"Their Views Were Widely Accepted as Authoritative"

Their views were widely accepted as authoritative. And since then, though countless numbers of wise persons have appeared, for four hundred years down to the present everyone has gone along with those views. As a result, now the more than ten thousand temples and the more than three thousand shrines of Japan, and the 4,994,828 inhabitants of this country have all become followers of these three great teachers [Kōbō, Jikaku, and Chishō]. They take the Lotus Sutra, which is described as the foremost of all the Buddhist sutras, and demote it to second or third place.¹

At first this did not seem to be any great error. But drops of dew accumulate until they form a great ocean; particles of dust pile up into a great mountain.

Background

This fragment of a letter, whose date and recipient are unknown, records a criticism of the "three great teachers," Jikaku and Chishō, the patriarchs of True Word esotericism within the Tendai school, and Kōbō, the founder of the True Word school. Nichiren Daishonin suggests that though their errors were unknown for more than four hundred years, those errors are now becoming apparent. In other writings, the Daishonin points out the doctrinal errors of these teachers, as well as the failure of the prayers of their latter-day followers.

Note

1. In chapter ten of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha says, "I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!" In his Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, however, Kōbō ranks the Lotus Sutra as inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra, and as two stages below the Mahāvairochana Sutra. Jikaku and Chishō held the view that although the Lotus Sutra and the Mahāvairochana Sutra are equal in terms of principle, the latter is superior in terms of practice.