QUESTION: When you say that the True Word doctrine will ruin the nation, what passages from the sutras or treatises can you offer as proof?

Answer: I say so because the True Word doctrine slanders the Lotus Sutra and contradicts the correct teaching.

Question: But if you fail to cite any passage to prove that the True Word doctrine will ruin the nation, then how can anyone believe you?

Answer: Do you agree that the True Word doctrine constitutes a slander of the Law? If you admit that it is a slander of the Law, then it cannot fail to bring ruin to the nation and to cause its proponents to fall into hell.

Generally speaking, to slander the Law means to slander the Buddha and to slander the Order, since the three treasures, the Buddha, the Law, and the Order, constitute a single entity. This is made clear in the Nirvana Sutra.

This is what the Lotus Sutra means when it says: "[If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra], immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world." Such a person is known as an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief. This matter is discussed in detail in the first, tenth, and eleventh volumes of the Nirvana Sutra.2

Since offenses differ in terms of gravity, some offenders fall deeper into hell than others. Those who kill, steal, or commit other crimes, even those who endeavor to kill or injure all the living beings of the major world system, are destined to fall only into the hell of repeated rebirth for torture, the hell of black cords, or some other of the upper seven of the eight great hells. They never fall into the eighth hell, the hell of incessant suffering.

The deeds that condemn one to this hell, the Avīci hell, are listed in the sutras and treatises as the five cardinal sins, the seven cardinal sins, the sin of denying the law of cause and effect, and that of slandering the Law.

However, though persons who commit only one of the five cardinal sins will fall into the hell of incessant suffering, after one medium kalpa has gone by, their guilt will come to an end and they will rise up out of hell. But, though one may never have violated a single precept and may be firm in one’s aspiration for the way and hopeful of good fortune in one’s next existence, if one turns one’s back on the Lotus Sutra, then, as the sutra says, one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering and will continue to be reborn there for a countless number of kalpas.

Thus we see that the offense of slandering the Law is graver than that of committing the five cardinal sins a
countless number of times. How could persons [who are guilty of such an offense] possibly bring peace and stability to the world by offering prayers on behalf of the state?

All affairs are best judged in the light of actual happenings. At the time of the disturbance that took place in the Jōkyū era, though the leaders in Kantō took no such steps, the sovereign of the nation, the Retired Emperor Go-toba, hoping to quell the forces that were ranged against the imperial court, summoned forty-one renowned priests and had them perform fifteen secret ceremonies. Among these, rites based upon the Protection Sutra were performed in Shishin-den Palace, being conducted for the first time by the prelate of Omuro [the retired emperor's second son]. But seven days later, when the rites came to an end, the forces defending the capital went down in defeat. Is this not proof in terms of an actual happening that the True Word teachings bring about the ruin of the state?

This is simply one relatively minor event that took place in our present age. Yet how lamentable is it that, because they trust to provisional teachings or erroneous doctrines, people should fall into the evil paths of existence!

Question: What scriptural passages can you offer as proof that the True Word school constitutes a "provisional teaching" or an "erroneous doctrine"?

The esoteric rites described by Mahāvairocana, the King of Enlightenment of the True Word teaching, constitute a storehouse of profound doctrine whereby one may attain Buddhahood in one's present form. Therefore persons of high and low station alike all place their trust in this creed and the whole world looks up to it as the great Law. The fact that all within the four seas is at peace and the world is well ordered is due wholly to the power of these True Word doctrines. What do you mean by referring to them as a "provisional teaching" or an "erroneous doctrine"?

Answer: The True Word doctrines are termed a provisional teaching because they include all of the four teachings, three of which are set forth as an expedient means, as is made perfectly clear in the sutras. They are thus the same as the teachings that correspond to the first four of the five flavors. Such teachings conceal the fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the infinitely distant past, and deny that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood. Moreover, since they declare that the benefits accruing from observance of the precepts come to an end with the life of the individual, they without doubt belong to the category of Hinayana among the provisional teachings.

Therefore, when the Japanese priest Enchō sent his questions on doctrine to the Chinese priests Kuang-hsiu of Ch'än-lin-ssu temple and Wei-chüan of Kuo-ch'ing-ssu temple, in their reply to his questions they indicated clearly that the True Word sutras belong to the Correct and Equal category of sutras.

Objection: I will leave aside for the moment the question of whether the [Mahāvairocana] sutra belongs to the provisional teachings. But as to the reply by the Chinese priests, its contents have been refuted by the eminent leader of the Tendai school, the Great Teacher Enchin. In his Essentials of the Mahāvairocana Sutra, he says, “Even the Lotus Sutra cannot compare [to the Mahāvairocana Sutra], much less the other doctrines.” This question therefore has already been settled by the patriarch of earlier times. Who, then, would venture to go against his opinion?

[Answer]: The reply by the Chinese priests says, “The truth has already
been decided,” by which it means that one should rely on the Law and not upon persons. However, though you cite Essentials of the Mahāvairochana Sutra, it is not certain whether this work is actually by Chishō, the Great Teacher Enchin, or not.

I say this because, in the second volume of his Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings, Chishō states: “In comparison to the teachings set forth in the Lotus, Flower Garland, and Nirvana sutras, these [True Word doctrines] are intended to serve as an introduction to those higher teachings.” When he is refuting the Chinese priests Kuang-hsiu and Wei-chüan, Chishō writes that even the Lotus Sutra cannot compare to the Mahāvairochana Sutra, but in his Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings he labels the Mahāvairochana Sutra a mere “introduction.” The two statements contradict one another. So if Essentials of the Mahāvairochana Sutra is by Chishō, then Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings cannot be by Chishō; or if Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings is really by Chishō, then Essentials of the Mahāvairochana Sutra must not be his work.

To decide the truth of the matter, we have only to note that everyone in the world is familiar with Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings and knows that it was written by Chishō, and it is referred to in the daily record of the court nobles. On the other hand, few people know of Essentials of the Mahāvairochana Sutra, and no mention of it is found in the record of the court nobles. From this one would therefore surmise that the latter work was written by someone of a later time and simply attributed to Chishō. One should look very carefully into this matter. As for Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings, it exists in a manuscript from Chishō’s own hand.

The school of esoteric Buddhism talks about the four phrases and the five storehouses, expounds on the ten stages of the mind, quotes from the treatises, and asserts that its teachings have been transmitted throughout the three lands of India, China, and Japan. It also asserts that it is mentioned in numerous family diaries, attempting to lend prestige to its own school, but all these discourses and claims are fallacious, empty words conjured up in an effort to enhance the dignity of its own doctrines.

The fact is that it claims that the Lotus Sutra is to be ranked two stages below the Mahāvairochana Sutra, being no more than a doctrine of childish theory, and asserts that Shakyamuni Buddha was still ensnared in the region of darkness. Let us look, then, to see if there are passages in the sutras, genuine words of the Thus Come One, to support such claims. If there are no such passages, then, whatever the exponents of these teachings may claim, how can they escape being guilty of slandering the Lotus Sutra? This is the very heart and core of the teachings of our own school, and I would caution you again and again never to forget this!

All the other schools of Buddhism are to some extent guilty of slandering the Law. When you debate with them, you should concentrate upon this particular point.

Though various schools may differ in their opinions regarding the Buddhist teachings, whether the persons practicing these teachings are clerics or lay believers, individuals of high or humble station, their basic reason for doing so is the desire to escape suffering and gain happiness in this life and in existences to come. But if, because they slander the Law, they as a consequence fall into the evil paths of existence, then all the wisdom of Manjushrī or all the eloquence of Pūrṇa cannot be of the slightest assistance. Thus, if persons who subscribe to an
erroneous doctrine that causes them to fall into the hell of incessant suffering are employed to offer prayers for the safety of the nation, what possible hope for success could there be?

I will not attempt to discuss here those commentaries that claim to define the relative worth of the esoteric and esoteric teachings. But with regard to the assertion that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra, I ask you to give very careful consideration.

In volume twelve of the Flower Garland Sutra (the forty-volume Flower Garland?) we read: “Of all the blessings acquired by clerics or lay believers through their religious practice, one portion in six will at all times be attributed to the ruler. . . . And in the same manner, of the evil karma resulting from evil acts that obstruct religious practice or proper conduct, one portion in six will likewise be attributed to the ruler.”

Volume six of the Six Pāramitās Sutra states: “If within the ruler’s domain there are persons who commit the offense of killing, the ruler will bear one-sixth of the guilt. And the same will be true in the case of acts of theft, improper conduct, or lying. Why is this? Because standards of lawful and unlawful behavior are the fundamental responsibility of the ruler. Therefore, whether it is a matter of blame or of good fortune, one portion in six of these will in all cases be attributed to the ruler.”

The Sovereign Kings Sutra says, “Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, marauders will appear from other regions, and the people of the country will meet with death and disorder.”

In the Great Collection Sutra we read: “There may perhaps be various kings of the Kshatriya class who act in a way contrary to the Law, causing anguish to the voice-hearer disciples of the World-Honored One. Perhaps they may curse and revile them or beat and injure them with swords and staves, or deprive them of their robes and begging bowls and the other things they need. Or perhaps they may restrain and persecute those who give alms to the disciples. If there should be those who do such things, then we will see to it that their enemies in foreign lands rise up suddenly of their own accord and march against them, and we will cause uprisings to break out within their states. We will bring about pestilence and famine, unseasonable winds and rains, and contention, wrangling, [and slander]. And we will make certain that those rulers do not last for long, but that their nations are brought to destruction.”

The Principles of the Threefold World states: “At that time people came together and chose from the group one person of outstanding virtue, conferring on him the title Field Master. Then each of them took a sixth of the crops that he had gathered and presented it as tribute to the Field Master, and in turn this one person acted as their leader, administering the laws of government for them. This in time led to the establishment of the Kshatriya class. The members of this class were honored and looked up to by the masses, and their beneficence spread throughout the realm. The first ruler was known as King Mahāsāṃmata.10” (The above passage is taken from The Dharma Analysis Treasury.)

Regarding the terms “esoteric” and “esoteric,” the “Ten Benefits” chapter of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra (in the passage dealing with the fourth benefit) states, “He enters deeply into the secret Law of the Buddhas and can expound it without error or omission.”

Now the three sūtras11 attributed to Mahāvairochana are referred to as secret or esoteric teachings, while the
Lotus Sutra is referred to as an exoteric teaching, but I do not know upon what golden words of the Buddha this designation is based. The point is, when people refer to the True Word doctrines as “secret,” does this word “secret” mean “secret” in the sense of something [faulty] concealed, or does it mean “secret” in the sense of something [precious] hidden away? There are two senses in which we may speak of something as “secret.” When we hide away gold or silver in a storehouse, we are secreting them from sight. But when we hide the fact that something is blemished or defective, this is an act of concealment.

Therefore, when we speak of the True Word doctrines as “secret,” it must mean that they involve a type of concealment. I say this because they state that the Buddha first attained enlightenment at Buddhagaya, thus concealing the fact that he actually attained it in the far distant past; and they speak disparagingly of persons of the two vehicles and do not reveal that such persons will eventually gain Buddhahood.

These two revelations—that the Buddha gained enlightenment in the far distant past, and that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood—constitute the very heart and marrow of the Buddha’s teachings, the bones and sinews of their meanings. The “secret” that is carefully hidden away [as opposed to being concealed] is that contained in the Lotus Sutra.

Therefore the “Teacher of the Law” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, “Medicine King, this sutra is the storehouse of the secret crux of the Buddhas.” The “Peaceful Practices” chapter in the fifth volume states, “Manjushri, this Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place.” The “Life Span” chapter speaks of “the Thus Come One’s secret and his transcendent powers,” and the “Supernatural Powers” chapter refers to “the storehouse of all the secret essentials of the Thus Come One.”

Furthermore, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, the founding father of the True Word doctrine, states in his commentary that the Lotus Sutra is to be designated “secret” because it teaches that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood. If that means that works that do not reveal that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood are not to be considered secret teachings, then it follows that the True Word is not a secret teaching.

Why is this so? Because the Mahāvairochana Sutra states: “The Buddha expounds [to bodhisattvas] an unfathomable Law of the True Word forms and way. It is not to be shared with any of the voice-hearers or cause-awakened ones. And the World-Honored One does not do this for the sake of living beings as a whole.”

In the way that it denies the possibility of attaining Buddhahood to persons of the two vehicles, it agrees with the teachings that correspond to the first four of the five flavors. Therefore the reply by the Chinese priests indicates that the Mahāvairochana Sutra is to be classified with the Correct and Equal category of sutras. This is because this sutra includes all of the four teachings.

Volume one hundred of The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (commentary on the ninety-ninth chapter of the Larger Wisdom Sutra) states: “Question: Is there a doctrine that is very profound and superior to the doctrines of the Wisdom sutras, so that, although the Wisdom sutras are entrusted to Ânanda, these other sutras are entrusted to the bodhisattvas? Answer: The prajñā-pāramitā teachings of the Wisdom sutras are not a secret doctrine. But the other sutras such as
the Lotus Sutra contain bestowals of prophecy concerning the arhats’ future attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore the great bodhisattvas are the ones who are best qualified to receive these sutras and make use of them. These sutras are like a great physician who can change poison into medicine.”

In volume six of The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra we read: “This can be likened to a skilled physician who can change poison into medicine. The sense organs of people of the two vehicles have become defective and can never be restored to their proper function. Therefore it is said that such people have been poisoned. But when the Lotus Sutra predicts that these people will eventually attain Buddhahood, the poison is changed into medicine. Therefore the treatise\textsuperscript{13} says that the various other sutras are not secret teachings, but the Lotus Sutra is secret. Moreover, the Lotus Sutra reveals the original state of the Buddha, a matter that is not revealed in the other sutras. But this point will be clarified in greater detail later on.”

Volume six of The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” states: “The treatise’ that is cited as proof for the fourth point under discussion [in Profound Meaning] is Great Perfection of Wisdom. The word ‘secret’ in the passage cited from this treatise does not refer to the ‘secret teaching’ that makes up one of the so-called eight teachings. It is simply that, before the Lotus Sutra was preached, these matters were kept secret. After these matters had been opened up and revealed, then there was nothing more left to be revealed—this is what is termed ‘secret.’”

Volume eight of The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra says: “Although the Correct and Equal sutras and the Wisdom sutras are storehouses of doctrine expounding the true aspect, they do not reveal that persons of the five vehicles [of human being, heavenly being, voice-hearer, cause-awakened one, and bodhisattva] are all capable of attaining Buddhahood. They have not yet cast off the transient and revealed the true. The sutras that deal with the sudden teaching and the gradual teaching have in all cases not yet achieved a full fusion with and understanding of the truth. Therefore [the teachings that are left unrevealed in them] are referred to as secret.”

The eighth volume of The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” states: “Great Perfection of Wisdom calls the Lotus Sutra a secret teaching and says that it is entrusted to the bodhisattvas. And as we see in the latter part of the sutra, the bodhisattvas who emerge from the earth\textsuperscript{14} are summoned forth. The Buddha was waiting for them, his original disciples [to whom he then entrusted the sutra]. This is proof that the other bodhisattvas were not capable of undertaking this task.”

The third volume of The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra, commenting on the way in which the dragon king’s daughter achieved Buddhahood, calls it “a secret of body and mouth.”

These various passages from the sutras, treatises, and commentaries make it perfectly clear that the Lotus Sutra is foremost among the expositions set forth by the Buddhas and that it deserves to be designated a secret or esoteric teaching.

To spout an outright lie and claim, without a single passage of evidence, that the Lotus Sutra is a work of the exoteric teaching, relegating it to an inferior position, is an act of slander. It is a great slander of the Law, is it not?

In China, Shan-wu-wei and Chinkang-chih wrote commentaries that held that, when the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra are compared, they are found to be alike in principle, but the latter is superior in
matters of practice. But were they deciding this matter of relative superiority on the basis of texts of the suttas found in both India and China?

In India the Lotus Sutra is said to have filled a storehouse sixteen ri round, so it must have included countless passages dealing with matters of practice. But the road from India to China is some fifty-eight thousand or even a hundred thousand ri in length, beset with difficulties and dangers such as the shifting sands of the desert and the mountain ranges of the Pamirs. In preparation for such a long and difficult journey, the less important parts of the sutra were omitted.

In addition, there are the tastes and intentions of the translators to be considered. Some favor detailed treatment and frown on conciseness; others prefer concise treatment and dislike abundant detail. For example, Hsian-tsang favored detailed discussion, and so when he translated the Wisdom Sutra, which was in forty volumes in the original, into Chinese, his translation came to six hundred volumes. The Tripitaka Master Kumārajīva, on the other hand, preferred conciseness, and so his translation of Great Perfection of Wisdom, a thousand volumes in the original, was reduced in translation to a hundred volumes. It is thus very difficult to decide which sutra, the Lotus or the Mahāvairochana, is superior simply on the basis of which describes mudras and mantras.

Kumārajīva’s translation of the Lotus Sutra does not consider mudras and mantras to be of prime importance [and hence omits mention of them]. But The Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra, translated by the Tripitaka Master Pu-k’ung, includes a discussion of mudras and mantras. Kumārajīva’s translation of the Benevolent Kings Sutra makes no mention of mudras and mantras, but Pu-k’ung’s translation of the same sutra has added a discussion of these matters. Thus we know that such differences are due to the taste and intention of the translator.

Furthermore, in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says, “and for them I preach the emblem [in] of the reality of things,”15 in which the word “emblem” indicates the mudra [in] of the palms pressed together. And the “Simile and Parable” chapter states, “This Dharma seal [in] of mine I preach because I wish to bring benefit to the world.” What of these passages? Though one sutra may be detailed and the other concise, they are not wholly different in content.

Moreover, when the Buddha speaks with his long broad tongue, all such utterances are mantras, or “true words.” In the Lotus Sutra it is stated: “No worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality.”16 And it also says, “The thoughts of these persons, their calculations and surmises and the words they speak...will also conform with what was preached in the suttas of former Buddhas.”17 What have you to say of such passages?

It is rather the True Word doctrine that has “true words” that exist in name only and not in reality. For it is a provisional teaching in which the full truth has not yet been revealed, and therefore it fails to give any sign of how persons may actually attain Buddhahood and gain the way. It speaks as though the Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time at Buddha-gaya and makes no mention of the fact that he actually attained it in the far distant past, and in doing so, it fails to make clear the Buddha nature that is a vital part of the innate nature of all beings.

According to its teachings, though persons of the three vehicles [of voice-hearer, cause-awakened one, and bodhisattva] may respond to the Buddha’s appearance in the world, two out of these three types of persons are cast
away; among thirty persons, twenty are
denied the attainment of Buddhahood.
If this is so, then the Buddha can never
fulfill his original vow to "cause all liv-
ing beings to enter the Buddha way." Its
doctrine does not take into consid-
eration the mutual possession of the
Ten Worlds, so how can it explain that
even insentient beings possess the cause
and effect [of Buddhahood] in both the
material and spiritual aspects?

During the time of the Ch'en and
Sui dynasties in China, the Great
Teacher T'ien-t'ai wrote his commen-
taries explaining the meaning of the
Lotus Sutra. Later, Shan-wu-wei stole
T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of the mutual pos-
session of the Ten Worlds, the hun-
dred worlds and thousand factors, and
the three thousand realms in a single
moment of life, a doctrine T'ien-t'ai
placed above mudras, and made it the
very core and heart of the teachings of
the True Word school.

This Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei
came to China from India in the fourth
year of the K'ai-yüan era [716], in the
reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the
seventh ruler of the T'ang dynasty. This
was 1664 years after the Thus
Come One Shakyamuni entered nir-
vana, and more than 120 years after
the seventeenth year of the K'ai-huang
era [597] [when the Great Teacher
T'ien-t'ai died]. Thus he stole this
doctrine of three thousand realms in
a single moment of life, which T'ien-
t'ai had expounded some 120 or more
years earlier, and made it his own.

But the Mahāvairochana Sutra, the
sutra upon which Shan-wu-wei based
his own teachings, discriminates against
certain types of people on the basis of
their capacities, agreeing in this respect
with the other sutras whose teachings
are comparable to the first four of the
categories of preaching. It denies that persons of the
two vehicles can ever attain Buddhahood, and of course cannot even con-
ceive of the idea of plants and trees
doing so. Thus, if someone speaks of
the principle [of three thousand realms
in a single moment of life underlying
the Mahāvairochana Sutra], that person
is a thief.

Moreover, these mudras and mantras
in which the Mahāvairochana Sutra
is said to excel—they can be found
in many other sutras as well. There-
fore one can hardly single out the Ma-
ḥāvairochana Sutra for special praise
just because it discusses mudras and
mantras. However, it is the Lotus Sutra
alone that reveals that persons of the
two vehicles can attain Buddhahood,
while in the other sutras preached dur-
ing the Buddha's lifetime such a possi-
bility is denied. Thus persons of these
two vehicles might perform mudras
and mantras of the twelve hundred
and more honored ones [of the True
Word school] for numberless, endless
kalpas, but they could never attain
Buddhahood if it were not for the
Lotus Sutra!

Mudras are actions performed by
the hands, mantras are actions performed
by the mouth. But if the owner of the
hands and mouth cannot attain Bud-
thood, the hands and mouth can
hardly attain Buddhahood on their
own, can they?

What makes it possible for persons
of the two vehicles to attain Buddha-
hood is the teaching of the Lotus Su-
tra that surpasses all the other sutras
preached throughout the Buddha's life-
time and excels the sutras of the three
categories of preaching. To disregard
this fact and instead pay highest honor
to some other sutra because it happens
to contain mudras and mantras—this is
to view the inferior and call it supe-
rior, a view anything but Buddhist!

The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra,
"Preaching of the Law" chapter, states,
"In these more than forty years, I have
not yet revealed the truth."

And in the first volume of the Lotus
Sutra, we read, "The World-Honored
One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth.” The same chapter says, “The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone.”

In the fourth volume we find this passage “Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!” And this passage as well, “Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra…”

The “Treasure Tower” chapter says, “For the sake of the Buddha way in immeasurable numbers of lands from the beginning until now I have widely preached many sutras, and among them this sutra is foremost.” The “Peaceful Practices” chapter says, “This Lotus Sutra is foremost among all that is preached by the Thus Come Ones. Among all that is preached it is the most profound.” It also says: “This Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place.”

In the “Medicine King” chapter it is stated, “So this Lotus Sutra is likewise. Among all the sutras, it holds the highest place.” It also states, “So this sutra is the most honored among all the many sutras.” And it says, “So this sutra likewise is king among all the sutras.” And, “So this sutra likewise is foremost among all the sutra teachings preached by all the Thus Come Ones, preached by all the bodhisattvas, or preached by all the voice-hearers.”

The tenth volume of Profound Meaning states: “Among the sutras I [Shakymuni Buddha] have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.’ The words ‘I have preached’ refer to the sutras preached prior to the Lotus.”

In the third volume of Outstanding Principles it is stated: “One should take special note of the fact that in the Lotus Sutra, the first verse section in the ‘Teacher of the Law’ chapter, the Buddha says, ‘Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!’” And the same work says, “One should understand that all the sutras of the first four periods preached in the past [are easy to believe and easy to understand].”

Volume eight of Words and Phrases says, “When the Lotus Sutra discourses on the Law…” [Because the theoretical teaching and the essential teaching of the sutra contradict all the earlier sutras, they are extremely difficult to believe and difficult to understand—no less difficult than facing an enemy who is armed with a spear.”] And volume eight of On “The Words and Phrases” remarks, “Concerning the words ‘no less difficult than facing an enemy who is armed with a spear,’ [the Lotus Sutra, which comes earlier, is as difficult to accept as it is to defeat the main force of an enemy, while the Nirvana Sutra, which comes later, is not difficult to accept, like defeating the remainder].”

The third volume of Outstanding Principles states, “One should understand that the sutras on which the other schools base their teachings are not the king among kings.”

Shakymuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions; T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyō all regarded the Lotus Sutra as the truth and the Flower Garland Sutra as a mere expedient means. “I have not yet revealed the truth,” “honestly discarding expedient means,” and “and not accepting a single verse of the other sutras,” said the Buddha. And he also said, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, … When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avīchi hell.”

The Great Teacher Kōbō has declared that the Lotus Sutra is childish
theory; the Flower Garland Sutra is the truth. Whose opinion should we rely on?

In his Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, Kōbō writes, “Each vehicle that is put forward is claimed to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but when examined from a later stage, they are all seen to be mere childish theory.” And he also says, “Slanderers or persons who slander the Law will assuredly cause one to fall into the Avichi hell.”

Volume five of On “The Words and Phrases” states, “Therefore teachings other than the true aspect of all phenomena are to be labeled frivolous or childish theory.”

A commentary on the Brahmā Net Sutra states: “The tenth precept is that which prohibits slander of the three treasures, also called the precept against slander of the bodhisattvas. It is also known as that regarding erroneous views. ‘To slander’ means to turn against. In all cases where understanding does not accord with what is right in principle and words do not match the truth, and the person is expounding some different interpretation, this is to be labeled an act of slander.”

Volume three of Profound Meaning says, “All assertions that lack scriptural proof are to be branded as false; they are the same as the views of non-Buddhists.”

Volume ten of The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight” states: “People nowadays put faith in the passages from the sutras and treatises cited by others and believe that they can be trusted. They fail to examine the origins of the school to which such persons belong and thus fall very gravely into error!”

In the first volume, the middle section, of An Essay on the Protection of the Nation, we read: “If passages of proof are quoted from the sutras or treatises, it should be made clear whether they are quoted from the provisional teachings or the true teaching, from Mahayana or from Hinayana works, from partial teachings or from the perfect teaching, from half revelations or from the full revelation.”

And volume three of Profound Meaning says, “They quote widely from the sutras and treatises in order to adorn and decorate their own doctrines.”

Kōbō says that the Lotus Sutra ranks in third place after the True Word teachings [and the Flower Garland Sutra], that it is a work of childish theory inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra. The Mahāvairochana Sutra is in six volumes, or seven volumes when the volume on offerings is added, a work in thirty-one or thirty-six chapters. But in what chapter, in what volume, is such a statement to be found? Moreover, in all the thirty-four chapters of the Susiddhikara Sutra and the three volumes and three chapters or one volume of the Diamond Crown Sutra, no such statement is anywhere to be found.

Furthermore, in what volume or what chapter of the Mahāvairochana Sutra or the other two sutras that make up the three sutras of the esoteric teaching is the doctrine of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds to be found? It is found nowhere in these works.

The Lotus Sutra includes both principle and practice. The fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the far distant past is an example of a matter pertaining to practice. And the fact that persons of the two vehicles are capable of attaining Buddhahood is a matter of principle. The wild assertion made by Shan-wu-wei and the others that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra are the same in principle but that the latter is superior in matters of practice is utterly untrustworthy!

The True Word teaching contains many errors, among which are the following:
1. *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind* ranks the Lotus Sutra at the eighth stage, the Flower Garland Sutra at the ninth stage, and the True Word teaching at the tenth or highest stage. Upon what sutra or treatise is such a ranking based?

2. Shan-wu-wei's four phrases and Kōbō's ten stages of the mind clearly contradict one another. Why should the doctrines of teacher and disciple be so directly opposed?

3. When the proponents of the True Word teaching speak of the five storehouses or divisions of the Buddhist scriptures, why do they claim that the dhāraṇī division described in the Six Pāramitās Sutra refers to the mantras, or “true words,” of their own school?37

4. Kōbō states that “the Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee [of the True Word dhāraṇīs].”38 But [if he is referring to the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai], are not the dates all wrong? I say this because from the time [when T’ien-t’ai died] in the seventeenth year of the K’ai-huang era [597] to the fourth year of the Chen-yüan era [788] in the reign of the T’ang emperor Te-tsung, the year with the cyclical sign mou-ch’en, is a period of 192 years. If the Six Pāramitās Sutra was not introduced to China until 192 years after the death of T’ien-t’ai, how could he be accused of “stealing the ghee” of the dhāraṇīs described in that sutra? In making such a claim, Kōbō stands convicted by his own statement that “slanderers persons or slandering the Law will assuredly cause one to fall into the Avīci hell.”

5. Kōbō in his *Secret Key to the Heart Sutra* includes the Lotus Sutra within [the second of] the five sections of the Heart Sutra. One should inquire very carefully into why he thinks he can do so.

Seven Severe Criticisms of True Word

First, they claim that the True Word teaching was expounded by the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana, who is different from the Buddha who expounded the Lotus Sutra. If so, then did this Mahāvairochana appear in the world and gain the way, expound the Law and benefit living beings before the time of Shakyamuni or after?

If he was a Buddha who expounded the Law in accordance with people’s capacities, he must have undergone the eight phases of a Buddha’s existence. Who, then, were his father and mother? What were their names?

Do they claim that he was a Buddha who appeared in this sahā world of ours? But there cannot be two Buddhas in a single world, just as there cannot be two rulers in a single nation—this is a principle established by the sacred teachings of the Buddha. One has only to look at the thirty-fifth volume of the Nirvana Sutra to see this.39

Or do they claim that he is the Buddha of a different world? If so, then why should we look with contempt on Shakyamuni, who is sovereign, teacher, and parent to us, and instead pay honor to a Buddha who belongs to another region and to whom we are only distantly related? Is this not to be disloyal, to be unfilial, to behave like a member of the Anti-Lokāyata school?40

If they say that Shakyamuni and Mahāvairochana are one in body, then why do they speak of the latter as “a different Buddha”? And if the latter is in fact “a different Buddha,” then why should we cast aside our own Buddha, to whom we owe such a great debt of gratitude, in order to serve him? The sage ruler Yao of T’ang continued to honor his mother even when she was old and failing, and the sage ruler Shun of Yu treated his father with respect, stubborn as the latter was.41 (This is the first criticism.)

The Six Pāramitās Sutra states: “The correct teachings expounded by the Buddhas of the past, the World-Hon-
ored Ones, who are as numberless as the sands of the Ganges—I now expound them just as they did. They are the gathering together of the eighty-four thousand wonderful teachings. . . . Moreover, Ānanda and my other major disciples, once they hear them, will all of them remember them all and keep them in mind.”

Kōbō claims that the dhāranī division contained in this sutra represents the mantras, or “true words,” of his school. Does he mean, then, that this dhāranī division was not preached by Shakyamuni? If so, then he is contradicting what the sutra says. (This is the second criticism.)

The Buddha says that among the immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions of sutras he has preached, now preaches, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is foremost. Among all the sutras preached by the Buddhas, or preached by the bodhisattvas, or preached by the voice-hearers, this sutra ranks first. Then is Mahāvairochana not included in this category of “the Buddhas”? But when, in preaching the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni said he was “honestly discarding” expedient means and preaching “the unsurpassed way,”42 Mahāvairochana and the other Buddhas extended their long tongues up to the Brahma heaven as testimony to the truth of his words.43 (This is the third criticism.)

The Sutra on the Form of the Lotus Mandala states: “His [the Thus Come One Many Treasures] bodily appearance is golden in color; constantly he appears in a full moon circle, forming his hands in the mudras representing meditation and wisdom, testifying to the truth of the Lotus Sutra.”44 And the Buddhas of the section concerning the five categories of Buddhas [in the second chapter of the Lotus Sutra] likewise demonstrate that the Lotus Sutra is foremost. (This is the fourth criticism.)

[The “Supernatural Powers” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states]: “To put it briefly, all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One, . . . all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra.”

These passages from the sutras prove not only that the Lotus Sutra is foremost among the sutras preached by Shakyamuni, but that it is foremost among all the sutras preached by the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future. If anyone should speak differently, claiming that, among the sutras preached by one Buddha or two Buddhas, there is a sutra that surpasses the Lotus Sutra, such claims are not to be heeded. For, be it the past, present, or future, the Lotus Sutra will never be overthrown. (This is the fifth criticism.)

Furthermore, there is no passage in the Mahāvairochana Sutra or the other sutras declaring that that sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra. (This is the sixth criticism.)

After Shakyamuni passed into nirvana, among the twenty-four scholars of India who successively inherited the lineage of his teaching,45 or the other great incarnations of Buddhas or bodhisattvas who appeared in the world to spread the doctrine there, or among the teachers of China, the teachers of the seven schools of the north and the three schools of the south, or among the founders of the Three Treatises school and the Dharma Characteristics school, there were none other than the proponents of the T’ien-t’ai school who taught the doctrine of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and the three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

If the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is not propounded, then there is no way to account for the principle of inherent evil in the nature of the Buddha. And
if the principle of inherent evil is not accepted, this means that the Bud-
dhas and bodhisattvas who universally manifest material bodies, as well as theive hundred and seven hundred hon-
ored ones depicted in the mandalas of the two realms of the True Word
teaching, are temporary beings existing only in the present, their original state
unknown.\(^{46}\) This is the same as the view expounded by the non-Buddhist
teachers.

The followers of the True Word school may speak of the mutual posses-
sion of the Ten Worlds or of the hun-
dred worlds and thousand factors, but in which of the three sutras upon
which their school is founded is it stated that the beings of all the Ten Worlds
are capable of attaining Buddhahood? It was only after they learned of the
perfect teaching of the T’ien-t’ai school that they stole this doctrine and in
wily fashion used it to adorn their own teachings.

One should not trust those who exercise their art and ingenuity, spouting
out empty words. One should look to the correct sutra passages and the
golden words of the Buddha to determine the truth. (This is the seventh
criticism.)

Volume thirty-five of the Nirvana

Sutra states: “I have explained this in
various different sutras. When one
Buddha makes his appearance in the
world, he brings benefit to many peo-
ple. But that two wheel-turning kings
should exist in a single country, or that
two Buddhas should appear in a single
world—nowhere has any such thing
ever happened.”

Volume nine of Great Perfection of
Wisdom says: “The major world sys-
tems in the ten directions, numerous as
the sands of the Ganges, make up what
is called the world of a single Buddha.
There are no other Buddhas there. Truly it is the world of one Buddha,
Shakyamuni Buddha.”

In volume one of On “The Words and
Phrases,” we read: “There are not two
Buddhas in the world, there are not
two rulers in the nation. In the realm
of one Buddha, there are not two Ven-
erable Ones.”

And The Treatise on the Upholding of
the Stage\(^{47}\) states: “In one world there
are not two Buddhas, in one nation
there are not two rulers. Within the
realm of a single Buddha’s teachings,
there are not two Venerable Ones.”

Seventh month
Nichiren

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Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter
during his exile in Sado in the seventh
month of 1272, and sent it to Sammi-
bō Nichigyo, a priest who at the time
was studying Buddhist doctrine in
Kyoto. In it, citing scriptural evidence,
he endeavors to clarify Buddhist prin-
ciples, and points to actual events to
show that the True Word school con-
stitutes a teaching that causes suffering
to the people and will ultimately lead
to the ruin of the nation.

He first explains why the True Word
teaching is capable of destroying the
nation. Next, he refutes the True Word
contention that the Lotus Sutra consti-
tutes an “exoteric teaching,” and is
thus inferior to the True Word sutras,
which True Word defines as “esoteric,”
or secret. Finally the Daishonin briefly
lists five points of error in the assertions
of True Word teachers, and then sets
forth seven key criticisms of the True
Word teachings.
As to why the True Word school can destroy the nation, the Daishonin points out the slander of the Lotus Sutra contained in its teachings. That the government relies on priests of this school to offer prayers to protect the nation, he says, is a cause for the nation’s downfall. He cites a 1221 incident known as the Jōkyū Disturbance, in which the Retired Emperor Gotoba sought to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate. Gotoba used True Word priests to offer prayers to overpower his enemies, but his forces were quickly wiped out and he was sent into exile. This, the Daishonin asserts, is proof that the True Word teaching will lead to the destruction of the nation. Quoting various sutras and commentaries, he states that the ruler of a nation is responsible for its destiny.

Concerning the True Word school’s claim that the Lotus Sutra is not an esoteric, or secret, teaching, but an exoteric teaching and therefore inferior, the Daishonin counters by asserting that there are two ways to view the term “secret.” One is to view it as the careful hiding of something precious, and the other, as an act of concealment to cover up a fault. The Lotus Sutra represents the first view of secret, he says, and the True Word sutras, the latter view. This is because, while the Lotus Sutra reveals what the Buddha had long kept secret—that he originally attained enlightenment in the remote past and that persons of the two vehicles are able to attain Buddhahood—the True Word sutras conceal these facts by stating that the Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in Buddhagaya and speaking disparagingly of persons of the two vehicles.

The True Word school also calls the Lotus Sutra inferior in terms of practice because it lacks descriptions of mudras and mantras. To this, the Daishonin states that the Lotus Sutra originally contained such descriptions, but that Kumārajiva, who translated the Lotus Sutra into Chinese, left them out in translation, deeming them unimportant. Their inclusion in the Mahāvairochana and other True Word sutras, he suggests, is a result of the personal tastes of the translators of those sutras.

The Daishonin states that T’ien-t’ai established the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which embodies his understanding of the Lotus Sutra. He placed the principle above the matters of mantra and mudra. Later Shan-wu-wei stole that principle and read it into the Mahāvairochana Sutra, arguing that that sutra is therefore equal to the Lotus Sutra.

Noting five brief examples of logical and textual inconsistencies in Kōbō’s doctrinal position, the Daishonin then lists seven major criticisms of the True Word doctrine. He questions the identity of Mahāvairochana Buddha, whom the True Word school reveres, raising doubts as to this Buddha’s very existence. Addressing contradictory assertions by Kōbō, he then cites various scriptural passages referring to the Lotus Sutra’s superlative position among the Buddha’s teachings. Finally, he reiterates that the True Word teachings do not embody the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, emphasizing that this accounts for the lack of a statement in the True Word sutras that all people are capable of attaining Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. In these volumes “icchantika” means those who have destroyed the seed of Buddhahood inherent in their lives.
3. See Jōkyū Disturbance in Glossary. “Kanto” mentioned subsequently refers to
the Kamakura government.

4. Kuang-hsiu (771–843) was an eminent priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in China and was a disciple of Tao-sui, one of Dengyō's teachers. Wei-chüan (n.d.) was Kuang-hsiu's disciple. Both Ch'án-lín-ssu and Kuo-ch'ing-ssu are temples on Mount T'ien-t'ai.

5. The four phrases in Shan-wu-wei's *Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahāvairochana Sūtra* that describe the reality of the five components of life and the denial of the ego, the non-substantiality of both mind and material objects, perceiving one's own mind as it truly is, and the nonexistence of individual nature or self-nature. Kōbō, the founder of the True Word school in Japan, identified these four characteristics represented by the four phrases with the Hinayana teachings, Three Treatises school, Tendai school, and Flower Garland school. He asserted that the four phrases represented the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and that because the teaching of the True Word school was that of Mahāvairochana Buddha, the teaching of the True Word school was superior to the teachings of all the other schools.

6. In his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, Kōbō assigns the Lotus Sutra to the eighth stage, the Flower Garland Sutra to the ninth stage, and the Mahāvairochana Sutra to the tenth and highest stage. Thus he ranks the Lotus Sutra as inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra, and as two stages below the Mahāvairochana Sutra.

7. A translation by Prajinā (b. 734), one of the three Chinese translations of the Flower Garland Sutra. The other two are the sixty-volume version translated by Buddhābhādra (359–429) and the eighty-volume version by Shikshānanda (652–710). Prajinā's translation consists only of the "Entering the Dharma Realm" chapter of the sutra.


9. A work by Genshin (942–1017), an eminent priest of the Tendai school in Japan. This work explains the threefold world, that is, the world of desire, the world of form, and the world of formlessness.

10. A legendary king who, according to various sutras, was the first ruler in the world and was impartial toward all people. The Shākya clan, or the clan of Shakyamuni, is said to be traced back to him.

11. The Mahāvairocana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. These are also known as the three True Word sutras.

12. This chapter is the final chapter of the sutra and is called the "Entrustment" chapter. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* consists of one hundred volumes and ninety sections. The ninetieth and last section of the treatise is also called the "Entrustment" chapter.


14. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth who emerge from beneath the ground and to whom Shakyamuni Buddha entrusts the propagation of the Law in the Latter Day of the Law. They are described in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

15. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

16. This passage actually appears in T'ien-t'ai's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* as an annotation to the following passage from the nineteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "The doctrines that they preach during that time will conform to the gist of the principles and will never be contrary to the true reality. If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or occupations that sustain life, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law."

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 19.

18. Ibid., chap. 2.

19. The Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities depicted in the True Word school's objects of devotion, that is, the Womb Realm mandala and the Diamond Realm mandala.

20. "Three categories of preaching" refers to "the sutras I [Shakyamuni] have preached, now preach, and will preach," mentioned in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This passage implies that the Lotus Sutra stands above all the other sutras.


22. The "one great reason" for the Buddhas' appearance in the world is to enable all people to attain the same enlightenment they have. Concerning this "one great reason," the sutra goes on to say that Buddhas appear in the world in order to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to show it to them, to cause
them to awaken to it, and induce them to enter into it.

24. Ibid.
25. A reference to all the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra. See five periods in Glossary.
27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
28. Ibid., chap. 3.
29. This passage is found in the sixth volume of the extant edition of The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.”
30. A work by T’ien-t’ai entitled The Commentary on the Meaning of Bodhisattva Precepts.
31. The tenth of the ten major precepts, or the ten most important among the fifty-eight rules of discipline for Mahayana bodhisattvas set forth in the Brahmanda Net Sutra.
32. This passage is found in the second volume of the extant edition of Profound Meaning.
33. “Half revelations” refers to teachings expounded as an expedient means to elevate the people’s capacity and lead them to Buddhahood. “The full revelation” refers to the teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood, or the teaching that leads the people directly to Buddhahood.
34. See n. 6.
35. The Mahavairocana Sutra consists of seven volumes and thirty-six chapters. The first six volumes consist of thirty-one chapters and concern essential doctrines and practices in esoteric Buddhism. The last and seventh volume consists of five chapters and concerns offerings and rituals pertaining to them.
36. “One volume” refers to the abbreviated version of the sutra.
37. This points to the fact that the True Word school regards the category of exoteric teachings including the Six Paramitas Sutra as inferior to the category of esoteric teachings, but still values the doctrinal classification set forth by the Six Paramitas Sutra itself.

38. A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism.
39. This refers to a passage of the Nirvana Sutra that appears later. It reads as follows: “I have explained this in various different sutras. When one Buddha makes his appearance in the world, he brings benefit to many people. But that two wheel-turning kings should exist in a single country, or that two Buddhas should appear in a single world—nowhere has any such thing ever happened.” In the extant edition of the Nirvana Sutra, this passage appears in the thirty-fourth volume.
40. A non-Buddhist school in ancient India that is thought to have arisen from and in opposition to the Lokayata school. In this sense, the Anti-Lokayata school is often referred to as representing betrayers of their teachers.
41. Yao and Shun are regarded as two of the Five Emperors. See Yao, Shun, and Five Emperors in Glossary.
42. In the “Expedient Means” chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha says, “Honesty discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.”
43. This scene is described in chapter twenty-one of the Lotus Sutra.
44. A summary of this sutra.
45. See twenty-four successors in Glossary.
46. “Evil,” or the nine worlds, inherent in the lives of Buddhas and bodhisattvas enabled them to manifest material bodies in order to save living beings. What makes their appearance in the world possible is that “inherent evil.”
47. The Treatise on the Upholding of the Stage corresponds to the Upholding the Bodhisattva Stage Sutra translated into Chinese by Dharmaraksha (385-433), a monk and translator from central India. The Upholding the Bodhisattva Stage Sutra corresponds to the section on the bodhisattva stage from the thirty-fifth volume through the fiftieth volume of The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice. The passage in the text is a summary of a passage from this sutra.