On the Five Guides for Propagation

It seems to me that, just as one searches out some potent medicine when one is attempting to cure a critical illness, so there is nothing as effective as the essential Law in rescuing those who have committed the cardinal sins or have slandered the Law.

In the category of time periods we have the Former, the Middle, and the Latter Days of the Law. In the category of teachings we have Hinayana and Mahayana, the partial and the perfect teachings, the provisional and the true, and the exoteric and the esoteric. In the category of countries there are two types, those that are central to the propagation of the teachings and those that are peripheral. In the category of the people's capacity to understand the teachings, there are differences depending upon whether the person has already committed the cardinal sins or has not done so, and whether the person has already slandered the Law or has not done so. In the category of teachers there are ordinary teachers and sage teachers; persons of the two vehicles and bodhisattvas; bodhisattvas of other worlds and bodhisattvas of this world; and bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching and bodhisattvas of the essential teaching.

Hence, when the four ranks of bodhisattvas appeared in the world after the Buddha's passing and spread the teachings, acting as successors to the Buddha, they did not expound the sutras and doctrines in a reckless manner.

Generally speaking, one should not suddenly set about transmitting this great doctrine of the Lotus Sutra to persons who are ignorant and have not slandered that great doctrine. On the other hand, to persons who are evil and who have already slandered this true Mahayana teaching, one should preach it with forcefulness.

Thus in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha addresses these words to Shāriputra: "Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom." And again in the fourth volume, when the Buddha addresses Bodhisattva Medicine King and the eighty thousand great men, he says: "This sutra is the storehouse of the secret crux of the Buddhas. It must not be distributed or recklessly transmitted to others." The meaning of these passages is that one must not thoughtlessly preach the Lotus Sutra to persons who are ignorant and have not done anything to slander the correct teaching.

In the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra, the "Never Disparaging" chapter, however, it says: "And if he happened to see any of the four kinds of believers far off in the distance, he would purposely go to where they were... Among the four kinds of be-
lievers there were those who gave way to anger, their minds lacking in purity, and they spoke ill of him and cursed him, saying, ‘This ignorant monk—where does he come from?’...some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him.”

The approach described in the passages quoted from the second and fourth volumes of the sutra and that described in the passage from the seventh volume are as different as heaven and earth, or as fire and water.

Question: Of these two procedures described in the sutra, which one should we adopt in propagating the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: We should not adopt one or the other on the basis of our own personal interpretation. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, who was among the company of listeners when the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak, as well as the Great Teacher Miao-lo, have left us a number of passages of commentary on this matter. Let me quote a few of them.

In the tenth volume of The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra it says:

“Question: When Shakyamuni appeared in the world, he hesitated as to whether to preach or not. Now how should we interpret this? On the other hand, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging rushed in to preach on every occasion. How should we interpret this?

“Answer: Shakyamuni, addressing persons of his time who in previous existences cultivated good roots, preached the doctrines of the lesser vehicle and assisted and protected them. But Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, addressing persons who in past existences did not cultivate good roots, expounded the doctrines of the great vehicle, forcing them to hear it, though it angered them.”

The meaning of this passage of commentary is as follows. Shakyamuni preached the four teachings and eight teachings, the Hinayana and Mahayana doctrines, the provisional and the true sutras, which are comparable to the first four flavors, such as the Flower Garland Sutra preached at the place of enlightenment, the Ågama sutras preached at Deer Park, the Correct and Equal sutras preached at the Great Treasure Chamber, and the Wisdom sutras preached at White Heron Lake. If we look into the past existences of the persons who received these teachings, we find that in the remote periods of Shakyamuni’s original enlightenment and of his preaching in the time of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence these persons received the seed of the pure and perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra. But because these persons slandered the one vehicle teaching of that sutra, they were forced to spend major world system dust particle kalpas or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in hell. Nevertheless, the seed that was sown in the distant past in time came to full maturity, so that the Buddha nature inherent in these persons manifested itself, like a jewel that has been sewn into a robe. However, because there was a possibility that even these persons who had earlier established a relationship with the Lotus Sutra might slander the sutra if it were preached during the first forty or more years of the Buddha’s preaching life, Shakyamuni for the time being preached only the Hinayana and provisional sutras so as to bring to further maturity the good capacities of his listeners.

Question: What about the great bodhisattvas of the specific and perfect teachings who were said to have gained enlightenment when the Flower Garland Sutra was preached, or the numbers of ordinary persons who were said to have gained enlightenment when the Meditation Sutra was preached?

Answer: If we speak in terms of the
time when these various groups gained enlightenment, then it would appear as though they had done so through the sutras you mention. But if we consider the realities of the situation, we realize that all of these persons were among those who received the seed of enlightenment major world system dust particle kalpas or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past.

Question: What proof can you offer of this?

Answer: The “Emerging from the Earth” chapter in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “For age after age in the past the living beings have constantly received my instruction. . . So when these living beings see me for the first time and listen to my preaching, they all immediately believe and accept it, entering into the wisdom of the Thus Come One.”

The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai in his commentary on this identifies these people as those who received the seed “in the long distant past.”5 And the Great Teacher Miao-lo says: “Though their enlightenment takes place in the present, in all cases it is due to the sprouting of the seed planted long ago.”6 And he also says: “Therefore we should understand that the accordance [with the Buddha wisdom] that takes place today represents a realization of capacities that have been maturing since the past.”7

Because these passages of sutra and commentary that I have quoted are perfectly clear in meaning, they require no comment from me. It is like the case of a king’s consort. Whether she happens to be a princess or a woman of humble birth, unless she conceives with the seed of the ruler, her son can never become the sovereign of the kingdom.

Question: What about those who are said to have gained enlightenment through the Mahāvairochana and the other [True Word] sutras?

Answer: There are various different theories concerning this, and since they are so numerous, I will not deal with them here. Generally speaking, however, these sutras do not expound doctrines that clarify when the Buddha planted the seed of Buddhahood, or when he nurtured and reaped it. These doctrines are no different from Hinayana, which demands that one reduce one’s body to ashes and annihilate one’s consciousness. They are not sutras that set forth the beginning and end of the process of enlightenment.

Despite this fact, however, the True Word teachers speak of them as leading to the attainment of Buddhahood in one’s present form. In this, they are like impoverished persons who wildly lay claim to the title of emperor or king and hence bring punishment and death upon themselves. If we were looking for a parallel with the Chinese usurpers Wang Mang or Chao Kao, we could find it in the True Word teachers of the present day.

If we are to speak in terms of the categories of time and capacity mentioned earlier, we would have to say that after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha, there are three periods. During the first two periods, the two thousand or more years that make up the Former and Middle Days of the Law, there were still some persons who had received the seed of Buddhahood, such as those who lived during the more than forty years when Shakyamuni preached in the world. But at such a time one must not, without stopping to consider the capacities of the people, thoughtlessly preach the Lotus Sutra, the true sutra.

At present, however, we have already entered the third period, the Latter Day of the Law. The persons who formed a relationship with the Buddha during the time he was in the world have little by little diminished in number, and all those who have the ca-
pacity to attain Buddhahood through the two categories of provisional and true sutras have disappeared. Now is the time for Bodhisattva Never Disparaging to appear in the world in this latter age and to sound his poison-coated drum. And yet, in spite of this fact, the scholars of today, because they are confused about the categories of time and capacity, in some cases propagate Hinayana doctrines, or in others transmit the teachings of provisional Mahayana or preach the one vehicle. But none of them realize that they should be utilizing the five characters of the daimoku, since this is the means for implanting the seed of Buddhahood.

The True Word scholars are particularly deluded in the manner in which, relying upon their three sutras, they expound the doctrine of the sublimating of the two vehicles of voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones into the one vehicle of bodhisattvas, or the replacing of these two vehicles by that one vehicle. They say nothing about comparing the relative merits of the three vehicles of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas to those of the one vehicle of Buddhahood. All they do is destroy the path by which one might immediately attain enlightenment in one’s present form, and do not even mention the principle of the enlightenment of plants.

However, when the monks Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung came to China from India, they found that the splendid doctrines of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, doctrines that did not exist in India, had been propagated throughout China and were flourishing greatly. As a result it was very difficult for them to spread the teachings of the sutras that they admired and had brought with them. They therefore consulted with Āchārya I-hsing and contrived to steal the wisdom and understanding of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai and read it into their interpretation of the Mahāvairochana and the other sutras, falsely claiming that this interpretation existed from the time the sutras were in India.

Everyone in China, including the ruler and his ministers, as well as the two great teachers of Japan, Kōbō and Jikaku, put faith in these assertions and failed to perceive the truth, and it goes without saying that lesser scholars did likewise. In all of China and Japan there was only one man, the Great Teacher Dengyō, who perceived the truth of the matter, but even he did not make it entirely clear.

In the end, however, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei, having been chastised by Yama, the king of hell, repent of his errors and faults, and the Tripitaka Master Pu-k’ung, returning to India and abandoning the True Word doctrines, journeyed once more to China, where he set up an ordination platform for the T’ien-t’ai teachings, placing the Lotus Sutra in the center as the principal object of devotion between the two mandalas of the Diamond Realm and the Womb Realm.

Question: Why is it that the scholars of the True Word school at the present time do not acknowledge that fact of their doctrine?

Answer: Just as people cannot see their own eyebrows, close as they are, so there are cases like this where people are unaware of their own errors. The Great Teacher Chia-hsiang abandoned the Three Treatises school and became a disciple of T’ien-t’ai, but present-day scholars of the Three Treatises school are ignorant of this fact. Fa-tsong and Ch’eng-kuan set aside the teachings of the Flower Garland school and put their faith in those of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, but scholars of the Flower Garland school do not realize this. The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz’u-en rejected the erroneous doctrine of the five na-
tures and shifted their allegiance to the truth of the one vehicle, but scholars of the Dharma Characteristics school stoutly deny this.

Question: What passages of proof can you offer?

Answer: Some of these men shifted their mental positions but not their physical positions. Some shifted their physical positions but not their mental positions. Some shifted both their mental and their physical position, and some shifted neither. I will write out the passages of proof on a separate sheet of paper. Generally speaking, they do not affect my main argument, so I will not go into them here.

As mentioned earlier, there are three periods of time following the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha, the first of which is the thousand years known as the Former Day of the Law. During the former five hundred years of this period, Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Śānavāsa, Madhyāntika, and the monk Pārśva devoted themselves entirely to spreading the medicine of the Hinayana teachings in order to cure the minor illnesses of the people of the time. They propagated the three divisions of the canon including the four Āgama sutras, the various precepts contained in The Ten Divisions of Monastic Rules and The Eighty Divisions of Monastic Rules, and the Transmission of Emancipation sutras. These teachings were later carried on by the schools known as Precepts, Dharma Analysis Treasury, and Establishment of Truth.

During the latter five hundred years of this period, great scholars such as Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, Bodhisattva Āryadeva, Bodhisattva Asanga, and Bodhisattva Vasubandhu appeared. At first they steeped themselves in the Hinayana sutras that had been propagated by the Hinayana sages of the preceding period until they had mastered them. Later they refuted these doctrines one by one and in their place propagated the Mahayana sutras, in this way providing a medicine of medium effectiveness to cure the moderate illnesses of the people of the time. These sutras, consisting of the Flower Garland Sutra, Wisdom sutras, Mahāvairochana Sutra, Profound Secrets Sutra, and others, gave rise to the Three Treatises school, the Dharma Characteristics school, the True Word dhāranīs, the Zen doctrine, and others.

Question: Why did sages of the Hinayana teachings such as Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda not propagate the Mahayana sutras?

Answer: First, because it was beyond their ability to do so. Second, because the people they were addressing did not have the capacity for such teachings. Third, because they had not been entrusted with the Mahayana teachings by the Buddha. And fourth, because the time had not yet come to do so.

Question: Why did Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, and the others not propagate the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: For the same four reasons that I have cited above.

Question: The various True Word teachers give the following account: When eight hundred years had passed following the demise of the Buddha, Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna appeared in India. From Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha he received the Flower Garland, Lotus, and other sutras, which represent the exoteric teachings disseminated by Shakyamuni Buddha. In the case of the esoteric teachings expounded by the Buddha Mahāvairochana, Nāgārjuna opened an iron tower in southern India, and he received the esoteric teachings personally from the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana and Vajrasattva in oral transmission.

Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna had two disciples. To one of these, Bodhisattva Āryadeva, he transmitted the exoteric teachings of Shakyamuni, and to the other, Bodhisattva Nāgabodhi, he trans-
mitted the esoteric teachings of Mahāvairochana. Bodhisattva Nāgabodhi went into retirement at the garden of mango trees and for a time did not transmit the teachings he had received to anyone. Meanwhile, the exoteric teachings that had been transmitted to Bodhisattva Āryadeva were introduced to China. Several years later, the esoteric teachings that had been transmitted to Bodhisattva Nāgabodhi were introduced to China by Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung.

What is your opinion regarding this assertion?

Answer: All the True Word teachers give this same account of the events. And the various representatives of the Tendai and Flower Garland doctrines accept it as trustworthy. But I am led to ask if we are to assume that the three sutras associated with Mahāvairochana Buddha did not exist in India prior to the time of Nāgārjuna? Did the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana perhaps appear in the world in addition to Shakyamuni Buddha and preach these three sutras? In what sutra or treatise can we find proof that the exoteric teachings were transmitted to Āryadeva and the esoteric teachings transmitted to Nāgabodhi?

As a matter of fact, these absurdly false assertions surpass the criminal fabrications put forth by Devadatta and outdo the wild lies told by Kokālika. And the fact that the ruling houses of both China and Japan have suffered eclipse and that Buddhist priests of both countries have taken to slandering the correct teaching is due mainly to the prevalence of such assertions. As a result of them, China has already been overthrown by the wild tribes to the north of it, and the borders of Japan are in danger of being invaded by barbarians from the west. But I will say no more of that here.

During the one thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law the Buddhist teachings of India were introduced to China. The first four hundred years of this period were marked by doctrinal differences among the various Buddhist leaders of northern and southern China that proliferated like spreading vines, so that nowhere was there any agreement as to what constituted the correct Buddhist teaching.

After the first four hundred years of the Middle Day, during the one hundred years that followed, the Great Teachers Nan-yüeh and T’ien-t’ai appeared in China and in a general manner disseminated the true doctrines of the Lotus Sutra. But although they were recognized as teachers of the nation in the fields of the perfect wisdom and perfect meditation taught by the Lotus Sutra, they did not take steps to establish an ordination platform for the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment. Therefore the nation as a whole did not look up to them as teachers of the precepts.

After six hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law had passed, the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics school were brought from India to China. Emperor T’ai-tsung placed his faith in them, and as a result the followers of the Lotus school propounded by T’ien-t’ai grew fewer and fewer in number. During the reign of Empress Wu, the members of the Flower Garland school, who had earlier been defeated in debate by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, took advantage of this situation to come forward once more and declare that their teachings were superior to those of the T’ien-t’ai school.

Then in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the eighth sovereign following Emperor T’ai-tsung, the True Word teachings were for the first time brought to China from India. Thus in the fourth year of the K’ai-yüan era [716], the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei introduced the Mahāvairochana and Susiddhikara sutras, and in the
eighth year of the K’ai-yüan era [720] the Tripitaka Masters Chin-kang-chih and Pu-k’ung introduced the Diamond Crown Sutra.

Thus all three of the True Word sutras were brought to China from India. But their interpreters, having studied the commentaries of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, were cleverly inspired to write commentaries of their own in which they declared that the Mahāvairochana and the Lotus sutras are in fact a singleutra, but that mudras and mantras had been added to the former to constitute what is known as the esoteric teachings. For this reason the Mahāvairochana Sutra is to be regarded as superior. In effect, they elevated the provisional teachings to a place higher than the true teaching. The scholars of China, however, failed to realize this fact.

When eight hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law had passed and the period was approaching its end, the Great Teacher Dengyō was born in the country of Japan. Not only did he refute the erroneous doctrines of the Flower Garland and the other groups that made up the six schools, but he accomplished something that neither Nan-yüeh nor T’ien-t’ai had done by setting up an ordination platform for the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment on Mount Hiei. Thus throughout the entire land of Japan, every Buddhist priest without exception became a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyō.

However, although he was aware that regarding the relative superiority of the Tendai and True Word doctrines the latter was fraudulent, he did not clarify this point. On the whole, he felt perhaps that this task should be left until the Latter Day of the Law. But this is a question that is only tangential to my present discussion and so I will not go into it here.

When our mentor, the Great Teacher Dengyō, established the ordination platform for the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment on Mount Hiei, something that had never been done previously in any of the three countries of India, China, or Japan, he was in effect applying the finest type of medicine to cure the grave illnesses of the people of the time.

And now we are more than two hundred and twenty years into the Latter Day of the Law, when the five impurities are rife in the world and the three calamities repeatedly occur. The two impurities of living beings and thought fill the whole country, and the two groups of perpetrators of the cardinal sins and slanders of the Law abound in the area within the four seas. Everywhere we find that people look up to icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, and rely upon them as though they were the pillars and beams of the state; they pay honor to those who slander the Law and make them the teachers of the nation.

People hold copies of Confucius’s Classic of Filial Piety in their hands while they knock their fathers and mothers on the head; they chant Shakyamuni’s Lotus Sutra with their mouths while they turn their backs on the lord of teachings. This country of ours has become the land of the un filial; one need seek no farther to find the Village of Mother-Abusers. That is why the blue heavens look down upon our country with angry eyes, and why the yellow earth, filled with indignation, shakes the ground under us.

The great earthquake that occurred in the first year of the Shōka era [1257], or the huge comet that appeared in the first year of the Bun ‘ei era [1264]—these portentous calamities were major disasters such as had never before made their appearance in India, China, or Japan during the 2,220 or more years since the passing of the Buddha. They were a hundred or a thousand times
more terrible than the deeds of King Pushyamitra, who burned Buddhist temples and stupas in the five regions of India, or those of the emperor of the Hui-ch‘ang era who forced the priests and nuns of the nine provinces of China to return to lay life.\footnote{14}

These portentous calamities have come about because the country is filled with persons who commit grave slander of the Law, because such persons have come to occupy every region under the sky. So the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra says: “In the Latter Day of the Law, those who are unfilial and who slander the Law will be like the dust particles of the land.” (Meaning summarized.) And the Decline of the Law Sutra says: “When the time comes for the Law to vanish and to come to an end, monks and nuns with the heart of dogs will be as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.” (Meaning summarized.)

Now, taking a careful look at this country of ours, I see that each person in it is tainted by these two evils, the five cardinal sins and the slandering of the Law. What extraordinary means can be employed to save persons who are guilty of such grave evils?

The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, observing with his Buddha eye, was able to see and understand the Latter Day of the Law. In order to provide a remedy for those who are guilty of these two offenses of committing the five cardinal sins and slandering the Law, he devised and left behind him his one great secret Law.

The Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, who had originally attained enlightenment in the remote past, sat side by side with Many Treasures Buddha of the World of Treasure Purity in a treasure tower that measured five hundred yojanas in height and two hundred and fifty yojanas in width, their appearance exactly like that of the sun and the moon. The emanations of the Buddha from the ten directions sat upon lion seats five yojanas high that were spread beneath jeweled trees five hundred yojanas in height, looking like multitudes of stars in their ranks.

The ceremony in which these three kinds of Buddhas gathered, filling the four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands during the [first] two assemblies, one on the ground and the other in the air, far outshone the Lotus Treasury World described in the Flower Garland Sutra, which Shakya-muni preached at the place of his enlightenment, and surpassed the twelve hundred and more honored ones of the two mandala realms of the True Word school.\footnote{15} These three kinds of Buddhas are the eyes for all people in all the worlds.

At this great gathering the Buddha, citing the six difficult and nine easy acts, encouraged the great bodhisattvas to disseminate the Lotus Sutra. There was Bodhisattva Manjushrī of the Golden-colored World, Bodhisattva Maitreya of the court of the Tushita heaven, Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated of the World of Treasure Purity, and Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds of Mount Potalaka. There was Mahākāśyapa, foremost in ascetic practices among Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciples, and Shāriputra, foremost in wisdom; immeasurable Brahmās, deities who each preside over a major world system; boundless Shakras, who each dwell on the summit of a Mount Sumeru; incalculable deities of the sun and moon, who illuminate all under heaven in the four directions; groups of four heavenly kings numerous as the sands of the Ganges, who protect the Buddhist Law in the worlds of the ten directions; and dragon kings numerous as the dust particles of the land, all of them pressing forward, hoping to be first in receiving and carrying on this sutra. But the World-Honored One
did not give permission to any of these. At this time he summoned up from beneath the ground four great bodhisattvas who had never been seen before, who appeared now for the first time. Their names were Bodhisattva Superior Practices, Bodhisattva Boundless Practices, Bodhisattva Pure Practices, and Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices. Each of these great bodhisattvas was accompanied by a retinue of followers equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers. Their form and dignity were such as can hardly be described in words or measured by the mind. If one were to compare these four great bodhisattvas with the four bodhisattvas Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse, each with his retinue of followers equal to the sands of ten Ganges Rivers, who adorned the meeting with the Buddha that occurred at his place of enlightenment [as described in the Flower Garland Sutra]; or with the great bodhisattvas from the ten directions who came to the Great Treasure Chamber situated between the world of desire and the world of form, as described in the Great Collection Sutra; or with the four great bodhisattvas in the eight-petaled lotus described in the Mahāvairochana Sutra; or with the sixteen great bodhisattvas who are among the thirty-seven honored ones described in the Diamond Crown Sutra, it would be like comparing the deity Shakra to a monkey, or Mount Sumeru to Mount Hua.16

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya, expressing the doubts of the assembly as a whole, said: “There is not one person that I know.”17

The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai comments: “He is saying: Since the time of the Buddha’s enlightenment at the place of meditation, up until the present gathering, great bodhisattvas unceasingly came from the worlds in the ten directions to attend the various assemblies. Their numbers are unlimited, but I, with the wisdom and power appropriate to the next Buddha, have been able to see and know every single one of them. And yet, among the newly arrived multitude, I do not know a single person.”18 And Miao-lo comments: “The reason he says he does not know any of them is that . . . wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes. [Though he is in the position of succeeding the Buddha, the distant (the Buddha’s original enlightenment) and the near (his enlightenment in India) are different. And one who knows the near does not fathom the distant.]”19 And T’ien-t’ai says: “By observing the fury of the rain, we can tell the greatness of the dragon that caused it, and by observing the flourishing of the lotus flowers, we can tell the depth of the pond they grow in.”20

Comparing [the bodhisattvas of the other sutras with these four great bodhisattvas] is like comparing the Han ruler’s21 four military leaders, Chang Liang, Fan K’uai, Ch’en P’ing, and Chou Po, with the Four White-Haired Elders of Mount Shang;22 Ch’i Li-chi, Scholar Lu-li, Master Tung-yüan, and Master Hsia-huang. These four worthy men were as different from the four military leaders as heaven is from earth or clouds from mud. When it came to appearance, the Four White-Haired Elders had heads like driven snow and foreheads wrinkled like the waves of the four seas; their eyebrows were shaped like crescent moons and their waists were bent like bows. In the way they attended Emperor Hui and helped him to govern the empire, it was as though the sage kings Yao and Shun of antiquity had appeared in the world; and in bringing peace and stability to the whole world, they were no different from Shen Nung of long ago.

The four great bodhisattvas were
similar to these men. They appeared at the Lotus Sutra assembly and added their dignity to the three kinds of Buddhas who were gathered there. They overthrown the arrogance of the slanderers of the Law the way a great wind tosses about the branches of little trees, and inspired respect and awe in the members of the assembly the way the deity Shakra commands obedience from the other heavenly beings. Devadatta, who earlier had attacked the Buddha, extended his tongue and pressed his palms together in reverence, and Kokālika, who had uttered untruths in the past, fell to the ground and repented his errors. The great sages like Manjushrī felt ashamed and could not speak a word, while the lesser sages like Śāriputra, their wisdom deserting them, hung their heads.

At that time the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment preached the “Life Span” chapter. After doing so, he displayed his ten supernatural powers and entrusted the transmission of the Law to the four great bodhisattvas.

And what is this Law that he entrusted to them? It is that which discards the breadth of the Lotus Sutra and seizes upon its outline, discards its outline and seizes upon its essential point, namely, the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo, which represent the five major principles of name, essence, quality, function, and teaching. It is like the method that Chiu-fang Yin used in judging horses, not bothering whether they were black or yellow but simply selecting those of truly outstanding quality, or the method by which Chih Tao-lin discussed on the sutras, setting aside minor considerations and seizing upon the basic meaning.

These four great bodhisattvas were not present when Shakayamuni preached his first sermon at the place where he achieved enlightenment, nor did they appear at the last, when he entered nirvana on the banks of the Ajitavati River. Not only that, but during the eight years when the Lotus Sutra was being preached on Eagle Peak, they were not among the sacred ones, such as Manjushrī and Maitrey, who asked and helped the Buddha to expound his teachings at the ceremony of the preparation and revelation sections of the theoretical teaching. Moreover, they retired from the assembly and did not take part when the Buddha urged the transmission of the essential teaching and Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, Wonderful Sound, and the other great bodhisattvas vowed to propagate the sutra. They appeared only for the purpose of receiving this one great secret Law [of Myoho-renge-kyo] and thereafter retired to their original places. During the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law that followed the passing of the Buddha, they did not once make their appearance.

The reason for this, we may conclude, was that the Buddha had entrusted this great secret Law to these great bodhisattvas for propagation only during the Latter Day of the Law. Thus the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra, ...” And the Nirvana Sutra says, “Suppose that a couple has seven children, one of whom falls ill. Though the parents love all their children equally, they worry most about the sick child.” And the “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa.”

Of the seven children mentioned by the Nirvana Sutra, we can disregard for the moment the six who are not ill. It is the seventh child, the sick one, who represents the icchantikas, the Persons who commit the five cardinal sins or
slander the Law, all the human beings in this country of Japan in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law.

During the first five hundred years of the thousand years that make up the Former Day of the Law, all the voice-hearer disciples succeeded in entering nirvana. And in the second five hundred years of that period, the bodhisattvas who had come from other regions for the most part returned to their original lands. During the one thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law that followed, Manjushrī, Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, Medicine King, and Maitreya were reborn as Nan-yüeh or T’ien-t’ai, or appeared in the world as Fu Ta-shih,26 Gyōki,27 or Dengyō to bring benefit to all living beings.

But now that we have entered the period of the Latter Day of the Law, these various great bodhisattvas have all gone into retirement in their original places. In addition to them, there are the heavenly gods and earthly deities who guard and protect the world. But these have either departed to other regions or, if they still reside in the land, have ceased to guard such an evil nation or, unable any longer to taste the flavor of the Law, have lost the power to guard it. Unless one is a bodhisattva of the Dharma body,28 one cannot endure the pains involved in entering the three evil paths, and the same is true of these heavenly and earthly gods. The sufferings in the world today are too great for them to endure.

But the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from the earth have first of all lived in this sahā world for an incalculably long period of time; second, they have been disciples of Shakayamuni Buddha since the far distant past, when he first set his mind on and attained enlightenment; and third, these bodhisattvas were the first persons in the sahā world to receive the seed of Buddhahood from the Buddha. Therefore, in terms of the bonds of karma from the past that tie them to the sahā world, they surpass the other great bodhisattvas.

Question: What passages of proof can you offer?

Answer: The “Emerging from the Earth” chapter in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “At that time the bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas who had gathered from the lands of the other directions, greater in number than the sands of eight Ganges Rivers, stood up in the midst of the great assembly... At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas: ‘Leave off, good men! There is no need for you to protect and embrace this sutra.’”

T’ien-t’ai comments on this: “The bodhisattvas from other lands had ties with this world that were of a superficial nature. Thus, though they might wish to preach and propagate the Law here, they would surely not be able to do so with any great effectiveness.”29 And Miao-lo comments: “The Buddha would not entrust the sutra to the bodhisattvas from the other worlds, to say nothing of entrusting it to Shāriputra.”30 And he also says: “The Buddha addresses the eighty thousand great men, [not the people of the two vehicles]. As we see later in the latter part of the sutra, the bodhisattvas who emerge from the earth 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.”31

The meaning of these passages from the sutra and its commentaries is that none of the voice-hearer disciples of the Buddha such as Mahākāśyapa or Shāriputra, none of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching such as Manjushrī, Medicine King, Perceiver of the
World's Sounds, or Maitreya, and none of the great bodhisattvas from other worlds was qualified to propagate the Lotus Sutra in the latter age.

The passage from the Lotus Sutra cited above continues: "[The Buddha said]: 'In this sahā world of mine there are bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas who are as numerous as the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers, and each of these bodhisattvas has a retinue equal to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers. After I have entered extinction these persons will be able to protect, embrace, read, recite, and widely preach this sutra.'

'When the Buddha spoke these words, the earth of the thousand-millionfold countries of the sahā world all trembled and split open, and out of it emerged at the same instant unmeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions of bodhisattvas and mahāsattvās... Among these bodhisattvas were four leaders. The first was called Superior Practices, the second was called Boundless Practices, the third was called Pure Practices, and the fourth was called Firmly Established Practices. These four bodhisattvas were the foremost leaders and guiding teachers among all the group.'

T'ien-t'ai comments, "They were the Buddha's own disciples and hence could spread his Law abroad." And Miao-lo says, "The children propagate the Law of the father." Tao-hsien comments: "As far as transmission goes, this sutra was entrusted solely to the bodhisattvas who had welled up out of the earth. The reason for this is that the Law embodied therein is the Law that was realized countless kalpas in the past, and therefore it was entrusted to persons who had been the Buddha's disciples from countless kalpas in the past." These great bodhisattvas [who emerged from the earth] are particularly suited to bring benefit to people in the Latter Day of the Law, like fish who are at home in the water or birds that move freely through the sky. When people in that corrupt and evil age encounter these great bodhisattvas, the seed of Buddhahood will be implanted in them, just as when a piece of crystal is exposed to the light of the moon, it produces water, or when a peacock hears the sound of thunder, it conceives. As T'ien-t'ai says, "Just as all the hundred rivers flow into the sea, so is one drawn by one's connection [with these bodhisattvas] and born in company with them."38

Shakyamuni, sun of wisdom, great sage and venerable one, looking forth with his Buddha eye, had from past times understood all this. Therefore he rejected the offer of the other great sages, and instead summoned forth these four great bodhisattvas, entrusting to them the essential Law and thus ensuring that they would propagate it in the Latter Day of the Law.

Question: What passage of scripture deals with this essential Law?

Answer: I will explain it to you with a teaching that has been handed down orally. For the sake of persons living in the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law after his passing, Shakyamuni Buddha emerged from the treasure tower and, standing in the midst of the air, with his right hand he patted the heads of Manjushrī, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings. After doing this three times, he then took the comprehensive and the abbreviated teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which are different from the essential Law of the sutra mentioned above, as well as all the other sutras preached before and after the Lotus, and entrusted these to Manjushrī, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and the other great bodhisattvas. This was for the sake of those living during the two thousand...
years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law.

And later, at the assembly when he preached the Nirvana Sutra, he once again took the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras representing the four preceding flavors and transmitted them to Manjushri and the other great bodhisattvas. This was the transmission for those left behind like gleanings.38

Thus we see that, with regard to the propagation of the various sutras in the period after the demise of the Buddha, depending upon the way in which he entrusted them, he placed limits on how the Law was to be propagated. Thus Mahakasyapa, Ananda, and others were entrusted solely with the dissemination of the Hinayana sutras and did not speak about the Mahayana sutras.

Nagarjuna, Asanga, and the others of their group spoke about the provisional Mahayana sutras but did nothing to disseminate the Lotus Sutra, the sutra of the one vehicle; or if they did mention it, it was only in a brief reference or the description of one small portion of the theoretical teaching. They never once discussed the fact that the Lotus Sutra, unlike the other sutras, makes clear when Shakyamuni’s instruction begins and when it ends.

Nan-yueh and T’ien-t’ai, being reincarnations of Perceiver of the World’s Sounds and of Medicine King, spoke on the subject of both Hinayana and Mahayana, provisional and true sutras, as well as on the theoretical teaching and essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the fact that the Lotus Sutra makes clear the beginning and end of Shakyamuni’s instruction, and the fact that it reveals the original relationship between master and disciple. In addition to all of these subjects, they also defined the nature of the three groups of sutras that the Buddha had preached in the past, was preaching, and would preach in the future,39 in this way making clear the reason why the Lotus Sutra surpassed all the other teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime. Because they did so, their writings proved to be superior to all the treatises of India, and outshine the numerous commentaries written previously in China. Indeed, even the Tripitaka masters who produced the old and the new translations could not measure up to these two teachers, nor could any of the founders of the various schools of the exoteric and the esoteric teachings rival them.

Nevertheless, basically what they described were the comprehensive and the abbreviated teachings of the Lotus Sutra. They were not yet fit to set forth the essential core of the sutra. They themselves were aware of what this was, but they did not venture to transmit that knowledge to others. This was wholly because they placed great importance upon the Buddha’s manner of entrusting the teachings.

The Great Teacher Dengyo was born eighteen hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, toward the end of the Middle Day of the Law, in the country of Japan. He divided into categories the various precepts set forth in the Hinayana sutras, the Mahayana sutras, and the one vehicle sutra, the Lotus. Then he used the specific precepts40 set forth in the Brahmā Net and Jeweled Necklace sutras to replace the two hundred and fifty precepts of the Hinayana, and used the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment set forth in the Lotus and Universal Worthy sutras to censure and do away with the precepts put forth in the other Mahayana sutras. The former are like the great king while the latter are like ministers and subjects.

For this purpose he established a great ordination platform for the administering of the precepts for perfect and immediate enlightenment on Mount Hiei, such as had never existed in the world ever since the Buddha
expounded them on Eagle Peak during the eight years when the Lotus Sutra was preached there. At that time the eight schools of Buddhism all cast aside their prejudiced views, and everyone throughout the entire country became a disciple of the Great Teacher Den-gyö. The Three Treatises and Establishment of Truth schools deriving from Kanroku, the Dharma Characteristics and Dharma Analysis Treasury schools introduced by Dōshō, the Flower Garland school transmitted by Rōben, the Precepts school introduced from China by the Reverend Ganjin, the disciples of the Great Teacher Kōbō—were there any of them who did not adhere to the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment?

Anyone who rebelled against or went contrary to this practice was regarded as a follower of the Anti-Lokāyata school.31 Anyone who embraced and honored these precepts was regarded as a follower of the Great Teacher Den-gyö. This is what the passage [by Gen-shin] means when it says: “Throughout Japan, all people share the same capacity to attain Buddhahood through the perfect teaching. Whether at court or in the countryside, whether far or near, all alike turn to the single vehicle.”42

But in addition to these people, there were others such as the Great Teacher Chi-tsang of the Three Treatises school and his hundred or more followers, the Great Teacher Tz’u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, Fa-tsang and Ch’eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, and Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k’ung, and Hui-kuo of the True Word school, all of them Chinese priests, as well as the Japanese priests Kōbō and Jikaku. All these various teachers and Tripitaka masters failed to qualify to be included among the four ranks of bodhisattvas. They were benighted teachers, foolish men.

When it came to the sutras, they did not understand the distinctions between Mahayana and Hinayana, provisional and true, nor did they know what is meant by the two categories of exoteric and esoteric. In the case of the treatises, they did not observe the distinction between general treatises and those on particular works, nor did they understand what is to be taught and what is not to be taught.

In spite of all this, however, the latter-day scholars of the various schools revere and look up to these teachers, hail them as sages and honor them as teachers of the nation. Here I will simply give a single example, from which one may surmise how the situation stands in other cases.

The Great Teacher Kōbō in his Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism, and other works states: “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.”43 He also said that the Lotus Sutra belonged to “the region of darkness.” And he said, “The Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee [of True Word] and claim that it is the possession of their own school.”44

What these passages of commentary mean is that, in comparison to the Flower Garland and Mahāvairochana sutras, the great teaching of the Lotus Sutra is disparagingly characterized as a doctrine of childish theory and is devoted to the “region of darkness,” and on top of all that, the various teachers of China are insultingly referred to as thieves.

These slanders of the Law and of the various Chinese teachers surpass even the wild assertion put forward by Tz’u-en and Tokuitsu that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth and the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the
Lotus Sutra is an expedient means, and are worlds removed even from the mistaken assertion of Shan-tao and Hōnen that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved by practices other than the Nembutsu or that one should “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” such practices.

The Six Paramitās Sutra [from which the simile of the ghee was taken] was introduced to China from India by the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung in the latter years of the T’ang dynasty. During the period from [the introduction of Buddhism to China in] the Later Han until the earlier part of the T’ang, this sutra had not been introduced, and hence none of the great leaders of the three schools of Buddhism in southern China and the seven schools in northern China had ever seen this sutra. How then could the teachers of the Three Treatises, T’ien-t’ai, Dharma Characteristics, and Flower Garland schools have “stolen the ghee” of this sutra? Moreover, in this sutra, is there in fact any passage that says that the Lotus Sutra is not the ghee of the teachings?

Nevertheless, the followers of Tō-ji temple in Japan all firmly believe that there is, and on this basis they proceed to put forth their prejudiced views, piling error upon error, moving from darkness to even greater darkness in a way that is truly pitiful.

Shōkaku, the founder of a temple called Dembō-in, who belongs to the same school as those followers I have mentioned, states in his Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics: “The figure worthy of true respect is the Buddha of the Nondual Mahāyana. The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha is not even fit to draw his carriage. The truly profound doctrines are the teachings of the twofold mandala. The teachers of the four doctrines of the exoteric vehicles are not worthy even to tend the sandals of those who teach the mandala!”

Thus in this passage he is saying that, in comparison to the True Word teachers, the founders of the Three Treatises, Tendai, Dharma Characteristics, and Flower Garland schools do not even measure up to ox-drivers, nor are they fit to serve even as lowly attendants.

I wish very much that those persons of the True Word school who have a mind for the truth would ponder these assertions! Are they not vile accusations? Are they not fearful slanders of the Law? And in effect all such wild assertions as these arise from the foul statement put forth by the Great Teacher Kōbō that “when examined from a later stage, they are all seen to be mere childish theory.”

When Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, the Buddha Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions were gathered together, it was declared that the Lotus Sutra surpassed all the other sutras preached in the past, present, and future, and that “all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!” After that Shakyamuni Buddha went into retirement on Eagle Peak, and Many Treasures and the other Buddhas all returned to their respective lands. And who, other than Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas, could ever refute or overturn their declaration regarding the superiority of the Lotus Sutra?

The point is, did Kōbō, in the True Word sutras that he examined, find some passage that contradicted the assertion that the Lotus Sutra surpasses all the other sutras preached in the past, present, and future? He never succeeded in producing any such passage. For all their wisdom, then, what can his followers in later times do to uphold his theories?

In effect, it is the Great Teacher Kōbō alone who has circulated these assertions that, in comparison to the Flower Garland and Mahāvairochana sutras, the Lotus Sutra is mere “childish
theory” and that those who support it are “thieves.” Such assertions in effect are tantamount to claiming that Shakya- 

muni, Many Treasures, and the Bud-

dhas of the ten directions are thieves, are they not? Later students of these 
teachings had better close their eyes for a moment and ponder the matter!

Question: Never in all the time since antiquity have there been heard such slanderous words as yours! Why should one turn one’s back upon the 

eminent priests who belonged to the pure age of antiquity and give one’s allegiance to a foolish priest of our present muddy age?

Answer: What you say would seem, at least to ignorant people, to be in accord with reason. But in fact it is all based upon the false words of others and does not take cognizance of the golden sayings of the Thus Come One himself. Shakya 
muni, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, in the Nirvana Sutra left these words of warning regarding the period following 
his demise: “My good men, if there are among you those who have doubts concerning the things I have preached, then you should not accept them.” Thus the Buddha says that, even with regard to his own preachings, if one 

feels distrustful of them, one should not try to put them into practice. Now you are criticizing me because I differ from the other teachers. However, I do not venture to put forward such differences out of any private or distorted view of my own. I am in all cases following the admonitions left behind by Shakya 
muni Buddha, and on that basis attempting to correct the mistaken interpretations of others.

In China during the two hundred or more years from the beginning of the Ch’i dynasty until the end of the Liang, there were two hundred some persons in northern and southern Chi-

na who, like the outstanding priests Fa-yün of Kuang-che-ssu temple or

Chih-tan,49 cited the passage in the Nirvana Sutra that says, “Up till today we all have been people of mistaken views,” and asserted that the Lotus Sutra is in fact a work that puts for-
ward mistaken views. As a result, the priests and nuns throughout the entire country, along with the ruler and his ministers, were all led astray. In the Ch’en and Sui periods that followed, the Great Teacher Chih-che corrected these errors, and then for the first time the warped views that had hitherto been held in both northern and southern China were dispelled.

Then, in the beginning of the T’ang dynasty, during the reign of Emperor T’ai-tsong, the Dharma Teacher K’uei- 

chi cited the passage in the Shrīmālā 

Sutra that reads: “If the Thus Come One should follow his desires and speak in terms of an expedient doctrine, then he would preach only the great vehicle and not the two vehicles.” On the basis of this passage, he claimed that the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the Lotus Sutra is a mere expedi-

ent means, and that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth. This erroneous doctrine not only spread throughout China, but was even taken up by the priest Tokuitsu of Japan, who vigorously advocated this mistaken doctrine during the reign of Empress Shōtoku. Later this erroneous view was completely refuted by the Great Teacher Dengyō.

In the time of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, Hōnen, also known as Genkū, picking up a phrase from the Medita-

tion on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra about “reading and reciting the great vehicle,” applied it to the Lotus Sutra and stated that “in comparison to the reciting of Amida Buddha’s name, this on the contrary constitutes a sundry practice, a mere expedient, and one should therefore discard, close, ignore, and abandon it!”50 In the fifty or more years since then, however, there has
been no one among all the various priests of the temples and sacred mountains of the southern or the northern capital,\textsuperscript{51} the five provinces surrounding the capital, or the seven outlying regions,\textsuperscript{52} who has been able to refute this evil doctrine. But because I have criticized it and demonstrated the truth of the matter, people throughout Japan have summarily cast away their copies of Hōnen’s Nembutsu Chosen above All. “When the roots are laid bare, the branches will wither; when the spring dries up, the river will cease to flow,”\textsuperscript{53} goes the saying. It refers to just such a case as this, does it not?

In addition to all this, around the middle of the T’ang dynasty, in the reign of Emperor Hsiian-tsung, Shan-wu-wei, Pu-k’ung, and others, citing the phrase “the mind that understands the one way as it truly is” in the “Stage of the Mind” chapter of the Mahāvairochana Sutra, applied this to the Lotus Sutra and accordingly demoted that sutra to the category of the provisional sutras. And the Great Teacher Kōbō of Japan, adopting the classification of the five categories from the Six Paramitā Sutras, claimed that the Lotus and Nirvana sutras belonged in the fourth category, that of the prajñā-pāramitā, which corresponds to the flavor of butter. He contrasted them with the fifth category, that of the dhāranī, and claimed that they “vied with one another to steal the ghee” of the fifth category.

Felonious assertions of this kind have filled the land of Japan for over four hundred years, and no one has yet corrected them. I have criticized them on the basis of my own point of view, and my criticisms have spread throughout the country. I am certain, therefore, that these erroneous doctrines will be refuted. But I will say no more on this subject. The essential secret Law, which Mahākāshyapa, Ānanda, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, T’ien-t’ai, Dengyō, and the other great sages knew about but did not proclaim or propagate, is plainly embodied in the text of the Lotus Sutra. It is also very clear that it is not found in the treatises and commentaries. Those who are born with understanding will understand it of themselves. Worthy men will take faith in it when they encounter a teacher who has the proper understanding. Those persons whose roots of guilt are deep and manifold will employ erroneous assumptions to make light of others and will not take faith in it. However, if they are willing to lend an ear and attend to the true meaning of the sutra, I will attempt to enlighten them.

In volume fifty-one of the Great Collection Sutra,\textsuperscript{54} the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment addresses Bodhisattva Moon Storehouse in these words: “After I have passed away, the first five hundred years will be the age of attaining liberation, and the next five hundred years, the age of meditation (making one thousand years). The next five hundred years will be the age of reading, reciting, and listening; and the next five hundred years, the age of building temples and stupas (making two thousand years). In the next five hundred years, quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost.”

Now it is over two hundred and twenty years since we entered the Latter Day of the Law. We are now in the age when “quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost.”

In the “Medicine King” chapter in the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, in the presence of the Buddha Many Treasures, speaks to Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower in
these words: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils’ people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, or kumbhānda demons to seize the advantage!”

If we consider this passage in the light of that cited earlier from the Great Collection Sutra, we see that the situation in the first four five-hundred-year periods was just as the Buddha predicted it would be in the sutra. Why, then, should we suppose that his predictions concerning the fifth five-hundred-year period will turn out to be false or inapplicable? And if they are not, then is the present struggle between the great kingdom of Japan and the great kingdom of the Mongols perhaps one of the things that is destined to take place in the fifth five-hundred-year period?

Again, if we consider this passage from the Lotus Sutra in the light of that from the Great Collection Sutra, the Buddha’s pronouncement “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa” refers to something that will take place here in our country of Japan, does it not?

The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice preached by Bodhisattva Maitreya states: “There is a small country in the eastern quarter populated by people whose inborn capacity is related solely to the Mahayana.” The Compassionate One, or Bodhisattva Maitreya, appeared in central India nine hundred years after the passing of the Buddha in response to the request of Bodhisattva Asanga, and there expounded Stages of Yoga Practice. He spread the provisional sutras perhaps to accord with persons whose capacities were fitted for the provisional teachings, perhaps because he had been entrusted with that task, or perhaps because the time had come to do so.

However that may be, at the time described in the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, when Maitreya saw the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth, he doubted that the Buddha [could have taught them during the short period since he] had attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree. In reply to his questions, the Buddha then preached the “Life Span” and “Distinctions in Benefits” chapters and encouraged the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, saying, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra...” Bodhisattva Maitreya himself was not entrusted with the task of propagating the sutra, and therefore he did not do so. Nevertheless, he was present at the assembly on Eagle Peak and heard these golden words of the Buddha regarding the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law. Therefore, when he expounded Stages of Yoga Practice, he indicated that in the Latter Day of the Law in the country of Japan, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth would propagate the core and heart of the Lotus Sutra.

Seng-chao’s Afterword to the Lotus Sutra Translation states: “The Great Teacher Shūryasoma held the Lotus Sutra in his left hand, and with his right patted Kumārajīva on the head and charged him as follows, saying, ‘The sun of the Buddha has set in the west, but its lingering rays shine over the northeast. This text is destined for the lands of the northeast. You must make certain that it is transmitted there.’”

When I respectfully peruse this passage from Seng-chao’s text, my eyes overflow with cascades of tears and my whole body is filled with joy. “This text is destined for the lands of the northeast,” it says. India, the land of the western sky, lies in the southwest,
while Japan, the land of the eastern sky, lies in the northeast. If someone in India speaks of something being "destined for the lands of the northeast," how can this fail to refer to the country of Japan?

Tsun-shih writes, "It [Buddhism] came first from the west, like the moon appearing. Now it is returning from the east, like the sun rising." During the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the teachings flowed from the west to the east, like the evening moon that appears in the western sky. Now in the five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law, they will move from the east to the west, like the morning sun coming up in the eastern sky.

The Great Teacher Kompon [Dengyo] makes this prediction: "Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu. As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, 'Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?' There is good reason for this statement." He also declares: "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people. How do we know this is true? Because the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, 'In the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish [accept and embrace the Lotus Sutra].'" The words of these passages of commentary are beautiful, but the meaning is obscure. People who read them will perhaps find them difficult to understand.

These words of the Great Teacher Dengyo may seem to apply to his own age, but in fact they are written by one who longed for the Latter Day of the Law. The Great Teacher Dengyo appeared in the world some eighteen hundred years after the passing of the Buddha. In terms of the passage from the Great Collection Sutra cited above, he lived in the fourth period, the age of building temples and stupas. His lifetime did not extend into the fifth period, the age of quarrels and disputes. He says in his commentary that "the Latter Day is near at hand." Thus he must have known that his own age did not correspond to that described in the sutra passage as one in which quarrels and disputes would arise.

When I consider the matter carefully, it seems to me that the Great Teacher Dengyo, who, as Bodhisattva Medicine King, was present at the assembly on Eagle Peak and heard the Buddha predict when Bodhisattva Superior Practices would appear in the world after the Buddha's passing, must have deliberately made the statements I have quoted above so that he could give people some rough idea of what was in store.

I, of course, was not among the company of bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth on that occasion, and yet I am aware of the role that those bodhisattvas are destined to play. Therefore, before the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have made their appearance, I take the lead in briefly introducing these five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo. I am like the bluebird that presages the appearance of the Queen Mother of the West, or the magpie that signals the arrival of a visitor.

In order to propagate this great Law that I am speaking about, one surely ought to have in one's possession all the teachings put forth by the Buddha.
in his lifetime, and to be thoroughly familiar with the commentaries of the eight schools. In the past I possessed many copies of the sacred teachings. But in the course of undergoing two exiles and encountering various major persecutions, I have lost a scroll here and a scroll there, there are places where a word or two have dropped out or copyists’ errors are found, or a sutra or more have been severely damaged. If I remain silent and do nothing about the situation, then when my lifetime is over, I will almost certainly lead my disciples into error and confusion. Therefore, before I become too old to know what I am doing, I am attempting to put my papers into order.

I have heard that within the province of Etchū where you and Ōta Kingo have your fiefs, and in the various temples in the nearby regions, there are many copies of the sacred teachings. You and he are major figures among my lay supporters and therefore I pray you will help fulfill my wish in this regard.

The Nirvana Sutra says: “Within the Order there are wise disciples who understand profound doctrines, while in secular circles there are pure-minded lay supporters. Thus the Buddha’s Law will long endure.” Thus the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai talked Mao Hsi and others into supporting him, and the Great Teacher Dengyō had Kuni-michi and Hiroyo to rely upon.

The Benevolent Kings Sutra says, “For a thousand ri around the seven disasters will not occur.” And the Lotus Sutra says, “[I will also shield and guard those who uphold this sutra], making certain that they suffer no decline or harm within the area of a hundred yojanas.” If the ruler of a nation propagates the correct teaching, then he is certain to be rewarded with results such as these. And if the people of the nation adhere to and protect this teaching, then how could any great disasters occur within their families? Again, the eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, “Their wishes will not be in vain, and in this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune.” And it says, “In this present existence he will have manifest reward for it.” And also, “He will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy.” And again, “Their heads will split into seven pieces.” And in the second volume, “If this person [should slander a sutra such as this], or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them, . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avīci hell.” And in the fifth volume, “If people speak ill of and revile him, their mouths will be closed and stopped up.”

The Great Teacher Dengyō states: “Those who praise him will receive blessings that will pile up as high as Mount Calm and Bright, while those who slander him will be committing a fault that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering.” Mount Calm and Bright is another name for Mount Sumeru, and the hell of incessant suffering is another name for the Avīci hell. If the ruler of a nation slanders the upholders of the correct teaching, he will lose his position of authority, and if the people of the nation speak ill of its votaries, they will perish. In fact, if the entire nation does not join in accepting and applying this teaching, then it will surely suffer the fate of rebellion within the state and attack from abroad.

When a votary of the highest order is slandered, then the seven great disasters occur. When a votary of the middle order is slandered, one of the twenty-nine disasters will occur. And when a votary of the lowest order is slandered, one of the innumerable disasters will occur.

[According to another account],
when the seven great disasters occur, it means that there are seven votaries who are being slandered. The first of the seven disasters consists of extraordinary changes in the sun and moon. Within the category of the first of the seven disasters, there are five great disasters. These are when the sun and moon depart from their regular courses and the seasons come in the wrong order, when a red sun or a black sun appears, when two, three, four, or five suns appear at the same time, when the sun is eclipsed and loses its light, or when one, two, three, four, or five coronas appear around the sun. And a sutra says, “When two moons appear side by side.”

In our own country at the present time, the great disasters that have yet to appear are two suns and two moons together. All the other great disasters have for the most part made their appearance. If we hold up this test as a mirror in which to reflect the face of Japan as it is now, we see that there must almost certainly be a great votary of the Lotus Sutra in the country. And those who slander him have already received great punishment. Therefore, why should those who have faith in him not receive great blessings?

Now I hope that the two of you will exert yourselves to the best of your ability to help achieve my wish and test the golden words of the Buddha.

If we proceed in the manner described in the sutra texts and still there is no response, then the statement by Shakyamuni Buddha, “Honestly discarding expedient means [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]”, the statement by Many Treasures Buddha, “All that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth,” which gave witness to the veracity of the Buddha’s pronouncements; as well as the proof of sincerity that the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions gave when they extended their tongues up to the Brahma heaven, would be mere words that are void of truth. But that would surpass even the great falsehoods of Devadatta, and would outdo the huge lies of Kokālika. It would be as terrible as though the sun and moon had fallen to earth, as though the great earth itself had turned upside down, and we might then cry out to the heavens, fling ourselves on the ground and beat our breasts.

That could never be, however, and this is rather the time when we should conduct ourselves like King T’ang of the Yin dynasty, who piled up firewood and prepared to sacrifice his own body, or King Śhīrādītīya, who thrust his face into the flames and prayed that the fire might be extinguished.

If, when you read this letter, it seems to accord with the practices that you have carried out in past existences, I hope you will make up your minds to lend me your assistance. I am hoping that you will send a messenger with this letter as quickly as possible to the northern province [of Etchū], and that, as soon as you receive a reply from Ōta Kingo, you will let me know whether he can be of assistance. If you and he can assist me in fulfilling this wish, it will be as if the bright gems of the K’un-lun Mountains, though you had not even sought for them, were to fill your storehouses, or the wonderful jewels of the great ocean, though you had not sent for them, were to appear in the palm of your hand.

With my deep respect,

Nichiren

The tenth day of the third month of late spring

To the lay priest Soya
Ōta Kingo

560
ON THE FIVE GUIDES FOR PROPAGATION

Background

This letter by Nichiren Daishonin, dated the tenth day of the third month in 1275, was addressed to two disciples, Soya Kyōshin and Ōta Jōmyō, also known as Ōta Kingo, who lived in the province of Shimōsa. Both were samurai who were introduced to the Daishonin's teachings by Toki Jōnin, who lived in the same area. The three worked in unison to support the Daishonin and spread his teachings.

The fact that this letter is written in classical Chinese and contains a number of important doctrinal points suggests a high level of education and Buddhist understanding on the part of the recipients.

In this letter, the Daishonin applies the principle of five guides for propagation to demonstrate that the essential Law that the Buddha entrusted to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth described in the Lotus Sutra is the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo, the teaching to be spread widely in the Latter Day of the Law.

The five guides for propagation are (1) the teaching, (2) the people's capacity, (3) the time, (4) the country, and (5) the sequence of propagation. In several writings, the Daishonin cites these as criteria for spreading the Buddhist teachings. The key point is to grasp the first criterion, the teaching to be propagated, which is determined by the other four criteria: the capacity of the people whom one addresses, the nature of the times, the conditions of the country or society, and the level of the teachings that have been spread there.

The Daishonin explains in some detail how the Buddhist teachings were propagated in terms of the time, that is, during the three periods of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. He concludes that the Lotus Sutra is the teaching the Buddha intended for the Latter Day and speaks of the benefit that derives from faith in the sutra and the negative effects that accrue from rejecting or slandering it.

Toward the end of the letter, he asks the two recipients for assistance with a specific concern. He explains that, over the years of personal troubles he has experienced such as exiles and attacks, some of the stock of Buddhist scriptures and reference works he copied or collected have become lost or severely damaged. Such works are important, he says, for his propagation efforts and for the sake of the future.

Therefore he asks the two samurai followers, who have some influence in their localities, to assist him in obtaining copies of texts available at the temples in their vicinity.

Paper being a rare commodity at the time and the copying of texts a laborious and time-consuming task, fulfilling the Daishonin's request would be no small undertaking. He therefore encourages them in their task of collecting the material, citing the passage in the Nirvana Sutra that says, "Within the Order there are wise disciples who understand profound doctrines, while in secular circles there are pure-minded lay supporters. Thus the Buddha's Law will long endure."

In closing, he urges them to practice exactly as the Lotus Sutra prescribes, assuring them that they will be fully rewarded.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. Ibid., chap. 10.
3. T'ien-t'ai studied under Nan-yüeh on Mount Ta-su for seven years. As a result of intense practice there, he is said to have attained an awakening through the "Medi-
cine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This awakening is referred to as the “enlightenment on Mount Ta-su.” This is one reason why he is regarded as a reincarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King, who attended the ceremony of the sutra as the leader of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching.

4. This refers to the parable of the jewel sewn in the lining of the poor man’s robe that is related in the “Five Hundred Disciples” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It tells of an impoverished man who goes to visit a wealthy friend. Being treated to wine, he becomes drunk and falls asleep. The wealthy friend sews a priceless jewel into the lining of his sleeping friend’s robe before going out on business. The poor man awakens and sets out on a journey. Unaware of the jewel he possesses, he suffers various hardships until later he comes upon his old friend, who shows him the jewel in the robe.

5. The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.


8. This act is also known as the poison-drum relationship or reverse relationship. See poison-drum relationship in Glossary.


10. The Transmission of Emancipation sutras refer to two sutras translated by Gumbhadra (394–468), which correspond respectively to chapters seven and eight of the eight-chapter Revelation of the Profound Secrets Sutra translated by Hsüan-tsang (602–664). See also Profound Secrets Sutra in Glossary.

11. Emperor T’ai-tsung and Emperor Hsüan-tsung are usually known as the second and sixth sovereigns of the T’ang dynasty.

12. Two of the five impurities. See five impurities in Glossary.

13. This refers to the story that Tseng Tzu, a disciple of Confucius, never entered a village called the Village of Mother-Abusers. Tseng Tzu regarded the honoring of father and mother as an important virtue.

14. This took place as part of the wholesale suppression of Buddhism in the Hui-ch’ang era (841–846) by Wu-tsung, the fifteenth emperor of the T’ang dynasty, known as the Hui-ch’ang Persecution. “The nine provinces of China” means the entire land of China.

15. “The twelve hundred and more honored ones” are Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities depicted in the Womb Realm mandala and the Diamond Realm mandala, objects of devotion in the True World school.

16. A mountain in Shensi Province in China, one of the five sacred mountains of China.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

18. Words and Phrases.


20. Words and Phrases.

21. The Han ruler refers to Emperor Kao-tsu (247–195 B.C.E.), founder of the Former Han dynasty.

22. Emperor Kao-tsu tried to disown his son, the future Emperor Hui. Hui’s mother, Empress Li, persuaded the Four White-Haired Elders to become her son’s advisers. On seeing these four elders, the emperor was impressed by their dignity and accepted Hui as his successor.

23. A judge of horses in China in the seventh century B.C.E.

24. A learned priest in China. Chih Tso-lin (314–366) gained fame for his lectures on Buddhist sutras such as the Wisdom sutras and the Vimalakīrti Sutra.

25. The preparation section indicates a part of a work that prepares the way for the revelation of the truth, and that readies people to accept the truth. The revelation section is the part in which the Buddha reveals the truth. The preparation section of the theoretical teaching, or the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, is the “Introduction” (1st) chapter. The revelation section consists of eight chapters from the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter through the “Prophecies” (9th) chapter. In this section the Buddha reveals the true aspect of all phenomena, the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and the doctrine of the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, and clarifies how persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood.

26. Fu Ta-shih (497–569) was a lay Buddhist in China. Fu Ta-shih’s biography states that he descended from the Tushita heaven, which is the abode of Bodhisattva Maitreya, to expound the teaching of supreme enlightenment.
27. A priest of Yakushi-ji temple in Nara. In 745 Gyōki (668–749) was appointed general administrator of priests. Because of his contributions to public welfare, people highly revered and respected him, calling him Bodhisattva Gyōki.

28. A bodhisattva at the first stage of development or above. The first stage of development is the first of the ten stages of development, which corresponds to the forty-first of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. At this stage one realizes a partial aspect of the truth and begins to manifest the essential nature of phenomena within one's own life.

29. Words and Phrases.
30. On "The Words and Phrases."
31. Ibid.
32. Words and Phrases.
33. On "The Words and Phrases."
34. The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."
35. The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.

36. The ceremony of entrustment beginning here is described in the "Entrustment" (22nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It follows the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, which describes the entrustment of the essence of the Lotus Sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth led by the four bodhisattvas.

37. "The comprehensive teachings" refers to the teachings expounded in all the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. "The abbreviated teachings" refers to the teachings on the true aspect of all phenomena expounded in the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter of the sutra and the teaching on Shakymuni's attainment of enlightenment in the far distant past expounded in the "Life Span" (16th) chapter of the sutra.

38. "Gleanings" refers to those to whom the teachings had not yet been transmitted. This transmission takes place in the six chapters from the "Medicine King" to the "Encouragements" chapters and in the Universal Worthy and the Nirvana sutras.

39. This is based on a passage in the "Teacher of the Law" (10th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "The sutras I [Shakymuni Buddha] have preached number immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions. 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." This passage means that among all the sutras the Lotus Sutra is the foremost.

40. The specific precepts set forth in the Brahmā Net Sutra refer to the ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts. The specific precepts set forth in the Jeweled Necklace Sutra refer to the ten inexhaustible precepts that are the same as the ten major precepts of the Brahmā Net Sutra. See also ten major precepts in Glossary.

41. A non-Buddhist school in ancient India that is thought to have arisen in opposition to the Lokāyata school. In this sense, the Anti-Lokāyata school is often referred to as representing betrayers of their teachers.

42. The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching.
43. The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury. "The region of darkness" in the next sentence appears in the same work.
44. A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism.
45. Shan-tao's Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land.

46. Hōnen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from different places in The Nembutsu Chosen above All and used them as a single phrase.

47. In this quotation, the Buddha of the Nondual Mahayana refers to Mahāvairochana Buddha, who represents the essential oneness of the Womb and Diamond realms. "The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha" refers to Shakymuni Buddha, who expounded the exoteric teachings. The three bodies of a Buddha are the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body. "The twofold mandala" refers to the Diamond Realm and Womb Realm mandalas, the objects of devotion of the esoteric teachings. "The four doctrines of the exoteric vehicles" refers to the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, and T'ien-t'ai, schools.

48. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.
49. For Fa-yünn, see Glossary. Chih-tan, a priest in the sixth century, asserted that the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras prior to the Lotus fell under the category of gradual teaching, or teaching that gradually develops one's capacities to understand higher doctrines, and of the teaching that was not complete and final. And he asserted
that the Nirvana Sutra, or the Buddha's final teaching, was the sudden teaching, or the teaching that led practitioners directly to enlightenment, and was complete and final.

50. A summary of a passage of Nembutsu Chosen above All.

51. The southern capital refers to Nara and the northern capital, Kyoto.

52. The seven outlying regions are also referred to as the seven marches. See five provinces and seven marches in Glossary.

53. This statement appears in Great Concentration and Insight.

54. This passage appears in the fifty-fifth volume of the extant edition of the Great Collection Sutra.

55. This passage does not appear in the extant edition of The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice, but it is quoted in Annen's Extensive Commentary on the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts as a citation from Stages of Yoga Practice.

56. These words appear in Tsun-shih's preface to The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight, a work by Nan-yüeh. Tsun-shih (964-1032) was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in Sung dynasty China. Nan-yüeh's work had been lost for centuries in China; but a copy was brought there from Japan by Jakushō, a priest of the Japanese Tendai school. Tsun-shih therefore said, "It [Buddhism] is returning from the east."

57. The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra. The passage "Since hatred and jealousy..." appears in chapter ten of the Lotus Sutra.


59. The Queen Mother of the West is a legendary goddess who was said to dwell on a mountain in the western part of China. A similar statement is found in A Collection of Stories and Poems. Profound Meaning states, "If a magpie chatters, it foretells the coming of a guest."

60. A summary of a passage from the Nirvana Sutra.

61. Mao Hsi was a high official of the Ch'ien (557-589) dynasty in China who was highly respected by Emperor Hsüan and his successor. When T'ien-t'ai lectured on the title of the Lotus Sutra at Wa-kuan-su temple in Chin-ling, he listened and placed his faith in T'ien-t'ai's teachings.

62. Ōtomo no Kuninichī (768-828) and Wake no Hiroyo (n.d.), who were court officials and sponsors of the Great Teacher Dengyō.


64. Ibid., chap. 28.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.


68. Ibid., chap. 3.

69. Ibid., chap. 14.

70. A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine.

71. Seven disasters referred to in the Benevolent Kings Sutra. See seven disasters in Glossary.

72. Dengyō in his Clarification of the Precepts classified the seven disasters referred to in the Benevolent Kings Sutra into twenty-nine categories.

73. These disasters are described in the Benevolent Kings Sutra.

74. A similar passage appears in the Great Crown of the Buddha's Head Shūramgama Meditation Sutra translated by Pan-la-mi-ti in the early eighth century. This sutra is also simply known as the Shūramgama Sutra.

75. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

76. King T'ang was the founder of the Yin (Shang) dynasty that lasted from about the sixteenth century through about the eleventh century B.C.E. This event refers to the prayer for rain that, because of drought, he offered up seven years after his accession to the throne.

77. Shilāditya was a king who ruled most of northern India in the seventh century and was a believer of Buddhism. According to The Record of the Western Regions, when he constructed a Buddhist monastery and held a ceremony, a fire broke out. Thenceupon the king in person went into the flames and offered up prayers to extinguish the fire. As a result, the fire went out.