WHEN a horse is still only one or two years old, though its joints are loose, its shanks thin and rounded, and its lower legs spindly, it does not look as though it is ailing. But by the time it gets to be seven or eight years old, it has grown fat, its blood vessels have thickened, and its legs are too frail to bear its upper body. Then it is like a big stone loaded on a small boat, or a large fruit growing on a little tree. It develops numerous ailments and is no longer fit for human use; its strength dwindles away and its life soon comes to an end.

The heavenly gods are like this. At the beginning of a kalpa of formation, the beings who accumulated good karma in their previous existence are born as gods in the realm of heaven, and there is little evil among human beings. The bodies of the heavenly gods have a bright glow, their minds are keen, they shine with a light like that of the sun and moon and are as powerful as lions or elephants.

But after the kalpa of formation has come to a close and the kalpa of continuance progresses, these same heavenly gods who were born earlier age with the years and wane like the moon in the closing third of the month. The gods newly born into the realm of heaven at that time have accumulated less good karma than those born earlier, and many beings of an inferior nature appear.

As a result, the three calamities in time appear in the world, and the region within the four seas is most likely to be beset by the seven disasters. At that time living beings for the first time learn the meaning of suffering and joy.

If at such a time a Buddha should appear in the world and expound the Buddhist teachings as a medicine for the heavenly beings, gods, and humans, such teachings will be like oil added to a lamp or a staff presented to an elderly person. The heavenly gods will once more shine in glory, their strength will return, and they will be as they were in the kalpa of formation.

The Buddhist teachings may be classified into five categories that correspond to the five flavors of fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee. The living beings who were in the world when Shakyamuni Buddha appeared, though they were no match for those who lived in the kalpa of formation, still enjoyed a considerable measure of good karma. Therefore, whichever of the five flavors of teaching they tasted, their strength and brightness increased. But now, after the Buddha has passed away, the two thousand years of the Former and Mid-
dle Days of the Law have gone by, and the Latter Day of the Law has arrived, those earlier heavenly beings, gods, asuras, great dragons, and other beings have grown very old and become feeble in body and weak in mind. And the heavenly beings, asuras, and others who are newly born into the world have only a small store of good karma or are heavenly beings of bad nature. If the fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, and butter of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings are fed to such beings, it will be like feeding coarse food to an elderly person or a humble meal of wheat to a person of high station.

In our present age the men of learning, failing to understand such matters, simply go along with the practices of the past, offering to the gods throughout the country of Japan recitations from the Āgama, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, Flower Garland, and Mahāvairochana sutras. And as priests in charge of such ceremonies they appoint priests of the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treasuries, Flower Garland, Pure Land, and Zen schools. This simply amounts to offering coarsely cooked food to an elderly person or hard, indigestible rice to a baby.

How much more is this so when one considers that the Hinayana sutras and schools and the Mahayana sutras and schools of today are not the same as the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras and schools of the past! When Buddhism was brought from India to China, the golden words of the Buddha contained in the various Hinayana and Mahayana sutras became mixed with private speculations. And as for the various schools, the Buddhist scholars and teachers of India and China at times insisted on propounding Hinayana teachings as though they were Mahayana, labeling Mahayana as Hinayana, mixing in Mahayana with Hinayana, or introducing Mahayana ideas into Hinayana. Sutras that were preached earlier in the Buddha’s life they asserted belonged to a later period, those preached later they placed earlier, those preached earlier they assigned to follow a later period. Exoteric sutras they labeled as esoteric, esoteric sutras they called exoteric. It was as though they had added water to milk or mixed medicine with poison.

In the Nirvana Sutra the Buddha, speaking of things to come, says: “At that time the various thieves will take the teachings that are like ghee and will add water to them. And because they add so much water, the teachings that are comparable to fresh milk, to cream, and to ghee will all lose their flavor.”

The Āgama sutras of the Hinayana are comparable to the flavor of fresh milk. The Correct and Equal sutras such as the Great Collection Sutra, Amida Sutra, Profound Secrets Sutra, Lankāvatāra Sutra, and Mahāvairochana Sutra are comparable to the flavor of cream. The Wisdom sutras are comparable to the flavor of curdled milk, the Flower Garland Sutra is comparable to the flavor of butter, and the Lotus and Nirvana sutras are comparable to the flavor of ghee. And even though the Hinayana sutras may only be comparable to the flavor of fresh milk, if one practices them as the Buddha instructed, how could they be anything less than medicine of a sort? How much more so, then, in the case of the various Mahayana sutras, or even that much more so in the case of the Lotus Sutra!

It should be noted, however, that there was a total of 187 translators who carried out the task of transmitting the sutras from India to the land of China. With the exception of one man, the Tripitaka Master Kumārajīva, all the other 186, when they produced their translations, added water to the milk of
the teachings and mixed poison with the medicine. But the various teachers and half-baked scholars, failing to understand this fact, do not realize that even if they were to recite the entire body of sutras or commit to memory all the twelve divisions of the scriptures, they would still find it difficult to escape the sufferings of birth and death.

The prayers being offered at present may appear to have a certain measure of effect, but they are not the sort of prayers that can be comprehended by the deities of heaven and earth. Rather it is the devil king and his devil people who are making it seem as though protection is being granted and the doctrine is having an effect. And in the end neither the persons offering such prayers nor their supporters can hope to achieve peace and tranquillity thereby.

They are comparable to the disciples of an elder physician who either steal the medicine that he left mixed with poison or come into possession of it quite unawares and try to heal an ailing person with it. How can they bring about well-being thereby?

In Japan at the present time the scholars of the True Word and the other schools that make up the seven schools, and those of the Pure Land and Zen schools, fail to realize that men like Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō have taken the Lotus Sutra, the foremost of all sutras and one that is comparable to the flavor of ghee, and have demoted it to second or third place, mixing the ghee with the water of their own private speculations. If the words of the Buddha’s prediction are true, how can they avoid blame for the major offense of causing “all [the various teachings] to lose their flavor”?

The Mahāvairochana Sutra is inferior to the Lotus Sutra and by comparison stands in seventh place. And yet Kōbō and the others held a topsyturvy view and declared that the Mahāvairochana was the foremost of all sutras, spreading this opinion throughout the country of Japan. Thus into one portion of the milk of the Lotus Sutra they have introduced seven parts of the water of the Mahāvairochana Sutra. The result is not water, nor is it milk. It is not the Mahāvairochana Sutra, nor is it the Lotus Sutra, though it somewhat resembles the Lotus Sutra and somewhat resembles the Mahāvairochana Sutra.

Shakyamuni, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, predicted such a situation when he said in the Nirvana Sutra: “After I have passed away and the correct teaching is about to come to an end, at that time there will be monks who do much evil. . . . There will be those who are like milkmaids who sell milk and, greedy for greater profit, dilute it with two parts of water. . . . A person who wants to buy the milk will say, ‘The milk is greatly diluted with water.’ . . . At that time this sutra will be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa. In that age there will be evil monks who will steal this sutra and divide it into many parts, losing the color, scent, and flavor of the correct teaching that it contains. These evil men will read and recite this sutra, but they will ignore and put aside the profound and vital principles that the Thus Come One has expounded in it . . . They will tear off the first part of the sutra and stick it on at the end, tear off the end and put it at the beginning, put the end and the beginning in the middle and the middle at the beginning or the end. You must understand that these evil monks are the companions of the devil.”

If we consider the situation in Japan at present, we will realize that many centuries have elapsed since the founding of the country. The benevolent deities that have guarded the nation from times past have undoubtedly grown old and their store of good fortune has
run out. Their bright glow has waned, their powers have dwindled. If they could taste the flavor of the Buddhist teachings, they would surely regain their old brilliance and power. But the flavors of the Buddhist teachings that are offered to them now are all the wrong ones. Old in years as they are, how can such deities stave off the disasters that beset the nation or grant protection to those who pay honor to them?

Moreover, though Japan as a country is guilty of slandering the Law, because these are its patron deities, they do not punish it for its great offense but instead continue to give it their protection. In doing so, these gods are violating the oath that they took in the presence of the Buddha. They look on those who patronize them as one would look on a beloved child who commits an error, not casting them aside but continuing to protect them. But in doing this, in failing to chastise the ruler and people of a nation that bears malice toward the votaries of the Lotus Sutra and protecting it instead, they are guilty of error. For such a fault Hachiman and the other deities must have been punished by Brahmā and Shakra. But this is a matter of grave import and must be treated with the utmost secrecy!

It is stated in one of the sutras⁵ that the Buddha called together all the Brahmās, Shakras, sun and moon deities, four heavenly kings, and dragon gods of this world and the other worlds and said that if in the Former, Middle, or Latter Day of the Law the devil king of the sixth heaven or other evil spirits should take possession of the human sovereign or his subjects and cause them to vex and persecute the Buddha's disciples, whether those who uphold the precepts, break the precepts, or are without precepts; and if the patron deities, observing and hearing of these events, let even so much as a moment pass by without punishing the offenders, then Brahmā and Shakra would send messengers with orders to the four heavenly kings to carry out punishment. If the patron deities of the nation fail to carry out punishment, then Brahmā, Shakra, and the four heavenly kings shall punish those deities as well. And the same applies, he said, to Brahmā and Shakra themselves. If they fail to carry out punishment, then the Brahmās and Shakras of other worlds will invariably step in to punish the Brahmā, Shakra, sun and moon gods, and four heavenly kings of this world. If this is not done, the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future will cease to appear in the world, and Brahmā and Shakra and the others will lose their positions and for a long time will sink into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

This is the vow that was recorded in writing in the presence of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas of the ten directions.

Now if we consider the matter, we realize that Hachiman is merely the ruler and patron deity of this small country of Japan. In terms of the Hinayana teachings, he is a bodhisattva of the three stages of worthiness; in terms of the Mahayana teachings, a bodhisattva who has mastered the ten stages of faith; and in terms of the Lotus Sutra, a bodhisattva who has mastered the five stages of practice,⁶ which correspond to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. No matter who the patron deity may be or how many inexhaustible blessings he may have acquired through his religious practice, if he does not heed the words of the Lotus Sutra and protect those who practice meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, then he is a bodhisattva who has failed to live up to his position and will no doubt spend countless
years sunk in the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

Thus A Brief History of Japan says: "Again for the benefit of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the Great Teacher Dengyō in person lectured on the Lotus Sutra in the temple attached to the bodhisattva’s shrine. After the great deity had finished listening to the lecture, he spoke through a medium, saying, ‘Many long years have passed in which I was unable to listen to the sound of the Law. Now I have had the good fortune to encounter you, Reverend, and have been able to hear the correct teaching. Moreover, for my sake you have carried out various types of meritorious practices. Truly I am overwhelmed with joy. How can I ever repay such kindness? As it happens, I have some priestly robes that I have possessed for some time.’ Then the medium who delivered the oracle himself opened the sanctuary of the shrine, took out a purple surplice and a purple robe, and presented them to the Great Teacher Dengyō, saying, ‘I trust through the power of your great compassion you will do me the favor of accepting these.’

“At that time the Shinto priests and their assistant priests all sighed in wonder, saying, ‘Never in the past have we observed such a marvellous happening, nor have we ever heard of its like!’ The robes that were bestowed by the great deity at that time are now preserved in the Monastery of the Mountain King. 7"

Now it should be noted that Hachiman appeared long ago as Emperor Ōjin, the sixteenth sovereign of Japan. 8 But at that time there were no Buddhist sutras in existence in Japan, so he could not have come into possession of any priestly surplice and robe.

Later, in the thirty-second year of the reign of the thirtieth sovereign, Emperor Kimmei [571], Hachiman manifested himself as a god. 9 There-
Lotus Sutra or the other works that make up the canon, why did he not present this surplice and robe to one of them?

You should understand that, before the time of the Great Teacher Dengyō, the words and phrases of the Lotus Sutra were read, but that was all; their true meaning had as yet not become apparent.

In the twentieth year of the Enryaku era [801], around the middle of the eleventh month, the Great Teacher Dengyō invited more than ten men, outstanding Buddhist leaders from the seven major temples and six schools of Nara, to meet with him on Mount Hiei, and he lectured to them on the Lotus Sutra. Two court officials, [Wake no] Hiroyo and [his younger brother] Matsuna, listening to the expositions of the Buddhist doctrine given at that time, declared with a sigh, “One regrets that the single vehicle of the Lotus is impeded by provisional teachings, and one grieves that the unification of the three truths has yet to be made manifest.” They also said, “Though both teachers and disciples have broken free from the bonds of the threefold world, you still persist on the road of the enlightenment that takes countless kalpas to achieve.”¹⁰

Later, in the twenty-first year of the Enryaku era [802], on the nineteenth day of the first month, Emperor Kamu paid a visit to the temple called Takao-dera, where he summoned eminent priests from the six schools of Nara and the Great Teacher Dengyō and listened to them as they debated the merits and shortcomings of the various schools. But the fourteen participants from Nara were all incapable of saying a word in their own defense, their mouths as useless as though they had been noses.

Sometime later, they submitted a memorial acknowledging their defeat and apologizing, in which they said: “In the two hundred or more years since Prince Shōtoku spread the Buddhist teachings in this country, a great many sutras and treatises have been lectured upon, and their principles have been widely argued, but until now, many doubts still remained to be settled. Moreover, the lofty and perfect doctrine of the Lotus Sutra had not yet been properly explained and made known.”

When we consider these facts, we can see that in the period before the Great Teacher Dengyō, the true heart and meaning of the Lotus Sutra had not yet become apparent. When Great Bodhisattva Hachiman declared through the medium that he had not previously seen or heard the Buddhist teachings, it is perfectly obvious that this is what he was referring to, perfectly obvious!

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says: “If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person . . . , then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. . . . The Thus Come One will cover them with his robe.”¹¹

In a time to come, the Buddha Maitreya will preach the Lotus Sutra, and therefore Shakyamuni Buddha sent the Venerable Mahākāśyapa as his envoy to present a robe to Maitreya.¹² And similarly, the Great Teacher Dengyō was sent as the envoy of the Buddha to preach the Lotus Sutra, and that is why Great Bodhisattva Hachiman acted as an envoy as well and presented him with a robe.

In the time before the Great Teacher Dengyō, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman imbibed a kind of watered-down version of the Lotus Sutra. But despite that fact he was able, because of good deeds in his past existence, to be born into the world as a great ruler, Emperor Ōjin.
As a further benefit deriving from those good deeds, he was able to appear as a god, lending his protection to this country of ours. But now the benefits from that earlier store of good fortune have all run out, and he can no longer enjoy the flavor of the correct Law. Although slanderers of the Law have been rife in this country for many years now, because Hachiman has long been revered by the people of Japan and feels close to them, he cannot bear to cast them aside in spite of their great faults. He is like an aged parent who cannot cast aside an unfortunate child, and thus incurs the displeasure of other heavenly deities.

In addition, this priestly robe we have spoken of is intended for bestowal upon the person who proclaims that the Lotus Sutra is foremost among sutras. In the period following the Great Teacher Dengyō, the Reverend Gishin, the first chief priest of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei, regarded the Lotus Sutra as foremost, and it was therefore right that he should have inherited the robe. The second chief priest, the Great Teacher Enchō, though he was a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyō, was also a disciple of the Great Teacher Kōbō and appears to have been guilty to some extent of slandering the correct teaching. He was not a person deserving of the robe.

The third chief priest, Ennin, also known as the Great Teacher Jikaku, though in name a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyō, was at heart a disciple of the Great Teacher Kōbō and declared that the Mahāvairocana Sutra is the foremost of all sutras and that the Lotus Sutra ranks only second. He was in no way deserving of the robe, and even if it was bestowed on him, he could never be accounted a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

What is more, the chief priests of the Tendai school these days are in fact priests of the True Word teachings. Furthermore, those holding the post of superintendent of Hachiman Shrine these days are either chief officials of Onjō-ji temple or followers of Tō-ji temple. As such, they are archenemies of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions of ancient times, and the sworn opponents of the Great Teacher Dengyō of more recent times. To give such persons the robe is like presenting the robe of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment to Devadatta, or like a hunter disguising himself in the robe of a Buddha in order to slay a lion and make off with its skin.

Nowadays the chief priests of Mount Hiei have donned the robe that was presented to the Great Teacher Dengyō by Bodhisattva Hachiman and proceeded to seize the domain of the Lotus Sutra and make it into a domain of the True Word teachings. They are like King Ajātashatru, who made Devadatta his teacher. And Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, in failing to strip them of the robe, is committing a fault of the utmost gravity.

This Great Bodhisattva was present in the assembly when the Lotus Sutra was preached and at that time pledged to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Yet for a number of years now he has failed to inflict punishment on the archenemies of the Lotus Sutra, which I find exceedingly strange. Moreover, it happens that a votary of the Lotus Sutra has now appeared on the scene, but Hachiman grants him no protection. Before his very eyes he sees the malice displayed by the ruler of the nation and others as they attack the votary like dogs snapping at a monkey, a snake swallowing a frog, a hawk attacking a pheasant, or a lion slaughtering a hare, yet not once has he made a move to chastise them, or if he has done so, it was in a half-hearted and ineffectual manner. That is no doubt the reason that Great Bodhisatt-
va Hachiman has now been punished by Brahēma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings.

Look, for example, at the case of the emperors Kimmei, Bidatsu, and Yōmei, three rulers of antiquity. At the urging of Chief Minister Mononobe no Moriya, they handed down an edict ordering the destruction by fire of the gilded bronze image of Shakyamuni Buddha, the burning of the hall that housed it, and the punishment of Buddhist priests and nuns. And as a result, fire came down from the heavens and burned up the residential quarters of the palace. In addition, the common people of the nation of Japan, though guilty of no fault, were inflicted with malignant sores and over half of them perished. In the end, the three emperors and two of their high ministers, as well as numerous other princes and court officials, either died of malignant sores or were killed in battle. At that time the sanctuaries in which the many different deities of the nation resided were all burned to the ground. This was because of the grave fault they committed by lending protection to the enemies of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Again there is the case of Onjō-ji, a temple that is older than Enryaku-ji temple of Mount Hiei, but that now teaches the True Word doctrines advocated by the Great Teacher Chishō and refers to its leaders as chief officials. Though it is without question a branch temple of Enryaku-ji, Onjō-ji has usurped the right to establish a Mahayana ordination platform, a right that belonged to Enryaku-ji alone, setting up such an ordination platform and disobeying Enryaku-ji. In doing so, it is behaving like a petty official who opposes his sovereign, or a child who disobeys its parents.

Yet the great deity of Silla mistakenl y lends his protection to this evil and rebellious temple, and as a result he has time and again had his sanctuary burned down by priests from Enryaku-ji.

Now Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, because he lent his protection to the archenemies of the Lotus Sutra, has had his sanctuary burned down by fire from the heavens. It is like the case of the First Emperor of the Ch’in dynasty in China. The distant ancestor of the First Emperor was King Hsiang, who acted as a deity and bestowed his protection upon the First Emperor. But the First Emperor conducted himself with great arrogance, burning the classical texts of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of antiquity and destroying The Classic of Filial Piety and other works of the Three Sages. As a result, a man known then as the governor of P’ei took up his sword and cut in two the great snake that was the deity of the Ch’in emperor, and shortly after that the Ch’in dynasty came to an end. This is another example of what I have been discussing here.

Again, the great deity of Itsukushima Shrine in the province of Aki acted as the patron god of the Taira clan. But because he permitted the members of the Taira clan to behave in arrogant fashion, he was subjected to divine punishment by the deity of the great Ise Shrine, Hachiman, and others, and not long after that the Taira clan met with its downfall. This serves as yet another example.

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, “If after the Buddha has passed into extinction one can understand the meaning of this sutra, one will be the eyes of the world for heavenly and human beings.” Nichiren, who propagates the daimoku, the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra, throughout the country of Japan—is he not the “eyes of the world for heavenly and human beings?”

There are five types of vision, the physical eye, the heavenly eye, the wis-
dom eye, the Dharma eye, and the Buddha eye. These eyes are a product and creation of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore the Universal Worthy Sutra says, “This correct and equal sutra is the eye of the Buddhas. It is through this sutra that the Buddhas are able to acquire the five types of vision.” Here “this correct and equal sutra” refers to the Lotus Sutra. And the same sutra says that the correct and equal sutra is the field of good fortune for human and heavenly beings and is highest among those worthy of alms.

As these various sutra passages make clear, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law represents the eyes of human and heavenly beings, the eyes of persons of the two vehicles and of bodhisattvas, and the eyes of the various Buddhas. And one who acts maliciously toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra is in effect gouging out the eyes of human and heavenly beings. And any deity who protects such a person and fails to punish him is aiding and abetting those who gouge out the eyes of human and heavenly beings.

Kōbō, Jikaku, Chishō, and others have clearly stated in their writings that they believe the Lotus Sutra belongs to the region of darkness and not to the position of enlightenment, that when examined from a later stage, it is a piece of childish theory, that it could never serve as a palanquin bearer and is not fit even to be a sandal tender. And in the four hundred and more years since they wrote these statements, everyone in Japan, from the ruler on down to the common people, has spoken contemptuously of the Lotus Sutra and gouged out the eyes of all living beings, and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman has acted as their accomplice by protecting them, has he not?

Some years ago, in the Kōchō era, and again in the eighth year of the Bun’ei era [1271], on the twelfth day of the ninth month, though I, Nichiren, was guilty of no error whatsoever, I was charged with the grave fault of propagating Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and at the command of the ruler was forcibly dragged into the presence of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman and subjected to the ridicule of slanderers of the Law from throughout the nation. Great Bodhisattva Hachiman is the one guilty of a “grave fault,” is he not?

Only once has he moved to punish offenders, and that was at the time when fellow clansmen were attacking one another. He has appeared in the past as a worthy ruler of the Japanese nation, and in addition is a deity of the highest or second highest order. Indeed, there is scarcely any deity superior to him. And one would hardly suppose him given to favoritism or partiality. And yet if we are to believe what is written in the Lotus Sutra and the other various sutras that make up the canon, this deity has in fact committed a grave fault.

In the 11,037 temples in the sixty-six provinces and two islands [of Iki and Tsushima] that make up the country of Japan, there are various Buddha images, some painted, some made of wood, some in temples established before the introduction of the True Word doctrines, some in temples established after their introduction. All these Buddhas are born from the Lotus Sutra, and all have the Lotus Sutra as their eyes. As the sutra quoted above says, “This correct and equal sutra is the eye of the Buddhas.” And Miao-lo says, “This [Lotus] sutra has the constantly abiding Buddha nature as its throat, the wonderful practice of the single vehicle as its eyes, the renewal of life in the decayed seeds as its heart, and the revelation of the Buddha’s original enlightenment and his immeasurable life span as its life.”

Despite this fact, however, it has become the custom in Japan, not only in True Word temples but in temples
of all the other schools as well, to perform the mudra of the Honored One Buddha Eye in order to “open the eyes” of the Buddha image, and to recite the mantra of the Buddha Mahāvairochana in order to endow it with the five kinds of wisdom. This is in effect to make an offering of the provisional sutras of the True Word doctrine to living beings who have become Buddhas through the Lotus Sutra. Persons who carry out such acts are on the contrary killing the Buddhas, gouging out their eyes, depriving them of their lives, and cutting their throats. How do they differ from Devadatta, who was summarily punished for shedding the blood of Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, or King Ajātashatru, who was similarly punished for making Devadatta his teacher?

Great Bodhisattva Hachiman was Emperor Ōjin, a ruler of a small country, while King Ajātashatru was the powerful ruler of the great kingdom of Magadha, the one as superior to the other as heavenly beings are to humans or kings are to commoners. Yet King Ajātashatru, because of the enmity he showed toward Shakyamuni Buddha, was punished by having virulent sores break out on his body. How then can Great Bodhisattva Hachiman hope to escape punishment for the offenses he has committed?

In the eleventh year of the Bun’ei era [1274], when the Mongol forces attacked Japan, not only were many Japanese warriors killed in the fighting, but the buildings of Hachiman Shrine were burned down as well. At that time, why did Hachiman not punish the warriors of the invading nation? It is clear from his failure to do so that the great ruler of that foreign land is superior in power to Hachiman, this deity of our country. King Hsiang was the foremost deity of China in ancient times, but despite that fact he was cut in two by the sharp sword of the governor of P’ei. This is something to think about!

The Buddhist priest Dōkyō, having gained favor with Empress Shōtoku, schemed to have himself made ruler of the nation. But when Kiyomaro went to pay his respects to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, Hachiman spoke to him through a medium, saying: “Among the gods there are great ones and small ones, good ones and bad ones... The opposing party is large in number while our party is few, the evil are strong and the just are weak. It is best to rely upon the power of the Buddha for protection and thus to insure that the imperial line is carried on in proper fashion.”23

From this we may understand that Great Bodhisattva Hachiman has employed the power of the correct teaching in providing protection for the ruling house and its institutions. [But at the time of the Jōkyū Disturbance], the imperial court relied on the erroneous True Word teachings of the priests of Mount Hiei and Tō-ji in an attempt to defeat the Acting Administrator [Hōjō Yoshitoki] through their prayers. The acting administrator, however, proved to be the more powerful, and the Retired Emperor of Oki suffered defeat. This is what [the Lotus Sutra means] when it says, “The injury will rebound upon the originator.”24

At present [the Buddha images of] the 11,037 temples and the deities of the 3,132 shrines of Japan are duly worshiped in order to insure the peace and safety of the nation. But the superintendents of these various temples and the Shinto priests of the various shrines are all in disagreement with the hearts of the Buddhas and deities that they are supposed to be worshiping. These various Buddhas and deities differ from one another in their bodily form, but all are alike in heart in being divine protectors of the Lotus Sutra. The temple superintendents and shrine cus-
todians are in some cases True Word teachers, in some cases Nembutsu believers, in some cases Zen priests, in some cases priests of the Precepts school, but all are alike in being enemies of Hachiman and the other deities. Yet Hachiman lends his protection to those who slander the correct teaching and behave in an unfilial manner, while he allows those who uphold the correct teaching to be sent into exile or condemned to death. That is why he has been chastised by the other heavenly beings.

Among my disciples there are some who, apparently still intent on slandering the correct teaching, accuse me, saying, "This priest is acting as an enemy of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman." It seems they fail to realize that, when it is only reasonable to expect prayers to be answered and yet they are not, one may rightly reproach the object of worship. Thus, in the scripture known as the Buddha's Successors Sutra, we find the following account regarding the birth of the Venerable Mahākāśyapa:

"At that time in the kingdom of Magadha there was a Brahman named Nyagrodha. In past existences he had for a long time carried out meritorious acts, and as a result he was blessed with great wealth, his fortune so vast it defied calculation and exceeded that of the ruler of Magadha by a thousandfold. But although he possessed abundant riches, he had no son, and he thought to himself that when he grew old and feeble and death approached, he would have no one to whom to entrust the goods and possessions in his storehouses.

"Beside the Brahman's house there grew a sacred tree, and in hopes of being granted a son, he decided to pray to the god of the tree for aid. But though he did so for years on end, he received no sign of response. Then Nyagrodha grew extremely angry and said to the god of the tree, 'I have worshiped you now for many years, but you have not bestowed on me the slightest blessing. I will continue to worship you in all sincerity for seven days more, but if you fail to show any sign of response, then I will most certainly chop you down and burn you!'

"The god of the tree, hearing this, was seized with terror and went to the four heavenly kings to report to them in full on the matter. The four heavenly kings then went to the god Shakra to inform him. Shakra searched throughout the continent of Jambudvīpa but could find no one who was worthy to become the son of someone so richly blessed with good fortune as was Nyagrodha. He then went to call on the heavenly king Brahmā and explained the situation to him in detail.

"At that time Brahmā gazed all about with his heavenly eye and spied another deity of the Brahma heaven whose life was about to come to an end. He said to the deity, 'If you are willing to descend from the realm of heavenly beings, you may be born as the son of a Brahman family in the Jambudvīpa world.'

"But the deity replied, 'The teachings of the Brahman are full of evil and erroneous views. I cannot bring myself to become the son of such a family.'

"Brahmā then spoke once more, saying, 'This Brahman is a person of great stature and virtue and there is no one in the continent of Jambudvīpa who is worthy to become his son. If you will consent to be born as his son, I will protect you and see that you never fall victim to erroneous views.'

"'In that case,' said the deity, 'I am willing to honor your wishes in the matter.' Shakra then went and reported to the god of the tree what had transpired. The god of the tree, delighted, went at once to the home of the Brahman and said to him, 'You must not be
angry with me any more. Seven days from now your wishes will be fulfilled!"

"When seven days had passed, it was found that the wife of the Brahman was pregnant, and after her ten months had passed, she gave birth to a son who became the man now known as Mahākāśīyapa."

You note that it says, "Then Nyagrodha grew extremely angry." Under ordinary circumstance if one displays great anger toward a patron deity, one’s life in this present existence will be cut off and one will thereafter be born in one of the evil paths of existence. Nevertheless, this rich man, Nyagrodha, displayed extreme anger toward a patron deity and spoke to it in abusive language, and yet his great wish was fulfilled and he was granted a worthy son. From this you should understand that anger can be either a good or a bad thing.

Now for the past twenty-eight years, since the fifth year of the Kenchō era [1253], cyclical sign mizunoto-ushi, the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month,25 until the present, the twelfth month of the third year of the Kōan era [1280], cyclical sign kanoe-tatsu, I, Nichiren, have done nothing else, but have labored solely to put the five or seven characters of Myoho-renge-kyo into the mouths of all the living beings of the country of Japan. In doing so, I have shown the kind of compassion that a mother does when she labors to put milk into the mouth of her infant child.

Moreover, this is the very time for such efforts, for we have already entered the fifth five-hundred-year period, the time in which the Buddha predicted the Lotus Sutra would be propagated. At the time when T’ien-t’ai and Dengyō lived, the fifth period had not yet begun, but because a certain number of persons already possessed the requisite capacity, these men to some extent propagated the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. But now that the fifth period has begun, it is even more appropriate that such teachings be propagated. Even though there are those who have no capacity to receive them, but who oppose them as water opposes fire, how can one fail to propagate them?

Now, although one should meet with the kind of persecution experienced by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, they must be propagated; there can be no doubt of that. But because of the slanderous accusations of the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu believers, the ruler and those around him in their ignorance make difficulties for one who does so. And the patron deity, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, who ought to correct them, fails to punish them for their grave faults. Therefore, when Nichiren reprimands this patron deity, is he doing anything in any way unreasonable? He is doing no different from what the rich man Nyagrodha did when he reproached the god of the tree.

The Susiddhikara Sutra says, "One chastises the object of worship in the same manner as one would a demon or evil spirit." The meaning of this passage is that if one is making a request of the deity in the manner dictated by the sutras, and if one carries out the proper practices for a period of several years, but fails to elicit the desired response, then one should punish the object of worship by binding it with cords or whipping it. Thus when the Reverend Sōtō 26 tied up the image of the wisdom king Immovable with cords, he was probably acting in accordance with this passage in the sutra.

But my situation cannot be compared with these others. All the good persons in the country of Japan abide by the precepts or distribute alms, found temples and pagodas for the sake of their parents as an act of filial piety, or skimp on funds for their wives and
children and instead donate the money to priests in hopes of attaining Buddhahood or gaining the way. But because these priests are in fact slanderers of the correct teaching, it is as though they were unwittingly providing shelter to rebels or taking as a mate a person lacking in filial piety. As a result, they invite calamity in their present lives and are destined to fall into the evil paths in their next existences. I am doing all I can to help such persons, and yet the benevolent deities who are supposed to be protecting the country of Japan ally themselves with those slanderous priests and act as enemies of the correct teaching. Therefore it is perfectly reasonable that I reproach them as the sutra instructs one to do.

There are some of my disciples who, in their foolish way of thinking, declare: “Though our teacher tries to propagate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, not only does he fail to do so but he meets with these great difficulties. This is because he goes around proclaiming that ‘True Word will ruin the nation, Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering, Zen is the work of the heavenly devil, and the Precepts priests are traitors to the nation’. He is like a person who with good reason files a complaint, but peppers it with abusive language.”

I would reply to such disciples thus: If what you say is correct, then answer this question. When I urge all the True Word teachers, the Nembutsu believers, or the followers of the Zen school to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the True Word teachers say, “Our Great Teacher Kōbō declared that the Lotus Sutra is childish theory and Shakyanuni Buddha is in the region of darkness, and that the sutra is not fit to be a palanquin bearer or even a sandal tender. Rather than read and recite such a useless text, we do better to busy our mouths with even a single repetition of our little spells.”

The lay devotees of the Nembutsu say, “The Reverend Shan-tao declared that not one person in a thousand can be saved by the Lotus Sutra, the Honorable Hōnen urged us to ‘discard, close, ignore, and abandon’ it, and the Meditation Master Tao-ch’o said that not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. This Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that you urge on us has an adverse effect on our Nembutsu practice. Even though we may be creating bad karma if we fail to do so, we will never recite it!”

And the followers of the Zen school say, “Our school represents a ‘separate transmission outside the sutras,’ the highest form of teaching and one that has been handed down independently from all the various sutras in the canon. The sutras are no more than a finger pointing at the moon, while Zen is the moon itself. T’ien-t’ai and those other foolish men occupied themselves with the finger and lost sight of the moon. The Lotus Sutra is the finger, Zen is the moon. Once you have glimpsed the moon, what need have you for the finger?”

Now tell me—when these men speak in this manner, how is one to make them swallow this good medicine of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?

The Buddha, after first preaching the Āgama sutras for a time, then planned to lead the practitioners of those sutras into the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. But at that time all the voice-hearer disciples merely clung to the Āgama sutras and made no move to embrace the Lotus Sutra.

Pondering how to meet this situation, the Buddha then announced, “Though one may commit the five cardinal sins, or give alms to those who commit such sins, the faults thus incurred can become the seeds of Buddhahood. But the meritorious acts performed by these practitioners of the
Ägama sutras can never become the seeds of Buddhahood.”

Though the Hinayana, or lesser vehicle, teachings differ from those of the Mahayana, or great vehicle, they are alike in both being the teachings of the Buddha. When the Buddha rejected the Hinayana and replaced it with the Mahayana, and when he in turn rejected the Mahayana and introduced his followers to the Lotus Sutra, he was rejecting different things, the Hinayana in one case and the Mahayana in the other; but his aim was the same in both cases, namely, to lead his followers to the Lotus Sutra. Therefore in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra he rejects the earlier Mahayana teachings by saying, “But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” And in the Lotus Sutra he says, “[If I used a lesser vehicle to convert even one person, I would be guilty of stinginess and greed], but such a thing would be impossible.” The Buddha himself declared, “If, having appeared in this world, I should preach the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras and then should enter nirvana without having preached the Lotus Sutra, I would be like a father who cannot bear to hand over his wealth to his beloved son, or like someone who refuses to give good medicine to an ailing person and lets the person die. I myself would deserve to fall into hell for such action.” What the Buddha speaks of as “impossible” means an act that condemns one to hell.

And how much more at fault are those who, after the Lotus Sutra has been preached, cling to the sutras that preceded it and refuse to embrace the Lotus Sutra! Such persons are like subjects who refuse to obey their ruler, or children who fail to come when their parents call them.

Even if one does not reject the Lotus Sutra, if one praises the sutras that preceded it, one is in effect slandering the Lotus Sutra. Miao-lo says, “If one praises the past, how can this fail to be a condemnation of the present?” And he also says, “Though one may set one’s mind on enlightenment, if one does not distinguish between the partial and the perfect teachings and understand what the Buddha has vowed to carry out, then although one may thereafter listen to expositions of the Law, can one escape the charge of slandering the Law?”

Even if Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k’ung, Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō of the True Word teachings had not discussed the relative merits of the Lotus Sutra as it compares with the Mahāvairocana Sutra, and had only propagated the Mahāvairocana Sutra, still, as Tripitaka masters and teachers living in the age after the passing of the Buddha, they could never escape being branded as slanderers of the correct teaching. How much more so, then, when the three Tripitaka masters, Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung, treated the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairocana Sutra as though they were similar in nature, calling the former an abbreviated exposition and the latter an extensive exposition, and moreover tricking practitioners of the Lotus Sutra into accepting the Mahāvairocana Sutra! And how much more so when the three great teachers, Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō, referring to the Lotus Sutra by name, in their writings called it a piece of childish theory, failing to make clear the grave fault they were committing thereby and causing all persons for the past four hundred and more years to become slanderers of the correct teaching!

One may recall that, after the passing of the Buddha Great Adornment, four of his monk disciples misled six hundred ten thousand million nayutas of persons and caused them all to fall into the hell of incessant suffering; and that, long after the passing of the Buddha
Lion Sound King, the monk Superior Intent misled a countless, incalculable number of precept-observing monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen and caused them all to enter the great citadel of the Avichi hell. And now, because they followed the teachings of these three great teachers, the 4,589,-659 men and women, according to the figure given by Gyoki in The Chronicles of Japan,34 or the 4,994,828 inhabitants of the country of Japan, according to other calculations, then another 4,900,-000, another 4,900,000 persons [and still another . . .] have over the past four hundred and more years been misled so that after their deaths they fell into the hell of incessant suffering. And beings from other realms who were later born in Japan were likewise led to fall into the hell of incessant suffering after their deaths.

Thus we see that the persons who have been caused to fall into hell are more numerous than the dust particles of the land, and all because of the faults committed by these three great teachers. And if I, Nichiren, were to observe this situation with my own eyes and yet pretend ignorance and refrain from speaking out, then I too ought to join those who have fallen into hell. Though guilty of no such fault myself, I should be condemned to journey through all the great Avichi hells of the worlds of the ten directions. Such being the case, how then can I fail to speak out, even though it may cost me life and limb?

The Nirvana Sutra says, “The varied sufferings that all living beings undergo—all these are the Thus Come One’s own sufferings.” And Nichiren declares that the sufferings that all living beings undergo, all springing from this one cause—all these are Nichiren’s own sufferings.

In the reign of Emperor Heizei, Hachiman declared in his oracle: “I am Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the guardian of Japan. I vow to guard and protect a hundred rulers.” Now people say that the eighty-first sovereign; the eighty-second, the Retired Emperor of Oki; the eighty-third, the eighty-fourth, and the eighty-fifth sovereigns were all dethroned,35 and it would appear that the remaining twenty some sovereigns will likewise be abandoned to their fate. It seems, they say, that Hachiman’s vow has ceased to be effective.

My own estimation of the matter is this. When Hachiman vowed to guard and protect a hundred rulers, he meant that he would guard and protect a hundred persons who were upright rulers. In his vow, Hachiman says: “I will take up my residence on the head of an upright person, but I will not abide in the heart of a person who is fawning and crooked.” It is like the moon, which casts its reflection in clear water but will not do so if the water is muddy.

A true ruler is a person who does not speak lies. The General of the Right [Minamoto no Yoritomo] and the Acting Administrator [Hōjō Yoshihito] were men who did not speak lies. They deserve to be counted among the hundred rulers, the upright persons upon whose heads Great Bodhisattva Hachiman dwells.

There are two kinds of uprightness. One is the uprightness of those in the secular world. The character for king or ruler unites heaven, humankind, and earth.36 The three horizontal lines represent heaven, humankind, and earth respectively, and they are joined together by a single vertical line. A true ruler is one like the Yellow Emperor,37 a ruler who stands at the center and acts as the lord of heaven, lord of humankind, and lord of earth.

The Retired Emperor of Oki in name was ruler of the nation, but in action he was a man who spoke lies, a wrongdoer. The acting administrator
was in name a subject of the ruler, but
in action he was a great ruler, a man
who spoke no lies, the kind upon
whose head Great Bodhisattva Hach-
iman vowed to dwell.

The second kind of uprightness is
that of the non-secular world. The
sutras preached previous to the Lotus
Sutra and the sutras, treatises, and com-
mentaries of the seven schools of Bud-
dhism are lying words, while the
Lotus Sutra and the commentaries of
the Tendai school are upright works. In
his original form he is Shakyamuni
Buddha, who expounded the sutra that
contains no lying words, while in his
temporary manifestation he is Great
Bodhisattva Hachiman, who speaks no
lying words. The eight-petaled lotus
represents Hachiman, and the central
dais represents Shakyamuni Buddha,
the lord of teachings. Both Shakyamuni
and Hachiman were born on the
eighth day of the fourth month, the
day of the tiger, and after a life of
eighty years, departed this world on
the fifteenth day of the second month,
the day of the monkey. How then can
one doubt that the lord of teachings
was born here in the country of Japan?

The stone inscription at Hachiman
Shrine of Ōsumi reads, “Long ago on
Eagle Peak he preached the Lotus Sutra
of the Wonderful Law. Now he has
manifested himself as the Great Bodhisat-
tva and resides in the main shrine.”

The Lotus Sutra says, “Now this
threefold world is all my domain, and
the living beings in it are all my chil-
dren.” And it says, “Constantly I
have dwelled on Holy Eagle Peak.”
Long ago all the living beings through-
out the major world system were chil-
dren of the Thus Come One Shaka-
ymuni. And more recently the 4,994,828
inhabitants of this country of Japan
have been the children of Great Bodhi-
sattva Hachiman.

Now for all the living beings of
Japan to pay honor to Hachiman and
yet cast aside Shakyamuni Buddha is
like showing respect for the shadow
but contempt for the form that casts it,
or like welcoming the child but speak-
ing ill of the parent.

In his original form he made his
appearance in the land of India as
the Thus Come One Shakyamuni,
who, “honestly discarding expedient
means,” preached the Lotus Sutra,
and in his temporary manifestation he
was born in the land of Japan as a being
who dwells upon the heads of those
who are honest or upright.

The original form of various provi-
sional beings is the single true reality
of the Lotus Sutra, but in their temporary
manifestations they follow innumerable
different doctrines. Thus the Venerable
Bakkula in existence after existence
observed the precept against the tak-
ing of life, while Angulimāla in lifet ime
after lifetime killed living beings,
and Shāriputra was a follower of non-
Buddhist teachings. Thus they were
at first ordinary followers of various
different doctrines. After these people
had attained Buddhahood and devoted
themselves to saving others, they re-
vealed the kind of life they had lived
when they were still ordinary mortals
and had first conceived the determina-
tion to attain the way, doing this in
order to show what sort of doctrine or
manner of life led to their attainment
of the way.

Thus the Great Teacher Miao-lo
says: “If one is speaking of a Buddha
in his original form, then although
he may have killed living beings and
done other evil deeds in the past, he
still gained emancipation from the suf fer-
ings of birth and death. Hence it is
possible that his temporary mani festa tions could also have killed liv-
ing beings and thereby been led to
the doctrines that bring salvation to
others.”

Now this Great Bodhisattva Ha-
chiman, whose original form is the
preacher of the Lotus Sutra in India, a sutra that speaks no lies, has appeared in a temporary manifestation in the country of Japan, proclaiming the word “uprightness,” which represents the sutra, and vowing that he will dwell on the head of a worthy person. If so, then although the Great Bodhisattva has burned down his sanctuary and ascended to the heavens, still, if there are practitioners of the Lotus Sutra here in Japan, he should take up his abode where they are.

The Lotus Sutra says in its fifth volume, “The heavenly beings day and night will for the sake of the Law constantly guard and protect them.” If we go by this passage of the sutra, then it would seem that Brahmā, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings ought day and night to guard and protect those persons who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Again, in its sixth volume it says, “Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of others; sometimes I present myself, sometimes others; sometimes I show my own actions, sometimes those of others.” Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds manifests himself in thirty-three different forms, and Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound manifests himself in thirty-four forms. Why then should Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, manifest himself as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman?

T’ien-t’ai says, “The Thus Come One manifests his form in all of the Ten Worlds, taking on a variety of different appearances.”

The Land of the Moon is another name for India, the place where the Buddha made his appearance in the world. The Land of the Sun is another name for Japan. Is there any reason why a sage should not appear here?

The moon moves from the west eastward, a sign of how the Buddhism of India spread in an easterly direction. The sun rises in the east, an auspicious sign of how the Buddhism of Japan is destined to return to the Land of the Moon.

The light of the moon is not very bright, for the Buddha taught [the Lotus Sutra in India] for only eight years of his life. But the light of the sun is brilliant, outshining the moon, an auspicious sign of how the Buddhism of Japan is destined to illuminate the long darkness of [the Latter Day of the Law, which begins with] the fifth five-hundred-year period.

The Buddha took no measures to correct those who slander the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, because while he was in the world there were no such persons. But in the Latter Day of the Law the formidable enemies of the single vehicle are everywhere in sight. Now is the time to benefit the world in the same manner as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. You who are my disciples, each of you should work diligently at this, work diligently at this!

Nichiren

The twelfth month in the third year of Kōan [1280], cyclical sign kanoe-tatsu

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this work at Minobu in the twelfth month of 1280, and addressed it to the body of his followers, as is apparent from its closing line, “You who are my disciples, each of you should work diligent-
ly at this, work diligently at this!"

Hachiman, the subject of this letter, is a major god of Japan. The origins of this deity are unknown, but the first Hachiman shrine exists at Usa, Kyushu. When the great image of the Buddha was constructed in Nara in 749, Hachiman was seen as its protector and thereafter viewed as a protector of Buddhism. Belief in the deity was firmly established when the Hachiman shrine was built at Iwashimizu, Kyoto, as a derivative shrine of the Usa Hachiman shrine. Also Buddhist temples were built within the precincts of shrines to Hachiman so that he could "taste the flavor" of Buddhism, and the god was identified as a provisional manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha. The syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism allowed the imperial court to bestow the Buddhist title of Great Bodhisattva upon Hachiman. Hachiman was also identified as the deified spirit of Emperor Ōjin, a legendary sovereign of Japan before Buddhism was introduced to the country. Hachiman had a special significance to the Kamakura shogunate as the patron deity of the Minamoto, or Genji, clan, who established the shogunate, and was worshiped by the warriors.

At the time of this writing, the Mongol Empire was preparing for a second invasion of Japan. For its part, the Kamakura shogunate was working intensively to shore up Japan's system of defenses. At this critical time, a fire destroyed the Hachiman shrine at Tsurugaoka in Kamakura. The burning of the shrine to the patron deity of the shogunate was a cause for widespread alarm.

In this writing, Nichiren Daishonin addresses the significance of events such as the burning of the Hachiman shrine and the Mongol invasion of Japan from the viewpoint of the Buddhist teachings, particularly the Lotus Sutra. He identifies these disasters as punishment from the gods who protect Buddhism—punishment of Hachiman for his negligence in failing to protect the Lotus Sutra and its votary, the Daishonin, and of the nation of Japan for slandering them.

On the twenty-eighth day of the tenth month, one month before this writing, a great fire had engulfed the Kamakura area, and another fire broke out on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, burning the shrine to Hachiman.

The current work can be divided into two parts. The first is a reprimand of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman for his negligence in failing to protect those who uphold and propagate the Lotus Sutra. Hachiman was believed to have vowed before the Buddha to protect those who uphold his correct teaching. But because he has failed to punish the Kamakura authorities for having consistently persecuted him, the Daishonin asserts, major gods such as Brahmā and Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon, have seen fit to punish Hachiman by burning his shrine. He strictly admonishes Hachiman to take measures immediately to punish the Kamakura government for its slander of the Law, and to lend protection to the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

In the second part of this writing, the Daishonin addresses doubts and criticisms that arose because of his reprimanding a respected deity in this fashion. Those who viewed gods such as Hachiman as superlative beings would find anything short of reverence toward them hard to accept. To them, the Daishonin's attitude would appear outrageous. But the Daishonin explains his actions based on the Buddhist sutras. He relates a Buddhist legend, which teaches that if one has sincerely and properly petitioned a tutelary god for some good purpose through prayer, and if that god fails to respond, one may reprimand the deity for negli-
gence. He clarifies that his efforts to refute erroneous doctrines and spread the Lotus Sutra in spite of great persecutions have been for the sole purpose of leading all the people of Japan away from suffering. For that reason, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman should hasten to protect him, the votary of the Lotus Sutra; Hachiman’s failure to do so will invite punishment by the Buddha.

In closing, the Daishonin states, “The Land of the Moon is another name for India, the place where the Buddha made his appearance in the world. The Land of the Sun is another name for Japan. Is there any reason why a sage should not appear here? The moon moves from the west eastward, a sign of how the Buddhism of India spread in an easterly direction. The sun rises in the east, an auspicious sign of how the Buddhism of Japan is destined to return to the Land of the Moon.” Here he predicts the global spread of the “Buddhism of the Sun,” the great pure Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Notes

1. The True Word school plus the six schools (see Glossary).
2. Chapter ten of the Lotus Sutra reads, “Among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!” For ghee, or the finest clarified butter, see Glossary.
3. In his Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, Köbō classified the various Buddhist teachings as corresponding to ten stages of the mind’s development and ranked the Lotus Sutra eighth, the Flower Garland Sutra ninth, and the Mahāvairochana Sutra tenth or the highest. Jikaku and Chishō, the third and fifth chief priests of the Tendai school, espoused an interpretation formulated by Shan-wu-wei asserting that the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra both reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and therefore these two sutras are equal in terms of principle; however, because the Mahāvairochana Sutra contains descriptions of mudras (hand gestures) and mantras (mystic formulas), it is superior to the Lotus Sutra in terms of practice. Hence they ranked the Lotus Sutra in second place.
4. The various reasons for this are described in On the Relative Superiority of the True Word and Tendai Schools (p. 364). These sutras are ranked in descending order as follows: Lotus Sutra, Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, Nirvana Sutra, Flower Garland Sutra, Wisdom sutras, Susiddhikara Sutra, and Mahāvairochana Sutra.
5. What sutra the Daishonin refers to is uncertain.
6. Five stages of practice to be followed after Shakyamuni’s death, which T’ien-t’ai formulated based on the contents of chapter seventeen of the Lotus Sutra. They are (1) to rejoice on hearing the Lotus Sutra, (2) to read and recite the sutra, (3) to expound the sutra to others, (4) to embrace the sutra and practice the six pāramitās, and (5) to perfect one’s practice of the six pāramitās. “The stage of hearing the name and words of the truth” is one of the six stages of practice (see Glossary).
7. One of the monasteries at Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei, where Dengyō enshrined a statue of Thousand-armed Perceiver of the World’s Sounds.
8. Around the beginning of the Heian period (794–1185), Hachiman was given the title Great Bodhisattva by the imperial court, an early instance of the fusion of Buddhist and Shinto elements. Also during the Heian period, Hachiman became identified with Emperor Ojin.
9. This statement appears in A Brief History of Japan. Kimmei is now regarded as the twenty-ninth emperor, because the administration of the fifteenth ruler, Empress Jingū, is no longer considered a formal reign. In Nichiren Daishonin’s time, however, she was included in the lineage, so Emperor Kimmei was counted as the thirtieth sovereign. In the reign of Emperor Kimmei, Buddhism was introduced to Japan from the Korean kingdom of Paekche in 552.
10. This statement is attributed to Dengyō, but here the Daishonin cites it as the words of the two court officials. See On Repaying Debts of Gratitude (I, p. 793).
11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.
12. This is a reference to a Buddhist legend that states that Shakyamuni’s disciple
Mahākāshyapa has been waiting, and will continue to wait, in meditation throughout the ages on Mount Kukkutapāda in India for the future Buddha Maitreya to appear. At that time he will present Maitreya with Shakymuni Buddha’s robe and begging bowl, which the Buddha entrusted to him for that purpose.

13. Bidatsu was the thirtieth emperor and the second son of Emperor Kimmei, and Yōmei was the thirty-first emperor and the fourth son of Emperor Kimmei. According to traditional accounts, in the reign of Emperor Bidatsu, Soga no Umako built a pagoda to enshrine the Buddha’s relics. When an epidemic broke out, Monono- be no Moriya attributed it to the anger of the native gods at the respect shown to the “foreign deity,” and he destroyed the pagoda.

14. The great deity of Silla is regarded as a guardian god of Onjō-ji temple. Tradition has it that in 858, on his return from T’ang China, Chishō saw an elderly man appear before him, saying that he was a deity of the Korean kingdom of Silla who would descend in Japan in order to protect Buddhism. In 860 Onjō-ji built a sanctuary for the statue of the deity as the guardian of the temple.

15. The governor of P’ei refers to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.E.), the founder of the Former Han dynasty. He overthrew the Ch’in dynasty whose ancestral deity is said to have been King Hsiang. The story of his taking his sword and cutting in two the great snake is found in Records of the Historian. The snake symbolizes King Hsiang and the Ch’in dynasty, and Liu Pang’s cutting it, the defeat of the Ch’in by the Former Han.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

17. The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, written by Kōbō.

18. “A later stage” means the tenth and supreme stage of the ten stages of the mind, that is, the stage of realizing the esoteric teaching. This statement is found in A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism written by Kōbō.

19. This statement is based on a passage in The Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha’s Relics, in which Kakuban, the precursor of the New Doctrine school, a branch of the True Word school, says that the Lotus Sutra is not fit even to be a sandal tender for the Mahāvairochana Sutra, and that Shakymuni Buddha is not worthy even to serve as an ox driver for the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana.

20. “The Kōchō era” refers to the Izu Exile in 1261, and “the Bun’ei era” to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. In 1271, the Daishonin was taken to the execution site at Tatsunokuchi, Kamakura, passing the shrine to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman.

21. This refers to the rebellions raised in the second month of 1272 by Hōjō Toki- suke, an influential commissioner in Kyoto, designed to overthrow the regent Hōjō Tokimune, his half-brother. Tokisuke’s co-conspirators in Kamakura were killed by government forces, while Tokisuke himself was attacked and killed in Kyoto.


23. This statement appears in A Brief History of Japan.


25. This refers to the time when the Daishonin first proclaimed the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

26. A priest of the Tendai school. He studied under Jikaku. He is said to have excelled in the performance of the esoteric prayer rituals. In 863 he founded Mudō-ji temple on Mount Hiei, in which a statue of the wisdom king Immovable was enshrined.

27. Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land.

28. Hönen asserted that one should discard, close, ignore, and abandon all teachings and practices other than those relating to Amida Buddha and his Pure Land. He set this forth in The Nembutsu Chosen above All, though he did not use these four words in this particular form.


30. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

31. Source unknown.

32. On “The Words and Phrases.”

33. Ibid.

34. This may refer to The Continued Chronicles of Japan, which mentions Gyōki but not the population of Japan. Concerning the population figures referred to in this sentence, their sources have not been traced. Gyōki (668–749) was a priest of Yakushi-ji temple in Nara. He traveled throughout the provinces to teach the doctrines of the Dharma Characteristics school and is said to have gained some one thousand converts. In his travels, he also built
bridges and embankments, repaired roads, and carried out reclamation and irrigation work.

35. The eighty-first sovereign refers to Emperor Antoku, who, still a child at the time, drowned in 1185 during the sea battle at Dannoura in which the Taira clan met their final defeat at the hands of the Minamoto clan. The eighty-second, the eighty-third, the eighty-fourth, and the eighty-fifth sovereigns refer to the three retired emperors, Gotoba, Tsuchimikado, and Juntoku, and the reigning emperor Chūkyō, respectively. In 1221, they joined in an attempt to overthrow the military government in Kamakura, but their forces were defeated by those of the Kamakura regent Hōjō Yoshitoki, under the leadership of his eldest son, Yasutoki. Chūkyō was deposed; Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki; Tsuchimikado, to Tosa Province; and Juntoku, to Sado Island.

36. The character for king is 王, which is pronounced ō.

37. A reference to Huang Ti, one of the legendary Three Sovereigns of ancient China. According to Records of the Historian, among other major contributions to civilization, he initiated the art of medicine.

38. The six schools (see Glossary) and the True Word school.

39. Applying the concept of the Womb Realm mandala of Esoteric Buddhism, the Daishonin explains that Shakyamuni Buddha seated on the central dais is the original form and Hachiman seated on one of the eight petals is its temporary manifestation.

40. Ōsumi Province was an area in what is now Kagoshima in the southernmost part of Kyushu. The stone itself no longer exists, but the inscription is quoted in a work by the Zen priest Nampo Genshō (1555–1620).

41. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
42. Ibid., chap. 16.
43. Ibid., chap. 2.
44. One of Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciples. He was born to a wealthy family in Shravasti, India. It is said that in the remote past he offered some money to Vipashyin Buddha and received instruction in the precept “not to kill.”

45. According to The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, in his past existence, Shāriputra was practicing the bodhisattva way when a Brahman begged for his eye. Shāriputra gave it to him, but the Brahman was so revolted by its smell that he dropped and crushed it. Seeing this, Shāriputra withdrew in despair from his practice.

46. The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”
48. Ibid., chap. 16.
49. The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.

50. The Land of the Moon (Chin Yūeh-chih) was a name for India used in China and Japan. In the latter part of the third century B.C.E., a central Asian tribe called the Yūeh-chih ruled a part of northern India. Since Buddhism was brought to China via this territory, the Chinese regarded the land of the Yūeh-chih (moon tribe) as India itself.

51. This refers to the direction of the moon’s apparent motion. While the moon rises in the east and sets in the west like the sun, because of the direction of its orbit around the earth, each night it appears a little farther to the east of its position in the sky the previous night.