Amidst a world undergoing constant and far-reaching change, it is difficult to know what may be taken as the foundation for our lives and how we should carry on our existence. In every age and in all societies, however, it is the true and real teaching that genuinely guides us; nothing else suffices.

Through such writings as the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way, Shinran Shonin clarified the teaching of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. This teaching is not restricted in its relevance, but unfailingly becomes meaningful for any person who reflects deeply on human existence. For at heart is the wish to guide all human beings, transcending differences of nationality, ethnicity, and race, to truly fruitful lives. Amida Buddha calls to us, who are inclined to enclose ourselves within our own husks, to awaken to that which is true and real.
The publication of the Collected Works of Shinran is a joyous occasion. The work of translation is difficult, for the understanding required extends to various underlying differences in culture and practices. This work, carried on through the efforts of many persons, is now published in comprehensive form.

It is my hope that, through The Collected Works of Shinran, even one more person may encounter the Shin Buddhist teaching and gain insight into the life of the Nembutsu.

Ohtani Koshin
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

Major Expositions

The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way

Major Expositions
Preface

I reflect within myself: The universal Vow difficult to fathom is indeed a great vessel bearing us across the ocean difficult to cross. The unhindered light is the sun of wisdom dispersing the darkness of our ignorance. Thus it is that, when conditions for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land had matured, Devadatta provoked Ajatashatru to commit grave crimes. And when the opportunity arose for explaining the pure act by which birth is settled, Shakyamuni led Vaidehi to select the land of peace. In their selfless love, these incarnated ones - Devadatta, Ajatashatru, Vaidehi - all aspired to save the multitudes of beings from pain and affliction, and in his compassion, Shakyamuni, the great hero, sought indeed to bless those
committing the five grave offenses, those slandering the dharma, and those lacking the seed of Buddhahood. We know, therefore, that the auspicious Name embodying the perfectly fulfilled supreme virtues is true wisdom that transforms our evil into virtue, and that the diamond-like shinjin so difficult to accept is true reality that sweeps away doubt and brings us to attainment of enlightenment.

This, then, is the true teaching easy to practice for small, foolish beings; it is the straight way easy to traverse for the dull and ignorant. Among all teachings the Great Sage preached in his lifetime, none surpasses this ocean of virtues. Let the one who seeks to abandon the defiled and aspire for the pure; who is confused in practice and vacillating in faith; whose mind is dark and whose understanding deficient; whose evils are heavy and whose karmic obstructions manifold - let such persons embrace above all the Tathāgata’s exhortations, take refuge without fail in the most excellent direct path, devote themselves solely to this practice, and revere only this shinjin.

Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida's universal Vow! Hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, is pure shinjin that is true and real! If you should come to realize this practice and shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about. But if in this lifetime still you are entangled in a net of doubt, then unavoidably you must pass once more in the stream of birth-and-death through myriads of kalpas. Wholly sincere, indeed, are the words of truth that one is grasped, never to be abandoned, the right dharma all surpassing and wondrous! Hear and reflect, and let there be no wavering or apprehension.

How joyous I am, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni! Rare is it to come upon the sacred scriptures from the westward land of India and the commentaries of the masters of China and Japan, but now I have been able to encounter them. Rare is it to hear them, but already I have been able to hear. Reverently entrusting myself to the teaching, practice and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way, I am especially aware of the
profundity of the Tathágata’s benevolence. Here I rejoice in what I have heard and extol what I have attained.

A Collection of Passages Revealing
The True Teaching of the Pure Land Way

Compiled By Gutoku Shinran,
Disciple Of Shakyamuni

1 Reverently contemplating the true essence of the Pure Land way, I see that Amida’s directing of virtue to sentient beings has two aspects: the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land and the aspect for our return to this world. In the aspect for going forth, there is the true teaching, practice, shinjin, and realization.

2 To reveal the true teaching: It is the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. The central purport of this sutra is that Amida, by establishing the incomparable Vows, has opened wide the dharma-storehouse, and full of compassion for small, foolish beings, selects and bestows the treasure of virtues. [The sutra further reveals that] Shakyamuni appeared in this world and expounded the teachings of the way to enlightenment, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by blessing them with this benefit that is true and real. Thus, to teach the Tathágata’s Primal Vow is the true intent of this sutra; the Name of the Buddha is its essence.

[THE SUTRA PASSAGES]
How is it known that [this sutra] was the great matter for which Shakyamuni appeared in the world? The Larger Sutra states:

[Ánanda asked,] "Today, World-honored one, your sense organs are filled with gladness and serenity. Your complexion is pure. Your radiant countenance is majestic, like a luminous mirror in which clear reflections pass unobstructed. Your lofty features are resplendent, surpassing all words or measure. Never before have I beheld your lineaments as sublime as they are now. Indeed, Great Sage, I have thought to myself: Today, the World-honored one abides in the dharma most rare and wondrous. Today, the Great Hero abides where all Buddhas abide. Today, the World's Eye abides in the activity of guide and teacher. Today, the Preeminent one of the world abides in the supreme enlightenment. Today, the Heaven-honored one puts into practice the virtue of all Tathágatas. The Buddhas of the past, future and present all think on one another. Do not you, the present Buddha, also think on all the other Buddhas now? Why does your commanding radiance shine forth with such brilliance? Then the World-honored one said to Ánanda, "Did devas so instruct you that you ask this, or do you inquire of my noble mien out of your own wisdom?"

Ánanda replied to the Buddha, "No deva came to teach me; I ask this myself, simply from what I observe." The Buddha said, "Well spoken, Ánanda! Your question is excellent. You ask this insightful question having summoned up deep wisdom and true and subtle powers of expression, and having turned tender thoughts to all sentient beings. In his boundless compassion, the Tathágata is filled with commiseration for the beings of the three realms. I have appeared in the world and expounded the teachings of the way to enlightenment, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by blessing them with the benefit that is true and real. Rare is it to encounter and rare to behold a Tathágata, even in countless millions of kalpas. It is like the blossoming of the udumbara, which seldom occurs. This question you now ask will bring immense benefit; it will enlighten the minds of all devas and human beings. Know, Ánanda, that the perfect enlightenment of the Tathágata is immeasurable in its wisdom and vast in its guidance of beings to
enlightenment. His insight knows no impediments; nothing can obstruct it."

4 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

Ánanda replied to the Buddha, "World-honored one, this thought occurs to me because I behold the rare and auspicious splendor that now fills your features; it was not taught me by the devas." The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Excellent, well spoken! This question is well asked indeed! You have been able to see the Tathágata’s subtle discernment, and well have you inquired of the Tathágata concerning the reason [for my splendor]. O Ánanda, all Tathágatas, who are to be revered and who have realized perfect enlightenment, dwell firmly in great compassion, and to bring benefit to sentient beings, they appear in the world as great masters - events as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara. This is why you have asked this question. It is out of commiseration for all the sentient beings, and out of desire to bring them benefit and happiness: Well have you asked this question!"

5 The Sutra of the Enlightenment of Ultimate Equality states:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "We find in this world a tree called udumbara that bears fruit but no flowers. In its rarity, a Buddha's appearance in this world is no different from the blossoming of the udumbara. And even though a Buddha may be in the world, exceedingly rare is it that one should encounter that Buddha. I am now Buddha and have come into this world. You are a person of great virtue, lucid intelligence, and goodwill, and you know beforehand the Buddha's intent. You have not in vain been at the Buddha's side serving him. Listen carefully and attentively now as I answer you."
6 Master Kyeong-heung comments on the Larger Sutra:

Today, the World-honored one abides in the dharma most rare and wondrous: These words indicate the form manifested through the Buddha's supernatural powers. Not only do his features surpass the ordinary, there is none his equal. Today, the Great Hero abides where all Buddhas abide: Abiding in the samādhi of universal sameness, he subdues all Maras, even the powerful demon-king of the sixth heaven. Today, the World's Eye abides in the activity of guide and teacher: The Buddha's five kinds of vision are termed "the activity of guide and teacher"; he is unsurpassed in drawing and guiding sentient beings to enlightenment. Today, the Preeminent one of the world abides in the supreme enlightenment: The Buddha, alone and matchless as he abides in the four forms of wisdom, is completely unrivaled. Today, the Heaven-honored one puts into practice the virtue of all Tathāgatas: In his attainment of highest truth, the Buddha is the one most revered in all the heavens. He has awakened to the truth that Buddha-nature is not void. Know, Ánanda, the perfect enlightenment of the Tathāgata: that is, the dharma rare and wondrous. His insight knows no impediment: This describes the most excellent way. Nothing can obstruct it: This refers to the virtue of the Tathāgata.

7 Thus, these passages give clear testimony that the Larger Sutra reveals the true teaching. It is indeed the right exposition for which the Tathāgata appeared in the world, the wondrous scripture rare and most excellent, the conclusive and ultimate exposition of the One Vehicle, the precious words disclosing perfect, instantaneous fulfillment, the sincere words praised by
all the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, the true teaching in consummate readiness for the beings of this day. Let this be known.

HERE ENDS CHAPTER I:
A COLLECTION OF PASSAGES REVEALING
THE TRUE TEACHING OF THE PURE LAND WAY

II

A Collection of Passages Revealing
The True Practice of the Pure Land Way

Compiled by Gutoku Shinran

Disciple of Shakyamuni

1 Reverently contemplating Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth to the Pure Land, I find that there is great practice there is great shinjin.

The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathágata of unhindered light. This practice, embodying all good acts and possessing all roots of virtue, is perfect and most rapid in bringing about birth. It is the treasure ocean of virtues that is such-ness or true reality. For this reason, it is called great practice.

This practice arises from the Vow of great compassion, which is known as "the Vow that all Buddhas extol the Name," "the Vow that all Buddhas say the Name," and "the Vow that all Buddhas praise the Name." It might also be called "the Vow of directing virtue for our going forth" and "the Vow in which the saying of the Name is selected."
[The Sutra Passages]

2 The Vow that all the Buddhas say the Name is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the countless Buddhas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters do not all praise and say my Name, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment!

3 The sutra further states:

When I have fulfilled the Buddha-way,

My Name shall pervade the ten quarters;

If there be any place it is not heard,

I vow not to attain the supreme enlightenment.

For the sake of all beings I will open forth the treasure-store

And give away universally its treasure of virtues.

Among the multitudes of beings

I will always preach the dharma with a lion's roar.

4 The sutra passage declaring the fulfillment of this Vow states:

The Buddha-Tathāgatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in praising the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of immeasurable life.
5 The sutra further states:

Boundless is the majestic power of the Buddha of immeasurable life. This Buddha is praised by every one of the Buddha-Tathágatas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters, whose number, incalculable and limitless, is beyond conception.

6 Further it states:

The power of the Buddha's Primal Vow is such

That those who, hearing the Name, aspire for birth

All reach that land-

Their attainment of non-retrogression coming about of itself.

7 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

Before Lokesvararaja Tathágata I have now declared my universal Vows;

May he verify that they will be the cause of supreme enlightenment.

Should I not fulfill these matchless Vows,

May I not become the incomparable honored one, possessed of the ten powers.

Those with minds incapable of the constant practice of giving-

Those impoverished- I will save universally and relieve of all suffering;

I will benefit the world, bringing peace and happiness...
As the one supremely able, I will perform and fulfill all practices;

To those impoverished I will be a hidden treasure-store.

Carrying all good acts to perfect completion, I will be unrivaled;

Among the multitudes I will preach with a lion's roar.

8 Further it states:

Ānanda, because of this benefit, the innumerable, incalculable, inconceivable, and peerless Buddha-Tathāgatas throughout the countless worlds are one in praising the virtues of the Buddha of immeasurable life.

9 It is stated in the Sutra of Salvation through the Perfect Enlightenment of Amida, Supreme among Buddhas:

Fourth, I vow: When I attain Buddhahood, I will cause my Name to be heard throughout the countless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, the zenith, and the nadir. All Buddhas will preach my virtues and the perfections of my land to the multitudes of monks in their own lands. There will be none among devas, human beings, and even insects that fly, crawl, or creep, who, upon hearing my Name, fails to awaken a heart of compassion. Dancing with joy, they will all be enabled to come and be born in my land. Fulfilling this Vow, I will attain Buddhahood; if it not be fulfilled, may I ultimately not attain Buddhahood.

10 The Sutra of the Immeasurable Pure Enlightenment of Equality, scroll one, states:
When I attain Buddhahood, I will cause my Name to be heard throughout the countless Buddha-lands of the eight quarters, the zenith, and the nadir. All of the Buddhas will extol my virtues and the goodness of my land among followers in their own lands. Those devas and human beings, and even the species of crawling things, who dance and leap [with joy] when they hear my Name, will all be enabled to come and be born in my land. If it not be so, may I not attain Buddhahood.

When I attain Buddhahood, people of other Buddha-lands- whether they have listened to my Name with evil intentions in previous lives or whether they indeed aspire to be born in my land for the sake of enlightenment - will be kept from returning once more to the three evil courses when their lives end. They will instead all attain birth in my land, which is the desire they cherish in their hearts. If it not be so, may I not attain Buddhahood.

Prince Ajatashatru and the five hundred sons of a wealthy man heard the Twenty-four Vows of the Buddha of immeasurable purity. Overwhelmed with gladness, they all danced with joy, and in their hearts they spoke their aspiration: "When we attain Buddhahood, may we too all be like the Buddha of immeasurable purity."

Shakyamuni Buddha, knowing their aspiration, declared to the monks, "Prince Ajatashatru and these five hundred sons of a wealthy man will, after innumerable kalpas, all attain Buddhahood and be like the Buddha of immeasurable purity."

The Buddha said, "Prince Ajatashatru and these five hundred sons of a wealthy man have practiced the bodhisattva path for innumerable kalpas, during which they have each made offerings to forty billion Buddhas. Now once again they come to make offerings to me. Prince Ajatashatru and these five hundred were all disciples of mine formerly, in the time of Kasyapa Buddha. Now, again, they all gather here and we meet."

All the monks, on hearing the Buddha's words, danced with joy in their hearts, and there was none who did not rejoice...

Such people as these, hearing the Buddha's Name,
Will be fully at peace and obtain the supreme benefit.

Beings like ourselves, too, will receive that virtue,

And gain what is excellent, each in our own lands.

The Buddha of immeasurable enlightenment bestows the prediction of our attainment:

"In my former life I made my Primal Vow;

All people, if they hear my teaching of the dharma,

Will without exception come and be born in my land.

Thus, what I have vowed will all be fulfilled,

Those who wish to come from the other lands

Will all reach this place,

Attaining non-retrogression after one lifetime."

Swiftly one transcends [birth-and-death]

And is able to attain the world of happiness;

Reaching the land of immeasurable light,

One makes offerings to countless Buddhas.

People not possessed of this virtue

Are unable to hear the name of this sutra;

Only those who have observed the precepts without fault

Have now come to hear the right dharma.
Those of evil, arrogance, the hindrance of passions, and indolence
Will have difficulty entrusting themselves to this dharma;
But those who have encountered Buddhas in previous lives
Will joyfully listen to the teaching of the World-honored one.
Rare is it to obtain human life,
And difficult to encounter a Buddha's appearance in the world;
Hard is it to attain the wisdom of entrusting:
Should you meet with and hear this teaching, pursue it with diligence.
If a person, hearing and never forgetting this dharma [of the Name],
Sees, reveres, and attains it, and greatly rejoices,
Then he or she is my excellent, close companion;
Therefore awaken aspiration for enlightenment!
Even when the world is filled with a great fire,
Pass through it and seek to hear the dharma;
Then you will unfailingly become a world-honored one
And free all beings from birth, aging, and death.

11 The "Chapter on Great Beneficence," scroll two, in the Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion states:
I vow that when I have attained supreme enlightenment, the sentient beings of the countless, innumerable, incalculable Buddha-lands who hear
my Name will all cultivate roots of good and aspire for birth in my land. Further, I vow that after their lives have ended, I will unfailingly bring them to attainment of birth. Excepted are those who commit the five grave offenses, who slander the sages, or who destroy the right dharma.

[On Saying The Name]

12 These passages reveal that saying the Name breaks through all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills their aspirations. Saying the Name is the right act, supreme, true, and excellent. The right act is the Nembutsu. The Nembutsu is Namu-Amida-butsu. Namu-Amida-butsu is right-mindedness. Let this be known.

Passages From The Masters: Nargarjuna

13 The Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages states:

Some declare that the samádhi called "all Buddhas' presence" and great compassion are the "home of the Buddhas." All Tathágatas are born from them. Of the two, the samádhi of all Buddhas' presence is the father and great compassion is the mother. It is also said that the samádhi of all Buddhas' presence is the father and insight into the non-origination of all existence is the mother. In Aid to Enlightenment it is stated:

The samádhi of all Buddhas' presence is the father;

Great compassion and non-origination are the mother:

All the Tathágatas

Are born from these two.
Since the home is free of all fault, it is possessed of purity. "Purity" refers to the six paramitas and the four abodes of virtue. Skillful means and Prajñápáramitá are the superb wisdom. The samádhi of all Buddhas' presence, great compassion, and the insights -these are pure and altogether free of fault. Hence the home is said to be pure. Because the bodhisattvas make these their home, it is completely without fault.

Turning from the paths of the world, they enter the highest, supra-mundane path: the paths of the world are the paths traveled by foolish beings. Turn from means to abandon. The paths of foolish beings do not ultimately lead to nirvana, but ceaselessly come and go in birth-and-death; hence they are called "paths of foolish beings." Supra-mundane path refers to the way by which one is able to go out from the three realms; hence it is called the "supra-mundane path." It is highest because it is excellent. Enter means to practice this way truly. With such a mind one enters the first stage; it is called "the stage of joy."

Question: Why is the first stage called "joy"?

Answer: Like the person of the first fruit,
Who will ultimately reach nirvana
Bodhisattvas who attain this stage
Always greatly rejoice in their hearts.
Within them the seed of all Buddha-Tathágatas
Naturally increases and grows;
Hence, such a person
Is called good and wise
Like the person of the first fruit: that is, like persons who gain the stage of srota-apanna. For them, the gates to the three evil courses are decisively closed off. They see the dharma, attain the dharma, and abide in the firm
dharma, from which they can never be moved, and thus they ultimately reach nirvana. They eliminate the blind passions that are to be eliminated by insight into true reality; hence they greatly rejoice in their hearts. Even though they may give themselves to sleep and sloth, still they will never be subject to further samsaric existence for a twenty-ninth time.

Split a hair into a hundred strands, and with a single strand draw up water from the broad ocean. The amount of suffering already extinguished at the first stage is like two or three drops drawn thus, while the waters of the vast ocean represent the amount yet remaining to be extinguished. The mind equal to those two or three drops greatly rejoices. The case of the bodhisattva is like this.

To have reached the first stage is called being born into the home of the Tathágatas. Persons born into this home receive the offerings and the homage of all devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas...Sravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas. Why? Because the home is free of all fault, and for this reason the bodhisattvas have turned from worldly paths and entered the supra-mundane path. With only joyful reverence for the Buddhas, they attain the four abodes of virtue and receive the recompense of performing the six paramitas. Nourished by the rich taste of this, the seed of all Buddhas [within them] is never severed; hence they greatly rejoice in their hearts. The remaining suffering that the bodhisattvas will experience seems but two or three drops of water. Although they must pass through a hundred thousand kotis of kalpas in attaining the supreme, perfect enlightenment, the remaining suffering seems like two or three drops when compared with the suffering they have gone through in birth-and-death since the beginning-less past, though in fact the suffering to be eliminated is like the water of the vast ocean. Therefore this stage is called "joy."

Question: Bodhisattvas in this first stage of joy are called "those who greatly rejoice." Since the attainment of many virtues occurs here, joy is taken to be the name of this stage. [In this stage] they should rejoice in the dharma. What is there that brings joy?

Answer: To think constantly on the Buddhas
And on the great faculties of the Buddhas

Is the rare practice of the definitely settled;

Hence, one greatly rejoices.

Because of such causal sources of joy, the bodhisattvas in the first stage greatly rejoice in their hearts.

Think on the Buddhas means to think on the Buddhas of the past such as Dipamkara, the Buddhas of the present such as Amida, and the Buddhas of the future such as Maitreya. When they think constantly on the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, it is as though the Buddhas were actually before their eyes. The Buddhas are foremost among beings of the three realms, excelled by none; hence the bodhisattvas greatly rejoice.

Think on the great faculties of the Buddhas: briefly stated, there are forty faculties possessed exclusively by Buddhas. First, their ability to fly freely accords with their own will. Second, their ability to transform themselves freely is unlimited. Third, their ability to hear freely is without impediment. Fourth, they have incalculable means by which they freely know the minds of all sentient beings...

Concerning the phrase, Bodhisattvas who think on definite settlement: when bodhisattvas have received a prediction of their attainment of supreme enlightenment, they enter the stage of the dharma and realize insight into non-origination. An army of millions of kotis of Maras cannot defeat or confuse them. Attaining the mind of great compassion, they fulfill the acts of a great being.... Such are those called "bodhisattvas who think on definite settlement."

Think on the rare practice means to think on the highest, rare practice of the definitely settled bodhisattva. To think on it causes one to rejoice in one's heart. This practice is beyond the capability of all ordinary beings, and no Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha is able to perform it. It reveals the unhindered emancipation of the Buddha-dharma, and also the wisdom of the all-knowing one. Further, since one thinks on all the practices performed in the
ten stages, one is said to "greatly rejoice in one's heart." Therefore, the first stage attained by bodhisattvas is called "joy."

Question: There are ordinary beings who have yet to awaken the aspiration for supreme enlightenment, and those who awaken the mind of enlightenment but have not yet attained the stage of joy. Such people may also experience joy when thinking on the Buddhas and the great faculties of the Buddhas, or on the definitely settled bodhisattvas and their rare practice. How does the joy of a bodhisattva who has attained the first stage differ from the joy of such people?

Answer: If bodhisattvas attain the first stage,

They will greatly rejoice in their hearts;

They will think, "I also am definitely to obtain

The immeasurable virtues of the Buddhas."

The definitely settled bodhisattvas who attain the first stage, in thinking on the Buddhas, see that the Buddhas possess immeasurable virtues, and they consider, "I will indeed unfailingly attain the same thing." This is because they reflect, "I have already attained this first stage and thus joined those who are definitely settled." This thought does not occur to the others. Because of it, the bodhisattvas of the first stage greatly rejoice. This is not the case with the others. How is it so? Although others may think on the Buddhas, they are incapable of having the thought, "I will indeed unfailingly attain Buddhahood." Take, for example, the case of the cakravartin prince. He is born into the house of the cakravartin king and possesses the marks of the cakravartin king. Thinking of the virtues and nobility of the cakravartin kings of the past, he considers, "Now I also have these marks, and I will indeed attain that wealth and nobility," and he rejoices greatly in his heart. If he lacked the marks of the cakravartin king, he would not have such joy. Likewise, when the definitely settled bodhisattvas think on the Buddhas, on their great virtues, and on their nobility of deportment, they reflect, "I have these marks and will indeed unfailingly attain Buddhahood," and they greatly rejoice. This does not take
place with the others. The mind [definitely] settled refers to the mind that, penetrating deeply into the Buddha-dharma, is never shaken.

14 Further it states:

What does it mean that the power of entrusting becomes dominant? When one accepts firmly what one hears and sees and does not doubt, it is said that the power of entrusting has become "dominant." It is also described as "excellent."

Question: There are two ways of being dominant: in abundance and in excellence. Which does the present explanation refer to?

Answer: It refers to both. Since the bodhisattvas obtain a taste of all virtues when they enter the first stage, the power of entrusting becomes increasingly dominant. With this power of entrusting, they fathom the depth and excellence of the immeasurable virtues of the Buddhas, and profoundly entrust themselves to and accept them. Hence, this mind of entrusting is both abundant and excellent.

When they deeply practice great compassion, pity for sentient beings penetrates their bones and marrow; hence, "deeply." Since they seek the enlightenment of the Buddha for the sake of all sentient beings, the word "great" is used. The compassionate heart constantly seeks to benefit beings and to bring them tranquility. There are three kinds of compassion...

15 Further it states:

In the Buddha's teaching there are countless gates. Just as there are difficult and easy among the paths of this world - for journeying overland is full of hardship while sailing on board of a boat is pleasant - so it is with the paths of bodhisattvas. Some engage in rigorous practice and endeavor; others
quickly reach the stage of non-retrogression through the easy practice of entrusting as the means [for attaining it]...

If a person desires quickly to attain

The stage of non-retrogression,

He or she should, with a reverent heart,

Say the Name, holding steadfast to it.

If bodhisattvas desire to realize the supreme, perfect enlightenment through attaining the stage of non-retrogression while in their present existence, they should think on the Buddhas of the ten quarters. The saying of the Name is taught thus in "Chapter on Non-retrogression" of the Sutra of the Questions of the Lad Ratnacandra...

In the west is the Good Land;

The Buddha there is named Immeasurable Light.

The Buddha's bodily radiance and wisdom are luminous,

Shining everywhere without limit.

Those who hear the Buddha's Name

Immediately attain the stage of non-retrogression...

Countless kalpas in the past,

There was a Buddha named Ocean of Virtue,

Under whose guidance the Buddhas of the present

All established their vows.

The Buddha's life is without measure,
And light unbounded;

The Buddha's land is exceedingly pure.

If one hears the Name, one definitely attains Buddhahood...

Question: When persons simply hear the names of these ten Buddhas, hold steadfast to them, and keep them in their hearts, they immediately attain non-retrogression [in progress] toward the supreme, perfect enlightenment. Does one also attain non-retrogression with the names of other Buddhas and bodhisattvas?

Answer: It is thus,

When, saying their names, one thinks single-heartedly

On Amida, the other Buddhas,

And the great bodhisattvas,

One attains the stage of non-retrogression.

One should revere and pay homage to Amida and the other Buddhas and say their names. I will now expound in detail the Buddha of immeasurable life.

There is Lokesvararaja Buddha (and the other Buddhas). These world-honored Buddhas at present in the pure realms of the ten quarters all say the Name of Amida Buddha and are mindful of the Primal Vow, which states:

If persons think on me and say my Name, spontaneously taking refuge in me, immediately they enter the stage of the definitely settled and will realize the supreme, perfect enlightenment.

Hence you should constantly be mindful of Amida. I offer praise in a gatha:

O Buddha, the wisdom of immeasurable light,
Whose body is like a mountain of pure gold,
I now in body, speech, and thought,
Place hands together and bow my head in worship!
Those who think on Amida Buddha's
Immeasurable power and virtues
Immediately enter the stage of the definitely settled;
For this reason I constantly think on Amida...
If persons aspire to attain Buddhahood
And think on Amida in their hearts,
At that moment the Buddha will appear before them;
For this reason I take refuge
In the power of that Buddha's Primal Vow.
The bodhisattvas throughout the ten quarters also
Go to Amida's land to make offerings and hear the dharma;
For this reason I bow my head to Amida...
When persons doubt as they plant roots of good,
The lotus [in which they gain birth] will not open;
But for those whose shinjin is pure,
The flower opens, and immediately they see the Buddha.
The Buddhas of the present throughout the ten quarters,
Each in their own way,

Praise the virtues of that Buddha;

For this reason, I now take refuge and worship...

Carried on the ship of the Eightfold Path,

One crosses the ocean difficult to cross.

One crosses oneself, and also ferries others across;

For this reason I worship Amida, the one freely working.

Even were all Buddhas to praise Amida's virtues

For kalpas beyond reckoning,

They still would fail to exhaust them;

For this reason I take refuge in the one of purity.

Now, in this way, I extol

Amida's immeasurable virtues;

Through the merit of this praise,

May the Buddha constantly think of me.

Vasubandhu

16 The Treatise on the Pure Land states:
Relying on the sutras

In which the manifestation of true and real virtues is taught,

I compose a gatha of aspiration, a condensation,

That accords with the Buddha's teaching...

Contemplating the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,

I see that no one who encounters it passes by in vain;

It quickly brings to fullness and perfection

The great treasure ocean of virtues.

17 Further it states:

Know that the bodhisattva, having entered the first four gates, has fulfilled the practice of self-benefit, and having emerged into the fifth gate, has fulfilled the practice of directing virtue and benefiting others. For by having thus performed the practices of the five gates and accomplished both self-benefit and benefiting others, the bodhisattva has swiftly realized the supreme, perfect enlightenment.

[T'an-luan]
Reverently contemplating the Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages of Bodhisattva Nargarjuna, I find it stated that there are two paths by which bodhisattvas seek the stage of non-retrogression - the path of difficult practice and the path of easy practice.

With the path of difficult practice, it is seeking non-retrogression in this world of five defilements at a time when there is no Buddha that is difficult. This difficulty appears in many ways; I will indicate what is meant by roughly listing several of them.

The apparent good practiced in non-Buddhist ways is confused with the dharma of the bodhisattva.

The Sravakas concentration on self-benefit diverts a bodhisattva's practice of great compassion.

Evildoers lacking self-reflection subvert the excellent merits of others.

The results of good acts undertaken with inverted thinking nullify the bodhisattva's pure practice for enlightenment.

The path of difficult practice is based solely on self-power and lacks the support of Other Power.

Such problems as these, which may be seen everywhere, are examples of the difficulty. Thus the path of difficult practice may be compared in its hardship to journeying overland on foot.
In the path of easy practice, one aspires to be born in the Pure Land with solely one's entrusting oneself to the Buddha as the cause, and allowing oneself to be carried by the power of the Buddha's Vow, quickly attains birth in the land of purity. Supported by the Buddha's power, one immediately enters the group of the truly settled of the Mahayana. The stage of the truly settled is none other than the stage of non-retrogression. Thus the path of easy practice may be compared in its comfort to being carried over waterways in a ship.

This treatise, the Upadesa on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, indeed holds the ultimate of the Mahayana; it is a sail with which to catch the favorable wind toward non-retrogression.

"Immeasurable Life" is a name of the Tathágata of the Pure Land of happiness. Shakyamuni Buddha, while residing at Rajagriha and Shravasti, taught the assembly about the virtues that adorn the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. The Buddha's Name forms the essence of those sutras. Later, the sage Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, reverently heeding [Shakyamuni] Tathágata’s greatly compassionate teaching, composed a gatha of aspiration for birth in the Pure Land based on these sutras.

19 Further it states:

Vasubandhu's aspiration is not undertaken lightly. How could it ever be fulfilled without the support of the Tathágata’s majestic power? Here Vasubandhu entreats the Tathágata to lend his majestic power; hence he reverently addresses him, saying, "O World-honored one!"
The words, Single-heartedly I, are Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's profession of personal commitment. They mean that in Vasubandhu's thinking on the Tathágata of unhindered light and aspiring to be born in the land of happiness, thoughts on the Buddha succeed one another without any other thoughts intermingling.

Concerning the words, [I] take refuge in the Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters: take refuge manifests the gate of worship, and Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters manifests the gate of praise.

We know that to take refuge is also to worship because Bodhisattva Nargarjuna, in composing gathas to Amida Tathágata, sometimes states "I bow in worship," sometimes "I take refuge," and sometimes "I take refuge and worship." Moreover, in the exposition section of the Treatise Bodhisattva Vasubandhu speaks of "practicing the five gates of mindfulness," and worship is numbered among these five gates. Since he indeed aspires for birth in Amida's Pure Land, is it not natural that he should worship the Buddha? For these reasons, we know that taking refuge manifests itself as worship. Worship itself, however, is only to pay homage and does not necessarily imply taking refuge; rather, taking refuge expresses itself in worship. From this we can infer that taking refuge is central. In the gatha, Vasubandhu expresses his personal aspiration; thus it is natural for him to say, "[I] take refuge." In explaining the meaning of the gatha in the exposition, he generally uses the term "worship." The two terms, "take refuge" and "worship," complement each other, revealing the basic meaning all the more clearly.
How do we know that the Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters expresses the gate of praise? It is stated later in the exposition:

How does one "praise"? One says the Name of the Tathágata in accord with the Tathágata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom, wishing, by practicing in accord with reality, to be in correspondence with the significance of the Name...

Here Vasubandhu states, Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters. This is to offer praise in accord with the working of the Tathágata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom, through the Tathágata’s Name. Hence we know that these lines manifest the gate of praise. The line [I] aspire to be born in the land of happiness manifests the gate of aspiration and expresses Bodhisattva Vasubandhu’s taking of refuge.

Question: In the Mahayana sutras and treatises it is frequently taught that sentient beings are in the final analysis unborn, like empty space. Why does Bodhisattva Vasubandhu express aspiration for "birth"?

Answer: The statement, "Sentient beings are unborn, like empty space," is open to two interpretations. First, what ordinary people see - such as sentient beings, which they conceive as real, or the acts of being born and dying, which they view as real - is ultimately non-existent, like imaginary "tortoise fur," or like empty space. Second, since all things are "born" from causal conditions, they are actually unborn; that is, they are non-existent, like empty space.
The "birth" to which Bodhisattva Vasubandhu aspires refers to being born through causal conditions. Hence it is provisionally termed "birth." This does not mean that there are real beings or that being born and dying is real, as ordinary people imagine.

Question: In what sense do you speak of birth in the Pure Land?

Answer: For the provisionally called "person" in this world who practices the five gates of mindfulness, the preceding thought is the cause of the succeeding thought. The provisionally called "person" of this defiled world and the provisionally called "person" of the Pure Land cannot be definitely called the same or definitely called different. The same is true of preceding thought and succeeding thought. The reason is that if they were one and the same, then there would be no causality; if they were different, there would be no continuity. This principle is the gate of contemplating sameness and difference; it is discussed in detail in the treatises. Here ends the explanation of the three gates of mindfulness manifested in the first stanza.

[Next Vasubandhu] states:

Relying on the sutras

In which the manifestation of true and real virtues is taught,

I compose a gatha of aspiration, a condensation,

That accords with the Buddha's teaching...

What does he rely on? Why does he rely on it? How does he rely on it? What Vasubandhu relies on is the sutras. He relies on them because what the Tathágata [taught in the sutras] is the manifestation of true and real
virtues. As to how he relies on them, he does so by being in accord with them through practicing the five gates of mindfulness... Sutras refers to the direct teaching among the twelve divisions of scripture; in addition to the Four Agamas or the Tripitaka, the Mahayana scriptures are also called "sutra." The words relying on the sutras refer to Mahayana sutras not included in the Tripitaka; they are not the Agamas.

Concerning the manifestation of true and real virtues: there are two kinds of virtue. First, there is virtue that is produced from a defiled mind and that does not accord with dharma-nature. Whether with regard to their cause or to their fruition, the good acts of foolish human beings and devas and the recompense of human beings and devas are all inverted, empty, and false. Hence, they are called untrue virtue. The second kind of virtue arises from the wisdom and pure deeds of the bodhisattva and adorns the Buddha's activity. It is in accord with such-ness and culminates in purity. It is not inverted or false; hence, it is termed true and real virtue. Why is it not inverted? Because it is in accord with such-ness and in conformity with the twofold truth. Why is it not false? Because it takes in all beings and brings them into the ultimate purity.

I compose a gatha of aspiration, a condensation, that accords with the Buddha's teaching: in the term condensation (literally: all-holding), "holding," means to keep from scattering or losing. "All" indicates holding much with a little...Aspiration means to aspire for birth...That accords with the Buddha's teaching means to fit together, like a box and lid...

The Treatise states:

How is directing of virtue accomplished? It is by never abandoning any sentient being in suffering, but constantly aspiring in the heart to fulfill the mind of great compassion, taking the directing of virtue as foremost.

The directing of virtue has two aspects: that for going forth to the Pure Land and that for return to this world. "Directing for going forth" means to
give one's virtues to all sentient beings and to aspire to bring them all to birth in Amida Tathágata’s Pure Land of happiness.

[Tao-ch'o]

20 The Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

It is declared in the Sutra of the Buddha-Contemplation Samádhi:

Shakyamuni urged his father the King to practice Nembutsu samádhi. His father the King said to the Buddha, "Why do you not have me, a disciple of yours, practice the virtue attained in the Buddha-stage-such-ness, true reality, the highest virtue of emptiness?" The Buddha answered his father; "The virtue attained by the Buddhas is a realm unfathomably profound and excellent, where one attains supernatural powers and emancipation [from blind passions]. Since this is not a realm to be practiced by foolish beings, I encourage you, my father the King, thus to practice Nembutsu samadhi." His father the King asked the Buddha, "What are the characteristics of the working of the Nembutsu?" The Buddha replied to his father the King, "Suppose there is a forest of eranda trees forty Yojanas Square, in which there is a single gosirsa-candana tree. The candana has roots and sprouts, but has yet to arise forth from the soil. The eranda forest emits only foul odors, without the least trace of a pleasant scent. If one should ingest its flowers or fruit, one goes insane and dies. In time, the roots and sprouts of the candana gradually shoot forth, and just as it grows into a tree, its fragrance fills the air, finally transforming the forest and imparting everywhere its own fragrance. Sentient beings who see this are struck with wonder." The Buddha said to his father the King, "Thus is the heart of the Nembutsu for all sentient beings in birth-and-death. If one simply engages in the Nembutsu and does not cease, without fail one will be born in the Buddha's presence. Once one has attained birth, all one's evils are immediately transformed and one realizes great compassion. This is likened to the transformation of the eranda forest by the fragrant tree.

The eranda tree here represents the three poisons and the three hindrances within the bodily existence of each sentient being and the innumerable acts...
of grave karmic evil arising from them. The candana stands for the heart of the Nembutsu. "Just growing into a tree": when any sentient being simply accumulates the practice of the Nembutsu without ceasing, the causal act [for attainment of birth] will unfailingly be fulfilled.

Question: By measuring the working of one sentient being's Nembutsu one knows that of all. How is it that the working of a single Nembutsu can destroy all hindrances, just as a single fragrant tree can transform a forty-yojana eranda forest and make all within it fragrant?

Answer: The inconceivable working of Nembutsu samádhi may be clarified by quoting from various Mahayana scriptures. The Garland Sutra states:

Suppose a person strings a lute with the sinews of a lion. When he strikes but a single note, all other kinds of string rend. Likewise, when a person practices Nembutsu samádhi in the aspiration for enlightenment, all blind passions and hindrances are sundered and destroyed. Again, suppose a person takes milk from a cow, a ewe, and an ass, and places it all in a single vessel. If he casts in a single drop of milk from a lion, the lion's milk will immediately pass unhindered through all the other milk, and the various kinds of milk will be broken down and transformed into pure water. Likewise, if a person simply practices Nembutsu samádhi in the aspiration for enlightenment, he or she immediately passes by all evil demons and obstructions without the least hindrance.

Further the sutra states:

Suppose there is a person who has a potion that renders him invisible. As he travels about from place to place, other travelers cannot see him. Likewise, when persons practice Nembutsu samádhi in the aspiration for enlightenment, they are not seen by any evil demons or obstructions, and wherever they go there is nothing that can impede them. This is because putting Nembutsu samádhi into practice is none other than the king of all samádhis.
21 Further it states:

A Mahayana work declares,

It is not that all other samādhis are not samādhis. For there is a samādhi that can eliminate only greed but is incapable of eliminating anger and folly; a samādhi that can eliminate only anger but is incapable of eliminating folly and greed; a samādhi that can eliminate only folly but cannot eliminate anger. There is a samādhi that can eliminate the obstructions of the present but not all the obstructions of the past and future. But if one constantly practices Nembutsu samādhi, one eliminates all the obstructions of past, present, and future without distinction.

22 Further it states:

A gatha on the Larger Sutra declares,

If persons hear the virtuous Name of Amida, Praise the Buddha with joy, and wholeheartedly take refuge Even but a single thought-moment, they gain the great benefit. That is, they come to possess the treasure of virtues.

Even though the great thousand-fold world be filled with fire, Pass through immediately to hear the Buddha's Name! If one hears "Amida," on will never retrogress. For this reason I wholeheartedly bow my head in worship.

23 Further it states:

Again, as declared in the Sutra of the Questions of Maudgalyayana,
The Buddha said to Maudgalyayana, "In every stream and river there are grasses and trees, and regardless of which follows or which goes before, all are carried down to gather in the vast ocean. So it is with this world. Though one may freely enjoy power, station, riches, and pleasure, one cannot escape birth, aging, sickness, or death. Simply because of failure to follow the Buddha's teaching, one born as a human being in the next life will still suffer great hardship and be incapable of attaining birth in the lands of the thousand Buddhas. For this reason I teach thus: The land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is easy to go to, easy to attain; nevertheless, there are people incapable of practicing and being born there, for they devote themselves instead to the ninety-five false paths. I call such people 'those without eyes' and 'those without ears'."

Such is the teaching of the sutra. Why then do people not abandon the difficult and rely on the path of easy practice?

[Shan-tao]

24 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

It is declared in the Prajñáparamitá Sutra Preached by Mañjusri,

I will elucidate the samádhi of single practice. I encourage you simply to sit alone in a quiet place and, abandoning all confused thoughts, concentrate your mind on the one Buddha. When, without contemplating the Buddha's features, you solely utter the Name, in your single-hearted practice you will be able to see Amida Buddha and all the other Buddhas.

Question: Why do you not have a person perform contemplation but rather directly encourage solely saying the Name?

Answer: Because the hindrances of sentient beings are grave and, though objects of contemplation are subtle, there minds are coarse, their souls are agitated and their spirits fly aloft, so that it is difficult for them to fulfill contemplative practice. For this reason the Great Sage, taking pity on them,
directly encourages them solely to say the Name. Saying the Name is indeed easy; accordingly, one continues in it and attains birth.

Question: In solely saying the Name of one Buddha, why does a person see many? Is this not the mixing of wrong and right contemplation, a confused appearance of one and many?

Answer: The Buddhas have attained realization equally; among them there is no differentiation in form. What fundamental principle is violated by thinking on one and seeing many?

Further, the Contemplation Sutra states:

I urge you to sit and practice contemplation, worship, and utterance. In all of these it is best to face the west. A tree falls in the direction that the top leans; it necessarily follows its bent. Thus, when there is an obstruction that prevents persons from facing the west, it is enough for them simply to turn toward the west in their thoughts.

Question: All Buddhas realize the three bodies in the same way, and their compassion-wisdom is perfectly fulfilled, without any differentiation among them. By worshiping and thinking on one Buddha and saying the Buddha's name, whatever direction one happens to be facing, one will attain birth. Why do you praise only the west and encourage us solely to worship and say the Nembutsu?

Answer: What is realized by all Buddhas is the same and single, but since each of them has reached attainment through their own vow and practice, each has in fact their own causal conditions. Thus the world-honored Amida originally established deep, momentous Vows, taking in and saving all beings throughout the ten quarters with light and Name. When Amida brings sentient beings to realize shinjin and aspire for birth, then by saying the Name to the end of one's life or down to but ten voicings or a single voicing, one easily attains birth through the power of the Buddha's Vow. For this reason, Shakyaamuni and the other Buddhas urge us to face the west in particular. You should understand that this in no way means that one cannot eliminate hindrances or eradicate one's evil by uttering the
names of other Buddhas. But when, as explained above, people continue utterance upon utterance of Amida's Name to the very end of their lives, then if there are ten people, ten will be born; if one hundred, one hundred will be born. This is because there are no obstructing conditions. It is because they realize right-mindedness; because they are in accord with the Buddha's Primal Vow; because they do not deviate from the teaching; because they follow the Buddha's words.

25 Further he states:

Watching solely over the sentient beings of the Nembutsu, the Buddha grasps and never abandons them; hence, the name Amida.

26 Further he states:

The ocean of Amida's Vow of wisdom

Is deep, vast, unfathomable;

Those who hear the Name and aspire for birth

All reach Amida's land...

Even though the great thousand-fold world be filled with fire,

Pass through immediately to hear the Buddha's Name!

Those who hear the Name, rejoice, and praise,

Will all attain birth in that land.

After ten thousand years the Three Treasures will disappear,

But this sutra will remain for a hundred years thereafter;
People of that time who hear and say the Name even once
Will all attain birth in that land.

27 Further he states:

I am in reality a foolish being of birth-and-death, possessed of deep and heavy karmic evil and transmigrating in the six courses. The suffering is beyond words. Now, encountering a true teacher, I have been able to hear the Name that embodies Amida's Primal Vow. The Buddha instructs me to say the Nembutsu single-heartedly and aspire for birth. May the Buddha's compassion, never abandoning the universal Primal Vow, grasp me, a disciple.

28 Further he states:

Question: What virtues and benefits in the present life accrue from saying Amida's Name and worshiping and contemplating the Buddha?

Answer: If one utters a single voicing of "Amida Buddha," one immediately eradicates the grave karmic evil that will bind one to eighty billion kalpas of birth-and-death. Worshiping and thinking on Amida and performing the other acts bring about the same result. It is declared in the Sutra of the Ten Ways of Attaining Birth:

When sentient beings think on Amida Buddha and aspire for birth, the Buddha immediately sends the twenty-five bodhisattvas to protect them; whether those beings are walking or sitting, standing or lying down, whether it is day or night, at all times and in all places, evil spirits and evil deities are given no chance to obstruct them.

Further, it is declared in the Contemplation Sutra:
When practitioners say Amida's Name, worship and think on the Buddha, and aspire to be born in the Buddha's land, the Buddha immediately sends innumerable manifestation-bodies of Buddhas, of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta to protect them. Together with the twenty-five bodhisattvas mentioned before, they surround the practitioners a hundredfold, a thousand-fold, and never part from them, whether they are walking, standing, sitting, or lying, at all times and in all places, whether it is day or night.

Now, since there are these excellent benefits, entrust yourself! May all practitioners, accepting Amida's sincere mind, seek birth in the Pure Land!

Further, the Sutra of Immeasurable Life states:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters say my Name even ten times but do not attain birth, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

The Buddha is now actually there in the Pure Land, and has attained Buddhahood. Know that the momentous Primal Vow is not in vain, and that when sentient beings say the Name, they unfailingly attain birth.

Further, the Amida Sutra states:

If sentient beings hear someone preach the teaching of Amida Buddha, they should hold steadfast to the Name. For one day, or two days, up to seven days, they should single-heartedly say the Name of the Buddha and not be disturbed by other thoughts. When their lives are about to end, Amida Buddha will appear before them with all the saintly host. At the time of death, their minds will not be inverted, and they will immediately attain birth in the Pure Land.

Shakyamuni Buddha said to Shariputra, "Seeing these benefits, I say: If a sentient being hears this teaching, he or she should awaken aspiration and desire to be born in that land!"
Following this the sutra states:

The Buddhas of the eastern quarter, countless as the sands of the Ganges, as well as the countless Buddhas of each of the other quarters - south, west, north, zenith, and nadir - each in their own lands, extending their tongues and covering all the great triple-thousand-fold worlds, preach these true and sincere words: "All you sentient beings should accept this sutra of all Buddhas' protection!"

Why is it called [the sutra of] "protection"? It is taught that if sentient beings say Amida's Name and think on the Buddha, for seven days, or one day, down to one voicing - even to ten voicings or a single utterance - they will unfailingly attain birth. [The Buddhas] give witness to this; hence the words, "sutra of all Buddhas' protection."

Following this is the statement:

The person who, saying the Name of the Buddha, attains birth, is constantly protected by the Buddhas throughout the six directions, countless as the sands of the Ganges; hence the words, "sutra of all Buddhas' protection."

Now, since we have this supreme Vow, you should entrust yourself to it. Why do not all disciples of the Buddha endeavor in their hearts to go forth [to the Pure Land]?

29 Further he states:

Concerning the "universal Vow," it is as set forth in the Larger Sutra. The attainment of birth of all foolish beings, whether good or evil, is always, without exception, by being carried by the karmic power of Amida Buddha's great Vow and accepting it as the decisive cause.
30 Further he states:

Namu means "to take refuge." It further signifies aspiring for birth and directing virtue. Amida-butsu is the practice. Because of this import, one necessarily attains birth.

31 Further he states:

Concerning the expression, Each living thing being grasped by Amida, a manifestation of the decisive cause of birth: it is declared among the Forty-eight Vows taught in the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life, "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, aspiring to be born in my land, saying my Name even down to ten times, and being carried by the power of my Vow, were not to be born there, then may I not attain the supreme enlightenment." This means that practitioners who aspire to be born are grasped by the power of the Vow and brought to attainment of birth when their lives end. Hence the expression, each living thing being grasped by Amida, a manifestation of the decisive cause of birth.

32 Further he states:

The Buddhas desire to bring all foolish beings, whether good or evil, to turn about at heart, express this in practice, and so attain birth. This is the witness to birth through the Nembutsu, a manifestation of the decisive cause of birth in the Pure Land.

33 Further he states:

The dharma-gates, each distinct, number eighty-four thousand,

But the keen blade for severing ignorance, its effects, and the karmic causes of suffering,
Is the Name of Amida:

In a single utterance, one's karmic evil is completely swept away.

Gone are countless traces of past karma and the designing thoughts arising from them;

Even without being instructed, we turn and enter the gate of such-ness.

Gaining freedom from long kalpas of suffering in this Saha world

Is above all the benevolence of Shakyamuni, the true teacher; Using various skillful means, carefully devised,

He selected the gate of Amida's universal Vow and enabled us to enter it.

[Explication of Namu-Amida-butsu]

34 From these passages we see that the word Namu means to take refuge. In the term to take refuge (kimyo), ki means to arrive at. Further, it is used in compounds to mean to yield joyfully to (kietsu) and to take shelter in (kisai). Myo means to act, to invite, to command, to teach, path, message, to devise, to summon. Thus, kimyo is the command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us.

Aspiring for birth and directing virtue indicates the mind of the Tathagata who, having already established the Vow, gives sentient beings the practice necessary for their birth.

The practice is the selected Primal Vow.

One necessarily attains birth elucidates the attainment of the stage of non-retrogression. Concerning this, the [Larger] Sutra states, "Immediately attains," and [Nagarjuna’s] commentary, "definitely settled." "Immediately" reveals the ultimate brevity of the instant in which the true
cause of one's birth in the fulfilled land becomes definitely settled through one's hearing the power of the Vow. "Definitely" characterizes the realization of the diamond-like mind.

[Other Masters]

35 It is stated in the Shorter Pure Land Liturgy of Nembutsu Chant in Five Stages:

[Shakyamuni] Tathāgata preached the teaching fully or in summary according to the capacities of the listeners, but this was in order to lead all to reality in the end. For the person who seeks to realize true non-origination, who else can give the teaching? Indeed, Nembutsu samādhi is the true supreme and profound gate. With the Name fulfilled through the Forty-eight Vows of Amida, the Dharma-king, the Buddha saves sentient beings, taking the power of the Vow as central...

[Shakyamuni] Tathāgata, always dwelling in the sea of samādhi, raised his soft, slender hand and said to his father the King:

O King, now you should perform seated meditation and simply say the Nembutsu. Why should you seek no-thought by freeing yourself from thought, or non-origination by freeing yourself from origination, or the formless dharma-body by freeing yourself from forms, or emancipation by freeing yourself from words...

How great it is! The true dharma, the ultimate reality, is oneness, and yet in saving beings and benefiting people, one Buddha's great vows differ from another's. For this reason, Shakyamuni is born accommodating himself to this defiled world and Amida manifests himself in the Pure Land. Although their realms differ, one being defiled and the other pure, the benefit they bestow on beings is the same. Truly it is the teaching-gate of the Pure Land alone that is easy to practice and easy to realize. That western quarter is most excellent, an incomparable land. It is adorned with
lotuses of a hundred jewels that open forth in nine different ways, and take people into them. This is due to the Name of the Buddha...

Hymns according to the Sutra of the Praise of the Pure Land by Fa-chao, disciple of Shakyamuni:

The sacred Name of the Tathágata is exceedingly distinct and clear;
Throughout the worlds in the ten quarters it prevails.
Solely those who say the Name all attain birth;
Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta come naturally to welcome them.
The Primal Vow of Amida was established to be supremely excellent;
With skillful means, in compassion, Amida draws forth foolish beings.
Every sentient being gains emancipation;
When we say the Name, immediately our karmic evil falls away.
When foolish beings reach the western quarter,
Their karmic evil, from kalpas countless as particles, disappears;
Gaining the six supernatural powers, they are able to act at will;
Rid forever of aging and sickness, they are free from impermanence.

Hymns according to the Sutra of the Life of the Buddha by Fa-chao:

What is to be called the right dharma?
What accords with truth is the true essence of the teaching.
Now is the time to determine and select right from wrong;
Test each particular one by one and allow no indistinctness.
The right dharma surpasses all things of the world!
Observance of precepts and seated meditation are called the right dharma,
But attainment of Buddhahood through the Nembutsu is the true essence of the teaching.
Doctrines that do not accept the Buddha's words are non-Buddhist ways;
Views that reject the law of cause and effect are nihilistic.

The right dharma surpasses all things of the world!
How can precepts and meditation be the right dharma?
Nembutsu-samádhi is the true essence of the teaching.
To see reality and awaken to mind, this is Buddha;
How could Nembutsu samádhi not accord with truth?

Hymns according to the Amida Sutra:

In permitting advance upon the way, the western land excels this Saha world,
For it is free of the five desires and of evil spirits.
To become a Buddha, one does not labor in the various good acts,
But solely sits on a lotus dais and thinks on Amida.

Practice in this world of the five defilements is full of regressions;

Nothing can equal saying the Nembutsu and going to the west.

Once there, one naturally realizes perfect enlightenment;

Returning to the world of suffering, one becomes a bridge for others.

Among the myriad practices, it is the quick and essential;

For swift attainment, the Pure Land gate is unexcelled.

Not only is it the teaching from the golden lips of the Master;

All Buddhas throughout the ten quarters transmit and witness it.

When, in this world, a person says the Name of the Buddha,

In the western land a lotus immediately rises;

If only such persons do not regress, but say the Name constantly all their lives,

Those flowers come here among us to welcome them.

Hymns according to the Sutra of the Samádhi of All Buddhas' Presence by Master Tz'u-min:

Those gathered in the dharma-hall today!

You have all passed in birth-and-death for kalpas countless as the sands of the Ganges.

Considering then this human existence - hard is it to obtain;
It is like the blossoming of the udumbara.

Truly we have come now to hear the Pure Land teaching so rare to encounter;

Truly we have encountered the opening of the dharma-gate of the Nembutsu.

Truly we have encountered the call of Amida's universal Vow;

Truly we have encountered the gathering's aspiration in shinjin.

Truly we have come today to praise the Nembutsu in accord with the sutra;

Truly we have come to pledge to be born on the high lotus dais.

Truly we have encountered no evil spirits in the hall of the dharma;

Truly we have all been able to come here free of sickness.

Truly we have encountered the fulfillment of the virtue of seven-days' Nembutsu;

The Forty-eight Vows will unfailingly take us to the Pure Land.

Thus I encourage all those of the same practice in this hall of the dharma:

Let us strive, and turn about at heart, and aspire to go to the Pure Land!

If we ask, "Where is our true home?"

It is the seven-treasure dais in the pond of the land of bliss.

Amida Buddha, in the causal stage, made the universal Vow:

When beings hear my Name and think on me, I will come to welcome each of them to my land,
Not discriminating at all between the poor and the rich and wellborn,

Not discriminating between the inferior and the highly gifted;

Not choosing the learned and those upholding pure precepts,

Not rejecting those who break precepts and whose evil karma is profound.

When beings just turn about at heart and often say the Nembutsu,

It is as if bits of rubble were turned into gold.

I address these words to the gathering before me:

Those alike having ties with the teaching and thus departing this world, quickly ask each other -

Question: Where should we seek to go?

Answer: To Amida's Pure Land.

Question: What cause enables you to be born there?

Answer: The Nembutsu naturally does.

Question: Countless are the acts of karmic evil in this life that obstruct you; how can one such as you enter there?

Answer: When we say the Name, our karmic evil is eradicated; It is like a shining lamp entering the dark.

Question: Is it possible for a foolish being to attain birth or not? How is it that in one utterance the darkness becomes light?

Answer: Cast aside your doubts and often say the Nembutsu; Then naturally Amida will always be near you.
Hymns newly composed according to the Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life by Fa-chao:

Persons of utter foolishness, committing the ten transgressions and five grave offenses,

Have been sinking for long kalpas in the sea of birth-and-death, dwelling in the dust of blind passions.

But when they say the Name of Amida even once, and thus attain

The Pure Land, they become one with the dharma-body as such-ness.

36 Master Kyeong-heung states:

There are two parts to Shakyamuni Tathágata’s full exposition in the Larger Sutra. First, he teaches in detail about the result attained by Amida Tathágata, namely, the Pure Land; in other words, that which was practiced and fulfilled. Next, he clarifies in detail the cause and result of sentient beings’ birth in the Pure Land; in other words, their being grasped and benefited.

37 Further he states:

It is declared in "Chapter on the Bodhisattvas' Receiving Prophecies" in the Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion:
At that time, Ratnagarbha Tathágata praised the cakravartin king, saying, "Excellent, excellent!...Great king, in the western quarter, past a hundred thousand billion Buddha-lands, there is a world called the Well-Undefiled Land. In that land there is a Buddha named Indraghosesvara...Now, at present, he is preaching the right dharma for all the bodhisattvas...It is a land of the genuine, single great vehicle, pure and unmixed. Sentient beings are born there transformed, all becoming alike. Further, there are no women, or even the word for woman. The virtues possessed by that Buddha-world are adornments of purity. They are all just as the great king vowed, not differing at all...Now your name will be changed to 'Immeasurable Purity.'"

The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

In this way Amida broadly established the great universal Vows and has already fulfilled them all. They are rare in this world. Having made these Vows, Amida, dwelling in repose in accord with reality, has consummated many and various virtues and with them adorned the vast, pure Buddha-land of majestic virtues.

38 Further he states:

Amida, having fulfilled the two adornments of merit and wisdom, gives the practice for attainment of birth to all sentient beings fully and equally. Because the Buddha benefits sentient beings with what he himself has performed, he has brought his virtues to fulfillment in them.

39 Further he states:

Through causes nurtured for us over long ages, we now encounter the Buddha and hear the dharma; we should rejoice at this.

40 Further he states:

The people are sages and the land is excellent. Who would not exert every effort to go there? Therefore do what is good and aspire for birth. Through good, the Pure Land has already been established. Does not attainment of
the fruit, then, come about of itself? Hence the word jinen. There is no discrimination between the lofty and the humble; all are brought to birth. Hence the phrase, There is no above or below.

41 Further he states:

To go is easy and yet no one is born there.

Never at variance with that land,

One is drawn there by its spontaneous working.

When the causal act is performed, one goes to the Pure Land; when it is not performed, seldom is birth there attained. In performing the causal act and going to be born, no discord arises. That is, to go is easy.

42 Further he states:

Because of the power of the Primal Vow means that going to the Pure Land comes about through the power of the Vow. Because of the Vow, which is perfectly complete: because there is nothing lacking in the Vow. Because of the Vow, which is luminously clear: because there is no futility in seeking to fulfill it. Because of the Vow, which is steadfast and firm: because no condition can impede it. Because of the Vow, which is thoroughgoing and ultimate: because the result will necessarily be attained.

43 Further he states:

In general, because of the desire to make foolish and inferior beings strengthen their aspiration for birth, one should reveal the excellent qualities of that land.

44 Further he states:

The sutra already declares, "It is in this world that they performed bodhisattva practices." By this we are to know that King Aranemi lived here in this world. So did Samudrarenu.
45 Further he states:

Through hearing that the Buddha's majestic virtue is great and vast, one attains the stage of non-retrogression.

46 The Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss states:

The military officer Chang-lun declares:

The Name of the Buddha is exceedingly easy to keep and say; the Pure Land is exceedingly easy to reach. Among the eighty-four thousand dharma-gates, none compares with this quick path to birth there. By just setting aside moments of the early morning for the Nembutsu, one can ultimately make an aid for attaining the eternal and indestructible. That is, one's exertion of effort is exceedingly slight, and yet one's obtaining of virtue is inexhaustible. What pains do sentient beings suffer, that of themselves they abandon the Nembutsu and do not take it up? Ah, all is dream and illusion, and void of reality! Life is short and hard to preserve! An instant between breaths is when the next life begins. Once we lose human existence, we will not repeat it for ten thousand kalpas. If at this time we do not realize enlightenment, what can even the Buddha do to save us sentient beings? May all people think deeply on impermanence and act so that they do not vainly harbor regrets! Thus I, Chang-lun, known as Layman Ching-yo, urge those with whom I have ties.

47 Ch'ing-wen of Shan-yin, master of the T'ien-t'ai school, states:

Because the Buddha's Name arises from the body of true reality and of fulfillment, because it arises from the ocean of compassion, because it arises from the ocean of the Vow, because it arises from the ocean of wisdom, because it arises from the ocean of the dharma-gates, simply to say the Name of this one Buddha wholeheartedly is itself to say the names of all Buddhas. Because it embodies immeasurable virtues, it eradicates the obstructions of our karmic evil and enables us to be born in the Pure Land. Why should there be any doubt?

48 Yüan-chao, master of the Vinaya School, states:
It goes without saying that in his great compassion our Buddha revealed the Pure Land way, and with loving concern widely spread it through the teachings of the great vehicle. Though we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, we give rise to doubts and slander. We are self-complacent in our own sinking and drowning, without longing to overcome and rise. The Tathágata taught for the sake of such pitiful beings as ourselves. Truly our doubts arise because we do not realize that this dharma is unique and beyond the ordinary. It does not discriminate between wise and foolish; it does not differentiate between priesthood and laity; it does not question the length of one's performance of practice; it does not take into account the weight of the karmic evil one has committed: only definitely settled shinjin is required as the cause-seed of birth.

49 Further he states:

Now, the sutras of the Pure Land teaching are in accord in not speaking of Maras; hence, we know that with this teaching one clearly encounters no Maras. In Dharma-gate of True Faith by Master Ch'ing-wen of Shan-yin, this is taken up in great detail. Let us quote the discussion at length:

There are people who say, "It is claimed that at the time of death, one beholds the approach of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, radiant with light and bearing a dais; that there is heavenly music and wondrous fragrance, as they come to welcome one to birth in the Pure Land. But this is all the work of Maras." Is this assertion true?

Answer: According to the Sutra of the Samádhi of Heroic Advance, when one performs samádhi, Maras of the five skandhas may appear. According to the Treatise on the Mahayana, when one performs samádhi, exterior
Maras (heavenly Maras) may appear. According to the Treatise on Samatha and Vipasyana, when one performs samádhi, time spirits may appear. All of these occur because people who practice meditation avail themselves of self-power, and the seeds of Maras' work are unfailingly made active at that time. When you clearly recognize this and apply the proper remedy, you can make them disperse immediately. If you assume that you have gained the wisdom of sages, you will be beset with the obstruction of Maras. (The above answer reveals that one who seeks to realize enlightenment here in this world stirs up the activity of Maras.)

With the Nembutsu samádhi that we are practicing, we rely on the power of the Buddha. If persons are close to the king, no one will dare assault them; so it is with us. This is, in short, because Amida Buddha has the power of great compassion, the power of great Vows, the power of great wisdom, the power of great samádhi, the great majestic powers, the great power to destroy wrong, the great power to subdue Maras, the power of the divine eye to see far, the power of the divine ear to hear at great distance, the power to look penetratingly into people's minds, the power of light shining everywhere and grasping sentient beings. Amida Buddha has all these powers of inconceivable virtue. Why then should Amida not be able to protect persons of the Nembutsu and keep them from hindrances up until death? If Amida were to fail to protect the practitioner, what would it mean for the Buddha to have the power of compassion? If Amida were unable to disperse the obstructions of Maras, what would it mean for the Buddha to have the power of wisdom, the power of samádhi, the majestic powers, the power to destroy wrong, the power to subdue Maras? If Amida were unable to perceive the Maras' activity to obstruct us and did not destroy it, what would it mean for the Buddha to have the divine eye's power to see far, the divine ear's power to hear at great distance, and the power to look penetratingly into people's minds? The [Contemplation] Sutra states:

The light emanating from Amida Buddha's features and marks shines everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, grasping and never abandoning sentient beings of the Nembutsu.
If one were beset by the obstructions of Maras at the time of death even though one said the Nembutsu, what would it mean for Amida to have the power of light shining everywhere and grasping sentient beings? Moreover, what people of the Nembutsu perceive at the point of death is revealed in many sutras, which are all the words of the Buddha. How can we dismiss it as the state of being obstructed by Maras? Mistaken doubts have now been completely obliterated; let us awaken the true faith.

(Here ends the question from Master Ch’ing-wen.)

50 Further he states:

The conclusive expositions of the One Vehicle all designate the land of bliss as their culmination. The resultant Name stands alone as most excellent in embodying the perfect accomplishment of a myriad practices.

Truly, Dharmakara, from the time of his causal stage, established his Vows, held fast to his aspiration, pursued his practice to fulfillment, and embraced the benevolence to save beings for countless kalpas. There is no place at all - even so small as a mustard seed - where he did not abandon his life for our sake. Practicing the six paramitas of compassion and wisdom, he took in and guided all sentient beings without exception. With the two kinds of possessions - those within and without oneself - he unfailingly responded to what beings sought. Bringing to maturity thus the opportunity and condition for saving each being, he fulfilled his practices and consummated his virtues, and thereupon perfectly realized the three Buddha-bodies simultaneously. All the myriad virtues manifest themselves in the four characters, [Amida-butsu].

51 Further he states:

Needless to say, our Buddha Amida grasps beings with the Name. Thus, as we hear it with our ears and say it with our lips, exalted virtues without limit grasp and pervade our hearts and minds. It becomes ever after the seed of our Buddhahood, all at once sweeping away a kotis of kalpas of
heavy karmic evil, and we attain the realization of the supreme enlightenment. I know truly that the Name possesses not scant roots of good, but inexhaustible roots of good.

52 Further he states:

Concerning right-mindedness, the way foolish people face death shows no control over their consciousness. The karmic seeds of past good and evil acts unfailingly rise up and manifest themselves. Some awaken evil thoughts, or fall into wrong views, or cherish attachments, or go insane with ugly features. Surely these can all be called causes of inverted-ness. If they had recited the Buddha's Name beforehand, their karmic evil would have been eradicated and their obstructions swept away; within, the pure act of saying the Name would be fragrant, while from without, the compassionate light would grasp them, and in an instant, they would break free of all suffering and realize joy. Thus, the next passage [of the Contemplation Sutra] encourages us to seek birth and teaches that the benefit of the Name lies in bringing us to attainment of it.

53 [Further he states:]

Master Tz'u-yun declares:

Only the Nembutsu is quick and true as the pure act that brings one to the land of peace; therefore, practice it. If the four classes of Buddhists desire to break through their ignorance swiftly and eradicate forever all the karmic evil - heavy and light - arising from their commissions of the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, they should practice this teaching. If people desire to abide continuously in pure observance of Mahayana or Hinayana precepts, to realize Nembutsu samádhi, and to fulfill the bodhisattva's practice of the paramitas, they should train themselves in this dharma. If people desire that they be free of all fear at the time of death, that with both body and mind in repose, the host of sages appear before them and extend their hands to guide them, and that, rid of defiling passions for the first time, they reach non-retrogression at once, so that without passing long kalpas, they immediately realize no-birth, then they should study this dharma.
Who would not follow the dharma-words of this ancient sage? With the five topics discussed above, I have briefly presented the essential points of the Contemplation Sutra. I am not giving a full explanation here; a detailed commentary appears below.

According to the K'ai-yüan Era Catalog of Scriptures, there were two translations of the Contemplation Sutra. The first has been utterly lost, and the one that survives is by Kalayasas. The Biography of Monks states that Kalayasas' name was translated "Shih-ch'eng" (Time-praise), and that he went to the capital toward the beginning of the Yuan-chia era of the Sung dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Wen.

54 Tz'u-yun states in a hymn:

Among full expressions of the truth, this is the fullest;

Among consummate sudden teachings, this is the most consummate and sudden.

55 Tai-chih states in praise:

It is the consummate, sudden teaching of the One Vehicle;

It is genuine and single, free of mixture.

56 Chieh-tu of the Vinaya school states:

Concerning the Buddha's Name: practices were performed and accumulated for kalpas, and those myriad virtues were all taken and manifested in the four characters, [Amida-butsu]. Therefore, when one says the Name, one acquires no small benefit.

57 Yung-ch'ìn of the Vinaya school states:
If one says the auspicious Name of the one Buddha and thinks on that Buddha now, one will unfailingly be possessed of the immeasurable virtues accumulated from the time Bodhisattva Dharmakara was in his causal stage until he reached the fulfillment of Buddhahood.

58 Further he states:

All the Buddhas, after passing countless kalpas in practice, awaken to the reality of things as they are, and yet they grasp not a single thing; hence when, on making great vows that are formless, they perform their practices they do not abide in those excellent acts. When they realize enlightenment, they do not attain it. When they take abode, they do not adorn lands. When they manifest their powers, their supernatural powers are not supernatural powers. Hence, spreading their tongues over the great thousand-fold world, they teach the non-teaching. Thus they urge us to entrust ourselves to this Amida Sutra. This is utterly impossible for us to fathom with our minds or discuss with our lips. I believe that these inconceivable virtues of the Buddhas are instantaneously embodied in Amida's two kinds of fulfilled adornments. Moreover, the practice of holding to a Buddha's name, though performed with the other Buddhas, always includes Amida.

59 Master Chia-hsiang of the San-lun school states:

Question: How is it possible for Nembutsu samádhi to eradicate so much karmic evil?

Answer: Amida Buddha possesses immeasurable virtues. One's immeasurable karmic evil is eradicated because one thinks on the Buddha's immeasurable virtues.

60 Master Beob-wi of the Fa-hsiang school states:

All the Buddhas invest their names with their virtues. To say their names is to praise their virtues. Just as their virtues eradicate karmic evil and give rise to merit, so it is with their names. When one entrusts to a Buddha's
name, it is certain beyond all doubt that the name produces good in one and eradicates one's evil. What question can there be of attaining birth through saying the Name?

61 Fei-hsi of the Ch'an school states:

The virtue of the Nembutsu samádhi is supreme. Because it is chief of all practices, it is called the king of samádhis.

62 The Essentials for Attaining Birth states:

It is taught that among the various acts performed by the three levels of practicers presented in the two-fascicle [Larger] Sutra, some are shallow and others are profound, but the act common to all is "wholehearted exclusive utterance of the Name of the Buddha of immeasurable life."

Third, among the Forty-eight Vows is one that, established especially for the gate of the Nembutsu, declares, "If sentient beings say my Name even ten times and yet are not born, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment."

Fourth, the Contemplation Sutra states, "For those most heavily burdened with karmic evil, there is no other way. By Simply saying the Name of Amida, one attains birth in the land of bliss."

63 Further it states:

We should refer to the Buddha's six kinds of virtue presented in the Sutra of Contemplation on the Mind-ground: The Buddha is 1) the supreme,
great field of virtues, 2) the supreme, great benefactor, 3) the most honored among sentient beings without legs, with two legs, or with many legs, 4) the one as extremely rare to encounter as the blossoming of the udumbara, 5) the only one appearing in all the great triple-thousand-fold worlds, 6) the one who has perfectly fulfilled all worldly and supra-mundane virtues. With these six kinds of virtue, [Amida] constantly benefits all sentient beings.

64 Concerning these six kinds of virtue, Master Genshin states:

1. Think on the Buddha's virtue! All who say "Namu-butsu!" even once have already fulfilled the Buddha-way; hence, I take refuge in and worship the supreme, great field of virtues.

2. Think on the Buddha's virtue! The Buddha's regard for each sentient being with eyes of compassion is equal, as though each one was the Buddha's only child; hence, I take refuge in and worship the unsurpassed mother of great compassion.

3. Think on the Buddha's virtue! All the Mahasattvas of the ten quarters bow reverently to Amida, the honored one; hence, I take refuge in and worship the supreme honored one among beings of two legs.

4. Think on the Buddha's virtue! Hearing the Buddha's Name even once is rarer than encountering the udumbara in bloom; hence, I take refuge in and worship the one exceedingly rare to encounter.

5. Think on the Buddha's virtue! Two honored ones do not appear at the same time in the one hundred kotis of worlds; hence, I take refuge in and worship the great Dharma-king rarely met with.

6. Think on the Buddha's virtue! The ocean of virtues of the Buddha-dharma is one and the same throughout past, present, and future; hence, I take refuge in and worship the honored one who has perfectly fulfilled the myriad virtues.

65 Further it states:
When a robe is scented for a single day with flowers of the palijata tree, its fragrance cannot be equaled by the flowers of campaka or varskika, though it be scented by them for a thousand years.

66 Further it states:

It is like one measure of elixir transforming a thousand measures of copper into gold. In the Himalayas there is a herb called "forbearance." If a cow eats it, it will produce milk of the finest taste (manda). If the silk tree faces the constellation Krttika, it bears fruit.

[Honen]

67 Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow compiled by Genku states:

Namu-Amida-butsu: as the act that leads to birth in the Pure Land, the Nembutsu is taken to be fundamental.

68 Further it states:

If you desire to free yourself quickly from birth-and-death, of the two excellent teachings leave aside the Path of Sages and choosing, enter the Pure Land way. If you desire to enter the Pure Land way, of the two methods of practice, right and sundry, cast aside all sundry practices and choosing, take the right practice. If you desire to perform the right practice, of the two kinds of acts, true and auxiliary, further put aside the auxiliary and choosing, solely perform the act of true settlement. The act of true settlement is to say the Name of the Buddha. Saying the Name unfailingly brings about birth, for this is based on the Buddha's Primal Vow.

[Conclusion to the Scriptural Passages]

69 Clearly we know, then, that the Nembutsu is not a self-power practice performed by foolish beings or sages; it is therefore called the practice of
"not-directing virtue [on the part of beings]." Masters of the Mahayana and Hinayana and people burdened with karmic evil, whether heavy or light, should all in the same way take refuge in the great treasure ocean of the selected Vow and attain Buddhahood through the Nembutsu.

70 Accordingly, the Commentary on the Treatise states:

In that land of happiness, every single being is born transformed from the pure lotus of Amida Tathágata’s perfect enlightenment, for they are the same in practicing the Nembutsu and follow no other way.

71 Thus, when one attains the true and real practice and shinjin, one greatly rejoices in one's heart. This attainment is therefore called the stage of joy. It is likened to the first fruit: sages of the first fruit, though they may give themselves to sleep and to sloth, will still never be subject to samsaric existence for a twenty-ninth time. Even more decisively will the ocean of beings of the ten quarters be grasped and never abandoned when they have taken refuge in this practice and shinjin. Therefore the Buddha is called "Amida Buddha." This is Other Power. Accordingly, the Mahasattva Nargarjuna states, that such persons "immediately enter the stage of the definitely settled." Master T'an-luan states that they "enter the group of the truly settled." We should reverently entrust ourselves to this practice and shinjin; we should single-heartedly practice it.

[Twofold Analysis of the Cause of Birth]

72 Truly we know that without the virtuous Name, our compassionate father, we would lack the direct cause for birth. Without the light, our compassionate mother, we would stand apart from the indirect cause of birth. Although direct and indirect causes may come together, if the karmic-consciousness of shinjin is lacking, one will not reach the land of light. The karmic-consciousness of true and real shinjin is the inner cause. The Name and light - our father and mother - are the outer cause. When the
inner and outer causes merge, one realizes the true body in the fulfilled land. Therefore master [Shan-tao] states:

[Amida] takes in and saves all beings throughout the ten quarters with light and Name; [Amida] brings sentient beings to realize shinjin and aspire for birth.

**Further, [Fa-chao] states:**

Attainment of Buddhahood through the Nembutsu: this is the true essence of the Pure Land way.

Further, [Shan-tao states:]

Difficult to encounter is the true essence of the Pure Land way.

Let this be known.

[One Utterance as Practice]

73 Concerning the practice and shinjin that Amida directs to us for our going forth: in practice there is "one utterance" (Ichinen), and in shinjin there is "one thought-moment" (Ichinen). The one utterance of practice reveals, in terms of the number of voicings, the consummation of the easy practice selected in the Primal Vow.

74 Thus, the Larger Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "If there are persons who, having heard the Name of that Buddha, leap and dance with joy and say it even once, know that they receive the great benefit; that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues."
75 Master [Shan-tao] of Kuang-ming temple uses the phrase, "Down to one utterance." Further he states, "One voicing, one utterance." Further he states, "Wholehearted thought, exclusive utterance."

76 In the second fascicle of the Liturgy of the Collected Sutra Passages of Master Chih-sheng, [Shan-tao] states:

Deep mind is true and real shinjin. One truly knows oneself to be a foolish being full of blind passions, with scant roots of good, transmigrating in the three realms and unable to emerge from this burning house. And further, one truly knows now, without so much as a single thought of doubt, that Amida’s universal Primal Vow decisively enables all to attain birth, including those who say the Name even down to ten times, or even but hear it. Hence it is called "deep mind"...

77 In the [Larger] Sutra, the term "even" (naishi) is used, while [Shan-tao's] commentary uses "down to" (geshi). Although the words "even" and "down to" differ, their significance is the same.

Even is used to indicate all-inclusiveness, embracing both once and many. Great benefit is used in contrast to small benefit. Unexcelled is used in contrast to excelled. Truly we know that the unexcelled great benefit is the true and real benefit of the One Vehicle. Excelled, small benefit refers to the eighty-four thousand provisional gates. Wholehearted thought in [Shan-tao's] commentary is single-heartedness, and indicates being free of double-mindedness. Exclusive utterance is the single practice, and indicates not engaging in dual practice.

The saying of the Name once (Ichinen) entrusted to Maitreya is one voicing. One voicing is one utterance. One utterance is single practice. Single practice is right practice. Right practice is the right act. The right act is right-mindedness. Right-mindedness is Nembutsu: this is Namu-Amida-butsu.

78 Thus, when one has boarded the ship of the Vow of great compassion and sailed out on the vast ocean of light, the winds of perfect virtue blow softly and the waves of evil are transformed. The darkness of ignorance is
immediately broken through, and quickly reaching the land of immeasurable light, one realizes great nirvana and acts in accord with the virtue of Samantabhadra. Let this be known.

79 Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

"Continuing for ten utterances" is simply the Sage's expression for a number. Thus, when persons accumulate practice of the Nembutsu, concentrate their thoughts, and do not think of other matters, their causal act [for attainment of birth] is brought to fulfillment, leaving nothing more to be done. We are not to take the trouble of keeping count of our utterances. It is said that the Nembutsu of those of long practice may often be done in accordance with the above. In the Nembutsu practice of beginners, it is permissible to keep count of the number of utterances. This conforms with the sacred scriptures.

[Conclusions to the Section on Great Practice]

80 These passages are clear testimony revealing the true and real practice. We know indeed that this practice embodies the Primal Vow, in which the Nembutsu was selected and adopted. It is the supreme practice, rare and all surpassing. It is the true and wondrous right dharma in which all virtues are perfectly fulfilled. It is the great practice, ultimate and unhindered. Let this be known.

[Other Power]

81 Other Power is none other than the power of the Tathagata's Primal Vow.

82 The [Commentary on the] Treatise on the Pure Land states:
Power of the Primal Vow: the great bodhisattva, having realized the dharma-body, always dwells in samādhi and thus manifests various bodies, various transcendent powers, and various ways of teaching the dharma. All of this arises from the power of the Primal Vow. It may be likened to an asura's harp, which, though no one strokes it, spontaneously gives forth music. This is the fifth aspect of virtue, namely, the state of teaching and guiding.

Know that the bodhisattva, having entered the first four gates, has fulfilled the practice of self-benefit: fulfilled means that self-benefiting has been completed. Know means we should know that, by fulfilling self-benefit, he performs the benefiting of others; it is not that he benefits others without being capable of self-benefit.

Know that the bodhisattva, having emerged into the fifth gate, has fulfilled the practice of directing virtue and benefiting others: fulfilled means to reach the fruition, the stage of teaching and converting, through the directing of virtues, which acts as the cause. Whether with regard to the cause or to the fruition, there is nothing whatever that does not work to benefit others. Know means we should know that, by fulfilling the benefiting of others, he performs self-benefit; it is not that he performs self-benefit without being capable of benefiting others.

For by having thus performed the practices of the five gates and accomplished both self-benefit and benefiting others, the bodhisattva has swiftly realized anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. The dharma that a Buddha realizes is called anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. He is called Buddha because he has realized this bodhi. He swiftly realized anuttara-samyak-sambodhi means that he quickly attained Buddhahood. An means "un-," uttara means "exelled," samyak means "right," sam means "all-pervading," and bodhi is translated "way." Taken together, the term is translated "unexcelled, right, all-pervading way." "Unexcelled" means that this way thoroughly penetrates true reality and reaches the ultimate nature of things; nothing surpasses it. Why? Because it is perfect. "Right" refers to enlightened wisdom. Because it knows things just as they are, it is called "right wisdom." Because dharma-nature is formless, enlightened wisdom is no-
knowing. "All-pervading" has two meanings: first, the enlightened mind knows all things everywhere; second, the dharma-body universally fills the dharma-realm. Neither the body nor the mind ever fails to be present everywhere. "Way" refers to "unhindered way." The [Garland] Sutra states, "Those unhindered throughout the ten quarters have gone beyond birth-and-death upon the one way." "One way" is the one unhindered enlightenment. "Unhindered" means to know that birth-and-death is itself nirvana. Such dharma-gates as this one teaching entrance into non-duality reveal the un-hindered-ness of enlightenment.

Question: What is the reason for saying, The bodhisattva has swiftly realized anuttara-samyak-sambodhi?

Answer: The Treatise states it is because he has performed the practices of the five gates and accomplished both self-benefit and benefiting others. Further, when we seek the basis for this [swift realization], truly Amida Tathágata is to be considered the decisive cause. "Other's benefiting" (ta-ri) and "benefiting others" (ri-ta) are two ways of saying the same thing. If we speak from the standpoint of the Buddha, the term "benefiting others" should be used. If we speak from the standpoint of sentient beings, the term "Other's benefiting" should be used. Here, it is the Buddha's power that is being discussed; hence, the term "benefiting others" applies. One must grasp the significance of this. Generally stated, it is because birth in the Pure Land, and the practices performed by the bodhisattvas, human beings, and devas there as well, are all brought to fulfillment by the Primal Vow of Amida Tathágata. If one asks why this should be so, the reason is that were it not for the Buddha's power, the Forty-eight Vows would have been made in vain. Here, let us verify this by taking up the three relevant Vows.

The Buddha vowed:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.
Through the power of the Buddha's Vow, one says the Name ten times and accordingly attains birth in the Pure Land. Because one attains birth, one escapes from transmigration in the three realms. Because one is released from transmigration, it is said one "swiftly" realizes enlightenment. This is the first proof.

The Buddha vowed:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

Through the power of the Buddha's Vow, one comes to dwell among the truly settled. Because one dwells among the truly settled, one attains nirvana without fail. One is released from all the adversities of wandering in birth-and-death, and for this reason, it is said one "swiftly" realizes enlightenment. This is the second proof.

The Buddha vowed:

When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come and are born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain [the rank of] "succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime" - except for those who, in accordance with their own original vows, freely guide others to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddhas and Tathāgatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in the unexcelled, right, true way. Such bodhisattvas surpass ordinary ones, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and discipline themselves in the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

Through the power of the Buddha's Vow one surpasses ordinary bodhisattvas, manifests the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and disciplines oneself in the virtue of Samantabhadra. Because one surpasses
ordinary bodhisattvas and manifests the practices of all the stages, it is said that one "swiftly" realizes enlightenment. This is the third proof.

Inferring from these proofs, we see that Other Power is to be taken as the decisive cause. How could it be otherwise?

Further, the following illustration will point out the characteristics of self-power and of Other Power. Out of fear of falling into the three evil courses, people undertake the observance of the precepts. Because of their observance of the precepts, they are able to perform meditation. Because they perform meditation, they acquire transcendent powers. Because they have transcendent powers, they are able to wander freely throughout the four continents - such is termed "self-power."

Again, a person of inferior powers astride a donkey cannot rise up off the ground, but when following an outing of a cakravartin king, is able to ride in the air and wander freely throughout the four continents with no obstruction - such is termed "Other Power." How foolish are scholars of these latter times! Hear the teaching that you should ride upon Other Power and awaken shinjin. Do not confine yourself to your own powers.

83 Master Yüan-chao states:

In breaking through delusion and realizing true reality in this world, one employs self-power; hence, [self-power practices] are taught in various Mahayana and Hinayana sutras. In going to the other world to listen to the dharma and realize enlightenment, one must rely on Other Power; hence, birth in the Pure Land is taught. Although these two ways differ, they are both means [provided by Shakyamuni] for leading one to realization of one's mind.

[Ocean of the One Vehicle]
84 In the term "ocean of the One Vehicle," One Vehicle refers to the great vehicle (Mahayana). The great vehicle is the Buddha vehicle. To realize the One Vehicle is to realize the highest perfect enlightenment. The highest perfect enlightenment is none other than the realm of nirvana. The realm of nirvana is the ultimate dharma-body. To realize the ultimate dharma-body is to reach the ultimate end of the One Vehicle. There is no other Tathágata; there is no other dharma-body. Tathágata is itself dharma-body. Reaching the ultimate end of the One Vehicle is without bound and without cessation. In the great vehicle there are no "two vehicles" or "three vehicles." The two vehicles and three vehicles lead one to enter the One Vehicle. The One Vehicle is the vehicle of highest truth. There is no One Vehicle other than the One Buddha-Vehicle, the Vow.

85 The Nirvana Sutra states:

Good people, true reality is called the great vehicle; that which is not the great vehicle cannot be called true reality. Good people, true reality is what the Buddha teaches. It is not what is taught by Maras. What Maras teach is not the Buddha's teaching and hence cannot be called true reality. Good people, true reality is the single way, pure and undefiled; there is no other way.

86 Further it states:

How does a bodhisattva accept and accord with the one reality? A bodhisattva knows that all sentient beings are led to enter the single way. The single way is none other that the great vehicle. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas divide it into three for the sake of sentient beings. This, a bodhisattva accepts and accords with it without going against it.

87 Further it states:

Good people, the term "ultimate" has two meanings; first, the ultimate is the process of consummation; second, the ultimate that has been consummated. The first is the ultimate in the realm of the mundane, the second is the ultimate in the realm of the supra-mundane. The ultimate that has been consummated is the One Vehicle that all sentient beings will
realize. The One Vehicle is called Buddha-nature. For this reason, I teach that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature. All sentient beings, without exception, posses the One Vehicle. Because it is covered over by their ignorance, they are unable to see it.

88 Further it states:

Why is Buddha-nature "one"? Because all sentient beings are possessed of the One Vehicle. Why is it "not-one"? Because the three vehicles are taught. Why is it neither "one" nor "not-one"? Because it is the dharma beyond count.

89 The Garland Sutra states:

The dharma realized by Manjusri is constantly such as it is;

The dharma-king is himself the one dharma.

All the unhindered ones

Have gone out from birth-and-death by means of the single way;

The bodies of all the Buddhas

Are solely the one dharma-body.

Their minds are one, their wisdoms are one;

So are their powers and fearlessnesses.

90 We see, therefore, that the realization described above is all the great benefit we receive in the Pure Land of peace, the inconceivable, perfect virtue of the Buddha's Vow.

91 Concerning the term "ocean": since the infinite past, the river waters of the sundry practices and disciplines performed by ordinary people and sages, and the ocean waters of the ignorance-infinite as the sands of the Ganges-of those who commit the five grave offenses, who slander the
dharma, or who lack the seed of Buddha- hood, have been transformed into
the waters of the great treasure ocean of all the true and real virtues-
countless as the sands of the Ganges - of the great wisdom- compassion of
the Primal Vow. This is likened to an ocean. We know truly, then, that it is
as a sutra states, "The ice of blind passions melts and become the water of
virtues."

The ocean of the Vow does not keep within it the dead bodies of the sundry
good acts of the two vehicles, that is, the middle and lower vehicles. Hardly
does it keep, then, the corpses of the empty, transitory, false, and deceitful
good acts and the poisoned and impure minds of human beings and devas.

92 Thus, the Larger Sutra states:

Sravakas and even bodhisattvas

Are unable to know thoroughly the enlightened mind;
They are like persons born without sight
Desiring to guide others.
The ocean of the Tathágata’s wisdom
Is deep, vast and without limit or bottom.
It cannot be fathomed by those of the two vehicles;
Only Buddhas alone can fully comprehend it.

93 The [Commentary of the] Treatise on the Pure Land states:

What is the fulfillment of the adornment, "the virtue of sustaining without
any futility"? The gatha states:

Contemplating the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,
I see that no one who encounters it passes by in vain;
It quickly begins to fullness and perfection

The great treasure ocean of virtues.

The fulfillment of the virtue of sustaining without any futility refers to the power of Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow. The meaning of "sustaining without any futility" will be revealed by briefly illustrating with examples that sentient beings' activities are futile and cannot be sustained...Sustaining without any futility is based on the Forty-eight Vows that Dharmakara Bodhisattva made in the past in the causal stage and on Amida Tathágata’s transcendent powers freely working in the present. The Vow gives rise to the power; the power fulfills the Vow. The Vow has not been made in vain; the power has not been actualized in futility. Power and Vow accord with each other and are never in conflict. Hence, the "fulfillment" of this virtue.

94 Further it states:

The term "ocean" signifies that the Buddha's all-knowing wisdom is profound, vast, and fathomless; it does not keep within it the dead bodies of the sundry good acts of the two vehicles, that is, the middle or lower vehicles. This is likened to an ocean. For this reason, it is said:

The immovable ones among devas and human beings

Are born from the ocean of pure wisdom.

"Immovable" means that those devas and human beings, having actualized the root of the great vehicle in themselves, cannot be moved.

95 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

I rely on the bodhisattva-pitaka,

The sudden teaching, the ocean of the One Vehicle.
Further he states:

In the Ornament Sutra the gradual teaching is expounded;

Performing practices for a myriad kalpas, one attains the stage of non-reetrogression.

What is taught in the Contemplation and the Amida Sutras

Is the sudden teaching, the bodhisattva-Pitaka.

It is stated in the Collection of Passages of the Land of Bliss compiled by Master Tsung-hsiao:

One grain of elixir transforms iron into gold; one word of truth transforms evil karma into good.

When, from the perspective of the teaching, the Nembutsu and the various good practices are compared, we find the following contrasts:

Easy, in contrast to difficult;

Sudden, in contrast to gradual;

Crosswise, in contrast to lengthwise;

Leaping across, in contrast to fording;

Accordant, in contrast to opposing;

Great, in contrast to small;

Many, in contrast to few;

Superior, in contrast to inferior;

Intimate, in contrast to remote;
Close, in contrast to distant;

Profound, in contrast to shallow;

Strong, in contrast to weak;

Momentous, in contrast to trivial;

Vast, in contrast to narrow;

Pure, in contrast to mixed;

Direct, in contrast to roundabout;

Quick, in contrast to slow;

Special, in contrast to general;

Non-retrogressive, in contrast to retrogressive;

Straightforward exposition, in contrast to incidental explanation;

The Name, in contrast to meditative and non meditative practices;

Exhaustive of truth, in contrast to not exhaustive in truth;

Encouraged, in contrast to not encouraged;

Uninterrupted, in contrast to interrupted;

Unceasing, in contrast to ceasing;

Continuous, in contrast to non-continuous;

Unsurpassed, in contrast to surpassed;

Highest of the high, in contrast to the lowest of the low;

Inconceivable, in contrast to conceivable;
Resultant virtue, in contrast to causal practices;

Buddha's exposition, in contrast to those of others;

Not-directing merit, in contrast to directing merit;

Protected, in contrast to unprotected;

Witnessed, in contrast to un-witnessed;

Praised, in contrast to un-praised;

Entrusted, in contrast to un-entrusted;

Fully expressed teaching, in contrast to that not fully expressed;

Able to eradicate evil, in contrast to unable;

Selected, in contrast to unselected;

True, in contrast to provisional;

Buddha's deathlessness, in contrast to Buddha's extinction;

Un-perishing dharma, in contrast to perishing;

Beneficial, in contrast to non-beneficial;

Other Power, in contrast to self-power;

Embodying the Vow, in contrast to not embodying the Vow;

Practitioner grasped, in contrast to not grasped;

Practitioner entering the stage of the truly settled, in contrast to not entering;

Fulfilled land, in contrast to transformed land.
Such are the contrast. However, when I consider the ocean of the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow, I see it is the teaching that is perfect, complete, instantaneous, unhindered, absolute, and incomparable.

99 Further, when they are compared from the perspective of the practicer, there are the following contrasts:

Entrusting, in contrast to doubt;

Good, in contrast to evil;

Right, in contrast to wrong;

Suitable, in contrast to unsuitable;

Real, in contrast to empty;

True, in contrast to false;

Pure, in contrast to defiled;

Intelligent, in contrast to dull;

Quick, in contrast to slow;

Lofty, in contrast to mean;

Bright, in contrast to dark.

Such are the contrast. However, when I consider the practitioner of the ocean of the One Vehicle, I see that the one who has realized diamond-like shinjin is the absolute and incomparable practitioner. Let this be known.

100 Respectfully I say to all people who aspire to be born in the Pure Land: The ocean of the One Vehicle, the universal Vow, has consummated the highest virtue, which is unhindered, unbounded, supreme, profound, inexplicable, indescribable, and inconceivable. How can this be? It is because the Vow surpasses conceptual understanding.
The Vow of compassion is life vast space, for all its excellent virtues are broad and boundless.

It is like an immense cart, for it carries all people - whether ignorant or wise - wherever they may be.

It is like a wonderful lotus blossom, for it is not stained by anything in the world.

It is like the clear sight tree, the king of medicines, for it overcomes all the diseases of blind passions.

It is like a sharp sword, for it rends the armor of pride and arrogance.

It is like the banner of a valiant general, for it subdues all the armies of Maras.

It is like a keen saw blade, for it fells all the trees [in the forest] of ignorance.

It is like a sharp ax, for it lops off all the branches of suffering.

It is like a true teacher, for it unknotts all the ropes of birth-and-death.

It is like a guiding master, for it informs foolish beings of the essential way of liberation.

It is like a spring, for it wells forth with the waters of wisdom, which are inexhaustible.

It is like a lotus, for it is not tainted by any karmic evil.

It is like a swift wind, for it dispels the fogs of all hindrances.

It is like a good nectar, for it perfectly possesses all tastes of virtue.

It is like the right path, for it leads the multitudes of beings into the capital of wisdom.
It is like a magnet, for it draws to itself the virtues originating from the Primal Vow.

It is like Jambunada gold, for it overwh elms all the good of the conditioned world with its brightness.

It is like a hidden treasure-store, for it embraces the dharmas of all the Buddhas.

It is like the great earth, for all the Tathágatas of the past, present, and future throughout the ten quarters arise from it.

It is like the light of the sun, for it breaks through the darkness and ignorance of all foolish beings and gives rise to shinjin in them.

It is like the supreme ruler, for it stands above all those of the upper vehicle.

It is like a strict father, for it gives guidance to all, both the ignorant and the wise.

It is like a compassionate mother, for it gives birth to and nurtures the true and real cause of birth in the fulfilled land for all, both the ignorant and the wise.

It is like a nursing mother, for it raises and protects all people who aspire for birth, both the good and the evil.

It is like the great the great earth, for it sustains the birth of all beings.

It is like the great waters, for it washes away the scum of all blind passions.

It is like the great fire, for it burns the firewood of all views.

It is like the great wind, for it goes everywhere in the world and is without hindrance.
The Vow] liberates one from the castle of the fetters of the three realms of existence and closes the gateways to the twenty-five forms of existence. It brings one to attainment of the true and real fulfilled land and distinguishes the wrong from the right path. It dries up the ocean of ignorance and cases beings to flow into the ocean of the Vow. It brings one to ride on the ship of all-knowing wisdom, so that one sails out into the ocean of beings. It brings to perfect fulfillment the sore of merit and wisdom and opens the store of provisional means. Truly we should reverently receive and accept it.

[Preface to the Hymn of True Shinjin and the Nembutsu]

101 Generally stated, with regard to the Vows, there is true and real practice and shinjin, and there is practice and shinjin that are provisional means. The Vow on which true and real practice is based is the Vow that all Buddhas say the Name. The Vow on which true and real shinjin is based is the Vow of sincere mind and trust. These are the practice and shinjin of the selected Primal Vow. Its practicers are all the good and the evil, the sages of the Mahayana and the Hinayana, and the foolish. Their birth is birth that is inconceivable. The Buddha and land are fulfilled Buddha and fulfilled land. All of this is none other than the ocean of true reality or suchness, the inconceivable Vow. This is the central purport of the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, the genuine significance of the true essence of Other Power.

Here, then, wishing to realize the Buddha's benevolence and to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's virtue, I turn to Master [T'an-luan's] Commentary, which states:

The bodhisattva takes refuge in the Buddha, just as filial children obey their parents and loyal retainers follow their rulers, with their behavior not self-centered and their acts always according with reason. Since the bodhisattva is aware of the Buddha's benevolence and responds in gratitude to the Buddha's virtue, he naturally addresses the Buddha first. Moreover, Vasubandhu's aspiration is not undertaken lightly. How could it ever be fulfilled without the support of the Tathágata’s majestic power? Here
Vasubandhu entreats the Tathágata to lend his majestic powers; hence he reverently addresses him, saying, "O World-honored one!"

Thus, taking refuge in the true words of the Great Sage and turning to the commentaries of the revered patriarchs, I realize the depth and vastness of the Buddha's benevolence and compose the following hymn.

102 Hymn of True Shinjin and the Nembutsu

I take refuge in the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life!

I entrust myself to the Buddha of Inconceivable Light!

Bodhisattva Dharmakara, in his causal stage,

Under the guidance of Lokesvararaja Buddha,

Searched into the origins of the Buddhas' pure lands,

And the qualities of those lands and their men and devas;

He then established the supreme, incomparable Vow;

He made the great Vow rare and all-encompassing.

In five kalpas of profound thought, he embraced this Vow,

Then resolved again that his Name be heard throughout the ten quarters.

Everywhere he casts light immeasurable, boundless,
Unhindered, unequaled, light-lord of all brilliance,

Pure light, joyful light, the light of wisdom,

Light constant, inconceivable, light beyond speaking,

Light excelling sun and moon he sends forth, illumining countless worlds;

The multitudes of beings all receive the radiance.

The Name embodying the Primal Vow is the act of true settlement,

The Vow of entrusting with sincere mind is the cause of birth;

We realize the equal of enlightenment and supreme nirvana

Through the fulfillment of the Vow of attaining nirvana without fail.

Shakyamuni Tathágata appeared in this world

Solely to teach the ocean-like Primal Vow of Amida;

We, an ocean of beings in an evil age of five defilements,

Should entrust ourselves to the Tathágata’s words of truth.

When the one thought-moment of joy arises,

Nirvana is attained without severing blind passions;

When ignorant and wise, even grave offenders and slanders of the dharma, all alike turn and enter shinjin,

They are like waters that, on entering the ocean, become one in taste with it.

The light of compassion that grasps us illuminates and protects us always;
The darkness of our ignorance is already broken through;
Still the clouds and mists of greed and desire, anger and hatred,
Cover as always the sky of true and real shinjin.
But though light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists,
Beneath the clouds and mists there is brightness, not dark.
When one realizes shinjin, seeing and revering and attaining great joy,
One immediately leaps crosswise, closing off the five evil courses.
All foolish beings, whether good or evil,
When they hear and entrust to Amida's universal Vow,
Are praised by the Buddha as people of vast and excellent understanding;
Such a person is called a pure white lotus.
For evil sentient beings of wrong views and arrogance,
The Nembutsu that embodies Amida's Primal Vow
Is hard to accept in shinjin;
This most difficult of difficulties, nothing surpasses.

The masters of India in the west, who explained the teaching in treatises,
And the eminent monks of China and Japan,
Clarified the Great Sage's true intent in appearing in the world,
And revealed that Amida's Primal Vow accords with the nature of beings.
Shakyamuni Tathágata, on Mount Lanka,

Prophesied to the multitudes that in south India

The Mahasattva Nargarjuna would appear in this world

To crush the views of being and non-being;

Proclaiming the unexcelled Mahayana teaching,

He would attain the stage of joy and be born in the land of happiness.

Nargarjuna clarifies the hardship on the overland path of difficult practice,

And leads us to entrust to the pleasure on the waterway of easy practice.

He teaches that the moment one thinks on Amida's Primal Vow,

One is naturally brought to enter the stage of the definitely settled;

Solely saying the Tathágata’s Name constantly,

One should respond with gratitude to the universal Vow of great compassion.

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, composing a treatise, declares

That he takes refuge in the Tathágata of unhindered light,

And that relying on the sutras, he will reveal the true and real virtues,

And make widely known the great Vow by which we leap crosswise beyond birth-and-death.

He discloses the mind that is single so that all beings be saved

By Amida's directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow.
When a person turns and enters the great treasure ocean of virtue,

Necessarily he joins Amida's assembly;

And when he reaches that lotus-held world,

He immediately realizes the body of such-ness or dharma-nature.

Then sporting in the forests of blind passions, he manifests transcendent powers;

Entering the garden of birth-and-death, he assumes various forms to guide others.

Turning toward the dwelling of Master T'an-luan, the Emperor of Liang

Always paid homage to him as a bodhisattva.

Bodhiruci, master of the Tripitaka, gave T'an-luan the Pure Land teachings,

And T'an-luan, burning his Taoist scriptures, took refuge in the land of bliss.

In his commentary on the treatise of Bodhisattva Vasubandhu,

He shows that the cause and attainment of birth in the fulfilled land lie in the Vow.

Our going and returning, directed to us by Amida, come about through Other Power;

The truly decisive cause is shinjin.

When a foolish being of delusion and defilement awakens shinjin,

He realizes that birth-and-death is itself nirvana;

Without fail he reaches the land of immeasurable light
And universally guides sentient beings to enlightenment.

Tao-ch'o determined how difficult it is to fulfill the Path of Sages,

And reveals that only passage through the Pure Land gate is possible for us.

He criticizes self-power endeavor in the myriad good practices,

And encourages us solely to say the fulfilled Name embodying true virtue.

With kind concern he teaches the three characteristics of entrusting and non-entrusting.

Compassionately guiding all identically, whether they live when the dharma survives as but form, when in its last stage, or when it has become extinct.

Though a person has committed evil all his life, when he encounters the Primal Vow,

He will reach the world of peace and realize the perfect fruit of enlightenment.

Shan-tao alone in his time clarified the Buddha's true intent;

Sorrowing at the plight of meditative and non meditative practicers and people of grave evil,

He reveals that Amida's light and Name are the causes of birth.

When the practitioner enters the great ocean of wisdom, the Primal Vow,

He receives the diamond-like mind

And accords with the one thought-moment of joy; whereupon,
Equally with Vaidehi, he acquires the threefold wisdom
And is immediately brought to attain the eternal bliss of dharma-nature.

Genshin, having broadly elucidated the teachings of Shakyamuni’s lifetime,
Wholeheartedly took refuge in the land of peace and urges all to do so;
Ascertaining that minds devoted to single practice are profound, to sundry practice, shallow,
He sets forth truly the difference between the fulfilled land and the transformed land.
The person burdened with extreme evil should simply say the Name:
Although I too am within Amida's grasp,
Passions obstruct my eyes and I cannot see him;
Nevertheless, great compassion is untiring and illumines me always.

Master Genku, well-versed in the Buddha's teaching,
Turned compassionately to foolish people, both good and evil;
Establishing in this remote land the teaching and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way,
He transmits the selected Primal Vow to us of the defiled world:
Return to this house of transmigration, of birth-and death,
Is decidedly caused by doubt.
Swift entrance into the city of tranquility, the uncreated,
Is necessarily brought about by shinjin.
The Mahasattvas and masters who spread the sutras

Save the countless beings of utter defilement and evil.

With the same mind, all people of the present, whether monk or lay,

Should rely wholly on the teachings of these venerable masters.

Here ends the Hymn,

120 lines in sixty verses.

Here ends Chapter II:

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Practice of the Pure Land Way

III

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Shinjin of the Pure Land Way

COMPILED BY GUTOKU SHINRAN,
DISCIPLE OF SHAKYAMUNI

[PREFACE]

As I reflect, I find that our attainment of shinjin arises from the heart and mind with which Amida Tathágata selected the Vow, and that the
clarification of true mind has been taught for us through the skillful works of compassion of the Great Sage, Shakyamuni. But the monks and laity of this latter age and the religious teachers of these times are floundering in concepts of "self-nature" and "mind-only," and they disparage the true realization of enlightenment in the Pure Land Way. Or lost in the self-power attitude of meditative and non-meditative practices, they are ignorant of true shinjin, which is diamond-like.

Here I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, reverently embrace the true teaching of the Buddhas and Tathāgatas and look to the essential meaning of the treatises and commentaries of the masters. Fully guided by the beneficent light of the three sutras, I seek in particular to clarify the luminous passage on the "mind that is single." I will pose questions concerning it and then present clear testimony in which explanation is found.

Mindful solely of the depth and vastness of the Buddha's benevolence, I am unconcerned about being personally abused. Let companions who aspire for the Pure Land and all who abhor this defiled world accept or discard what they will of this work, but let them not ridicule the teaching.

1 Reverently contemplating Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth, I find there is great shinjin. Great shinjin is the superlative means for attaining longevity and deathlessness. It is the wondrous way to awaken aspiration for the pure and rejection of the defiled. It is the straightforward mind directed to us through the selected Vow. It is shinjin* that actualizes Amida's profound and vast benefiting of others. It is true mind that is diamond-like and indestructible. It is pure shinjin by which a person easily reaches the Pure Land where no one goes. It is the mind that is single, realized by the person who is grasped and protected by the compassionate light. It is great shinjin, rare and unsurpassed. It is the quick path difficult for people to accept. It is the true cause of attaining great nirvana. It is the white path by which all virtues are fulfilled instantly. It is the ocean of shinjin that is itself such-ness or true reality.
This mind arises from the Vow of birth through the Nembutsu. This great Vow is known as "the selected Primal Vow," "the Vow of the threefold mind of the Primal Vow," "the Vow of sincere mind and entrusting," and, further, may be called "the Vow of shinjin, which is Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth."

For the foolish and ignorant who are ever sinking in birth-and-death, the multitudes turning in transmigration, it is not attainment of the unexcelled, incomparable fruit of enlightenment that is difficult; the genuine difficulty is realizing true and real shinjin.* Why? Because this realization takes place through the Tathágata’s supportive power; because it comes about wholly through the power of great compassion and all-embracing wisdom. If pure shinjin should be realized, that mind will not be inverted; that mind will not be vain or false. Thereupon that sentient being of extreme evil, profound and immense, will realize the mind of great joy and receive the veneration and love of all the sacred honored ones.

[The Sutra Passages]

2 The passage stating the Primal Vow of sincere mind and entrusting in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

3 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

If, when I have realized the supreme enlightenment, living beings in other Buddha-lands should hear my Name, I will with sincere mind direct all my roots of good to them. Aspiring to be born in my land, they shall say my Name perhaps even ten times. If they should not be born there, may I not attain enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit evil acts that
condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.

4 The passage declaring the fulfillment of the Primal Vow in the [Larger] Sutra states:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

5 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

When, upon hearing the Name of the Tathágata of immeasurable life, sentient beings of the Buddha-lands of other quarters awaken one thought-moment of pure shinjin, rejoice, and - cherishing Amida's directing of his roots of good to them - aspire to be born in the land of immeasurable life, then all shall be born in accord with their aspiration, attaining the stage of non-retrogression and, ultimately, the supreme perfect enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.

6 Further, [the Larger Sutra] states:

The one who hears and never forgets this dharma,

But sees and reveres it and greatly rejoices in attaining it-

That person is my true companion;

Therefore, awaken this mind!

7 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:
Such a person is one of great, majestic virtue. He or she shall enter the preeminent gateway of the boundless Buddha-dharma.

8 Further, it states:

The virtues of the Tathágata are known solely to Buddhas;

Only a world-honored one is able to reveal them.

They lie beyond the grasp of devas, nagas, and yakshas,

And the two vehicles by nature are incapable of expressing them.

Even if all sentient beings were to become Buddhas,

Perform activities surpassing even Samantabhadra's, and reach the other shore,

Though they try to enumerate and expound the Buddha's virtues,

It would not be accomplished even in incalculable kalpas.

Even if, in the meanwhile, their bodies were to pass into extinction,

Still they would not have exhausted the Buddha's incomparable wisdom.

For this reason, those who realize shinjin, hear,

And are embraced by true friends-

Those who come to hear this profound and peerless dharma-

Shall be venerated and loved by all sacred honored ones.

Only Buddhas comprehend the significance and words

Of the teaching of the Tathágata’s supreme wisdom, which pervades all space.
Hence, listening well concerning the land of all-knowing wisdom,

Entrust yourself to the true words of my teaching.

It is immensely difficult to receive human existence,

And, again, difficult to encounter a Tathágata’s appearance in the world.

The consummate wisdom of shinjin is rarely realized;

Hence, the practitioner must be diligent.

When you have actually heard this excellent dharma,

You constantly bring joy to all the Buddhas.

Passages From The Masters: T'an-Luan]

9 The Commentary on the Treatise states:

One says the Name of the Tathágata in accord with the Tathágata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom, and with the significance of the Name, wishing to be in correspondence with it by practicing in accord with reality.

One says the Name of the Tathágata means to say the name of the Tathágata of unhindered light. In accord with the Tathágata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom: the Buddha's light is the manifestation of wisdom. This light is completely unhindered in shining throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, and it dispels the darkness of ignorance of the sentient beings of the ten quarters. It is not like the light of the sun, the moon, or a gem, which dispels only the darkness of an enclosure. [In
accord] with the significance of the Name, wishing to be in correspondence with it by practicing in accord with reality: the Name of the Tathágata of unhindered light dispels all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills their aspirations. But if you ask why ignorance still remains and your aspirations are not fulfilled even though you say the Name and are mindful of Amida, it is because you do not practice in accord with reality, because you are not in correspondence with the significance of the Name. Why is your practice not in accord with reality and not in correspondence with the significance of the Name? Because you do not know that the Tathágata is the body of true reality and, further, the body for the sake of beings.

Further, there are three aspects of non-correspondence. In the first, shinjin is not genuine, for at times it appears to exist and at other times not to exist. In the second, shinjin is not single, for it lacks decisiveness. In the third, shinjin is not enduring, for it is disrupted by other thoughts. These three act reciprocally among themselves and mutually give rise to each other. Because shinjin is not genuine, it lacks decisiveness. Because it lacks decisiveness, mindfulness is not enduring. Further, because mindfulness is not enduring, one does not realize shinjin that is decisive. Because one does not realize shinjin that is decisive, the mind is not genuine. The opposite, positive side of this is termed, to be in correspondence [with the significance of the Name] by practicing in accord with reality. For this reason, the author of the Treatise states at the outset, "I, with the mind that is single."

10 The Hymns to Amida Buddha states:

All sentient beings hear Amida Buddha's Name of virtues, Realize shinjin and joy, and delight in what they hear for even a single thought-moment. When those of sincere mind, which has been directed to them – aspire to be born in the Pure Land, they are all enabled to go there. Excepted are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma. Therefore, I offer homage and aspire for birth.
The Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra by the Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

[The Buddha's transcendent powers work] in accord with the intentions has two meanings. First, it means "in accord with the intentions of sentient beings." All shall be saved in accord with their thoughts and desires. Second, it means "in accord with the will of Amida." With his five kinds of sight he perceives all being perfectly, and with his six transcendent powers he works freely and without reservation. When he sees a being ready to be saved, in a single thought-moment – neither before nor after – he appears before that being in both body and mind, and with the three wheels of thoughts, words and deeds he brings him to the realization of enlightenment. Thus, the ways in which he benefits beings differ according to their natures.

Further, it states:

The five defilements and the five forms of suffering are common throughout the six courses; not a single being has ever been free of them. We are constantly assailed and afflicted by them. If there were a person not afflicted by such suffering, he would not belong to the group of ordinary beings.

Further, it states:

The passage from what are these three? to born without fail in that land clearly delineates the three minds and explains that these are the true cause resulting in birth. There are two points elucidated by this passage. First, it shows that the World-honored one's revealing of benefit in accord with the nature of the practitioner is profound in intent and difficult to fathom; thus, if the Buddha had not himself raised the question and presented the point precisely, we should have no way of understanding. Second, it shows that
the Tathágata himself answers, setting forth the previously mentioned "three minds."

The sutra states, the first is sincere (shijo) mind. Shi means true, jo means real. This shows that the understanding and practice of all sentient beings, cultivated through their bodily, verbal, and mental acts, unfailingly take as essential what was performed [by Amida] with a true and real mind. We should not express outwardly signs of wisdom, goodness, or diligence, for inwardly we are possessed of falsity. We are filled with all manner of greed, anger, perversity, deceit, wickedness, and cunning, and it is difficult to put an end to our evil nature. In this we are like poisonous snakes or scorpions. Though we perform practices in the three modes of action, they must be called poisoned good acts or false practices. They cannot be called true, real and sincere action. Firmly setting our minds and undertaking practice in this way - even if we strive to the utmost with body and mind through the twelve periods of the day and night, urgently seeking and urgently acting as though sweeping fire from our heads - must all be called poisoned good acts. To seek birth in the Buddha's Pure Land by directing the merit of such poisoned practice is completely wrong. Why? Because when, in his causal stage, Amida Buddha was performing practices as a bodhisattva, in every single moment - every single instant - he performed his practices in the three modes of action with a true and real mind. [True practice] depends on this.

What is given [by Amida] constitutes our aspiration; it is all true and real. Further, what is true and real falls into two types: self-benefiting with a true and real mind and [Amida's] benefiting others with a true and real mind... Regarding acts in the three modes that are not good, you should unfailingly take as essential the Buddha's abandoning of them with a true and real mind. And if you perform good in the three modes of action, unfailingly take as essential what the Buddha performed with a true and real mind. It is because a person takes the true and real as essential, whether he be within our without, whether of brightness or darkness, that the term "sincere mind" is applied.
The second is deep mind. Deep mind is the deeply entrusting mind. There are two aspects. One is to believe deeply and decidedly that you are a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration from innumerable kalpas in the past, with never a condition that would lead to emancipation. The second is to believe deeply and decidedly that Amida Buddha's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings, and that allowing yourself to be carried by the power of the Vow without any doubt or apprehension, you will attain birth.

Further, it is to believe deeply and decidedly that Shakyamuni Buddha leads people to aspire for the Pure Land by teaching, in the Contemplation Sutra, the three types of meritorious conduct, the nine grades of beings, and the two kinds of good – meditative and non-meditative – and by verifying and praising Amida's two kinds of fulfillment, the Buddha's body and land.

Further, it is to believe deeply and decidedly that, as taught in the Amida Sutra, all the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, give their witness and encourage all foolish beings to attain birth without fail.

May all practicers – persons of deeply entrusting mind – single-heartedly entrust themselves to the Buddha's words alone and, thinking not of their lives but relying utterly on the practice [of the Nembutsu], abandon what the Buddha brings them to abandon, practice what the Buddha brings them to practice, leave what the Buddha brings them to leave. This is called "being in accord with the Buddha's teaching, being in accord with the Buddha's intent." This is "being in accord with [Amida] Buddha's Vow." This is to be a "true disciple of the Buddha."

Further, all practicers who, in accord with the [Contemplation] Sutra, entrust themselves deeply to this practice alone, will never fall into error in guiding other sentient beings. This is because the Buddha is the person in whom great compassion is consummate and perfect, and because his words in the sutra are true. Those apart from the Buddha – those who have yet to reach Buddhahood – are still imperfect in wisdom and practice. They are still in the stage of training, and because the two kinds of hindrance and
their residues have not been eradicated, the fulfillment of their aspiration has yet to come about. Such unenlightened beings and sages, though they may have some reckoning of the fundamental intent of the Buddha's teachings, are still incapable of finally ascertaining it. Although they may clarify it according to some standard, they must ascertain it for themselves through requesting the Buddha's testimony.

When one is in accord with the Buddha's intent, he will give his sanction, saying, "So it is, so it is." If one is not in accord with the Buddha's intent, he will say, "Concerning what you say, it is not so." Not giving sanction carries the same meaning as "not to be discussed," "profitless," "without benefit." The Buddha's bestowing of sanctions means that one is in accord with the Buddha's right teaching. Every word and pronouncement of the Buddha is the right teaching, the right meaning, the right practice, the right understanding, the right act, the right wisdom. Be the passages brief or extensive, how could those beings – whether bodhisattvas, human beings, or devas – determine whether they are right or wrong? What is taught by the Buddha is the "fully expressed teaching." What bodhisattvas and others teach is all to be labeled the "teaching not fully expressed." Reflect on this.

For this reason, I now respectfully urge all those aspirants for birth who have ties with the teaching to entrust themselves deeply to the Buddha's words – to attend solely to them and devotedly practice what they teach. Do not take up and believe teachings of bodhisattvas that are at variance with the Buddha's, thereby creating doubts and hindrances, embracing delusions, confusing yourself, and losing the great benefit of birth into the Pure Land…

Shakyamuni guides and urges all foolish beings to the saying of the Name alone and to single practice throughout their lives, so that when death comes, they will be born without fail in the Pure Land. All the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, with the same intent, praise this teaching, urge beings to follow it, and give witness to it. Why? Because their great compassion is the same in essence. What one Buddha teaches is what all Buddhas teach. What all Buddhas teach, one Buddha teaches. As taught in the Amida Sutra, Shakyamuni praises all the various adornments of the
land of bliss. Further, urging all foolish beings single-heartedly to practice
the saying of the Name alone, for one to seven days, he leads them to attain
birth without fail.

The passage that follows states that in each of the ten quarters there are
Buddhas countless as the sands of the Ganges, who all in accord say in
praise:

Well does Shakyamuni, in this evil age of the five defilements, in this evil
world, among evil sentient beings, evil views, evil passions, and in a time
when evil acts and lack of faith prevail, teach and praise the Name of
Amida, encouraging sentient beings, "If one says the Name, one unfailingly
attains birth."

This is the witness.

Further, the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, fearing that sentient
beings might not accept the teaching of the one Buddha, Shakyamuni, all
together with the same intent and at the same time extend their tongues,
and covering all the great triple-thousand-fold worlds, preach these true
and sincere words:

Sentient beings, each of you should accept what Shakyamuni has taught,
has praised, has given witness to! It is certain beyond any doubt that when
foolish beings – regardless of whether their evil or merit is great or small,
or the period of time long or short – just single-heartedly practice the
saying of the Name of Amida alone, for up to one hundred years or down
to even one or seven days, they unfailingly attain birth.

Thus, what one Buddha teaches, all Buddhas give witness to. This is known
as "establishing shinjin through the Buddha"…

Further, right practice is divided in two. First, single-heartedly practicing
the saying of the Name of Amida alone – whether walking, standing,
sitting, or reclining – without regard to the length of time, and without
abandoning it from moment to moment: this is called "the act of true
settlement," for it is in accord with the Buddha's Vow. [Second,] if one
engages in worship, sutra-recitation, and so on, these are called "auxiliary acts." All forms of good other than these two kinds of practice – true and auxiliary – are called "sundry practices"... They are all "irrelevant and sundry practices."

Hence the term deep mind.

The third is the mind of aspiration for birth and directing of virtue... Again, let the person who seeks to be born with the mind of aspiration and directing of virtue aspire for attainment of birth by unfailingly and decidedly taking as essential the Vow directed to him from the true and real mind. This mind, in its profound entrusting, is like diamond; it is not shaken, confused, defeated, or broken by people of other views, other teachings, different understandings, or different practices. Just be decisively settled, single-heartedly hold to the Vow, and rightly and directly go forward, without paying attention to what others may say. If your heart advances and retreats, and you look back with weak and cowardly thoughts, you will fall from the path and forfeit the great benefit of birth.

Question: People of other understandings and practices, of wrong and sundry practices, may come and confront us, seeking to cast us into confusion. They may raise a variety of doubts and difficulties, saying, "You cannot attain birth," or "Sentient beings such as yourselves have, since the beginning-less past down to this present existence, with bodily, verbal, and mental acts, committed all the ten transgressions, the five grave offenses, the four serious offenses, slander of the dharma, lack of the seed of Buddhahood, violation of precepts, destruction of right views and so on, against all others, whether ordinary beings or sages, and the retribution for these acts has yet to be eliminated or exhausted. This karmic evil will bind you to the three realms and the evil courses. How is it possible that, by performing meritorious deeds and saying the Nembutsu for but one lifetime, you will attain the undefiled land of no-birth and realize the stage of non-retrogression forever?"

Answer: The teachings and practices taught by the Buddhas outnumber even particles or grains of sand. The opportunities and conditions of beings
[for encountering them] differ according to their hearts and minds. To illustrate, concerning even what ordinary people can see with the eyes and believe, there is light dispersing darkness, space enveloping all things, the earth bearing and nurturing, water bringing forth and nourishing, heat-element ripening and consuming. Such examples are all termed "elements with corresponding functions." They can be observed with the eye with a thousand differences and a myriad variation. How much more is this so with the inconceivable power of the Buddha-dharma! Does it not benefit us in a variety of ways?

To emerge from one gateway is to emerge from one gateway of blind passion; to enter one gateway according to your opportunities and conditions is to enter one gateway of emancipation- wisdom. In this way, you should undertake practice in accord with your opportunities and conditions and seek emancipation. Why do you obstruct and confuse me with what is not the essential practice corresponding to my conditions? What I desire is the practice corresponding to my conditions; that is not what you seek. What you desire is the practice corresponding to your conditions; that is not what I seek. Each person's performance of practices in accord with his aspirations unfailingly leads to rapid emancipation.

Practitioner, know that if you desire to gain understanding, you will be able to study without obstruction the teaching relevant to the stages of ordinary beings or sages or to the fruit of Buddhahood. If you desire to undertake practice, by all means follow the method of practice corresponding to your conditions. In return for a little effort, you will gain great benefit.

Further, I say to all who aspire for birth in the Pure Land: I will now present a parable for practicers so that their shinjin be protected from attacks by those of wrong or non-Buddhist views and of different opinions. What is the parable?

Suppose there is a traveler journeying one hundred thousand li toward the west, when suddenly, along the way, he comes upon two rivers [in a single channel] - one of fire, extending southward, and one of water, extending north. Each river is one hundred paces across, immeasurably deep, and
endless to the north and south. Dividing the fire and water is a single white path four or five inches wide. This path, from the eastern bank to the western bank, is one hundred paces in length. Billows of water surge over the path and flames sweep up to scorch it. Water and fire thus alternate without a break.

Now the traveler has already journeyed deep into the vast and solitary wilderness; there is no one to be seen. But bands of brigands and wild beasts lurk there, and seeing the traveler alone, they vie with each other to kill him. Fearing for his life, the traveler at once flees toward the west, when without warning the great river appears. He reflects, "I can see no end to this river either to north or south. In the middle is a white path, but it is exceedingly narrow. Although the two banks are but slightly separated, how is it possible to cross? Assuredly this day I shall die. If I turn back, brigands and wild beasts will press closer and closer upon me. If I run north or south, beasts and poisonous insects will contend with each other to attack me. If I venture on the path westward, surely I will plunge into the two currents of water and fire."

There are no words to express the terror and despair that fill him at this point. He thinks further to himself: "If I turn back now, I die. If I remain here, I die. If I go forward, I die. There is no way for me to escape death. Therefore, I choose to go forth, venturing on this path. Since this path exists, it must be possible to cross the rivers."

When this thought occurs to him, he suddenly hears the encouraging voice of someone on the eastern bank, "O traveler, just resolve to follow this path forward! You will certainly not encounter the grief of death. But if you stay where you are, you will surely die."

Further, someone on the western bank calls to him, "O traveler, with mind that is single, with right-mindedness, come at once! I will protect you. Have no fear of plunging to grief in the water or fire." The traveler, having heard the exhortation on his side of the river and the call from the other, immediately acquires firm resolution in body and mind and decisively takes the path, advancing directly without entertaining any doubt or apprehension.
When he has gone but one or two paces, the brigands on the eastern bank call out to him: "O traveler, come back! That path is treacherous and permits no crossing. You are certain to meet your death. None of us address you thus with evil intent."

The traveler hears the voices calling him, but he gives no backward glance. Thinking only of the path, he advances directly forward with the mind that is single and forthwith reaches the western side, free forever of all afflictions. He meets his good friend, and his joy in boundless. This is the parable.

Now to apply the parable: The eastern bank is the burning house that is this Saha world. The western bank: the precious land of perfect bliss. The brigands and wild beasts calling with treacherous familiarity: a sentient being's six sense organs, the six forms of consciousness, the six kinds of objects, the five aggregates, and the four elements. The wilderness where no one is to be seen: one constantly joins with evil companions, without ever meeting a true teacher. The two currents of water and fire: sentient being's greed and desire are likened to water, their anger and hatred to fire. The white path in the middle, four or five inches wide: amidst sentient being's blind passions of greed and anger, a pure mind that aspires for birth in the Pure Land is awakened. Since the greed and anger are intense, they are like the water and fire. Since the good mind is slight, it is like the white path. Further, billows of water constantly surge over the path: desires arise incessantly to defile the good mind. Flames ceaselessly scorch the path: anger and hatred consume the dharma-treasure of virtue. The traveler follows the path and advances directly westward: turning away from all practices, he advances directly westward. He hears the voice of someone on the eastern bank encouraging and exhorting him, and following the path, advances directly westward: Shakyamuni has already entered nirvana and people of later times cannot meet him. His teachings still remain, however, and we can follow them. They are like that voice. When he has gone one or two paces, the brigands call him back: people of different understandings, different practices or false views, with their own misguided opinions, one after another seek to confuse him, claiming that he is committing evil and will fail. Someone on the western bank calls to
him: this is the intent of Amida's Vow. The traveler forthwith reaches the western side; he meets his good friend, and his joy is boundless: sentient beings long sinking in birth-and-death and for innumerable kalpas lost is transmigration, being bound in delusion by their own karma, have no means of gaining emancipation for themselves. Reverently embracing Shakyamuni's teaching in his exhortations to advance westward and obeying Amida's call to us with his compassionate heart, the traveler accepts and accords with the mind of the two honored ones; never giving a thought to the two rivers of water and fire and taking the call of the honored ones to heart at every moment, he entrusts himself to the path of the power of the Vow. After his death, he attains birth in that land and meets the Buddha. How boundless is his joy!

Further, all practicers always have this understanding and always dwell in this aspiration when performing practice in the three modes of action, whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, regardless of the time, whether day or night; hence it is called the mind of aspiration for birth and directing virtue.

Moreover, concerning directing of virtue: after being born in that land, one now awakens great compassion and reenters birth-and-death to teach and guide sentient beings; this too is "directing virtue." Since one already possesses the three minds, there is no practice that is not fulfilled. With aspiration and practice already fulfilled, any assertion that one is not born is clearly baseless. These three minds apply also to meditative good acts. Reflect on this.

14 Further, [Shan-tao] states [in Hymns on the Samádhi of All Buddhas' Presence]:

Reverently I say to fellow practicers who aspire for birth: You should all deeply repent! Shakyamuni Tathágata is truly our compassionate father and mother. With a variety of compassionate means he leads us to awaken the supreme shinjin.

15 The Newly Compiled Chen-yüan Era Catalog of Scriptures, fascicle eleven states:
The Collection of Liturgical Passages from Various Sutras (two fascicles), compiled by Chih-sheng, monk of the West Ch'ung-fu temple during the T'ang dynasty. In accordance with an Imperial order of the twenty-third day, tenth month, Chen-yüan 15 [800 A.D.], it was newly added [to the Tripitaka]. In collecting liturgies from various sutras for the first fascicle of the Collection of Liturgical Passages, Chih-sheng took, for the Contemplation Sutra, the hymns of the midday chanting from Shan-tao's Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land. The second fascicle is labeled, "Collected and recorded by Bhiksu Shan-tao."

To make a selection of essential passages from the Collection of Liturgical Passages:

Second [of the three minds] is deep mind, which is true and real shinjin. One truly knows oneself to be a foolish being full of blind passions, with scant roots of good, transmigrating in the three realms and unable to emerge from this burning house. And further, one truly knows now, without so much as a single thought of doubt, that Amida's universal Primal Vow decisively enables all to attain birth, including those who say the Name even down to ten times, or even but hear it. Hence it is called "deep mind"...

When people have been able to hear The Name of Amida Buddha, Rejoice, and attain the mind that is single, they will all attain birth in the Pure Land.

[Genshin]

16 It is stated in Essentials for Attaining Birth:

The "Chapter on Entrance into the Dharma-realm" states,

Suppose there is a person who possesses a potion that renders him indestructible, so that his foes and adversaries are denied any means of
harming him. The bodhisattva-Mahasattva is like this. When he has gained
the dharma-elixir of indestructibility – the mind aspiring for enlightenment
– no blind passions, no Maras or adversaries, are able to defeat him. A man
who wears the ornament of gems that keeps one from drowning can enter
into deep waters without sinking and expiring. One who has acquired the
gem that prevents drowning – the mind aspiring for enlightenment – enters
the ocean of birth-and-death but does not sink or succumb. As a diamond
may be immersed in water for one hundred thousand kalpas without
destruction or alteration, so is the mind aspiring for enlightenment, which
may be submerged in all the karma of blind passions in birth-and-death for
endless kalpas, and yet cannot be damaged or destroyed.

17 Further, it states:

Although I too am within Amida's grasp, blind passions obstruct my eyes
and I cannot see [the light]; nevertheless, great compassion untiringly and
constantly illumines me.

18 Hence, whether with regard to practice or to shinjin, there is nothing
whatever that has not been fulfilled through Amida Tathágata's directing
of virtue to beings out of his pure Vow-mind. It is not that there is no cause
or that there is some other cause. Reflect on this.

QUESTION AND ANSWER:

THE THRE_EOFOLD MIND AS THE MIND THAT IS SINGLE]

19 Question: In the Primal Vow, the Vow of "sincere mind, entrusting, and
aspiration for birth" has been established. Why does Vasubandhu, the
author of the Treatise, speak of "the mind that is single"?
Answer: In order to make the matter easily comprehensible for ignorant and foolish sentient beings. Although Amida Tathagata discloses three minds, the true cause of attaining nirvana is shinjin alone; it appears to be for this reason that Vasubandhu takes the three together as one.

Looking into the literal meanings of the three minds, I find that the three should be taken as one. Why? In "sincere mind" (shishin), shi means truth, reality, sincerity; shin means seed, kernel. In "entrusting" (shingyo), shin means truth, reality, sincerity, fullness, ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, reverence, discernment, distinctness, clarity, faithfulness; gyo means aspiration, wish, desire, exultation, delight, joy, gladness, happiness. In "aspiration for birth" (yokusho), yoku means wish, desire, awakening, awareness; sho means accomplishment, fulfillment, performance, establishment.

We see clearly that sincere mind is the mind that is the seed of truth, reality, and sincerity; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. Entrusting is the mind full of truth, reality, and sincerity; the mind of ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, and reverence; the mind of discernment, distinctness, clarity, and faithfulness; the mind of aspiration, wish, desire, and exultation; the mind of delight, joy, gladness, and happiness; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. Aspiration for birth is the mind of wish, desire, awakening, and awareness; the mind of accomplishment, fulfillment, performance, and establishment. It is the mind of great compassion directing itself to beings; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt.
Here, in considering the literal meanings of the terms for them, we find that the three minds are the mind of truth and reality, free of any taint of falsity; they are the mind right and straightforward, free of any taint of wrong and deceit. Truly we know, then, that this is called shinjin* because it is untainted by the hindrance of doubt. Shinjin* is the mind that is single. The mind that is single is shinjin that is true and real. Therefore, the author of the Treatise states, at the outset, "With the mind that is single." Reflect on this.

[QUESTION AND ANSWER: AMIDA'S INTENT IN THE THREEOFOLD MIND]

21 Question: We can accept Vasubandhu's intentions - the significance of taking the three as one - as indicated by the literal meanings of the terms. But Amida Tathágata has in fact established the Vow of the threefold mind for the sake of foolish and evil sentient beings. How are we to understand this?

Answer: The Buddha's intention is difficult to fathom. Nevertheless, reflecting on this [threefold] mind for myself alone, I find that all beings, an ocean of multitudes, have since the beginning-less past down to this day, this very moment, been evil and defiled, completely lacking the mind of purity. They have been false and deceitful, completely lacking the mind of truth and reality. Thus, when the Tathágata, in profound compassion for the ocean of all sentient beings in pain and affliction, performed bodhisattva practices for inconceivable millions of measureless kalpas, there was not a moment, not an instant, when his practice in the three
modes of action was not pure, or lacked this true mind. With this pure, true
mind, the Tathágata brought to fulfillment the perfect, unhindered,
inconceivable, indescribable and inexplicable supreme virtues. The
Tathágata gives this sincere mind to all living beings, an ocean of beings
possessed of blind passions, karmic evil, and false wisdom. This mind
manifests the true mind of benefiting others. For this reason, it is
completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. This sincere mind takes as
its essence the reverend Name of supreme virtues.

[SINCERE MIND: PASSAGES]

22 Thus, the Larger Sutra states:

No thought of greed, anger, or harmfulness arose in his mind; he cherished
no impulse of greed, anger, or harmfulness. He did not cling to objects of
perception - color, sound, smell, taste. Abounding in perseverance, he gave
no thought to the suffering to be endured. He was content with few desires,
and without greed, anger, or folly. Always tranquil in a state of samádhi,
he possessed wisdom that knew no impediment. He was free of all
thoughts of falsity or deception. Gentle in countenance and loving in
speech, he perceived people's thoughts and was attentive to them. He was
full of courage and vigor, and being resolute in his acts, knew no fatigue.
Seeking solely that which was pure and undefiled, he brought benefit to all
beings. He revered the three treasures and served his teachers and elders.
He fulfilled all the various kinds of practices, embellishing himself with
great adornments, and brought all sentient beings to the attainment of
virtues.

23 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:
The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Bhikshu Dharmakara, before Lokesvararaja Tathágata and all devas, men, Maras, Brahma, Samanas, Brahmans, and others, widely proclaimed thus his great, universal Vows. He has already brought them all to fulfillment.

"After proclaiming these Vows, which are so rare in all the worlds, he actually resided firmly in them. Acquiring all the varieties of virtue, he adorned the pure Buddha-land of vast majestic virtues. He performed bodhisattva practices in this way, passing innumerable, countless, incalculable, unequaled kotis of Nayutas of millions of kalpas. During that time, he never harbored a single thought of greed, anger, or folly, nor any impulse of desire, harmfulness, or wrath; he cherished no thought of form, sound, smell, taste or tangible thing. The constant warmth of affection and respect he felt for all sentient beings was like that for close relatives.... His nature was harmonious and adaptable, without any violence or ill will. He always embraced a heart of compassion and patience for all sentient beings, and was never deceptive or flattering, never slothful. Encouraging them to good acts, he led them to seek pure virtues. For the sake of beings everywhere, he was stalwart and fearless and never retreated. He benefited all the worlds and brought his great Vow to perfect completion."

24 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

To seek birth in the Buddha's Pure Land by directing the merit of such poisoned practices is completely wrong. Why? Because when, in his causal stage, Amida Buddha was performing practices as a bodhisattva, in every single moment - every single instant - he performed his practices in the three modes of action with a true and real mind. [True practice] depends on this.

What is given constitutes our aspiration; it is all true and real. Further, what is true and real falls into two types: the true and real attained through self-power and the true and real given by Other Power...

Regarding acts in the three modes that are not good, you should unfailingly take as essential the Buddha's abandoning of them with a true and real mind. And if you perform good in the three modes of action,
unfailingly take as essential what the Buddha performed with a true and real mind. It is because persons take the true and real as essential, whether they be within or without, whether of brightness or darkness, that the term "sincere mind" is applied.

25 Thus, through these true words of the Great Sage and the commentary of the master, we know indeed that this mind is the true and real mind of benefiting others through directing virtues, which originates from the inconceivable, indescribable, and inexplicable ocean of the Vow of great wisdom, the One Vehicle. This is "sincere mind."

[NOTE ON "TRUE AND REAL"]

26 The term true and real has been used. Concerning it, the Nirvana Sutra states:

True reality is the single way, pure and undefiled; there is no other. The true and real is Tathāgata; Tathāgata is the true and real. The true and real is boundless space; boundless space is the true and real. The true and real is Buddha-nature; Buddha-nature is the true and real.

27 [Above, Shan-tao's] Commentary states, "Whether they be within or without, whether of brightness or darkness."

Concerning the phrase "within or without," "within" refers to the supra mundane, "without" to the mundane. Concerning "brightness or darkness," "brightness" refers to the supra mundane, "darkness" to the mundane. Further, "brightness" refers to wisdom, "darkness" to ignorance. The Nirvana Sutra states:

Darkness refers to the mundane, brightness to the supra mundane. Darkness refers to ignorance, brightness to wisdom.
28 Next, concerning entrusting, it is the ocean of shinjin, perfect and unhindered, that is the Tathágata’s consummately fulfilled great compassion. Hence, there is no mixture of doubt. It is therefore called "entrusting." The essence of entrusting is the sincere mind of benefiting others and directing virtues.

However, since the beginning-less past, the multitudes of beings have been transmigrating in the ocean of ignorance, sinking aimlessly in the cycle of all forms of existence and bound to the cycle of all forms of pain; accordingly, they lack the entrusting that is pure. In the manner of their existence, they have no entrusting that is true and real. Hence, it is difficult for them to encounter the unexcelled virtues, difficult to realize the supreme, pure shinjin. In all small foolish beings, at all times, thoughts of greed and desire incessantly defile any goodness of heart; thoughts of anger and hatred constantly consume the dharma-treasure. Even if one urgently acts and urgently practices as though sweeping fire from one's head, all these acts must be called "poisoned and sundry good," and "false and deceitful practice." They cannot be called "true and real action." To seek to be born in the land of immeasurable light through such false and poisoned good is completely wrong.

Why? Because when the Tathágata was performing bodhisattva practices, there was not a moment - not an instant - when his practice in the three modes of action was tainted by the hindrance of doubt. Because this mind is the Tathágata’s mind of great compassion, it necessarily becomes the truly decisive cause of attaining the fulfilled land. The Tathágata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings. This is called the "true and real shinjin that is [Amida's] benefiting of others."
The passage on the Vow's fulfillment that reveals the shinjin of the Primal Vow states:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy.

Further, [the corresponding passage from the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

When, upon hearing the Name of the Tathágata of immeasurable life, sentient beings of the Buddha-lands of other quarters awaken one thought-moment of pure shinjin, rejoice.

The Nirvana Sutra states:

Good sons! Great love and great compassion are called Buddha-nature. Why? Because great love and great compassion always accompany the bodhisattva, just as shadows accompany things. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great love and great compassion. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." Great love and great compassion are Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathágata.

Great joy and great even-mindedness are called Buddha-nature. Why? Because if a bodhisattva-Mahasattva were incapable of the twenty-five forms of existence, he could not attain the supreme, perfect enlightenment. All sentient beings will ultimately attain great joy and great even-mindedness. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." Great joy and great even-mindedness are none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathágata.

Buddha-nature is great shinjin. Why? Because through shinjin the bodhisattva-Mahasattva has acquired all the paramitas from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great shinjin. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." Great shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathágata.
Buddha-nature is called "the state of regarding each being as one's only child." Why? Because through the conditions of the state of regarding each being as one's only child, the bodhisattva has realized the mind of equality concerning all sentient beings. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately attain the state of regarding each being as one's only child. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." The state of regarding each being as one's only child is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathágata.

32 Further, it states:

Also it is taught, concerning the supreme, perfect enlightenment, that shinjin is its cause. Although the causes of enlightenment are without number, when shinjin has been presented, they have already been exhaustively included.

33 Further, it states:

There are two kinds of shinjin: one arises from hearing and the other from thought. This person's shinjin has arisen from hearing but not from thought. Therefore it is called "imperfect realization of shinjin."

Again, there are two kinds of shinjin: one is to believe that there is enlightenment, and the other, to believe that there are people who have attained it. This person's shinjin is belief only that enlightenment exists and not that there are people who have attained it. Therefore it is called "imperfect realization of shinjin."

34 The Garland Sutra states:

The person who hears this dharma, rejoices

In shinjin, and is free of doubt
Swiftly attains the supreme enlightenment;
Such a person is equal to the Tathágatas.

35 Further, it states:
The Tathágata dispels forever
The doubts of all sentient beings,
And all the aspirations of their hearts
He brings to complete fulfillment.

36 Further, it states:
Shinjin is the source of enlightenment, the mother of virtues;
It nurtures all forms of goodness.
It cuts away the net of doubt and breaks free from the currents of desire;
It unfolds the supreme enlightenment of nirvana.
Shinjin harbors no defiled thoughts, it is pure,
Eradicating all arrogance; it is the root of reverence
And the foremost treasure of the dharma-store.
It is the hand of purity, holding all practices within itself.
Shinjin gives freely and ungrudgingly;
Shinjin rejoices and enters the Buddha-dharma;
Shinjin makes wisdom and virtues increase;
Shinjin unfailingly reaches the stage of Tathágata.
Shinjin purifies the faculties, makes them clear and sharp;

Its power is firm and steadfast, nothing can destroy it.

Shinjin sunders forever the root of blind passions;

Shinjin leads one to seek the virtues of Buddha alone.

Shinjin knows no attachment to objects;

It separates one from the adversities, so that one attains the realm free of them.

Shinjin transcends the domain of Maras

And manifests the path of unexcelled emancipation.

Shinjin keeps the seeds of virtues from destruction;

Shinjin nurtures the tree of enlightenment.

Shinjin makes supreme wisdom grow.

Shinjin makes all the Buddhas manifest.

For this reason, the process of enlightenment is taught in stages of practice;

Shinjin* is foremost, and is extremely difficult to realize...

If one constantly entrusts to and reveres the Buddhas,

That in itself is to perform great offerings.

When one performs great offerings,

One entrusts to the inconceivable working of the Buddhas.
If one constantly entrusts to and reveres the precious dharma,
One never tires of listening to the Buddha's teaching.
If one never tires of listening to the Buddha's teaching,
One entrusts to the inconceivable working of the dharma.
If one constantly entrusts to and reveres the undefiled Sangha,
One attains the point where shinjin never retrogresses.
If one attains the point where shinjin never retrogresses,
One's power of shinjin is immovable.
If one's power of shinjin is immovable,
One's faculties are purified and become clear and sharp.
If one's faculties are purified and become clear and sharp,
One is able to approach true teachers.
If one becomes able to approach true teachers,
One devotes oneself to practicing the vast, supreme good.
If one practices the vast, supreme good,
One acquires the immense causal power [that leads to Buddhahood].
If one acquires the immense causal power,
One attains the peerless, decisive understanding.
If one attains the peerless, decisive understanding,
One is protected by all the Buddhas.
If one is protected by all the Buddhas,
One is able to awaken the mind aspiring for enlightenment.
If one awakens the mind that aspires for enlightenment,
One diligently practices the virtues of the Buddhas.
If one diligently practices the virtues of the Buddhas,
One is born into the home of the Tathāgatas.
If one is born into the home of the Tathāgatas,
One performs good and practices skillful means.
If one performs good and practices skillful means,
One attains the pure mind of shinjin.*
If one attains the pure mind of shinjin,*
One realizes the unsurpassed supreme mind.
If one realizes the unsurpassed supreme mind,
One constantly practices the paramitas.
If one constantly practices the paramitas,
One fulfills all the practices of the Mahayana.
If one fulfills all the Mahayana practices,
One makes offerings to the Buddhas in accord with the dharma.
If one makes offerings to the Buddhas in accord with the dharma,
The mind of thinking on the Buddhas is immovable.
If the mind of thinking on the Buddhas becomes immovable,

One constantly sees the countless Buddhas.

If one constantly sees the countless Buddhas,

One sees that the body of Tathāgata is eternal.

If one sees that the body of Tathāgata is eternal,

One realizes that the dharma is everlasting and imperishable.

If one realizes that the dharma is everlasting and imperishable,

One attains unhindered powers of speech.

If one attains unhindered powers of speech,

One can expound the boundless teachings.

If one expounds the boundless teachings,

One saves sentient beings by loving and caring for them.

If one saves sentient beings by loving and caring for them,

One attains the steadfast mind of great compassion.

If one attains the steadfast mind of great compassion,

One rejoices in the most profound dharma.

If one rejoices in the most profound dharma,

One is free from the faults of the created world.

If one is free from the faults of the created world,

One rids oneself of arrogance and self-indulgence.
If one rids oneself of arrogance and self-indulgence,
One benefits all sentient beings as well as oneself.
If one benefits all sentient beings as well as oneself,
One dwells in the realm of birth-and-death without fatigue or revulsion.

37 The Commentary on the Treatise states:

It is termed, "to be in correspondence [with the significance of the Name] by practicing in accord with reality." For this reason, the author of the Treatise states at the outset, "I, with the mind that is single"...

38 Further, it states:

Each sutra opens with the words, "Thus [have I heard]..."

This reveals entrusting to be the basis for entry into the dharma.

[Aspiration for Birth]

39 Finally, "aspire for birth" is the command of the Tathágata calling to and summoning the multitudes of all beings. That is, true and real entrusting is the essence of aspiration for birth. Truly, [aspiration for birth] is not the directing of merit through the self-power of meditative and non-meditative practices, whether performed by ordinary people or sages of the Mahayana or the Hinayana. Therefore it is called "not-directing."

However, sentient beings of the countless worlds, floundering in the sea of blind passions and drifting and sinking in the ocean of birth-and-death, lack the true and real mind of directing virtues; they lack the pure mind of directing virtues. For this reason, when the Tathágata was performing bodhisattva practices out of pity for the ocean of all sentient beings in pain and affliction, in every single moment, every single instant, of his endeavor in the three modes of action, he took the mind of directing virtues as foremost, and thus realized the mind of great compassion. Accordingly, the
Buddha directs this other-benefiting, true and real mind of aspiration for birth to the ocean of all beings. Aspiration for birth is this mind of directing virtues. It is none other than the mind of great compassion; therefore, it is untainted by the hindrance of doubt.

40 Here, let us turn to the passage teaching the Primal Vow's fulfillment with respect to the mind of aspiration for birth. The [Larger] Sutra states:

...which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

41 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

When sentient beings, cherishing Amida's directing of his roots of good to them, aspire to be born in the land of immeasurable life, then all shall be born in accord with their aspiration, attaining the stage of non-retrogression and, ultimately, the supreme perfect enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.

42 The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

How is directing of virtue accomplished? It is by never abandoning any sentient being in suffering, but constantly aspiring in the heart to fulfill the mind of great compassion, taking the directing of virtue as foremost.

The directing of virtue has two aspects: that for going forth to the Pure Land and that for return to this world. "Directing for going forth" means to give one's virtues to all sentient beings and to aspire to bring them all to birth in Amida Tathágata's Pure Land of happiness. "Directing for return to this world" means that after being born in that land, fulfilling samatha and vipashyana, and gaining the power of compassionate means, one returns and enters the thick forests of birth-and-death, teaches and guides all sentient beings, and brings all to enter the Buddha-way together. Whether with regard to the aspect for going forth or the aspect for return, all is
entirely for the sake of bringing sentient beings across the ocean of birth-
and-death. Thus, It is [by aspiring] to fulfill the mind of great compassion,
taking the directing of virtue as foremost.

43 Further, it states:

Concerning the purity contained in the Vow-mind, the Treatise states:

Previously I have explained the act of observing the fulfilled virtue of the
Buddha-land's adornments, the fulfilled virtue of the Buddha's
adornments, and the fulfilled virtue of the bodhisattvas' adornments. These
three kinds of fulfillment are the adornments produced by the Vow-mind. Reflect on this.

Concerning the phrase, Reflect on this, we should reflect that these three
types of fulfilled adornments were originally accomplished by the
adorning activity of the pure Vow-mind expressed as the Forty-eight Vows;
hence, because the cause is pure, the fruition is also pure. It is not that there
is no cause or that there is some other cause.

44 Further, the Treatise states:

Concerning "the fifth gate of emergence": With great compassion, one
observes all sentient beings in pain and affliction, and assuming various
transformed bodies to guide them, enters the garden of birth-and-death
and the forests of blind passions; freely sporting there with transcendent
powers, one attains the stage of teaching and guiding. This is brought
about by the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow; it is
called "the fifth gate of emergence."

45 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Again, let the person who seeks to be born with the mind of aspiration and
directing of virtue aspire for attainment of birth by unfailingly and
decidedly taking as essential the Vow directed to him from the true and
real mind. This mind, in its profound entrusting, is like diamond; it is not
shaken, confused, defeated, or broken by people of other views, other
teachings, different understandings, or different practices. Just be decisively settled, single-heartedly hold to the Vow, and rightly and directly go forward, without paying attention to what others may say. If your heart advances and retreats, and you look back with weak and cowardly thoughts, you will fall from the path and forfeit the great benefit of birth.

46 Truly we know that, in the parable of the two rivers, the white of the white path four or five inches wide contrasts with black. White is the white act selected and adopted [in the Vow], the pure act that is the directing of virtue to us for our going forth. "Black" is the black activity of our ignorance and blind passions, the sundry good acts of those of the two vehicles and of human beings and devas. Path contrasts with trail. It is the one real, direct path of the Primal Vow, the supreme great way to complete nirvana. "Trail" refers to the bypaths of those of the two or the three vehicles, of the myriad good acts and practices. Four or five inches wide refers to the four elements and five aggregates that make up sentient beings. Awakens the pure mind of aspiration means to realize the diamond-like true mind. Since this is the ocean of great shinjin directed to us through the power of the Primal Vow, it cannot be defeated or broken. This is likened to diamond.

47 The Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra states:

People of the present, both monk and lay,

Seek to awaken the supreme mind,

But it is extremely difficult to abhor birth-and-death,

And difficult to aspire to the Buddha-dharma.

Let us all together awaken the diamond-like aspiration

And, transcending crosswise, cut off the four currents.

Upon truly receiving the diamond-like mind -
According [with the Vow] in that one thought-moment -

We become persons who consequently attain nirvana.

48 Further, it states:

Thoroughly attaining the true mind, abhor this Saha world of pain, aspire for the uncreated realm of happiness and take refuge forever in eternal bliss. But the realm of the uncreated is not easily reached. Breaking free of the Saha world of pain and affliction is not readily accomplished. Unless the diamond-like aspiration is awakened, how can the roots of birth-and-death be severed forever? If you do not intimately follow the compassionate honored-one, how will you be able to escape this long sorrow?

49 Further, it states:

"Diamond" characterizes the essence of what is undefiled.

[Summary of the Discussion of the Threefold Mind]

50 Truly we know that although the terms "sincere mind," "entrusting," and "aspiration for birth" differ, their significance is the same. Why? Because these three minds are already completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. They are therefore the true and real mind that is single. This is called the diamond-like true mind. The diamond-like true mind is true and real shinjin. True and real shinjin is unfailingly accompanied by [saying] the Name. [Saying] the Name, however, is not necessarily accompanied by shinjin that is the power of the Vow. Thus, the author of the Treatise opens with the words, "I, with the mind that is single." Further he states, "One wishes to be in correspondence with [the Name] by practicing in accord with reality."

[The Nature of Shinjin]
51 In reflecting on the great ocean of shinjin, I realize that there is no
discrimination between noble and humble or black-robed monks and
white-clothed laity, no differentiation between man and woman, old and
young. The amount of evil one has committed is not considered; the
duration of any performance of religious practices is of no concern. It is a
matter of neither practice nor good acts, neither sudden attainment nor
gradual attainment, neither meditative practice nor non-meditative
practice, neither right contemplation nor wrong contemplation, neither
thought nor no-thought, neither daily life nor the moment of death, neither
many-calling nor once-calling. It is simply shinjin* that is inconceivable,
inexplicable, and indescribable. It is like the medicine that eradicates all
poisons. The medicine of the Tathágata’s Vow destroys the poisons of our
wisdom and foolishness.

[Shinjin as the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment]

52 Further, the mind aspiring for enlightenment is of two kinds [of
orientation]: lengthwise and crosswise.

The lengthwise is further of two kinds: transcending lengthwise and
departing lengthwise. These are explained in various teachings -
accommodated and real, exoteric and esoteric, Mahayana and Hinayana.
They are the mind [with which one attains enlightenment after] going
around for many kalpas, the diamond-like mind of self-power, or the great
mind of the bodhisattva.

The crosswise is also of two kinds: transcending crosswise and departing
crosswise. That characterized by departing crosswise is the mind of
enlightenment of right and sundry practices or meditative and non-
meditative practices - of self-power within Other Power. That characterized
by transcending crosswise is shinjin* that is directed to beings through the
power of the Vow. It is the mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood. The
mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind aspiring for great
enlightenment of crosswise orientation. It is called "the diamond-like mind of crosswise transcendence."

Although the same term is used, the crosswise and the lengthwise minds of aspiration for enlightenment differ in significance; nevertheless, both take entrance into the true as right and essential, both take true mind as their foundation, both reject the wrong and sundry, and both take doubt to be erroneous.

All who seek the Pure Land, both monk and lay, must grasp the profound significance of the precious words concerning imperfect realization of shinjin and must become free of the wrong thinking of imperfect realization of hearing.

53 The Commentary on the Treatise states:

In reflecting on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life taught at Rajagriha, it is clear that although among the three levels of practitioners some are superior in practice and some inferior, not one has failed to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. This mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment is the mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood. The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind to save all sentient beings. The mind to save all sentient beings is the mind to grasp sentient beings and bring them to birth in the land where the Buddha is. Thus, the person who aspires to be born in the Pure Land of happiness must unfailingly awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. Suppose there is a person who, without awakening the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment, simply hears that bliss is enjoyed in that land without interruption and desires to be born there for the sake of the bliss; such a person will not be able to attain birth. Thus it is said, they do not seek the sustained bliss for their own sake, but think only of freeing all sentient beings from pain. Sustained bliss means that the Pure Land is sustained by the power of Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow, and that the enjoyment of bliss is without interruption.
In general, the term "directing virtue" may be interpreted as meaning that [Amida] gives all virtues he has gathered to sentient beings and brings them to enter the Buddha-way together.

54 Master Yüan-chao states:

Because no others can accomplish it, it is described as "extremely difficult." Because nowhere in all the world has it yet been seen, it is called "rare."

55 Further, he states:

The dharma-gate of the Nembutsu does not discriminate between foolish and wise, noble and poor; the length of practice, or whether you are good or evil, is of no concern. If you simply realize firm resolution and unshakable entrusting, although adverse conditions may accompany the end of your life, with ten utterances you will be born. It is the dharma by which the foolish beings in bondage, the lowly such as butchers and wine dealers, in an instant transcend birth-and-death and attain Buddhahood. This must be called that which is "for all people of the world, most difficult to accept."

56 Further, he states:

To perform practices and attain Buddhahood in this evil world is extremely difficult. To teach this dharma-gate for the sake of all sentient beings is a second great difficulty. These two difficulties [that Shakyamuni accomplished] show us that what all the Buddhas praise is not futile. They instruct sentient beings to hear and accept.

57 Yung-ch'in of the Vinaya school states:

When the dharma [of the Nembutsu-gate] is said to be difficult [to accept], is it not really because it transforms the foolish being into a sage as easily as you turn your palms? Because this seems so tremendously easy, many unreflective sentient beings are skeptical. Thus the Larger Sutra states, "To go there is easy and yet no one is born there." Thus we know that it is difficult to accept.
58 Notes to Yüan-chao's Amida Sutra Commentary states:

It does not discriminate between foolish and wise: in natures there are keen and dull. It does not choose between noble and poor: in karmic rewards there are strong and weak. Length of practice is of no concern: in effort there is shallow and deep. It does not choose between good and evil: in practice there is good and bad. If you realize firm resolution and unshakable entrusting, although adverse conditions may accompany the end of your life: as taught in the Contemplation Sutra, concerning those of the middle grade of the lowest level, the flames of hell all at once sweep up to them. Foolish beings in bondage: for they are utterly possessed of the two kinds of delusional thinking. The lowly such as butchers and wine dealers in an instant transcend birth-and-death and attain Buddhahood. This must be called that which is "for all people of the world, most difficult to accept": butchers are those who earn their livings by killing. Wine dealers are those who make and sell liquor. Such evil people, simply through ten utterances, are able to transcend and attain birth. Is this not difficult to accept?

Amida Tathāgata is called the true and real light, the enlightenment of equality, the difficult to conceive, the ultimate resort, the great one worthy of offerings, the great consolation, the unequaled, the inconceivable light.

59 The postscript to Collection of Passages on the Land of Bliss states:

There are always many who endeavor to be born in the Pure Land, but exceedingly few reach the gateway and immediately attain birth. There are always many who discuss the Pure Land, but few indeed grasp what is essential and directly point it out. I have yet to hear a person explain [Nembutsu] with reference to self-obstruction and self-obscuration. Having grasped this matter, I explain it here.

There is no greater self-obstruction than attachment, no greater self-obscuration than doubt. As that which finally eliminates these hindrances of doubt and attachment, we have only the teaching-gate of the Pure Land. Never has there been any separation: Amida's vast Vow always, of itself, grasps and holds beings. This is the necessary way of its working.
[One Thought-Moment of Shinjin]

60 Contemplating true and real shinjin*, I find there is the one thought-moment. One thought-moment expresses the ultimate brevity of the instant of the realization of shinjin* and manifests the vast, inconceivable mind of joyfulness.

61 Here, let us turn to the Larger Sutra, which states:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

62 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

Upon hearing the Name of the Tathágata of immeasurable life, sentient beings of the Buddha-lands of other quarters awaken one thought-moment of pure shinjin and rejoice.

Further, [the Larger Sutra] states:

The power of the Buddha's Primal Vow is such

That hearing the Name, they aspire for birth.

Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

It is to hear the Buddha's Name of exalted virtues.

63 The Nirvana Sutra states:

What is the meaning of "imperfect realization of hearing"? What the Tathágata taught comprises twelve divisions of scripture. Such people believe in only six of the divisions, but do not yet believe in the other six. Hence this is termed, "imperfect realization of hearing."
Again, although they accept and uphold these six divisions, they cannot recite them, so when they expound them for others, no benefit is gained. Hence this is termed "imperfect realization of hearing."

Further, having accepted these six divisions of scripture, they uphold, recite, and expound them solely for the sake of disputation, for the sake of defeating others, for the sake of gain and profit, or for some ulterior motive. Hence this is termed, "imperfect realization of hearing."

64 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Single-heartedly practice the saying of the Name alone.

Further:

With wholehearted thought, practice the saying of the Name alone.

65 The word hear in the passage from the [Larger] Sutra means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha's Vow arose - its origin and fulfillment - are altogether free of doubt. This is to hear. Shinjin is shinjin that is directed to beings through the power of the Primal Vow. Joy expresses gladness in body and mind. Even includes both many and few. One thought-moment: because shinjin is free of double-mindedness, one thought-moment is used. It is the mind that is single. The mind that is single is the true cause of [birth in] the pure fulfilled land. When we realize the diamond-like true mind, we transcend crosswise the paths of the five courses and eight hindered existences and unfailingly gain ten benefits in the present life. What are these ten?

1. The benefit of being protected and sustained by unseen powers.
2. The benefit of being possessed of supreme virtues.
3. The benefit of our karmic evil being transformed into good.
4. The benefit of being protected and cared for by all the Buddhas.
5. The benefit of being praised by all the Buddhas.
6. The benefit of being constantly protected by the light of the Buddha's heart.

7. The benefit of having great joy in our hearts.

8. The benefit of being aware of Amida's benevolence and of responding in gratitude to his virtue.

9. The benefit of constantly practicing great compassion.

10. The benefit of entering the stage of the truly settled.

66 The term practicing the saying of the Name alone that occurs in Master [Shan-tao] is single practice; wholehearted thought is single-heartedness. Thus, the term one thought-moment in the passage teaching the fulfillment of the Vow is wholehearted thought. Wholehearted thought is deep mind. Deep mind is deep entrusting. Deep entrusting is deep entrusting that is steadfast and firm. Deep entrusting that is steadfast and firm is decisive mind. Decisive mind is supreme mind. Supreme mind is true mind. True mind is enduring mind. Enduring mind is genuine mind. Genuine mind is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the true and real mind that is single. The true and real mind that is single is the mind of great joy. The mind of great joy is true and real shinjin. True and real shinjin is the diamond-like mind. The diamond-like mind is the mind that aspirer for Buddhahood. The mind that aspires for Buddhahood is the mind to save sentient beings. The mind to save sentient beings is the mind to grasp sentient beings and bring them to birth in the Pure Land of peace. This mind is the mind aspiring for great enlightenment. This mind is the mind of great compassion. For this mind arises from the wisdom of immeasurable light. The ocean of the Vow is characterized by sameness; therefore, the aspiration awakened is the same. Since the aspiration awakened is the same, the path is the same. Since the path is the same, the great compassion is the same. For great compassion is the right cause of realizing the enlightenment of Buddha.

67 The Commentary on the Treatise states:
To aspire to be born in the Pure Land of happiness is necessarily to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment.

68 Further, it states:

This mind attains Buddhahood means that the mind becomes Buddha; this mind is itself Buddha means that there is no Buddha apart from the mind. This is like the relationship of fire and wood: fire arises from wood; it cannot exist apart from the wood. Because it cannot exist apart from the wood, it consumes the wood. The wood, on the other hand, is consumed by the fire; it becomes the fire.

69 The [Master of] Kuang-ming temple states:

This mind attains Buddhahood. This mind is itself Buddha. There is no Buddha apart from this mind.

[Conclusion to Questions and Answers]

70 Hence we know that the mind that is single is termed, "to be in correspondence [with the significance of the Name] by practicing in accord with reality." This is the right teaching. This is the right meaning. This is the right practice. This is the right understanding. This is the right act. This is the right wisdom.

71 The threefold mind is the mind that is single; the mind that is single is the diamond-like true mind: here ends the answer concerning this matter. Reflect upon it.

[Further Topics Concerning Shinjin: Transcending Crosswise]

72 The Treatise on Samatha and Vipasyana, fascicle one, states:

P'u-ti (bodhi) is in Indian word; in Chinese it is rendered tao (Way).
Chih-to (citta) represents an Indian sound; here in this country it is called hsin. Hsin indicates reflecting and discerning.

Let us consider the words, transcending crosswise, cut off the four currents.

In transcending crosswise, crosswise stands in contrast to transcending lengthwise and departing lengthwise. Transcending contrasts with going roundabout and following a winding path. "Transcending lengthwise" characterizes the true and real teaching of the Mahayana. "Departing lengthwise" is the accommodated, expedient teaching of the Mahayana and the roundabout teachings of the two-vehicle and three-vehicle schools.

Transcending crosswise is the true teaching based on the fulfillment of the Vow, which embodies the perfectly consummate true reality. This indeed is the true essence of the Pure Land way.

Further, there is "departing crosswise." This is the teaching of meditative and non-meditative practices of the three levels of practicers and the nine grades of beings; it comprises the good acts of going roundabout that lead to the transformed land, the realm of indolence and pride.

In the pure fulfilled land of the Great Vow, grade and level are irrelevant; in the space of an instant, one swiftly transcends and realizes the supreme, perfect, true enlightenment. Hence, transcending crosswise.

The Larger Sutra states:

Surpassing all, he made the supreme, incomparable Vow.

Further, it states:

I have established the all-surpassing Vow

And will unfailingly attain supreme enlightenment.

My Name shall pervade the ten quarters;
If there be any place it is not heard,

I vow not to attain perfect enlightenment.

76 Further, it states:

Necessarily one achieves the abandoning of this world, transcending and parting from it, and attains birth in the land of peace. One cuts off crosswise the five evil courses and the evil courses close naturally (jinen). Ascending the way is without limit; to go is easy and yet no one is born there. Never at variance with that land, one is drawn there by its spontaneous working (jinen).

77 The Larger Amida Sutra states:

One will be able to abandon this world, transcending and parting from it. When one is born in that land of Amida Buddha, one cuts off crosswise the five evil courses, and they close naturally. Ascending the way is without limit; to go is easy and yet no one is born there. Never at variance with that land, one is drawn there by its spontaneous working.

78 Concerning the term cut off: because we have awakened the mind that is single, which is directed to us for our going forth, there is no further state of existence into which we must be born, no further realm into which we must pass. Already the causes leading to the six courses and the four modes of birth have died away and their results become null. Therefore we immediately and swiftly cut off birth-and-death in the three realms of existence. Hence, cut off. The four currents are the four turbulent currents. They also refer to birth, aging, sickness, and death.

79 The Larger Sutra states:

You will unfailingly attain the enlightenment of Buddha

And bring beings everywhere across the stream of birth-and-death.

80 Further, [the Sutra of Immeasurable Pure Perfect Enlightenment] states:
You will unfailingly become a world-honored one
And free all beings from birth, aging, and death.

81 The Nirvana Sutra states:

Nirvana is called an islet in the stream. Why? Because the four great turbulent currents cannot toss it about. What are these four? First, the turbulence of desire; second, the turbulence of existence; third, the turbulence of views; fourth, the turbulence of ignorance. Therefore nirvana is called an islet.

82 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

I say to all practicers: Do not crave the birth-and-death of foolish beings and fail to abhor it. Do not consider Amida's Pure Land lightly and fail to aspire for it. When you abhor this Saha world, you part from it forever; when you aspire for the Pure Land, you constantly dwell there. When you part from this world, the causes leading to the six courses die away, and naturally their results of transmigration are nullified. With the causes and results already null, the forms and names [of samsaric existence] suddenly come to an end.

83 Further, he states:

My reverent wish is that all who aspire for birth carefully take measure of their own capabilities. Persons who aspire in the present existence to attain birth in that land should unfailingly strive with all their heart, whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, and overcoming the self, they should never abandon [the Nembutsu] day or night. It may seem rather arduous to do this throughout your life to the very moment of death, but in one thought-moment life ends, in the next you are immediately born in that land, and there you will constantly enjoy the pleasure of the uncreated dharma for endless kalpas. Until your attainment of Buddhahood, you will be free of turning in birth-and-death. Is this not joy? Reflect on this.

[True Disciple of Buddha]
84 In the term true disciple of Buddha, true contrasts with false and provisional. Disciple indicates a disciple of Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas. This expression refers to the practitioner who has realized the diamond-like heart and mind. Through this shinjin and practice, one will without fail transcend and realize great nirvana; hence, one is called true disciple of Buddha.

85 The Larger Sutra states:

When I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless, incalculable Buddha-realms of the ten quarters, upon receiving my light and having their bodies touched by it, shall become soft and gentle in body and mind, thereby surpassing other men and devas. If it be not so, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless and incalculable Buddha-realms of the ten quarters, upon hearing my Name, do not acquire the bodhisattva's insight into the nonorigination of all existence and all the profound dharanis, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

86 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

When I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the countless, immeasurable, inconceivable, numberless worlds throughout the ten quarters who receive the Buddha's majestic light and are touched and illuminated by it shall attain peace and comfort in body and mind, thereby surpassing other human beings and devas. If it be not so, may I not attain enlightenment.

87 Further, [the Larger Sutra] states:

The one who hears and never forgets this dharma,

But sees and reveres it and greatly rejoices in attaining it -
That person is my true companion.

88 Further, it states:

The person who aspires with a sincere mind to be born in the land of happiness shall reach the full illumination of wisdom and acquire virtues unexcelled.

89 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

A person of vast and excellent understanding.

90 Further, it states:

Such a person is one of great, majestic virtue. He or she shall enter the preeminent gateway of the boundless Buddha-dharma.

91 Further, [the Contemplation Sutra] states:

Know that the person who says the Nembutsu is a white lotus among people.

92 Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

Through quoting from the various Mahayana scriptures, the method and model for teaching and for listening will be clarified. The Great Assembly states:

The person who teaches the dharma should think of himself as king among physicians and of his work as the elimination of pain. He should think of the dharma that he teaches as sweet nectar (amrta) or milk of the finest taste (manda).

The person who listens to the dharma should think that excellent understanding thereby increases and grows and that his sickness is being cured.
Such a teacher and listener together can make the Buddha-dharma flourish. They dwell always in the presence of the Buddhas...

According to the Nirvana Sutra:

The Buddha said, "If a person just constantly practices the Nembutsu samádhi with a sincere mind, the Buddhas of the ten quarters will always see him, just as if they were actually in front of him."

Therefore the Nirvana Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Kasyapa, "If there are good sons or good daughters who always solely practice the Nembutsu with a sincere mind, whether they be in mountain forests or in villages, whether it be day or night, whether they be sitting or reclining, the world-honored Buddhas will always see them, as if they were before their eyes. The Buddhas always, for the sake of such people, accept the offerings they make."

According to the Commentary on the Maha Prajñápáramitá Sutra, there are three explanations of this. First, the Buddha is the supreme dharma-king and bodhisattvas are the dharma-vassals. Only the Buddha, the World-honored one, is to be venerated and revered. For this reason we should constantly practice the Nembutsu.

Second, the bodhisattvas themselves declare, "For innumerable kalpas we have received the World-honored one's attention in nurturing our dharma-body, wisdom-body, and body of great compassion. Thanks to the Buddha we have been able to fulfill meditation, wisdom, and innumerable practices and vows. In order to return in gratitude the Buddha's benevolence, we desire to serve him always. We are like great vassals who, receiving the king's kindness, are always mindful of him."

Third, the bodhisattvas speak these words, "In our causal stage, we encountered true teachers, but we maligned wisdom and tumbled into evil paths. Though we passed countless kalpas in performance of other practices, still we could not emerge. Later, by once happening to be near a true teacher, we were taught to practice the nembutsu-samadhi. At that
time we were immediately enabled to cast off all our hindrances and to
attain emancipation. Because of this immense benefit, we desire never to
part from the Buddha."

The Larger Sutra states:

If you aspire for birth in the Pure Land, you should unfailingly take as
essential the awakening of the mind aspiring for enlightenment; this is the
basis [for attaining birth]. Why? Because "enlightenment" is a name for the
supreme Buddha-way. If you desire to attain Buddhahood by awakening
this mind of aspiration, it will be vast and pervade the dharma-realm; it
will be everlasting and continue throughout all the future. This mind is in
every respect free of the hindrances of the two vehicles. If you awaken this
mind, you will break out of the round of existence that you have been
undergoing ever since the beginning-less past...

The Sutra of Great Compassion states:

What is "great compassion"? Those who continue solely in the Nembutsu
without any interruption will thereby be born without fail in the land of
happiness at the end of life. If these people encourage each other and bring
others to say the Name, they are all called "people who practice great
compassion."

93 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

It is regrettable indeed that sentient beings doubt what should not be
doubted;

The Pure Land is right before us and never out of harmony with us.

Do not ponder whether Amida will take you in or not;

The question is whether or not you wholeheartedly turn about at heart...

It is said from this moment until the attainment of Buddhahood,
For vast kalpas, we will praise the Buddha out of gratitude for his compassion and benevolence.

Had we not received the power of Amida's universal Vow,

When - in what kalpa - could we part from this Saha world?...

And how could we now expect to reach that precious land?

It is indeed the power of our Guide, who appeared in the Saha world.

But for the encouragement of our Guide, our true teacher,

How would we be able to enter Amida's Pure Land?

94 Further, he states:

Extremely difficult is it to encounter an age in which the Buddha appears,

And difficult indeed for a person to realize the wisdom of shinjin.

To come to hear the dharma rarely met with

Is again among all things most difficult.

To realize shinjin oneself and to guide others to shinjin

Is among difficult things yet even more difficult.

To awaken beings everywhere to great compassion

Is truly to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence.

95 Further, he states:

The body of Amida is in color like a mountain of gold;

The radiance of his features and marks illumines the ten quarters;
Only people of the Nembutsu are grasped by the light;

Know that the Primal Vow is the decisive cause.

The Tathágatas of the ten quarters extend their tongues and give witness:

Persons who solely say the Name attain the West.

Reaching the lotus dais, they hear the excellent dharma;

The vows and practice of the ten stages naturally manifest themselves in them.

96 Further, he states:

There are sentient beings who solely think on Amida Buddha; only these people are constantly illumined by the light of that Buddha's heart, grasped and protected, never to be abandoned. It is not at all stated that any practicers of various other acts are illumined and embraced. This is being protected in the present life, a manifestation of the decisive cause of birth in the Pure Land.

97 Further, he states:

The words, the heart rejoices and one attains insight, teach that the pure radiance of Amida Buddha's land suddenly appears before one. How can one keep from leaping with joy? Out of this joy, one immediately attains insight into the non-origination of all existence. This is also called "insight of joy," "insight of awakening," and "insight of confidence." In suggesting this attainment beforehand, [the Buddha] does not yet reveal at what point it will occur. [These words are spoken here] out of the wish to bring the Queen to aspire wholeheartedly for that benefit. When one courageously and single-mindedly desires in one's heart to see [Amida Buddha], then one will realize insight. This is mainly insight achieved within the ten stages of faith; it is not the insight realized in or above the stages of understanding and practice.
Further, he states:

The passage from the person of the Nembutsu to is born in the home of the Buddhas clearly reveals that the virtue of the Nembutsu samādhi is completely transcendent; truly it allows no comparison with sundry good practices. In this, five points are clarified: First, the practice of saying the Name of Amida Buddha alone.

Second, the person who says the Name is singled out and praised.

Third, the person who continues in the Nembutsu is a truly rare person; there is nothing that compares with such a one. For this reason, the white lotus is used as an analogy. The white lotus is called "the excellent flower among people," or "the rare flower," or "the best among the best," or "the wondrous excellent flower." What has traditionally been called the "blossom bearing the white tortoise" is none other than this flower. The person of the Nembutsu is the excellent person among people, the wondrous, excellent person, the best among the best, the rare person, the very finest person.

Fourth, the person who practices the saying of the Name of Amida alone is protected by Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, who accompany him or her constantly, as shadows do things. They are like close friends and true teachers.

Fifth, already in this life, the person has received this benefit. Thus, when life ends, that person immediately enters the home of all the Buddhas; this is the Pure Land. Attaining that land, that person listens long to the dharma and travels to the lands of the Buddhas to pay homage. Since the cause has been completed, the result will be fulfilled. How could the seat of enlightenment be far distant?

[On Being the Same as Maitreya]

Wang Jih-hsiu states:
As I reflect on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, I find that sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. "The stage of non-retrogression" is avaivartika in Sanskrit. The Lotus Sutra states that this is the stage of fulfillment attained by Bodhisattva Maitreya. The birth attained in one thought-moment is, as such, the same as [the stage of] Maitreya. The Buddha's words are not empty. The Sutra of Immeasurable Life is truly the shortest path to attainment of birth, the superlative means to liberation from suffering. All people should embrace [its teaching].

100 The Larger Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "In this world there are sixty-seven hundred million bodhisattvas of the stage of non-retrogression, and they will all be born in that land. Every one of those bodhisattvas has already in the past made offerings to innumerable Buddhas, and is next [to enlightenment], like Maitreya."

101 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "In this Buddha-land there are seventy-two hundred million bodhisattvas. They have planted roots of good under the guidance of Buddhas numbering countless hundreds of thousands of billions of Nayutās, and they have attained non-retrogression. They will be born in that land."

102 Yung-ch'ìn of the Vinaya school states:

Nothing surpasses the ultimate teaching of the Garland Sutra or the excellent message of the Lotus Sutra. But the universal prediction of attainment is yet to be seen in those sutras. For all sentient beings to receive the prediction that they will realize the supreme, perfect enlightenment after the present life is indeed the benefit of the inconceivable virtue that is taught here [in the Amida Sutra].
Truly we know that because Mahasattva Maitreya has perfectly realized the diamond-like mind of the stage equal to enlightenment, he will without fail attain the stage of supreme enlightenment beneath a dragon-flower tree at the dawn of the three assemblies. Because sentient beings of the Nembutsu have perfectly realized the diamond-like mind of crosswise transcendence, they transcend and realize great, complete nirvana on the eve of the moment of death. Hence the words, As such, the same.

Moreover, the people who have realized the diamond-like mind are the equals of Vaidehi and have been able to realize the insights of joy, awakening, and confidence. This is because they have thoroughly attained the true mind directed to them for their going forth, and because this accords with [the working of] the Primal Vow, which surpasses conceptual understanding.

Chih-chüeh of the Ch'an school praises the practitioner of the Nembutsu:

How wondrous! The power of the Buddha surpasses conceivability; never has there been such power.

Yüan-chao, master of the Vinaya School, states:

Ah, for clear understanding of the teaching and the contemplations, who can equal Chih-che (Chih-i)? But when facing the end of life, he took up the Contemplation Sutra, and praising the Pure Land, he went there forever.

For realization of the dharma-realm, who can equal Tu-shun? But he urged all four groups - monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen - to think on the Buddha, and perceiving the excellent features, he went to the West.

In practicing Dhyana and seeing reality, who can equal Kao-yü and Chih-chüeh? But they formed societies for contemplating the Buddha and both realized the highest birth in the Pure Land.
For ability in classical study, who can equal Liu, Lei, Liu Tzu-hou, and Po Lo-t’ien. But they all took up the brush to write the truth and aspired to be born in that Land.

[On "Provisional" and "False"]

106 The term provisional refers to those of the Path of Sages and those of the meditative and non-meditative practices within the Pure Land path.

107 Hence, the Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

The gateways of the Buddhist teaching are many, numbering eighty-four thousand,

For the capacities of sentient beings are not the same.

108 Further, he states:

Provisional gateways of expedience are in essence the same, without any difference.

109 Further, he states:

The various dharma-gates are not the same; they are called teachings of gradual attainment,

And one realizes non-origination only through a myriad kalpas of painful practice.

110 The term false refers to the sixty-two views and the ninety-five wrong paths.

111 The Nirvana Sutra states:

The World-honored one always teaches, "All non-Buddhists learn the ninety-five kinds [of wrong paths] and fall into the evil courses."

112 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:
The ninety-five [of wrong paths] all defile the world;
The single way of the Buddha alone is pure and tranquil.

113 I know truly how grievous it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, am sinking in an immense ocean of desires and attachments and am lost in vast mountains of fame and advantage, so that I rejoice not at all at entering the stage of the truly settled, and feel no happiness at coming nearer the realization of true enlightenment. How ugly it is! How wretched!

[The Person Difficult to Save]

114 Concerning beings who are difficult to cure, the Buddha has taught the following. The Nirvana Sutra states:

Kasyapa, there are three kinds of people in the world who are hard to cure: those who slander the great vehicle, those who commit the five grave offenses, and those who lack the seed of Buddhahood (icchantika). These three sicknesses are the most severe in the world; they cannot be treated by Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas. Good sons, suppose a person is stricken with a disease that is certain to be fatal and is without cure, but treatment is given and there is appropriate medicine. Were it not for the treatment or appropriate medicine, in no way would it be possible to cure the illness. Know that the person would be certain beyond any doubt to die. Good sons, these three kinds of people are like this. Following the Buddha and bodhisattvas, they have heard and received the cure - they are able to awaken the mind of aspiration for supreme, perfect enlightenment. But Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas, whether they preach the dharma or not, cannot bring such people to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment.

115 Further, it states:

At that time, the king at Rajagriha was Ajatashatru. Of a vile nature, he often engaged in killing. In speech, he was given to the four evils, and he
was possessed of greed, anger, and folly, with which his heart raged furiously... Taking evil people for his companions, he craved the worldly pleasures of the five desires, and this led him even to viciously murder his blameless father the King. Because he killed his father, a fever of remorse arose in his heart... Because of this fever of remorse in his heart, sores began to cover his entire body. These sores emitted a foul stench and filth oozed, such that none could go near him. Then he reflected, "Already I am receiving in this present body the fruition of recompense. The fruition-recompense of hell is surely not far off and is approaching."

Then the queen mother Vaidehi applied a variety of medicines, but the sores only spread and showed no sign of alleviation. The King said to his mother, "These sores have been produced by the heart; they do not arise from the four elements. It is said that there are people who can cure them, but that is completely unreasonable."

At that time there was a minister named Candrayasas. Approaching the King, he stood to one side and said, "Great King! Why are you so sorrowful and emaciated, and why does your countenance show no sign of joy? Is it your body that aches, or is it your mind?"

The King replied to his minister, "How could I not ache now in both body and mind? I have viciously committed a grave crime in murdering my blameless father. I was once told by a wise man that there are in this world five kinds of people who cannot escape falling into hell. These are people who have committed the five grave offenses. I already bear the karmic evil of countless, innumerable, incalculable offenses. How could I not ache in both body and mind? There is no good physician who can heal them."

The minister said to the Great King, "Do not be so terribly afflicted with sorrow and pain." Then he spoke in verse:

If one is constantly given to sorrow,

The sorrow increases and grows.

If one indulges in sleep,
Sleep will burgeon and lengthen.

Thus it is also

With lustful desires and love of drink.

"The King has said that there are in this world five kinds of people who cannot escape falling into hell. But who has gone to see for himself, and returned to inform the King? 'Hell' is simply something about which many of the so-called wise men of the world speak. The King states that there is surely no good physician in the world to treat his body and mind. But there is now a great doctor named Purana Kasyapa. He knows and sees everything and has attained unimpeded powers; and, thoroughly practicing the pure life of discipline, he always expounds for innumerable, countless sentient beings the way of supreme nirvana. For his disciples, he teaches the dharma thus:

There is no black karma, no result of black karma;

There is no white karma, no result of white karma.

There is no black or white karma, nor result of black or white karma.

There is no superior karma, no inferior karma.

This master is now in Rajagriha. I pray, Great King, that you deign to visit him and have him heal your body and mind."

Then the king replied, "If he can clearly do away with my karmic evil as you say, I will rely upon him."

Again, there was a minister named Praptagarbha, who also approached the King and said: "Great King, why is it that your features are so thin and emaciated, your lips so dry, your voice so feeble?... Where is the affliction? Does your body ache, or your mind?"

The King replied, "Why should my body and mind not ache now? I am foolish and blind; I have no eyes of wisdom. I associated with wicked
friends, taking them as good friends, and following the advice of the evil Devadatta, I viciously committed a grave crime upon the person of the king, who was devoted to the right dharma. Long ago, I heard a wise person teach in verse:

If, against father or mother,

Buddha or his disciples,

You harbor ill thoughts

And commit evil acts,

The recompense will be

Abode in Avici hell.

Because of this, I tremble in my heart and am greatly afflicted. And there is no treatment, even by a good physician."

The minister said, "Pray, Great King, be not so anxious and fearful. There are two kinds of law, one for those who renounce home life and one for those who govern the state. The law of state recognizes the case of a person killing his father and taking over the kingdom; although this is said to be a grave offense, in actuality it is not a crime. It is like the karala worm, which necessarily tears through its mother's womb to be born. Thus is its law of birth. Although it rends its mother's body, in actuality this is no crime. It is the same with a mule in foal. The law of statecraft in itself is also thus. One may kill father or brother, but this is actually not a crime. According to the law of those renouncing home life, however, to kill even a mosquito or ant constitutes a crime...

"The King has said that there is in this world no good physician to heal his body and mind. But there is now a great master named Maskarin Gosaliputra. He knows and sees everything, and pities sentient beings as though they were his own children. He has freed himself of blind passions and can extract the sharp arrows of the three poisons from sentient beings...
This master is now in Rajagriha. I beg, Great King that you go to see him. If you do, all your evils will be eradicated."

Again, there was a minister named Tattvalabdha. He came before the King and stated in verse:

"Great King! Why is it

That your bodily adornments are put inside,

Your hair tangled and disheveled?

How come it is thus...

Is it your mind that aches, or your body?

The King answered, "How should I not ache now in both body and mind? My father, the late king, was loving and kind, and he looked after me with special tenderness. He was truly without fault. When I was about to be born, he consulted a soothsayer who said, 'This infant, once he has been born, will unfailingly grow up to slay his father.' In spite of these words, he cared for me and raised me. Long ago, I heard a wise man say that the person who commits incest with his mother, violates a nun, steals from the Sangha, kills one who has awakened the aspiration for supreme enlightenment, or murders his own father will unfailingly plunge into Avici hell. How should I not ache now in both body and mind?"

The minister said, "Pray, Great King, be not afflicted with sorrow and pain... All sentient beings possess a residue of karma, and through the working of karma, they are repeatedly involved in samsaric life. Suppose the late king possessed a residue of karma, and the King has now slain him. Why, then, are you to blame? Pray, Great King, be easy in mind and throw off your sorrow! For it is said:

If one is constantly given to sorrow,

The sorrow increases and grows.
If one indulges in sleep,

Sleep will burgeon and lengthen.

Thus it is also

With lustful desires and love of drink...

[There is a great master named] Samjayin Vairattiputra."

Again, there was a minister name Sarvarthajña. He approached the King and spoke such words... The King replied, "How should I not ache now in both body and mind... The late king was blameless, and I viciously committed a great offense in murdering him. Long ago, I heard a wise person say, 'The person who slays his father will unquestionably suffer terrible pain and affliction for countless, incalculable kalpas.' I am certain to plunge into hell before long, and there is no good physician who can treat my karmic evil."

The minister said, "Pray, Great King, cast off your sorrow and affliction! Has the King not heard? Long ago there was a king named Rama. He killed his father and ascended to the throne. King Bhadrika, King Viruchin, King Nahusa, King Kathika, King Visakha, King Candraprabha, King Suryaprabha, King Kama, King Bahujanadhara - such kings as these were all able to ascend to the throne upon slaying their fathers. But not one has gone to hell. At this moment there reign such kings as King Virudhaka, King Udayana, King Canda, King Musaka and King Padma, who have all killed their fathers. Not one of them has been overcome by sorrow and grief. Though people speak of hell, hungry ghosts, and heaven, who has ever seen them? Great King, there are only two states of life - that of men and that of beasts. Although there are these two, one is not born through causation, one does not perish through causation. If there is no causation, what is good or evil? Pray, Great King, do not give yourself to sorrow and fear. For it is said:

If one is constantly given to sorrow,
The sorrow increases and grows.

If one indulges in sleep,

Sleep will burgeon and lengthen.

Thus it is also

With lustful desires and love of drink...

[There is a great master named] Ajita Kesakambalin...

Again, there was a minister named Mangala...[He said,] "What does hell (naraka) mean? I will offer an explanation. Nara means earth, ka means to break. If hell is broken apart, there is no retribution for evil. This is 'hell.'

"Again, nara means human, ka means god. For having killed one's father, one is born as man or god. For this reason, the ascetic Vasu declared that by killing sheep, one gains the pleasure of men and gods; this is 'hell.'

"Again, nara means life, ka means long. By killing, one gains long life; this is 'hell.'

"Great King, know for these reasons that there is no hell. Great King, if one plants wheat, one reaps wheat; if one plants rice, one reaps rice. The person who destroys hell in return goes to hell. The person who kills a man in return again becomes a man.

"Great King, listen now to what I say. In reality there is no such thing as murder. If there is a real self, it cannot be killed, and if there is no self, there can be no killing in it. Why? Because if there is a real self, it is ever unchanging. Since it is eternal, it cannot be murdered. In being indestructible, incorruptible, unbound, unfettered, without anger, and without joy, it is like empty space. How, then, can there be any crime of killing? If there is no self, then all things are impermanent. Because they are impermanent, they perish with each instant. Because they perish with each
instant, slayer and slain both perish instant by instant. If they perish in each instant, who is to blame?

"Great King, it is like fire being innocent in consuming wood. It is like the axe being innocent in cutting the tree. It is like the scythe being innocent in severing the grass. The sword, in killing a man, is not a person. Even the sword has committed no crime; how can the person be blamed? Poison, in killing a man, is not a person. Even the poison is not a criminal; how can there be a crime? It is the same with all things. In reality, there is no such thing as killing. How can there be any crime? Pray, Great King, be not so afflicted with sorrow. For it is said:

If one is constantly given to sorrow,

The sorrow increases and grows.

If one indulges in sleep,

Sleep will burgeon and lengthen.

Thus it is also

With lustful desires and love of drink.

There is at present a great master. His name is Kakuda Katyayana."

"Again, there was a minister named Abhaya.

"Now there is a great master. His name is Nigrantha Jñatiputra..."

At that time there was an eminent physician named Jivaka. He approached the King and said, "Great King, are you able to sleep well?"

The King answered in a verse... [Then he said,] "Jivaka, my sickness now lies heavy upon me. Against the King, who followed the right dharma, I have committed a grave and evil offense. No excellent physician, no miraculous medicine, no charms, no good and skilful nursing can heal me. Why? Because my father, King who adhered to the dharma, ruled the land
according to the dharma, and was indeed blameless. Viciously I murdered him. I am like a fish upon the dry ground...

Long ago I hear a wise man say, 'If a person's acts in body, speech, and mind are not pure, know that he is certain to fall into hell.' I am like this. How should I be able to sleep peacefully? And now there is no supreme great physician. If such a person were to impart to me the medicine of the dharma, surely it would relieve the pain of my sickness."

Jivaka replied, "Oh, excellent, excellent! Though the King has committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled with shame and self-reproach. Great King, all Buddhas, the world-honored ones, always preach these words:

There are two good means by which sentient beings can be saved: one is shame and the other is self-reproach. Shame means not committing further evil oneself; self-reproach means not leading others to commit evil. Shame is to be abased within oneself, self-reproach is to express this outwardly, toward others. Shame means to feel humility before others, self-reproach means to feel humility before heaven. This is shame and self-reproach. To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human; it is to be a beast. Because one feels shame and self-reproach, one reveres father, mother, teachers, and elders. Because one feels shame and self-reproach, it is taught that there is accord among father, mother, elder and younger brothers, and elder and younger sisters.

Excellent, Great King! You are now filled with shame and self-reproach....

"The King stated that there is no one to cure him. Know, Great King, of the son of King Shuddhodana from the city of Kapilavastu. His family name is Gautama, and he is called Siddhartha. Without a teacher, he has naturally attained awakening and realized supreme, perfect enlightenment... He is Buddha, the World-honored one. He possesses diamond-like wisdom and can break through all the karmic evil of sentient beings. Some may say that he is incapable of doing so, but such statements are utterly without basis... Great King, the Tathágata has a cousin named Devadatta who disrupted the harmony of the Sangha, inflicted a bleeding wound on the Buddha's
body, and killed the nun Lotus. He committed these three grave offenses. By teaching him the different essentials of the dharma, the Tathágata reduced that heavy burden of karmic evil to minuteness. Thus the Tathágata is the pre-eminent physician, beyond compare with the six masters..."

[There was a voice:] "Great King, the person who commits one grave offense suffers fully the corresponding retribution for it. If he commits two grave offenses, the retribution is double. If he commits five, the retribution is fivefold. Great King, we know with certainty now that you cannot escape your evil acts. Pray, Great King, go quickly to the Buddha! Apart from seeing the Buddha, the World-honored one, there is no help. It is out of deep pity that I urge you to do so."

As the Great King heard these words, terror gripped his heart and a shudder ran through his body. He trembled in his five parts like a plantain tree. Gazing upward, he replied, "Who is it? There is no form, only the voice."

"Great King! It is your father, Bimbisara. Let Jivaka's advice be heeded. Do not follow the words of the six ministers; their views are wrong."

Upon hearing this, the King fainted and collapsed to the ground. The sores on his body spread with vehemence, and the stench and filth grew worse. Cooling salves were applied to treat the sores, but they still burned and the poisonous fever only worsened, with no sign of alleviation.

1. Great Minister Candrayasas
2. Praptagarbha
3. A minister named Tattvalabdha
4. A minister named Sarvathajña
5. Great Minister Mangala
6. Kakuda Katyayana

1. Purana Kasyapa

2. Maskarin Gosaliputra

3. Samjayin Vairattiputra

4. Ajita Kesakambalin

5. The ascetic Vasu

6. Nigrantha Jñaniputra

116 Further, it states:

[The Buddha said:] "Good sons! I say, For the sake of Ajatashatru, I will not enter nirvana. You are yet unable to grasp the profound meaning of this. Why? Because for the sake of means for all foolish beings, and Ajatashatru includes universally all those who commit the five grave offenses. Further, for the sake of means for all sentient beings of the created state. I do not remain in this world for the sake of sentient beings who have realized the uncreated. Why? Because one who has realized the uncreated is no longer a sentient being. Ajatashatru refers to those possessed of blind passions. Again, for the sake of means for sentient beings who do not see Buddha-nature. I do not remain long in this world for the person who sees Buddha-nature. Why? Because one who sees Buddha-nature is no longer a sentient being. Ajatashatru refers to all those who have yet to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment...

"Again, for the sake of is said with regard to Buddha-nature. Ajata literally means not born. Satru means enemy. Because a person does not give birth to Buddha-nature, he gives birth to the enemy, blind passions; because he gives birth to the enemy, blind passions, he does not see Buddha-nature. Because a person does not give birth to blind passions, he sees Buddha-
nature; because he sees Buddha-nature, he dwells firmly in great and complete nirvana. This is called 'not born.' Hence, For the sake of 'Ajatashatru.'

Good sons, Ajata means not arising, and not arising denotes nirvana. Satru indicates mundane matters. For the sake of implies the undefiled. Because he is not defiled by the eight kinds of mundane matters, [the Buddha] does not enter nirvana for countless, innumerable, incalculable kalpas. For this reason I say, For the sake of Ajatashatru, I will not enter nirvana for countless millions of kalpas.

"Good sons, the profound words of the Tathágata surpass conceptual understanding. Buddha, dharma, and Sangha also surpass conceptual understanding. Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas too surpass conceptual understanding. The Great Nirvana Sutra surpasses conceptual understanding."

Then the World-honored one, the Guide of great compassion, entered the samádhi of moon-radiant love for the sake of Ajatashatru. Having entered this samádhi, he cast a brilliant light. That light, cool and refreshing, shone upon the body of the King, and the sores healed instantly...

The King said to Jivaka, "He is a deva among devas. What causes him to send forth this radiance?"

"Great King, this auspicious sign seems to be for your sake. Because you have said that there is no good physician in the world to heal our body and mind, he radiates this light, first to heal your body. Next, he will treat your mind."

The King said to Jivaka, "Does the Tathágata, the World-honored one, think to cast his eye on me?"

Jivaka replied, "Suppose there are parents with seven children. When there is sickness among the seven children, although the father and mother are concerned equally with all of them, nevertheless their hearts lean wholly toward the sick child. Great King, it is like this with the Tathágata. It is not
that there is no equality among all sentient beings, but his heart leans wholly toward the person who has committed evil. To the person sunken in self-indulgence, the Buddha turns compassionate thoughts. Those who are free of self-indulgence, his heart lets free. Who are those free of self-indulgence? The bodhisattvas of the first six stages. Great King, the world-honored Buddhas do not see sentient beings' family lineage; they do not see young, old, or middle age; poverty or wealth; auspicious times, or astrological sun, moon, or stars; skilled workers, menial laborers, or man or woman servants. They see only sentient beings who possess the good mind. If they have the good mind, the Buddhas compassionately think of them. Great King, know that this auspicious sign is none other than the radiance the Tathāgata releases, having entered the samādhi of moon-radiant love."

The King then asked, "What is the samādhi of moon-radiant love?"

Jivaka answered, "The light of the moon causes all the blue lotuses to unfold in brilliant luminosity. Such is the samādhi of moon-radiant love, which causes sentient beings to open forth the good mind. This is why it is called 'the samādhi of moon-radiant love.'

"Great King, the light of the moon brings joy to the hearts of all travelers on the road. Such is the samādhi of moon-radiant love, which brings joy to the hearts of those in practice on the path to nirvana. This is why it is called 'the samādhi of moon-radiant love'... It is the king of all good, it is sweet nectar. It is what all sentient beings love and aspire for. Therefore, it is called 'the samādhi of moon-radiant love'...."

Then the Buddha said to all those in the great assembly, "Among the immediate causes of all sentient beings' attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment, the foremost is a true teacher. Why? If King Ajatashatru did not follow the advice of Jivaka, he would decidedly die on the seventh day of next month and plunge into Avici hell. Hence, with the day [of death] approaching, there is nothing more important than a true teacher."
Further, on his way [to see the Buddha], King Ajatashatru heard that King Virudhaka of Sravasti was burned to death on board a boat out at sea, and that Bhiksu Kokalika was buried alive and went to Avici hell. But Sunaksatra, although he had committed various evil acts, went to the Buddha, and all his karmic evil was eradicated. Having heard these stories, Ajatashatru said to Jivaka, "Though I have just heard these two kinds of stories, I still feel anxious. Come with me, O Jivaka! I want to ride on the same elephant with you. Even though I should with certainty plunge into Avici hell, my wish is that you grasp me and keep me from falling. For I have heard in the past that the person who has attained the way does not fall into hell..."

[The Buddha said,] "Why do you say that you will certainly fall into hell? Great King, all the evil committed by sentient beings is of two kinds, light and heavy. That performed mentally and verbally is designated light; that performed bodily, verbally, and mentally is designated heavy. Great King, when one thinks in one's mind and speaks with one's lips, but does not act physically, the recompense is light. Great King, in the past you did not command verbally that murder be performed; you only said that the legs should be cut. Great King, if you had ordered your vassals to behead the king, it would surely have been while he was standing. But even if he were beheaded, if they did it while he was sitting, you would not have committed evil. Much less, then, since no royal command was given, can you have committed evil.

"King, if you have committed evil, all Buddhas, world-honored ones, must have done so also. Why? Because your father, the former king Bimbisara, always planted roots of good by paying homage to the Buddhas. For this reason, he was able to occupy the throne in this life. If the Buddhas had not accepted that homage, he would not have been able to become king. If he had not become king, you would not have been able to kill him in order to seize the kingdom. If you have committed evil in killing your father, we Buddhas too must have also. If the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, have not committed evil, how can you alone have done so?"
"Great King, Bimbisara was once possessed of evil thoughts. He had gone out to Mount Vipula to hunt deer, searching the broad meadows, but he had taken nothing at all. He met only with an ascetic who had acquired the five transcendent powers. Upon seeing him, Bimbisara became enraged and conceived an evil thought: "I am out hunting now, but I cannot take anything because this man has driven the game away.' And he ordered his attendants to kill the ascetic.

"At the point of death, the ascetic grew angry and conceived an evil thought, thereby losing his transcendent powers. He vowed, 'I am completely blameless. Through your thoughts and words you viciously had me murdered. In the next life, I will, in the same way, kill you with thought and word.' The King, upon hearing this, was filled with remorse and made offerings before the dead body.

"The former king thus received light recompense and did not fall into hell. Much less should you, King, receive the recompense of hell when you have not done such an act. The former king committed evil and himself received the recompense. Why should you, King, have to bear the recompense for killing him? Since you are innocent, even if people say you are guilty, how, Great King, can there be any recompense? If no evil act has been committed, there is no recompense. If your father the former king was innocent, why should there be this recompense? In this world, Bimbisara received both good and evil recompense. Hence, the former king is indeterminate in his recompense. Because he is indeterminate, the recompense of his being killing is also indeterminate. If it is indeterminate, why should you be destined to fall into hell?

"Great King, the insanity of sentient beings is of four types: 1) insanity induced by greed, 2) insanity induced by drugs, 3) insanity induced by spells, and 4) insanity induced by one's past karmic conditions. Great King, these four types of insanity are found among my disciples. But though such disciples may commit numerous evil acts, I have never pronounced them violators of the precepts. Their acts do not lead them to the three evil courses. When they regain their senses again, I do not say they have
violated [their precepts]. King, originally out of greed to rule over the land, you murdered your father the king. You did this because you were possessed of greed-insanity. Why should you receive the recompense for this act? Great King, it is like a person who, in a drunken fit, slays his own mother, but when he has become sober again, is overcome by remorse. Know that this act will not bring recompense. King, you were drunk with greed; your act was not committed out of your normal mind. If it was not done out of your normal mind, how could you receive recompense for it?

"Great King, it is like a magician at the crossroads conjuring all varieties of men and women, elephants and horses, adornments and robes. The ignorant think them real, but the wise know that they are not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.

"Great King, it is like the echo of a voice in the mountain valleys. The ignorant think it a real voice, but the wise know it is not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.

"Great King, it is like a person who intends you ill coming to you with false pretensions of goodwill. The ignorant think such a person truly kindhearted, but the wise, understanding thoroughly, know it is but empty pretense. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.

"Great King, it is like a person taking up a mirror and looking at his reflection. The ignorant think that is their real face, but the wise, understanding thoroughly, know it is not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.

"Great King, it is like a mirage in the hot season. The ignorant think it is water, but the wise, understanding thoroughly, know it is not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.
Great King, it is like the mirage of the city of Gandharva. The ignorant think it real, but the wise, understanding thoroughly, know it is not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know fully that it is not.

Great King, it is like a person enjoying the pleasures of the five sensual desires in dream. The ignorant think this real, but the wise, understanding thoroughly, know it is not. Killing is like this. Foolish beings think it real, but the Buddhas, the world-honored ones, know it is not.

Great King, I thoroughly understand the matter of killing, the act of killing, the one who kills, and the consequences of killing, and also the emancipation from the consequences, but this does not mean that I am guilty. King, although you know killing, how can this make you guilty? Great King, it is like a man who, being in charge of the wine, knows much about it; but if he does not actually drink, he does not become drunk.

Again, one may know fire, but this in itself does not burn. In the same way, King, you may know about killing, but how can that constitute a crime? Great King, when the sun rises, sentient beings commit all manner of evil. And when the moon appears, again they perform acts of theft. But when the sun and moon do not come out, they commit no evil. Although it is by the light of the sun and moon that they commit evil, the sun and moon are not guilty. It is like this with killing...

Great King, it is like nirvana being neither existent nor nonexistent, and yet being existent. So it is with killing. Although it is neither existent nor nonexistent, and yet is existent, for the person who feels shame, it is not existent; for the person who feels no shame, it is not nonexistent; for the person who receives the recompense, it is existent. For the person who sees emptiness, it is nonexistent; for the person who sees existence, it is not nonexistent; for the person who sees existence as existent, it is existent. Why? Because the person who sees existence as existent receives the karmic recompense. For the person who sees existence as nonexistent, there is no karmic recompense. For the person who sees permanence, it is not existent; for the person who sees impermanence, it is not nonexistent; for the person who sees permanence as permanent it is not nonexistent. Why? Because the
person who sees permanence as permanent receives the recompense of evil acts. Therefore, for the person who sees permanence as permanent, it cannot be nonexistent. In this sense, then, it is neither existent nor nonexistent, and yet it is existent. Great King, sentient beings are termed so for their exhaling and inhaling of breath. The cutting off of exhaling and inhaling breath is 'killing.' The Buddhas, in accord with worldly usage, also teach this to be 'killing'..."

[Ajatashatru said,] "O World-honored one, observing the world, I see that from the seed of the eranda grows the eranda tree. I do not see a candana tree growing from an eranda seed. But now for the first time I see a candana tree growing from the seed of an eranda. The eranda seed is myself; the candana tree is shinjin that has no root in my heart. 'No root' means that at the beginning I did not know to revere the Tathágata, and did not entrust myself to the dharma and Sangha. World-honored one, if I had not encountered the Tathágata, the World-honored one, I would have undergone immeasurable suffering for countless, incalculable kalpas in the great hell. Now I meet the Buddha. With the virtue I have acquired from this meeting, I will destroy the blind passions and evil mind of sentient beings!"

The Buddha said, "Excellent, excellent, Great King! Now I know that you will without fail be able to destroy the evil mind of sentient beings."

"World-honored one, if I can clearly destroy sentient beings' mind of evil, even if I were to dwell in Avici hell constantly for innumerable kalpas, undergoing pain and suffering for the sake of sentient beings, it would not be painful."

At that time, all the countless people of Magadha awakened the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment. Because these innumerable people awakened the great mind, King Ajatashatru’s heavy burden of karmic evil was reduced to minuteness. The King, the Queen, the consorts, and the court maids all in the same way awakened the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment.
At that time, King Ajatashatru said to Jivaka, "O Jivaka, I have now, even before dying, already attained the heavenly body. Casting of short life, I have gained unending life; abandoning the impermanent body, I have gained the eternal body. I bring sentient beings to the awakening of the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment..."

Upon uttering these words, that disciple of the Buddhas, with many kinds of jeweled banners...and with a verse expressed his veneration:

The true words are extraordinarily subtle and excellent.

They are skilful in expression and content;

They are a store of profound secrets.

For the sake of the multitudes,

He explains extensively with many words;

For the sake of the multitudes, he teaches in summary.

Possessing such words,

He perfectly heals sentient beings.

If there are sentient beings

Who are able to hear these words,

Whether they entrust themselves or not,

They know with certainty that these are the Buddha's teaching.

The Buddhas always possess gentle words,

But for the multitudes they teach in rough words.

Rough words or gentle,
All have their basis in the highest truth.

For this reason, I now

Take refuge in the World-honored one.

The words of the Tathágata are of one taste;

They are like the waters of the broad ocean.

It is called the highest truth.

For this reason, there are no meaningless words;

What the Tathágata now teaches -

The various innumerable teachings -

Men and women, old and young, hear

And all alike are made to attain the highest truth.

Without cause, without effect;

With no arising, no perishing -

This is termed great nirvana.

Those who hear break all their bonds.

The Tathágata, for the sake of every being,

Always acts as one's loving father and mother.

Know that all sentient beings

Are the Tathágata’s children.

The World-honored one of great compassion
Performed austere practices for the sake of sentient beings,

Like a person possessed by demons,

Rushing wildly, full of activity.

I have now been able to encounter the Buddha.

May the merit accruing from this -

The good I have acquired through the three modes of action -

Be directed toward attainment of supreme enlightenment.

I now pay homage

To the Buddha, dharma, and Sangha;

With the merit from this,

May the three treasures ever be present in the world.

I now acquire

The various merits;

With them, may I defeat

The four Maras that torment sentient beings.

Having met with evil friends,

I committed evils whose recompense spanned past, present and future.

Now, before the Buddha, I repent;

May I henceforth never perform evil again.

May all sentient beings alike
Awaken the mind aspiring for enlightenment,
And with a whole heart think constantly
On the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters.
And may all sentient beings
Break free forever from blind passions,
And in seeing Buddha-nature clearly,
Be the equal of Manjusri.

Then the World-honored one praised King Ajatashatru, "Excellent, excellent! Know that if a person awakens the mind aspiring for enlightenment, he adorns the Buddhas and their great assemblies. Great King, you have already in the past awakened the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment, for the first time in the presence of Vipasyin Buddha. During the interval from that time until my own appearance in the world, you have never fallen into hell and undergone suffering there. Great King, know that the mind aspiring for enlightenment brings such incalculable recompense. Great King, from this moment on, be ever earnest in practicing the mind of aspiration for enlightenment. Why? Because through this cause, you will be able to eradicate immeasurable karmic evil."

Then King Ajatashatru and all the citizens of Magadha rose from their seats, circumambulated the Buddha three times, and taking their leave, returned to the palace.

117 Further, it states:

[The Buddha speaks:] Good sons! King Bimbisara of Rajagriha had a prince named Sudarsana (Handsome One), who, because of karmic causes, awakened thoughts of grave evil and desired to kill his father. He had no opportunity, however. At that time, the evil person Devadatta, also because
of karmic causes from the past, awakened thoughts of no good regarding me and wanted to kill me. Having acquired the five transcendent powers, he soon gained the confidence of Prince Sudarsana. He demonstrated various acts of transcendent power for the prince, departing from where there was no exit and entering again through the gate, or going out through the gate and appearing again from where there was none. On different occasions he would assume the form of an elephant, a horse, an ox, a sheep, or another person. On seeing these things, Prince Sudarsana conceived feelings of affection, joy, and respectful trust. Out of these feelings, he had offerings made to Devadatta, strictly specifying the various utensils to be used.

Further, he once said, "Venerable master, I would like to see the mandarava blossom."

Upon hearing these words, Devadatta immediately ascended to the Heaven of Thirty-three Devas and sought a blossom from the devas. But because his good merit had been exhausted, there was none who could give him one.

Still unable to obtain the flower, he considered, "The mandarava has no sense of 'I' or 'mine'; there will surely be no crime in picking one myself." As he went to pick a blossom, he immediately lost his transcendent powers, and when he came to himself, he was back in Rajagriha. Full of shame, he found it impossible to see Prince Sudarsana again.

Further, he thought, "I will go to the Tathágata now and ask for the Sangha. If the Buddha commits it to me, I will give instruction as I please and make Shariputra and the others obey me."

Then Devadatta came to me and said, "I ask, O Tathágata, that you entrust the Sangha to me. I will instruct them in the many teachings, convert them, and make them discipline themselves." I replied to the foolish man, "Shariputra and the others have heard the great wisdom, and they are trusted and venerated by the world. Still, I would not give them charge of the Sangha. Much less, then, would I entrust it to an abject fool and lickspittle like you."
Then Devadatta all the more conceived evil intentions against me, and said, "Gautama, now you lead the Sangha, but your strength will not last long. It will fade and disintegrate before my eyes."

But as soon as he had uttered this, the earth shook six times. Devadatta fell to the ground, and about his body a violent wind arose, blowing dust and earth which completely covered and soiled him. Devadatta, seeing this bad omen, said further, "If I, with this body, must fall into Avici hell in this present life, I will assuredly avenge it with similar immense evil."

Then Devadatta stood and went to Prince Sudarsana, who, on seeing him, asked, "Sage, why do you look so haggard and emaciated, with such a sorrowful expression?"

Devadatta replied, "I am always so. Have you not noticed?"

Sudarsana said, "Explain what you mean. What causes you to be so?"

Devadatta said, "I feel now the strongest bonds of friendship with you. The common people abuse you, saying you lack reason. When I hear it, how can I not be thus sorrowed!"

Prince Sudarsana said, "How do the people of the kingdom abuse and insult me?"

Devadatta said, "The people of the land abuse you, calling you 'Unborn Enemy'."

Sudarsana asked, "Why do they call me 'Unborn Enemy'? Who made that name?"

Devadatta said, "Before you were born, all the soothsayers declared, 'This infant, once it has been born, will assuredly slay its father.' For this reason, the common people all call you 'Unborn Enemy.' Everyone close to you, in order to protect you feelings, calls you Sudarsana."
"Queen Vaidehi, having heard the words of the prediction, cast you from the top of a high tower when you were born. In that fall, your finger was broken. Because of this incident, the people call you 'Broken Fingered.' When I heard this, such sorrow and resentment sprang up in my heart that I could not face you and tell you of it."

Devadatta related a variety of such evil matters, seeking to induce the prince to kill his father, and said, "If you kill your father, I too will kill the Shramana Gautama."

Prince Sudarsana asked a minister named Varsakara, "Why did the Great King give me the name 'Unborn Enemy'?"

The minister's explanation of how the name was given did not vary from Devadatta's. Upon hearing it, Sudarsana together with the minister seized his father the king, confined him in a place apart from the palace, and put him under guard of the four kinds of soldiers. Queen Vaidehi, on hearing of this, went immediately to where the king was, but those guarding him intercepted her here and would not allow her to enter. Then the queen's heart filled with anger and she castigated them.

The guards told the prince, "The wife of the great king wishes to see you father the king. Should we allow her in or not?"

Hearing this, Sudarsana also became enraged and went to his mother. Grasping her by the hair, he drew his sword and was about to stab her.

Then Jivaka said, "Great King, from the time this country was first founded, there have been acts of evil that were extremely grave, but no woman has ever been punished, not to speak of the mother who gave one birth."

Prince Sudarsana heard these words, and because of what Jivaka said, let go of his mother. But he deprived the king of any clothing, bedding, food, drink, or medicine. After seven days, the king's life ended. Prince Sudarsana, seeing his father dead, became filled with remorse.
Minister Varsakara, with various evil rationalizations, said, "Great King! Your acts are completely blameless. Why are you now filled with remorse?"

Jivaka said, "Great King, know that this act involves a twofold evil: killing your father, and killing a srota-apanna. There is no one, apart from the Buddha, who can free you of such evil."

King Sudarsana said, "The Tathágata is pure, without any defilement. I am a being of karmic evil. How is it possible to see him?"

Good sons! Knowing that state of affairs, I intentionally said to Ánanda, "So, when three months have passed, I will enter nirvana." Sudarsana, hearing of this, quickly came to me. I taught the dharma for him, so that his heavy burden of karmic evil was lightened, and enabled him to realize the shinjin that has no root in him.

Good sons! My disciples, on hearing these words, did not grasp my intent; hence they said, "The Tathágata has declared that he will enter complete nirvana."

Good sons, there are two kinds of bodhisattvas: bodhisattva in the true sense, and bodhisattva in provisional name. Bodhisattvas in provisional name, on hearing that in three months I will enter nirvana, all fall into despair, saying, "If the Tathágata is subject to impermanence and will not abide in this world, what can we do?" Because of this matter [of impermanence], we have undergone great pain and suffering for incalculable lifetimes. The Tathágata, the World-honored one, has perfected and acquired immeasurable virtues; in spite of this, he cannot destroy the Mara of death. Much less, then, can we defeat it."

Good sons! I therefore say for the sake of such bodhisattvas, "The Tathágata is eternal, and undergoes no change." My disciples who, on hearing these words, do not grasp my intent, will surely say, "The Tathágata after all will ultimately never enter nirvana."

118 Here we see, from the true teaching of the Great Sage, that when the three types of beings difficult to save - those afflicted with the three kinds
of sickness difficult to cure - entrust themselves to the universal Vow of great compassion and take refuge in the ocean of shinjin that is [Amida's] benefiting others, the Buddha is filled with pity for them and heals them, commiserates with and cures them. It is like the wondrous medicine called manda curing all illness. Beings of the defiled world - the multitudes possessed of corruptions and evil - should seek and think on the diamond-like, indestructible true mind. They should hold steadfast to the Primal Vow, which is the wondrous medicine called manda. Reflect on this.

119 In the Mahayana sutras, the master of the being difficult to save is expounded. The Larger Sutra states:

Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

And [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states]:

Excluded are those who commit evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.

The Contemplation Sutra teaches the attainment of birth of those who commit the five grave offenses, but not of those who slander the dharma, and in the Nirvana Sutra, the beings and the sicknesses difficult to cure are taught. How are these true teachings to be understood?

120 Answer: The Commentary on the Treatise states:

Question: The Sutra of Immeasurable Life states,

Those who aspire for birth are all brought to attainment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

The Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life states,
Those who have committed the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, and who are possessed of various evils also attain birth.

How are these two sutra passages to be reconciled?

Answer: The first sutra speaks of committing two kinds of serious evil act: the five grave offenses and the slander of the right dharma. Because of committing both these two kinds of evil act, a person is unable to attain birth. The other sutra speaks only of committing the evil of the ten transgressions and five grave offenses; nothing is said of slander ing the right dharma. Because a person has not slandered the right dharma, he attains birth.

Question: Suppose a person has committed the five grave offenses but has not slandered the right dharma. In the sutra, it is granted that such a person can attain birth. Further, suppose there is a person who has only slandered the right dharma but is free of the five grave offenses and other evil acts; if he aspires for birth, will he attain it or not?

Answer: Although he has only slandered the right dharma and has not committed other evil acts, he will definitely be unable to attain birth. How is this known? A sutra states that the person who has committed the five grave offenses falls into great Avici hell and fully undergoes their recompense for one kalpa. The person who slanders the right dharma falls into great Avici hell, and when that kalpa has run out, he passes on into the great Avici hell of another quarter. In this way he passes through a hundred thousand great Avici hells one after another. The Buddha does not indicate any time when it is possible for him to emerge. This is because slandering the right dharma is an evil act of extreme gravity.

Further, the right dharma is the Buddha-dharma. Such a foolish person has already slandered it; how can it be reasonable to think that he would aspire to be born in the Buddha-land? Suppose the person aspires for birth merely because he craves to be born into happiness; this is like seeking ice that is not water or fire without smoke. How can it be deemed reasonable that he attain it?
Question: What are the characteristics of slandering the right dharma?

Answer: Saying there is no Buddha, no Buddha-dharma, no bodhisattva, no bodhisattva-dharma. Deciding on such views, whether through understanding thus in one's own mind or receiving the ideas from others, is called slandering the right dharma.

Question: Taking such views only concerns the person himself. What pain and suffering does his act inflict on other sentient beings, that it should exceed the evil of the five grave offenses in seriousness?

Answer: If there were no Buddhas and bodhisattvas to expound the mundane and supra mundane good paths and to teach and guide sentient beings, how could we know of the existence of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity? Such mundane good would all be cut off, and the sages of the supra mundane would all perish. You know only the gravity of the five grave offenses, and not that they arise from the absence of the right dharma. Thus, the person who slanders the right dharma is involved in the gravest karmic evil.

Question: The Sutra on the Working of Karma states, "The working of karma is like a scale; the heavier side is drawn down first and foremost." The Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life speaks of a person who has committed the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, and is possessed of all evils. He is to fall into the evil courses and undergo incalculable pain for many kalpas. At the point of death, he happens to be guided by a true teacher and comes to say Namu-muryoju-butsu (Namu-amida-butsu). When, in this way, he gives voice to it with a sincere mind without interruption, completing ten utterances, he attains birth in the Pure Land of happiness, immediately enters the truly settled of the Mahayana, and ultimately attains non-retrogression. He becomes free forever from all the pain of the three courses. How is this to be understood in terms of the principle of "the heavier side is drawn down first and foremost"?

Further, from distant kalpas in the past we have been committing all manner of acts. These acts, being defiled dharmas, are bound to the three
realms. If, as you say, one immediately emerges from the three realms by merely thinking on Amida Buddha with ten utterances, how are we to understand the meaning of "binding karmic acts"?

Answer: If, giving weight to the five grave offenses, the ten transgressions, and other binding karmic acts, and considering the ten utterances of the person of the lowest grade of the lowest rank to be trivial, you say that drawn by karmic evil one should first and foremost fall into hell or be bound to the three realms, then we must consider lightness and heaviness here in terms of principles. This is a matter of mind, of active condition, and of settled-ness; it is not a matter of length of time or of quantity.

What is meant by "matter of mind"? The person who commits such karmic evil does so based on his own false and inverted views. The ten utterances, however, arise when a true teacher, consoling him by various means, makes him hear the dharma that is true reality. The latter is real, the former is unreal. How can there be any comparison?

Suppose there is a room that has been dark for a thousand years. If light reaches it, however briefly, the room immediately becomes bright. How can the darkness say that, having occupied the room for a thousand years, it refuses to leave? This is termed "matter of mind."

What is meant by "matter of active condition"? The person who commits such evil does so based on his own mind of falsity, depending on sentient beings who have come into existence from blind passions and falsity. The ten utterances arise based on supreme shinjin, depending on the Name embodying Amida Tathāgata’s immeasurable, true, real, and pure virtues, which is the adornment of compassionate means. Suppose there is a man who has been struck by a poison arrow. At the point of entry, the flesh is torn and the bone is broken. But if he hears a drum to which the dispelling elixir has been applied, the arrow will immediately be extracted and the poison expelled. It is like this [Note]. How can it be said that, because the arrow is deep and the poison virulent, even though the drumbeat is heard, it is impossible for the arrow to be withdrawn or the venom removed? This is termed "matter of active condition."
What is meant by "matter of settled-ness"? The person who commits such evil does so based on thoughts of something coming after and of other things interrupting. The ten utterances arise based on thoughts of nothing coming after and nothing interrupting. This is termed settled-ness.

When we consider these three matters, we see that the ten utterances carry weight. What is heavy draws down first and foremost and enables beings to depart from the three realms of existence. The two sutra passages have a single meaning.

Question: How long is "one thought [-moment]"?

Answer: One hundred and one arisings and perishings of a thing make up one instant, and sixty instants are one moment. Here, however, "thought[-moment]" should not be understood as temporal. "Ten thoughts" refers simply to continuing in mindfulness of Amida Buddha for ten thoughts, in accord with what is contemplated - whether it be the entire body or a specific feature - without any other thoughts in one's mind. Saying the Name is also like this.

Question: We can know the number of thoughts if the mind turns to other objects and then is collected again and returned [to Amida]. Such awareness of the number, however, means that un-interrupted-ness is lacking. If the mind is concentrated and the thought focused, by what means is it possible to keep track of the number of thoughts?

Answer: The term "ten utterances" in the [Contemplation] Sutra is intended only to elucidate the completion of the act [resulting in birth]. We need not necessarily know the number. It is said, for example, that the cicada knows no spring or autumn, so how can it know the season of the red sun? Only one who knows [the seasons] can speak of summer. Likewise, completion of the karmic act in ten utterances can be spoken of only by one possessed of transcendent powers. When one simply repeats utterances, continuing without turning thoughts to other matters, that is enough; what need is there to know the number of utterances? If it is absolutely necessary to know, however, there is a method. It is to be transmitted orally, and should not be recorded.
The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Question: According to the Forty-eight Vows, only those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma are excluded and cannot attain birth. Here, according to the passage on the lowest grade of the lowest rank in the Contemplation Sutra, those who slander the dharma are set apart and those who commit the five grave offenses are grasped. What does this mean?

Answer: The intent may be understood as a teaching to make us desist from evil. As stated in the Forty-eight Vows, those who slander the dharma and those who commit the five grave offenses are excluded; this means that these two kinds of action are the gravest of hindrances. When sentient beings commit them, they plunge directly into Avici hell, where they undergo long kalpas of terror and panic without any means of emerging. The Tathágata, fearing that we would commit these two kinds of faults, seeks to stop us through compassionate means by declaring that we will then not be able to attain birth. This does not mean that we will not be grasped.

It is taught, concerning the lowest grade of the lowest rank, that those who commit the five grave offenses are taken up but those who slander the dharma are excluded; this is because beings [of the lowest grade] have already committed the five grave offenses, but must not be abandoned to endless transmigration. Thus Amida, awakening great compassion, grasps them and brings them to birth. Since, however, they have yet to commit the karmic evil of slandering the dharma, in order to prevent them from doing so it is stated that if one slanders the dharma one will not attain birth. This is to be understood as relevant to those who have not committed this evil. Even if one has committed it, one will nevertheless be grasped and brought to attainment of birth. Although one attains birth in the Pure Land, however, one must pass many kalpas enclosed in a lotus bud. Such people of karmic evil, while they are within the lotus, are possessed of the three kinds of obstructions: first, they cannot see the Buddha and the noble assemblies; second, they cannot hear the right dharma; third, they cannot travel to the lands of the Buddhas to make offerings. But apart from these
obstructions, they do not undergo any form of pain. In the sutras, it is taught that their state is like that of a Bhikshu who has entered the bliss of the Third Dhyana Heaven. Reflect on this. Although they are confined within the flower that is closed for many kalpas, is this not better than to suffer all the torments for endless kalpas in Avici hell? Thus, this passage should be understood as a teaching to make us desist from evil.

122 Further, he states:

The Pure Land is free forever from slander and dislike; all are equal, with no anxieties or afflictions. Whether human or deva, good or evil, all can reach the Pure Land. On attaining it, their distinctions vanish; all equally enter the stage of non-retrogression. Why is it thus? It comes about because Amida, in his causal stage, under the guidance of Lokesvararaja Buddha, abandoned his throne and left his home, and awakening the mind of compassion and wisdom, widely proclaimed his Forty-eight Vows. Through the power of the Buddha's Vows, the karmic evil of the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions is eradicated and all are brought to attainment of birth. When those who slander the dharma or abandon the seed of Buddhahood turn about at heart, they all reach the Pure Land.

123 Concerning the five grave offenses:

According to Tzu-chou, there are two traditions concerning the five grave offenses. One is the five grave offenses of the three vehicles: 1) intentionally killing one's father; 2) intentionally killing one's mother; 3) intentionally killing an arhat; 4) disrupting the harmony of the Sangha through one's inverted views; and 5) maliciously causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha. These acts are termed grave offenses (literally, "contraries") because they go against the field of benevolence and run athwart the field of merits. Those who give themselves to these grave offenses, when they deteriorate in body and die, unfailingly plunge into Avici ("uninterrupted") hell, where for one great kalpa they undergo pain without interruption; hence, these offenses are termed "acts resulting in uninterrupted pain."

The Abhidharma-kosa lists five acts of uninterrupted pain similar to those above. A verse states:
Violating one's mother or a nun of the stage of non-learning

[equivalent to the karmic evil of killing one's mother],

Killing a bodhisattva who abides in meditation

[Equivalent to the karmic evil of killing one's father]

Or a sage of the stage of learning or non-learning

[Equivalent to killing an arhat],

Destroying the cause of happiness in the Sangha

[Equivalent to the karmic evil of disrupting the Sangha],

And smashing stupas

[equivalent to causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha].

The second tradition is the five grave offenses of the Mahayana. The Sutra Taught to Nigranthas states:

1) Destroying stupas, burning sutra repositories, or plundering the belongings of the three treasures. 2) Speaking evil of the teaching of the three vehicles, saying they are not the sacred teachings, obstructing and censuring it, or attempting to hide and obscure it. 3) Beating those who have abandoned home life, whether they observe precepts, have not received precepts, or break precepts; persecuting them, enumerating their faults, confining them, forcing them to return to lay life, putting them to menial labor, exacting taxes from them, or depriving them of life. 4) Killing one's father, harming one's mother, causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha, disrupting the harmony of the Sangha, or killing an arhat. 5) Speaking evil by saying there is no cause and effect and constantly performing the ten transgressions throughout the long night of ignorance.

The [Ten Wheel] Sutra states:
Killing a Pratyekabuddhas out of evil intentions; this is destroying life. 2) Violating a nun who has attained arhat-ship; this is an act of lust. 3) Stealing or destroying what has been offered to the three treasures; this is taking what has not been given one. 4) Disrupting the harmony of the Sangha with inverted views; this is speaking falsely.

Here ends Chapter III:

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Shinjin of the Pure Land Way

IV

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Realization of the Pure Land Way

Compiled by Gutoku Shinran

Disciple of Shakyamuni

1 To reveal, with reverence, the true realization: It is the wondrous state attained through Amida's perfect benefiting of others; it is the ultimate fruition of supreme nirvana. It arises from the Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana, also known as the Vow of realization of great nirvana.

When foolish beings possessed of blind passions, the multitudes caught in birth-and-death and defiled by evil karma, realize the mind an practice that
Amida directs to them for their going forth, they immediately join the truly settled of the Mahayana. Because they dwell among the truly settled, they necessarily attain nirvana. To necessarily attain nirvana is [to attain] eternal bliss. Eternal bliss is ultimate tranquility. Tranquility is supreme nirvana. Supreme nirvana is uncreated dharma-body. Uncreated dharma-body is true reality. True reality is dharma-nature. Dharma-nature is such-ness. Suchness is oneness. Amida Tathágata comes forth from such-ness and manifests various bodies - fulfilled, accommodated, and transformed.

[The Sutra Passages]

2 The Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

3 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

If, when I become Buddha, the sentient beings in my land do not decidedly attain the equal of perfect enlightenment, so that they realize great nirvana, may I not attain enlightenment.

4 The passage declaring the fulfillment of this Vow in the Larger Sutra states:

The sentient beings born in that land all dwell among the truly settled, for in that Buddha-land there is not one who is falsely settled or not settled.

5 Further it states:

That Buddha-land is pure and tranquil, wondrous and delightful. It is not apart from the enlightenment of uncreated nirvana. The Sravakas, bodhisattvas, devas, and human beings there all possess lofty and brilliant wisdom, and their transcendent powers are thoroughly realized. They are all of a single kind, with no distinction in appearance. The words "human beings" and "devas" are used simply in accordance with usage elsewhere.
Their countenances are dignified and wonderful, surpassing things of this world. Their features, subtle and delicate, are not those of human beings or devas; all receive the body of naturalness (jinen) or of emptiness, the body of boundlessness.

6 Further [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

All the sentient beings of that land and those to be born there are brought to thorough fulfillment of supreme enlightenment and reach the abode of nirvana. Why is this? Because those who are falsely settled or not settled cannot comprehend [the Buddha's intent in] establishing the cause [of birth there].

[Passages from the Masters: Vasubandhu and T'an-luan]

7 The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of wondrous sound," the gatha states:

The land's pure sound deeply enlightens beings far and wide;

Subtle and wondrous, it is heard throughout the ten quarters.

Why is this inconceivable? The sutra declares, "Those who, simply hearing of the purity and happiness of that land, earnestly desire to be born there, and those who attain birth, immediately enter the stage of the truly settled." This shows that the land's very name performs the Buddha's work [of saving others]. How can this be conceived?

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of the lord," the gatha states:

Amida, the perfectly enlightened,
Being dharma-king, makes [the Pure Land] abide and sustains it with his good.

Why is this inconceivable? Amida, the perfectly enlightened, surpasses conceivability. The Pure Land of happiness is sustained by the power of the good of Amida, the perfectly enlightened. How can this be conceived?

Abide means not to change or perish; sustain means to keep from scattering or losing. If a salve that prevents spoilage is applied to seeds, they will not rot though placed in water, nor burn though placed in fire, and later, under proper conditions, they will sprout immediately. Why? Because of the salve's power. People, once born in the Pure Land of happiness, later conceive in their hearts the wish to be born in the three realms to teach and guide sentient beings; they then abandon their life in the Pure Land and receive birth in accord with their aspiration. Though they are born into the flames of various births in the three realms, the seed of supreme enlightenment will never rot. Why? Because they are sustained by the good of Amida, the perfectly enlightened.

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of fellow beings," the gatha states:

The beings of the Tathágata’s pure lotus

Are born transformed from the lotus of perfect enlightenment.

Why is this inconceivable? In this world of miscellaneous modes of birth, whether beings are born from womb, egg, or moisture or by sudden metamorphosis, their fellow beings are numerous, and these fellow beings experience pain and pleasure in a myriad variations because of their diverse karmas. In that land of happiness, every single being is born transformed from the pure lotus of Amida Tathágata’s perfect enlightenment, for they are the same in practicing the Nembutsu and follow no other way. This extends even to this world, so that all Nembutsu practitioners within the four seas are brothers and sisters. The fellow beings are innumerable. How can this be conceived?
Further, it states:

Although there are initially nine grades among those aspiring for birth, now [in the Pure Land] there are no distinctions whatsoever. It is like the waters of the Tzu and Sheng becoming one in taste upon entering the sea. How can this be conceived?

9 Further, the Treatise states:

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of purity," the gatha states:

Contemplating the features of that world,

I see that it transcends the three realms.

Why is this inconceivable? When foolish beings possessed of blind passions attain birth in the Pure Land, they are not bound by the karmic fetters of the three realms. That is, without severing blind passions, they realize nirvana itself. How can this be conceived?

[Tao-ch'ō]

10 Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

The majestic powers of the two Buddhas, Amida and Shakyamuni, are equal. Shakyamuni Tathāgata, however, speaks not of his own capacities, but purposely reveals Amida's excellence; this is from his desire that every single sentient being be equally brought to take refuge in Amida. Hence, in various sutras Shakyamuni praises and leads beings to take refuge in Amida; we must recognize this to be the Buddha's intent. Master T'an-luan's fundamental intention, then, was indeed to take refuge in the West. He therefore expresses praise in hymns based on the Larger Sutra:

The Sravakas and bodhisattvas of the land of happiness,
And the human beings and devas also, all perfectly attain wisdom;
In bodily appearance and adornments they do not differ at all.
The terms for them differ simply in accordance with usage elsewhere.
Their countenances, dignified and wonderful, are beyond compare;
Delicate and subtle, their bodies are not human beings' or devas'.
Their are the body of emptiness, the body of boundlessness;
Therefore, I pay homage to the one possessing the power of equality.

[Shan-tao]

11 The Commentary of the Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Concerning the "universal Vow," it is as set forth in the Larger Sutra. The attainment of birth of all foolish beings, whether good or evil, is always, without exception, by being carried by the karmic power of Amida Buddha's great Vow and accepting it as the decisive cause. Further, the Buddha's innermost intent is vast and profound; hence, his teachings are difficult to grasp. It cannot be fathomed by the three classes of the wise or the ten classes of sages. Much less, then, can it be fathomed by us, petty foolish beings who have not reached even the stages of understanding. How should we know its significance?

As I reverently reflect, I see that Shakyamuni exhorts us on this shore, and that Amida, from that land, comes to welcome us. From there we are beckoned to, from here we are urged on; how could we refuse to go? Just earnestly devote yourself to this dharma with life's limit as the end, and abandoning completely this defiled existence, immediately realize the eternal bliss of dharma-nature.

12 Further, it states:
The city of bliss, tranquil and uncreated, in the West,

Is ultimately free and peaceful, far removed from being and nonbeing;

Great compassion imbues the heart, so that one sports in the dharma-realm;

Transforming oneself into various bodies, one benefits all beings equally, without discrimination.

Manifesting transcendent powers, one teaches the dharma;

Realizing Buddha's features and marks, one enters nirvana without residue.

Miraculously created adornments are manifested at will;

Those sentient beings who see them have all their karmic evil swept away.

Further, it states in praise:

Let us return! Do not abide

In this homeland of Maras. Since innumerable kalpas ago

We have been transmigrating

Passing through all the six courses.

Nowhere has there been any pleasure;

We hear only the voices of grief and sorrow.

After this present lifetime has ended,

Let us enter the city of nirvana!

[Conclusion to the Aspect of Going Forth]
13 As I contemplate the teaching, practice, shinjin, and realization of the true essence of the Pure Land way, I see that they are the benefit that the Tathāgata directs to us in his great compassion.

Therefore, whether with regard to the cause or to the fruition, there is nothing whatever that has not been fulfilled through Amida Tathāgata’s directing of virtue to beings out of his pure Vow-mind. Because the cause is pure, the fruit is also pure. Reflect on this.

[The Aspect of Return to this World]

14 Second is Amida's directing of virtue for our return to this world. This is the benefit we receive, the state of benefiting and guiding others. It arises from the Vow of necessary attainment of the rank of succession to Buddhahood, also known as "the Vow of succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime." It may further be called "the Vow of directing virtue for our return to this world." Since this Vow appears in the Commentary on the Treatise, I will not quote it here; see the passages from the Commentary [that follow].

[Vasubandhu]

15 The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

Concerning "the fifth gate of emergence": With great compassion, one observes all sentient beings in pain and affliction, and assuming various transformed bodies to guide them, enters the gardens of birth-and-death and the forests of blind passions; freely sporting there with transcendent powers, one attains the state of teaching and guiding. This is brought about by the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow; it is called "the fifth gate of emergence."
16 The Commentary on the Treatise states:

"Directing virtue for return to this world" means that after being born in that land, fulfilling samatha and vipasyana, and gaining the power of compassionate means, one returns and enters the thick forests of birth-and-death, teaches and guides all sentient beings, and brings all to enter the Buddha-way together. Whether with regard to the aspect for going forth or the aspect for return, all is entirely for the sake of bringing sentient beings across the ocean of birth-and-death. Thus it is stated, "It is to fulfill the mind of great compassion, taking the directing of virtue as foremost."

17 Further, it states:

Because they see the Buddha, the bodhisattvas who have not yet realized pure mind will ultimately attain dharma-body of equality. For they will ultimately realize tranquility and equality like the bodhisattvas of pure mind or the bodhisattvas of higher stages.

Dharma-body of equality refers to bodhisattvas of the eighth stage or above, who have bodies arising from dharma-nature. This is dharma that is tranquility and equality. Because they realize this dharma of tranquility and equality, they are termed "dharma-body of equality." Because bodhisattvas of dharma-body of equality attain it, it is called "dharma of tranquility and equality." These bodhisattvas attain the samádhi called "arising as the fruit [of dharma-body]." With the transcendent powers of this samádhi, they are able, while remaining in one place, to be everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters in one instant, at the same time, and to make offerings in various ways to all the Buddhas and the ocean of beings in the Buddha's great assemblies. They can, in places throughout the innumerable worlds where there is no Buddha, no dharma, and no Sangha, manifest themselves in various forms to teach, guide, and bring all sentient beings to emancipation, thus ever performing Buddha's work. From the very beginning, however, they have no thought of going and coming, not
thought of making offerings, no thought of emancipating. For this reason this body is called dharma-body of equality. This dharma is called dharma of tranquility and equality.

Bodhisattvas who have not yet realized pure mind: bodhisattvas of the first to the seventh stages. These bodhisattvas are, again, able to manifest bodies, in a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million, or a hundred thousand million lands where there is no Buddha, and to perform Buddha's work. However, it is necessary for them to enter into samádhi through exertion of mind; they are not without such exertion. Because of this exertion of mind, they are said to be "bodhisattvas who have not yet realized pure mind." These bodhisattvas aspire to be born into the Pure Land of happiness and to see Amida Buddha. When they have seen Amida Buddha, they will ultimately become equal in body and equal in dharma to all the bodhisattvas of the higher stages. It is precisely for this reason that Bodhisattva Nargarjuna and Bodhisattva Vasubandhu aspired for birth there.

Question: In reflecting on the Sutra of the Ten Stages, I find that the bodhisattvas' advance through stages is attained only after gradually acquiring immeasurable merit over numerous kalpas. How is it that if they see Amida Buddha, ultimately they will be equal in body and equal in dharma to bodhisattvas of the higher stages?

Answer: Ultimately does not mean "immediately equal." Ultimately, without fail, they will be equal; for this reason, they are said to be equal.

Question: If they are not immediately equal, how can they be called bodhisattvas? When bodhisattvas attain the first stage, then by gradually advancing they will naturally become equal to the Buddhas; how can it be provisionally said that they are equal to bodhisattvas of the higher stages?

Answer: Within the seventh stage, bodhisattvas attain great tranquility; above, they see no Buddhahood that must be attained, below, they see no sentient beings who must be saved. They desire to abandon the Buddha-way and [immediately] realize reality-limit. At that time, if they do not receive encouragement through the transcendent powers of the Buddhas of
the ten quarters, they immediately enter nirvana and come to be no different from [those of] the two vehicles. If bodhisattvas are born in the land of happiness and see Amida Buddha, they do not encounter this fault. Hence, they are ultimately equal."

Further, among Amida Tathāgata’s Primal Vows in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life is the following:

When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come and are born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain [the rank of] "succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime" - except for those who, in accordance with their own original vows freely to guide others to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddhas and Tathāgatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in the unexcelled, right, true way. Such bodhisattvas surpass ordinary ones, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and discipline themselves in the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

Reflecting on this sutra passage, we may infer that the bodhisattvas of that land do not advance from stage to stage. What is spoken of as the process of the ten stages is merely an accommodated method of guidance that Shakyamuni Tathāgata used in this Jambudvipa continent; what necessity is there that it be thus in the pure lands of other quarters? Among the five inconceivability’s, the Buddha-dharma is the most inconceivable. If one says that bodhisattvas must necessarily advance from stage to stage, and that there is no principle of leaping, then one still lacks understanding.

There is a tree called "great firmness." It takes one hundred years for this tree to send forth a shoot from the ground, but when it does it grows one hundred yards a day. It grows thus day by day. How can its measure after a hundred years be compared even to tall pines? Since pine trees grow no more than an inch a day, people hearing of this "great firmness" tree surely doubt it can grow thus in a single day. A person hearing that Shakyamuni
Tathāgata brought a man to realization of arhat ship with but one sermon, or brought another to insight into the non-origination of all existence in but the time before breakfast, will take this as words of inducement and not a presentation of fact. Hearing the above exposition [of the Treatise], one will surely not believe it. Extraordinary words do not find entrance into the ears of the ordinary; they think it cannot be so. That cannot be helped.

I have briefly explained eight passages, showing that the Tathāgata’s virtues and adornments for self-benefit and benefiting others have been fulfilled in due order. Reflect on this.

What is the due order? The preceding seventeen passages treat the fulfillment of the adornments of the virtues of the land. We know already the features of the land; hence, we must know the master of the land. For this reason, next we contemplate the virtues of the Buddha’s adornments. If the Buddha has completed his adornments, where does he sit? Thus, first we contemplate his seat. When we have come to know the seat, then we must know the seated master. Thus, next we contemplate the Buddha's adornment of bodily activity. Having come to know the bodily activity, we must know what name the Buddha has. Thus, next we contemplate the Buddha's adornment of verbal activity. Having come to know how the Name is heard, we must know the origins of the Name's acquisition. Thus, next we contemplate the Buddha's adornment of mental activity. Having come to know that the Buddha possesses these three modes of activity, we must know which people are able to receive the guidance of the great teacher of human beings and devas. Thus, next we contemplate the virtue of the great assembly. Having come to know the countless virtues possessed by the great assembly, we must know who the leader is. Thus, next we contemplate the leader. The leader is the Buddha. We come to know that the leader is surely the same for long kalpas; thus, next we contemplate the master. Having come to know the master, we must know what supreme virtue the master possesses. Thus, we next contemplate his adornment of sustaining without any futility. Thus, the due order of the eight passages is established.

Concerning contemplation of the bodhisattvas:
How does one contemplate the fulfillment of virtues that adorn the bodhisattvas? When contemplating the fulfillment of the virtues that adorn the bodhisattvas, you should, contemplating those bodhisattvas, reflect that they possess the fulfillment of virtues resulting from the performance of four kinds of right practice.

Suchness is the true essence of all existence. The essence of all existence is such-ness, and yet [the bodhisattvas] perform practices; hence, it is not-practicing. Practicing while not practicing is termed "practicing in accord with reality." The essence is simply oneness, but its function is divided into four. Hence, the four practices are rightly taken to be unified as one.

What are these four? First, without moving bodily from one Buddha-land, the bodhisattvas go throughout the ten quarters, assuming various transformed bodies and practicing in accord with reality, and thus constantly performing the Buddha's work. As the gatha states:

The land of happiness is pure and immaculate;

There, the undefiled wheel is turned constantly;

Transformed Buddhas and bodhisattvas there are like suns,

And further, like Mount Sumeru, abide [immovable].

This is to unfold blossoms from the muddy ponds of sentient beings.

Bodhisattvas of the eighth stage and above abide constantly in samádhi, and with the power of samádhi, they go throughout the ten quarters without moving their bodies from their original place, making offerings to the Buddhas and teaching and converting sentient beings.

The undefiled wheel is the virtue of the stage of Buddhahood. The virtue of the stage of Buddhahood is undefiled by habit-energy and blind passions. For the sake of all bodhisattvas, the Buddha constantly turns this wheel of dharma. And with this wheel of dharma the great bodhisattvas awaken
and guide all beings to enlightenment without even brief rest. Hence it is said that the wheel is turned constantly.

The dharma-body is like the sun, and the light of accommodated and transformed bodies pervades all the worlds. Sun is inadequate for expressing immovability; hence, it is further said, like Mount Sumeru abide [immovable].

Concerning blossoms from the muddy ponds, the [Vimalakirti] Sutra states, "The lotus does not grow in the solid ground of lofty plateaus, but in the muddy ponds of the lowland marshes." This is an analogy meaning that foolish beings live in the mud of blind passions, but awakened and guided by bodhisattvas, they are able to put forth the blossoms of the Buddha's perfect enlightenment. Truly they make the three treasures flourish and keep them ever from decline.

Second, their accommodated and transformed bodies, at every moment, neither before nor after, radiate in one thought and one moment a great light that reaches everywhere throughout the worlds of the ten quarters, and they teach and guide sentient beings. They perform practices and acts with a variety of skillful means and eradicate the pain of all sentient beings. As the gatha states:

The undefiled adornment of light,

In one thought-moment, one instant,

Illumines the assemblies of the Buddhas everywhere

And benefits all sentient beings.

Earlier it was stated that the bodhisattvas reach [everywhere] without moving. This might be taken to mean that in going about, there is succession of before and after. Therefore it is said here, "in one thought-moment, one instant" and "without before or after."
Third, in all worlds without exception, they illuminate the assemblies of the Buddhas and the members of the great assemblies, all without exception, vastly and incalculably; they make offerings and pay homage to and praise the virtues of the Buddha-Tathāgatas. As the gatha states:

Showering heavenly music, flowers, robes,

And excellent fragrances, they make offerings to

And praise the Buddha's virtues

Without the least trace of discriminative thought.

Without exception means that they go to all worlds and all the assemblies of the Buddhas everywhere, and that there is not one world or Buddha-assembly they do not reach. Seng-chao states:

The dharma-body, being formless, takes on all forms. Further, it conforms with the ultimate expression. It being without words, profound writings spread more and more widely. Deep and subtle means, being without calculation, work to bring about the benefiting of beings.

It is precisely this that is meant here.

Fourth, in places throughout the worlds of the ten quarters where the three treasures do not exist, they sustain and adorn the great ocean of virtue of the treasures of Buddha, dharma, and Sangha, and manifesting them everywhere, they lead beings to realization of practice in accord with reality. As the gatha states:

In whatever worlds

The treasure of virtue of Buddha-dharma does not exist

May I be born in all of them

And, like Buddha, manifest Buddha-dharma.
The preceding three passages speak of "reaching everywhere," but they all refer to lands where there are Buddhas. If [the virtue expressed in] this passage were lacking, the dharma-body would not wholly be dharma, and the supreme good would not wholly be good. This concludes the section on practice of contemplation on the features.

Next is the fourth section of the explanation of the meaning of the gatha; it is titled "The pure [adornments] originating in the Vow-mind."

Concerning the purity contained in the Vow-mind, the Treatise states:

Previously I have explained the act of observing the fulfilled virtue of the Buddha-land's adornments, the fulfilled virtue of the Buddha's adornments, and the fulfilled virtue of the bodhisattva's adornments. These three kinds of fulfillment are the adornments produced by the Vow-mind. Reflect on this.

Concerning the phrase, Reflect on this, we should reflect that these three types of fulfilled adornments were originally accomplished by the adorning activity of the pure Vow-mind expressed as the Forty-eight Vows; hence, because the cause is pure, the fruition is also pure. It is not that there is no cause or that there is some other cause.

It is because, stated in brief, they enter into the phrase "one-dharma."

The preceding seventeen phrases on the land's adornments, eight phrases on the Tathágata’s adornments, and four phrases on the bodhisattvas' adornments are "extensive." That they enter into the phrase "one-dharma" is termed in brief. Why is it explained that extensive and brief interpenetrate? Because all Buddhas and bodhisattvas have dharma-bodies of two dimensions: dharma-body as such-ness and dharma-body as compassionate means. Dharma-body as compassionate means arises from dharma-body as such-ness, and dharma-body as such-ness emerges out of dharma-body as compassionate means. Those two dimensions of dharma-body differ but are not separable; they are one but cannot be regarded as identical. Thus, extensive and brief interpenetrate, and together are termed
"dharma." If bodhisattvas do not realize that extensive and brief interpenetrate, they are incapable of self-benefit and benefiting others.

The phrase "one-dharma" is the phrase "purity." The phrase "purity" is "true and real wisdom or uncreated dharma-body."

These three phrases mutually interpenetrate. For what reason is ["one-dharma"] termed "dharma"? It is pure. For what reason is purity so termed? It is true and real wisdom or uncreated dharma-body. True and real wisdom is wisdom that is true reality. Because true reality is formless, true wisdom is no-knowing. Uncreated dharma-body is the body of dharma-nature. Because dharma-nature is tranquility, dharma-body is formless. Because it is formless, it never fails to manifest every kind of form. Therefore, the adornment of the Buddha's features and marks is itself dharma-body. Because it is no-knowing, it never fails to know all things. Therefore, all-knowing wisdom is itself true and real wisdom. That the true and real is termed wisdom shows that wisdom is neither active nor non-active. That dharma-body is described as uncreated shows that dharma-body is neither form nor non-form. When negation is negated, is negation of negation affirmation? It is no-negation that is indeed affirmation. It is affirmation in and of itself, without anticipation of a negation of affirmation. It is neither relative affirmation nor relative negation; one hundred negations cannot disclose it. Hence it is said, the phrase "purity." The phrase "purity" is true and real wisdom or uncreated dharma-body. The Treatise states:

This purity has two aspects. Reflect on this.

In the mutual interpenetration of phrases discussed before, we saw that through one-dharma, purity is entered. Through purity, dharma-body is entered. Now, purity is divided and two aspects set forth; hence, Reflect on this.

What are the two aspects? The first is the purity of the world as environment (literally, "vessel"), the second is the purity of the world as sentient beings. "Purity of the world as environment" refers to the seventeen kinds of fulfillment of the virtues of the adornments of the
Buddha-land explained earlier; these are called "purity of the world as environment." "Purity of the world as sentient beings" refers to the eight kinds of fulfillment of the virtues of the adornments of the Buddha and the four kinds of fulfillment of the virtues of the adornments of the bodhisattvas; these are called "purity of the world as sentient beings." The phrase "one-dharma" holds the significance of these two kinds of purity. Reflect on this.

Sentient beings are bodies that are individual recompense; the land is enjoyment that is shared recompense. Body and enjoyment are not one; hence, Reflect on this.

All dharmas, however, are produced from the mind; there is no other realm. [Thus,] sentient beings and environment are neither different nor identical. They are not identical, for they are distinct in meaning; they are not different, for they are the same purity. Vessel refers to enjoyment. Because the Pure Land is what is enjoyed by those pure sentient beings, it is termed "vessel." If an impure vessel is used for pure food, because the vessel is impure, the food becomes impure. If a pure vessel is used for impure food, because the food is impure, the vessel becomes impure. The two must both be clean in order to be called pure. In this way, one term "purity" invariably embraces two aspects.

Question: The purity of [the world as] sentient beings refers to Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Is it possible for human beings and devas there to be included in the purity?

Answer: They may be termed pure, but they are not actually pure. Consider, for example, that sages who have renounced home life are called "Bhikshu" because they have slain the villainous blind passions, but those renouncing home life who are yet foolish beings are also called "Bhikshu." It is like this. Further, a prince who is to be anointed possesses at birth the thirty-two marks of excellence [of a cakravartin king] and the seven treasures belong to him. Although he cannot yet perform the kingly offices, still he is called "cakravartin king," for he is certain to become king. So it is with all those human beings and devas [of the Pure Land]. They join the
truly settled of the Mahayana and ultimately realize dharma-body of purity. Because they will realize it, they may be called "pure."

Concerning "grasping and guiding by skillful means," it is said:

Such bodhisattvas, by fulfilling the practice, in observing both the extensive and brief, of samatha and vipasyana, attain the mind that is pliant and gentle.

The mind that is pliant and gentle: by performing harmoniously the practices of calming the mind and discerning the real, by which they observe the extensive and the brief, they realize the mind of non-duality. It is like water holding a reflection; purity and stillness help each other in bringing it about.

[The Treatise] states:

They know all things - the extensive and the brief - as they truly are.

They know...as they truly are: they know things in their true reality. Of the twenty-nine phrases of the extensive and the one phrase of the brief there is none that is not true reality.

[The Treatise] states:

In this way, they have fulfilled the directing of virtue through skillful means.

In this way: in such a way that the extensive, discussed first, and the brief, discussed after, are all true reality. Because they know true reality, they know the characteristics of the false state of sentient beings of the three realms. Because they know the false state of sentient beings, they awaken true and real compassion. Because they know the true and real dharma-body, they give rise to true and real taking of refuge in it. Skillful means based on compassion and taking refuge is discussed below.
What is the bodhisattvas' directing of virtue through skillful means? It is shown as five kinds of practice, such as worship. With all the virtues and roots of good that they accumulate thus, they do not seek the sustained bliss for their own sake, but think only of freeing all sentient beings from pain; hence, they aspire to grasp all sentient beings and to bring them all together to birth in the Buddha-land of happiness. This is termed the fulfillment of the bodhisattvas' directing of virtue through skillful means.

In reflecting on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life taught at Rajagriha, it is clear that although among the three levels of practicers some are superior in practice and some inferior, not one has failed to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. This mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment is the mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood. The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind to save all sentient beings. The mind to save all sentient beings is the mind to grasp sentient beings and brings them to birth in the land where the Buddha is. Thus, the person who aspires to be born in the Pure Land of happiness must unfailingly awaken the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. Suppose there is a person who, without awakening the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment, simply hears that bliss is enjoyed in that land without interruption and desires to be born there for the sake of the bliss; such a person will not be able to attain birth. Thus it is said, They do not seek the sustained bliss for their own sake, but think only of freeing all sentient beings from pain. Sustained bliss means that the Pure Land of happiness is sustained by the power of Amida Tathágata’s Primal Vow, and that the enjoyment of bliss is without interruption.

In general, the term directing virtue may be interpreted as meaning that the bodhisattva gives all the virtues he has gathered to sentient beings and brings them to enter the Buddha-way together.

Skillful means: the bodhisattva vows, "With the fire of wisdom, I shall consume the grasses and shrubs of all sentient beings' blind passions. If there is even one sentient being who does not attain Buddhahood, I shall not become Buddha." Thus, for a bodhisattva to become Buddha himself while there are sentient beings who have still not all attained Buddhahood
may be likened to a firing torch that, though meant to eliminate completely
the grasses and shrubs, is exhausted before all the grasses and shrubs are
consumed. In putting himself last, he is in the fore; hence, the term skillful
means is applied.

Means here refers to awakening aspiration, grasping all sentient beings,
and bringing them all together to birth in the Buddha-land of happiness.
That Buddha-land is the path to ultimate attainment of Buddhahood, and is
the unexcelled means.

Concerning "obstruction to the gate of enlightenment":

Because the bodhisattvas know fully that the directing of virtue has been
fulfilled, they become free of the three kinds of divergence from the gate of
enlightenment. What are these three? First, by following the gate of
wisdom, they refrain from seeking their own pleasure and become free of
egocentric attachments to self.

[Concerning wisdom (chie):] To know advance and guard against
regression is termed chi; to realize emptiness and no-self is termed e.
Through chi, one does not seek one's own pleasure; through e, one becomes
free of egocentric attachments to self.

Second, they follow the gate of compassion. They eliminate all sentient
beings' pain and become free of thoughts that do not bring peace [to other
beings].

[Concerning compassion (jihi):] To eliminate pain is termed ji; to give
happiness is termed hi. Through ji, one eliminates the pain of all sentient
beings; through hi, one becomes free of thoughts that do not bring them
peace.

Third, they follow the gate of skillful means. This is the heart and mind that
looks compassionately on all sentient beings. They become free of thoughts
of paying homage to and revering self.
Concerning skillful means (Hoben):] To be right and straightforward is termed ho; to cast oneself aside is termed ben. Since one is right and straightforward, one looks compassionately on all sentient beings; since one casts oneself aside, one becomes free of thoughts of paying homage to and revering oneself. Hence,

This is termed, becoming free of the three kinds of divergence from the gate to enlightenment.

Concerning "accord with the gate of enlightenment," it is stated [in the Treatise]:

The bodhisattvas become free of the three kinds of divergence from the gate of enlightenment and are able to fulfill the three kinds of accord with the gate to enlightenment. What are these three? First, the undefiled pure mind, [so termed] because [the bodhisattvas] do not seek various delights for themselves.

Enlightenment is the undefiled realm of purity. If one seeks pleasures for one's own sake, one diverges from enlightenment. For this reason, the undefiled pure mind is in accord with the gate to enlightenment.

Second, the peace-bestowing pure mind, [so termed] because [the bodhisattvas] eliminate all sentient beings' pain.

Enlightenment is the realm of purity that brings peace to all sentient beings. If one did not exert one's mind to extract and free all sentient beings from the pain in birth-and-death, one would diverge from enlightenment. Hence, to eliminate all sentient beings' pain is to accord with the gate to enlightenment.

Third, the blissful pure mind, [so termed] because they cause all sentient beings to realize great enlightenment - because [the bodhisattvas] grasp sentient beings and bring them to birth in that land.

Enlightenment is the realm of ultimate, eternal bliss. If one did not bring all sentient beings to realize ultimate, eternal bliss, one would diverge from
enlightenment. What does one follow to realize this ultimate, eternal bliss? One follows the gate of the Great Vehicle. The gate of the Great Vehicle is the Buddha-land of happiness. Hence it is stated, Because they grasp sentient beings and bring them to birth in that land.

This is termed fulfilling the dharma of the three gates that accord with enlightenment. Reflect on this.

Concerning the "inclusiveness and correspondence of terms and meanings," it is stated:

It has been taught above that the three gates - wisdom, compassion, and skillful means - include Prajna (wisdom), and Prajna includes upaya (skillful means). Reflect on this.

Prajna is a term for insight (e) that realizes such-ness; upaya is a term for intelligence (chi) that thoroughly knows the accommodated and temporary. If one realizes such-ness, one's mental activity becomes quiescent. If one knows the accommodated and temporary, one sees beings in full particularity; while the intelligence (chi) that sees beings fully adapts itself to them, it is no-knowing. Insight of quiescence is also no-knowing and yet sees in full particularity. Thus, Prajna (chie) and upaya, through their mutual dependence, are active, and through their mutual dependence are tranquil. Because of the working of Prajna, activity does not lose tranquility; because of the power of upaya, tranquility does not abolish activity. Hence, wisdom, compassion, and skillful means include Prajna, and Prajna includes upaya.

Reflect on this: it should be known that Prajna and upaya are the father and mother of bodhisattvas; if bodhisattvas do not depend on Prajna and upaya, the way of the bodhisattva cannot be fulfilled. Why? Because if they lacked Prajna when performing acts for the sake of sentient beings, they would fall into inverted-ness. If they lacked upaya when contemplating dharma-nature, they would [be satisfied with] attaining reality-limit. Hence, Reflect on this.
Above, becoming free of egocentric attachments to self, becoming free of thoughts that do not bring peace [to other beings], and becoming free of thoughts of paying homage to and revering self have been taught. These three signify becoming free of thoughts that are obstructions to enlightenment. Reflect on this.

Everything, in its own way, has the aspect of being an obstruction. The wind obstructs quiet; earth obstructs water; moisture obstructs fire; the five evil acts and the ten transgressions obstruct birth as a human being or deva; the four kinds of inverted ness obstruct the Sravakas attainment of the fruit. These three [obstructions] signify not becoming free of thoughts that obstruct enlightenment.

Reflect on this: know that if one seeks to attain non-obstructed-ness, one should become free of these three kinds of obstruction.

Above, the undefiled pure mind, peace-bestowing pure mind, and blissful pure mind have been taught. These three minds - taken in brief and unified - are fulfilled as the wondrous, joyous, excellent, true mind. Reflect on this.

There are three kinds of joy: 1) external joy; this is joy produced by the five senses; 2) internal joy; this is joy produced by the consciousness in the first, second, and third stages of meditation; 3) joy of dharma music; this is joy produced by wisdom. The joy produced by wisdom arises from love of the Buddha's virtue. The three minds - becoming free of egocentric attachments, becoming free of thoughts that do no bring peace to others, and becoming free of thoughts of self-homage - are pure and, developing and taken in brief, they form the wondrous, joyous, excellent, true mind.

The term wondrous means good. This joy is such because it arises from perceiving Buddha. Excellent means that it surpasses the joys within the three realms. True means not empty or false, not inverted.

Concerning "the fulfillment of aspiration for birth," the Treatise states:
Such bodhisattvas, with the mind of wisdom, the mind of skillful means, the unobstructed mind, and the excellent, true mind, attain birth in the Buddha-land of purity. Reflect on this.

Reflect on this: Know that these four kinds of pure virtue bring about attainment of birth in that Buddha-land of purity, and that they do not attain birth through other causes.

This is expressed as the bodhisattva-Mahasattvas' according with the five dharma-gates and freely fulfilling those acts as they desire. For the bodily acts, verbal acts, mental acts, acts of wisdom, and acts of the wisdom of skillful means that were explained before accord with the dharma-gates.

Freely...as they desire: the power of the virtue resulting from the five dharma-gates brings about birth in the Buddha-land of purity, and enables one freely to enter and emerge from it. Bodily acts refers to worship, verbal acts to praise, mental acts to aspiration, acts of wisdom to discernment, and acts of the wisdom of skillful means to directing virtue. It is stated that these five kinds of acts are harmoniously united, and being in accord with the dharma-gate of birth in the Pure Land, they bring about the fulfillment of free activity.

Concerning "perfect fulfillment of the practice of benefiting":

Again, there are five gates. [The bodhisattva] has fulfilled these five kinds of virtue in order. Reflect on this. What are these five gates? First, the gate of approach. Second, the gate of the great assembly. Third, the gate of the grounds. Fourth, the gate of residence. Fifth, the gate of the state of sporting in the gardens and forests.

These five show the order in entering and emerging. In the aspect of entrance, the first attainment of the Pure Land is the aspect of approach. This means that to join the truly settled of the Mahayana is to approach highest, perfect enlightenment. After one has entered the Pure Land, one immediately joins the Tathágata’s great assembly. After one has joined the assembly, one reaches the grounds where one attains the settled mind of practice. After one has entered the grounds, one reaches the residence of
abiding in practice. After practice has been fulfilled, one attains the state of teaching and guiding. The state of teaching and guiding is the state of the bodhisattva's own play and delight. Hence, the gate of emergence is called the gate of the state of sporting in the gardens and forests.

Concerning these five gates, the first four gates are the fulfillment of the virtue of entrance and the fifth gate is the fulfillment of the virtue of emergence.

What are the virtues of entrance and emergence? They are explained:

In the first gate of [the virtue of] entrance, one worships Amida Buddha with the desire to be born in the Pure Land; thereby, one is enabled to attain birth in the realm of happiness. This is termed the first gate.

To worship the Buddha and aspire for birth in the Buddha's land is the first aspect of virtue.

In the second gate of [the virtue of] entrance, one praises Amida Buddha, saying the Tathágata’s Name in accord with the Name's significance and practicing in correspondence with the Tathágata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom; thereby, one is able to join the great assembly. This is termed the second gate of entrance.

To offer praise in accord with the significance of the Tathágata’s Name is the second aspect of virtue.

In the third gate of [the virtue of] entrance, one thinks solely [on Amida] with singleness of heart and aspires to be born in the Pure Land, and being born there, one performs the practice of samatha, the samádhhis of tranquility; thereby, one is able to enter the lotus-held world. This is termed the third gate of entrance.

Because one practices tranquility, the calming of the mind, one aspires single-heartedly to be born in the Pure Land; this is the third aspect of virtue.
Concerning the fourth gate of [the virtue of] entrance: thinking solely on the wondrous adornments and contemplating them, one practices vipasyana; thereby, one is able to reach that place and enjoy the delights of the various tastes of dharma. This is termed the fourth gate of entrance.

Delights of the various tastes of dharma: in vipasyana there is the taste of contemplation on the Buddha-land's purity, the taste of the Mahayana that takes in and receives all sentient beings, the taste of ultimate sustenance [of beings] without any futility, and the taste of performing practice by accommodating oneself to beings and vowing to establish a Buddha-land. There are countless such tastes of adornments of the Buddha-way; hence, various. This is the fourth aspect of virtue.

Concerning the fifth gate of [the virtue of] emergence: with great compassion, one observes all sentient beings in pain and affliction, and assuming various transformed bodies to guide them, enters the gardens of birth-and-death and the forests of blind passions. Sporting freely there with transcendent powers, one attains the state of teaching and guiding. This is brought about by the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow; it is called the fifth gate of emergence.

Assuming various transformed bodies to guide [sentient beings]: this is like Avalokiteshvara's manifestation in various forms presented in the Lotus Sutra. Sporting freely has two meanings. First, it means being free and unrestricted. The bodhisattva's saving of sentient beings is like a lion's taking of a deer; the action is free of the slightest hesitation and is performed as if in play. Second, it means that in saving, one perceives no object of salvation. The bodhisattva, in observing sentient beings, sees that in the final analysis they are nonexistent. Although he saves countless sentient beings, in reality there is not a single sentient being who realizes nirvana. Manifesting the act of saving sentient beings is thus like play.

Power of the Primal Vow: the great bodhisattva, having realized dharma-body, always dwells in samádhi and thus manifests various bodies, various transcendent powers, and various ways of teaching the dharma. All of this arises from the power of the Primal Vow. It may be likened to an asura's
harp, which, though no one strokes it, spontaneously gives forth music. This is the fifth aspect of virtue, namely, the state of teaching and guiding.

[Conclusion]

18 Thus we know truly from the words of the Great Sage that realization of supreme nirvana is brought about by the directing of virtue through the Vow's power. Benefiting in the aspect of return expresses the true intent of benefiting others. Accordingly, the author of the Treatise, Vasubandhu, proclaims the vast and unhindered mind that is single, thereby universally awakening the multitudes of this passion-defiled world of endurance. Master T'an-luan clarifies Amida's compassionate directing of virtue for our going to the Pure Land and our return to this world; and he widely teaches, with care and concern, the profound significance of benefited by the other and of benefiting others. Reverently embrace these words; receive them in deepest homage.

Here ends Chapter IV:

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Realization of the Pure Land Way

V

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Buddha and Land
1 Reverently contemplating the true Buddha and the true land, I find that the Buddha is the Tathāgata of inconceivable light and that the land also is the land of immeasurable light. Because they have arisen through the fulfillment of Vows of great compassion, they are called true fulfilled Buddha and land. There are relevant Vows that were made: the Vows of light and of life.

[The Sutra Passages]

2 The Larger Sutra states:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, my light not be infinite and not illumine even a hundred thousand Nayutas of kotis of Buddha-lands, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

3 Further, it is stated in a Vow:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, my life not be infinite and not span even a hundred thousand Nayutas of kotis of kalpas, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

4 The passage declaring the fulfillment of these Vows states:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "the Majestic radiance of the Buddha of immeasurable life is exalted and supreme; the radiance of other Buddhas cannot compare with it... For this reason, the Buddha of immeasurable life is called Buddha of immeasurable light, Buddha of boundless light, Buddha of unhindered light, Buddha of incomparable light, Buddha of light that is lord of blazing light, Buddha of the light of purity, Buddha of
the light of joy, Buddha of the light of wisdom, Buddha of uninterrupted light, Buddha of inconceivable light, Buddha of inexpressible light, and Buddha of light surpassing sun and moon.

"Sentient beings who encounter this light have the three defilements swept away, and they become soft and gentle in body and mind. They dance with joy, and the good mind arises in them. When those suffering the pain and travail in the three evil courses see this light, they all find respite and are freed of afflictions. After their lives have ended, they all gain emancipation. The light of the Buddha of immeasurable life is resplendent and brilliantly illuminates the lands of the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters; nowhere is it not heard of. It is not I alone who praise this light now; all Buddhas, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas together praise it just as I do. When sentient beings hear of this light's majestic virtues and praise it day and night with wholeness of heart and without interruption, they will attain birth in that land in accord with their hearts' aspirations, and all the bodhisattvas and Sravakas will extol and praise their virtues. Upon attaining the enlightenment of Buddhahood later, their light will be praised by all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the ten quarters just as I now praise that Buddha's light."

The Buddha said, "Even if I were to expound the magnificence, splendor, and wondrousness, of the light of the Buddha of immeasurable life day and night for a kalpa, still I could not exhaust it."

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "The life of the Buddha of immeasurable life is everlasting and beyond reckoning. How could you know it? Imagine that the countless sentient beings throughout the worlds of the ten quarters were made to acquire human existence, and all were caused to attain the state of Sravakas or Pratyekabuddhas. Even if all of them, gathering in a single place and, with focused thoughts and concentrated minds, employing the utmost power of their wisdom, pondered together for myriads of kalpas in an attempt to determine the length of that life, they still would not be able to come to its end and know its limit.

5 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:
Ánanda, for this reason the Buddha of immeasurable life has other names: immeasurable light, boundless light, light free of attachment, unhindered light, lord of lights, serene and glorious light, light of gladness, joyous light, light worthy of admiration, inconceivable light, incomparable light, inexpressible light, light that darkens the sun, light that darkens the moon, light that deprives sun and moon of luminance. That light, pure and immense, brings joy and happiness to the bodies and minds of sentient beings everywhere. Further, it enables the beings of all other Buddha-lands - devas, nagas, yakshas, asuras - without exception, to attain delight and exultation.

6 The Sutra of the Immeasurable Pure Enlightenment of Equality states:

Swiftly one transcends [birth-and-death]

And is able to attain the world of happiness;

Reaching the land of immeasurable light,

One makes offerings to countless Buddhas.

7 The Sutra of Salvation through the Perfect Enlightenment of Amida, Supreme among Buddhas states:

The Buddha said, "Amida Buddha's radiance is exalted and supreme; it has no peer. The radiance of other Buddhas cannot compare with it. The light from the crown of the head of some among the countless Buddhas of the eight quarters, the zenith and the nadir, extends seventy feet; of others, a mile... The light from the crown of some Buddhas' heads shines over two million Buddha-lands."

The Buddha said, "Such is the area shone upon by the lights from the crowns of the heads of the countless Buddhas throughout the eight directions, the zenith and the nadir. The area shone upon by the light from the crown of Amida Buddha's head extends over ten million Buddha-lands. Why are there such differences in the distance covered by the Buddhas' lights? Viewed in relation to the vows they made when they were
bodhisattvas seeking the way, the scales of their merits naturally differ from each other. Afterwards, when they attained Buddhahood, they each actualized what they had vowed. Thus, their lights are all the more unequal. Only the Buddhas' majesty is, to be sure, the same. They act of their free will as they desire and do not design or calculate beforehand. The area illuminated by Amida Buddha's light is the greatest. The area illuminated by the lights of the other Buddhas cannot compare with it."

The Buddha praised the excellence of Amida Buddha's light, "The light of Amida Buddha is surpassingly good; it is luminous and wondrous among all that is good. It is pleasing beyond compare, boundlessly excellent. Amida Buddha's light is pure, without the least defilement or diminution. Amida Buddha's light is superbly beautiful, a hundred million times more brilliant than the sun and moon. It is the brightest among the lights of all the Buddhas. It is the most excellent of lights, the most surpassing of lights, the most pleasing of lights. It is king among the Buddhas. It is the most exalted of lights, by far the most radiant of lights. It illuminates the innumerable dim and dark places in innumerable worlds, so that they are always splendidly bright. Among all human beings and even insects that leap or worms that crawl, there is none that does not see Amida Buddha's light. Among those that see it, there is none that does not come to possess a heart of compassion and rejoice. Among all beings in the world who are possessed of licentious desires or wrath or folly, there is none who, on seeing Amida Buddha's light, does not perform good acts. Among those in the realms of hell, beasts, hungry ghosts, or asuras, where they suffer pain and affliction, there is none who, upon seeing Amida Buddha's light, does not gain respite and, although not acquiring remedy, obtain emancipation from sorrow and pain after death. Amida Buddha makes that light and Name heard throughout the boundless, unlimited, countless lands of the Buddhas in the eight quarters, the zenith and the nadir. There is none among devas and human beings who does not hear and know them. Of those who hear and know them, none fails to attain emancipation."

The Buddha said, "I am not alone in praising Amida Buddha's light. The countless Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Arhats throughout the eight quarters, the zenith and the nadir all praise it thus."
The Buddha said, "If there are people - good sons and good daughters - who hear the Name of Amida Buddha, praise Amida's light, and day and night constantly extol the light's excellence with sincere mind and without interruption, they will attain birth in the Buddha's land in accord with their aspiration."

8 The Unfailing Net of Salvation Sutra states:

The place where you will be born is Amida Buddha's pure fulfilled land. Being born from a lotus transformed, you will constantly see the Buddhas and will realize the various kinds of dharma-insight. Your life will be immeasurable, spanning a hundred thousand kalpas. You will immediately attain highest perfect enlightenment and will never retrogress. I will always protect you.

9 The Nirvana Sutra states:

"Further, emancipation is called nothingness. Nothingness is none other than emancipation; emancipation none other than Tathágata; Tathágata none other than nothingness. It is the activity of non-acting... True emancipation is non-arising and non-perishing; hence, emancipation is Tathágata. Tathágata is also thus - non-arising, non-perishing, un-aging, undying, indestructible and incorruptible; it is not a created existence. Because it has this significance, it is said Tathágata enters great nirvana.

"Further, emancipation is called the supreme that is unexcelled... The supreme that is unexcelled is none other than true emancipation; true emancipation is none other than Tathágata... If one has attained highest perfect enlightenment, one is free of desire and free of doubt. To be free of desire and free of doubt is true emancipation, true emancipation is Tathágata... Tathágata is nirvana, nirvana is the inexhaustible, the inexhaustible is Buddha-nature, Buddha-nature is unchanging, the unchanging is highest perfect enlightenment."
Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, if nirvana, Buddha-nature, the unchanging, and Tathāgata are all synonyms, why do you teach the three refuges?"

The Buddha said to Kasyapa, "Good sons, all sentient beings fear birth-and-death; hence they seek the three refuges. Because of the three refuges, they come to know Buddha-nature, the unchanging, and nirvana. Good sons, sometimes the name for things is the same but its meanings different, sometimes both names and meanings differ. Concerning the name being the same and its meanings different, Buddha, eternal dharma, and eternal Sangha are the eternal. This is called 'the name being the same and its meanings different.' Concerning the names and meanings both differing, Buddha is called awakening, dharma is called non-awakening, Sangha is called the harmonious, nirvana is called emancipation, boundless space is called non-good or unhindered. This is a case of 'names and meanings both differing.' Good sons, it is like this with the three refuges."

10 Further, it states:

Light is called the un-decaying, the un-decaying is called Tathāgata. Further, light is called wisdom.

11 Further, it states:

Good sons, all created things are impermanent. Boundless space is the uncreated; hence it is eternal. Buddha-nature is the uncreated; hence it is eternal. Boundless space is Buddha-nature, Buddha-nature is Tathāgata, Tathāgata is the uncreated, the uncreated is the eternal, the eternal is dharma, dharma is Sangha, Sangha is the uncreated, the uncreated is the eternal...

Good sons, it is like taking milk from a cow, rendering cream from the milk, rendering curdled milk from the cream, rendering butter from the curdled milk, and rendering manda from the butter. Manda is the finest. The person who partakes of it is freed of all illnesses. It is as though all medicines were contained in it. Good sons, it is such with the Buddha. From the Buddha the twelve divisions of scriptures arise, from the twelve
divisions of scriptures the sutras arise, from the sutras the Mahayana sutras arise, from the Mahayana sutras the Prajñāpāramitā sutras arise, from the Prajñāpāramitā sutras the Great Nirvana Sutra arises, just as manda is obtained. Manda is a metaphor for Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathāgata. Good sons, for this reason, it is taught that the virtues possessed by the Tathāgata are immeasurable, boundless, and incalculable.

12 Further, it states:

Good sons, there are two kinds of enlightenment: eternal and impermanent. There are also two kinds of bodhi: eternal and impermanent. Nirvana is also like this. The enlightenment of non-Buddhist ways is called impermanent, Buddhist enlightenment is called eternal. The bodhi possessed by Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas is called impermanent, the bodhi possessed by bodhisattvas and Buddhas is called eternal. The emancipation of non-Buddhist ways is called impermanent, the emancipation of Buddhist ways is called eternal.

Good sons, enlightenment, bodhi, and nirvana are all eternal. All sentient beings are constantly oppressed by immeasurable blind passions and lack the wisdom-eye; hence they cannot see. And desiring to see the practice of precepts, meditation, and wisdom, all sentient beings, through practice, see enlightenment, bodhi, and nirvana. This is called the bodhisattva's attainment of enlightenment, bodhi, and nirvana. The nature and characteristics of enlightenment are in actuality non-arising and non-perishing. Because of this, it cannot be grasped... Although enlightenment is formless and featureless, it can be seen, it can be reckoned and known; in reality it possesses functioning... Such things as the sentient beings' minds are formless. They are neither long nor short, neither rough nor fine, neither bound nor free; they are not visible. Nevertheless, they exist as things.

13 Further, it states:

Good sons, because there is great pleasure it is called great nirvana. Nirvana is without pleasure, and because it possesses the four aspects of pleasure, it is called great nirvana. What are these four?
The first is eradication of all pleasures. If pleasures are not eradicated, it is called pain. If there is pain, it cannot be called great pleasure. Because one eradicates pleasure, there is no pain. Being without pain and without pleasure is great pleasure. The nature of nirvana is absence of pain and absence of pleasure. Hence, it is called great pleasure. With this meaning it is called great nirvana.

Further, good sons, there are two kinds of pleasure. The first is that of foolish beings, the second is that of Buddhas. The pleasures of foolish beings are subject to impermanence and destruction. For this reason they are without pleasure. The Buddhas have eternal pleasure. Because there is no change or alteration, it is called great pleasure.

Further, good sons, there are three kinds of sensation: first, painful sensation; second, pleasant sensation; third, sensation that is neither painful nor pleasant. It is said that what is neither painful nor pleasant is in fact painful. Although nirvana is neither painful nor pleasant, it is called great pleasure. Because it is great pleasure, it is called great nirvana.

Second, it is called great pleasure because it is great quiescence. The nature of nirvana is great quiescence. Why? Because it is free of all that is disruptive and clamorous. Because it is great quiescence, it is called great nirvana.

Third, it is called great pleasure because it is all-knowing wisdom. That which is not all-knowing wisdom is not called great pleasure. The Buddha-Tathāgatas, because they possess all-knowing wisdom, are called [those of] great pleasure. Because it is great pleasure, it is called great nirvana.

Fourth, it is called great pleasure because the body is un-decaying. If the body were subject to decay, it would not be called pleasure. The body of Tathāgata is diamond-like and un-decaying. It is not a body of blind passions, not a body of impermanence. Hence it is called great pleasure. Because it is great pleasure, it is called great nirvana.

14 Further, it states:
Because it is inexpressible and inconceivable, it may be termed great, complete nirvana. Because it is pure and genuine, it is called great nirvana. What is the pure and genuine? There are four aspects of purity. What are these four?

First, the twenty-five forms of existence are called impure; since they are severed forever, it can be called pure. Purity is itself none other than nirvana. Such nirvana, being an existence, can be called nirvana. In reality it is not an existence. All Buddha-Tathágatas, in accordance with the worldly, teach that nirvana is an existence. For example, there are cases when one calls someone who is not one's father "Father," one who is not one's mother "Mother," and those who are not actually one's parents "Parents." Thus it is with nirvana. In accordance with the worldly, it is taught that the Buddhas are existent and are great nirvana.

Second, the activity is pure. The acts of all sentient beings are impure; hence, they possess nothing of nirvana. Because the acts of all Buddha-Tathágatas are pure, they are termed great purity. Because they are great purity, they are termed great nirvana.

Third, the body is pure. When the body is impermanent, it is called impure. The body of the Tathágata is eternal; hence, it is called great purity. Because it is great purity, it is called great nirvana.

Fourth, the mind is pure. When the mind is defiled, it is called impure. The Buddha-mind is undefiled; hence, it is called great purity. Because it is great purity, it is called great nirvana. Good sons, [the one who grasps] this is called "good son" or "good daughter."

Further, it states:

The Buddha-Tathágatas do not give rise to blind passions; hence, they are termed nirvana. The wisdom they possess is unhindered in penetrating things; hence, they are termed Tathágatas. Tathágatas are not foolish beings, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas; hence, they are termed Buddha-nature. Tathágatas are, in body and mind and in wisdom, unhindered in pervading and fulfilling the immeasurable, boundless,
innumerable lands; hence, they are termed boundless space. The Tathágatas are eternal and never changing; hence they are termed true reality. Because of this, the Tathágatas do not actually enter ultimate nirvana; they are termed "bodhisattva."

16 Further, it states:

Bodhisattva Kasyapa said, "World-honored one, Buddha-nature is eternal, like boundless space. Why does the Tathágata speak of it as in the future? When the Tathágata states that those lacking the seed of Buddhahood do not possess any good, does this mean that they cannot give rise to thoughts of love toward fellow disciples, teachers they have in common, parents, relatives, or wives and children? If they give rise to such thoughts, is this not good?"

The Buddha replied, "Excellent, excellent! Good son, well have you asked this question! Buddha-nature is like boundless space; it is not in the past, or future, or present. All sentient beings have bodily existences of three aspects - the past, future, and present. In the future, they will attain the body adorned with purity and be able to see Buddha-nature. For this reason, I have spoken of Buddha-nature as belonging to the future. Good sons, for the sake of sentient beings, I sometimes explain a causal matter in terms of the result; at other times, I explain it in terms of the cause. Therefore, in this sutra, life is explained as nourishment, and form, which is to be seen, is termed the tangible. Because the future body is pure, I teach it to be Buddha-nature."

"World-honored one, if such is what the Buddha teaches, why do you teach that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature?"

"Good sons, although the Buddha-nature of sentient beings is nonexistent in the present, it should not be called nonexistent. It is like boundless space. Although 'nature' is nonexistent, one should not say that it is nonexistent in the present. Further, although all sentient beings are impermanent, still their Buddha-nature is eternal and unchanging. For this reason, I teach in this sutra that sentient beings' Buddha-nature is neither within nor without, like boundless space. Neither within nor without, it exists like boundless
space. Although that which is within or without is boundless space, we do not consider it one or permanent, nor do we consider it existent everywhere. Although boundless space is neither within nor without, nevertheless all sentient beings possess it. Sentient beings' Buddha-nature is like this.

"It is like those lacking the seed of Buddhahood of whom you speak. Their bodily, verbal, and mental acts, and acts of grasping, seeking, giving, and understanding, though they perform them, are all wrong acts. Why? Because they do not seek the principle of causation. Good sons, the green herb is bitter in its seed, roots, stalk, branches, leaves, flower, and fruit. The acts of those lacking the seed of Buddhahood are like this."

17 Further, it states:

[The Buddha said,] "Good sons, the Tathágata possesses the power to know the capacities of beings. Hence, he is able to discern and determine sentient beings' capacities - superior, average, or inferior - and he knows that a person changes from inferior into average. He knows that a person changes from average into superior. He knows that a person changes from superior into average. He knows that a person changes from average into inferior. Realize, for this reason, that the capacities of sentient beings are not unfixed. Because they are not fixed, their good roots may be sundered, and having been sundered, may arise again. If sentient beings' capacities were fixed, what had once been sundered, having been completely sundered, would not arise again. Further, it should not be taught that those lacking the seed of Buddhahood fall into hell, there to pass a lifetime of one kalpa. Good sons, for this reason the Tathágata teaches that all things lack fixed nature."

Kasyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, the Tathágata possesses the power to know beings' capacities; hence, you surely knew that Sunaksatra would certainly sever his good roots. Why did you permit his entrance into homeless life?"

The Buddha said, "Good sons, long ago, when I abandoned home life, my brother Nanda, my cousins Ánanda and Devadatta, and my son Rahula all
followed me, abandoned home life, and endeavored in the way. If I had not approved of Sunaksatra's abandonment of home life, he would have succeeded to the throne. He would have exercised his powers as he pleased and might have destroyed the Buddha-dharma. For this reason, I permitted him to abandon home life and endeavor in the way. Good sons, if the Bhikshu Sunaksatra had not entered homeless life, he would have severed his good roots; he would have been bereft of benefit for countless ages. Though now, after having abandoned home life, he has sundered his good roots, he well received and observed the precepts, paid homage to and revered the elders, the seniors, and the virtuous, and practiced the first through the fourth stages of meditation. These are called 'good causes.' Such good causes produce good. When good has been produced, the way will be practiced. When the way has been practiced, highest perfect enlightenment will be realized. Therefore, I approved of Sunaksatra's abandonment of home life. Good sons, if I did not permit Bhikshu Sunaksatra to abandon home life and receive the precepts, I could not be called a Tathágata possessed of the ten powers... Good sons, the Tathágata knows well the superior, average, or inferior capacities of sentient beings. For this reason, the Buddha is called one who possesses power to know beings' capacities.

Kasyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, the Tathágata possesses this power to know the capacities of beings. For this reason, he knows superior, average, or inferior capacities of all sentient beings and their differences in keenness or dullness, and he accords with the person, accords with the intent, and accords with the time; hence, the Tathágata is called one who possesses the power to know the capacities of beings... At times it may be taught that those who violate the four major prohibitions, those who commit the five grave offenses, and those who lack the seed of Buddhahood all have Buddha-nature..."

[The Buddha said,] "The Tathágata, World-honored one, in order to accord with the country, to accord with the times, to accord with other languages, to accord with the people, and to accord with the various capacities, teaches one matter in two ways. He teaches innumerable names for that which has one name. He teaches innumerable names for that which has one
meaning. He teaches innumerable names for that which has innumerable meanings.

"How is it that innumerable names are taught for that which has one name? It is like the case of nirvana. It is called 'nirvana.' It is called 'no-birth.' It is called 'no-arising.' It is called 'no-act.' It is called 'uncreated.' It is called 'taking refuge.' It is called 'cave shelter.' It is called 'emancipation.' It is called 'light.' It is called 'lamp light.' It is called 'other shore.' It is called 'fearlessness.' It is called 'no-retrogression.' It is called 'place of peace.' It is called 'quiescence.' It is called 'formlessness.' It is called 'non-duality.' It is called 'one practice.' It is called 'coolness.' It is called 'not dark.' It is called 'unhindered.' It is called 'no-dispute.' It is called 'undefiled.' It is called 'vastness.' It is called 'sweet nectar.' It is called 'auspiciousness.' This is termed 'giving innumerable names for that which has one name.'

"How is it that innumerable names are taught for that which has one meaning? It is like the case of Sakra...

"How is it that innumerable names are taught for that which has innumerable meanings? It is like the case of Buddha-Tathāgata. He is called 'Tathāgata,' which differs in meaning and differs in name. He is called 'arhat,' which differs in meaning and differs in name. He is called 'perfectly awakened one,' which differs in meaning and differs in name. He is called 'helmsman.' He is called 'guiding master.' He is called 'perfectly enlightened.' He is called 'possessed of perfect knowledge and practice.' He is called 'great lion king.' He is called 'Shramana.' He is called 'Brahman.' He is called 'quiescent one.' He is called 'almsgiver.' He is called 'gone to the other shore.' He is called 'great physician king.' He is called 'great elephant king.' He is called 'great dragon king.' He is called 'eye-giver.' He is called 'master of great powers.' He is called 'great fearlessness.' He is called 'mass of gems.' He is called 'caravan leader.' He is called 'attainment of emancipation.' He is called 'great stalwart one.' He is called 'teacher of devas and human beings.' He is called 'great lotus.' He is called 'solitary and unequaled.' He is called 'great field of merits.' He is called 'ocean of great wisdom.' He is called 'formlessness.' He is called 'possessed of eightfold wisdom.' All these differ in meaning and differ in name. Good
"Further, innumerable names are taught for that which has one meaning, as in the case of the aggregates. They are called 'aggregates.' They are called 'inverted-ness.' They are called 'truth.' They are called 'four bases of mindfulness.' They are called 'four kinds of nourishment.' They are called 'four abodes of consciousness.' They are called 'existence.' They are called 'path.' They are called 'time.' They are called 'sentient being.' They are called 'world.' They are called 'highest truth.' They are called 'three kinds of practice'; these involve body, precepts, and mind. They are called 'causality.' They are called 'blind passions.' They are called 'emancipation.' They are called 'twelve-fold causation.' They are called 'Sravaka,' 'Pratyekabuddha,' and 'Buddha.' They are called 'hell,' 'hungry ghost,' 'beast,' 'human being,' and 'deva,' and further 'past,' 'present,' and 'future.' This is termed 'teaching innumerable names for that which has one meaning.'

"Good sons, the Tathágata, World-honored one, for the sake of sentient beings, within what is extensive teaches the brief, within what is brief teaches the extensive. He teaches the highest truth as the worldly truth, teaches the dharma of worldly truth as the highest truth."

18 Further, it states:

Further Kasyapa said, "World-honored one, the highest truth is also called enlightenment. It is called bodhi. It is called nirvana..."

19 Further, it states:

Good sons, I have stated in this sutra, in teaching the body of Tathágata, that there are two kinds. The first is the physical body, and the second is the dharma-body.

The physical body is the transformed body of skillful means. This body is subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death, and the distinctions of long and short, black and white, this and that, learning and non-learning. My
disciples, having heard this teaching, will say, if they have not grasped my intent, "The Tathágata has definitely taught that the Buddha-body is a created dharma."

The dharma-body is eternity, bliss, self, and purity. It is forever free of all birth, aging, sickness, and death, of not-white and not-black, not-long and not-short, not-this and not-that, not learning and not non-learning; hence, whether the Buddha appears in the world or does not appear in the world, he is constantly unmoving and without change. Good sons, my disciples, having heard this teaching, will say, if they have not grasped my intent, "The Tathágata has definitely taught that the Buddha-body is an uncreated dharma."

20 Further, it states:

It is like the case of the twelve divisions of scriptures that I have taught. Some are teachings in accord with my own intent; some are teachings in accord with the listeners' intent; some are teachings in accord with both my own intent and the intent of the listeners... Good sons, I have taught that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature; this is called a teaching in accord with the listeners intent. Why do I say "see a little"? Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage have attained such samádhis as the samádhi of heroic advance and also mastery of the three thousand dharma-gates. Hence, they themselves clearly know that they will indeed attain highest, perfect enlightenment, but they do not see that all sentient beings will definitely attain highest, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, I teach that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature.

Good sons, I always proclaim that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature. This is termed the teaching in accord with my own intent. All sentient beings are non-ceasing and non-perishing, and thus attain highest perfect enlightenment. This is termed the teaching in accord with my own intent. Although all sentient beings have Buddha-nature, because it is covered over by blind passions, they cannot see it. Such is what I teach, and such is what you teach. This is termed the teaching in accord with my own intent and with the intent of the listeners. Good sons, in order to present one teaching, the Tathágata sometimes explains innumerable teachings.
Further, it states:

"To be awakened to all things is called Buddha-nature. Bodhisattvas of the
ten stage cannot be called all-awakened ones; hence, although they see,
they do not see clearly. Good sons, there are two kinds of seeing: seeing
with the eyes and seeing through hearing. All Buddhas, world-honored
ones, see Buddha-nature with their eyes as though looking at a mango in
the palms of their hands. The bodhisattvas of the tenth stage, although they
see Buddha-nature by hearing, do not see it especially clearly. The
bodhisattvas of the tenth stage know only that they themselves will
definitely attain highest perfect enlightenment and are incapable of
knowing that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature.

"Good sons, there is also seeing with the eyes. This belongs to all Buddha-
Tathāgatas. Bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see Buddha-nature with the
eyes, but also see it through hearing. All sentient beings up to bodhisattvas
of the ninth stage see Buddha-nature through hearing. When bodhisattvas
do not awaken faith in their hearts, even though they hear that all sentient
beings have Buddha-nature, they cannot be said to see through hearing..."

The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva Lion-Roar said, "World-honored one, none of
the people in the world are capable of knowing the Tathāgata’s mind. How
is it possible for them to perceive and know it?"

"Good sons, all sentient beings are indeed incapable of knowing the
Tathāgata’s mind. If they desire to be capable of perceiving and knowing it,
there are two conditions by which it is possible: seeing with the eyes and
seeing through hearing. If one sees the Tathāgata’s bodily activity, then one
knows indeed that it is the Tathāgata. This is termed seeing with the eyes. If
one perceives the Tathāgata’s verbal activity, then one knows indeed that it
is the Tathāgata. This is termed seeing through hearing. If one sees the
countenance and realizes that there is none its equal among all sentient
beings, then one knows indeed that it is the Tathāgata. This is termed
seeing with the eyes. If one hears the subtlety and excellence of the voice
and realizes that there is none like it among the voices of sentient beings,
then one knows indeed that it is the Tathāgata. This is termed seeing
through hearing. If one sees the miraculous acts performed by the
Tathāgata, the question may arise whether they are for the sake of sentient beings or for the sake of gain. If one realizes that they are for the sake of sentient beings and not gain, then one knows indeed that it is the Tathāgata. This is termed seeing with the eyes. If one perceives the Tathāgata when he is looking upon sentient beings with the wisdom that knows others' minds, the question may arise whether he teaches for the sake of gain or for the sake of sentient beings. If one realizes that it is for the sake of sentient beings and not for the sake of gain, then one knows indeed that it is the Tathāgata. This is termed seeing by hearing."

[Passages from the Masters: Vasubandhu]

22 The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

O World-honored one, with the mind that is single
I take refuge in the Tathāgata of unhindered light
Filling the ten quarters
And aspire to be born in the land of happiness.
Contemplating the features of that world,
I see that it transcends the three realms.
It is infinite, like space,
Vast and boundless.

[T'an-luan]

23 The Commentary on the Treatise states:
Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of purity," the gatha states:

Contemplating the features of that world,

I see that it transcends the three realms.

Why is this inconceivable? When foolish beings possessed of blind passions attain birth in the Pure Land, they are not bound by the karmic fetters of the three realms. That is, without severing blind passions, they realize nirvana itself. How can this be conceived?

Further, it states:

The great compassion of true enlightenment (tao)

Is born from supra mundane roots of good.

What is described in these two lines is termed "fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of its nature..."

Nature means essence. It signifies that the Pure Land accords with dharma-nature and does not conflict with dharma-essence. This matter has the same significance as the arising of Jewel-King Tathāgata’s nature in the Garland Sutra.

It further signifies the nature fulfilled through repeated practice. It indicates what was fulfilled by Dharmakara Bodhisattva's accumulating all the paramitas and repeatedly practicing them.

Further, nature refers to the seed-lineage of sages. At the beginning, Dharmakara Bodhisattva, in the presence of Lokesvararaja Buddha, realized insight into non-origination. The stage attained at that time is termed "the seed-lineage of sages." While abiding in this "nature," he established the Forty-eight great Vows and gave rise to this land through performing practices. It is called the Pure Land of happiness. This is what is
realized by the cause. Concerning the fruition, the cause is taught; hence the term nature.

Further, the term nature has the meaning of necessity, the meaning of unalterability. It is like the ocean's nature having one taste; when various streams enter, they necessarily become the one taste, and the ocean's taste does not alter accordingly.

Again, it is like the nature of the human body being impure, so that things having excellent color and fragrance and pleasing taste, on entering it, all become impure. Those born in the Pure Land of happiness have no impure form, no impure mind, and in the end they all acquire the uncreated dharma-body of purity and equality, for the pure nature of the land of happiness has been fulfilled.

"The great compassion of true enlightenment is born from supra mundane roots of good" refers to the great enlightenment of equality. The enlightenment of equality is termed "true enlightenment" because equality is the fundamental aspect of all things. Because of the equality of all things, awakening the mind [aspiring for enlightenment] is the same. Because awakening the mind is the same, the enlightenment (tao) is the same. Because the enlightenment is the same, great compassion is the same. Because great compassion is the true cause of attaining the Buddha's enlightenment, it is termed "the great compassion of true enlightenment."

Concerning compassion, there are three kinds of objects. First, sentient beings as object; this is small compassion. Second, things as object; this is medium compassion. Third, nothing as object; this is great compassion. Great compassion is none other than the supra mundane good. The Pure Land of happiness arises from this great compassion; therefore this great compassion is said to be the root of the Pure Land. Hence the phrase, "born from supra mundane roots of good."

25 Further, it states:
Question: When we look into the power of Dharmakara Bodhisattva's Primal Vow and Nargarjuna Bodhisattva's verses of praise, they seem to take the great numbers of Sravakas in that land as wondrous. What is the meaning of this?

Answer: Sravakas take reality-limit for enlightenment. From this it is assumed that they should not be able to produce the germ of the Buddha's enlightenment. However, with the Primal Vow's inconceivable, transcendent power, Amida Buddha grasps and brings them to birth in the Pure Land; there, again through the transcendent power, they unfailingly produce the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. It is like the fish and clams dying when a chen bird enters the water, and the dead all reviving when a rhinoceros touches it. They should not be able to produce [the germ of enlightenment] and yet they do; hence, it is indeed wondrous. Of the five inconceivability’s, the Buddha-dharma is the most inconceivable. The Buddha is able to cause Sravakas to produce the mind aspiring for supreme enlightenment. Truly, this is the utmost of inconceivability’s.

Further, it states:

"Inconceivable power" indicates the inconceivability of the power of the virtues possessed by the Buddha-land's seventeen kinds of adornment. The sutras teach that there are five inconceivability’s: first, the inconceivability of the number of sentient beings; second, the inconceivability of karmic power; third, the inconceivability of the power of dragons; fourth, the inconceivability of the power of meditation; fifth, the inconceivability of the power of Buddha-dharma.

Concerning the Buddha-land's inconceivability, which is mentioned here, there are two kinds of power. The first is karmic power; [the Pure Land is] the fruition of Dharmakara Bodhisattva's supra mundane roots of good and the great Vow's karmic power. The second is the sustaining power of Amida, the perfectly enlightened Dharma-king, by which the Pure Land is embraced.

Further, it states:
Concerning "showing self-benefit and the benefiting of others," the Treatise states:

I have briefly explained the seventeen kinds of fulfillment of adornments of the virtues of Amida Buddha's land. For the Buddha has shown the fulfillment of the power of the great virtues of self-benefit and the fulfillment of the virtues of benefiting others.

Briefly signifies that the virtues of the Pure Land are immeasurable; it is not that there are but seventeen. It is said that Mount Sumeru can fit into a mustard seed, and that a hair pore can hold the vast ocean. Can this come about through the miraculous powers of the mountain or the sea, or the powers of the hair pore or the mustard seed? It can come about only through the miraculous power of the one possessing it.

Further, it states:

What is the fulfillment of the adornment, "the virtue of sustaining without any futility"? The gatha states:

Contemplating the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,

I see that no one who encounters it passes by in vain;

It quickly brings to fullness and perfection

The great treasure ocean of virtues.

The fulfillment of the virtue of sustaining without any futility refers to the power of Amida Tathāgata’s Primal Vow... Sustaining without any futility is based on the Forty-eight Vows that Dharmakara Bodhisattva made in the past in his causal stage and on Amida Tathāgata’s transcendent powers freely working in the present. The Vow gives rise to the power; the power fulfills the Vow. The Vow has not been made in vain; the power has not been actualized in futility. Power and Vow accord with each other and are never in conflict. Hence, the "fulfillment" [of this virtue].
29 Gathas in Praise of Amida Buddha states:

Namu-Amida-butsu.

Interpreting the title, I call this work An Appended Scripture on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. In praising Amida, it also refers to the land of peace.

Since attainment of Buddhahood, ten kalpas have passed;

The Buddha's life indeed has no measure.

Dharma-body's wheel of light pervades the dharma-realm,

Shining on the blind and ignorant of the world; hence, I bow in homage.

The light that is wisdom cannot be measured;

Hence, the Buddha is called "immeasurable light."

All limited beings receive this dawn-light;

Thus, I pay homage to the true and real light.

Infinite is the wheel-like light that brings emancipation;

Hence, the Buddha is called "boundless light."

All touched by it are freed from being and nonbeing;

Thus, I pay homage to the enlightenment of nondiscrimination.

The cloud of light is unhindered, like boundless space;

Hence, the Buddha is called "unhindered light."

It benefits all beings caught in hindrances;

Thus, I bow in homage to the one beyond conception.
The light of purity is beyond compare;
Hence, the Buddha is called "unequaled light."
Those who encounter it are rid of karmic bonds;
Thus, I pay homage to the ultimate shelter.
The Buddha-light, shining in splendor, is supreme;
Hence, the Buddha is called "lord of blazing light."
The pitch darkness of the three lower courses receives it and is dispelled;
Thus, I bow in homage to the great one worthy of offerings.
Bodhi's effulgence, in its brilliance, transcends all colors;
Hence, the Buddha is called "light of purity."
Once shone upon, beings are freed from evil's defilements
And all gain emancipation; thus, I bow in homage.
The light of compassion reaches far, bestowing happiness;
Hence, the Buddha is called "light of joy."
Wherever it shines, joy of dharma is attained;
Thus, I pay homage to the great consolation.
The Buddha-light rends the darkness of ignorance;
Hence, the Buddha is called "light of wisdom."
All Buddhas and sages of the three vehicles
Together offer praise; thus, I pay homage.
The light, at all times, shines everywhere;
Hence, the Buddha is called "uninterrupted light."
Because beings hear this light-power, their thoughts uninterrupted,
They all attain birth; thus, I bow in homage.
None, excepting the Buddhas, can fathom this light;
Hence, the Buddha is called "inconceivable light."
The Buddhas of the ten quarters all extol birth
And praise Amida's virtue; thus, I pay homage.
The majestic light transcends forms; it cannot be named.
Hence, the Buddha is called "inexpressible light."
With this light as cause, Buddhahood was attained; its resplendence
Is praised by all Buddhas. Thus, I bow in homage.
The light, in its luminosity, surpasses sun and moon;
Hence, the Buddha is called "light that surpasses sun and moon."
Even Shakyamuni Buddha's praise is not exhaustive;
Thus, I pay homage to the unequaled...
The great master, Nargarjuna Mahasattva, manifested form,
And first corrected distortions [of the teaching].
He closed off wrong views and opened the right path;
He is the eye for all beings of this Jambudvipa continent.
Reverently accepting the Honored-one's words, he reached the stage of joy,

Took refuge in Amida, and was born in the land of happiness.

I have been wandering in the three realms since the beginning-less past,

Turning on the wheel of falsity.

The karma I commit every moment, every instant,

Is a step bound to the six courses, so that I stay in the three paths.

May the compassionate light protect me

And keep me from losing the mind aspiring for enlightenment.

I praise the voice of the Buddha's wisdom and virtue.

May all beings of the ten quarters having ties with the teaching be brought to hear it,

And may those who aspire for birth in the land of happiness

All, everywhere, have their hindrances dispersed as they desire.

My merits, whether great or small,

I give to all beings, so that all be born together.

Entrusting to the inconceivable light,

I single-heartedly take refuge and pay homage.

Those throughout the ten quarters and three times who awaken immeasurable wisdom

All alike accord with oneness and are called "perfectly enlightened."
In them the two wisdoms - real and accommodated - are perfectly fulfilled; their awakening is of equality.

Their grasping and guiding beings, according to conditions, is truly immense.

My taking refuge in Amida Buddha's Pure Land

Is taking refuge in all the Buddhas' lands;

Single-heartedly I extol one Buddha;

May it extend to the unhindered ones throughout the ten quarters.

To each of the innumerable Buddhas of the ten quarters,

With all my heart, I bow in homage...

[Shan-tao]

30 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Question: Is Amida's Pure Land a fulfilled land or a transformed land?

Answer: It is a fulfilled land, not a transformed land. How is this known? The Mahayana Identity in Essence Sutra states:

The land of happiness in the west and Amida Buddha are a fulfilled land and fulfilled Buddha.

Further, the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life states:

In practicing the bodhisattva path, Bhikshu Dharmakara, before Lokesvararaja Buddha, established forty-eight vows, stating in each one:
If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters say my Name aspiring to be born in my land, even but ten times, and do not attain birth, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

He has already attained Buddhahood; he is a body of fulfilled cause. Further, the Contemplation Sutra states, concerning the three grades of the highest level, that at the time of death, "Amida Buddha and transformed Buddhas come to welcome these people." The fulfilled body together with transformed bodies comes and extends his hand to them; thus, the word and is used. From this attesting passage we know that Amida is a fulfilled body.

"Fulfilled body" and "accommodated body" are synonymous, like "eye" and "organ of sight." In earlier translations, "fulfilled" is translated "accommodated"; in later ones, "accommodated" is rendered "fulfilled." In general, "fulfilled" means that practice - the cause - is not futile and necessarily brings about its result in the future; the result is "accommodated" to the cause. Hence, the term "fulfilled." Further, the myriad practices performed through three great incalculable kalpas necessarily bring enlightenment. Now, already, enlightenment has been realized; therefore, he is an "accommodated" body. Concerning the Buddhas of the past and present, three bodies are distinguished; there is no body apart from these. The variations in the eight events [of a Buddha's life] may be numberless, and the Buddhas' names may be countless as grains of sand, but we find, from the perspective of the essential body, that they all belong to transformed bodies. Amida, however, is in actuality a fulfilled body.

Question: When you say "fulfilled," it is assumed that it is eternal and forever free of arising and perishing. Why, then, is it stated in the Sutra of Avalokiteshvara’s Prediction of Enlightenment, "There is a time when Amida Buddha also enters nirvana." How is this passage to be interpreted?

Answer: The meaning of "entering" and "not entering" nirvana pertains only to the realm of Buddhas; the shallow wisdoms of those of the three vehicles cannot have even a glimpse of it. Much less, then, can it be easily understood by the small and foolish. Nevertheless, if you urgently feel that
you must know, the matter may be clarified through drawing on the Buddhist sutras. The chapter "Nirvana is Not Illusory" of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "What are your thoughts? Suppose an illusory man creates an illusory man. Is this illusion quite real and nonempty or not?"

Subhuti said, "It is not, World-honored one."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "Form is illusion. Sensation, perception, will, and consciousness are illusion. Even all-knowing wisdom is illusion.

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, are dharmas of the world illusion? And are supra mundane dharmas also illusion? The four bases of mindfulness, four right efforts, four supernatural powers, five faculties, five powers, seven factors for awakening, eightfold noble path, and three gates of emancipation; the Buddha's ten powers, four fearlessnesses, four kinds of unhindered wisdom, and eighteen special qualities; the results of practices of various dharmas; and the wise and the sages - stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners, Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattva-Mahasattvas, and all Buddhas, world-honored ones - are all these illusion?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All dharmas are illusion. Among them, there are the illusory dharmas of Sravakas. There are the illusory dharmas of Pratyekabuddhas. There are the illusory dharmas of bodhisattvas. There are the illusory dharmas of Buddhas. There are the illusory dharmas of blind passions. There are the illusory dharmas of karmic causation. For this reason, Subhuti, all dharmas are illusion."

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "Regarding the sundering of blind passions, World-honored one, the fruits of stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, and arhat, and the path of Pratyekabuddhas lie in cutting off the residual energy of blind passions. Are all these illusion?"
The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All dharmas, as long as they have the aspect of arising and perishing, are illusion."

Subhuti said, "World-honored one, what dharma is not illusion?"

The Buddha said, "The dharma free of arising and perishing is not illusion."

Subhuti said, "What is it that, neither arising nor perishing, is not illusion?"

The Buddha said, "Nirvana, which is not delusive - this dharma is not illusion."

"World-honored one, you the Buddha have yourself taught that all dharmas are characterized by equality and are not created by Sravakas, not created by Pratyekabuddhas, not created by bodhisattva-Mahasattvas, not created by Buddhas. Whether or not there is a Buddha, the nature of all dharmas is always emptiness. Emptiness is itself nirvana. How is it that the one dharma of nirvana is not illusion?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "It is so! It is so! All dharmas are characterized by equality and are not creations of Sravakas and so forth; emptiness is itself nirvana. If bodhisattvas who have newly awakened aspiration hear that all dharmas are ultimately empty and so on, and that even nirvana is illusion, their hearts will be seized with surprise and fear. For the sake of bodhisattvas who have newly awakened aspiration, I deliberately make a distinction, saying that what arises and perishes is illusion, while that which neither arises nor perishes is not illusion."

We know clearly from this sacred teaching that Amida is definitely a fulfilled body. Even if he should enter nirvana, there is no contradiction. All wise people should reflect on this.

Question: If, as you say, the Buddha and land are fulfilled, they are lofty and excellent fulfilled dharmas and beyond the reach of even Hinayana sages. How could it be possible for foolish beings with defiling obstructions to gain entrance there?
Answer: If the defiling obstructions of sentient beings are considered, such aspiration is indeed difficult. But when we truly entrust ourselves to the Buddha's Vow, it becomes the strong cause bringing all of the five vehicles equally to entrance.

31 Further, he states:

The passage beginning I now aspire to be born in [the Pure Land of] Amida clarifies the Queen's choosing in particular the place where she desires to be born. This shows that Amida's land is [the fulfillment of] the Forty-eight Vows. Each Vow gives rise to the dominant, excellent cause; through the cause, the excellent practice is performed; through practice, the excellent result is attained; through the result, the excellent fulfillment is accomplished; through the fulfillment, the land of bliss is established; through the bliss, compassionate activity is pervasively manifested; through the compassionate activity, the gate of wisdom is revealed. The compassionate mind is never exhausted; the wisdom is infinite. Through the practice of compassion and wisdom together, the nectar of dharma spreads everywhere. In this way, the beneficent dharma-rain saves all beings universally. Passages in the other sutras encouraging [aspiration for the Pure Land] are numerous. The sages, with hearts in accord, all teach and praise it in the same way. For this reason, the Tathágata secretly led the Queen to make her selection.

32 Further, he states:

The city of bliss, tranquil and uncreated, in the West,

Is ultimately free and peaceful, far removed from being and nonbeing;

Great compassion imbues the heart, so that one sports in the dharma-realm;

Transforming oneself into various bodies, one benefits all beings equally, without discrimination.
Let us return! Do not abide

In this homeland of Maras. Since innumerable kalpas ago

We have been transmigrating,

Passing through all the six courses.

Nowhere has there been any pleasure;

We hear only the voices of grief and sorrow.

After this present lifetime has ended,

Let us enter the city of nirvana!

33 Further, he states:

The land of bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated;

I fear it is hard to be born there by doing sundry good acts according to our diverse conditions.

Hence, the Tathágata selected the essential dharma,

Instructing beings to say Amida's Name with singleness, again singleness.

34 Further, he states:

Drawn by the Buddha, we return effortlessly to naturalness (jinen);

Jinen is itself the land of Amida.

Undefiled by passions, un-arisen, it is true reality.

Whether going or returning, advancing or halting, we always accord with the Buddha;
We realize the body of uncreated dharma-nature.

35 Further, he states:

Amida’s perfect fruit of enlightenment is termed supreme nirvana.

[Kyeong-heung]

36 Master Kyeong-heung states:

Buddha of immeasurable light: because it cannot be calculated. Buddha of boundless light: because there is nothing it does not shine upon. Buddha of unhindered light: because, with regard to human beings and things, there is nothing that obstructs it. Buddha of incomparable light: because it is beyond all bodhisattvas' lights. Buddha of light that is lord of blazing light: because the radiance, being free and unrestricted, is unexcelled. Buddha of the light of purity: because it is manifested from roots of good free of greed, it rids sentient beings of their defilements of greed. Because it is free of defilements of greed, it is "pure." Buddha of the light of joy: because it arises from roots of good free of anger, and thus can rid sentient beings of anger and rage. Buddha of the light of wisdom: because, emerging from the mind of roots of good free from folly, it rids sentient beings of ignorance. Buddha of uninterrupted light: because the Buddha's eternal light constantly illuminates and benefits beings. Buddha of inconceivable light: because it cannot be fathomed by those of the two vehicles. Buddha of inexpressible light: because those of other vehicles [than Buddha] cannot teach it. Buddha of light surpassing sun and moon: because it shines constantly day and night, unlike the two lights of this Saha world.

That all have their bodies touched by this light is due to the working of the "Vow of softness and gentleness in body and mind."

[Conclusion]
Thus we clearly know from the Tathāgata’s true teaching and the commentaries of the masters that the Pure Land of peace is the true fulfilled land. Delusional and defiled sentient beings cannot, here, see [Buddha-] nature, for it is covered over by blind passions. The [Nirvana] Sutra states, "I have taught that bodhisattvas of the tenth stage see a little of Buddha-nature." Hence, we know that when we reach the Buddha-land of happiness, we unfailingly disclose Buddha-nature. This is through the directing of virtue by the power of the Primal Vow. Further, the [Nirvana] Sutra states, "Sentient beings will, in the future, possess a body of purity adorned with virtues and be able to see Buddha-nature."

The Treatise on the Awakening of Faith states:

To realize that even though one expresses it in words, there is no one who can express it, and that [in thinking] there is no one who can think it - this is called "being in accord [with reality]." Freedom from thought is called "attaining entrance."

[Fei-his explains:] Attaining entrance means attaining the samádhi of suchness. Further, the state of no-thought belongs to [the stage of] wondrous awakening. Thereby to realize the mind is [to know] the aspect of its first arising. Knowing the aspect of the first arising is no-thought; it cannot be known even by bodhisattvas of the tenth stage. Such people as ourselves, however, have not yet attained even the ten stages of understanding; hence, we must rely on Asvaghosa Mahasattva, and enter from words into no-word, from thought into no-thought."

Contemplating "fulfilled," I find that the resultant land was fulfilled from the ocean of Tathāgata’s Vow. Hence "fulfilled."

Concerning the ocean of the Vow, there is true and provisional. Thus, with regard to the Buddha-land, there is true and provisional. Through the true cause, the selected Primal Vow, the true Buddha-land was brought to realization.
Concerning the true Buddha, the Larger Sutra states, "Buddha of boundless light, Buddha of unhindered light." Further, "[Amida] is the king among Buddhas, the most revered among lights."

The Treatise on the Pure Land states, "I take refuge in the Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters."

Concerning the true land, the Larger Sutra states, "Land of immeasurable light" and "Land of all-knowing wisdom."

The Treatise states, "It is infinite, like space, vast and boundless."

Concerning birth, the Larger Sutra states, "All receive the body of naturalness (jinen) or of emptiness, the body of boundlessness."

The Treatise states, "The beings of the Tathágata’s pure lotus are born transformed from the lotus of perfect enlightenment." Further, "For they are the same in practicing the Nembutsu and follow no other way."

Further, the words, "Birth that is inconceivable," refer to this.

Provisional Buddhas and lands are discussed below.

We have noted already that both true and provisional were fulfilled from the ocean like Vow of great compassion; we know, therefore, that both are fulfilled Buddha and land. Since there are thousands of differences in the causes of birth in the provisional Buddha-lands, there are thousands of differences in the lands. They are termed "transformed bodies of skillful means" and "transformed lands of skillful means." Being ignorant of the distinction between true and provisional, people misunderstand and lose sight of the Tathágata’s vast benevolence.

For this reason, the true Buddha and true land are here clarified. This is the genuine significance of the true essence of the Pure Land way. Reverently entrust yourselves to the right teaching of the master of the sutras and the masters of the treatises and to the expositions of the Pure Land masters. You should uphold and devote yourself to them. Reflect on this.
Here ends Chapter V:

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Buddha and Land

Of the Pure Land Way

VI

1 To reveal, with reverence, the transformed Buddha-bodies and lands: The Buddha is as taught in the Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life; the Buddha in the "contemplation of the true body" is such a Buddha-body. The land refers to the Pure Land as described in the Contemplation Sutra and is also as taught in such sutras as the Sutra of the Bodhisattvas' Dwelling in the Womb; the "realm of indolence and pride" is such a land. Or again, it is as taught in the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life; the "city of doubt" and "womb-palace" are such.

2 Concerning this, we find that even if the multitudes of this defiled world, the sentient beings of corruption and evil, have abandoned the ninety-five wrong paths and entered the various dharma-gates - imperfect or consummate, accommodated or real - those who are authentic [in their practice] are extremely difficult to find, and those who are genuine are exceedingly rare. The false are extremely numerous; the hollow are many. For this reason, Shakyamuni Buddha guides the ocean of beings by disclosing the store of merit [for birth in the Pure Land], and Amida
Tathāgata, having established the Vows, saves the ocean like multitude of beings everywhere.

Already we have the compassionate Vow, which is known as "the Vow of performing meritorious acts," "the Vow of Buddha's appearance at death," "the Vow of Buddha's appearance and guidance to birth," and "the Vow of Buddha's coming to receive," and which further may be called "the Vow of sincere mind and aspiration."

[The Sutra Passages: The Nineteenth Vow]

3 Here, let us turn to this Vow stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters - awakening the mind of enlightenment and performing meritorious acts - should aspire with sincere mind and desire to be born in my land, and yet I should not appear before them at the moment of death surrounded by a host of sages, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

4 The "Chapter on Great Beneficence" in the Sutra of the Lotus of Compassion states:

I vow that when I have attained supreme enlightenment, if sentient beings of the countless, innumerable, incalculable other Buddha-realms should awaken the mind aspiring for highest, perfect enlightenment, practice roots of good, and desire to be born in my realm, I will appear before them surrounded by a host of sages. Upon seeing me, those people will, in my presence, attain joy in their hearts. Because they see me, they will be freed of all their obstructions and will immediately be born in my realm when their lives end.

5 The passages declaring the fulfillment of this Vow are the [Larger Sutra] passage on the three levels of practicers and the Contemplation Sutra passages on meditative and non-meditative practices and the nine grades of beings.

6 Further, the Larger Sutra states:
Further, the bodhi-tree of the Buddha of immeasurable life is four million miles in height, with a girth, at its base, of fifty yojanas. Its branches and leaves spread two hundred thousand miles in the four directions. It is formed naturally of a composite of all kinds of gems. The kings of gems - the moon-radiant mani-jewel and the ocean-supporting-wheel gem - adorn it.

Ānanda, human beings and devas of that land who see this tree will realize the three dharma-insights: insight through the sound [of the tree proclaiming the Buddha's teaching], insight that accords [with the truth], and insight into the non-origination of all existence. These all come about through the majestic, transcendent powers of the Buddha of immeasurable life, through the power of the Primal Vow, through the complete and perfect Vow, through the firm and steadfast Vow, through the ultimate Vow...

Further, the halls, living quarters, palaces and storied pavilions, all adorned with the seven precious substances, appear miraculously of themselves. Covering them is a jewel-canopy composed of pearls, moon-radiant mani-jewels, and various other gems. Everywhere about the buildings, both inside and out, there are ponds for bathing ten yojanas, or twenty or thirty, up to one hundred thousand yojanas across. Each is of dimensions - in length, breadth, and depth - of perfect symmetry. They are brimming with pure and fragrant waters possessed of the eight excellent qualities and have the taste of nectar.

7 Further, it states:

"Those who attain womblike birth dwell in palaces a hundred yojanas or five hundred yojanas in extent. Within, they each enjoy pleasures like those of Trayastrimsa heaven, all of which arise naturally."

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, what cause or conditions leads to the distinction between womblike birth and transformative birth among the human beings of that land?"
The Buddha said to Maitreya, "Suppose there are sentient beings who, with minds full of doubts, aspire to be born in that land through the practice of various meritorious acts; unable to realize Buddha-wisdom, the inconceivable wisdom, the ineffable wisdom, the all-encompassing wisdom of the great vehicle, the unequaled, peerless, and supremely excellent wisdom, they doubt these wisdoms and do not entrust themselves. And yet, believing in [the recompense of] evil and good, they aspire to be born in that land through cultivating the root of good. Such sentient beings will be born in the palace of that land, where for five hundred years they will never see the Buddha, hear the dharma of the sutras, or see the sacred host of bodhisattvas and Sravakas. Hence, in that land this is known as womblike birth... Know, Maitreya, that those of transformative birth are superior in wisdom; those of womblike birth lack wisdom..."

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "Consider the case of the noble cakravartin-king who possesses a prison embellished with the seven precious substances. It is adorned in manifold ways, furnished with a canopied bed, and hung with many silken banners. If young princes commit offenses against the king, they are imprisoned there and bound with gold chains..."

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "These sentient beings are precisely like that. Because they doubt the Buddha's wisdom, they are born in a womb-palace... If these sentient beings become aware of their past offenses and deeply repent, they desire to leave that place... Know, Maitreya, that if even bodhisattvas embrace doubt, they lose the great benefit."

8 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "Suppose there are sentient beings who, being possessed of doubts, accumulate roots of good and seek to realize the Buddha-wisdom, the universal wisdom, the inconceivable wisdom, the peerless wisdom, the majestically virtuous wisdom, the vast, all-encompassing wisdom. Concerned with their roots of good, they cannot entrust themselves [to Buddha-wisdom]. For this reason, they dwell within the palace for five hundred years... As you see, Ajita, those of excellent wisdom have received transformative birth in lotus flowers of enlightenment through the power of vast wisdom and sit with legs crossed..."
and soles upturned. When you see the inferior,... they have failed in their practice of meritorious acts. For this reason, without having fulfilled the true cause [of birth], they serve the Buddha of immeasurable life. All such people have come to be so through the past condition of embracing the faults of doubts..."

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "It is so, it is so. They may, being possessed of doubts, accumulate roots of good and seek to realize [various kinds of] wisdom, from Buddha-wisdom to the vast, all encompassing wisdom; to the roots of good that are theirs, they cannot entrust themselves. Although they give rise to trust through hearing the Buddha's Name and thus are born in that land, they cannot emerge from within the lotus bud. These sentient beings, enclosed within the flower-womb, feel as though they were within a garden or palace."

9 The Larger Sutra states:

Bodhisattvas of slight practice and practicers of small virtues are numerous beyond calculation, but they will all be born [in that land].

10 Further, [the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life] states:

How much more incalculably numerous are other bodhisattvas, who will be born in that land through small roots of good.

[Commentaries]

11 The Commentary of the Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

They are enclosed within the flower and cannot emerge, or are born in the borderland, or fall into the womb-palace.

12 Master Kyeong-heung states:
It is because of doubting the Buddha-wisdom that, although born in that land, you remain in the borderland and are unable to receive the Buddha's guidance. If you are to receive womblike birth, you must definitely part from it.

13 In Essentials for Attaining Birth by [Genshin,] the Master of Shuryogon-in, the Commentary of Master Huai-kan is cited:

Question: The Sutra of the Bodhisattvas' Dwelling in the Womb, fascicle two, states:

In the western quarter, twenty kotis of Nayutas from this Jambudvipa continent, is the realm of indolence and pride... Sentient beings who have awakened aspiration and desire to be born in Amida Buddha's land are all deeply attached to the land of indolence and pride and cannot advance to birth in Amida's land. At times only one of millions upon millions of beings is able to attain birth in Amida's land.

Regarding this sutra, the question arises of whether it is possible to attain birth at all?

Answer: In Response to Various Questions Concerning the Pure Land Teaching, the previously cited passage of Master Shan-tao is quoted to explain this difficulty, and further the author himself adds:

The next passage in the sutra states, "For since they are indolent and complacent, their resolve lacks firmness." Thus we know that those who engage in sundry practices are people of infirm resolve. For this reason they are born in the realm of indolence and pride. If you do not engage in sundry practices, but solely perform this act, then you are firm of resolve and will definitely attain birth in the land of bliss... Further, those born in the fulfilled Pure Land are extremely few; those born in the transformed Pure Land are many. Therefore, the different teachings in the sutras are in fact not at variance with each other.

14 Thus, contemplating the understanding of the Master of Shuryogon-in, I find that he reveals in "Chapter on Witness to the Nembutsu" that the
Eighteenth Vow is the special Vow among all [Amida's] special Vows. He states, exhorting the beings of the meditative and non-meditative practices taught in the Contemplation Sutra, "People of extreme evil should simply say [the Name of] Amida." This means that monks and laypeople of this defiled world should well consider their own capabilities. Reflect on this.

[Question and Answer: The Threefold Mind in the Larger and Contemplation Sutras]

15 Question: Are the three minds taught in the Larger Sutra and those taught in the Contemplation Sutra the same or different?

Answer: When I consider the Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, taking into account the interpretation of the commentator [Shan-tao], I find there is an explicit meaning and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning.

"Explicit" refers to presenting the meditative and non-meditative good acts and setting forth the three levels of practitioners and the three minds. The two forms of good and the three types of meritorious acts, however, are not the true cause of birth in the fulfilled land. Further, the three minds that beings awaken are all minds of self-benefit that are individually different and not the mind that is single, which arises from [Amida's] benefiting of others. They are roots of good with which to aspire for the Pure Land that [Shakyamuni] Tathágata taught as a distinct provisional means. This is the import of the sutra; it is its "explicit" meaning.

"Implicit" refers to disclosing the Tathágata’s universal Vow and revealing the mind that is single, to which [practicers of the three minds] are led through [Amida's] benefiting of others. Through the opportunity brought about by the grave evil acts of Devadatta and Ajatashatru, Shakyamuni, with a smile, disclosed his inner intent. Through the condition brought about by the right intention in Vaidehi's selection, Amida's Primal Vow of great compassion was clarified. This is the hidden, implicit meaning of the sutra.
Thus, [regarding the implicit meaning,] the sutra states, Enable me to perceive the place [established through] pure acts. "Place [established through] pure acts" refers to the fulfilled land established through the Primal Vow.

Teach me how to concentrate my thoughts: to concentrate thoughts is a matter of provisional means. Teach me genuine acceptance refers to the true mind that is diamond-like.

Clearly perceive the one in that land who has accomplished pure acts: perceive and know the Tathágata fulfilled through the Primal Vow - the Tathágata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters.

Expound fully with many illustrations refers to the thirteen meditative practices.

You are a foolish being; your mind is inferior: here it is disclosed that [Vaidehi] is the person suited for the teaching of birth for evil beings.

The Buddha-Tathágatas possess distinct provisional means: it is revealed that meditative and non-meditative good acts are provisional teachings.

Through the Buddha's power I have seen that land expresses Other Power.

Sentient beings after the Buddha's demise: sentient beings of the future are the very beings who attain birth.

Even if [what you have seen] corresponds with [the sutra], it is to be called "rough perception": this reveals that meditative practice is difficult to accomplish.

While in this present existence, you attain Nembutsu samádhi: this explains, concerning the benefit obtained through accomplishing meditative practice, that attainment of Nembutsu samádhi is the benefit of contemplation. In other words, the gate of contemplative practice is a provisional teaching.
It is stated: Awakening the three minds, they attain immediate [or] provisional birth. Further: Again, there are three kinds of sentient beings who will definitely attain birth. According to these passages there are, in relation to the three levels of practicers, three different kinds of "three minds" and also two kinds of birth.

Truly we see from the above that this sutra has an explicit meaning and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning.

I will discuss the sameness and differences of the three minds in the two sutras; this matter must be carefully understood. In their explicit meanings, the Larger Sutra and the Contemplation Sutra differ; in their implicit meaning, they are one. Reflect on this.

16 Hence, the Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Thus the Guiding Master of this Saha world, in response to [Vaidehi's] request, opened widely the "essential" gate to the Pure Land path, and the Compassionate One of the land of happiness revealed the universal Vow that holds his special intent. The "essential" gate consists of the meditative and non-meditative practices taught in the Contemplation Sutra. "Meditative" refers to stopping thought and concentrating the mind; "non-meditative" refers to abandoning evil and performing good. Beings are instructed to direct the merit of these two kinds of practices and aspire for birth. Concerning the "universal Vow," it is as set forth in the Larger Sutra.

17 Further, he states:

The Contemplation Sutra has Buddha-contemplation samádhi as its essence, and also Nembutsu samádhi as its essence. Its core is aspiring single-heartedly through directing merits and thus attaining birth in the Pure Land.

Concerning whether its teaching is Mahayana or Hinayana, the question arises: to which of the two Pitakas does it belong and in which of the two teachings is it included?
Answer: It is included in the bodhisattva-pitaka. It belongs to the teachings of sudden attainment.

18 Further, he states:

"Thus [have I heard]" (nyoze) indicates dharma; it refers to the two teachings of meditative and non-meditative practices. Ze (this) is a word indicating something definite. Beings who perform these practices unfailingly gain benefit. This shows that the words taught by the Tathágata are without error. Hence the term, "Thus" (nyoze).

Further, nyo ("in this way") means "in accord with the desires of sentient beings." In accord with our wishes, the Buddha saves us. The correspondence between being and teaching is also referred to as ze (this). Hence, "Thus."

Further, "Thus" is meant to clarify what the Tathágata taught. The Tathágata teaches gradual attainment just as gradual attainment is; teaches sudden attainment just as sudden attainment is; teaches phenomena just as phenomena are; teaches emptiness just as emptiness is; teaches the way of human beings just as the way of human beings is; teaches the way of devas just as the way of devas is; teaches Hinayana just as Hinayana is; teaches Mahayana just as Mahayana is; teaches the nature of foolish beings just as foolish beings are; teaches the nature of sages just as sages are; teaches cause just as cause is; teaches result just as result is; teaches pain just as pain is; teaches pleasure just as pleasure is; teaches things distant just as things distant are; teaches things near just as things near are; teaches sameness just as sameness is; teaches difference just as difference is; teaches purity just as purity is; teaches defilement just as defilement is; teaches all things in a thousand different ways and with a myriad variations. The Tathágata discerns clearly and thoroughly and performs practices in accord with beings' minds, so as to benefit each of them in different ways. His acts and their results accord with the nature of things and are always unerring; they are referred to as "this" (ze). Hence, "Thus" (nyoze).

19 Further, he states:
The passage from Those who aspire to be born in that land to are called pure acts clarifies the exhortation to perform the three types of meritorious conduct. It reveals that the capacities of all sentient beings are of two kinds: meditative and non-meditative. If birth depended only on meditative good acts, not all beings would attain it. Thus the Tathágata, devising provisional means, revealed the three types of meritorious conduct to provide for those of non-meditative and distracted faculties.

Further, he states:

Further, what is true and real falls into two types: self-benefiting with a true and real mind and benefiting others with a true and real mind.

Self-benefiting with a true and real mind is of two kinds. The first is, with a true and real mind, to stop all one's own and others' evil acts and abandon this defiled world, and, just as bodhisattvas stop and cast off all evil acts, to aspire oneself to do likewise whether walking, standing, sitting or reclining.

The second is to cultivate diligently with a true and real mind what is good for oneself and for others, both ordinary people and sages. As verbal action with a true and real mind, one praises Amida Buddha and the Buddha's two kinds of fulfillment, beings and land. Moreover, as verbal action with a true and real mind, one deplores and loathes the pain and evil of the two kinds of recompense - beings and environment - of oneself and others within the three realms and six courses. In addition, one praises the good performed by all sentient beings in the three modes of action. If their acts are not good, one should respectfully keep one's distance and not rejoice in concord.

Further, as bodily action with a true and real mind, one pays homage, with joined hands, to Amida Buddha and the Buddha's two kinds of fulfillment of body and land, venerates them, and makes offerings to them with the four kinds of gifts. And, as bodily action with a true and real mind, one loathes and abandons the two kinds of recompense - beings and environment - of oneself and others within the three realms of birth-and-death, holding them of no account.
Further, as mental action with a true and real mind, one thinks on, observes, and remains mindful of Amida Buddha and the Buddha's two kinds of fulfillment of body and land, as though they stood before one's eyes. And, as mental action with a true and real mind, one despises, loathes, and abandons the two kinds of recompense - beings and environment - of oneself and others within the three realms of birth-and-death...

Further, it is to believe deeply and decidedly that Shakyamuni Buddha leads people to aspire for the Pure Land by teaching, in the Contemplation Sutra, the three types of meritorious conduct, the nine grades of beings, and the two kinds of good - meditative and non-meditative - and by verifying and praising Amida's two kinds of fulfillment, body and land...

Further, the deep trust that is deep mind is to decidedly settle one's own mind, perform practices in accord with the teaching, cast out doubt and error forever, and not succumb to or be thwarted by those of different understandings, different practices, other teachings, other views, or other opinions...

Next, concerning "establishing trust in relation to practice," there are two kinds of practices: right practice and sundry practices. Right practice refers to performing solely as prescribed in the sutras that teach birth in the Pure Land. What is this practice? It is to recite solely and single-heartedly the Contemplation Sutra, the Amida Sutra, and the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. It is to concentrate single-heartedly on, think on, observe, and hold in mindfulness the adornment of the Pure Land's two kinds of fulfillment alone. If one worships, one single-heartedly worships Amida Buddha alone. If one utters a name, one single-heartedly utters the Name of Amida Buddha alone. If one praises and makes offerings, one single-heartedly praises and makes offerings [to Amida] alone. This is called "right practice."

Further, right practice is divided into two. First, single-heartedly practicing the saying of the Name of Amida alone - whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining - without regard to the length of time, and without abandoning it from moment to moment: this is called "the act of true
settlement," for it is in accord with the Buddha's Vow. [Second,] if one engages in worship, sutra-recitation, and so on, these are called "auxiliary acts." All forms of good other than these two kinds of practice - true and auxiliary - are called "sundry practices."

If one performs these true and auxiliary practices, one's heart always attends upon Amida and one's mindfulness never ceases; hence, such practice is said to be "uninterrupted." If one performs the sundry practices, one's mind is constantly interrupted. Even though one may direct the merit of such practices and attain birth, they are all "irrelevant and sundry practices."

Hence, the term deep mind. [Here ends the explanation of deep mind.]

The third is the mind of aspiration for birth through directing merit. The mind of aspiration for birth through directing merit is to aspire, with a mind of genuine deep trust, to attain birth in that land through directing all roots of good performed by oneself and others - the mundane and supra mundane roots of good that one has performed through bodily, verbal, and mental acts from the past down to the present life, and further all the mundane and supra mundane roots of good performed through bodily, verbal, and mental acts by others, both foolish beings and sages, in which one rejoices.

21 Further, he states:

Meditative good is a means to lead on to discernment [of the Primal Vow].

22 Further, he states:

Non-meditative good is a means to lead one to the practice [of the Nembutsu].

23 Further, he states:

It is difficult to encounter the essentials of the Pure Land way.
Further, he states:

As the Contemplation Sutra teaches, above all if one possesses the three minds, one will unfailingly attain birth. What are these three? The first is sincere mind. This is, in bodily action, to worship the Buddha; in verbal action, to praise the Buddha; and in mental action, to think solely on and contemplate the Buddha. In giving rise to the three modes of action, one unfailingly possesses truth and sincerity; hence, "sincere mind."... The third is the mind of aspiration for birth through directing merit. Directing all the roots of good one has performed, one aspires for birth; hence, "mind of aspiration for birth through directing merit." If one possesses these three minds, one will unfailingly attain birth. If one of these three minds is lacking, one does not attain birth. This is taught fully in the Contemplation Sutra. Reflect on this...

Further, bodhisattvas who have already become liberated from birth-and-death direct the good that they perform seeking the fruit of Buddhahood; this is self-benefit. [At the same time,] they are active into the endless future, teaching and guiding sentient beings; this is benefiting others. Sentient beings of these present times, however, are all fettered by blind passions and have not yet become liberated from the pain of the evil courses in birth-and-death. But under favorable conditions, they perform practices and, fully and swiftly directing all their roots of good, aspire to be born in Amida Buddha's land. Once they have reached that land, there is nothing that they fear. The four aspects of practice explained earlier come to be carried on naturally and effortlessly, and both self-benefit and benefiting others are necessarily fulfilled. Reflect on this.

Further, he states:

Of those who abandon the sole practice and seek to perform sundry good acts, out of a hundred, at times scarcely one or two will attain birth, and out of a thousand, at times only three or five. For various circumstances confuse and disturb them; for they lose right-mindedness; for they do not accord with the Buddha's Primal Vow; for they are in conflict with [Shakyamuni’s] teaching; for they do not follow the Buddhas' words; for their concentration is not continuous; for their mindfulness is interrupted;
for their directing of merit and aspiration are not earnest and sincere; for blind passions such as greed, anger, and various views arise and interrupt them; for they completely lack shame and repentance.

There are three grades of repentance: high, middle, and low. In the high grade of repentance, blood flows from the hair pores of one's body and issues from one's eyes. In the middle grade of repentance, hot beads of sweat appear from the hair pores of one's whole body, and blood issues from one's eyes. In the low grade of repentance, one's whole body is pervaded by heat and tears flow from one's eyes. Although there are differences among these three levels, they are all performed only by those who have long cultivated roots of good for emancipation. But if people in this life revere the teaching, pay homage to monks, do not cherish their lives, and repent even small transgressions, this will penetrate to their hearts' core, and if they repent in this way, their heavy obstructions, whether accumulated over a long or short time, will all swiftly be eradicated. People who do not do so may urgently seek [emancipation] through the twelve periods of the day and night, but in the end it will be of no avail. People who do not repent should know: Although one may not be able to shed tears and blood, if one is simply pervaded by true mind, it will be the same as [the repentance] described above.

26 Further, he states:

It is not at all stated that any practitioners of various other acts are illumined and embraced.

27 Further, he states:

The Tathāgata appeared amid the five defilement

And through well-suited provisional means, guides the multitudes.

At times, he explains attaining emancipation through listening to many teachings;
At times, realizing the three illuminations through but slight understanding.

At times, he teaches eradicating obstructions through meritorious conduct and wisdom,

At times, sitting and reflecting in meditation.

The various dharma-gates all lead to emancipation.

28 Further, he states:

It is truly hard to continue cultivating merits through myriads of kalpas;

In each moment, blind passions intrude a hundred or a thousand times;

Though some may hope to realize dharma-insight in this Saha world,

They will pass kalpas countless as the Ganges' sands in the six courses,

And still the time of realization will not come.

The various dharma-gates are not the same; they are called teachings of gradual attainment;

And one realizes non-origination only through a myriad kalpas of painful practice.

Therefore, throughout your life, practice the Nembutsu alone;

At the moment your life ends, the Buddha will come to receive you.

Even in the interval of a single meal, there is time

For greed and anger to arise; how would they not in a myriad kalpas?

Greed and anger obstruct the path to the human and deva realms;
One will come to settle in the three evil courses or the four evil realms.

29 Further, he states:

Directing the merit of meditative and non-meditative practices, enter the precious land;

These are the Tathāgata’s distinct provisional means.

Vaidehi being a woman, her condition was that

Of a foolish being filled with greed and anger.

30 The Commentary on the Treatise states:

There are two kinds of virtue. First, there is virtue that is produced from a defiled mind and that does not accord with dharma-nature. Whether with regard to their cause or to their fruition, the good acts of foolish human beings and devas and the recompense of human beings and devas are all inverted, empty, and false. Hence, they are called untrue virtue.

31 Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

To quote the "Moon-Matrix Section" of the Great Collection Sutra:

Out of billions of sentient beings who seek to perform practices and cultivate the way in the last dharma-age, not one will gain realization.

This is now the last dharma-age; it is the evil world of the five defilements. This one gate - the Pure Land way - is the only path that affords passage.

32 Further, it states:

As long as ten thousand kalpas of practice have not been fulfilled, we can never escape from this burning house. For we are subject to inverted thinking and regression. The effort in each practice is quite large, but the acquired result is only falsity.
According to the Larger Sutra, true and provisional Vows were established. Further, in the Contemplation Sutra, provisional and true teachings are revealed. In the Smaller Sutra, only the "true" gate is taught, and provisional good acts are not discussed. Thus, what is true in the three sutras has as its essence the selected Primal Vow. What is provisional in the three sutras is essentially the practice of various good roots of good.

In considering the provisional Vow from this perspective, I find that there is the temporary aspect and the true, and further that there is an aspect of practice and an aspect of trust. This Vow is the Vow of Buddha's appearance at death. "Practice" refers to the good of cultivating various virtues. "Trust" refers to sincere mind, aspiration, and desire for birth. Through the practice and trust of this Vow, the accommodated and the temporary provisional means that form the "essential" gate of the Pure Land way are revealed.

By means of this "essential" gate, three types of practice - right, auxiliary, and sundry - are disclosed. With regard to both the right and the auxiliary, there is single praxis and mixed praxis. Concerning practicers, there are two kinds: the meditative practitioner and the non-meditative practitioner.

Further, the three minds are of two types, and there are two kinds of birth. The two types of three minds are the three minds of meditative practice and the three minds of non-meditative practice. The meditative and non-meditative minds are minds of self-benefit that vary with each person. The two kinds of birth are immediate birth and provisional birth. Provisional birth refers to womblike birth and birth in the borderland; it is birth like that attained beneath the twin sala trees. Immediate birth is transformative birth in the fulfilled land.

In the [Contemplation] Sutra, we also find the aspect of the true. It is the revealing of the diamond-like true mind, through which Amida's grasping, never to abandon is disclosed. Thus Shakyamuni, the well-gone, who guides sentient beings of this defiled world, widely taught the mind of the "Vow of sincere mind and entrusting"; for it is entrusting that is the true cause of birth in the fulfilled land. Hence, the Larger Sutra states "entrusting." It is the Tathágata’s Vow-mind that is completely untainted by
the hindrance of doubt. Therefore the term "entrusting" (shin) is used. The Contemplation Sutra refers to it as "deep mind." In order to contrast it with the shallow trust of beings, it is termed "deep mind." The Smaller Sutra refers to it as "single-heartedness." "Single" here implies that there is no mixing of two kinds of practice. Further, concerning single-heartedness, there is deep and shallow. "Deep" refers to the true and real mind that is [Amida's] benefiting of others; "shallow" describes the mind of self-benefit through meditative and non-meditative practices.

34 According to Master [Shan-tao]:

Depending on the minds [of beings], excellent practices are performed. There are gateways numbering eighty-four thousand and more. Whether they are gradual or sudden, they are suited to the capacities of beings. Hence, those who practice them according to their circumstances all gain emancipation.

But it is hard for the foolish and ignorant, who are ever sinking in birth-and-death, to perform acts with the mind of meditative practices, for this is to cease thinking and to concentrate the mind. It is also hard to perform acts with the mind of non-meditative practices, for this is to discard evil and practice good. Thus, since it is hard even to visualize forms and fix the mind on them, [Shan-tao] states:

One may dedicate a lifetime of a thousand years, but still the dharma-eye will not be opened.

How much harder indeed is it to realize formlessness and cessation of thought. Therefore he states:

The Tathágata already knows that foolish beings of the latter age possessed of karmic evil and defilements are incapable of visualizing forms and fixing the mind on them. How much harder is it to seek realization without visualizing forms; it is like a person lacking transcendent powers building a house in the air.
In the expression, "gateways...and more," "gateways" refers to the eighty-four thousand provisional gateways. "More" refers to the ocean of the One Vehicle, the Primal Vow.

35 Among all the teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha taught during his lifetime, those that teach attaining sacred wisdom and realizing the fruit in this world are called the Path of Sages. They are termed the path of difficult practice. Within this path there are Mahayana and Hinayana; gradual attainment and sudden attainment; the One Vehicle, two vehicles, and three vehicles; accommodated and true; exoteric and esoteric; departing lengthwise and transcending lengthwise. These are self-power teachings, the path of the accommodated gate of provisional means recommended [by those] in the state of benefiting and guiding others.

Attaining sacred wisdom and realizing the fruit in the Pure Land of peace is called the Pure Land path. It is termed the path of easy practice. Within this path there are departing crosswise and transcending crosswise; temporary and true; gradual attainment and sudden attainment; auxiliary, right, and sundry practices; mixed praxis and single praxis.

"Right [practices]" refers to the five kinds of right practice. "Auxiliary [practices]" refers to these five kinds of practice with the exception of saying the Name. "Sundry practices" refers to all the various practices other than the right and the auxiliary; these are teachings of gradual attainment that expound ways of departing crosswise; they are the temporary gate of self-power, which includes the teachings of meditative and non-meditative practices, the three kinds of meritorious conduct, and the three levels of practitioners and nine grades of beings.

"Transcending crosswise" refers to being mindful of the Primal Vow and becoming free of the mind of self-power; this is termed "Other Power of transcending crosswise." It is the single within the single, the sudden within the sudden, the true within the true, the One Vehicle within the [One] Vehicle. It is the true essence [of the Pure Land way]. This has already been clarified in "Chapter on True Practice."
With the expression "sundry practices" and also with "mixed praxis," the term is single, but there are different meanings. "Sundry" embraces all the myriads of practices. In contrast to the five right practices, there are five kinds of sundry practices. The term "sundry" is used because the understandings and practices for birth as human beings, devas, bodhisattvas and so on are compounded [with aspiration for birth in Amida's land]. Originally, they are not causes resulting in birth in the Pure Land. They are good acts that, with a change of mind, come to be directed toward birth; hence, they are termed "sundry practices within the Pure Land way."

Further, concerning "sundry practices," there is "single practice" and "single mind"; also, there are "combined practices" and "combined mind."

"Single practice" refers to the performance of solely one kind of good act; hence it is termed "single practice." "Single mind" refers to directing merit solely [toward birth in the Pure Land]; hence it is termed "single mind."

Concerning "combined practices" and "combined mind," because one performs various good acts together, the term "combined practices" is used; because minds of meditative good and non-meditative good are combined, the term "combined mind" is used.

Further, concerning right and auxiliary, there is single praxis and mixed praxis. Regarding mixed praxis, there is single mind and combined mind. There are two kinds of single praxis: first, only saying the Buddha's Name, and second, the five single [acts]. Concerning these [five] acts, there is single mind and combined mind. The five single [acts] are: 1) solely worshiping [Amida], 2) solely reciting [the Pure Land sutras], 3) solely contemplating [Amida and the Pure Land], 4 solely saying the Name, and 5) solely praising [Amida]. These are termed the five kinds of single praxis. The term "single praxis" is the same, but it has different meanings. It is meditative single praxis and also non-meditative single praxis.

"Single mind" refers to singly performing the five right practices without double-mindedness; hence, "single mind." This is meditative single mind, and also non-meditative single mind.
"Mixed praxis" is to perform the auxiliary and right acts together; hence "mixed praxis." "Combined mind" refers to mixing the minds of meditative and non-meditative good acts; hence, "combined mind." Reflect on this.

All the various practices of the Pure Land way are termed the "myriad practices" by Master Tao-ch’o and "sundry practices" by Master Shan-tao. Master Huai-kan called them "various practices." [In the use of these terms,] Master Genshin followed Master Huai-kan, and Master Genku followed Master Shan-tao.

Relying on the teacher of the sutras, [Shakyamuni,] and turning to the commentary of Master [Shan-tao], I find that among "sundry practices" are combined practices performed with a combined mind, combined practices performed with a single mind, and single practice performed with a combined mind. Further, among right practices there is single praxis performed with a single mind, or single praxis performed with a combined mind, and mixed praxis performed with a combined mind; all are causal acts resulting in birth in the borderland, the womb-palace, and the realm of indolence and pride. Hence, although one is born in the land of bliss, one does not see the three treasures. The light of the Buddha's mind does not illuminate and grasp practicers of sundry acts. How truly profound is the intent behind the temporarily guiding Vow! How clear become the teachings of the temporary gate and [Shan-tao's] explanation [that they are for the awakening] of desire for the Pure Land!

In their explicit meaning, the three minds taught in the two sutras differ; in their implicit meaning, they are one. Here ends the answer to the question concerning the sameness and differences of the teachings on the threefold mind.

Question and Answer: The Threefold Mind

and the Mind that is Single]
37 A further question: Are the threefold mind taught in the Larger Sutra and the Contemplation Sutra and the mind that is single taught in the Smaller Sutra the same or different?

Answer: Concerning the Vow of the "true" gate, which is a provisional means, there is practice and there is trust. Further, there is the true and real, and there is provisional means.

The Vow is the Vow of cultivating the root of virtue. The practice is of two kinds: the root of good and the root of virtue.

The trust is the mind of sincerely directing merit and aspiring for birth.

Concerning practicers, there are the meditative and the nonmeditative.

The birth is birth that is Noncomprehensible.

The Buddha is the transformed body.

The land is the city of doubt and the womb-palace.

By taking the Contemplation Sutra as a model, we know that the [Smaller] Sutra also possesses an explicit meaning and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning.
Concerning its "explicit" meaning, the sutra-teacher Sakyamuni reveals the "true" gate, which consists of the root of good or of virtue, urges beings to have the single-mindedness of self-benefit, and encourages them to attain the noncomprehensible birth, rejecting all other practices of small good. Thus, the sutra teaches, "[Saying the Name is] the act of many roots of good, many virtues, and many merits," and a commentary states, "The nine grades of beings should all direct [the merit of the nembutsu] and attain the stage of nonretrogression." Further:

None [of the other dharma-gates] surpasses birth in the West through the nembutsu;

[With but] three or five utterances, the Buddha will come to welcome us.

This is the explicit meaning of the sutra; it is the provisional means within the "true" gate.

In its implicit meaning, the sutra discloses the true and real dharma that is difficult to accept. It reveals the inconceivable ocean of the Vow, seeking to bring beings to take refuge in the ocean of unhindered great shinjin. Indeed, because this encouragement is encouragement already given by Buddhas countless as the sands of the Ganges, this shinjin is also shinjin witnessed and praised by Buddhas countless as the Ganges' sands. Hence, the sutra terms it "extremely difficult." The commentary states:

Solely through the greatness of Amida's universal Vow,

Foolish beings, when they become mindful of it, are immediately brought to attain birth.
I have set forth here the implicit, disclosed meaning.

The [Smaller] Sutra speaks of "holding steadfast." Further, it uses the term, "the mind that is single."

"Steadfast" reveals that the mind is firm and unchanging. "Holding" means not being distracted and not letting go.

"Single" means nondual. "Mind" is a term for the true and real.

Among the Mahayana sutras, this sutra is the one that was delivered spontaneously, not in response to a question. Thus, the reason Sakyamuni Tathagata appeared in the world, and the true intent of the witness and protection of Buddhas countless as the sands of the Ganges, lies solely in teaching this [sutra]. Accordingly, the mahasattvas who belonged among the four kinds of dependable people who spread the sutras, as well as the teachers of the Pure Land way in the three countries, guide people immersed in the wrong and falsity of the defiled world by revealing the nembutsu that is the true essence of the way.

Although in their general import the three sutras have explicit meanings and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning, they each reveal shinjin to be the basis for entry [into dharma]. Hence, each sutra opens with the words, "Thus [have I heard]..."
"Thus" (nyoze) signifies the aspect of genuine entrusting. Reflecting on the three sutras, I find that they all teach the true, diamondlike mind to be what is most essential. The true mind is great shinjin. Great shinjin is rare, most excellent, true and wondrous, and pure. Why? Because the ocean of great shinjin is extremely difficult to enter, for it arises through the power of the Buddha; because the true land of bliss is extremely easy to go to, for one is born there immediately through the power of the Vow. Here I have sought to discuss the sameness and differences of the "mind that is single" [in relation to the threefold mind of the Larger and Contemplation Sutras]; the import is as I have clarified above.

Here ends the answer concerning the meaning of the mind that is single in the three sutras.

[The "True" Gate: The Twentieth Vow]

38 Monks and laity of this defiled world should swiftly enter the "true" gate of perfectly accomplished supreme virtues and aspire for the birth that is non-comprehensible.

With regard to the provisional means of the "true" gate, there is the root of good and there is the root of virtue. Further, there is the meditative single mind, the non-meditative single mind, and the meditative and non-meditative combined mind.

"Combined mind" means that sages and foolish beings - whether Mahayana or Hinayana - and all beings of good and evil, recite the Name with minds in which the auxiliary and the right are mixed together. The teaching is indeed one of sudden attainment, but the practicers are beings of gradual attainment. The practice is single, but the mind is mixed. Hence the term, "combined mind."
"Meditative or non-meditative single mind" refers to seeking the power of the Primal Vow with a mind that believes in [the recompense of] evil and good. This is termed the single mind of self-power.

"Root of good" refers to the Tathágata’s auspicious Name. This auspicious Name is perfectly possessed of the myriad goods; it is the root of all goods. Hence the term "root of good."

"Root of virtue" refers to the Tathágata’s virtuous Name. This virtuous Name, with but a single utterance, fulfills the supreme virtues [in practitioners], transforming all their evil. It is the source of the virtuous names [of the Buddhas] throughout the ten quarters in the past, present, and future. Hence it is termed the "root of virtue."

Shakyamuni Buddha revealed this store of virtue to encourage and guide beings of the defiled worlds of the ten quarters. Amida Tathágata, in the beginning, established the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth in order to compassionately lead the multitudinous ocean of all beings.

The compassionate Vow already exists. It is the "Vow of cultivating the root of virtue," also known as the "Vow of settlement of birth through placing thoughts [on the Pure Land]," the "Vow stating 'If they do not ultimately attain birth,'" and the "Vow of sincere mind and directing merit."

39 In the Larger Sutra, the Vow is stated:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, on hearing my Name, should place their thoughts on my land, cultivate the root of all virtues, and direct their merits with sincere mind desiring to be born in my land, and yet not ultimately attain it, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

40 Further, [the Larger Sutra] states:

They doubt these wisdoms and do not entrust themselves. And yet, believing in [the recompense of] evil and good, they aspire to be born in
that land through cultivating the root of good. Such sentient beings will be born in the [womb] palace.

41 Further, it states:

People who lack the root of good

Are not able to hear this sutra,

But those who observe the precepts without fault

Are able to hear the right dharma.

42 The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

If, when I become Buddha, all the sentient beings of the countless lands should hear my Name being expounded and, taking it as their own root of good, direct their merits toward the land of bliss, and yet not attain birth, may I not attain enlightenment.

43 The Sutra of the Enlightenment of Ultimate Equality states:

People not possessed of this virtue

Are unable to hear the name of this sutra;

Only those who have observed the precepts without fault

Have now come to hear the right dharma.

Those of evil, arrogance, the hindrance of passions, and indolence

Will have difficulty entrusting themselves to this dharma;

But those who have encountered Buddhas in previous lives

Will listen joyfully to the teaching of the World-honored one.

Rare is it to obtain human life,
And difficult to encounter a Buddha's appearance in the world;

Hard is it to attain the wisdom of entrusting:

Should you meet with and hear this teaching, pursue it with diligence.

44 The Contemplation Sutra states:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "You must hold firmly to these words. To hold to these words is to hold to the Name of the Buddha of immeasurable life."

45 The Amida Sutra states:

You cannot be born in that land through the cause of small roots of good and small virtues. Hearing Amida Buddha's Name being expounded, hold steadfast to it.

46 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

Although the many other practices are termed "good acts," when viewed in relation to the Nembutsu, one finds them altogether beneath comparison. For this reason, many passages in the sutras extensively praise the efficacy of the Nembutsu. For example, in such passages as the Forty-eight Vows in the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, it is clear that by singly practicing the saying of the Name alone, one attains birth.

Further, as taught in the Amida Sutra, by singly practicing the saying of Amida's Name for one to seven days, one attains birth.

Further, the witness of the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, is not hollow.

Again, the passages of this [Contemplation] Sutra presenting meditative and non-meditative good acts show that by singly practicing the saying of the Name alone, one attains birth.
Such examples are not few. This completes the general exposition of Nembutsu samádhi.

47 Further, he states:

Further, one should believe deeply and decidedly that, as taught in the Amida Sutra, all the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, give their witness and encourage all foolish beings to attain birth without fail...

In their words and acts, the Buddhas are not in conflict with each other. Shakyamuni is the one who guides and urges all foolish beings to the saying of the Name alone and to single practice throughout their lives, so that when death comes, they will be born without fail in the Pure Land; but in fact all the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, with the same intent, praise this teaching, urge beings to follow it, and give witness to it. Why? Because their great compassion is the same in essence. What one Buddha teaches is what all Buddhas teach. What all Buddhas teach, one Buddha teaches. As taught in the Amida Sutra... Further, he urges all foolish beings single-heartedly to practice the saying of the Name of Amida alone, for one to seven days, and to attain birth without fail.

The [sutra] passage that follows states that in each of the ten quarters there are Buddhas countless as the sands of the Ganges, who all in accord praise Shakyamuni:

In the evil age of the five defilements, in this evil world, among evil sentient beings, evil passions, and in a time when evil acts and lack of faith prevail, well does he teach and praise the Name of Amida, encouraging sentient beings, "If one says the Name, one unfailingly attains birth."

This is the witness.

Further, the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters, fearing that sentient beings might not accept the teaching of the one Buddha, Shakyamuni, all together with the same intent and at the same time extend their tongues
and, covering all the great triple-thousand-fold worlds, preach these true and sincere words:

Sentient beings, each of you should accept what Shakyamuni has taught, has praised, has given witness to! It is certain beyond any doubt that when foolish beings - regardless of whether their evil or merit is great or small, or the period of time long or short - just single-heartedly practice the saying of the Name of Amida alone, for up to one hundred years or down to even one or seven days, they unfailingly attain birth.

Thus, what one Buddha teaches, all Buddhas give witness to. This is known as "establishing shinjin through the Buddha."

48 Further, he states:

Considering the intent of the Buddha's Vow, we find that, encouraging us to right-mindedness, it solely brings us to say the Name. In quickness of attaining birth, this practice cannot be compared with sundry, non-meditative acts. As expressed in the extensive praise in various passages of this [Contemplation] Sutra and other scriptures, encouraging and bringing beings to say the Name is taken to be the crucial benefit. Reflect on this.

49 Further, he states:

The [Contemplation Sutra] passage beginning, The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Hold well to these words," reveals precisely that Shakyamuni entrusted Amida's Name to Ánanda so that it would be passed down to distant generations. Although the advantages of the two gateways of meditative and non-meditative practices have been taught up to this point, in view of the intent of the Buddha's Primal Vow, this is to bring sentient beings solely to wholehearted utterance of the Name of Amida Buddha.

50 Further, he states:

The land of bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated;
I fear it is hard to be born there by doing sundry good acts according to our diverse conditions.

Hence, the Tathāgata selected the essential dharma,

Instructing beings to say Amida's Name with singleness, again singleness.

Further, he states:

As this kalpa draws to a close, the five defilements flourish;

Since sentient beings possess wrong views, they find it hard to have faith.

We are taught to practice wholeheartedly the Nembutsu alone, taking refuge in the path to the West,

But because of others our faith is destroyed, and we remain as we originally were.

Since innumerable kalpas in the past we have always been thus;

It is not that we realize this for the first time in this present life.

Because we have not encountered the excellent, decisive cause,

We have been transmigrating, unable to reach the other shore.

Further, he states:

Though the various dharma-gates all lead to emancipation,

None surpasses birth in the West through the Nembutsu.

When we say the Nembutsu, whether throughout life or down to ten,

Or three, or five utterances, the Buddha will come to welcome us.

Solely through the greatness of Amida's universal Vow,
Foolish beings, when they become mindful of it, are immediately brought to attain birth.

53 Further, he states:

All Tathágatas use skillful means;

Now, Shakyamuni does the same.

Through his teaching of dharma in accord with the listener, all receive benefit;

All people, each coming to their own understanding, should enter the "true" gate...

The gateways of the Buddhist teaching are many, numbering eighty-four thousand,

For the capacities of sentient beings are not the same.

If you seek the place of the eternal, where your existence finds repose,

First find the essential practice and enter the "true" gate.

54 Further, he states:

From what I see and hear about the monks and laity throughout the various areas these days, I find that there are different types of understandings and practices, and that single praxis and mixed praxis differ. Only when they perform [the Nembutsu] with singleness of mind, ten out of ten are born. With mixed praxis, since the sincere mind is lacking, not even one in a thousand can attain birth.

55 Master Yüan-chao's Commentary on the Amida Sutra states:

The Tathágata seeks to clarify the excellence of virtue of holding to the Name. First, other good acts are criticized and labeled "small roots of good." If performed without true trust, all meritorious acts - including
charity, observance of the precepts, temple construction, making images, worship and chanting, seated meditation, repentance, and ascetic practices - are only small good acts, even though they are directed toward birth with aspiration for the Pure Land. They are not the cause of birth. If one holds steadfast to the Name in accord with this sutra, one will definitely attain birth. We know then that saying the Name is possessed of many roots of good and many merits.

I formed this understanding long ago, but people hesitated to accept it because of their doubts. Recently, I have obtained a copy of the sutra as engraved on a stone monument at Hsiang-yang and find that this text corresponds perfectly with the truth. Thus people have begun to embrace a deep faith. The inscribed text states:

Good sons and daughters, hearing the teaching of Amida Buddha, solely say the Name single-heartedly, without being disturbed by other thoughts. Because one says the Name, all one's evils are eradicated. It is the act of many roots of good, many virtues, and many merits.

56 The Commentary [on the Amida Sutra] by [Chih-yuan of] Mount Ku states:

Hold steadfast (shuji) to the Name: shu (steadfast) means to accept firmly; ji (hold) means to maintain. Through the power of trust, one firmly accepts the Name in one's heart. Through the power of mindfulness, one maintains it without forgetting.

57 The Larger Sutra states:

It is difficult to encounter a time when a Tathágata has appeared in the world and to meet one. It is difficult to meet with and difficult to hear the teaching of the Buddhas. It is difficult to hear of the excellent dharma of bodhisattvas, the paramitas. It is also difficult to meet a true teacher, hear the dharma, and put it into practice. But the most difficult of all difficulties is to hear this sutra and accept it in shinjin; nothing surpasses this difficulty.
Therefore, I have presented the dharma thus, preached it thus, and taught it thus; accept it in trust and practice in accord with it.

58 The Nirvana Sutra states:

As stated in this sutra, the cause of all pure practices is the true teacher. Although the causes of all pure practices are innumerable, if the true teacher is mentioned, they are all already exhaustively included. As I have taught, all evil acts arise from wrong views. Although the causes of all evil acts are innumerable, if wrong views are mentioned, they are all already included exhaustively. Further, I say: the cause of highest perfect enlightenment is shinjin. Although the causes of enlightenment are innumerable, if shinjin is mentioned, they are all already included exhaustively.

59 Further, it states:

Good sons! There are two kinds of shinjin: one is trust and the other is searching. Such people, although they have trust, are incapable of searching. Therefore theirs is termed "imperfect realization of shinjin."

Again, there are two kinds of shinjin: one arises from hearing and the other from reflection. These people's shinjin has arisen from hearing but not from reflection. Therefore it is called "imperfect realization of shinjin."

Again, there are two kinds: one is to believe that there is enlightenment and the other, to believe that there are people who have attained it. These people's shinjin is belief only that enlightenment exists and not that there are people who have attained it. Therefore it is called "imperfect realization of shinjin."

Again, there are two kinds: one is trust in what is right and the other is trust in what is wrong. To say that there is causation and that there is Buddha, dharma, and Sangha, is termed "trust in what is right." To say that there is no causation or that there is a distinction in nature among the three
treasures, or to trust in wrong words or [such wrong teachers as] Purana, is termed "trust in what is wrong." These people, although they have trust in the treasures of Buddha, dharma, and Sangha, do not believe that the three treasures are identical in nature and character. Although they believe in causation, they do not believe that there are any who attain realization. Therefore, such trust is called "imperfect realization of shinjin." These people have acquired imperfect realization of shinjin...

Good sons, there are four acts that bring evil results. What are these four? The first is to recite the sutras in order to surpass others. The second is to observe the precepts in order to gain profit and esteem. The third is to practice charity in order to make others one's followers. The fourth is to fix and concentrate one's mind in order to reach the realm of neither thought nor no-thought. These four good acts bring evil results. Those who practice these four good acts are termed "people who sink, then emerge again; emerge, then sink again." Why is it said that they sink? Because they aspire to the three realms of existence. Why is said that they emerge? Because they see brightness. To see brightness is to hear of precepts, charity, and meditation. Why do they sink again? Because their wrong views increase and they give rise to arrogance. For this reason, I teach in two verses in the sutra:

There are sentient beings who aspire to the various states of existence;

They commit good and evil acts out of attachment to existence;

Such people lose the path of nirvana.

This is called emerging briefly, and sinking again.

There are people who, although they practice in the dark ocean of birth-and-death

And attain emancipation, still have blind passions;

Such people receive again the recompense of evil.
This is called briefly emerging, and sinking again.

With regard to Tathāgata, there are two kinds of nirvana: the created and the uncreated. Nirvana of the created is without permanence, bliss, self, or purity; uncreated nirvana is characterized by permanence, bliss, self and purity.

These people deeply believe that the two kinds of precepts both bring about good results. Hence this is termed "imperfect observance of precepts." Such people have not realized trust and precepts; even though they hear many teachings, it is imperfect.

What is "imperfect hearing"? What the Tathāgata taught comprises twelve divisions of scripture. Such people believe in only six of the divisions, but do not yet believe in the other six. Hence this is termed "imperfect hearing."

Again, although they accept and uphold these six divisions, they cannot recite them, so when they expound them for others, no benefit is gained. Hence this is termed "imperfect hearing."

Further, having accepted these six divisions of scripture, they uphold, recite, and expound them solely for the sake of gain and profit, or out of attachment to various states of existence. Hence this is termed "imperfect hearing."

Further, it states:

[The Buddha said,] "Good sons, the foremost, genuine, true teachers are bodhisattvas and Buddhas."

"World-honored one, why is this so?"

[The Buddha answered,] "Because of their three well-controlling powers. What are these three? The first is extremely gentle words. The second is extremely stern rebuke. The third is both gentle words and stern rebuke. Because of these, bodhisattvas and Buddhas are genuine true teachers."
"Further, good sons, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are great physicians; hence they are called "true teachers." Why? Because they know sicknesses and the medicines to cure them, and they give the medicine appropriate to the disease. It is like an excellent physician being skillful in eight kinds of healing. First, he observes the symptoms of the illness. There are three types: those of wind, fever, and water. To the patient of a wind disease, ghee is given. To the patient of fever disease, crystallized honey is given. To the patient of water disease, ginger infusion is given. Through knowing the root of the sickness, he is able to give medicine and cure it. Hence, he is called a good physician.

"The Buddhas and bodhisattvas are like this. They know all the sicknesses of foolish beings, which fall into three types: greed, anger, and folly. In the case of the sickness of greed, they make the person observe a skeleton. In the case of the sickness of anger, they make the person observe the features of compassion. In the case of the sickness of folly, they make the person observe the features of twelve-fold causation. Because of this, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are called true teachers.

"Good sons, a ferryman who safely transports his passengers is known as a good ferryman. So it is with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They bring all sentient beings across the great ocean of birth-and-death. Because of this, they are called true teachers."

61 The Garland Sutra states:

When you reflect on the true teachers,

You find they are like the father and mother who gave us birth.

They are like a nursing mother who nourished us with her milk.

They cause the elements of enlightenment to grow.
They are like a physician who cures our illnesses,
Like a deva raining down sweet dew,
Like the sun showing us the right path,
Like the moon turning its pure orb.

62 Further, it states:
The Tathágata, out of great compassion,
Appears in this world,
And for the sake of sentient beings universally,
Turns the wheel of supreme dharma.
It is for sentient beings that the Tathágata
Strove with great effort for countless kalpas;
How could all the worlds repay
The Great Teacher's benevolence?

63 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:
It is regrettable indeed that sentient beings doubt what should not be doubted;
The Pure Land is right before us and never out of harmony with us.
Do not ponder whether Amida will take you in or not;
The question is whether or not you wholeheartedly turn about at heart.
It is said that from this moment until the attainment of Buddhahood,

For vast kalpas, we will praise the Buddha out of gratitude for his compassion and benevolence.

Had we not received the power of Amida's universal Vow,

When - in what kalpa - could we part from this Saha world?

And how could we now expect to reach that precious land?

It is indeed the power of our Guide, who appeared in the Saha world.

But for the encouragement of our Guide, our true teacher,

How would we be able to enter Amida's Pure Land?

Attaining birth in the Pure Land, respond in gratitude for the compassion and benevolence!

64 Further, he states:

Extremely difficult is it to encounter an age in which a Buddha appears,

And difficult indeed for a person to realize the wisdom of shinjin.

To come to hear the dharma rarely met with

Is again among all things most difficult.

To realize shinjin oneself and to guide others to shinjin

Is among difficult things yet even more difficult.

To awaken beings everywhere to great compassion

Is truly to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence.

65 Further, he states:
Let us return!

Do not abide in other lands.

Following the Buddha’s guidance, let us return to our original home.

Once we have returned to our original land,

All our aspiration and practice will naturally reach fulfillment.

We are possessed of sorrow and joy by turns. Deeply reflecting on ourselves,

We must wonder: Were it not for Shakyamuni Buddha’s awakening of us,

When would we hear Amida’s Name and Vow?

Though we have received the compassion and benevolence of the Buddha, it is indeed difficult to repay.

66 Further, he states:

The beings of the ten quarters in the same way transmigrate within the six courses endlessly; revolving in circles, they flounder in the waves of desire and sink in the sea of pain. It is rare to meet with the Buddhist path or receive birth into human existence; now, already, we have met with them. It is rare to hear the Pure Land teaching; now, already, we have heard it. It is rare to awaken shinjin; now, already, we have awakened it.

67 Truly we know that those who perform single praxis with a combined mind do not attain great joy. Hence, the master [Shan-tao] states:

Such people do not realize the Buddha’s benevolence and do not respond in gratitude to it; though they perform practices, they give rise to contempt and arrogance in their hearts. For they act always for the sake of fame and profit; they have been enveloped in self-attachment unawares, and do not approach fellow practicers and true teachers; preferring to involve
themselves in worldly affairs, they obstruct themselves and block others from the right practice for birth.

How grievous it is that, since the beginning-less past, foolish, ignorant human beings possessed of defilements and hindrances have mixed the auxiliary and right and combined the minds of the meditative and non-meditative practices, so that they have had no chance of attaining emancipation. Reflecting on our transmigration in birth-and-death, we realize how hard it is to take refuge in the power of the Buddha's Vow, how hard it is to enter the ocean of great shinjin, even in the passage of countless kalpas. Truly we must sorrow at this; we must deeply lament.

Sages of the Mahayana and Hinayana and all good people make the auspicious Name of the Primal Vow their own root of good; hence, they cannot give rise to shinjin and do not apprehend the Buddha's wisdom. Because they cannot comprehend [the Buddha's intent in] establishing the cause [of birth], they do not enter the fulfilled land.

68 Thus I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, through reverently accepting the exposition of [Vasubandhu,] author of the Treatise, and depending on the guidance of Master [Shan-tao], departed everlastingly from the temporary gate of the myriad practices and various good acts and left forever the birth attained beneath the twin sala trees. Turning about, I entered the "true" gate of the root of good and the root of virtue, and wholeheartedly awakened the mind leading to the birth that is non-comprehensible.

Nevertheless, I have now decisively departed from the "true" gate of provisional means and, [my self-power] overturned, have entered the ocean of the selected Vow. Having swiftly become free of the mind leading to the birth that is non-comprehensible, I am assured of attaining the birth that is inconceivable. How truly profound in intent is the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth!
Having entered forever the ocean of the Vow, I now realize deeply the Buddha's benevolence. To respond with gratitude for the supreme virtues, I collect the crucial passages expressing the true essence of the Pure Land way, constantly saying, out of mindfulness [the Name that is] the inconceivable ocean of virtues. Ever more greatly rejoicing, I humbly receive it.

69 Truly we know that the teachings of the Path of Sages were intended for the period when the Buddha was in the world and for the right dharma-age; they are altogether inappropriate for the times and beings of the semblance and last dharma-ages and the age when the dharma has become extinct. Already their time has passed; they are no longer in accord with beings.

The true essence of the Pure Land way compassionately draws all of the innumerable evil, defiled beings to enlightenment without discrimination, whether they be of the period when the Buddha was in the world, of the right, semblance, or last dharma-ages, or of the time when the dharma has become extinct.

70 Relying on the teacher of the sutras and turning to the commentaries of the masters, I find that, with regard to the teaching of sutras, there are five kinds, distinguished in terms of their expositors: first, the Buddha's exposition; second, the exposition of holy disciples; third, the exposition of heavenly beings and hermit-sages; fourth, the exposition of demigods; and fifth, the exposition of miraculous spirits. Thus, [the latter] four kinds of exposition are not to be relied upon. The three [Pure Land] sutras are the Great Sage's own exposition.

71 The Commentary on the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Sutra states, explaining the four reliance’s:

When Shakyamuni was about to enter nirvana, he said to the Bhikshus, "From this day on, rely on dharma, not on people who teach it. Rely on the meaning, not on the words. Rely on wisdom, not on the working of the mind. Rely on the sutras that fully express the meaning, not on those that do not."
"As to relying on dharma, dharma refers to the twelve divisions of scripture. Follow this dharma, not people who teach it.

"With regard to relying on the meaning, meaning itself is beyond debate of such matters as, like against dislike, evil against virtue, falsity against truth. Hence, words may indeed have meaning, but the meaning is not the words. Consider, for example, a person instructing us by pointing to the moon with his finger.  

[To take words to be the meaning] is like looking at the finger and not at the moon. The person would say, 'I am pointing to the moon with my finger in order to show it to you. Why do you look at my finger and not the moon?'  

Similarly, words are the finger pointing to the meaning; they are not the meaning itself. Hence, do not rely upon words.

"As to relying on wisdom, wisdom is able to distinguish and measure good and evil. The working of mind always seeks pleasure, and does not reach the essential. Hence it is said, 'Do not rely on mind.'

"As to relying on the sutras that fully express the meaning, among all the sages, the Buddha is foremost. Among all the various scriptures, the Buddha-dharma is foremost. Among all human beings, the assemblage of Bhikshus is foremost."

The Buddha regarded the sentient beings of an age in which there is no Buddha as possessed of deep karmic evil. They are people who have not cultivated the roots of good that would enable them to see a Buddha.

72 Thus, monks and lay people of the latter age should practice the dharma with clear awareness of the four reliance’s.

73 Grounding myself in the right and true intent of the teaching and exploring the explanations made and transmitted by the venerable masters of the past, I will here set forth the true and provisional in relation to the Path of Sages and the Pure Land way, and caution people against non-Buddhist teachings based on opinions that are wrong, false, and misleading. Determining the year of Shakyamuni Tathágata’s entrance into nirvana, I will explain the distinctive characteristics of the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages.
Concerning this, Master Tao-ch’o of Hsuang-chung temple states:

Those who practice the way must continue without interruption for ten thousand kalpas before they can attain the stage of non-retrogression. Foolish beings of the present are said to be in reality "those whose thoughts of entrusting are as light as feathers." Further, they are called [bodhisattvas merely in] "provisional name," "those not settled," and "foolish beings outside [the bodhisattva stages]." They have not yet departed from the burning house [of samsaric existence].

How do we know this? In the Bodhisattva-Ornament Sutra, the stages of practice leading to attainment of enlightenment are minutely distinguished; because of the principle functioning here, these stages are called the path of difficult practice.

Further, he states:

I will clarify the reason for the Pure Land teaching by relating it to beings through its connection with the times and encourage them to take refuge in it; here, if the beings, the teaching, and the times were not in accord, it would be difficult to perform practice and difficult to attain enlightenment. The Sutra of Mindfulness of the Right Dharma states:

When practicers single-heartedly seek enlightenment,

They must always consider the times and the means;

If the times are inappropriate, there are no means.

This is called "loss"; it is not beneficial.

Why? Because it is like rubbing green wood to build a fire; fire cannot be made, for the time is not right. Because it is like merely breaking dry wood to build a fire; a fire cannot be made, for wisdom is lacking.

The "Moon-matrix" section of the Great Collection Sutra states:
During the first five-hundred year period after the Buddha’s parinirvana, my disciples will be resolute in acquiring wisdom. During the second five-hundred year period, they will be resolute in cultivating meditation. During the third five-hundred year period, they will be resolute in listening to the teaching and sutra-recitation. During the fourth five-hundred year period, they will be resolute in constructing towers and temples, practicing meritorious conduct, and performing repentance. During the fifth five-hundred year period, they will be resolute in conflict and strife, which will become widespread with the good dharma being diminished.

In ascertaining the nature of sentient beings of the present, we must consider that we are now in the fourth five-hundred year period following the Buddha’s departure from this world. This is indeed the age when beings should perform repentance, practice meritorious conduct, and recite the Buddha’s Name. In a single utterance of the Name of Amida Buddha, karmic evil that would involve one in eighty billion kalpas of birth-and-death is eliminated. Even a single utterance is thus; the person who practices the constant saying of the Name, is none other than the one who is always performing repentance.

76 Further, he states:

In distinguishing the sutras that will remain in the world from those that will disappear, we must consider that all the teachings of Shakyamuni’s lifetime will last through the five hundred years of the right dharma-age and the thousand years of the semblance dharma-age; during the ten thousand years of the last dharma-age, sentient beings will diminish in number, and the sutras will all disappear. The Tathágata, out of pity for the sentient beings in the various forms of pain and torment, will have this sutra in particular survive, remaining for a hundred years.

77 Further, he states:

The Great Collection Sutra states,

Out of billions of sentient beings who seek to perform practices and cultivate the way in the last dharma-age, not one will gain realization.
This is now the last dharma-age; it is the evil world of the five defilements. This one gate - the Pure Land way - is the only path that affords passage.

78 Thus, the multitudes of this evil, defiled world, ignorant of the distinctive characteristics of the latter age, revile the behavior and attitude of monks and nuns, but all people of the present, whether monk or lay, must take measure of their own capabilities.

79 Considering the teachings concerning the three dharma-ages, we find that the date of the Tathágata’s parinirvana falls on the fifty-third year (the year water/monkey) of the reign of King Mu, the fifth emperor of the Chou dynasty. From that year of water/monkey to the first year of our Gennin era (the year wood/monkey) it is 2,173 years. Based on the Auspicious Kalpa Sutra, the Benevolent Kings Sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra, we find that we are already 673 years into the last dharma-age.

80 Reading the Lamp for the Last Dharma-Age (by Saicho), we find it written:

He is a dharma-king that, basing himself on oneness, sets flowing the cultivation of beings.

He is a benevolent king that, widely reigning over the four seas, sends down the winds of virtue.

The benevolent king and the dharma-king, in mutual correspondence, give guidance to beings. The supra mundane truth and the mundane truth, depending on each other, cause the teaching to spread. Thus, the profound writings are everywhere throughout the land, and the benevolent guidance reaches everywhere under heaven.

We foolish monks have been caught in heaven's net and humbly submit to strict punishment; we have not a moment's rest.
With regard to the dharma, there are three ages, and among people, there are three levels. The instruction imparting the teaching and precepts flourishes and declines according to the age, and words of condemnation or praise are accepted or rejected depending on the person. The fortunes of the three ancient eras arose and declined in different ways, and the wisdom and enlightenment of beings of the five five-hundred year periods after the Buddha's demise differ. How can beings be saved by only one path? How can they be disciplined according to one principle?

Hence, we will distinguish carefully the right, semblance, and last [dharma-ages] and attempt to clarify how monks have observed or broken the precepts. There are three parts. First, the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages will be defined. Next, the behavior of monks in observing or breaking precepts will be determined. Finally, the teachings will be considered and compared with monks' conduct.

First, to define the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages, we note that the various explanations differ. For the present, we will set forth one explanation. Kuei-chi, a Mahayana master, cites the Auspicious Kalpa Sutra and states:

After the Buddha's parinirvana, the right dharma-age lasts for five hundred years and the semblance dharma-age for a thousand years. After this period of 1,500 years, Shakyamuni's teaching will become completely extinct.

No mention of the last dharma-age is made here. According to other expositions, [the right dharma-age lasts one thousand years. However,] since nuns do not observe the eight rules of deference and are indolent, the [right] dharma does not extend any further [than five hundred years]. Thus, we cannot accept this teaching.

Further, the Nirvana Sutra states:

In the last dharma-age, a multitude of 120,000 great bodhisattvas uphold the dharma, so that it does not perish.
Since this statement concerns bodhisattvas of high rank, it also is irrelevant to our discussion here.

Question: If this is so, what is the behavior of monks during this 1,500 year period?

Answer: In the Sutra of Mahamaya it is stated:

During the first five hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvana, seven holy monks, sages all, including Mahakashyapa, will uphold the right dharma in succession so that it does not perish. After five hundred years, the right dharma will become completely extinct.

Six hundred years after, the ninety-five kinds of non-Buddhist teaching will arise and vie with each other, but Ashvaghosha will appear and subdue them all.

Seven hundred years after, Nargarjuna will appear and demolish the banners of wrong-views.

Eight hundred years after, monks will give themselves to self-indulgence and only a few will attain the fruit of enlightenment.

Nine hundred years after, menials will be made into monks and nuns.

One thousand years after, on hearing of the contemplation of bodily impurity, they will be enraged and give it no thought.

One thousand one hundred years after, monks and nuns will take wives and husbands, and will break and revile the precepts.

One thousand two hundred years after, monks and nuns will have children.

One thousand three hundred years after, the yellow monk's robe will be changed to white.
One thousand four hundred years after, the four kinds of disciples will all be like hunters, and will sell the offerings made to the Three Treasures.

Here I declare: One thousand five hundred years after, two monks in the land of Kausambi will fall into dispute with each other and finally kill each other. As a result, the teachings will be stored in the naga's palace.

This passage is also found in the Nirvana Sutra, fascicle eighteen, the Benevolent Kings Sutra, and others. According to these sutra passages, after 1,500 years, there will be no precepts, meditation, or wisdom. Therefore, the Great Collection Sutra, fascicle fifty-one, states:

During the first five hundred years after my nirvana, monks and others will be resolute in attaining emancipation through the right dharma that I have taught. (The first stage of sageshood that is attained is termed emancipation.) In the next five hundred years, they will be resolute in meditation. In the next five hundred years, they will be resolute in listening to the teaching. In the next five hundred years, they will be resolute in constructing temples. In the last five hundred years, they will be resolute in conflict and disputes, and the pure dharma will sink into dormancy...

This passage means that during the first three five-hundred year periods, the three dharmas of precepts, meditation, and wisdom will, in succession, be resolutely upheld. This corresponds to the two periods in the quotation above: the right dharma lasting five hundred years and the semblance dharma lasting one thousand years.

The period from that of temple construction on is the last dharma-age. Thus, Chi's Commentary on the Diamond Sutra states:

The right dharma-age lasts five hundred years and the semblance dharma-age one thousand; after these 1,500 years, the right dharma will perish utterly.

We know, therefore, that the period from temple construction on belongs to the last dharma-age.
Question: If that is so, precisely to which period does the present age belong?

Answer: There are a number of theories concerning the years since the Buddha's nirvana; I will present two of them here.

First, Master Fa-shang and others, based on the Chou Dynasty Record of Miraculous Events, state:

The Buddha entered nirvana in the fifty-third year (water/monkey) of the reign of Mu Wang-man, the fifth lord of the Chou dynasty.

If we accept this theory, from that year (water/monkey) to our present year, Enryaku 20 (metal/snake), it is 1,750 years.

Second, Fei Ch'ang-fang and others, based on the Spring and Autumn Annals of the state Lu, declare:

The Buddha entered nirvana in the fourth year (water/rat) of the reign of K'uang Wang-pan, the twenty [-first] lord of Chou.

If we accept this theory, from that year (water/rat) to our present year, Enryaku 20 (metal/snake), it is 1,410 years.

Thus, this present period belongs to the end of the semblance dharma-age. Conduct in this period is already the same as in the last dharma-age.

In the last dharma-age, only the verbal teaching remains; there is no practice or realization. If there were precepts, then there would be the breaking of precepts. But already there are no precepts; by the violation of what precept can the precepts be said to be broken? And since there is not even the breaking of precepts, how much less is there the observance of precepts! Therefore the Great Collection Sutra states:

After the Buddha's nirvana, those without precepts will fill the land.
Question: In the sutras and the Vinaya, those who break precepts are barred and refused permission to enter the Sangha. Even those who break precepts are thus; how much more so those without precepts. Nevertheless, you now assert again with regard to the last dharma-age that there are no precepts. Why should monks feel the pain [of breaking precepts] without a wound?

Answer: Your reasoning here is erroneous. The conduct of monks during the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages is set forth in many sutras. Who is there, whether within or without - whether monk or lay - who has not read of it? Why should they, while being greedily attached to a wrong way of life, hide the right dharma that is the support of the country?

However, in the last dharma-age, with which we are concerned here, there are monks in name only. These nominal monks are the true treasures of the age. Are they not fields of merits? If, in the last dharma-age, there were those who observed precepts, they would seem strange and suspect, like a tiger in the marketplace. Who would believe in such things?

Question: We have already seen the subject of monks' conduct in the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages discussed in many sutras. Is it stated in the sacred scriptures, however, that nominal monks of the last dharma-age are the true treasure?

Answer: The Great Collection Sutra, fascicle nine, states:

It is like genuine gold being regarded as a priceless treasure. If there were no genuine gold, silver would be regarded as a priceless treasure. If there were no silver, then brass - as spurious treasure - would be regarded as priceless. If there were no brass, then copper or nickel, iron, pewter, or lead would be regarded as priceless.

All such metals are the world's treasures, but it is the Buddha dharma that is priceless. If there is no treasure of Buddha, the Pratyekabuddhas is supreme. If there is no Pratyekabuddhas, the arhat is supreme. If there is no arhat, other sages are regarded as supreme. If there are no other sages, beings who have realized meditation are regarded as supreme. If there are
no beings who have realized meditation, those who strictly observe precepts are regarded as supreme. If there are none who strictly observe precepts, monks who imperfectly observe precepts are regarded as supreme. If there are none who imperfectly observe precepts, monks in name only, who shave their heads and wear a monk's robe, are regarded as supreme.

Compared with followers of the ninety-five kinds of wrong paths, they are regarded as belonging to the first rank. They are worthy of receiving the world's homage. They are the field of merits for beings. Why? Because they show that they are to be held in awe by sentient beings. If one pays homage to such monks, protecting and supporting them, before long one will surely attain the state of discernment.

In this passage, eight kinds of priceless treasure are mentioned: the Tathágata, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas, and those of the first three fruits; beings who have realized meditation, monks who observe precepts, and monks who break precepts; and monks in name only who are without precepts. These are the priceless treasures of the right, semblance, and last dharma-ages, respectively. The first four belong to the right dharma-age, the next three to the semblance dharma-age, and the last to the last dharma-age. Thus we know clearly that those who break precepts and those who have no precepts are all true treasures.

Question: Humbly reading the preceding passage from the sutra, I see that monks who break precepts and monks in name only are indeed all true treasures. Why is it stated in the Nirvana Sutra and the Great Collection Sutra:

If the king and the ministers make offerings to monks who break precepts, the three calamities will arise in the land, and they will eventually be born in hell.

It is so even with monks who break precepts; how much more so, then, with monks who have no precepts. Thus, with regard to a single person - the monk who breaks precepts - the Tathágata speaks at times with censure
and at times with praise. Is there not the fault of two contradictory judgments in the exposition of the one sage?

Answer: Your reasoning is in error. In the Nirvana Sutra and the other sutras, there is an injunction against breaking precepts in the right dharma-age. This is not spoken with regard to monks of the semblance and last dharma-ages. Although the terms are the same, the times differ. There is injunction or sanction according to the age. This is the Great Sage's intent. In the World-honored one, there is no fault of two contradictory judgments.

Question: If that is the case, how do we know that the Nirvana Sutra and the other sutras prohibit breaking precepts during the right dharma-age and that this does not apply to monks of the semblance and last dharma-ages?

Answer: It is as revealed in terms of the eight kinds of true treasure taught in the passage from the Great Collection Sutra quoted before. This is the proof. For depending on the age, all are regarded as priceless. However, the monk who breaks precepts in the time of the right dharma defiles the purity of the Sangha; hence, the Buddha strictly prohibits this and does not allow him to enter. Thus, it is stated in the Nirvana Sutra, fascicle three:

The Tathágata has now entrusted the supreme, right dharma to kings, ministers, councilors, monks, and nuns... If there are some who break their precepts and slander the right dharma, the kings, ministers, and four groups of Buddhists should earnestly correct them. Such kings, ministers, and others will gain immeasurable merit... They are my disciples; they are true hearers. They will attain merit beyond measure...

Such words of injunction appear in numerous places throughout the sutras. All are injunctions explained for the right dharma-age, not teachings for the semblance and last dharma-ages. This is know because there is no dharma that can be abused, for the right dharma cannot be practiced in the latter part of the semblance dharma-age and in the last dharma-age. What is there that can be called abuse of the dharma? There are no precepts to be broken. Who is there that can be called one who breaks precepts? Further, in such times there is no practice of right dharma for a great king to
safeguard. How should the three calamities be fomented, and how could the practice of precepts and wisdom be lost? Moreover, in the semblance and last dharma-ages, there is no one who attains the fruit of realization. Why should it be taught that the great king be advised by the two kinds of sages? Hence we know that the teachings in the preceding passages all refer to the right dharma-age, when precepts are observed, for only then can there be the breaking of precepts.

Next, concerning the thousand years of the semblance dharma-age, during the first five hundred years, the observance of precepts wanes by degrees and the breaking of precepts gradually spreads. Although precepts are observed and practices performed, there is no realization. Hence, the Nirvana Sutra, fascicle seven, states:

Kasyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "World-honored one, you have taught that there are four kinds of Maras. How is it possible to distinguish between the teachings of Maras and the teaching of the Buddha? If some sentient beings pursue the practices of Maras and others follow the teaching of the Buddha, how are these various beings to be known?"

The Buddha said to Kasyapa, "Seven hundred years after my parinirvana, the Mara Papiyas will gradually gain strength and will act incessantly to destroy the right dharma that I teach. It is like a hunter being clothed in monk's robes. The Mara Papiyas will be thus. In taking on the appearance of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, he will be like this... [He will say:] 'Monks are permitted to acquire and keep menials, servants, cows, sheep, elephants, horses and so on, including copper and iron kettles and cauldrons, copper bowls of various sizes, and necessities of daily life; they may cultivate fields and plant seeds, buy and sell, engage in trade, and store grains and rice. The Buddha, out of his great compassion, takes pity on sentient beings and therefore permits them to engage in such activities and keep such things.' All such sutras and Vinaya's are the teachings of Maras."

Already we see it stated, "Seven hundred years after my parinirvana, the Mara Papiyas will gradually gain strength." Hence we know that at that time monks will gradually come to desire and keep the eight kinds of
impure possessions. The fabrication of these false teachings is the work of Maras. These sutras clearly explain in detail the conduct of monks with reference to the age. They should not be doubted. Here I have cited one passage; know that others are in accord with it.

Next, in the latter half of the semblance dharma-age, observance of precepts will decline and diminish, and breaking precepts will increase enormously. Therefore it is stated in the Nirvana Sutra, fascicle six:

Further, the Sutra of the Ten Wheels states:

If there is a person who, according to my teaching, abandons home life and yet commits evil, then though he is not a sramana, he calls himself a sramana, and though he does no pure acts he calls himself one who performs pure acts. Such a monk opens the storehouse of all good acts and virtues to all the devas, nagas, and yakshas, thus becoming a true teacher of sentient beings. Though he cannot be said to know content with but few desires, he shaves his head and beard and dons monk's robes. Through this, he increases the roots of good of sentient beings and discloses the path of good for the beings of the heavens...

Although the monk who breaks precepts is said to be a dead man, the traces of the power of precepts in him are like the cow's liver. The cow may have died, but people can in full awareness derive the medicinal liver from it. It is like the usefulness of the musk after the musk deer has died.

As we see, it is stated [in the Nirvana Sutra], "In the poisonous kara forest, there is a single persimmon tree." This is a parable teaching that the momentum of the semblance dharma-age is declining, and that in the defiled world characterized by the breaking of precepts, there are but one or two monks who observe precepts. Further, it is stated: "Although the monk who breaks precepts is said to be a dead man, it is like the usefulness of the musk after the musk deer has died. He becomes the true teacher of sentient beings." Clearly we know that in this period the breaking of precepts gradually comes to be permitted and becomes the field of merits for the world. This is the same as in the passage from the Great Collection Sutra quoted earlier.
Next, after the end of the semblance dharma-age, there are no precepts whatsoever. Recognizing the momentum of the times, the Buddha praises those who are monks in name only, declaring them to be the field of merits for the world, in order to save the people of the last dharma-age. The Great Collection Sutra, fascicle fifty-two, states:

If, in the last age that follows, there is a monk in name only who, in accord with my teaching, shaves his hair and beard and wears a monk's robe, and if there are lay supporters making offerings to him, these latter will acquire immeasurable merit.

Further, the Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish states:

If in the future, in the last age when the dharma-vehicle is about to perish, nominal monks should take wives and have them bear children, still lay supporters should pay homage to groups of four or more such monks just as they would to Shariputra, Maha Maudgalyayana, and the others.

Further, it states:

If one beats and scolds monks who break precepts, failing to recognize that they wear monk's robes, the offense is the same as causing blood to flow from the bodies of a hundred billion Buddhas. If, because of the dharma that I teach, sentient beings shave their hair and beard and don monk's robes, though they may not observe the precepts, they all bear the seal of nirvana already...

The Sutra of Great Compassion states:

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "In the future age, when the dharma is about to fall into complete extinction, monks and nuns - who have abandoned home life in accord with the dharma that I teach - will wander together from one wine house to another, leading their children by the hand. While following the dharma, they will commit impure acts. While behaving thus because of wine, they will be my disciples in the Auspicious Kalpa, when a thousand Buddhas appear in the world. After me, the future Buddha Maitreya will be my successor, followed by others. Know that the
succession will continue thus in order, until finally reaching Rocana Tathágata.

"Ánanda, while following the dharma, people will perform the acts of sramanas merely in form and declare themselves sramanas; in appearance they will resemble sramanas, and they will still wear monk's robes. In the Auspicious Kalpa, when the Buddhas from Maitreya down to Rocana Tathágata appear, such sramanas will, under those Buddhas, gradually enter nirvana in the realm of nirvana without residue. None will be left behind. Why? Because among the sramanas under the guidance of the Tathágatas, those who say the Buddha's name even once, awakening one moment of trust, will gain virtue through their act that will ultimately not be in vain. Thus through Buddha-wisdom, I discern the dharma-realms..."

All these sutras, referring to the age, speak of the nominal monks of the last dharma-age in the future as the venerable teachers of that period. If the monks of the last dharma-age are constrained by the injunctions meant for the right dharma-age, then the teachings and the capacities of beings will fall into opposition, and human beings and dharma will not be suited to each other. Accordingly, the Four-Part Vinaya states:

When that which has not been prohibited is made into a prohibition, the [Buddha's] three illuminations are sundered. Codifying such arbitrary opinions is an offense.

With the quotations from the sutras given above, the alignment [of dharma-ages and beings] has been completed.

In conclusion, I will cite the sutras and discuss them with respect to the last dharma-age. In its fundamental nature, the last dharma-age consists of the destruction of the right dharma, so that the three modes of activity cannot be regulated. The four modes of proper deportment are all violated. The Sutra Resolving Doubts concerning the Semblance Dharma-Age states...

Further, the Final Testament Sutra states...

Further, the Dharma-Practice Sutra states...
The Mrgaramat Sutra states...

Further, the Benevolent Kings Sutra states...

VI-2

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands

That are Provisional Means of the Pure Land Way

Compiled by Goutoku Shinran,

Disciple of Shakyamuni

81 Here, based on the sutras, the true and the false are determined and people are cautioned against the wrong, false, and misleading opinions of non-Buddhist teachings:

82 The Nirvana Sutra states:

If one has taken refuge in the Buddha, one must not further take refuge in various gods.

83 The Sutra of the Samádhi of All Buddhas' Presence states:

Those among laywomen who hear of this samádhi and seek to learn it...Take refuge in the Buddha yourself, take refuge in the dharma, take refuge in the Sangha. Do not serve other teachings, do not worship devas, do not enshrine spirits, do not heed days considered lucky.

84 Further, it states:
Laywomen who wish to learn this samādhi...must not worship devas or enshrine spirits.

85 Chapter Eight, "Constellations of the Mara King Papiyas," section two, in the Extensive Mahayana Sun-Matrix Sutra, fascicle eight, states:

Then Kharosti said to the beings of the heavens, "The moon and these other heavenly bodies each have their own sphere to govern. You are to save the four kinds of sentient beings. What are these four? You are to aid the human beings on earth, all nagas, yaksas, and further, scorpions. All such beings are to be saved without exception. In order to bring peace and happiness to all sentient beings, I have fixed the stars in their constellations. Each of these has its own divisions of space and time, down to the briefest hour. I will explain each in detail. The activities of each proceed regularly and prosper, varying according to the lands and their directions."

Kharosti placed his palms together before the assembly and said, "I have thus set in their places the sun and moon, the annual seasons, and the major and minor heavenly bodies. What are the six seasons? The first and second months are the time of warmth. The third and fourth months are the time of sowing. The fifth and sixth months are the time of rain. The seventh and eighth months are the time of ripening. The ninth and tenth months are the time of chill. The eleventh and twelfth months are the time of heavy snow. The twelve months are thus divided into six seasons.

"Further, there are eight major heavenly bodies: Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus, Mercury, the sun, the moon, and the star of eclipse. In addition, there are twenty-eight minor heavenly bodies, ranging from Krttika to Bharani. I have set them thus in order and have explained the laws of their placement. All of you, look and listen! All of you in this assembly, what are your thoughts? Are the methods by which I set them in place right or wrong? Do the activities and functioning of the twenty-eight constellations and the eight major heavenly bodies give you delight or not? Those who say yes and those who say no, each declare your views."
A that time all the devas, human beings, ascetics, asuras, nagas, kinnaras, and others placed their palms together and said, "You, Great Sage, are the most revered among devas and human beings, and among the nagas and asuras also, none surpasses you. Your wisdom and compassion are supreme. For innumerable kalpas you have taken pity on all sentient beings, never forgetting them; hence, you have gained meritorious recompense and fulfilled your vows, and your virtues are like an ocean. You know all things of the past, present and future; among devas and human beings, there is not one who possesses such wisdom. There is no sentient being who could have made such laws and operations - the laws and operations of day and night, of moment and hour, of the major and minor heavenly bodies, and of the waxing and waning moon and the cycle of the year. All of us delight in this and find peace and joy in it. How wonderful! You, the one of great virtue, give peace and comfort to sentient beings."

Then the sage Kharosti said, "Means such as the cycle of the year consisting of twelve months, and the laws governing the major and minor stars and the moments and hours, have all been explained already. Further, the great kings of the four continents have been placed at the four faces of Mount Sumeru, one king at each face. From each face, they reign over the sentient beings of that quarter. The deva-king of the northern quarter is Vaisravana. In his realm, there are many yaksas. The deva-king of the southern quarter is Virudhaka. In his realm, there are many kumbhandas. The deva-king of the western quarter is Virupaksa. In his realm, there are many nagas. The deva-king of the eastern realm is Dhrtarastra. In his realm, there are many gandharvas.

"These kings protect all lands and cities throughout the four cardinal points and four intermediate directions. Further, spirits are placed about as guards."

When the sage Kharosti finished preaching, all the great assembly - including devas, nagas, yaksas, asuras, kinnaras, mahoragas, and human and nonhuman beings - rejoicing immeasurably, said, "It is good, it is
good!" At this time, the devas, sages nagas, yaksas, asuras and others paid homage day and night to Kharosti.

Further, after an immeasurable length of time, there will be another sage. He will be named Kalika. He will appear in the world and again teach the laws governing the heavenly bodies and minor and major moons, and the essentials concerning times and seasons.

When the sage Light-Taste had preached the above, all the nagas on Mount Khalatiya where the sage lived venerated him with great reverence. With all their power as nagas, they paid homage.

86 Chapter Ten, "Buddha-Mindfulness Samádhis," of the Sun Matrix Sutra, fascicle nine, states:

When Papiyas finished delivering his verse, there was a Mara woman in the assembly named Free-of-Darkness. This Mara woman had, in the past, planted various roots of good. She stated, "The sramana Gautama is called by a name meaning 'virtues'. If sentient beings are able to hear the Buddha's name and wholeheartedly take refuge in him, no Mara is capable of inflicting harm on them. Much less subject to harm, then, are those who, seeing the Buddha and hearing the dharma directly, adopt various means to deepen and broaden their wisdom and insight...An army of all Maras hundreds of billions in number could not inflict harm on them even for a moment. The Tathágata has now opened forth the path to nirvana. I will go to the Buddha and take refuge in him."

Then she declared in verse for her father...

By practicing the dharma taught by all the Buddhas throughout the past, present, and future,

I will liberate sentient beings undergoing all forms of pain.

Attaining complete mastery in all dharmas,

I aspire to be like the Buddha in the future.
When Free-of-Darkness finished stating her verse, five hundred Mara women in the palace of her father the king, including all her sisters and relatives, awakened the aspiration for enlightenment. Then the Mara king, seeing that the five hundred women of the palace had all taken refuge in the Buddha and awakened the aspiration for enlightenment, felt a mounting anger and fear and sorrow... At that time, the five hundred Mara women declared in verse to Papiyas:

If sentient beings take refuge in the Buddha,

Those people will be fearless in the face of a hundred billion Maras.

All the more free of fear are those who have aspired to cross the current of birth-and-death

And reach the shore of uncreated nirvana.

If there are beings who offer a piece of incense

And scatter a blossom before the three treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,

They will give rise to a mind resolute and fearless,

Which cannot be defeated even by all the Maras...

Our immeasurable evil from the past

Is all extinguished without any residue;

Now that we have taken refuge in the Buddha sincerely and wholeheartedly,

It is certain that we will attain the fruit of supreme enlightenment.
When the Mara king heard these verses, his anger and fear greatly increased; his heart grew feverish with distress and melancholy, he sat alone in the palace.

At that time, the bodhisattva-Mahasattva Light-Taste, hearing the Buddha teach the dharma, caused all sentient beings to sever their attachments and achieve the four pure practices.

[The Buddha said to Light-Taste,] "Bathe yourself, don clean robes, refrain form meat and from meals after noon, and do not eat things strong in taste or smell. Prepare a site for practice in a tranquil place and sit in right mindfulness with your legs crossed. Whether walking or sitting, think on the Buddha's bodily features and do not let your mind be distracted. Do not perceive any other objects or think on other matters. For one day and night or seven days and nights, perform no other action. Sincerely think on the Buddha...and see the Buddha. With a small thought one sees a small Buddha; with a great thought one sees a great Buddha....With immeasurable thoughts, one sees the immeasurable and boundless Buddha body.

87 Chapter Thirteen, "Protecting Stupas," of the Sun-matrix Sutra, fascicle ten, states:

Then the Mara Papiyas, surrounded in front and behind by eighty billion kinsmen, went to the place of the Buddha. On reaching it, he touched his head to the Buddha's feet and paid homage to the World-honored one. Then he stated in verse.

All Buddhas of the past, present, and future, with great compassion,

Accept my homage! I repent all my evil acts.

In the two treasures of dharma and Sangha, in the same way.

I sincerely take refuge without any other thought.

May I, this day, make offerings to, revere,
And venerate the guiding master of all the world.

All evils I extinguish forever and will never commit;

To the end of my life, I will take refuge in the Tathágata’s dharma.

The Mara Papiyas, when he had finished stating this verse, said to the Buddha, ‘O World-honored one! The Tathágata, possessing a mind of equality and nondiscrimination with regard to me and all sentient beings, is always filled with joy and with compassion and forbearance."

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Then the Mara Papiyas greatly rejoined and awakened the mind of purity. Again, before the Buddha, he touched his head to the Buddha’s feet in homage. He then circumambulated the Buddha three times to the right, reverently placed his palms together, and withdrew to one side, where he stood gazing at the Buddha without wearying.

88 Chapter Eight, "Evil Spirits" Attainment of Reverent Trust," part one, of the Great Collection "Moon-Matrix" Sutra, fascicle five, states:

[The Buddha said,] "All beings! If you keep your distance from wrong views, you will gain ten kinds of virtue. What are these ten? First, with your mind pliant and good, you will have companions who are wise and virtuous. Second, believing in the recompense of actions, leading even to death, you will not commit any evil acts. Third, venerating the three treasures, you will not trust in gods. Fourth, adopting right views, you will not decide propitious or unpropitious times according to the season, day or month. Fifth, always being born in realms of human beings or devas, you will never fall into the evil courses. Sixth, attaining a mind of clarity in wisdom and goodness, you will be praised by others. Seventh, abandoning secular involvements, you will always pursue the holy path. Eighth, parting from views of annihilation and eternality, you will believe in the law of causation. Ninth, you will always meet and be with people of right faith, right practice, and right aspiration. Tenth, you will be born into the good courses of existence.
"You will direct the roots of good acquired from casting off wrong views toward attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment. People who do so quickly fulfill the six paramitas and will attain perfect enlightenment in a Buddha-land of goodness and purity. Having achieved enlightenment, they will adorn sentient beings with their virtues, wisdom, and all their roots of good in their own Buddha-land. Being born in those lands, people do not put trust in gods; leaving behind their fear of the evil course, they will be born into good courses on ending their lives there."

89 Chapter Eight, "Evil Spirits' Attainment of Reverent Trust," part two, of the Moon-Matrix Sutra, fascicle six, states:

Extremely difficult is it to encounter a Buddha's appearance in the world,

And difficult again to encounter the dharma and the sangha.

Difficult is it for sentient beings to attain pure faith,

And difficult again to part from the manifold adversities.

Difficult is it to have pity on sentient beings,

And difficult above all to know content.

Difficult is it to be able to hear the right dharma,

And difficult indeed to practice it well.

If we come to know these difficulties and thus attain [the ten kinds of] equality,

We will always receive happiness in the world.

The person of wisdom is always quick to perceive

The ten kinds of equality....
Then the World-honored one taught the dharma to the gathering of evil spirits. At that time, some evil spirits in the assembly had in the past awakened a resolute faith in the Buddha's teaching. After that, however, they had associated with evil teachers and had come to perceive in their hearts the faults of others. It was through this cause that they had been born evil spirits.

90 Chapter Nine, "The Deva Kings' Protection," in the "Moon-Matrix" section of the Great Collection Sutra, fascicle six, states:

Then, in order to instruct the beings of the world, the World-honored one asked the deva-king Maha Brahma lord of the Saha world, "Who protects and sustains the four continents?"

The deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha world, said, 'World-honored one of great virtue! The deva-king of Tusita heaven, together with countless hundreds of thousands of Tusita gods, protects and sustains Uttarakuru.

"The deva-king of Paranirmitavasavartin heaven, together with countless hundreds of thousands of Paranirmitavasavartin gods, protects and sustains Purvavideha.

"The deva-king of Nirmanarati heaven, together with countless hundreds of thousands of Nirmanarati gods, protects and sustains Jambudvipa.

"The deva-king of Suyama heaven, together with hundreds of thousands of Suyama gods, protects and sustains Aparagodaniya.

"World-honored one of great virtue! King Vaisravana, together with a host of countless hundreds of thousands of yaksas, protects and sustains Uttarakuru.

"King Dhrtarastra, together with a host of countless hundreds of thousands of gandharvas, protects and sustains Purvavideha.

"King Virudhaka, together with a host of countless hundreds of thousands of kumbhandas, protects and sustains Jambudvipa.
"King Virupaksa, together with a host of countless hundreds of thousands of nagas, protects and sustains Aparagodaniya.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Seven constellations of the heavenly sage [Kharosti], three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Uttarakuru. These seven constellations of the heavenly sage are Sata-bhisa, Dhanistha, and Purva-bhadrapada, Uttara-bhadraphada, Revati, Asvini, and Bharani. The three luminous bodies are Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. The three celestial maidens are Kuhan, Mina, and Meisha.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Among these seven constellations of the heavenly sage, Sata-bhisa, Dhanistha, Purva-bhadrapada are the domain of Saturn, and Kuhan is its star. Uttara-bhadrapada and Revati are the domain of Jupiter, and Mina is its star. Asvini and Bharani are the domain of Mars, and Meisha is its star. World-honored one of great virtue, these seven constellations of Kharosti, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Uttarakuru.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Purvavideha. These seven constellations of the heavenly sage are Krttika, Rohini, Mrga-sira, Ardra, Punar-vasu, Pusya, and Asleka. The three luminous bodies are Venus, Jupiter, and the moon. The three celestial maidens are Birisha, Michuna, and Katsukataka.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Among these seven constellations of the heavenly sage, Krttika and Rohini are the domain of Venus, and Birisha is its star. Mrga-sira, Ardra, and Punar-vasu are the domain of Jupiter, and Michuna is its star. Pusya and Aslesa are the domain of the moon, and Katsukataka is its star. World-honored one of great virtue! These seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Purvavideha.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Jambudvipa. These seven constellations of the heavenly sage are Magha, Purva-phalguni, Uttara-phalguni, Hasta, Citra, Svati, and Visakha.
The three luminous bodies are the sun, Mercury, and Venus. The three celestial maidens are Shakuka, Ka'nya, and Tora.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Among these seven constellations of the heavenly sage, Magha, Purva-phalguni, and Uttara-phalguni are the domain of the sun, and Shakuka is its star. Hasta and Citra are the domain of Mercury, and Ka'nya is its star. Svati and Visakha are the domain of Venus, and Tora is its star. World-honored one of great virtue! These seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Jambudvipa.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Aparagodaniya. These seven constellations of the heavenly sage are Anuradha, Jyestha, Mula, Purva-sadha, Uttara-sadha, Sravana, and Abhijit. The three luminous bodies are Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The three celestial maidens are Birishika, Tatoba, and Makara.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Among these seven constellations of the heavenly sage, Anuradha and Jyestha are the domain of Mars, and Birishika is its star. Mula, Purva-sadha, and Uttara-sadha are the domain of Jupiter, and Tatoba is its star. Sravana and Abhijit are the domain of Saturn, and Makara is its star. World-honored one of great virtue! These seven constellations of the heavenly sage, three luminous bodies, and three celestial maidens protect and sustain Aparagodaniya.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Among the four continents, Jambudvipa is the most excellent. Why? Because the people of Jambudvipa are courageous and wise, and their pure acts benefit them. You, the Buddha, World-honored one, have appeared in it. For this reason the four great deva-kings of the directions all the more protect and sustain it. In Jambudvipa, there are sixteen great kingdoms. The four great kingdoms of Anga-Magadha, Vangamagadha, Avanti, and Ceti are surrounded by King Vaisravana and a host of yaksas, who protect and sustain them.
"The four great kingdoms of Kasi, Kosala, Vamsa, and Malla are surrounded by King Dhrtarastra and a host of gandharvas, who protect and sustain them.

"The four great kingdoms of Kuru, Vajji, Pancala, and Surasena are surrounded by King Virudhaka and a host of Kumbhandas, who protect and sustain them.

"The four great kingdoms of Assaka, Soma, Sorata, and Kamboja are surrounded by King Virupaksa and a host of nagas, who protect and sustain them.

"World-honored one of great virtue! Because the sages of the heavens protected and sustained the four continents in the past, they have been divided and situated in this way. Later - depending on whether the place was a kingdom, city, village, temple, or garden, beneath trees, among graves, or in mountain valleys, fields, rivers, springs, dikes, or jeweled islands in the sea or shrines to the gods - nagas, yaksas, raksasas, hungry ghosts, pisacas, putanas, kataputanas and so on were born there, by egg, womb, moisture, and metamorphosis. They dwell in those places but have no territory of their own. They have not received instructions from others. Thus, I pray that the Buddha array these spirits and station them throughout the lands of Jambudvipa for the protection of these lands and for the protection of all the beings. We would like to rejoice with them in receiving this instruction."

The Buddha said, "It is so. Maha Brahma, it is as you say."

Then the World-honored one set forth the meaning once more, teaching in verse:

In order to instruct the beings of the world, I,

The guiding master, asked King Brahma:

Who is it that protect and sustains
These four continents?

Brahma, teacher of the heavens, spoke thus:

With their followings, the kings of the heavens

Of Tusita, Paranirmitavasavartin,

Nirmanarati, and Suyama

Protect and sustain

The four continents.

Further, the kings of the four directions

And their followers protect and sustain them.

The twenty-eight constellations,

Their twelve central stars,

And the twelve celestial maidens

Protect and sustain the four continents.

Nagas, spirits, raksasas, and so on,

Who have received no instructions from others,

Go to and protect various areas

According to their place of birth.

I pray that the Buddha array

The devas and spirits variously,

And taking pity on sentient beings,
Make the torch of the right dharma burn brightly.

Then the Buddha said to Bodhisattva-Mahasattva Moon-Matrix, "You who have knowledge of purity! At the beginning of this Auspicious Kalpa, when human life lasted forty-thousand years, the Buddha Krakucchanda appeared in the world. For the sake of countless, innumerable hundreds of thousands of billions of Nayutas of sentient beings, this Buddha stopped the wheel of birth-and-death and turned the wheel of the right dharma. Further, he stopped the evil courses and established the good courses and the attainment of emancipation.

"This Buddha entrusted the four vast continents to the deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, and to the deva-king of Paranirmitavasavartin heaven, the deva-king of Nirmanarati heaven, the deva-king of Tusita heaven, the deva-king of Suyama heaven, and other. In order to protect them, in order to sustain them, in order to manifest pity for sentient beings, in order that the seeds of the three treasures not be severed, in order that the three treasures flourish, in order that the vital energy of the earth, the vital energy of sentient beings, and the vital energy of the right dharma long abide and increase, in order to stop sentient beings from falling into the three evil courses, and in order to guide them toward the three good courses, he entrusted the four continents to Maha Brahma and the other deva-kings of the heavens.

"Thus the kalpa gradually elapsed and devas and human beings expired, all good acts and the pure dharma passed into extinction, and beings addicted to great evil and various blind passions increased. When human life lasted thirty thousand years, the Buddha Kanakamuni appeared in the world. This Buddha entrusted the four great continents to King Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, and to the other deva-kings, from the deva-king of Paranirmitavasavartin heaven to the four great deva-kings of the directions and their followers. In order to protect and sustain the continents, and for all the other reasons, including stopping sentient beings from falling into the three evil courses and guiding them toward the three good courses, he entrusted the four continents to Maha Brahma and the other deva-kings.
"Thus the kalpa gradually elapsed and devas and human beings expired, the pure dharma passed away, and beings addicted to great evil and various blind passions increased.

"When human life lasted for twenty thousand years, the Tathágata Kasyapa appeared in the world. This Buddha entrusted the four great continents to King Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, and to the deva-king of Paranirmitavasavartin heaven, the deva-king of Nirmanarati heaven, the deva-king of Tusita heaven, the deva-king of Suyama heaven, Kausika Indra, the four deva-kings of the directions, and all their followers. In order to protect and sustain the continents, and for all the other reasons, including stopping sentient beings from falling into the three evil courses and guiding them toward the three good courses, Kasyapa Buddha entrusted the four continents to Maha Brahma, the four deva-kings of the directions, and the others. He also entrusted them to the various sages of the heavens, the seven central stars, the twelve celestial maidens, the twenty-eight constellations, and so on in order to protect and sustain the continents.

"You who have knowledge of purity! Thus we have reached the time when human life lasts one hundred years - the time of defilement of the kalpa, defilement of the blind passions, defilement of the sentient beings, defilement of great evil and blind passions, and the evil world of strife. The pure dharma has vanished entirely, and all evils darken the world. Just as sea water has the single taste of salt, so the world is pervaded and filled with the taste of great blind passions. Evil ones in hordes, taking skulls in their hands and staining their palms with blood, slay one another. Among such evil sentient beings, I now appear in the world and attain perfect enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree. I received food from merchants led by Trapusa and Bhallika. For their sake, I divide Jambudvipa among the devas, nagas, gandharvas, kumbhandas, yaksas, and others, so that it be protected and sustained.

"Accordingly, all the bodhisattva-Mahasattvas of the Buddha-lands throughout the ten quarters, without exception, will come and assemble here, gathering in multitudes. In this Buddha-land of Saha, where there are
ten billion suns and moons, ten billion fourfold continents, ten billion fourfold great oceans, ten billion Encircling Iron Mountains and Great Encircling Iron Mountains, ten billion Mount Sumerus, ten billion fourfold asura castles, ten billion fourfold great deva-kings of the directions, ten billion Trayatrimsha heavens and so on, up to ten billion realms of neither thought nor no-thought that I will not enumerate in detail - in this Buddha-land of Saha, I will perform the Buddha's work. In this Buddha-land of Saha, all the deva-kings Brahmas and their followers, as well as the deva-king Papiyas, the deva-kings of the Paranirmitavasavartin heavens, the deva-kings of the Nirmanarati heavens, the deva-kings of the Tusita heavens, the deva-kings of the Suyama heavens, the deva-king Indras, the fourfold great deva-kings of the directions, the kings of the asuras, the kings of the nagas, the kings of the yaksas, the kings of the raksasas, the kings of the gandharvas, the kings of the kinnaras, the kings of the garudas, the king of the mahoragas, the kings of the kumbhandas, the kings of the hungry ghosts, the kings of the pisacas, the kings of the putanas, the kings of the kataputananas and so on are gathered here in a great assembly with their followers in order to hear the dharma.

"In this Buddha-land of Saha, all the bodhisattva-Mahasattvas and Sravakas, without exception, have gathered here in order to hear the dharma. I will now, for the great assembly gathered here, set forth the most profound Buddha-dharma. Moreover, in order to protect the world, I will array the spirits gathered in Jambudvipa and station them throughout the land, and thus protect and sustain it."

Then the World-honored one asked deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, "To whom did the Buddhas of the past entrust these four great continents, in order that they be protected and sustained?"

Deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, replied, "The Buddhas of the past entrusted these four continents to me and to Kausika Indra in order that they be protected. But we were at fault. [Thus,] my name and that of Indra have not been stated; only the other deva-kings and the constellations, luminous bodies, and central stars have been praised as those who protect and sustain them."
Then deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, and Kausika Indra touched their heads to the Buddha's feet in homage and spoke these words, "World-honored one of great virtue! Well-gone one of great virtue! We now repent our failings. We are like small children, foolish and lacking in wisdom; how can we speak our names before the Tathágata?

"World-honored one of great virtue! Please pardon us. Well-gone one of great virtue! Grant us your pardon. Those gathered in the great assembly also, please pardon us. Having obtained freedom in expounding the teaching in our own dominions, we protect and sustain beings in order to lead them all into the good courses.

"Already in the distant past, under the Buddha Krakucchanda, we received our instructions, and we have already made the seeds of the three treasures flourish. Under the Buddhas Kanakamuni and Kasyapa, we again received the same instructions, and earnestly caused the seeds of the three treasures to flourish. This was in order that the vital energy of the earth, the vital energy of the sentient beings, and the vital energy of the right dharma - the taste of manda - long abide and increase. We too now receive instructions under the World-honored one also. Having obtained freedom in expounding the teaching in our dominions, we put an end to all strife and famine, and earnestly give protection in order to keep the seeds of the three treasures from extinction; in order that the three kinds of vital energy long abide and increase; in order to obstruct those sentient beings performing evil acts and protect and nurture those who practice the dharma; in order to stop sentient beings from falling into the three evil courses and to guide them into the three good courses; and in order that the Buddha-dharma be able to long abide."

The Buddha said, "Excellent, excellent! Stalwart ones, let it be as you say."

Then the Buddha said to the ten billion deva-king Maha Brahmas, "I place in your hands all beings who practice the dharma, abide in the dharma and accord with the dharma, and who shun evil. You, leaders of sages, obtain freedom in expounding the teaching in your own dominions in the ten billion fourfold continents. You have acquired places where you can freely exercise your powers. The sentient beings of those places are vile, coarse,
and malicious; they altogether lack pity for others, conceive no fear for the next life, and impinge upon and distress the minds of all, whether warriors, Brahmans, merchants and peasants, or serfs. They do so even to the minds of animals. In this way they engage in the destruction of life and hold to wrong views. Through these acts they bring about untimely winds and rains, the impairment and diminution of the vital energy of the earth, of sentient beings, and of the right dharma. You are to stop them and lead them to good acts.

"If there are sentient beings who seek to achieve good, who desire to obtain the dharma, who aspire to cross to the other shore beyond birth-and-death, who practice the paramitas of charity or one of the others, up to the paramitas of wisdom - sentient beings whose acts abide in the dharma, or who manage their affairs in order to perform practices - you should protect and sustain such sentient beings.

"If there are sentient beings who accept and uphold various sutras and treatises, recite them, expound them for others, and explain them, you should, with them, acquire sturdy powers through the means of mindfulness, enter the wisdom in which one does not forget what one hears, and discern the characteristics of all things, and moreover cause beings to part from birth-and-death, practice the noble eightfold path, and accord with the root of samádhi.

"If there are sentient beings in your dominions who, dwelling in the dharma, performing the methods of practicing samatha and vipasyana in order, and accomplishing the various samádhis, earnestly seek to practice in order to attain the three kinds of bodhi, you should remove evils and protect them, embrace them, warmly give them alms, and keep them from want.

"If there are sentient beings who practice charity by giving food and drink, clothing, or bedding, or who give medication for illness, you should cause the five benefits to increase for those almsgivers. What are these five? First, increase in life; second, increase in wealth; third, increase in pleasure; fourth, increase in good acts; and fifth, increase in wisdom. You will obtain benefits and happiness throughout the long night. Because of this, you will
well fulfill the six paramitas, and before long, you will attain all-knowing wisdom."

Then the ten billion deva-king Brahmas, with deva-king Maha Brahma, lord of the Saha-world, at their head, all said, "It is so, it is so. World-honored one of great virtue, in each of our own dominions, there are people who are vile, course and malicious, who lack pity for others, conceive no fear for the next life, and so on. We will stop them and cause the five benefits to increase for the alms-givers."

The Buddha said, "Well spoken, well spoken! Let all of you be thus."

At that time, all the bodhisattva-Mahasattvas, all the great Sravakas, and all the devas and nagas and so on, including all the human and nonhuman beings, praised [the deva-king Brahmas], saying, "Excellent, excellent! Valiant, courageous ones! You will cause the dharma to long abide, free all sentient beings from the evil courses, and lead them quickly into the good courses."

Then the World-honored one, in order to clarify further the meaning, stated in verse:

I say to Moon-Matrix:

Upon entering the beginning of this Auspicious Kalpa,

Krakucchanda Buddha

Entrusted the four continents to Brahma and the others.

In order to obstruct all evil acts,

They make the eye of the right dharma bright;

They cast aside all evils

And protect and sustain those who practice the dharma.
They keep the seeds of the three treasures from extinction
And cause the three kinds of vital energy to increase;
They arrest the suffering in the evil courses
And lead them into the good courses.
Kanakamuni also entrusted the four continents
To King Mahabrahma and all the other deva-kings -
Of Paranirmitavasavartin, Nirmanarati, and so on,
And the four directions.
Next, Kasyapa Buddha also entrusted them
To deva-king Brahma, the four deva-kings
Of Nirmanarati and the other heavens,
Indra, the world-protecting kings,
And all the sages of the heavens in the past.
For the sake of all the worlds,
They set the constellations and luminous bodies in place
And had them protect and sustain beings.
When the world has entered the age of defilement and evil
And the pure dharma has become extinct,
I alone attain enlightenment that is supreme
And bring human beings peace and protect them.
Now, before this great assembly,
I have often been deeply troubled;
But you are to bestow alms and teach the dharma,
Support me and enable me to protect and sustain the world.
The bodhisattvas throughout the ten quarters
All without exception will come and gather here.
And the deva-kings also
Come to this Buddha-land of Saha.
I asked King Mahabrahma:
Who protected this world in the past?
The deva-kings Indra and Mahabrahma
Indicated the other deva-kings.
Then Indra and King Brahma
Begged me, the guiding master, for pardon, saying,
"In the dominions where we rule
We will stop all evil.
We will cause the seeds of the three treasures to flourish
And increase the three kinds of vital energy;
We will obstruct those who commit evil acts
And protect those who perform good."
91 Chapter Ten

"The Maras' Attainment of Reverent Trust," of the Moon-Matrix Sutra, fascicle seven, states:

At that time there were ten billion Maras. All together, at the same time, they rose from their seats, and joining their hands in homage, faced the Buddha, touched their heads to the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "World-honored one! Awakening great courage, we will protect and sustain the Buddha's right dharma and cause the seeds of the three treasures to flourish and to long abide in the world. We will now cause the vital energy of the earth, the vital energy of sentient beings, and the vital energy of the dharma all to increase. If there are disciples who listen well to the World-honored one, abide in the dharma and accord with the dharma, and perform practices so that the three modes of action correspond with the dharma, then we will all protect and sustain those people and see that they have all that they need...

In this Saha world,

At the time that it first entered the Auspicious Kalpa,

Krakucchanda Tathāgata entrusted

All the four continents

To the deva-kings Indra and Brahma

And had them protect and sustain them.

Thus he caused them to nurture the seeds of the three treasures

And increase the three kinds of vital energy.

Kanakamuni also entrusted

The four continents
To Brahma, Indra, and the other deva-kings
And had them protect and sustain them.

Again, Kasyapa, in the same way,
Entrusted all the four continents
To Brahma, Indra, and the world-guardian kings
And had them protect people who practiced the dharma.

Further, the sages
And heavenly sages of the past
Entrusted the world to the central stars, luminous bodies, and constellations,
Dividing and arranging them.

In the world of the five defilements I have appeared;
I subdue the evil deeds of Maras,
Form a great assembly,
And reveal the right dharma of the Buddha"

All the assembled devas
Said together to the Buddha:
"In the dominions where we rule,
We will all protect the right dharma.
We will cause the seeds of the three treasures to flourish
And increase the three kinds of vital energy.

We will put an end to all disease and pestilence,

Starvation and strife."

92 "Chapter on the Protection of the Deva-King Dhrtarastra" states:

The Buddha said, "God of the sun, god of the moon, if you protect and sustain my dharma, I will have you enjoy long life and keep you from degeneration and decline."

At that time there were ten billion deva-king Dhrtarastras, ten billion deva-king Virudhakas, ten billion deva-king Virupaksas, and ten billion deva-king Vaisravanas. They all, at the same time, together with their followers, rose from their seats, straightened their garments, bowed in homage with their palms joined, and spoke the following words: "World-honored one of great virtue! Each of us, in our own continent, will earnestly protect and sustain the Buddha-dharma. We will cause the seeds of the three treasures to flourish and long abide, and will make the three kinds of vital energy all increase...

"We now, with the same mind as our leader deva-king Vaisravana, protect the northern part of Jambudvipa and the teaching of all the Buddhas."

93 "Chapter on Forbearance," part sixteen, of the Moon-Matrix Sutra, fascicle eight, states:

The Buddha said, "It is so, it is so. It is just as you say. If, while clinging to existence, you want to reject pain and gain pleasure, you should protect and uphold the right dharma of the Buddhas. In this way you will certainly attain the recompense of immeasurable merit. If there are sentient beings who, following me, renounce worldly life, shave their hair and beard, and don monk's robes, though they might not observe precepts, they all already bear the seal of nirvana. Further, there may be some who unjustly inflict
distress and confusion on those who renounce worldly life but do not uphold precepts, abuse them and slander them, and taking swords and rods in their hands, cut them and flog them. They may seize their robes and begging bowls and snatch away their various daily provisions and utensils. Such people destroy the true and real fulfilled body of the Buddhas of the past, present and future; they demolish the eye for all devas and human beings. Because such people cause the right dharma taught by all the Buddhas and the seeds of the three treasures to sink into obscurity, they keep all devas and human beings from obtaining benefit. Since they will surely fall into hell, they cause the three evil courses to expand and grow full."

[Further, it states:]

At that time, all the devas, nagas and so on, including all kataputanas and human and nonhuman beings, joined their palms in homage and said: "We will consider as our teachers and elders all those who are the Buddha's disciples and those who, though they do not observe the precepts, shave their hair and beard and wear a monk's robe at their shoulder. We will protect and sustain them, provide them with necessities, and keep them from want. If other devas, nagas and so on, including kataputanas, cause them distress or even look on them with evil thoughts, we will all together deprive them of their characteristics as devas, nagas, putanas, and so on, and make them ugly and unsightly. We will make it impossible for them to live together with us or to take meals with us. They will not be able to laugh or sport in the same place with us. In this way we will shun them and inflict punishment on them.

94 [Further, the Garland Sutra states:]

One must give up divination, study right views, and believe deeply and decidedly in the causation of evil and merit.

95 The Sutra of the Samádhi of Heroic Advance states:

All those Maras, all those spirits, and all those evil ones, with their accompanying groups, will each say, "I have attained the unexcelled
enlightenment." During the last dharma-age, long after my parinirvana, there will be many such Maras, many such spirits, and many such evil ones. They will be active in the world, and as teachers, they will lead beings to fall into the trap of attachments and false views and to wander from the way to enlightenment. They will delude and confuse the ignorant and surely cause them to lose their minds. Where such spirits pass, familial houses will collapse and disperse, and their members will become Maras of attachments and false views, losing the seed for becoming Tathágata.

96 The Sutra of Ritual Sprinkling states:

Without revealing themselves, the thirty-six spirit-kings, together with their followings of spirits numerous as the sands of the Ganges ten billion-fold, will take turns protecting those who receive the three refuges.

97 The Sutra of the Ten Wheels of Ksitigarbha states:

Those who take refuge truly and wholeheartedly, freeing themselves from all delusional attachments and all concern with the propitious or unpropitious, must never take refuge in false spirits or non-Buddhist teachings.

98 Further, it states:

In various ways, to lesser or greater degree, they cling to signs of the propitious or unpropitious and worship spirits... they give rise to acts of the greatest and most oppressive evil, close to the evil karma that will lead them to Avici hell. Unless such people repent and cast off these acts of great evil - whether they do not leave home life and receive full precepts, or whether they do - they will suffer the evil consequences.

99 In the Sutra of the Samádhi of Collecting All Merits, it is stated:

Do not turn toward other teachings; do not worship gods.
The Sutra of the Vows of Medicine Master Buddha states:

Good sons and good daughters of pure trust must never serve gods to the very end of their lives.

Further, it states:

Those who believe the deluded teachings of evil Maras, non-Buddhists, or sorcerers foretelling calamity or fortune may be stricken by fear; their minds will become unsound. Engaging in divination, they will foretell misfortune and will come to kill various sentient beings. They may make prayers to gods or invoke spirits to beg for good fortune and wish for long life, but in the end these will not be obtained. Being foolish and ignorant, they will believe in false teachings and fall into inverted views and, finally bringing an untimely death on themselves, will enter hell with no prospect of emergence... Eight, undergoing misfortune, they will suffer from poison, prayers to evil gods, curses, and the spirits that emerge from corpses.

The Sutra of the Bodhisattva Precepts states:

The rule of the person who renounces worldly life is not to pay homage to the king, not to pay homage to one's parents, not to serve the six kinds of blood-relatives, and not to worship spirits.

"Chapter on Upasena" in the Sutra of the Buddha's Past Lives (translated by Jñanagupta), fascicle forty-two, states:

At that time, there was a nephew of the three Kasyapa brothers, a Brahmin with his hair tied in conch shape. This Brahmin’s name was Upasena... He was always engaged in the study and practice of the way of hermit sages together with two hundred fifty Brahmin disciples who also tied their hair in conch-shape. He heard that his uncles, the three Kasyapas, went with all their disciples to the place of the great sramana [Shakyamuni], shaved off their hair and beards and donned monk's robes. Going to see his uncles, he spoke to them in verse:

Uncles! Have you worshiped fire for one hundred years in vain?
In vain have you performed austerities?

Today, do you all abandon this path of practice

Just as a snake sloughs its old skin?

Then his uncles, the three Kasyapas, said together, in verse, to their nephew Upasena:

In the past, we worshiped the god of fire in vain

And performed austerities to no purpose.

Today we abandon that path of practice

Indeed as a snake discards its old skin.

104 The Awakening of Faith states:

Further, there are sentient beings who, lacking the power of roots of good, are confused and misled by Maras, non-Buddhist teachers, and spirits. During meditation, such beings may manifest forms to terrify you, or may appear with the features of comely men and women. You should meditate on "mind only"; the object will then disappear and harass you no more.

Sometimes they may appear in the forms of devas or bodhisattvas, or present figures replete with the features and marks of Tathágatas. They may teach dharanis, or charity, precepts, forbearance, endeavor, meditation and wisdom; or teach that equality is the true nirvana, or that emptiness, formlessness, and wish-less-ness is; or freedom from aversion and favor, or the nonexistence of cause and effect, or ultimate emptiness and tranquility. At other times, they may enable you to know your past lives or your futures. They may enable you to attain the wisdom of knowing the minds of others, or the capacity for unimpeded eloquence. Thus they may foster in you a grasping for worldly fame and profit.
They may cause you frequently to give rise to anger or joy, so that you grow accustomed to having an unstable nature. At times, you become extremely kind, or extremely sleepy, or extremely sick; your mind is given to negligence. At other times, you suddenly display great diligence, and afterwards abandon your efforts. You fall into uncertainty, with much doubting and much pondering. Or discarding your original excellent practices, you are brought to devote yourself to sundry acts, becoming entangled in worldly affairs and being drawn about here and there.

Again, Maras and spirits may cause you to attain states that in small part resemble the various samádhis. These are all non-Buddhist attainments and not true samádhis. When you are abiding in meditation for one day, or two days, or three days, up to seven days, they may cause you to experience taking food and drink that is naturally fragrant and delicious; feeling pleasant repose in body and mind, without hunger or thirst, you thus become attached to your states. Or, they may cause you to lose moderation in meals, suddenly eating excessively or eating too little, so that your complexion changes accordingly.

For these reasons, practicers should constantly devote themselves to contemplating with wisdom and keep their minds from falling into a net of falsity. Strive to abide in right-mindedness, without grasping or clinging, and keep your distance from all obstructive acts. Know that none of the samádhis of non-Buddhist teachers is free from wrong views, attachment, and self-conceit, for they are undertaken out of desire for worldly fame, profit, and esteem.

105 The Treatise Illuminating the True (by Fa-lin) states:

The chapters "Ten Illuminations" and "Nine Admonitions" replying to the "ten divergences and nine delusions" posed by Li, the Taoist.

The first "divergence" set forth by the non-Buddhist states:

The spirit of the august Lao-tzu was entrusted to a wondrous hermit lady, and he was born from her left side. Shakyamuni entered the womb of Queen Maya and emerged from the right side.
The first illumination of the Buddhist states: Lao-tzu, contrary to the eternal laws, emerged from the left side after being entrusted to a herd girl. The World-honored one, conforming with the law of change, emerged from the right side of his sacred mother.

A person of enlightenment states: In reading the various commentaries on the Five Thousand Characters by Lü Ching-yü, Tai Shen, Wei Ch'u-hsüan, and others, and the glossaries compiled by the emperor Yüan of Liang and by Chou Hung-cheng, I find that they state that the title "august" has four applications: it is used for the three emperors and for the emperors Yao and Shun.

In ancient times these lords of great virtue stood above all the people; hence, they were referred to as "august." Kuo-hsiang states in his commentary [on Chuang-tzu], "The person that the age regards as wise is the lord; those whose capacities are not recognized by the world are retainers."

Lao-tzu was not an emperor or lord; he is not included among the four applications of the word "august." In what documents is he casually referred to as "august"?

Moreover, such Taoist classics as Hsuan-miao, Chung-t'ai, Chu-t'ao, and Yü-cha, as well as the record Ch'u-sai-chi, state that Lao-tzu was born of his mother Li; they do not speak of a "wondrous hermit lady." The statement by the non-Buddhist is incorrect, a groundless, fictitious tale.

Further, the Precious Record of Hermit Sages states:

Hermit sages do not take wives; hermit ladies do not take husbands.

Although they have the form of women, they do not give birth.

An event so miraculous [as Lao-tzu's birth from a hermit lady] would certainly be spoken of as auspicious indeed. Why is it not mentioned in the
Records of the Historian, and not noted at all in the Chou Writings? To search out what is merely imagined while denouncing the truth is none other than to trust in the words of the deluded and deceitful.

The Book of Rites states:

One who retires from government office and has no rank is said to "move to the left."

The Analects states:

It is against propriety to wear robes with the left side outward [as viewed by others].

If the left side is superior to the right, why is it that Taoists, in their ritual processions, turn not to the left but rather to the right? Further, the imperial edicts all declare, "As stated to the right..." All of these examples are instances of according with the laws of Heaven...

The fourth "divergence" of the non-Buddhist states:

Lao-tzu lived in the days of King Wen and was teacher to the nation when the Chou rose to its height. Shakyamuni lived in the time of King Chuang and was a teacher in the land of Chi-pin [northern India].

The fourth illumination of the Buddhist states: Lao-tzu was a petty official in the government and humbly served in the archives. He did not live during the time of King Wen, nor was he a teacher when the Chou flourished.

Shakyamuni was in rank a prince, and he realized the enlightenment most honored in the world. His life corresponds to the height of King Chao, and he was the teacher of Jambudvipa...

The sixth "divergence" of the non-Buddhist states:

Lao-tzu began his life in the world during the reign of King Wen of Chou and ended his days in the time of Confucius. Shakyamuni was born into
the family of Shuddhodana; his period corresponds to the reign of King Chuang.

The sixth illumination of the Buddhist states: Lao-tzu, the incarnation of Kasyapa, was born in the year fire/hare [714 BCE] of the reign of King Huan and died in the year water/horse [519 BCE] of the reign of King Ching. Although he died in the time of Confucius, he did not live during the age of King Wen. The Buddha, the tamer of beings, was born in the year wood/tiger [1027 BCE] of the reign of King Chao and died in the year water/monkey [949 BCE] of the reign of King Mu. He was the heir of Shuddhodana, and appeared before the time of King Chuang.

A person of enlightenment states: Confucius went to the kingdom of Chou to see Lao-tzu and ask about propriety. This is explained in detail in the Records of the Historian. There is no documentary evidence stating that Lao-tzu was the teacher of King Wen. He was born at the end of the Chou dynasty; this may be found in the records. The statement that he existed at the beginning of the Chou does not appear in the historical documents...

The seventh "divergence" of the non-Buddhist states:

Lao-tzu was born during the Chou dynasty and late in life went into the great desert. What became of him is a mystery; his final destination is unknown. Shakyamuni was born in the western lands and died near the Hiranyavati River. His disciples beat their breasts in sorrow, and large numbers of natives cried bitterly.

The seventh illumination of the Buddhist states: Lao-tzu was born at Lai-hsiang and buried at Huai-li. This is clearly known from the fact that Ch'in-i went to mourn him, but criticized him in regard to "the form of one who has hidden himself in Heaven." Gautama was born in the palace and died beneath the sala trees. This became known in China during the reign of King Ming of the Han dynasty and is recorded in a treasured writing in the imperial library.

A person of enlightenment states: In the "Inner Chapters" of Chuang-tzu it is written:
When Lao-tzu died, Ch'in-i went to mourn him. He cried out only three times, then left the room. Lao-tzu's disciples were puzzled and asked, "Weren't you an old friend of the Master?"

Ch'in-i replied, "When I went in, I saw young people mourning for him as though they had lost their fathers, and old people mourning for him as though they had lost their sons. From the past, Lao-tzu has been called the form of one who has hidden himself in Heaven. At first, I too thought him such a person, but now I see it was not so."

"Hidden" means to have withdrawn. "Heaven" implies gaining freedom from bondage. "Form" refers to the body. This passage means that Ch'in-i at first thought that Lao-tzu was a hermit sage who had gained freedom from the bonds of the physical body, but now he sees that he was wrong. Ah, Lao-tzu's words flattered people and won their sympathy, but after all he could not evade death. He is not my friend...

The above are the ten illuminations of the Buddhist, replying to the ten "divergences" set forth by the non-Buddhist.

The non-Buddhist asserts first the "divergence" regarding left and right in birth; the Buddhist replies that there is here a distinction of superior and inferior in birth.

The Buddhist adds to illuminate the matter: The custom of wearing clothing with the left side outward is maintained by uncivilized peoples of the west and north; in China, commands that come from the "right" are respected. Thus, it is stated in the Spring and Autumn Annals:

The Prime Minister receives no imperial commands, but the assistant ministers receive commands. Is this not on the left [that is, unreasonable]?

The Records of the Historian states:
Lin Hsiang-ju's contributions were great, and in position, he was to the right of Lien-p'o, who felt humiliated.

Further, it states:

Prime Minister Chang-i placed [the envoy from] Ch'in on the right and Wei on the left. Prime Minister His-shou placed Han on the right and Wei on the left.

Surely this indicates that the left side implies unreliability. The Book of Rites states:

Those who, through left [that is, wrong] ways, form groups and start riots among the masses are to be killed.

Does this not indicate that the right is superior and the left inferior? Huang Fu-mi states in his Biographies of Great Men:

Lao-tzu was a physiognomist of the state of Ch'u. He lived to the north of the Wo River and studied under Ch'ang-sung-tzu. When Ch'ang-tzu lay ill, Lao-tzu went to see him and inquired about his condition.

Further, Chi-k'ang states:

Lao-tzu studied the arts of the nine hermit sages under Chüan-tzu

Even though we examine the Records of the Historian and other great histories, we do not find it stated that Lao-tzu was born from an opening in his mother's left side. Since there is no proper documentation, this assertion is obviously unacceptable.

It is evident that wielding a lance or moving a brush [with the right hand] is the beginning of letters and arms, just as the five aethers and the three kinds of luminous bodies are the beginning of yin and yang. Thus, in the Buddhist path, one turns to the right [i.e., correct way]; this accords with human activities, while the Tao of the left [i.e., incorrect, "sinister" path] of Chang-ling contradicts the normal way of Heaven. This is clear from the
appearance [out of the right side] of Shakyamuni, who awakened compassion free of objects and responded to the desires of sentient beings.

Shakyamuni stood alone in heaven and on earth and occupied the position of the most revered. As one transcending the three realms and the six courses, his excellence was respected by all...

The non-Buddhist asserts:

Lao-tzu was a model, saving society and bringing people to salvation solely with the teaching of filial piety and loyalty, and manifesting the fullest compassion and love. Because of this, his fame and his teachings are transmitted perpetually, and the generations of kings, without alteration, have promulgated his profound influence without deviation for a myriad ages. Thus, in governing the country and in governing the household, his teaching has constantly served as a standard.

In Shakyamuni’s teaching, righteousness is discarded, parents are discarded; benevolence and filial piety are done away with. King Ajatashatru murdered his father, yet it is taught there was no offense. Devadatta wounded his cousin Shakyamuni with an arrow, but we do not hear of any punishment for his crime. Since common people are guided by his teaching, the evil is all the more compounded. If it is taken for a standard in society, how can good arise?

This is the tenth "divergence" regarding contradiction and conformity.

The illumination of the Buddhist states: [According to Taoists,] righteousness is inferior to the virtue of the Way, and propriety arises because loyalty and sincerity have attenuated. Small benevolence is despised as the conduct of lowborn women, and great filial piety is said to be practiced only by the rich.

Further, to laugh and sing on seeing people's misfortune is not the manner in China, and to beat trays at funerals is not the rule of Chinese custom.
Thus, it is in order to instruct such people that filial piety is taught; it is to bring the people of the world to respect their fathers. Further, it is in order to instruct such people that loyalty is taught; it is to bring the people of the world to respect the king. For education with these teachings to spread to all countries is the utmost benevolence of the wise ruler. Throughout the four seas these teachings appear, and this is the great piety of the sacred king.

The Buddhist sutras state:

As the subject of mental activity transmigrates in the six courses, there is no being that does not become one's father or mother. Since beings change ceaselessly in the three realms of birth-and-death, who can be distinguished as enemy or friend?

Further, it is stated:

Ignorance covers their eyes of wisdom, so that people come and go in birth-and-death. Through various acts committed in going and returning, people become parents and children reciprocally. In this way, enemies turn frequently into friends, and friend into enemies.

Thus, sramanas abandon mundane life and direct themselves toward the true. They treat all beings the same as parents and relatives. They discard worldly prosperity and pursue the way, and regard all beings as the same as their own relatives. (They practice the universally right mind and maintain the same attitude of universal friendliness.)

Further, in Taoism serene void-ness is esteemed, yet you place importance on gratitude and love. In the dharma, equality is treasured, while you discriminate between friend and foe. Is this not delusion? That competition for power leads to forgetfulness of one's parents is clearly documented in the histories; Duke Huan of Ts'i and King Mu of Ch'u are examples of this. Thus, is it not an error to seek to slander the sage [Shakyamuni]?
Here ends the tenth point regarding the inferiority of Taoism.

The two emperors unified the land; they lived at the beginning of the era of peace. The three sages established their teachings and advocated them in the period when the world had already become defiled. The Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu actively discussed the essential meaning of profoundness, void-ness, emptiness, and oneness, and the Duke of Chou and Confucius promoted the teachings of the arts of poetry, composition, propriety, and music. Illuminating the virtues of modesty and guarding the spirit of honesty are steps in ascending to sage-hood. The three kinds of awe and the five constant virtues are causes for being born a human being or deva. These teachings implicitly accorded with the Buddha's truth, but they did not correctly illuminate and exhaustively discuss it. It is like asking those who are mute or deaf the way; they can only point the direction and cannot tell us the exact distance. Or, we may wish to discover a river crossing from a rabbit or a horse; though they may know how to cross, they do not know the depth.

To extrapolate from these examples, the Yin and Chou dynasties were not propitious times for the spread of Shakyamuni’s teaching. The situation may be likened to a child being unable to look directly at blazing flames or dazzling light, or a weak-spirited man being unable to listen attentively to a violent thunderclap. Thus, on seeing rivers and ponds welling up and overflowing, King Chao stood in fear of the birth of a god, [Shakyamuni]. Seeing clouds and a rainbow change in color, the consort of King Mu rejoiced at the sage's demise. In such circumstances, how could the teaching be received across the rivers of the Pamir range? How could contact be made with the truth from over the Himalayas? The Vimalakirti Sutra states, "It is not the fault of the sun or moon that the blind [do not see them]." Even though you might wish to engage in discussions that are like drilling holes, it would probably result only in harming the nature of your treasured "chaos." It is beyond your understanding. This is the first blindness of the Taoist.

The second point of the Buddhist, concerning the construction of images and temple buildings:
From the time of Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty to the end of the Ts'i and Liang dynasties, there were over two hundred people, including kings, nobles, officials, men and women believers and monks and nuns, who deeply sensed the most sacred one and saw a miraculous radiance with their own eyes.

Further, there have been such accounts as those of the Buddha's foot impression seen at Mount Wan, and a luminous Buddha image seen over the waters at Hu-tu. At the foot of Mount Ch'ing-t'ai, the [Buddha's] figure appeared as the full moon, and outside the Yung-men gate an image of the rings at the top of a stupa was seen. King Nan-p'ing entered into deep correspondence with Buddha through a miraculous image, and Wen-hsüan received a revelatory dream through a sacred tooth relic. King Hsiao was able to cast a golden Buddhist image with one attempt, while the Emperor of Sung tried four times without success. There are countless such examples; it is impossible to mention them all. Though you be sightless, still how can you dismiss such miracles?

However, the virtue that is perfect is called nieh-p'an (nirvana); the way that reaches everywhere is called pu-t'i (bodhi, enlightenment); the wisdom that pervades all things is called Fo-t'o (Buddha). The Sanskrit terms have been transcribed with these Chinese words; thus, "Buddha" expressed in either language is clearly to be entrusted to. This is evident, because Fo-t'o or Buddha means "great awakening" in Chinese, pu-t'i or bodhi means "great Way," and nieh-p'an or nirvana means "uncreated." You, while daylong treading the broad earth of enlightenment, do not know that the great way is simply a different name for enlightenment. While you take bodily form in the realm of great awakening, you have still not learned that great awakening is a translation for Buddha. Thus, Chuang-tzu states:

Great awakening leads to knowledge of [human existence as] a great dream.

Kuo-hsiang states in commentary:

"Awakening" refers to a sage. The meaning here is that those whose hearts are distressed are all dreaming.
The commentary further states:

Confucius and Tzu-yu were not able to forget the words and apprehend the spirit; hence, they did not attain great awakening.

A person of virtue said, "The teaching of Confucius goes only up to here."

Nirvana, which is tranquil illumination, cannot be known by the consciousness or apprehended through knowledge; rather, words are cut off and mental activity ceases. Thus, one forgets words. Dharma-body is possessed of the three aspects and four virtues; it is majestic and free of any annoyance. Hence, it is termed "emancipation." Through spiritual awakening, one attains alleviation of distress. Confucius is spoken of as a sage, but his accomplishments are far surpassed by the Buddha. This we may assert, for we find it stated in Liu-hsiang's Two Records of Antiquity:

One hundred fifty years after Buddhism was transmitted to China, Lao-tzu composed the Five Thousand Characters.

This being the case, both Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu were aware of [and borrowed from] what was taught in the Buddhist sutras; the evidence for this is found here and there in their words and teachings...

The Sutra of Mindfulness of the Right Dharma states:

When people do not observe precepts, the devas fall into decline and the asuras flourish. Good nagas lose their power, and evil nagas gain in power. When evil nagas have power, there is frost and hail, as well as violent winds and ill rains out of season; the five kinds of grains do not ripen, epidemics arise and compete in virulence, and the people starve and kill each other.

When people observe precepts, the many devas grow in awesome majesty. The asuras decline, and evil nagas lose their power, while good nagas gain in power. When the good nagas have power, the winds and rains come at
their proper times, and the four seasons are mild and harmonious. The nourishing rain falls, and rice and grain are abundant; the people enjoy peace, and arms and warfare are put aside. Epidemics do not occur...

A person of virtue states:

The Taoist states in Book of the Principle Hidden in the Great Sky and Book of Supreme Truth:

The Lord of the supreme great Way [Ling-pao T’ien-tsun] rules in Great Gossamer Net Heaven, which is infinitely vast and of fifty-five layers, on Mount Jade Capital, where the pavilion of seven precious substances with a golden shelf and jade-desk is found. Immortal youths and jade ladies attend him. He dwells beyond the thirty-two heavens and the three realms.

Further, we find it stated in the Chart of the Five Divine Peaks:

The Celestial Honored-one of the great Way governs at the capital of Great Profundity, located in the province of Jade Light, the prefecture of Golden Truth, the district of Heavenly Protection, the county of Primordial Illumination, the village of Settled Aspiration. No calamities intrude here.

The Scripture of Spirits states:

Great Gossamer Net Heaven lies at the top of the heavens in 555,555 layers.

The Chart of the Five Divine Peaks states:

"Capital" means to look over. The divine illuminated Lord of the supreme great Way, the Way of Ways, abides in the capital of Great Profundity, maintaining the tranquility.

Sound within the Heavens states:

Heavenly beings and hermits sound drums in the pavilioned palace. They attend at the jade capital and entertain the Lord of the Way.
Concerning the Catalog of Taoist Scriptures dedicated to the emperor by the Taoist [Hsüan Tu-kuan], all people say, "According to Lu Hsiu-ching, a man of the Sung, there are 1,228 [Taoist] volumes listed." Miscellaneous works, including writings of the "tzu" category [belonging to various schools], were originally not included. Now, however, the Taoist [Hsüan Tu-kuan] lists 2,040 volumes. Among these are many ["tzu"] works taken from the "Catalog of Literature" of the Book of Han; 884 are erroneously listed and presented as Taoist writings...

It may be inferred that T'ao-shu [the author of The Art of Bodily Transformation] was none other than Fan-li. He intimately served Kou-chien, the king of Yüeh. The king and all his ministers, however, were taken captive by the kingdom of Wu and were forced to eat excrement and drink urine; they suffered extreme wretchedness. Further, Fan-li's son was murdered by the kingdom of Ch'i. If Fan-li possessed the art of bodily transformation, why could he not transform himself and provide escape?

In reading the Record of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, we find the statement, "Lao-tzu was born from the womb of the imperial consort of King Yu." In other words, he was the child of King Yu. It further states, "In station, he was an official in the archives." That is, he was a retainer of King Yu. The Scripture on Converting the Natives [of India] states, "Lao-tzu was Tung-fang Shuo of the Han dynasty." If this is actually so, why - since we know that King Yu was killed by the western barbarians - did Lao-tzu not, out of love for his father the king, give him a divine amulet to keep him from death...

We have already referred to Lu Hsiu-ching's catalog; it is without genuine substance. How ridden with errors it is! Hsiu-ching made his catalog as a great deception, but Hsüan Tu-kuan's catalog [based on it] is deception compounded with deception...

106 Further, it states [quoting an edict of Emperor Wu of Liang]:

The Larger [Nirvana] Sutra teaches:
There are ninety-six kinds of paths; only the single path of the Buddha is the right path. The other ninety-five are all non-Buddhist paths.

Discarding the non-Buddhist paths, I serve the Tathágata. If there are lords who make this same vow, let them each awaken the aspiration for enlightenment. Lao-tzu, the Duke of Chou, Confucius, and others guided people as disciples of the Tathágata, but they already followed wrong paths. Their teachings concern only mundane good; through them, one cannot part from the worldly and attain the sacred. Let lords and ministers, together with the nobility and the king and their families, turn from the false and adhere to the true, discard the wrong and enter the right. Thus the Treatise on the Establishment of Truth, setting forth the teaching in the sutras, states:

If your adherence to non-Buddhist paths is great and your adherence to the Buddha-dharma is light, you are possessed of wrong views. If your adherences are equal, your state is indeterminate, corresponding to neither good nor evil. If your adherence to the Buddhist path is strong and your adherence to the path of Lao-tzu is slight, you possess pure trust. "Pure" means immaculate both on the surface and within; all the grime and defilement of ignorance has been completely eliminated. "Trust" means to entrust oneself to the right and be free of wrong views. Hence, one is called a "disciple of the Buddha who possessed pure trust." Other forms of trust are all wrong views. They cannot be called "pure trust"...

Discard the wrong teachings of Lao-tzu and enter the true teaching of the dharma!

107 The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

The Buddhas of the zenith, countless as the sands of the Ganges,

Extend their tongues for the sake of such people as those of this Saha world
Who, committing the ten transgressions and five grave offenses, greatly
doubt and slander the teaching,

Entrust themselves to wrong views, serve spirits, offer food to gods and
Maras,

Think delusional thoughts, seeking blessings, and wish for benefits,

And who, on the contrary, suffer calamities and disasters one after another,
with increasing frequency,

Lie in bed with sickness in successive years, and

Grow deaf and blind, with broken legs and palsied hands -

Serving gods and receiving such recompense.

Why do they not abandon such practices and think on Amida?

108 T'ien-t'ai's Steps to the Dharma-Realm states:

The first is to take refuge in the Buddha. The [Nirvana] Sutra states:

If one has taken refuge in the Buddha, one must not further take refuge in
various non-Buddhist gods.

Further, it states:

The person who takes refuge in the Buddha will not fall into the evil
courses.

The second is to take refuge in dharma. That is, one should take refuge in
and practice what the Great Sage taught, whether it be teaching or
principle.

The third is to take refuge in the Sangha. That is, the mind takes refuge in
those who renounce worldly life and rightly practice the teachings of the
three vehicles; hence, the [Nirvana] Sutra states:
One never again takes refuge in non-Buddhist paths.

109 Master Tz'u-yun states:

Concerning methods of worship, in India there are the Vedas and in China the books of rites. These have never led to emancipation from the world. From the stance of the true, they are accommodated means to guide the worldly.

110 Master Chegwan of Koryo states [in his Fourfold Teachings of T'ien-t'ai]:

The course of hungry ghosts is termed preta in Sanskrit. This course is likewise present in all [samsaric] realms. Those hungry ghosts that possess merit become spirits of mountains and forests or of graveyards. Those without merit dwell in impure places, receive no food or drink, and are constantly flogged. Forced to fill in rivers and dam the oceans, they suffer pain without measure. Those beings who, harboring flattery and deception in their hearts, have performed the five grave offenses and ten transgressions of the lowest degree receive as recompense existence in this course.

111 Master Shen-chih, in his commentary [on the preceding passage], states:

Concerning the course of hungry ghosts, "hungry" refers to constantly starving, and "ghost" (kuei) implies returning (kuei). Shih-tzu states, "In the past, a dead person was called 'one who has returned.'" Human spirits are called ghosts, while earth-spirits are called earth-gods... In form, they may resemble human beings or be like animals.

The mind that is not straightforward is said to "harbor flattery and deception."

112 Master Tai-chih states:
"Spirits" refers to ghosts. They all belong to the four courses of devas, of asuras, of ghosts, and of hell.

113 Master Chieh-tu states:

Maras are beings of the evil courses.

114 The Treatise on Samatha and Vipasyana states, in the section on the realm of Maras:

Second, to clarify the features with which Maras appear: Whatever their particular type, they are all called Maras. When we look carefully into their minor distinctions, we find that there are no more than three kinds: spirits of irritation, spirits of temptation at the different hours, and Mara-spirits. The features with which these Maras appear vary according to their kind.

115 Genshin states, based on the Treatise on Samatha and Vipasyana:

Maras obstruct enlightenment by employing blind passions. Spirits attack the root of life by causing sickness.

116 The Analects states:

Chi-lu asked, "Should one worship spirits?"

Confucius said, "One should not worship spirits. Why should people worship spirits?"

[Postscript]

117 Reflecting within myself, I see that in the various teachings of the Path of Sages, practice and enlightenment died out long ago, and that the true essence of the Pure Land way is the path to realization now vital and flourishing.

Monks of Shakyamuni’s tradition in the various temples, however, lack clear insight into the teaching and are ignorant of the distinction between
true and provisional; and scholars of the Chinese classics in the capital are confused about practices and wholly unable to differentiate right and wrong paths. Thus, scholar-monks of Kofuku-ji presented a petition to the retired emperor in the first part of the second month, 1207.

The emperor and his ministers, acting against the dharma and violating human rectitude, became enraged and embittered. As a result, Master Genku - the eminent founder who had enabled the true essence of the Pure Land to spread vigorously [in Japan] - and a number of his followers, without receiving any deliberation of their [alleged] crimes, were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monk-hood, given [secular] names, and consigned to distant banishment. I was among the latter. Hence, I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life. For this reason, I have taken the term Toku ["stubble haired"] as my name. Master Genku and his disciples, being banished to the provinces in different directions, passed a period of five years [in exile].

On the seventeenth day of the eleventh month, 1211, during the reign of the emperor Sado-no-in, Genku received an imperial pardon and returned to Kyoto. Thereafter, he lived in the capital, at Otani, north of Toribeno in the western foothills of Higashiyama. In 1212, during the midday hour of the twenty-fifth day of the first month, he passed away. The auspicious signs [that occurred then], too numerous to record here, may be found in his biography.

118 I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, discarded sundry practices and took refuge in the Primal Vow in 1201. In 1205 Master Genku, out of his benevolence, granted me permission to copy his Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow. In the same year, on the fourteenth day of the fourth month, the master inscribed [the copy] in his own hand with an inside title, "Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow," with the words, "Namu-Amida-butsu: as the act that leads to birth in the Pure Land, the Nembutsu is taken to be fundamental," and with [the name he had bestowed on me,] "Shakku, disciple of Shakyamuni." That day, my request to borrow his portrait was granted, and I made a copy. During that same year, on the twenty-ninth day of the seventh intercalary
month, the master inscribed my copy of the portrait with "Namu-Amida-butsu" and with a passage expressing the true teaching:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters say my Name as few as ten times and yet are not born, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. The Buddha has now actually attained Buddhahood. Know that the momentous Primal Vow is not in vain, and that when sentient beings say the Name, they unfailingly attain birth.

Further, since my name "Shakku" had been changed in accord with a revelation in a dream, on the same day he wrote the characters of my new name [Zenshin] in his own hand. At that time, the master was seventy-three years of age.

Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow was compiled at the request of the Chancellor, an ordained layman (Lord Tsukinowa Kanezane, Buddhist name Ensho). The crucial elements of the true essence of the Pure Land way and the inner significance of the Nembutsu have been gathered into this work, which is easily understood by those who read it. It is a truly luminous writing, rare and excellent; a treasured scripture, supreme and profound. Over the days and years, myriads of people received the master's teaching, but whether they were closely associated with him or remained more distant, very few gained the opportunity to read and copy this book. Nevertheless, I was in fact able to copy it and to paint his portrait. This was the virtue of practicing the right act alone, and the manifestation of the decisive settlement of birth.

Thus, suppressing tears of both sorrow and joy, I record the circumstances that have resulted [in my compilation of this work].

How joyous I am, my heart and mind being rooted in the Buddha-ground of the universal Vow, and my thoughts and feelings flowing within the dharma-ocean, which is beyond comprehension! I am deeply aware of the Tathāgata's immense compassion, and I sincerely revere the benevolent care behind the master's teaching activity. My joy grows even fuller, my gratitude and indebtedness ever more compelling. Therefore, I have selected [passages expressing] the core of the Pure Land way and gathered
here its essentials. Mindful solely of the profundity of the Buddha's benevolence, I pay no heed to the derision of others. May those who see and hear this work be brought - either through the cause of reverently embracing the teaching or through the condition of [others'] doubt and slander of it - to manifest shinjin within the power of the Vow and reveal the incomparable fruit of enlightenment in the land of peace.

119 Passages on the Land of Happiness states:

I have collected true words to aid others in their practice for attaining birth, in order that the process be made continuous, without end and without interruption, by which those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted.

120 Know, therefore, that the monks and laypeople of the last age should reverently entrust themselves to [this teaching].

121 A verse of the Garland Sutra states:

On seeing a bodhisattva

Perform various practices,

Some give rise to a good mind and others a mind of evil,

But the bodhisattva embraces them all.

Here ends Chapter VI:

A Collection of Passages Revealing

The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization

Of the Pure Land Way
Passages on the Pure Land Way

[PREFACE]

The radiant light, unhindered and inconceivable, eradicates suffering and brings realization of joy; the excellent Name, perfectly embodying all practices, eliminates obstacles and dispels doubt. This is the teaching and practice for our latter age; devote yourself solely to it. It is eye and limb in this defiled world; do not fail to endeavor in it. Accepting and living the supreme, universal Vow, then, abandon the defiled and aspire for the pure. Reverently embracing the Tathágata’s teaching, respond in gratitude to his benevolence and be thankful for his compassion.

Here I, Gutoku, of outlying islands, relying on the treatises from India and the western regions and looking to the explanations of the teachers of China and Japan, reverently entrust myself to the teaching, practice, and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way. And knowing keenly that the Buddha's benevolence is difficult to fathom, I seek to clarify it through this collection of passages on the Pure Land way.

[TEACHING]

To begin, the teaching of the Pure Land way is found in the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life. The central purport of this sutra is that Amida, by
establishing the incomparable Vows, has opened wide the dharma-storehouse, and full of compassion for small, foolish beings, selects and bestows the treasure of virtues. It reveals that Shakyamuni appeared in this world and expounded the teachings of the way to enlightenment, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by blessing them with the benefit that is true and real. Assuredly this sutra is the true teaching for which the Tathágata appeared in the world. It is the wondrous scripture, rare and most excellent. It is the conclusive and ultimate exposition of the One Vehicle. It is the right teaching, praised by all the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters. To teach Tathágata's Primal Vow is the true intent of this sutra; the Name of the Buddha is essence.

[PRACTICE]

The practice of the Pure Land way is the great practice that embodies Amida's perfect benefiting of others. It is revealed in the Vow that all the Buddhas praise the Name, also known as "the Vow that all the Buddhas say the Name." It may further be called "the Vow of the right act, which is Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth."

Amida's directing of virtue to beings through the power of the Primal Vow has two aspects: the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land and the aspect for our return to this world. Regarding the aspect for going forth, there is great practice, there is pure shinjin.

The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathágata of unhindered light. This practice, comprehensively encompassing all practices, is perfect and most rapid in bringing them to fullness. For this reason, it is called "great practice." Saying the Name, then, breaks through all the ignorance of sentient beings and readily brings all their aspirations to fulfillment. Saying the Name is in itself mindfulness; mindfulness is Nembutsu; Nembutsu is Namu-Amida-butsu.

The passage declaring the fulfillment of the Vows in the Larger Sutra states:

The Buddha-Tathágatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in praising the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of immeasurable life. All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed
to them from Amida’s sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

Further the sutra states:

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "If there is a person who, having heard the Name of that Buddha, leap and dance with joy, and say it even once, know that they receive the great benefit; that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues."

Bodhisattva Nargarjuna states in the Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages:

If a person desires quickly to attain
The stage of non-retrogression,
He or she should, with a reverent heart,
Say the Name, holding steadfast to it.
When persons doubt as they plant roots of good,
The lotus [in which they gain birth] will not open;
But for those whose shinjin is pure,
The flower opens, and immediately they see the Buddha.

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu states in the Treatise on the Pure Land:

O World-honored one, with the mind that is single
I take refuge in the Tathágata of unhindered light
Filling the ten quarters
And aspire to be born in the land of happiness.

Relying on the sutras
In which the manifestation of true and real virtues is taught,
I compose a gatha of aspiration, a condensation,
That accords with the Buddha's teaching.

Contemplating the power of the Buddha's Primal Vow,
I see that no one who encounters it passes by in vain.

It quickly brings to fullness and perfection

The great treasure ocean of virtues.

With these passages from the sacred words of the Buddha and from the treatises, we know in particular that the great practice is not a foolish being's practice of directing his or her own merit toward attainment of birth. It is the fulfilled practice that Amida directs to beings out of great compassion, and therefore is called "not-directing virtue [on the part of beings]." This practice indeed embodies the Primal Vow, in which the Nembutsu is selected and adopted. It is the supreme, all-surpassing universal Vow. It is the true and wondrous right dharma that is the One Vehicle. It is the unexcelled practice that perfectly embodies all good acts.

The word naishi (even) in the passages from the Larger Sutra is used to indicate an upper or lower limit while omitting what is between. [In the second passage,] Ichinen (saying of the Name once) indicates single-heartedly practicing the Nembutsu. Single-heartedly practicing the Nembutsu is a single voicing. A single voicing is saying the Name. Saying the Name is constant mindfulness. Constant mindfulness is right-mindedness. Right-mindedness is the true act [that brings about birth in the Pure Land].

Further, naishi ichinen in no way refers to one thought in contemplation on the Buddha's virtue or to one utterance in repeated recitation of the Name. [As the first passage shows,] naishi ichinen (even one thought-moment) refers to the ultimate brevity and expansion of the length of time in which one attains the mind and practice [i.e., shinjin and Nembutsu] that result in birth in the Pure Land. Let this be known.

[SHINJIN]
Pure shinjin is shinjin that actualizes Amida’s profound and vast benefiting of others. It arises from the Vow of birth through the Nembutsu, also known as ”the Vow of sincere mind and entrusting.” It may further be called ”the Vow of shinjin, which is Amida’s directing of virtue for our going forth.” However, for the shallowest of foolish beings - we multitudes of the basest level - it is impossible to realize pure shinjin, impossible to attain the highest end. This is because we do not depend on Amida’s directing of virtue for our going forth and because we are entangled in a net of doubt. It is through the Tathágata’s supportive power, and through the vast power of great compassion and all-embracing wisdom, that a person realizes pure, true, and real shinjin. Therefore, that mind will not be inverted; that mind will not be vain or false. Truly we know that the supreme, perfect fruit of enlightenment is not difficult to attain; it is pure shinjin, true and real, that is indeed difficult to realize.

When persons realize pure shinjin that is true and real, they realize the mind of great joy. Concerning the attainment of the mind of great joy, the Larger Sutra states:

The person who aspires with a sincere mind to be born in the land of happiness shall reach the full illumination of wisdom and acquire virtues unexcelled.

Further, the sutra states: Such a person is ”one of great, majestic virtue”; moreover, he or she is ”a person of vast and unexcelled understanding.”

This shinjin is indeed the superlative means of sweeping away doubt and attaining virtues. It is what is truly manifested in the sutra, all virtues being fulfilled instantly in it. It is the wondrous way of attaining longevity and deathlessness. It is the pure shinjin of vast, majestic virtue.

Hence, whether with regard to practice or to shinjin there is nothing whatever that has not been fulfilled through Amida Tathágata’s directing of virtue to beings out of the pure Vow-mind. It is not that there is no cause or that there is some other cause. Let this be known.

[REALIZATION]
The realization attained in the Pure Land way is the wondrous fruition attained through Amida's perfect benefiting of others. It arises from the Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana, also known as the "Vow of the realization of great nirvana." It may further be called "the Vow of realization, which is Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth." This realization is purity, reality, and no-birth (nirvana), ultimate and consummate.

Concerning the supreme nirvana, the passage teaching the fulfillment of this Vow in the Larger Sutra states:

The sentient beings born in that land all dwell among the truly settled, for in that Buddha Land there is not one who is falsely settled or not settled.

Further the sutra states:

The words "human beings" and "devas" are used simply in accordance with the usage elsewhere. Their countenances are dignified and wonderful, surpassing things of this world. Their features, subtle and delicate, are not those of human beings or devas; all receive the body of naturalness (jinen) or of emptiness, the body of boundlessness.

Further it states:

Necessarily one achieves the abandoning of his world, transcending and parting from it, and attains birth in the land of peace. One cuts off crosswise the five evil courses and the evil courses close naturally (jinen). Ascending the way is without limit; to go is easy and yet no one is born there. Never at variance with that land, one is drawn there by its spontaneous working.

With these sacred words of the Buddha we know clearly that when foolish beings possessed of all blind passions - the multitudes of beings caught in birth-and-death and defiled by evil karma - realize the mind and practice that Amida directs to them for their going forth, they come to dwell among the truly settled of the Mahayana teaching. Those who dwell among the truly settled necessarily attain nirvana. When one necessarily attains nirvana, [one attains] eternal bliss. Eternal bliss is great nirvana. Great nirvana is the fruit that manifests itself in the field of benefiting and converting others. This body is the uncreated dharma-body. The uncreated dharma-body is the body of ultimate equality. The body of
ultimate equality is tranquility. Tranquility is true reality. True reality is dharma-nature. Dharma-nature is such-ness. Suchness is oneness.

Hence, whether with regard to the cause or to its fruition, there is nothing whatever that has not been fulfilled through Amida Tathágata’s directing of virtue to beings out of the pure Vow-mind. Because the cause is pure, the fruit is also pure. Reflect on this.

[DIRECTING VIRTUE FOR OUR RETURN]

Second is Amida's directing of virtue for our return to this world. This is the benefit we receive, the state of benefiting and guiding others. It arises from the Vow of necessary attainment of the rank next to Buddhahood, also known as "the Vow for the attainment of Buddhahood after one lifetime." It may further be called "the Vow of directing virtue for our return to this world." The passage declaring the fulfillment of this Vow in the Larger Sutra states:

The bodhisattvas of that land all fulfill the attainment of Buddhahood after one lifetime, except those who, for the sake of sentient beings, have established their own original vows and, thus adorning themselves with the virtues of universal vows, seek to bring all to emancipation.

With these sacred words we know clearly that this is the working of the universal Vow of great love and great compassion; it is the vast and inconceivable benefit. Through it one enters the thick forests of blind passion to guide beings, compassionately leading them in accord with the virtue of Samantabhadra.

Hence, whether with regard to the aspect for going forth to the Pure Land or to the aspect for return to this world, there is nothing whatever that has not been fulfilled through the Tathágata’s directing of virtue to beings out of the pure Vow-mind. Reflect on this.
This being so, when conditions were mature for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land, Devadatta provoked Ajatashatru to commit grave crimes, and out of pity for beings of this defiled world, Shakyamuni led Vaidehi to select the land of peace. As we turn this over in our minds and quietly reflect, we realize that Devadatta and Ajatashatru bestowed their generous care on us, and that Amida and Shakyamuni thus manifested their profound intention to save all beings.

Accordingly Vasubandhu, the author of the Treatise on the Pure Land, proclaims pure shinjin, vast and unhindered, and universally awakens the multitudes of this passion-defiled world of suffering. Master T’an-luan clarifies Amida’s directing of virtue, which is the working great compassion for our going forth to the Pure Land and our return to this world; and he thoroughly expounds for all, with care and concern, the profound significance of Other’s benefiting and benefiting others. The teaching and saving activity of the Buddha and the incarnated ones was solely to bring benefits universally to all foolish beings; the vast, great mind and practice arise solely out of the desire to guide evil people who have committed grave offenses and those who wholly lack the seed of Buddhahood.

My fervent wish is this: Whether monk or layperson, when on board the ship of the great compassionate Vow, let pure shinjin be the favorable wind, and in the dark night of ignorance, let the jewel of virtue be a great torch. Those whose minds are dark and whose understanding deficient, endeavor in this way with reverence! Those whose evils are heavy and whose karmic obstructions manifold, deeply revere this shinjin! Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida’s universal Vow; and hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, is pure shinjin that is true and real. If you should come to realize shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about. But if in this lifetime still you are entangled in a net of doubt, then unavoidably you must pass once more in the stream of birth-and-death through myriads of kalpas and countless lives. Hear and reflect on the truth that one is grasped, never to be abandoned - the teaching of attaining birth in the Pure Land with transcendent quickness and ease; and let there be no wavering or apprehension.

How joyous I am, realizing as I humbly reflect that my heart and mind stand rooted in the Buddha-ground of the universal Vow, and that my thoughts and feelings flow within the dharma-ocean, which is beyond comprehensibility. Filled with praise for what I have heard and joy in what I have attained, I gather words expressing the truth and select passages from the commentaries of the masters.
In this, I am mindful solely of the unexcelled honored ones, and in particular seek thus to respond to the immense benevolence they have shown me.

Accordingly, I note in reading Bodhisattva T'an-luan's commentary the following passage [explaining the words, "O World-honored one"];

The bodhisattva takes refuge in the Buddha, just as filial children obey their parents and loyal retainers follow their rulers, with their behavior not self-centered and their acts always according with reason. Since the bodhisattva is aware of the Buddha's benevolence and responds in gratitude to his virtue, he naturally addresses the Buddha first.

Having realized the depth and vastness of the Buddha's benevolence, I compose the following hymn:

[Hymn on the Nembutsu and True Shinjin]

Honored One in the West, who surpasses all thought!

Bodhisattva Dharmakara, in his causal stage,

Made the Primal Vow, incomparable and all-embracing;

He established his supreme Vow of great compassion.

Five kalpas of profound thought passed in his selection; then,

With the perfect fruit of enlightenment, this Vow was fulfilled;

Ten kalpas have passed since its consummation.

The life of Amida is infinite, no measure can be taken;

The compassion deep and far-reaching, like space;

The wisdom replete, a vast ocean.

Pure, wondrous, without bound is Amida's land,
And possessed of great adornments;

The different virtues all reach fulfillment there -

It excels all Buddha-lands of the ten quarters.

Everywhere the Buddha sends light inconceivable and unhindered,

Breaking the immense night-dark of ignorance.

Wisdom-light in its brilliance wakens wisdom-eyes,

And the Name is heard throughout the ten quarters.

Only Buddhas can fathom the virtue of Amida Tathágata;

Shakyamuni gathers Amida's dharma-treasure to bestow on the foolish.

Amida Buddha is the sun, illuminating all,

And has already broken through the darkness of our ignorance.

Still the clouds and mists of greed and desire, anger and hatred,

Cover as always the sky of pure shinjin.

But even when the sun, moon, and stars in their constellations

Are veiled by smoke, mist, clouds, or fog,

Beneath mist and cloud there is brightness, not dark.

I realize now that Amida's beneficent light surpasses even sun and moon.

Necessarily, then: We will reach the dawn of supreme, pure shinjin,

Whereupon the clouds of birth-and-death in the three realms of existence will clear;
Then the pure, unhindered radiance will be luminous,

And the true body of dharma-realm of oneness will become manifest.

When persons awaken shinjin and utter the Name, Amida's light embraces and protects them,

And in this life they acquire immeasurable virtue.

This light, boundless and inconceivable, never ceases a moment,

Nor does it differentiate by time, or place, or any circumstance.

That the Buddhas protect persons of shinjin is truly beyond doubt:

In all ten quarters alike they joyfully praise them.

The deluded and defiled and those of grave evil all equally attain birth;

Those who slander the dharma or who lack seeds of Buddhahood, when they turn about at heart, all go to the Pure Land.

In the future, the sutras will all disappear;

The Larger Sutra alone is designed to remain a hundred years thereafter.

How can one vacillate in doubt over the great Vow [expounded in this sutra]?

Simply entrust yourself to Shakyamuni’s true words!

The masters of India in the west, who clarified the teaching in treatises,

And the eminent monks of China and Japan

Set forth the true intent of the Great Sage, the World-hero,
And revealed that the Tathāgata’s Primal Vow accords with the nature of beings.

Shakyamuni Tathāgata, on Mount Lanka,

Prophesied to the multitudes that in south India

Bodhisattva Nargarjuna would appear in this world

To crush the views of being and of non-being;

Proclaiming the unexcelled Mahayana teaching,

He would attain the stage of joy and be born in the land of happiness

Nargarjuna wrote the Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages,

And particularly sorrowing for those on the steep trails of difficult practice,

Therein reveals for all the great way of easy attainment:

With the mind of reverence, one should keep

And say the Name and quickly attain the stage of non-retrogression.

When shinjin is pure, one immediately sees the Buddha.

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu declares in a treatise that,

Relying on the sutras, he will reveal the true and real virtues.

Casting light on the universal Primal Vow, by which we leap crosswise beyond birth-and-death,

He expounds this Vow that surpasses conception;

He discloses the mind that is single so that we, fettered by blind passions,
Be saved by Amida's directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow.

When persons turn and enter the great treasure-ocean of virtue,

Necessarily they join the Tathágata’s great assemblage,

And when they have reached that lotus-held world,

They immediately realize the body of tranquility and equality.

Then sporting in the forests of blind passion, they manifest transcendent powers;

Entering the garden of birth-and-death, they assume various forms to guide others.

Turning toward the dwelling of the great teacher T'an-luan, the ruler Hsiao of Liang

Always paid homage to him as a bodhisattva.

Bodhiruci, master of the Tripitaka, gave T'an-luan the Pure Land teaching,

And T'an-luan, burning his scriptures on immortality, took refuge in the land of bliss.

In his commentary on the treatise of Bodhisattva Vasubandhu

He reveals the Tathágata’s Vow at work in our saying of the Name;

Our going and returning, directed to us by Amida, is based on the Primal Vow.

When shinjin unfolds in foolish beings possessed of all blind passions,

They immediately attain insight into the non-origination of all existence
And come to realize that birth-and-death is itself nirvana.

Without fail they reach the land of immeasurable light

And universally guides sentient beings to enlightenment.

Tao-ch'o determined how difficult it is to fulfill the Path of Sages

And reveals that only passage through the Pure Land gate is possible for us.

He criticizes endeavor in the myriad good practices,

And encourages us solely to say the fulfilled Name embodying true virtue.

With kind concern he teaches the three characteristics of entrusting and non-entrusting,

Compassionately guiding all identically, whether they live when the dharma survives as but form, when in its last stage, or when it has become extinct.

Though persons have committed evil all their lives, when they encounter the Primal Vow,

They will reach the world of peace and realize the perfect fruit of enlightenment.

Shan-tao alone in his time clarified the Buddha's true intent,

And deeply drawing on the Primal Vow, he established the true teaching.

Sorrowing at the plight of meditative and non-meditative practicers, and people of grave evil,

He reveals that Amida's light and Name are the cause of birth.

When one enters this gate leading to nirvana and encounters true mind,
Without fail one acquires the insights of confidence, joy, and awakening;

And attaining the birth that surpasses comprehension,

One immediately realizes the eternal bliss of such-ness.

Genshin, having broadly elucidated the teachings of Shakyamuni’s lifetime,

Wholeheartedly took refuge in the land of peace and urges all to do so;

In accord with the sutras and treatises, he chooses the teaching and practice of birth in the Pure Land:

Truly they are eye and limb for us of this defiled world.

Ascertaining the virtue of the single practice and the inadequacy of diversified practice,

He leads us to turn and enter the Nembutsu-gate, which is true and real.

Solely by distinguishing profound and shallow minds of devotion,

He sets forth truly the difference between the fulfilled land and the transformed land.

Genku, clearly understanding the sacred scriptures,

Turned compassionately to foolish people, both good and evil;

Establishing in this isolated land the teaching and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way,

He transmits 'the selected Primal Vow" to us of the defiled world:

Return to this house of transmigration, of birth-and-death,

Is decidedly caused by doubt.

Swift entrance into the city of tranquility, the non-created,
Is necessarily brought about by shinjin.

Through their treatises and commentaries, these masters, all with the same mind,

Save the countless beings of utter defilement and evil.

All people of the present, both monk and lay,

Should rely wholly on the teachings of these venerable masters.

Here ends the hymn, 120 lines in sixty verses.

[Questions and Answers]

Question 1: In the Vow of birth through the nembutsu, three minds are disclosed. Why does Vasubandhu, the author of the Treatise, speak of "one mind," the mind that is single?

Answer: Vasubandhu appears to take the three together as one to make the matter easily comprehensible for dull and foolish sentient beings. The three minds are sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth. Looking into the intention of the Treatise through the literal meanings of these terms, I find that the three should be taken as one.

Why? First, for sincere mind (shishin), the character shi means truth, sincerity; shin means seed, kernel. Next, for entrusting (shingyo), shin means truth, reality, sincerity, fullness, ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, reverence, discernment, distinctness; gyo means aspiration, wish, happiness, joy, gladness. Third, for aspiration for birth (yokusho), yoku means wish, desire, awakening, awareness; sho means accomplishment, establishment.

Sincere mind, then, is the mind that is the seed of sincerity, the kernel of truth. It is therefore altogether free of doubt. Entrusting is the mind full of
truth, reality, and sincerity, the mind of ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, and reverence; the mind of aspiration, desire, discernment, and distinctness; the mind of happiness, joy, and gladness. It is therefore altogether free of doubt. Aspiration for birth is the mind of desire and wish, the mind of awakening, knowing, completion, and establishment. Thus, these three minds are all true and real and completely free of doubt. Because they are free of doubt, they are the mind that is single.

Such are the literal meanings of these characters. You should consider them carefully.

Further, to consider the three minds, the first is sincere mind. This is the true and real mind that perfectly embodies and fully possesses the Tathágata’s consummate virtues. Amida Tathágata gives to all these true and real virtues [of sincere mind]; this is the significance of the Name being the essence of sincere mind. By contrast, the sentient beings of the ten quarters are utterly evil and defiled and completely lack a mind of purity. Being false and poisoned, they lack a true and real mind. Thus, for the Tathágata, when performing practices as a bodhisattva in the stage leading to Buddhahood, there was not a single moment - not an instant - in his endeavor in the three modes of action when his heart was not pure, true, and real. The Tathágata directs this pure, true mind to all sentient beings.

The Larger Sutra states:

No thought of greed, anger, or harmfulness arose in his mind; he cherished no impulse of greed, anger, or harmfulness. He did not cling to objects of perception - color, sound, smell, taste. Abounding in perseverance, he gave no thought to the suffering to be endured. He was content with few desires, and without greed, anger, and folly.

Always tranquil in a state of samádhi, he possessed wisdom that knew no impediment. He was free of all thought of falsity or deception. Gentle in countenance and loving in speech, he perceived people's thoughts and was attentive to them. He was full of courage and vigor, and being resolute in his acts, knew no fatigue. Seeking solely that which was pure and undefiled, he brought benefit to all beings. He revered the three treasures
and served his teachers and elders. He fulfilled all the various kinds of practices, embellishing himself with great adornments, and brought all sentient beings to the attainment of virtues.

From these sacred words we know clearly that this first mind is the Tathágata’s sincere mind, pure and vast. It is "true and real mind." Because sincere mind is none other than the mind of great compassion, it is completely free of doubt.

Second is entrusting. The essence of entrusting is none other than the true and real mind. But the multitudes of beings in their bondage - foolish beings in defilement - completely lack pure shinjin, shinjin that is true and real. Because of this, it is hard to encounter the true and real virtue, hard to realize entrusting that is pure. Hence, as is explained in Shan-tao's commentary, thoughts of desire arise constantly to defile any goodness of heart; the flames of anger and hatred in the mind consume the dharma-treasure. Even if one strives to the utmost with body and mind through the twelve periods of the day and night, and however importunate one's action and practice may be, as though sweeping fire away from one's head, it must all be called poisoned good acts, or empty, transitory, and false practices. It cannot be called true, real, and sincere action. Though one may direct the merit of such poisoned good toward birth in the Pure Land, it is of no avail. Why? Because when the Tathágata was performing practices as a bodhisattva, every single moment - every single instant - was filled with his practices in the three modes of action performed with a true and real mind. Hence, they were completely free of doubt. And the Tathágata directs this joyful trust that is pure, true, and real to all sentient beings.

The passage on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow in the sutra states:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy....

With these sacred words we know clearly that this second mind - because of the Primal Vow - is entrusting that is pure, true, real, and perfect. It is shinjin. Shinjin, because it is none other than the mind of great compassion, is altogether free of doubt.
Third is the aspiration for birth. The essence of aspiration for birth is none other than pure, true, and real shinjin. But foolish beings transmigrating in samsára - multitudes passing many lives through long kalpas - lack the pure mind of directing merits toward attaining enlightenment and toward all beings, the true and real mind of directing merit. Thus, while the Tathágata was performing practices as a bodhisattva in the stage leading to Buddhahood, there was not a single moment - not an instant - in his endeavor in the three modes of action when he did not realize the mind of great compassion, taking the directing of his virtue to beings as foremost. Hence the Tathágata directs this pure, true, and real mind of aspiration for birth to all sentient beings.

The passage on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow in the sutra states:

[Through being] directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

With these sacred words we know clearly that this third mind arises as the call by which the great compassion of the Tathágata summons all sentient beings. The aspiration for birth that is great compassion - this is true directing of virtue.

Since these three minds are all directed to beings by the mind of great compassion they are pure, true, and real, and completely free of doubt. Hence they are the mind that is single.

Thus, on reading Master Shan-tao's commentary, we find it written:

Someone on the western bank calls to him, "O traveler, with the mind that is single, with right-mindedness, come at once! I will protect you. Have no fear of plunging to grief in the water or fire."

Further it states:

The white path that spans the river is an image for the awakening of pure aspiration for birth in the midst of greed and anger, of all our blind
passions...Reverently embracing Shakyamuni’s teaching in his exhortations to advance westward and obeying Amida’s call to us with his compassionate heart, the traveler gives no thought to the two rivers of water and fire and entrusts himself to the path of the power of the Vow.

With these words we know that the pure aspiration that one awakens is not the mind of self-power of foolish beings. It is the mind directed to beings out of great compassion. Hence it is called "pure aspiration." Concerning the words, "With the mind that is single, with right-mindedness," then, "right-mindedness" refers to saying the Name. Saying the Name is the Nembutsu. "The mind that is single" is deep mind. Deep mind is profound shinjin, which is steadfast. Steadfast, profound shinjin is the true mind. The true mind is the diamond-like mind. The diamond-like mind is the supreme mind. The supreme mind is the mind that is genuine, single, and enduring. The mind that is genuine, single, and enduring is the mind of great joy. When the mind of great joy is realized, this mind negates the three characteristics of non-entrusting; it accords with the three characteristics of entrusting. This mind is the mind of great enlightenment. The mind of great enlightenment is true and real shinjin. True and real shinjin is the aspiration for Buddhahood. The aspiration for Buddhahood is the aspiration to save all beings. The aspiration to save all beings is the mind that grasps sentient beings and brings them to birth in the Pure Land of happiness. This mind is the mind of ultimate equality. It is great compassion. This mind attains Buddhahood. This mind is Buddha. It is "practicing in accord with reality, being in correspondence with the Name." Let this be known.

Here ends the explanation that the three minds are the mind that is single.

Question 2: Are the three minds taught in the Larger Sutra and the three taught in the Contemplation Sutra identical or not?

Answer: The three minds taught in the two sutras are identical. How do we know this? We know it from the master's commentaries.

Concerning sincere mind (shijoshin), he states: "Shi means true, jo means real." Concerning the establishment of shinjin through [the teaching of] the
Buddha and in relation to practice, he states: "Single-heartedly practicing the saying of the Name of Amida alone is the act of true settlement [of birth in the Pure Land]."

Further he states: "Deep mind (jinshin) is true and real shinjin."

Concerning the mind of aspiration for birth and directing virtue to beings (eko hotsugan shin), he states: "This mind, in its profound entrusting, is like diamond."

Thus we know clearly that the mind that is single is shinjin. Solely saying the Name is the right act by which birth is settled. Within the mind that is single, both sincere mind and the mind of aspiration for birth and directing of virtue are included.

Here ends the response to the preceding question.

Question 3: Are the three minds of the two sutras discussed above and "hold steadfast" taught in the Smaller Sutra identical or not?

Answer: The Smaller Sutra states: "Hold steadfast to [the Name]." "Steadfast" means that the mind is firm and unchanging. "Hold" means not being distracted and not letting go. Hence the sense of "never becoming confused." "Hold steadfast" is thus the mind that is single. The mind that is single is shinjin. Without fail, then, take refuge in and especially revere the true teaching of "Hold steadfast to [the Name]" and the true and sincere words, "With the mind that is single, never becoming confused."

It is to guide people of the defiled world, who are given to error and falsity, that the author of the Treatise and the Pure Land master Shan-tao revealed the true essence of the Pure Land teaching. Although there are implicit and explicit expositions found among the three Pure Land sutras, their overall intent is to teach that only the mind that is single is the basis for entry [into the Pure Land]. Thus, each sutra opens with the words, "Thus [have I heard]...." The author of the Treatise begins, "With the mind that is single...." These words express the meaning of "thus."
In this regard, we find in the commentary of the Pure Land master Shan-tao:

"[The Buddha's supernatural powers work] in accord with the intentions" has two meanings. First, it means "in accord with the intentions of sentient beings." All shall be saved in accord with their thoughts and desires. Second, it means "in accord with the will of Amida." With five kinds of sight the Buddha perceives all beings perfectly and with six transcendent powers, works freely and without restriction. When beings are seen ready to be saved, in a single thought-moment - neither before nor after - the Buddha appears before them in both body and mind, and with the three wheels of thoughts, words, and deeds brings them to realization of enlightenment. Thus the ways in which the Buddha benefits beings differ according to their natures.

Further he states:

Reverently I say to the fellow practicers who aspire for birth: You should all deeply repent! Shakyamuni Tathágata is truly our compassionate father and mother. With a variety of compassionate means he leads us to awaken the supreme shinjin.

We clearly know from these words that those practicers have attained the cause of Buddhahood - the mind that is single - through the great compassion of the two honored ones [Amida and Shakyamuni]. Know that they are rare people, people of utmost excellence. But, foolish people caught in the cycle of birth-and-death - beings turning in transmigration - never awaken shinjin, never give rise to a mind that is true. Concerning this, the Larger Sutra states:

The most difficult of all difficulties is to hear this sutra and accept it in shinjin; nothing surpasses this difficulty.

Further, Shakyamuni teaches:

It is the dharma that, for all people in the world, is most difficult to accept.
Truly we know, then, that the crucial matter for which the Great Sage, the World-honored one, appeared in this world was to reveal the true benefit of the compassionate Vow and to declare it to be the direct teaching of the Tathāgatas. The essential purport of this great compassion is to teach the immediate attainment of birth by foolish beings. Thus, looking into the essence of the teachings of the Buddhas, we find that the true and fundamental intent for which all the Tathāgatas, past, present, and future, appear in this world, is solely to teach the inconceivable Vow of Amida.

When, through Amida's directing of virtue to them by the power of the Vow, the foolish beings ever floundering in birth-and-death hear the true and real virtues and realize supreme shinjin, they immediately attain great joy and reach the stage of non-retrogression, so that without being made to sunder their blind passions, they are brought quickly to the realization of great nirvana.

### Hymns in Japanese

Let Amida's virtues be praised

For a hundred thousand kotis of Nayutas of kalpas,

By tongues a hundred thousand countless kotis of Nayutas in number,

Each tongue producing countless voices,

And still those virtues could not be exhausted.

### The Sutra of Praise of the Pure Land

Translated by Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang
Hymns of the Pure Land

1

Those who truly attain shinjin

As they utter Amida’s Name,

Being mindful of the Buddha always,

Wish to respond to the great benevolence.

2

Those who say the Name while they doubt

The Vow beyond conceptual understanding

Attain birth and abide for five-hundred years

Vainly within a palace; so it is taught.

It is stated in the Gathas in Praise of Amida Buddha by T'an-luan:

Namu-Amida-butsu
Interpreting the title, I call this work An Appended Scripture on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. In praising Amida, it also refers to the land of peace.

Since attainment of Buddhahood, ten kalpas have passed;

The Buddha's life indeed has no measure.

Dharma-body's wheel of light pervades the dharma-realm,

Shining on the blind and ignorant of the world; hence, I bow in homage.

Further, Amida is called:

1 Immeasurable Light
2 True and Real Light
3 Boundless Light
4 Enlightenment of Nondiscrimination
5 Unhindered Light
6 Beyond Conception
7 Unequaled Light
8 Ultimate Shelter
9 Lord of Blazing Light
10 Great One Worthy of Offerings
11 Light of Purity
12 Light of Joy
13 Great Consolation

14 Light of Wisdom

15 Uninterrupted Light

16 Inconceivable Light

17 Inexpressible Light

18 Light that Surpasses the Sun and Moon

19 One who is without Equal

20 One of the Vast Assembly

21 Ocean-like Great Mind

22 Supremely Honored One

23 Power of Nondiscrimination

24 Power of the Great Mind

25 Inexpressible Buddha

26 Bhagavat

27 One of the Hall

28 Pure One who Broadly Grasps All Beings

29 Honored-one beyond Conceptual Understanding

30 One of the Bodhi-tree

31 Truly Immeasurable One

32 Music of Purity
The Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages states:

The one freely working
I pay homage
The one of purity
I take refuge
Immeasurable virtue
I offer praise
Our teacher, Bodhisattva Nargarjuna, abundantly praises the Pure Land in the west

In such works as his commentaries on the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Sutra

And the Ten Bodhisattva Stages,

And urges us to practice the Nembutsu.

Nargarjuna (Ryuju, literally "naga [dragon]-tree"): Nargarjuna was born beneath a tree and taken and raised by a naga-king. Later, he became the son of a king in southern India. Hence his name, Nargarjuna.

The World-honored one foretold

That a monk named Bodhisattva Nargarjuna

Would appear in south India and would crush

The wrong views of being and nonbeing.

South India: Further south, there was a great spirit king who was master of Mount Lanka, which rises from the sea. Because this king loved the Mahayana teaching, Shakyamuni Tathāgata crossed the sea to his kingdom and taught the dharma to him. On that occasion, Shakyamuni foretold that
some time after his entrance into nirvana, Nargarjuna would appear in the world and vanquish the non-Buddhist teachings.

3

Our teacher, Bodhisattva Nargarjuna,

Clarified the unexcelled dharma of the Great Vehicle;

Having attained the stage of joy,

He wholeheartedly recommended the Nembutsu to all.

Stage of joy: the stage of the truly settled. In the term "joy" (kangi), kan means to be gladdened in body and -gi means to be gladdened in mind. To rejoice, realizing that one is assured of attaining what one shall attain, is called "joy."

4

Mahasattva Nargarjuna appeared in the world

And distinguished the paths of difficult and easy practice;

Thus he leads us, who are wandering in transmigration,

To board the ship of the universal Vow.
Difficult: the Path of Sages.

Easy: the Pure Land path.

People who hear and accept the words
Of our teacher Bodhisattva Nargarjuna
Should be mindful of the Primal Vow
And say the Name of Amida always.

Those who desire quickly to attain
The stage of non-retrogression
Should, with a heart of reverence,
Hold steadfast to and say Amida's Name.

Reverence: to worship with humility. Hinayana speaks of making offerings; Mahayana speaks of reverence.
Hold steadfast to: to take and hold in one's mind; not to scatter or lose; never abandoning once one has taken hold.

7

The ocean of birth-and-death, of painful existence, has no bound;
Only by the ship of Amida's universal Vow
Can we, who have long been drowning,
Unfailingly be brought across it.

8

The Commentary on the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Sutra states:
The Tathāgata is the supreme dharma-king;
With bodhisattvas as dharma-vassals,
The person to be deeply revered is the World-honored one.

9

All the bodhisattvas state:
"When we were in the causal stage,
We passed through countless kalpas
Performing the myriad good acts and practices,

10

But the attachments of affection were extremely hard to sever,
And birth-and-death was extremely difficult to exhaust.
Only by practicing the Nembutsu samádhi
Could we eliminate the obstructions of karmic evil and gain liberation."

Here ends the Hymns on
Bodhisattva Nargarjuna

Hymns of the Dharma-Ages

[1]
Reverently I say to fellow practicers who aspire for birth:
You should all deeply repent! Shakyamuni Tathágata is
truly our compassionate father and mother.
With a variety of compassionate means
he leads us to awaken the supreme shinjin.

Hymns on the Samádhi of All Buddhas' Presence

[Prefatory Hymn]

In 1257, on the night of the ninth day of the second month, during the hour of the tiger, I was told in a dream:

Entrust yourself to Amida's Primal Vow.

Through the benefit of being grasped, never to be abandoned,

All who entrust themselves to the Primal Vow

Attain the supreme enlightenment.

Hymns in Praise of Prince Shotoku

COMPOSED BY GUTOKU SHINRAN

1
TAKE REFUGE IN PRINCE SHOTOKU OF THE COUNTRY OF JAPAN!

OUR INDEBTEDNESS TO HIS PROPAGATION OF THE BUDDHIST TEACHING IS PROFOUND.

HIS COMPASSIONATE ACTIVITY TO SAVE SENTIENT BEINGS IS FAR-REACHING;

DO NOT BE LAX IN REVERENT PRAISE OF HIM!

2

IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT THE FOUR SUBTEMPLES
OF A TEMPLE OF THE FOUR DEVA-KINGS (SHINTENNO-JI), HE WENT INTO A TIMBER FOREST
IN THE DISTRICT OF OTAGI (PRESENT KYOTO), IN YAMASHIRO PROVINCE.

AT THAT TIME, HE MADE A PROCLAMATION.

3

HE STATED THAT IN TIME TO COME, WITHOUT FAIL,
THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL WOULD STAND ON THAT SITE.

IN ORDER TO BENEFIT THE SENTIENT BEINGS OF THE FUTURE,
HE MADE A HEXAGONAL PLATFORM OF EARTH.

4

HE CONSTRUCTED A HEXAGONAL HALL

AND THEREIN ENSHRINED

A STATUE OF JAMBUNADA GOLD, THREE INCHES TALL,

OF GREAT BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA, THE WORLD SAVIOR.

5

AFTER SPENDING SEVERAL DECADES

IN THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL AT NAMBA IN SETTSU PROVINCE,

HE MOVED TO THE CAPITAL OF TACHIBANA

AND BUILT HORYU-JI TEMPLE.

6

FROM THE CAPITAL OF TACHIBANA
He moved to Nara;

constructing a number of great temples,

he widely spread the Buddha's teaching.

7

After the reigns of four emperors in Nara,

the capital was moved to Nagaoka.

After fifty years there,

it was moved to Otagi.

8

In Enryaku 6 (787), during the August reign

of Emperor Kammu, at the time of the construction

of this capital, Avalokitesvara, the world savior,

manifested miraculous signs.

9
THIS TEMPLE WAS BUILT UPON THE FIRST SITE

FOR THE BUDDHIST TEACHING IN THE LAND OF JAPAN.

THEREAFTER, THROUGH THE PRINCE'S BENEFIT,

TEMPLES AND PAGODAS WERE BUILT IN MANY PLACES.

10

REVERENTLY FOLLOWING THE COMMAND OF THE PRINCE,

THE PEOPLE TOOK REFUGE IN THE HEXAGONAL TEMPLE.

THEY PAID HOMAGE THERE

ALONG WITH THE IMPERIAL FAMILY AND COURT OFFICIALS.

11

IN INDIA, PRINCE SHOTOKU
Was born as Queen Srimala,

and in China appeared

as Master Hui-ssu.

He appeared in China
to benefit sentient beings;

he was reborn five hundred times

as both man and woman.

So that the Buddhist teaching be established and flourish,

he appeared in Hunan province, at Mount Heng;

passing tens of incarnations,

he spread Shakyamuni Tathāgata’s teaching.
IN ORDER TO BRING SENTIENT BEINGS TO LIBERATION,

HE APPEARED AS MASTER HUI-SSU;

IN THE TEMPLE AT MOUNT HENG WHERE THE WISDOM SUTRAS WERE TAUGHT,

HE WAS KNOWN AS MASTER OF SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN.

A RECORD BEARING THE HANDPRINT SEAL OF THE PRINCE

STATES THAT IN ORDER TO BENEFIT SENTIENT BEINGS

HE CONSTRUCTED A TEMPLE

IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE KORYO DISTRICT (IN PRESENT OSAKA).

AS THE DHARMA-NAME OF THE TEMPLE OF THE FOUR DEVA-KINGS,

THE DESIGNATION KORYO-JI TEMPLE WAS GIVEN.

BECAUSE IT WAS BUILT IN THE KORYO DISTRICT,

IT WAS NAMED THUS.
In the year 593,

moving to the eastern part of the Koryo district,

he gave the name Shitenno-ji (Temple of the Four Deva-Kings),

and widely spread the Buddhist teaching.

To this place in the past,

Shakyamuni Tathāgata came

and indicated it as a site for the turning of the Dharma-wheel;

he spread the Buddhist teaching.

At that time, the rich and virtuous Prince

made offerings to the Tathāgata.
Because of this relationship,

He built the temple and pagoda.

Making statues of the four great deva-kings

And spreading the Buddhist teaching,

He built Kyoden-in temple

As a site where enlightenment would be realized.

On this site, there is a body of pure water;

It is called Koryo pond.

An auspicious dragon constantly dwell therein;

It protects the Buddhist teaching.
IN THE YEAR 597,
ON THE BANK AT TAMATSUKURI,
HE PERFORMED RITES FOR THE DRAGON
AND PROTECTED THE BUDDHIST TEACHING.

THE SEVEN PRECIOUS MATERIALS WERE LAID AT THIS SITE;
HENCE, THE DRAGON DWELLS THERE CONSTANTLY.
THE PURE WATER FLOWS TO THE EAST;
IT IS CALLED FLOWING WATER OF WHITE JADE.

HEARING THAT IT UNFAILINGLY BECOMES DHARMA-MEDICINE
FOR PEOPLE WHO DRINK IT WITH A HEART OF COMPASSION,
THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE PRINCE'S WORDS
ALL TRUSTINGLY DRAW FROM ITS FLOW.
THE PAGODA AND MAIN HALL FACE THE CENTER
OF THE EASTERN GATE OF THE LAND OF BLISS;
THOSE WHO MAKE A PILGRIMAGE THERE ONCE
UNFAILINGLY ATTAIN BIRTH IN THE PURE LAND.

Commentaries

Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'

In the title, Essentials of Faith Alone, alone means "this one thing only," expressing a rejection of two things standing together. It also means "by itself."

Faith is the heart and mind without doubt; it is shinjin, which is true and real. It is the heart and mind free of that, which is empty and transitory. "Empty" means vain; "transitory" means provisional. "Empty" means not real, not sincere; "transitory" means not true. To be free of self-power, having entrusted oneself to the Other Power of the Primal Vow - this is faith alone.

Essentials indicates the selecting and gathering together of significant passages from the scriptures. Thus the title, Essentials of Faith Alone.

Faith alone also means that nothing is placed equal with this shinjin of Other Power, for it is the working of the universal Primal Vow.

The Sacred Name of the Tathágata is exceedingly distinct and clear;
Throughout the worlds in the ten quarters it prevails.
Solely those who say the Name all attain birth;

Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta come of themselves to welcome them.

The sacred Name of the Tathágata is exceedingly distinct and clear

The Tathágata is the Tathágata of unhindered light. The sacred Name is Namu-Amida-butsu.

Sacred means holy, excellent.

Name (go) indicates the name of a Buddha after the attainment of Buddhahood; another term (myo) indicates the name before this attainment. The sacred Name of the Tathágata surpasses measure, description, and conceptual understanding; it is the Name of the Vow embodying great love and great compassion, which brings all sentient beings into the supreme nirvana. The Name of this Buddha surpasses the names of all the other Tathágatas, for it is based on the Vow to save all beings.

Exceedingly distinct and clear

Exceedingly here means utterly, unsurpassed.

Distinct implies "to distinguish"; here it means to distinguish each sentient being.

Clear means evident. It is evident that Amida, distinguishing every sentient being in the ten quarters, guides each to salvation; thus the Buddha's compassionate concern for us is unsurpassed.

Throughout the world in the ten quarters it prevails

Throughout means universally, extensively, boundlessly.

Prevails means that the Name spreads universally throughout the worlds in the ten quarters, countless as minute particles, and guides all to the practice of the Buddha's teaching. This means that, since there is no one - whether among the wise of the Mahayana or the Hinayana, or the ignorant, good or evil - who can attain supreme nirvana through his or her own self-cultivated wisdom, we are encouraged to enter the ocean of the wisdom-Vow of the Buddha of unhindered light, for the Buddha's form is the light of wisdom. This form comprehends the wisdom of all the Buddhas. It should be understood that light is none other than wisdom.

Solely those who say the Name all attain birth
Solely those who means that only those who say the Name single-heartedly attain birth in the Pure Land of bliss; this is the meaning of "Those who say the Name all attain birth."

Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta come of themselves to welcome them

Namu-Amida-butsu is the Name embodying wisdom; hence, when persons accept and entrust themselves to this Name of the Buddha of inconceivable wisdom-light, holding it in mindfulness, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta accompany them constantly, as shadows do things. The Buddha of unhindered light appears as Avalokitesvara, and becomes manifest as Mahasthamaprapta. A sutra states that Avalokitesvara, with the name Bodhisattva Treasure-response, reveals himself as the god of the sun and dispels the pitch darkness of ignorance in all beings; and Mahasthamaprapta, with the name Bodhisattva Treasure-happiness, reveals himself as the god of the moon and illuminates the long night of birth-and-death. Together they bring forth wisdom in all beings.

Come of themselves to welcome: of themselves (ji) means "in person." Amida and a vast and numberless saintly host, consisting of innumerable manifestation-bodies of Buddhas, of Avalokitesvara, and of Mahasthamaprapta, appear in person to be alongside and always protect those who have realized true and real shinjin, at all times and in all places; hence the word "themselves."

Ji also means of itself. "Of itself" is a synonym for jinen, which means to be made to become so. "To be made to become so" means that without the practitioner's calculating in any way whatsoever, all that practitioner's past, present, and future evil karma is transformed into the highest good, just as all waters, upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water. We are made to acquire the Tathágata's virtues through entrusting ourselves to the Vow-power; hence the expression, "made to become so." Since there is no contriving in any way to gain such virtues, it is called jinen. Those persons who have attained true and real shinjin are taken into and protected by this Vow that grasps never to abandon; therefore, they realize the diamond-like mind without any calculation on their own part, and thus dwell in the stage of the truly settled. Because of this, constant mindfulness of the Primal Vow arises in them naturally (by jinen). Even with the arising of this shinjin, it is written that supreme shinjin is made to awaken in us through the compassionate guidance of Shakyamuni, the kind father, and Amida, the mother of loving care. Know that this is the benefit of the working of jinen.

Come to welcome: come means to cause to come to the Pure Land; it is a word which expresses the actualizing of Amida's Vow, "If any should not be born in my land, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment." It indicates that a person
is made to reject the defiled world and come to the true and real fulfilled land. In short, the word indicates the working of Other Power.

Come also means to return. To return is to attain the supreme nirvana without fail because one has already entered the ocean of the Vow; this is called "returning to the city of dharma-nature." The city of dharma-nature is none other than the enlightenment of Tathāgata, called dharma-body, unfolded naturally. When person become enlightened, we say they "return to the city of dharma-nature." It is also called realizing true reality or such-ness, realizing the uncreated or dharma-body, attaining emancipation, realizing the eternal bliss of dharma-nature, and attaining the supreme enlightenment. When persons attain this enlightenment, with great love and great compassion immediately reaching their fullness in them, they return to the ocean of birth-and-death to save all sentient beings; this is known as attaining the virtue of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. To attain this benefit is come; that is, "to return to the city of dharma-nature."

To welcome means that Amida receives us, awaits us. Hearing the inconceivable selected Primal Vow and the holy Name of supreme wisdom without a single doubt is called true and real shinjin; it is also called the diamond-like mind. When sentient beings realize this shinjin, they attain the equal of perfect enlightenment and will ultimately attain the supreme enlightenment, being of the same stage as Maitreya, the future Buddha. That is, they become established in the stage of the truly settled. Hence shinjin is like a diamond, never breaking, or degenerating, or becoming fragmented; thus, we speak of "diamond-like shinjin." This is the meaning of to welcome.

The Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life states:

All sentient beings aspire to be born in that land; they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

Aspire to be born in that land is a command: All beings should aspire to be born in that land!

They then attain birth means that when a person realizes shinjin, he or she is born immediately. "To be born immediately" is to dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. To dwell in the stage of non-retrogression is to become established in the stage of the truly settled. This is also called the attainment of the equal of perfect enlightenment. Such is the meaning of they then attain birth.

Then means immediately; "immediately" means without any passage of time and without any passage of days.
That the Name spreads universally throughout the worlds in the ten quarters is due to the fulfillment of the Vow embodying the ocean of the One-Vehicle wisdom, the Seventeenth Vow of Bodhisattva Dharmakara's Forty-eight great Vows, which states, "My Name shall be praised and pronounced by the countless Buddhas in the ten quarters." This is evident from the description of the Buddhas' witness and protection in the Smaller Sutra. The Buddhas' intention in their witness and protection is also expressed in the Larger Sutra. Thus, this Vow of compassion already shows that the Primal Vow, which encourages the saying of the Name, is the true cause of birth selected by Amida.

I have not gone into the significance of this passage as fully as I would like, but using these notes, please explore it carefully. It is the exposition of a master named Fa-chao, "the second Shan-tao." Tz'u-chio called him Master Fa-tao (Dharma Way), and in a biography he is called the Amida of Mount Lu-shan. He is also called Master Ching-yeh (Pure Karma). He was the reincarnation of the T’ang dynasty master Shan-tao of Kuang-ming temple, and hence is known as "the second Shan-tao."

Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling

The teaching of once-calling should not be considered false

Every person should desire continually, up to the time of death, that all the excellent conditions and surroundings appear before them.

Continually means without stopping. Thus, you should desire from time to time as occasions arise. "Continually" here does not mean constancy. "Constancy" means that there should be no pause. It means always in terms of time, anywhere and everywhere in terms of place.

Everyone, up to the time of death means "all sentient beings who aspire for the land of bliss, to the end of their lives."

Excellent conditions and surroundings means that you should desire to behold the Buddha, to see the light, to smell the wondrous fragrance, and to encounter the guidance of a true teacher.
All appear before them: you should wish these wonderful things to appear before your eyes.

In the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life it is taught:

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

All sentient beings: all the sentient beings throughout the ten quarters.

Hear the Name is to hear the Name that embodies the Primal Vow. "Hear" means to hear the Primal Vow and be free of doubt. Further, it indicates shinjin.

Realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy: shinjin is hearing the Vow of the Tathágata and being free of doubt.

Joy (kangi) means to be gladdened in body (kan) and gladdened in heart (gi). It means to rejoice beforehand at being assured of attaining what one shall attain.

Even includes all possibilities, both many and few, a long time and a short time, first and later.

One thought-moment is time at its ultimate limit, where the realization of shinjin takes place.

Sincere mind is that which is true, real, and sincere, the heart of Amida Tathágata.

Directed to them is Amida's giving the Name that embodies the Primal Vow to sentient beings throughout the ten quarters.

Aspiring to be born in that land: aspiring to be born means that every sentient being should desire to be born in the land fulfilled through the Primal Vow. That land is the land of happiness.

They then attain birth: then (soku) means immediately, without any time elapsing, without a day passing.

Soku also means to ascend to and become established in a certain rank.

Attain means to have attained what one shall attain.
When one realizes true and real shinjin, one is immediately grasped and held within the heart of the Buddha of unhindered light, never to be abandoned.

"To grasp" (sesshu) means to take in (setsu) and to receive and hold (shu). When we are grasped by Amida, immediately - without a moment or a day elapsing - we ascend to and become established in the stage of the truly settled; this is the meaning of attain birth.

Further, Bodhisattva Dharmakara established the Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana, which is taught in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled there also, necessarily attaining nirvana, may I not attain perfect enlightenment.

[Another translation of] the sutra states:

If, when I become Buddha, the sentient beings in my land do not decidedly attain the equal of perfect enlightenment, so that they realize great nirvana, may I not attain enlightenment.

Thus Bodhisattva Dharmakara established this Vow. Shakyamuni Tathágata explains its fulfillment for the sake of us, who are corrupt with the five defilements:

The sentient beings born in that land all dwell among the truly settled, for in that Buddha-land there is not one who is falsely settled or not settled.

In these words of the two honored ones we find stated the significance of they then attain birth; that is, to become established in the stage of the truly settled thus is itself to dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. When a person becomes established in this stage, he or she becomes one who will necessarily attain the supreme great nirvana; hence, it is taught that one realizes the equal of perfect enlightenment, or avaivartika, or avinivartaniya. It is also said one "immediately enters the stage of the definitely settled."

The true and real shinjin explained above is the diamond-like mind of the crosswise leap realized through Other Power. Hence the Larger Sutra teaches that the person of the Nembutsu is of [the stage] next [to enlightenment], like Maitreya. Maitreya is a bodhisattva of the diamond-like mind of lengthwise progression. "Lengthwise" applies to people who follow the Path of Sages, the path of difficult practice performed through self-power. "Crosswise" means laterally or transcendently; "leap" means to go beyond. When we have boarded the ship of the Buddha's karmic power, which has been fulfilled through the
great Vow, we go laterally and transcendently beyond the vast ocean of birth-and-death and reach the shore of the true fulfilled land.

[The stage] next [to enlightenment], like Maitreya: next means near, next in order. "Near" means that Maitreya is a person who will definitely attain supreme nirvana. Hence the pronouncement, like Maitreya. The person who realizes shinjin and says the Nembutsu is nearing supreme nirvana also. "Next in order" means that when 5,670,000,000 years have passed, Maitreya will definitely attain the level of perfect enlightenment and will become the next Buddha in this world after Shakyamuni.

Like: persons of shinjin, which is Other Power, are "like Maitreya" in that they rise to the stage of non-retrogression in their present life and will unfailingly attain the enlightenment of supreme nirvana.

The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

The sutra declares, "Those who, simply hearing of the purity and happiness of that land, earnestly desire to be born there, and those who attain birth, immediately enter the stage of the truly settled." This shows that the land's very name performs the Buddha's work [of saving others]. How can this be conceived?

This passage states, "Hearing of the purity and happiness of that land with wholeheartedness, the person who realizes shinjin and aspires to be born there and the person who has already attained birth immediately enter the stage of the truly settled. In other words, the Buddha's work is assuredly accomplished in hearing the name of that land: how can this be conceivable? Know, then, that although they neither seek nor know the indescribable, inexplicable, and inconceivable virtues of the Pure Land of happiness, those who entrust themselves to the Primal Vow are made to acquire them.

Further, Wang Jih-hsiu states:

The being of the Nembutsu, as such, is the same as Maitreya.

The being of the Nembutsu: the person who has realized diamond-like shinjin.

As such means immediately; also, by means of. Thus, "since one is immediately brought to dwell in the stage of the truly settled through the compassionate means of shinjin."
Same means that the persons of the Nembutsu are the same as Maitreya in that they will attain the supreme nirvana.

Further, Shakyamuni states in a sutra:

Know that the person who says the Nembutsu is a white lotus among people.

With these words the Tathágata likens the persons of the Nembutsu to the white lotus, the flower praised as the best among best flowers, the excellent flower, the wondrous excellent flower, the rare flower, the very finest flower. Master Shan-tao of Kuang-ming temple interprets this to be praise of the person of the Nembutsu as the best among the best, the excellent person, the wondrous excellent person, the truly rare person, the very finest person.

Further, in teaching the benefit of being protected in this present life, it is stated:

There are sentient beings who solely think on Amida Buddha; only these people are constantly illumined by the light of that Buddha's heart, grasped and protected, never to be abandoned. It is not at all stated that any practicers of various other acts are illumined and embraced. This is being protected in the present life, a manifestation of the decisive cause of birth in the Pure Land.

There are sentient beings who solely think on Amida Buddha signifies entrusting oneself with wholeness of heart to Amida Buddha.

The light of that Buddha's heart is the heart of the Buddha of unhindered light.

These people are constantly illumined: constantly means ever, without pause. Without pause, the person of true and real shinjin is ever illumined and protected, at all times and places. Since he or she is constantly protected without pause by the heart of Amida, this Buddha is called the Buddha of unceasing light.

These people: these is used in contrast with "non-." People of true and real shinjin are called "these people." Those who are empty and transitory, full of doubt and vacillation, are "non-persons." "Non-persons" are rejected as not being persons; they are people of falsity. "These people" are true persons.

Grasped and protected, never to be abandoned: grasped means to embrace.

Protected means that the Buddha protects the person of shinjin without pause - in all places, at all times, and without discrimination among people. "Protected" means that one cannot be deterred by those who have taken up other teachings and beliefs, nor obstructed by those of different understandings and practices;
one is not threatened by the heavenly demon Papiyas, nor troubled by evil gods and demons.

Never to be abandoned: these words teach us that the person of shinjin is embraced and protected by the heart of the Buddha of wisdom-light and that he or she is never abandoned, but always resides within that heart of light.

It is not stated at all that any practicers of various other acts are illumined and embraced: various other acts signifies all the various kinds of good acts. Thus, it is not the case that any who perform sundry practices and incline toward different forms of discipline are illumined and embraced; they are not protected. This sentence urges us to realize that such people do not receive the benefit of being grasped by Amida, for they are not practicers of the Primal Vow. It means that they are not protected in the present life.

This is being protected in the present life means that Amida protects us in this world. This karmic power of the Buddha, fulfilled through the Primal Vow, is the strong cause of the attainment of birth by the person of shinjin; hence it is called the decisive cause. The person who rejoices in realizing shinjin is taught in a sutra to be the equal of the Buddhas.

Master Genshin of Shuryogon-in states:

Although I too am within Amida's grasp, blind passions obstruct my eyes and I cannot see [the light]; nevertheless, great compassion untiringly and constantly illumines me.

This means, "Even though I am also in Amida's grasp, I cannot see because of the blind passions that obstruct my eyes. Nevertheless, great compassion is tireless and always illumines me."

If there are persons who, having heard the Name of that Buddha, leap and dance with joy and say it even once, know that they receive the great benefit; that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues.

There are persons who, having heard the Name of that Buddha: Shakyamuni's words exhorting us to entrust ourselves to the Name that embodies the Primal Vow.

Leap and dance with joy and say it even once: joy is to rejoice beforehand at being assured of attaining what one shall attain.

Leap and dance (yuyaku) means to dance in the air (yu) and to dance on the ground (yaku); it is the form of boundless joy and manifests the state of gladness
and delight. "Gladness" is to rejoice upon attaining what one shall attain and "delight" is happiness. Attaining the stage of the truly settled expresses itself in this form.

Even indicates the indeterminateness of the number of times one should say the Name.

Say [the Name] once is virtue at its fullness. The countless virtues are all included and the various merits all held in a single utterance.

Know that they: people realizing shinjin.

Receive the great benefit: they will realize the supreme nirvana; hence it is further stated, that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues. That is means immediately; it also means dharmicness.

In entrusting ourselves to the Tathágata’s Primal Vow and saying the Name once, necessarily, without seeking it, we are made to receive the supreme virtues, and without knowing it, we acquire the great and vast benefit. This is dharmicness, by which one will immediately realize the various facets of enlightenment naturally. "Dharmicness" means not brought about in any way by the practitioner's calculation; from the very beginning on shares in the benefit that surpasses conception. It indicates the nature of jinen. "Dharmicness" expresses the natural working (jinen) in the life of the person who realizes shinjin and says the Name once.

Concerning the statement from the sutra, There is not one who is falsely settled or not settled: not one who is falsely settled means, "because in the fulfilled land there is no one who performs various good acts and practices in mixed ways."

Not settled: in the true fulfilled land there is no one who says the Nembutsu in self-power or in doubt, for only the truly settled are born there.

These passages are scriptural evidence for the teaching of once calling. I have not explained them as fully as I would like, but using these notes, please explore their deeper significance.

Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls
It is stated in the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

It is stated in the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life: the sutra that teaches the Tathágata’s Forty-eight Vows.

If, when I attain Buddhahood: "If, when I have attained Buddhahood."

The sentient beings of the ten quarters: all the beings throughout the ten quarters.

With sincere mind entrusting themselves: Sincere means true and real. "True and real; this is what sincere mind means. From the very beginning sentient beings, who are filled with blind passions, lack a mind true and real, a heart of purity, for they are possessed of defilements, evil, and wrong views. Entrusting is to be free of doubt, believing deeply and without any double-mindedness that the Tathágata’s Primal Vow is true and real. This entrusting with sincere mind, then, is that arising from the Vow in which Amida urges every being throughout the ten quarters, "Entrust yourself to my Vow, which is true and real"; it does not arise from the hearts and minds of foolish beings of self-power.

Aspiring to be born in my land: "Out of the entrusting with sincere mind that is Other Power, aspire to be born in the Pure Land of happiness!"

Saying my Name perhaps even ten times: In encouraging us to say the Name that embodies the Vow, the Tathágata added perhaps even to the words ten times to show that there is no set number of times the Name must be said and to teach sentient beings that there is no determined hour or occasion for saying it. Since we have been given this Vow by the Tathágata, we can take any occasion in daily life for saying the Name and need not wait to recite it at the very end of life; we should simply give ourselves up totally to the entrusting with sincere mind of the Tathágata. When persons realize this true and real shinjin, they enter completely into the compassionate light that grasps, never to abandon, and hence become established in the stage of the truly settled. Thus it is written.

Should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment: "If the person who has realized entrusting with sincere mind is not born in my Pure
Land, may I not become a Buddha." This, the essential purport of the Primal Vow, can be found fully explained in the Essentials of Faith Alone. "Faith alone" is the heart that aspires solely to this true and real entrusting.

Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma: Excluded means that those who commit the five grave offenses are rejected and reveals how grave the evil of slandering the dharma is. By showing the gravity of these two kinds of wrongdoing, these words make us realize that all the sentient beings throughout the ten quarters, without a single exception, will be born in the Pure Land.

It further states:

The power of the Buddha's Primal Vow is such
That those who, hearing the Name, aspire for birth,
All reach that land -
Their attainment of non-retrogression coming about of itself.

The power of the Buddha's Primal Vow: the power of the Primal Vow of Amida.

Hearing the Name, aspire for birth: Hearing is to entrust oneself to the Name that embodies the Tathágata’s Vow.

Aspire for birth: "Aspire to be born in the land of purity and happiness!"

All reach that land: Those who entrust themselves to the Name embodying the Vow and desire to be born will all, without exception, reach the Pure Land.

Their attainment of non-retrogression coming about of itself: Of itself (ji) means that the calculation of sentient beings is not involved at all; it being made to become so, one is brought to attainment of the stage of non-retrogression. Of itself expresses jinen.

Attainment is to reach, to take as the essence. Thus: "The persons who entrust themselves to the Name embodying the Tathágata’s Primal Vow are brought to the stage of non-retrogression naturally, by jinen. Realize that you should take this as the essence."

Non-retrogression is the stage at which a person becomes settled as one who will necessarily attain Buddhahood. With these words, Shakyamuni teaches us to take reaching the stage of the truly settled as the essence.
It further states:

Necessarily one achieves the abandoning of this world, transcending and parting from it, and attains birth in the land of peace. One cuts off crosswise the five evil courses and the evil courses close naturally (jinen). Ascending the way is without limit; to go is easy and yet no one is born there. Never at variance with that land, one is drawn by its spontaneous working (jinen).

Necessarily one achieves the abandoning of this world, transcending and parting from it, and attains birth in the land of peace. Necessarily means it has become settled. It further expresses the working of jinen. Parting from: to sever, cast away, and become free of. Abandoning: to cast away, go forth, depart. This passage means that one transcends, becomes free of, and departs from transmigration in birth-and-death, cutting off and abandoning this Saha world; it means that one shall definitely attain birth in the Pure Land of peace. Peace expresses praise of Amida and indicates the Pure Land of happiness.

One cuts off crosswise the five evil courses and the evil courses close naturally (jinen). Crosswise: laterally or transcendently. This means that because persons entrust themselves to the power of Tathāgata’s Vow - this is the absence of calculation on the part of the practitioner - they cut off and abandon the five evil courses and become free of the four modes of birth naturally, by jinen; it signifies Other Power. This is the meaning of "crosswise leap." "Crosswise" is used in contrast with lengthwise, "leap" in contrast with going around. "Lengthwise" and "going around" characterize the self-power Path of Sages; the crosswise leap is the fundamental intent of the true teaching of Other Power.

Cuts off means to sever crosswise the bonds of the five evil courses. The evil courses close naturally: When a person takes refuge in the power of the Vow, the five courses of birth-and-death are closed off; hence, close naturally. That is, drawn by the Primal Vow as the karmic cause, one attains birth in the Pure Land naturally, by jinen.

Ascending the way is without limit. Ascending: attaining the supreme nirvana. Way: the enlightenment of great nirvana.

To go is easy and yet no one is born there. To go is easy: When persons allow themselves to be carried by the power of the Primal Vow, they are certain to be born in the land that has been fulfilled through it; hence, it is easy going there. No one is born there: Because people of true and real shinjin are extremely rare, those born in the true fulfilled land are few. Hence, Master Genshin states that those born in the fulfilled Pure Land are extremely few; those born in the transformed Pure Land are many.
Never at variance with that land, one is drawn there by its spontaneous working (jinen). That land is the Pure Land of peace. Never at variance means not upside down, not at variance. Through the karmic power of the great Vow, the person who has realized true and real shinjin naturally is in accord with the cause of birth in the Pure Land and is drawn by the Buddha's karmic power; hence the going is easy, and ascending to and attaining the supreme great nirvana is without limit. Thus the words, one is drawn there by its spontaneous working (jinen). One is drawn there naturally by the cause of birth, the entrusting with sincere mind that is Other Power; this is the meaning of drawn. Jinen means that there is no calculating on the part of the practitioner.

Letters

Lamp for the Latter Ages

1 [Concerning Thought and No-thought]

The idea of Amida's coming at the moment of death is for those who seek to gain birth in the Pure Land by doing various practices, for they are practitioners of self-power. The moment of death is of central concern to such people, for they have not yet attained true shinjin. We may also speak of Amida's coming at the moment of death in the case of those who, though they have committed the ten transgressions and the five grave offenses throughout their lives, encounter a teacher in the hour of death and are led at the very end to utter the Nembutsu.

The practitioner of true shinjin, however, abides in the stage of the truly settled, for he or she has already been grasped, never to be abandoned. There is no need to wait in anticipation for the moment of death, no need to rely on Amida's coming. At the time shinjin becomes settled, birth too becomes settled; there is no need for the deathbed rites that prepare one for Amida's coming.

"Right-mindedness," then, is the settling of the shinjin of the universal Primal Vow. Because of the realization of this shinjin, a person necessarily attains the supreme nirvana. Shinjin is the mind that is single; the mind that is single is the diamond-like mind; the diamond-like mind is the mind aspiring for great enlightenment; and this is Other Power that is true Other Power.
There are, in addition, two other types of right-mindedness: that achieved through meditative and that through non-meditative practices. These are right-mindedness of self-power within Other Power. The terms "meditative good" and "non-meditative good" are used with reference to birth through various practices and indicate the good practices of self-power within Other Power.

Without awaiting Amida's coming, the practitioner of self-power will not attain birth even into the borderland, or the womblike birth, or the realm of indolence. For this reason Amida created the Nineteenth Vow, vowing to appear at the moment of death to welcome people who wish to attain birth by directing the merit of their accumulated good toward the Pure Land. Thus, it is the person endeavoring in meditative or non-meditative practices who must be concerned about awaiting the moment of death and attaining birth through Amida's coming.

The shinjin of the selected Primal Vow has nothing to do with either "thought" or "no-thought." "Thought" refers to meditation on the color and form of an object; "no-thought" means that no form is conceived and no color visualized, so that there is no thought whatever. These are both teachings of the Path of Sages. The Path of Sages comprises teachings that people who have already attained Buddhahood preach in order to encourage us; it includes such schools as the Busshin, Shingon, Tendai, Kegon, and Sanron, which are said to be the ultimate developments of the Mahayana. The Busshin school is the presently growing Zen school. There are also the accommodated Mahayana and the Hinayana teachings, such as the Hosso, Jojitsu, and Kusha. These are all teachings of the Path of Sages. "Accommodated teachings" are those that Buddhas and bodhisattvas, who have already attained Buddhahood, promote by temporarily manifesting themselves in various forms; this is the meaning of the word "accommodated."

The Pure Land teaching also includes doctrines of "thought" and "no-thought," although here "thought" refers to non-meditative good and "no-thought" to meditative good. "No-thought" in the Pure Land School, then, is quite different from that of the Path of Sages. "No-thought" of the Path of Sages also includes a doctrine of "thought" as visualization. Please ask someone about the full implications of this.

In the Pure Land teaching there are the true and the provisional. The true is the selected Primal Vow. The provisional teaches the good of meditative and non-meditative practices. The selected Primal Vow is the true essence of the Pure Land way; good practices, whether meditative or non-meditative, are provisional ways. The true essence of the Pure Land way is the consummation of Mahayana
Buddhism; the provisional gateways of expedience include the other Mahayana and the Hinayana teachings, accommodated and real.

The teachers of Shakyamuni numbered one hundred and ten; this is stated in the Garland Sutra.

Namu-Amida-butsu

Kencho 3 [1251], Intercalary ninth month, 20th day

GUTOKU SHINRAN
Age 79

A Collection of Letters

That the Tathágata’s Primal Vow is spreading is indeed splendid and gladdening above all else. In this, however, there must never be any arguing, person with person in each locality, while adhering to one's own view. In the capital also there seems to be much arguing over such matters as "once-calling" and "many-calling"; this should never take place at all.

Ultimately, you should read carefully and constantly such writings as Essentials of Faith Alone, On the Afterlife, and Self-power and Other Power, and not diverge from their message. Please tell this to all people, wherever they
may be. Further, if there are matters that are unclear, since I am still alive today, please take the trouble of coming to see me. Or you may ask someone to deliver a message. Please be sure to relate all of this to the people of Kashima, Namekata, and the neighboring areas also. In such disputation over once calling and many-calling, merely futile and argumentative words are voiced. You should by all means avoid it.

Respectfully.

People who do not understand these matters discuss things of little significance. You should avoid such arguments by all means.

Second month, 3rd day
Shinran

[Letter to Shinran from Senshin]

A person said: At the point of the awakening of the one moment of shinjin, we come to be grasped and protected by the unhindered light of Amida's compassion; hence, the cause of birth in the Pure Land is one and the same [for all]. Thus, there should be no doubt about this. Therefore, there is no need whatsoever to inquire into whether one has firm faith or not. Hence we say "Other Power"; this is why it is said that there is true working in no working. We are completely possessed of ignorance and our minds are wholly covered over by blind passions.

Respectfully

Eleventh month, 1st day
From Senshin

[Shinran's Response to Senshin]
To respond to your question concerning the cause of birth, at the moment we realize true and real shinjin, we receive [the benefit of] Amida's grasping, never to abandon us; hence, we unfailingly come to dwell in the Tathāgata’s Vow. We find this in the compassionate Vow, which states: "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment." If it is understood that the person of shinjin dwells in the stage of the truly settled, there is no calculation on the part of the practitioner; hence, we speak of Other Power, in which no working is true working. Since practitioners have become free of calculation as to whether they are good or evil, pure or defiled, it is said that no working is true working.

It is stated in the Seventeenth Vow, "If [the Buddhas] do not praise and say my Name," and in the Eighteenth Vow, "If [beings] truly realize shinjin and yet are not born, may I not attain Buddhahood." Since both the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Vows are true, how can the Vow of the stage of the truly settled be meaningless? Because persons of shinjin dwell in the same stage as Maitreya, who will attain Buddhahood after one lifetime, it is certain that they are grasped, never to be abandoned. Hence, what we call Other Power means that there is no room for the slightest particle of calculation on the part of the practitioner. For this reason, it is said that no working is true working. The great master [Honen] said, "Beyond this, nothing need to be said. Simply entrust yourself to the Buddha."

Eleventh month, 18th day

Message to Senshin-bo

I have carefully read your letters.

I have heard that because of Jishin's statements concerning the teaching, people of Hitachi and Shimotsuke have, in their saying of the Nembutsu,
changed utterly from what I had for long years been given to understand. This deeply saddens me. People who had been saying for many years that their birth was firmly settled have, in the same manner as Jishin, all spoken falsehoods; having deeply trusted them for many years, I am profoundly shocked by it. For shinjin that is the cause of birth is to be wholly free of any doubt, and it is this that is the complete settlement of birth. Concerning the nature of shinjin, I have learned from the Master of Kuang-ming temple that after true shinjin has become settled in us, even if Buddhas like Amida or Shakyamuni should fill the skies and proclaim that Shakyamuni’s teaching and Amida’s Primal Vow are false, we will not have even one moment of doubt. Thus I have spoken for long years. In spite of this, at the words of a person like Jishin, the Nembutsu practicers of Hitachi and Shimotsuke all were shaken at heart and went so far as to cast away all those wholly dependable, authoritative writings which I exhausted my strength in copying out in great numbers to send to them. Hearing of this, I know it is useless to speak about details.

To begin, I have never heard such statements as Jishin's or even the terminology he uses, much less learned them; hence, what he says cannot be something I taught him privately. Further, I have not instructed Jishin alone, whether day or night, in a special teaching, concealing it from other people. If, while having told Jishin these things, I now lie and conceal it, or if I have taught him without letting others know, then may the punishment, first, of the Three Treasures, and of all the devas and benevolent gods in the three realms of existence, of the Naga-gods and the rest of the eight kinds of trans-mundane beings in the four quarters, and of the deities of the realm of Yama, the ruler of the world of death - all be visited on me, Shinran.

From this moment on, I cease to regard Jishin as my son. He is spreading incomprehensible lies and absurd statements about secular matters as well; hence, not only regarding religious matters, but regarding secular matters also, there are a countless number of appalling statements. Among them, these statements concerning the teaching are particularly incomprehensible to hear. I have never heard or learned such things. It is utterly astounding and saddening. In abandoning Amida's Primal Vow, people have followed
Jishin, and they have asserted me to be a person who tells lies. It is lamentable and deplorable.

It is deplorable to say that many Nembutsu practicers, even while reading *Essentials of Faith Alone, Self-power and Other Power, On the Afterlife, Once-calling and Many-calling, Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone', and Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, should have abandoned Amida's Primal Vow because of Jishin's statements on the teaching. Such letters as you have sent need not be discussed from now on.

However, *Words on the True Essence of the Pure Land Way*, which you have written, doe not in the least depart from what I have said, so I am very pleased. I accept this writing and will keep it with me.

Further, I have never met a person named Aimin-bo. I have never written a letter to him nor have I received one from him. It is alarming that he is saying he possesses a letter of mine.

His claim that I have written and sent him *Essential of Faith Alone* is appalling; such a letter should be burned. It is altogether lamentable.

Please show this letter to the others.

Respectfully.

Fifth month, 29th day

Shinran

Reply to Shoshin-bo

[Postscript]

Further, the profession of the people of Nembutsu that their shinjin was completely settled was indeed all empty. It was foolish of me to have trusted for many years the words of people who are thus abandoning the
Eighteenth Vow. Since this letter need not be concealed, please do not fail to show it to the others.

Uncollected Letters

1

You have written a letter to me concerning Iya, the serving woman. There is still no place for her to live, and she is undergoing much hardship; it is indeed a pity. I cannot manage to find a solution, and do not know what to do.

Respectfully.

Third month, 28th day

To: Ogozen

Shinran

[written seal]

2
I have carefully read your letter of the first day of the intercalary tenth month. I am truly sad to hear about Kakunen-bo. I had expected that I would go first to the Pure Land, but I have been left behind; it is unutterably saddening. Kakushin-bo, who left us last year, has certainly gone to the Pure Land and is awaiting us there. Needless to say, I will surely meet them there; it is beyond words. Kakunen-bo's words did not differ at all from what I have said, so we will certainly go to the same place, the Pure Land. If I am still alive in the tenth month of next year, it will undoubtedly be possible to meet again in this world. Since your mind of entrusting also does not differ at all from my own, even if I go first, I will await you in the Pure Land.

I wish to acknowledge the gifts from the people there. As long as I am alive, I will continue to write you about everything, and hope to hear from you. It is especially moving to receive this letter of yours. I express this poorly; my words are inadequate. I shall write again without fail.

Respectfully.

Intercalary tenth month, 29th day [1259]

Shinran

[written seal]

Reply to the Lay-monom of Takada
Please show this letter to the people of Hitachi. There has been no change. Since nothing would be more effective than this letter, if you show it to the people there, they will come to share the same feelings.

Respectfully.

Eleventh month, 11th day

To: The Mother of Imagozen

The mother of Imagozen has no one to depend on; if I had property, I would bequeath it to her. I am sure that after my death the people there will deeply sympathize with her. Since I rely on the people of Hitachi to whom I write, I am asking you all to treat her with compassion. Please heed this letter. Concerning Sokusho-bo also, since he has no means of livelihood, I cannot ask him to take care of her. Regarding this matter, I feel equally powerless and distressed about both of them. I am not asking Sokusho-bo to help her. It
is the people of Hitachi who must show compassion for these two. With sympathy, the people there should feel concern for them. On reading this letter, the people should share the same feelings.

Respectfully.

Eleventh month, 12th day

To: The People of Hitachi

Zenshin

[written seal]

To: The People of Hitachi

[written seal]
Enbutsu-bo is returning from Kyoto. Because of his deep aspiration, he came here without informing his master. Bearing this in mind, please speak to his master. On the night of the tenth, there was a fire. Enbutsu-bo did well in managing to come and visit. His aspiration is wonderful. He will certainly speak of these events; please hear about them from him. I am extremely busy, and cannot write fully of all the various matters.

Respectfully.

Twelfth month, 15th day

To: Shinbutsu-bo

[written seal]

I have heard in detail what you have been saying. It is above all incomprehensible that someone called Aimin-bo has been saying that he has received a letter from [me in] Kyoto. To say that he has gotten a letter from me, although I have never met such a person, never received a letter from him, and never communicated with him, is appalling.
Further, I have never heard and do not know such statements concerning the teaching as you are making or even the terminology you use. Nevertheless, you have been telling others that I taught them to you privately one night, and so, concerning me also, the people of Hitachi and Shimotsuke are all saying that I have lied to them. Therefore, there shall no longer exist parental relations with you.

Further, it is inexpressibly shocking that you are making groundless accusations about your mother, the lay-nun. The woman of Mibu came bringing a letter that she said she received from you; she left the letter here. I have this letter of yours. In this letter as it stands, it is written that you have been deceived by your "stepmother"; it is indeed deplorable. It is a shocking falsehood to say, while she is still alive, that your mother - whom you call "stepmother" - has been deceiving you.

Further, in the letter to the woman of Mibu you make statements about your birth without knowing anything about it; these are utterly incomprehensible falsehoods. I lament this deplorable matter.

It is distressing that you have spoken such lies and that you have petitioned the Rokuhara and Kamakura magistrates concerning them. Falsehoods of this kind are worldly matters and thus may be dismissed as such. Even so, telling lies is wretched, and how much more grievous is it to mislead others regarding the great concern of birth in the land of bliss, casting the people of the Nembutsu in Hitachi and Shimotsuke into confusion, and to make groundless accusations about your father.

I have heard that you likened the Eighteenth Primal Vow to a withered flower, so that all the people have abandoned it. This is truly the offense of slandering the dharma. Further, to favor the five grave offenses and to harm people by misleading them is lamentable.

The offense here of disrupting the Sangha is one of the five grave offenses. To make groundless accusations about me is to murder your father; it is among the five grave offenses. I cannot fully express my grief at hearing these things. Hence, from now on there shall no longer exist parental relations with you; I cease to consider you my son. I declare this resolutely to
the three treasures and the gods. It is a sorrowful thing. It rends my heart to hear that you have devoted yourself to misleading all the people of the Nembutsu in Hitachi, saying that [what they have been taught] is not my true teaching. Rumors have reached as far as Kamakura that I have instructed you to denounce the people in Hitachi who say the Nembutsu. It is deeply deplorable.

Fifth month, 29th day

[written seal]

Reply to Jishin-bo

Arrived: Sixth month, 27th day

Copied for reference: Kencho 8 [1256], sixth month, 27th day

Copied: Kagen 3 [1305], seventh month, 27th day

Gutoku's Notes

[Fascicle One]

[Composed by Gutoku Shinran]
Through hearing the shinjin of the wise, the heart of myself, Gutoku ("foolish/stubble-haired"), becomes manifest:

The shinjin of the wise is such that they are inwardly wise, outwardly foolish.

The heart of Gutoku is such that I am inwardly foolish, outwardly wise.

Concerning the teachings of the Path of Sages and the Pure Land way, there are two types:

1. Mahayana teachings. 2. Hinayana teachings

Concerning the Mahayana teachings, there are two types:

Teachings of sudden attainment.

Teachings of gradual attainment.

Concerning the teachings of sudden attainment, there are further two types of teachings and two kinds of transcendence.

The two types of teachings are:

Real teachings of the difficult practices, the Path of Sages. These are the teachings of the Busshin (Zen), Shingon, Hokke (Tendai), Kegon and other schools.

The true and real teaching of the easy practice, the Primal Vow of the Pure Land way; this is the teaching of the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life and so on.

The two types of transcendence are:

Transcending lengthwise. This refers to the realization termed "this body itself is Buddha," "becoming Buddha with this very body," and so on.
Transcending crosswise. This refers to the selected Primal Vow; the true and real fulfilled land; immediate attainment of birth.

Concerning the teachings of gradual attainment, there are again two types of teachings and two kinds of departure.

The two types of teachings are:

Accommodated teachings of the path of difficult practices, the Path of Sages; the teachings of performing practices for many kalpas, such as that of the Hosso school.

The "essential" gate of the Pure Land way, the path of easy practice. This is the meaning of the Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life: the teachings of meditative and non-meditative good, the three types of meritorious conduct, and the good acts done by the nine grades of beings.

The two kinds of departure are:

Departing lengthwise through the Path of Sages. This is the realization attained by performing practices for many kalpas.

Departing crosswise through the Pure Land way. This is birth in the womb-palace, the borderland, or the realm of indolence and pride.

Concerning the Hinayana teachings, there are two types of teachings:

1. Teachings for Pratyekabuddhas:

Pratyekabuddhas who practice in solitary, like the single horn of a rhinoceros

Pratyekabuddhas who practice in groups.

2. Teachings for Sravakas

The eight classifications of Sravakas are:
The person who has attained the first fruit;
the person advancing to [the fruit of] stream-enterer.

The person who has attained the second fruit;
the person advancing to [the fruit of] once-returner.

The person who has attained the third fruit;
the person advancing to [the fruit of] non-returner.

The person who has attained the fourth fruit;
the person advancing to [the fruit of] arhat.

Know that all the teachings other than solely the selected Primal Vow of Amida Tathāgata, whether Mahayana or Hinayana, accommodated or real, exoteric or esoteric, are the paths of difficult practice, the Path of Sages, or they are the path of easy practice, the Pure Land way, that is termed the directing of merit and aspiration for birth in the Pure Land path, the self-power, provisional gateway of expedience.

In the Larger Sutra, there are three kinds of selection.

Bodhisattva Dharmakara:

The selection of the Primal Vow.

The selection of the Pure Land.

The selection of grasping all beings.

The selection of the realization [in the Pure Land].

Lokesvararaja Buddha:

The selection of the Primal Vow.
The selection of the Pure Land.

The selection of the praise.

The selection of the witness.

Shakyamuni Tathāgata:

The selection of the entrusting of the sutra to Maitreya.

In the Contemplation Sutra, there are two kinds of selection.

Shakyamuni Tathāgata:

The selection of the virtues.

The selection of the grasping.

The selection of the praise.

The selection of the protection.

The selection of the entrusting of the sutra to Ánanda.

Queen Vaidehi:

The selection of the Pure Land.

The selection of the person suited for the Pure Land teaching.

In the Smaller Sutra, there are two kinds of encouragement to entrust oneself, two kinds of witness, two kinds of protection, two kinds of praise, and difficulty and ease [in acceptance].

The two kinds of encouragement to entrust oneself are:

The encouragement of Shakyamuni. Concerning Shakyamuni, there are two passages.
The encouragement of the Buddhas. Concerning the Buddhas, there are two passages.

The two kinds of witness are:

The witness to the adornment of virtues.

The witness to the attainment of birth.

The two kinds of protection are:

The protection of those holding steadfast [to the Name]. This is the protection by Shakyamuni.

The protection of those awakening aspiration. This is the protection by the Buddhas.

The two kinds of praise are:

The praise by Shakyamuni, of which there are two kinds.

The praise by the Buddhas, of which there are two kinds.

Concerning difficulty and ease [in acceptance]:

The difficulty refers to doubt.

The ease refers to shinjin.

There are three kinds of people holding steadfast [to the Name]: those in the past, those in the present, and those in the future.

There are three kinds of people awakening aspiration: those in the past, those in the present, and those in the future.

In Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy, there are three kinds of birth:

Birth that is inconceivable; this is the intent of the Larger Sutra.
Birth attained beneath twin sala trees; this is the intent of the Contemplation Sutra.

Birth that is non-comprehensible; this is the intent of the Amida Sutra.

It is stated in the Larger Sutra: "In the giving of witness to the Primal Vow, there are three [Buddha-] bodies."

The witness of dharma-body. The [Larger] Sutra states:

From the sky [a voice] declared in praise, "You shall decidedly and without fail attain the supreme enlightenment!"

The witness of fulfilled bodies; this refers to the Tathágatas of the ten quarters.

The witness of transformed bodies; this refers to Lokesvararaja Buddha.

Concerning Buddha-lands, there are two types:

Buddhas [true and provisional]

Lands [true and provisional]

Concerning Buddhas, there are four kinds:

1. Dharma-body. 2. Fulfilled body

3. Accommodated body. 4. Transformed body.

Concerning dharma-body, there are two kinds:

Dharma-body as such-ness.

Dharma-body as compassionate means.

Concerning fulfilled bodies, there are three kinds.

1. Amida. 2. Shakyamuni.
3. Buddhas throughout the ten quarters.

Concerning accommodated and transformed bodies, there are three kinds:

1. Amida. 2. Shakyamuni.

3. Buddhas throughout the ten quarters.

Concerning lands, there are four kinds:

The land of dharma-body.

The lands of fulfilled bodies.

The lands of accommodated bodies.

The lands of transformed bodies.

Concerning fulfilled lands, there are three kinds:

1. That of Amida. 2. That of Shakyamuni.

3. Those of the Buddhas throughout the ten quarters.

Concerning the transformed lands of Amida, there are two kinds:

The city of doubt or womb-palace.

The realm of indolence and pride or borderland.

Know that because the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow is the ultimate sudden teaching, the teaching of sudden and instantaneous attainment, the perfectly fulfilled teaching, and the consummate teaching, it is the absolute and incomparable teaching, the path of true reality or such-ness. It is the single within the single, the sudden within the sudden, the true within the true, the consummate within the consummate. The One Vehicle that is true reality is the ocean of the great Vow. It is the supreme, rare practice.
Know that the diamond-like true mind is the ocean of unhindered shinjin.

The Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra states:

I rely on the bodhisattva-Pitaka,

The sudden teaching, the ocean of the One Vehicle.

The Hymns on the Samádhi of All Buddhas' Presence states:

In the Ornament Sutra the gradual teaching is expounded;

Performing practices for a myriad kalpas, one attains the stage of non-retrogression.

What is taught in the Contemplation and Amida Sutras

Is the sudden teaching, the bodhisattva Pitaka.

Concerning "consummate" and "sudden"; "consummate" means "perfectly fulfilled" and "consummate". "Sudden" means "ultimate sudden" and "sudden and instantaneous."

Contrasts of the two kinds of [Pure Land] teachings.

Know that the ocean of the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow is the ultimate sudden teaching, the teaching of sudden and instantaneous attainment, the perfectly fulfilled teaching, the consummate teaching.

Know that the "essential" gate of the Pure Land teaching is the teaching of the two kinds of good acts, meditative and non-meditative, the provisional gate of expedient means, the teaching of the three types of meritorious conduct and the good acts done by the nine grades of beings.

Easy, in contrast to difficult;

Crosswise, in contrast to lengthwise;
Sudden, in contrast to gradual;

Leaping across, in contrast to fording;

True, in contrast to provisional;

Accordant, in contrast to opposing;

Pure, in contrast to mixed;

Right, in contrast to wrong;

Superior, in contrast to inferior;

Intimate, in contrast to remote;

Great, in contrast to small;

Many, in contrast to few;

Momentous, in contrast to trivial;

Special, in contrast to general;

Direct, in contrast to roundabout;

Quick, in contrast to slow;

Vast, in contrast to narrow;

Close, in contrast to distant;

Fully expressed teaching, in contrast to that not fully expressed;

Greatly beneficial, in contrast to meagerly beneficial;

Unsurpassed, in contrast to surpassed;

Not-directing merit, in contrast to directing merit;
Buddha's exposition, in contrast to those of others;

Embodying the Vow, in contrast to not embodying the Vow

Promised, in contrast to not promised;

Selected, in contrast to un-selected;

Praised, in contrast to un-praised;

Witnessed, in contrast to un-witnessed;

Protected, in contrast to unprotected;

Straightforward exposition, in contrast to incidental explanation;

Exhaustive of truth, in contrast to not exhaustive of truth;

Uninterrupted, in contrast to interrupted;

Continuous, in contrast to non-continuous;

Non-retrogressive, in contrast to retrogressive;

Unceasing, in contrast to ceasing;

Resultant virtue, in contrast to causal practice;

Un-perished dharma, in contrast to perishing;

Other Power, in contrast to self-power;

Practitioner grasped, in contrast to not grasped;

Practitioner entering the stage of the truly settled, in contrast to not entering;

Inconceivable, in contrast to conceivable;

Fulfilled land, in contrast to transformed land.
Know that the above forty-two contrasts are applied with respect to the teaching.

True and real, pure shinjin is the inner cause. Being grasped, never to be abandoned is the outer cause.

Concerning the entrusting of oneself to the Primal Vow, [to borrow the words of Shan-tao,] "in the preceding moment, life ends..."

This means that "one immediately enters the group of the truly settled" [T'an-luan].

Concerning immediately attaining birth, [to borrow the words of Shan-tao,] "in the next moment, you are immediately born."

This means that "one immediately enters the stage of

The definitely settled" [Nargarjuna].

Further, "One is termed a definitely-settled bodhisattva."

Know that it is the diamond-like mind that is Other Power.

Know, in other words, that one is the same as Bodhisattva Maitreya, who has attained the diamond-like mind of self-power.

It is stated in the Larger Sutra, "Next [to enlightenment], like Maitreya."

Contrast of the two kind of practicers.

The practitioner of the One Vehicle, of perfect fulfillment, is one of Other Power.

The practitioner of the teaching of gradual attainment, of conversion [from other teachings], is one of self-power.

Entrusting, in contrast to doubt;
Wise, in contrast to foolish;

Good, in contrast to evil;

Right, in contrast to wrong;

Suitable, in contrast to unsuitable;

Real, in contrast to empty;

True, in contrast to false;

Pure, in contrast to defiled;

Comely, in contrast to ugly;

Subtle, in contrast to coarse;

Intelligent, in contrast to dull;

Quick, in contrast to slow;

Rare, in contrast to common;

Strong, in contrast to weak;

Highest of the high, in contrast to lowest of the low;

Superior, in contrast to inferior;

Directly entering, in contrast to entering by conversion;

Bright, in contrast to dark.

Know that the above eighteen contrasts apply to practicers.

Further, concerning the two kinds of practicers, there are also two kinds of natures.
The two kinds of practicers are:

1 Good practicers. 2 Evil practicers.

The two natures are:

1 Goodness 2 Evil

Further, there are two kinds of good practitioner.

(There are also the contingent and the proper.)

Practicers of meditative good acts.

Practicers of non-meditative good acts.

It is stated in the Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra, "The capacities of all sentient beings are of two kinds: meditative and non-meditative."

Concerning the contingent and the proper:

Bodhisattvas (Mahayana and Hinayana).

Pratyekabuddhas.

Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas (contingent practicers of the Pure Land path).

Devas.

Human beings (proper practicers of the Pure Land path).

Further, there are five kinds of goodness.


5. Truthfulness.
Further, there are seven kinds of evil practitioner.

Those who commit the ten transgressions.

Those who commit the four heavy evils.

Those who destroy right views.

Those who break precepts.

Those who commit the five grave offenses.

Those who slander the dharma.

Those lacking the seed of Buddhahood (icchantika).

Further, there are five kinds of evil.

1. Evil 2. Wrongness

3. Deceit 4. Badness

5. Falsity

The Master of Kuang-ming temple states:

People of the present, both monk and lay,

Seek to awaken the supreme mind,

But it is extremely difficult to abhor birth-and-death,

And difficult to aspire to the Buddha-dharma.

Let us all together awaken the diamond-like aspiration

And, transcending crosswise, cut off the four currents.

Contemplating the realm of Amida,
Let us take refuge, place our hands together, and worship.

According [with the Vow] in one thought-moment

We become persons who consequently attain nirvana.

The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

O World-honored one, with the mind that is single

I take refuge in the Tathágata of unhindered light

Filling the ten quarters

And aspire to be born in the land of happiness.

Relying on the sutras

In which the manifestation of true and real virtues is taught,

I compose a gatha of aspiration, a condensation,

That accords with the Buddha's teaching.

The Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life states:

(Translated by Tripitaka-master Samghavarman)

"Do not give rise to doubt after my parinirvana. In the future, when the time of the extinction of the sutras comes, out of compassion and pity I will cause this sutra in particular to survive and remain for one hundred years. Sentient beings who encounter this sutra will all, in accord with their aspiration, attain the other shore."

The Buddha said to Maitreya, "It is difficult to encounter a time when a Tathágata has appeared in the world and to meet one. It is difficult to meet with and difficult to hear the teaching of the Buddhas. It is difficult to hear of the excellent dharma of bodhisattvas, the paramitas. It is also difficult to
meet a true teacher, hear the dharma, and put it into practice. But the most
difficult of all difficulties is to hear this sutra and accept it in shinjin; nothing
surpasses this difficulty."

"Therefore, I have presented the dharma thus, preached it thus, and taught it
thus; accept it in trust and practice in accord with it."

The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

(Translated by Tripitaka-master Bodhiruci)

The words taught through the supreme wisdom of the Tathágata that
pervades all space

Are understood only by Buddhas.

For this reason, hearing widely of the Land of all-knowing wisdom,

You should entrust yourselves to my teaching, the words in accord with
reality.

The Sutra of the Immeasurable Pure Enlightenment of Equality states:

(Translated by Tripitaka-master Po-yen)

Swiftly and rapidly transcending [birth-and-death], at once

We attain that world, the land of happiness;

On reaching that land of immeasurable light,

Let us make offerings to the countless Buddhas.

The Sutra of Salvation through the Perfect Enlightenment of Amida,
Supreme among Buddhas states:

(Translated by Tripitaka-master Chih-chi'en)
After I have attained my parinirvana and departed, the sutras will remain for one thousand years. After one thousand years, they will vanish. Out of pity, I will cause this sutra in particular to survive and remain for one hundred years. After one hundred years, it will disappear. All who aspire in their hearts will attain enlightenment.

The Commentary on the Amida Sutra by Yüan-chao, master of the Vinaya school (Master Tai-chih), states:

The "Chapter of Mahasthamaprapta" [of the Sutra of the Samádhi of Heroic Advance] states: "The Tathágatas of the ten quarters think compassionately on sentient beings just as a mother thinks of her child." The Commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra states: "For example, if the mother fish did not think of her eggs, the eggs would soon fall into ruin and decay."

Anuttara is translated "unexcelled." Samyak means "right," and sambodhi means "perfect enlightenment." This is a term for the fruit of Buddhahood.

Foolish beings of the lowest level, fettered by their karmic acts and blind passions, are transmigrating in the five evil courses for a hundred thousand myriads of kalpas. But suddenly hearing of the Pure Land, they awaken aspiration and seek to be born there. Saying the Name for one day, they transcend and reach that land. All the Buddhas protect them, and enable them to advance directly toward enlightenment.

Know that such and encounter is rare, even in a myriad kalpas. In a thousand lifetimes, a person might encounter the Vow but once. From this day to the very end of time, wherever you are, give praise to the Vow, and wherever you may go, encourage others to hear it. Whatever body and land you may be born into as your recompense, whatever the conditions for teaching others, your work is the same as Amida Buddha's, without any difference. This aspiration is boundless; may the Buddha recognize and know this.

For this reason, after this passage we are encouraged three times to entrust ourselves to the Buddha's teaching. To "accept my words" is to entrust ourselves to the teaching. For people not to entrust themselves to "the
witness to me of the Buddhas of the ten quarters" would be to take the Buddha's words as false and empty.

Written in Kencho 7 [1255] wood/hare

Eighth month, 27th day

Gutoku Shinran

Age 83

Hymn of the Two Gateways of Entrance and Emergence

Composed by Gutoku Shinran
Disciple of Shakyamuni

On the Treatise on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, one fascicle, translated by the Indian Tripitaka Master Bodhiruci during the Wei dynasty.

This treatise is by Bodhisattva Vasubandhu (P'o-sou-p'an-tou). "P'o-sou-p'an-tou" is a transliteration of the Sanskrit. In old translations, his name was translated T'ien-ch'in, which is inaccurate; in later translations, it is given as Shih-ch'in, which is correct. The Upadesa in a Gatha of Aspiration for Birth has been named Treatise on the Pure Land by Master Shan-tao. This treatise is also called the Treatise on Birth. The "two gateways of entrance and emergence" come from this work.

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, relying on the true
And real virtues taught in the Mahayana sutras,
With the mind that is single, took refuge
In the Tathágata of inconceivable light filling the ten quarters.

Unhindered light is great compassion;
This light is the wisdom of all the Buddhas.
In contemplating that world [of the Pure Land], it is boundless,
And vast and infinite, like space.

The fifth of the five inconceivability’s is the power of Buddha-dharma,
Which includes the Buddha-land’s inconceivability.
In it, there are two kinds of inconceivable power,
Which manifest the supreme virtues of that land of happiness.

The first is karmic power; [the land] has been fulfilled
By the karmic power of Dharmakara’s great Vow.
The second is the power of the good of Amida,
The perfectly enlightened Dharma-king, by which [the land] is embraced.

Women, the disabled, and those of the two vehicles
Are never born in the Pure Land of happiness as they are;
The sages of the Tathágata’s pure lotus
Are born transformed from Dharmakara’s lotus of perfect enlightenment.

Although there are initially nine grades among practicers,
Now [in the Pure Land] there are no distinctions whatever;
For all are the same in saying the Nembutsu, following no other way.
It is like the rivers Tzu and Sheng becoming one taste on entering the sea.

Contemplating the power of Tathágata’s Primal Vow,
One sees that no foolish being who encounters it passes by in vain.
When a person single-heartedly practices the saying of the Name alone,
It brings quickly to fullness and perfection [in that person] the great treasure ocean of true and real virtues.

[Dharmakara] Bodhisattva, having practiced the five gates of entrance and emergence,
Has fulfilled the practice of both self-benefit and benefit of others.
Through inconceivable billions of kalpas,
He has gradually fulfilled the five gates.

What are the "five gates of mindfulness"?
Worship, praise, aspiration, discernment, and directing virtue.
How is worship accomplished? He performed worship with bodily acts,
For Amida Buddha, the perfectly enlightened one,
Guiding all beings with skillful, compassionate means,
Brings them to aspire to be born in the land of happiness.
This is called the first gate of entrance;
Further, it is called entering the gate of approach.

How is praise accomplished? He performed praise with verbal acts,
For [Amida Buddha] brings beings to say the Name in accord with the Name's significance,
And to practice in accord with reality,
In correspondence with the Tathágata’s light, the embodiment of wisdom;

This comes about through the Primal Vow in which the Tathágata of unhindered light
Selected and adopted the Nembutsu.
This is called the second gate of entrance;
It is attaining entry into the great assembly.

How is aspiration accomplished? He aspired constantly in his mind,
For [Amida Buddha] brings beings to practice single-heartedly the saying of the Name and aspire to be born in the Pure Land.
Attaining entry into the lotus-held world,
They are led to practice samatha in accord with reality.

This is called the third gate of entrance;
Further, it is called entering the grounds.
How is discernment accomplished? He discerned with wisdom;
For [Amida Buddha] brings beings to contemplate that land with right-mindedness
And practice vipasyana in accord with reality.
On reaching that land,
They are led to enjoy the delights of the various tastes of dharma.
This is called the fourth gate of entrance;

Further, it is called entering the residence.
Concerning the bodhisattva's fulfillment of practice,
Know that he has fulfilled the virtues of the four kinds of entrance
And thereby fulfilled the practice for self-benefit.

Fifth, he has fulfilled the virtues of emergence.
Concerning the bodhisattva's fifth gate of emergence,
How is directing of virtue accomplished? He aspired in his heart,
Never abandoning any sentient being in suffering,
He took the directing of virtue as foremost, and has fulfilled
The mind of great compassion; thus he bestows virtues.
On being born in that land, one is able swiftly and rapidly
To fulfill samatha and vipasyana

And gain the power of compassionate means; thereupon,
One enters the gardens of birth-and-death and the forests of blind passions,
And assuming various transformed bodies to guide sentient beings, freely sports
there with the transcendent powers;
Attaining the state of teaching and guiding, one benefits beings.

This is called the fifth gate of emergence,
Which is entering the state of sporting in the gardens and forests.
Know that because of the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal
Vow,
He has fulfilled the practice of benefiting others.

The Buddha of unhindered light, when in the causal stage,
Awakened this aspiration and established the universal Vow.
The bodhisattva has already attained the mind of wisdom,
Attained the mind of skillful means and the unobstructed mind,
Fulfilled the wondrous, joyous, excellent, and true mind,
And quickly realized supreme enlightenment.
The virtues of self-benefit and benefiting others have thus been fulfilled;
Vasubandhu taught this as the gates of entrance and emergence.

Passages on the Two Aspects of
The Tathágata’s Directing of Virtue

The Gatha of Aspiration for Birth: An Upadesa on the Sutra of the Buddha of
Immeasurable Life states:
How is directing of virtue accomplished? It is by never abandoning any sentient
being in suffering, but constantly aspiring in the heart to fulfill the mind of great
compassion, taking the directing of virtue as foremost.
Concerning the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow, the Tathāgata’s directing of virtue has two aspects: the directing of virtue in the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land and the directing of virtue in the aspect for our return to this world.

With regard to the directing of virtue in the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land, there is the true and real practice, true and real shinjin, and true and real realization.

The true and real practice is expressed in the compassionate Vow that all Buddhas say the Name. This compassionate Vow of saying the Name is stated in the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the countless Buddhas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters do not all praise and say my Name, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

True and real shinjin is expressed in the compassionate Vow of birth through the Nembutsu. This compassionate Vow of shinjin* is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

True and real realization is expressed in the compassionate Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana. This compassionate Vow of realization is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

These Primal Vows of compassion are called the "selected Primal Vows."

Establishing the great Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana, [Amida Buddha] has vowed that the person who has realized this true and real shinjin* immediately comes to dwell in the stage of the truly settled.

In the Sutra of the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Life, another translation of the same sutra, this Vow is stated:
If, when I become Buddha, the sentient beings in my land do not decidedly attain the equal of perfect enlightenment, so that they realize great nirvana, may I not attain enlightenment.

In this compassionate Vow it has been vowed that the person who has realized true and real shinjin* is decidedly brought to attain the equal of perfect enlightenment. The equal of perfect enlightenment is the stage of the truly settled. With regard to the equal of perfect enlightenment, it is vowed that one is brought to be the same as Bodhisattva Maitreya, who is in the rank of succession to Buddahood. These selected Primal Vows are Bodhisattva Dharmakara's universal Vows that surpass conceptual understanding. Thus, in the Larger Sutra, the Nembutsu practitioner of true and real shinjin is said to be "next [to enlightenment], like Maitreya." It is taught that these are the great Vows of directing of virtue in the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land. The Lung-shu Writings on the Pure Land states that one is taught to be the same as Bodhisattva Maitreya.

Concerning the second aspect of the directing of virtue, that for our return to this world, it is stated in the Treatise on the Pure Land:

[Our return] is brought about by the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow; it is called "the fifth gate of emergence."

This is the directing of virtue for our return to this world.

The meaning is expressed in the great Vow of attainment of the rank of "succession to Buddahood after one lifetime." This Vow of great love and great compassion is stated in the Larger Sutra:

When I attain Buddahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come and are born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain [the rank of] "succession to Buddahood after one lifetime" - except for those who, in accordance with their own original vows to freely guide others to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddhas and Tathágatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in the unexcelled, right, true way. Such bodhisattvas surpass ordinary ones, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and discipline themselves in the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment!
This is the Vow of the Tathágata’s directing of virtue for our return to this world. Since this is directing of virtue for return to this world that is Other Power, neither self-benefit nor benefiting others arises from the practitioner's own aspiration; they are the working of Bodhisattva Dharmakara's Vows. The great master [Honen] said: "In Other Power, no working is true working."

You should fully understand these selected Vows of compassion.

Copied Shoka [1257] fire/snake
Intercalary third month, 21st day

A Collection of Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras
[Birth in accord with the Larger Sutra]

Birth in accord with the Larger Sutra is [brought about by] the Tathágata’s selected Primal Vow, the inconceivable ocean-like vow. This is Other Power. In other words, by the cause of the Vow of birth through the Nembutsu, we gain the fruit of the Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana. In this life we dwell in the stage of the truly settled and we necessarily attain the true and real fulfilled land. Thus, because of the true cause - Amida Tathágata’s directing of virtue for our going forth - we realize the enlightenment of supreme nirvana. This is the true intent of the Larger Sutra. Hence, it is termed "birth in accord with the Larger Sutra," and also "birth that is inconceivable."

[Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth to the Pure Land]

[Practice]
Concerning the Tathágata’s directing of virtue for our going forth, there is the true and real act of practice. It is expressed in the compassionate Vow that all the Buddhas say the Name. The compassionate Vow of saying the Name is stated in the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the countless Buddhas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters do not all praise and say my Name, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment!

The passage teaching the fulfillment of the compassionate Vows of saying the Name and of true entrusting is stated in the sutra:

The Buddha-Tathágatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in praising the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of immeasurable life.

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida’s sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

[Shinjin]

Further, there is true and real shinjin. It is expressed in the compassionate Vow of birth through the Nembutsu. The compassionate vow of true entrusting is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind and entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

In the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life, another translation of the same sutra, this Vow is stated:
If, when I have realized the supreme enlightenment, living beings in other Buddha lands should hear my Name, I will with sincere mind direct all my roots of good to them. Aspiring to be born in my land, they shall say my Name perhaps even ten times. If they should not be born there, may I not attain enlightenment! Excluded are those who commit evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.

[Realization]

Further, there is true and real realization. It is expressed in the compassionate Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana. The compassionate Vow of realization is stated in the Larger Sutra:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the human beings and devas in my land do not dwell among the settled and necessarily attain nirvana, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

In the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life, another translation of the same sutra, this Vow is stated:

If, when I become Buddha, the sentient beings in my land do not decidedly attain the equal of perfect enlightenment, so that they realize great nirvana, may I not attain enlightenment.

The Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life states:

When upon hearing the Name of the Tathágata of immeasurable life, sentient beings of the Buddha-lands of other quarters awaken one thought-moment of pure shinjin, rejoice, and - cherishing Amida's directing of his roots of good to them - aspire to be born in the land of immeasurable life, then all shall be born in accord with their aspiration, attaining the stage of non-retrogression and, ultimately, the supreme perfect enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages.
The passages teaching the fulfillment of the Vow of necessary attainment of nirvana, of realization of great nirvana, is stated in the Larger Sutra:

The sentient beings born in that land all dwell among the truly settled, for in that Buddha-land there is not one who is falsely settled or not settled.

Further, in the Sutra of the Tathágata of Immeasurable Life, it is stated:

All the sentient beings of that land and those to be born there are brought to thorough fulfillment of supreme enlightenment and reach the abode of nirvana. Why is this? Because those who are falsely settled or not settled cannot comprehend [the Buddha's intent in] establishing the cause [of birth there].

The Buddha has vowed that persons who realize this true and real saying of the Name and true and real entrusting shall immediately be brought to dwell in the stage of the truly settled. Dwelling among the truly settled is also taught to be attainment of the stage equal to perfect enlightenment. Attainment of the stage equal to perfect enlightenment is taught to be attainment of the same stage as Maitreya Bodhisattva, who is in the rank of succession to Buddhahood. Thus, the Larger Sutra states that such a person is "next to enlightenment, like Maitreya."

The Treatise on the Pure Land states:

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of wondrous sound," the gatha states:
The land's pure sound deeply enlightens beings far and wide;

Subtle and wondrous, it is heard throughout the ten quarters.

Why is this inconceivable? The sutra declares, "Those who, simply hearing of the purity and happiness of that land, earnestly desire to be born there, and those who attain birth, immediately enter the stage of the truly settled." This shows that the land's very name performs the Buddha's work [of saving others]. How can this be conceived...

Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of fellow beings," the gatha states:
The beings of the Tathágata’s pure lotus
Are born transformed from the lotus of perfect enlightenment.

Why is this inconceivable? In this world of miscellaneous modes of births, whether beings are born from womb, egg, or moisture or by sudden
metamorphosis, their fellow beings are numerous, and these fellow beings experience pain and pleasure in myriad variations because of their diverse karmas. In that land of happiness, every single being is born transformed from the pure lotus of Amida Tathágata’s perfect enlightenment, for they are the same in practicing the Nembutsu and follow no other way. This extends even to this world, so that all Nembutsu practicers within the four seas are brothers and sisters. The fellow beings are innumerable. How can this be conceived?

Further, it states:
Although there are initially nine grades among those aspiring for birth, now [in the Pure Land] there are no distinctions whatever. It is like the waters of the Tzu and Sheng becoming one in taste upon entering the sea. How can this be conceived?

Further, the Treatise states:
Concerning "the fulfillment of the adornment of the virtue of purity," the gatha states:
Contemplating the features of that world,
I see that it transcends the three realms.

Why is this inconceivable? When foolish beings possessed of blind passions attain birth in the Pure Land, they are not bound by the karmic fetters of the three realms. That is, without severing blind passions, they realize nirvana itself. How can this be conceived?

We see [expressed in the above passages] the selected Primal Vow that embodies Amida Tathágata’s directing of virtue for our going forth. [The birth in accord with the working of] this Vow is called "birth that is inconceivable."
Understanding this, know that Other Power is such that no working is true working.

[Amida's directing of virtue for our return to this world]

Second, there is Amida's directing of virtue for our return. Concerning it, the Treatise on the Pure Land states:

[Our return] is brought about by the directing of virtue through the power of the Primal Vow; it is called "the fifth gate of emergence."

This is the directing of virtue for our return. It is expressed in the compassionate Vow of attainment of the rank of "succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime."
The Vow of great love and great compassion is stated in the Larger Sutra:

When I attain Buddhahood, the bodhisattvas of other Buddha-lands who come and are born in my land will ultimately and unfailingly attain [the rank of] "succession to Buddhahood after one lifetime" - except for those who, in accordance with their own original vows freely to guide others to enlightenment, don the armor of universal vows for the sake of sentient beings, accumulate roots of virtue, emancipate all beings, travel to Buddha-lands to perform bodhisattva practices, make offerings to all the Buddhas and Tathāgatas throughout the ten quarters, awaken sentient beings countless as the sands of the Ganges, and bring them to abide firmly in the unexcelled, right, true way. Such bodhisattvas surpass ordinary ones, manifest the practices of all the bodhisattva stages, and discipline themselves in the virtue of Samantabhadra. Should it not be so, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

This compassionate Vow is the Vow of the Tathāgata’s directing virtue for our return to this world.

The person who realizes true and real shinjin* through the Tathāgata’s two aspects of directing virtue necessarily dwells in the stage of the truly settled; hence, this is called Other Power. Thus, the Gatha of Aspiration for Birth: An Upadesa on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life states:

How is directing of virtue accomplished? It is by never abandoning any sentient being in suffering, but constantly aspiring in the heart to fulfill the mind of great compassion, taking the directing of virtue as foremost.

Vasubandhu teaches this to be the true intent of the Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. It is birth that is inconceivable.

The Virtue of the Name of Amida Tathāgata

CONCERNING "IMMEASURABLE LIGHT," THE [CONTEMPLATION] SUTRA STATES:
THE BUDDHA OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE POSSESSES EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND FEATURES. EACH FEATURE POSSESSES EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND MARKS. EACH MARK GIVES FORTH EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND BEAMS OF LIGHT. EACH BEAM OF LIGHT SHINES EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT THE WORLDS OF THE TEN QUARTERS, GRASPING AND NEVER ABANDONING SENTIENT BEINGS OF THE NEMBUTSU.

REGARDING THIS LIGHT, THE MASTER OF ESHIN-IN STATES:

EACH FEATURE GIVES FORTH SEVEN HUNDRED FIVE KOTIS AND SIX MILLION BEAMS OF LIGHT AND APPEARS RESPLENDENTLY ABLAZE.

SUCH IS THE LIGHT GIVEN FORTH BY EACH FEATURE; KNOW HOW MUCH GREATER THE LIGHT GIVEN FORTH BY ALL THE EIGHTY-FOUR THOUSAND FEATURES MUST BE. BECAUSE OF THE GREATNESS OF THE NUMBER OF BEAMS OF LIGHT, THE EXPRESSION "IMMEASURABLE LIGHT" IS USED.

NEXT, CONCERNING "BOUNDLESS LIGHT," BECAUSE IMMEASURABLE LIGHT THUS ILLUMINES THE TEN QUARTERS WITHOUT BOUND OR LIMIT, THE EXPRESSION "BOUNDLESS LIGHT" IS USED.

NEXT, CONCERNING "UNHINDERED LIGHT," WITH THE LIGHT OF THE SUN OR MOON, WHEN SOMETHING HAS COME BETWEEN, THE LIGHT DOES NOT REACH US. AMIDA'S LIGHT, HOWEVER, BEING UNOBSTRUCTED BY THINGS, SHINES ON ALL SENTIENT BEINGS; HENCE THE EXPRESSION, "BUDDHA OF UNHINDERED LIGHT.

AMIDA'S LIGHT IS UNHINDERED BY SENTIENT BEINGS' MINDS OF BLIND PASSIONS AND KARMIC EVIL; HENCE THE EXPRESSION, "BUDDHA OF UNHINDERED LIGHT."

WERE IT NOT FOR THE VIRTUE OF UNHINDERED LIGHT, HOW WOULD IT BE FOR US?

WORLD REACHING [THE HEAVEN OF] THE SECOND STAGE OF MEDITATION IN
HEIGHT. THUS, IF AMIDA WERE NOT BUDDHA OF UNHINDERED LIGHT, THE LIGHT
WOULD NOT PASS THROUGH EVEN A SINGLE WORLD, NOT TO SPEAK OF ONE
HUNDRED THOUSAND MILLION. BECAUSE THE LIGHT OF THE BUDDHA OF
UNHINDERED LIGHT IS UNHINDERED IN SHINING THROUGH SUCH
INCONCEIVABLE MOUNTAINS AND GRASPING SENTIENT BEINGS OF NEMBUTSU,
THE EXPRESSION "UNHINDERED LIGHT" IS USED.

NEXT, CONCERNING "LIGHT OF PURITY," IT IS LIGHT THAT DHARMAKARA
BODHISATTVA ATTAINED THROUGH BECOMING FREE OF THOUGHTS OF GREED.
THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF GREED: LUSTFUL GREED AND GREED FOR THINGS. IT IS
LIGHT ATTAINED BY BECOMING FREE OF THESE TWO KINDS OF GREED. IT IS LIGHT
FOR ELIMINATING THE DEFILEMENTS AND IMPURITIES OF SENTIENT BEINGS. IT IS
FOR SWEEPING AWAY THE EVIL OF LUSTFUL GREED AND GREED FOR THINGS.
HENCE, THE EXPRESSION "LIGHT OF PURITY" IS USED.

NEXT, CONCERNING "LIGHT OF JOY," IT IS LIGHT ATTAINED WITH ROOTS OF GOOD
FREE OF ANGER. BEING FREE OF ANGER MEANS THAT EXTERNALLY THERE IS NO
EXPRESSION OF ANGER OR IRRITATION AND IN THE HEART AND MIND THERE IS NO
FEELING OF JEALOUSY OR ENVY. IT IS LIGHT ATTAINED WITH SUCH A MIND, AND
HAS BEEN ATTAINED IN ORDER TO SWEEP AWAY THE KARMIC EVIL OF SENTIENT
BEINGS' ANGER, WRATH, HATRED, AND ENVY; HENCE THE EXPRESSION "LIGHT OF
JOY."

NEXT, CONCERNING "LIGHT OF WISDOM," IT IS THE LIGHT THAT HAS BEEN
ATTAINED WITH ROOTS OF GOOD FREE OF FOLLY. "ROOTS OF GOOD FREE OF
FOLLY" MEANS THAT IT HAS BEEN ATTAINED IN ORDER TO BRING ALL SENTIENT
BEINGS TO AWAKEN THE MIND ASPIRING TO LEARN WISDOM AND ATTAIN
SUPREME ENLIGHTENMENT. IT BRINGS THEM TO REALIZE THE MIND BY WHICH
ONE ENTRUSTS ONESELF TO THE NEMBUTSU. TO ENTRUST ONESELF TO THE
NEMBUTSU IS TO ALREADY HAVE BECOME A PERSON WHO REALIZES WISDOM AND
WILL ATTAIN BUDDHAHOOD; KNOW THAT THIS IS TO BECOME FREE OF
FOOLISHNESS. HENCE THE EXPRESSION "BUDDHA OF THE LIGHT OF WISDOM" IS
USED.

NEXT, CONCERNING "UNEQUALED LIGHT," BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT EQUAL
to that of AMIDA, THE EXPRESSION "UNEQUALED LIGHT" IS USED.
Next, concerning "Lord of blazing light," the brilliance of the light is likened to blazing fire at its height. It is stated that it is like flames at their height without any smoke.

Next, concerning "uninterrupted light," this light shines without discontinuance and without cessation...

...is light that... "Surpass" means that the light of Amida excels that of the sun and moon. In order to bring us to know that it excels and transcends all other light, the expression "surpasses the sun and moon" is used.

I have set forth the meaning of the twelve kinds of light roughly. It is difficult to write it down exhaustively and in complete detail.

Amida Buddha is the light of wisdom. This light is called "Buddha of unhindered light." The reason for the expression "unhindered light" is that it is not obstructed or impeded by the minds of karmic evil and blind passions of all sentient beings of the ten quarters. In order to clarify and to bring us to know that the light of Amida surpasses conceptual understanding, the expression "I take refuge in the Tathāgata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters" is used.

When we constantly hold in mind and say the name of the Buddha of unhindered light, since it embodies the virtues of all the Buddhas of the ten quarters, in saying the name of Amida, all the virtues and roots of good come to fullness in us. Hence Bodhisattva Nargarjuna has taught, "I have expounded the virtues of that honored-one; the good [I have received] is boundless, like the waters of the ocean."

Thus, the expression "Buddha of inconceivable light" is taught. Because Amida is Buddha of inconceivable light, we may also say "Buddha of unhindered light filling the ten quarters"; this is stated by Bodhisattva Vasubandhu in the Treatise on the Pure Land. Amida Buddha has names based on the twelve kinds of light...(Note)

Concerning "Buddha of inconceivable light," even Shakyamuni Tathāgata taught that the virtue of the light of Amida Tathāgata
cannot be comprehended. Because it cannot be comprehended, the expression "Buddha of inconceivable light" is used.

Next, concerning "inexpressible light," Shakyamuni states that the virtue of the Buddha of inconceivable light is difficult to expound fully. It means that words cannot describe it. For this reason, the expression "inexpressible light" is used. Thus Master T'an-luan, in Gathas in Praise of Amida Buddha, combining Buddha of inconceivable light and Buddha of inexpressible light, states, "I take refuge in the Buddha of inconceivable light." That which is expressible concerning the Buddha of inconceivable light, Bodhisattva Vasubandhu previously...

...is stated. It cannot be said that the practicer of self-power is equal to Tathāgata. With one's own mind of self-power, it is impossible to reach the land of the Buddha of inconceivable light.

It is taught that only by shinjin that is Other Power does one reach the land of the Buddha of inconceivable light. The person of shinjin aspiring to be born in that land possesses inexpressible, inexplicable, and inconceivable virtues that cannot be thought or described. Hence the expression, "Buddha of inconceivable light."

Namu-fukashigiko-butsu (Buddha of inconceivable light)

The draft records:

Copied on the 2nd day of the twelfth month,

Bun'o [1260] metal/monkey

Composed by

Gutoku Shinran

Age 83
As I humbly reflect on the past [when the late master was alive] and the present in my foolish mind, I cannot but lament the divergences from the true shinjin that he conveyed by speaking to us directly, and I fear there are doubts and confusions in the way followers receive and transmit the teaching. For how is entrance into the single gate of easy practice possible unless we happily come to rely on a true teacher whom conditions bring us to encounter? Let there be not the slightest distortion of the teaching of Other Power with words of an understanding based on personal views.

Here, then, I set down in small part the words spoken by the late Shinran Shonin that remain deep in my mind, solely to disperse the doubts of fellow practicers.

"Saved by the inconceivable working of Amida's Vow, I shall realize birth in the Pure Land": the moment you entrust yourself thus to the Vow, so that the mind set upon saying the Nembutsu arises within you, you are immediately brought to share in the benefit of being grasped by Amida, never to be abandoned.

Know that the Primal Vow of Amida makes no distinction between people young and old, good and evil; only shinjin is essential. For it is the Vow to save the person whose karmic evil is deep and grave and whose blind passions abound.
Thus, for those who entrust themselves to the Primal Vow, no good acts are required, because no good surpasses the Nembutsu. Nor need they despair of the evil they commit, for no evil can obstruct the working of Amida's Primal Vow.

Thus were his words.

2

Each of you has come to see me, crossing the borders of more than ten provinces at the risk of your life, solely with the intent of asking about the path to birth in the land of bliss. But if you imagine in me some special knowledge of a path to birth other than the Nembutsu or of scriptural writings that teach it, you are greatly mistaken. If that is the case, since there are many eminent scholars in the southern capital of Nara or on Mount Hiei to the north, you would do better to meet with them and inquire fully about the essentials for birth.

As for me, I simply accept and entrust myself to what my revered teacher told me, "Just say the Nembutsu and be saved by Amida"; nothing else is involved.

I have no idea whether the Nembutsu is truly the seed for my being born in the Pure Land or whether it is the karmic act for which I must fall into hell. Should I have been deceived by Master Honen and, saying the Nembutsu, were to fall into hell, even then I would have no regrets.

The reason is, if I could attain Buddhahood by endeavoring in other practices, but said the Nembutsu and so fell into hell, then I would feel regret at having been deceived. But I am incapable of any other practice, so hell is decidedly my abode whatever I do.

If Amida's Primal Vow is true, Shakyamuni's teaching cannot be false. If the Buddha's teaching is true, Shan-tao's commentaries cannot be false. If Shan-tao's commentaries are true can Honen's words be lies? If Honen's words are true, then surely what I say cannot be empty.

Such, in the end, is how this foolish person entrusts himself [to the Vow]. Beyond this, whether you take up the Nembutsu or whether you abandon it is for each of you to determine.
Thus were his words

Even a good person attains birth in the Pure Land, so it goes without saying that an evil person will.

Though it is so, people commonly say, "Even an evil person attains birth, so it goes without saying that a good person will." This statement may seem well founded at first, but it runs counter to the intent of the Primal Vow, which is Other Power. This is because people who rely on doing good through their self-power fail to entrust themselves wholeheartedly to Other Power and therefore not in accord with Amida's Primal Vow, but when they overturn the mind of self-power and entrust themselves to Other Power, they will attain birth in the true and fulfilled land.

It is impossible for us, who are possessed of blind passions, to free ourselves from birth-and-death through any practice whatever. Sorrowing at this, Amida made the Vow, the essential intent of which is the evil person's attainment of Buddhahood. Hence, evil persons who entrust themselves to Other Power are precisely the ones who possess the true cause of birth.

Accordingly he said, "Even the good person is born in the Pure Land, so without question is the person who is evil"

Concerning compassion, there is a difference between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path.

Compassion in the Path of Sages is to pity, commiserate with, and care for beings. It is extremely difficult, however, to accomplish the saving of others just as one wishes.
Compassion in the Pure Land Path should be understood as first attaining Buddhahood quickly through saying the Nembutsu and, with the mind of great love and compassion, freely benefiting sentient beings as one wishes.

However much love and pity we may feel in our present lives, it is hard to save others as we wish; hence, such compassion remains unfulfilled. Only the saying of the Nembutsu, then, is the mind of great compassion that is thoroughgoing.

Thus were his words.

As for me, Shinran, I have never said the Nembutsu even once for the repose of my departed father and mother. For all sentient beings, without exception, have been our parents and brothers and sisters in the course of countless lives in the many states of existence. On attaining Buddhahood after this present life, we can save every one of them.

Were saying the Nembutsu indeed a good act in which I strove through my own powers then I might direct the merit thus gained towards saving my father and mother. But this is not the case.

If, however, simply abandoning self-power, we quickly attain enlightenment in the Pure Land, we will be able to save, by means of transcendent powers, first those with whom we have close karmic relations, whatever karmic suffering they may have sunk to in the six realms through the four modes of birth.

Thus were his words.
It appears that disputes have arisen among followers of the sole practice of Nembutsu, who argue that "these are my disciples" or "those are someone else's disciples." This is utterly senseless.

For myself, I do not have even a single disciple. For if I brought people to say the Nembutsu through my own efforts, then they might be my disciples. But it is indeed preposterous to call persons "my disciples" when they say the Nembutsu having received the working of Amida.

We come together when conditions bring us to meet and part when conditions separate us. In spite of this, some assert that those who say the Nembutsu having turned from one teacher to follow another cannot attain birth. This is absurd. Are they saying that they will take back the shinjin given by Amida as if it belonged to them? Such a claim should never be made.

If one comes to be in accord with the spontaneous working of the Vow (jinen), one will awaken to the benevolence of the Buddha and of one's teachers.

Thus were his words.

The Nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances. Why is this? To practicers who have realized shinjin, the gods of the heavens and earth bow in homage, and Maras and non-Buddhists present no obstruction. No evil act can bring about karmic results, nor can any good act equal the Nembutsu.

Thus were his words.
The Nembutsu, for its practicers, is not a practice or a good act. Since it is not preformed out of one's own designs, it is not a practice. Since it is not good done through one's own calculation, it is not a good act. Because it arises wholly from Other Power and is free of self-power, for the practitioner, it is not a practice or a good act.

Thus were his words.

"Although I say the Nembutsu, the feeling of dancing with joy is faint with me, and I have no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. How should it be [for a person of the Nembutsu]?

When I asked the master this, he answered, "I, too, have had this question, and the same thought occurs to you, Yuien-bo!

"When I reflect deeply on it, by the very fact that I do not rejoice at what should fill me with such joy that I dance in the air and dance on the earth, I realize all the more that my birth is completely settled. What suppresses the heart that that should rejoice and keeps one from rejoicing is the action of blind passions. Nevertheless, the Buddha, knowing this beforehand, called us 'foolish beings possessed of blind passions'; thus, becoming aware that the compassionate Vow of Other Power is indeed for the sake of ourselves, who are such beings, we find it all the more trustworthy.

"Further, having no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly, we think forlornly that we may die even when we become slightly ill; this is the action of blind passions. It is hard for us to abandon this old home of pain, where we have been transmigrating for innumerable kalpas down to the present, and we feel no longing for the Pure Land of peace, where we have yet to be born. Truly, how powerful our blind passions are! But though we feel reluctant to part from this world, at the moment our karmic bonds to this Saha world run out and
helplessly we die, we shall go to that land. Amida pities especially the person who has no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. Reflecting on this, we feel the great Vow of great compassion to be all the more trustworthy and realize that our birth is settled.

"If we had the feeling of dancing with joy and wishing to go to the Pure Land quickly, we might wonder if we weren't free of blind passions."

Thus were his words.

Concerning the Nembutsu, no working is true working. For it is beyond description, explanation, and conceptual understanding.

Thus the Master stated.

Essentials of Faith Alone

By Seikaku

When persons aspire to free themselves from birth-and-death and attain enlightenment, there are two routes open to them: the gate of the Path of Sages and the gate of the Pure Land. The Path of Sages consists of performing practices and accumulating merit while living in this Saha world, striving to attain enlightenment in this present life. People who practice the Shingon teaching aspire to rise to the stage of great enlightenment with their present bodies, all
followers who endeavor in the Tendai school seek to attain the enlightenment known as "the stage of purifying the six sense organs" in this life. Although such indeed is the final objective of the teaching of the Path of Sages, since the world has reached the age of the corrupt dharma and entered the period of defilement, not even a single person among millions can attain enlightenment in this present life. Hence, those who endeavor in the gate of the Path of Sages in the present age become weary and withdraw in their attempt to attain enlightenment of becoming Buddha with this present body. In remote anticipation of the birth in this world of Maitreya, the Compassionate One, they look to the dawning sky 5,670,000,000 years in the future, or awaiting the appearance of even later Buddhas, they become lost in clouds of the night of countless transmigrations through innumerable kalpas. Or they merely yearn for the sacred sites of Vulture Peak or Potalaka Mountain where Avalokitesvara dwells, or for the small reward of another birth as heavenly or human beings. Although any spiritual relationship with the Buddhist teaching is admirable, immediate enlightenment seems completely beyond hope. What is longed for remains within the three worlds, and what is hoped for is still life within transmigration. Why should they undertake much practice and cultivate understanding, seeking such a small reward? Truly, is it not the result of the dharma being too profound and our understanding too shallow, having become so far removed from the Great Sage, Shakyamuni?

Second is the gate of the Pure Land, in which, directing the merit of practice in the present life, one aspires to be born in the next life in the Pure Land to fulfill the bodhisattva practices and become a Buddha. This gate meets the needs of people of these latter days; it is truly a marvelous path. But this gate is itself divided into two: birth through various practices and birth through the Nembutsu.

"Birth through various practices" means to aspire to be born in the Pure Land through observing filial piety toward one's parents, serving one's teacher and elders, maintaining the five precepts or eight precepts, and practicing charity and patience, and also through such practices as the Three Mystic Acts (Shingon) or the meditation exercise of the One Vehicle (Tendai). One may attain birth through these practices, for all are, without exception, none other than practices for birth into the Pure Land. But in all of them one aspires for birth by applying oneself relentlessly to practices, so they are called "birth through self-power." If the practices are done inadequately, it is impossible to achieve birth. They do not accord with Amida's Primal Vow; they are not illuminated by the radiance of Amida's grasp.
"Birth through the Nembutsu" is to aspire for birth through saying the Name of Amida. Because this is in accordance with the Buddha's Primal Vow, it is called the act of true settlement; since one is pulled solely by the power of Amida's Vow, it is called birth through Other Power. If one asks why utterance of the Name is in accord with the Buddha's Primal Vow, we must recall the Vow's origin. In the distant past, before Amida Tathágata became a Buddha, he was called Bhikshu Dharmakara. At that time there was a Buddha named Lokesvararaja Buddha. When Bhikshu Dharmakara had already awakened the thought of enlightenment, he desired to dwell in a land of purity and benefit sentient beings, and going before the Buddha he said: "Already I have awakened the thought of enlightenment and desire to establish a Buddha-land of purity. May the Buddha, for my sake, teach fully the innumerable, wondrous practices for adorning the Pure Land." Then Lokesvararaja Buddha taught completely the good and bad of the human and heavenly beings in the pure lands of twenty-one billion Buddhas, as well as the coarse and the wondrous aspects of each of the lands, fully revealing each one of them. Bhikshu Dharmakara listened and looked upon them, and discerning the bad he took up the good, casting out the coarse he aspired for the wonderful. He, for example, discerned and rejected lands which contained the three evil paths, but he requested and selected in the first Vow a world in which these three paths did not exist. We should understand that all the other Vows were established in this manner. Thus he chose the surpassing qualities from among the pure lands of twenty-one billion Buddhas and established the world of perfect bliss. It is as though cherry blossoms were made to bloom on the branches of willow trees, or those renowned sights, Kiyomi Beach and Futami Bay, were placed together. This selection was not made out of a brief consideration; it was the result of contemplation over the span of five kalpas. Thus, Dharmakara vowed to create a land most wondrous and adorned with purity, and he further contemplated: "The creating of this land is to guide all sentient beings. Though the land be exquisite, if it is difficult for beings to be born there, it would go against the intent of the great compassion and the great vow. In seeking to determine the special cause for birth into the land of bliss, none among all the various practices is easily performed. If I were to select filial piety toward one's parents, those who lack piety could not be born; if I were to adopt the recitation of Mahayana sutras, the illiterate would have no hope; if I determined charity and observance of precepts to be the causal act, followers who are stingy and greedy or who break precepts would be dropped; if I made patience or effort the act resulting in birth, those given to anger or sloth would be completely abandoned. The other practices are all likewise. Hence, in order that all foolish beings, both good and evil, may equally be born and that they may all aspire for the land of bliss, I shall make simply the utterance of the three characters of the Name, A-mi-da, the special cause for birth therein."
Thus he completed five kalpas of profound contemplation and first of all established the Seventeenth Vow that all Buddhas shall say and praise the Name. It is important to have a thorough understanding of this in regards to the Vow. Because he sought to guide sentient beings everywhere with his Name, he vowed that his Name be praised as the first step. If it were not so, since the Buddha has no desire for acclaim, what need would there be to be praised by all the Buddhas? Thus it is stated:

The sacred name of the Tathágata is exceedingly distinct and clear;

Throughout the worlds in the ten quarters it prevails.

Solely those who say the Name all attain birth;

Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta come themselves to welcome them.

Next he established the Eighteenth Vow, the Vow of birth through the nembutsu, in which he declared that he would guide even people of ten utterances. When we carefully reflect upon it, this Vow is truly vast and profound. Because the Name is composed of but three characters, it is easy to keep even for one as foolish as Shakyamuni’s disciple Panthaka, and in its utterance, it makes no difference whether one is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, nor is discrimination made regarding time, place, or circumstance, nor is distinction made between householder and monk, man and woman, old and young, good and bad. Who, then, is left out? Thus it is stated:

[Amida] Buddha, in the causal stage, made the universal Vow:

When beings hear my Name and think on me, I will come to welcome each of them,

Not discriminating at all between the poor and the rich and wellborn,

Not discriminating between the inferior and the highly gifted;

Not choosing the learned and those upholding pure precepts,

Nor rejecting those who break precepts and whose evil karma is profound.

When beings just turn about at heart and often say the Nembutsu,

It is as if bits of rubble were turned into gold.

This is birth through the Nembutsu.
Bodhisattva Nargarjuna states in his Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages:

In practicing the Buddha-way there is a path of difficult practice and a path of easy practice. The path of difficult practice is like going overland on foot; the easy path is like receiving a favorable wind upon the sea-lanes. The difficult path consists in seeking to attain the stage of non-retrogression within the world of the five defilements; the easy path consists of being born in the Pure Land by virtue of simply entrusting oneself to the Buddha.

The difficult path is the gate of the Path of Sages; the easy path is the gate of the Pure Land. Thinking to myself, it seems that those who enter the Pure Land gate and yet endeavor in various practices for birth are like those who ride on a boat on the sea-lanes, but not receiving favorable wind, push oars and expend their strength, going against the tides and forcing through the waves.

In this gate of birth through the Nembutsu, moreover, two practices are distinguished: single practice and sundry practice. Single practice is to perform simply the one practice of the Nembutsu, awakening the aspiration for the land of bliss and the faith of entrusting to the Primal Vow, never mixing any other practices whatsoever with it. To say the Name of Amida only and think wholeheartedly on this one Buddha, never upholding other formulas or thinking on other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, is called single practice. Sundry practice, while taking the Nembutsu as primary, places other practices alongside it and includes other forms of good acts. Of these two, single practice is to be considered superior. The reason is as follows. If one already aspires wholeheartedly for the land of bliss, why include other things besides contemplating on the master of that land? Life is like a flash of lightning, or a dewdrop at daybreak, and the body like the plantain tree or a bubble - yet one seeks in a mere lifetime of religious practice to depart immediately from one's long abode in the five courses. How can one leisurely combine diverse practices? For securing spiritual bonds with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, one must await the morn when one can make offerings to the Buddhas as one wishes; for the essential principles of the Mahayana and Hinayana scriptures, one must await the eve when all the teachings will be illuminated. Aside from aspiring for the one land and thinking on the one Buddha, there is no other necessity. People who enter the gate of the Nembutsu but combine it with other practices are attached to their former practices and have difficulty abandoning them. Those who hold to the One Vehicle or practice the Three Mystic Acts do not change their aspiration to attain birth in the Pure Land by directing the merits of such practices, wondering what can be wrong with pursuing them together with the Nembutsu. Without endeavoring in the Nembutsu of easy practice that accords with the Primal Vow, meaningless is it to follow various practices rejected by the Primal Vow. Thus Master Shan-tao declared: "Among those who abandon the
single practice and incline toward the sundry, not one in a thousand can be born; among those of single practice, a hundred in a hundred, a thousand in a thousand, can be born." It is said:

The land of bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated;

I fear it is hard to be born there by doing sundry good acts according to our diverse conditions.

Hence, the Tathágata selected the essential dharma,

Instructing beings to say Amida's Name with singleness, again singleness.

That which is rejected as "various good acts done according to one's conditions" is the attachment to one's own former practice. In serving as a retainer, for example, one should serve one's lord, depend on him, and wholeheartedly be loyal to him. However, suppose a person, while evidently serving his lord, in addition harbors designs concerning an unfamiliar, distant person and, arranging to have him meet his lord, seeks to be well spoken of by him. Compared with serving directly, which is superior and which inferior is clearly known. Being of two minds and being of one mind are as vastly different as heaven and earth.

Concerning this, someone asks: "Suppose there is a person who practices the Nembutsu, reciting it ten thousand times each day, and aside from that does nothing but play all day and sleep all night; and another person who says it ten thousand times and afterwards reads sutras and recites the names of other Buddhas: which is superior? In the Lotus Sutra is the phrase, 'by virtue of this sutra one is born in the land of peace.' Can reading this sutra be the same as playing and frolicking? In the Yakushi Sutra is found the guidance of eight bodhisattvas. Thinking on Yakushi Buddha is surely not like useless sleep. I still cannot understand praising one as single practice and rejecting the other as sundry practice."

In considering this matter over again now, single practice is still superior. The reason is that we are essentially foolish beings of this defiled world who experience obstacles in everything. Amida, observing this, taught the path of easy practice. One who plays and frolics all day is a person of great distraction and confusion. One who sleeps the whole night is a person of great lethargy. All are consequences of blind passions, difficult to sunder and difficult to control. When playing has ended, say the Nembutsu; when awakening from sleep, recall the Primal Vow. This does not violate the performance of single practice. To recite the Nembutsu ten thousand times and afterward hold in mind other sutras
and other Buddhas seems splendid upon first hearing, but who determined that the Nembutsu should be limited to ten thousand times? If you are a person of diligence, then recite all day. If you take up the nenju-beads, then utter the Name of Amida. If you face an object of worship, then choose the image of Amida. Directly await Amida's coming; why depend on the eight bodhisattvas to direct your way? You should rely solely on the guidance of the Primal Vow. Do not struggle to undertake the exercises of the One Vehicle (Tendai). In the capacities of Nembutsu practitioners there are the superior, the ordinary, and the inferior. Those of superior nature constantly say the Nembutsu both night and day; in what interval, then, can they turn their attention to other Buddhas? You should reflect on this deeply and not become entangled in distracting doubts.

Next, in saying the Nembutsu, you should possess the three minds. With the simple saying of the Name, who cannot obtain the virtue of one or ten utterances? Nevertheless, those who attain birth are exceedingly rare, the reason being that people do not have the three minds. The Contemplation Sutra states: "The person with the three minds will be born without fail in that land." Shan-tao says in his commentary: "If one possesses these three minds, one will unfailingly attain birth. If one of these minds is lacking, then birth is not attained." This means that if a person lacks one of the three minds, he cannot be born. Although there are many who say the Name of Amida in this world, rare are those who actually attain birth. Know that this is because they do not possess the three minds.

Concerning these three minds: first is the mind of sincerity; this is the true and real heart and mind. In entering the Buddha path, one must first of all have a sincere mind; if the mind is not sincere, it is impossible to advance. Amida Buddha in the past accomplished the bodhisattva practices and established the Pure Land; in doing this he awakened the sincere mind. Hence, if you desire to be born in that land, you must also awaken a sincere mind. As to this true and real heart and mind, one must abandon that which is untrue and unreal and manifest that which is true and real. Indeed, although we are without profound aspiration for the Pure Land, on meeting others we talk as though we have deep aspirations. While being deeply attached within to fame and gain in this life, our outward show is a rejection of this world. While on the surface we act as though we have a good heart and are noble, we have within an evil heart and a self-indulgent heart. This is called a heart and mind which is empty and transitory, opposite of the true and real heart and mind. You should turn away from this and firmly grasp the true and real heart and mind.
A person who erroneously grasps this, saying that if all things are not as they seem to be they might as well be empty and transitory, exposes to others even what should be matters of reserve and shame, and, contrarily, invites the faults of self-indulgence and shamelessness. Concerning the true and real heart and mind, in seeking the Pure Land, rejecting this defiled world, and entrusting to the Buddha's Vow, one must have such a heart and mind. It does not necessarily mean to openly manifest shame or to make a show of one's faults. You should deeply reflect on this in all circumstances and on all occasions. Shan-tao's commentary states: "Do not express outwardly signs of wisdom, goodness, or diligence, while inwardly possessing falsity."

Second is deep mind, the mind of trust. You should first know the features of the mind of trust. The mind of trust is to have deep faith in people's words without doubting them. For example, suppose that a man whom one deeply trusts and of whom one has no cause for suspicion whatever tells you about a place which he knows well at firsthand, saying that there is a mountain here, a river there. You believe deeply what he says, and after you have accepted these words, you meet other people who say it is all false. There is no mountain and no river. Nevertheless, since what you heard was said by a person whom you cannot think would speak a mere fabrication, a hundred thousand people might tell you differently but you would not accept it. Rather, you deeply trust what you heard first. This is called trust. Now, believing in what Shakyamuni taught, entrusting yourself to Amida's Vow, and being without any doubt should be like this.

There are two aspects concerning this mind of trust: the first is to believe oneself to be a foolish being of defiled karma, subject to birth-and-death, from incalculable kalpas past constantly sinking and constantly turning, without any condition that could lead to liberation. The second is to believe deeply and decisively that, since one does not doubt that Amida's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings, one rides on the power of that Vow and will without fail attain birth. People often say: "Not that I don't believe in Buddha's Vow, but when I reflect on myself, I see that my karmic hindrances have accumulated greatly and that the appearance of a good heart is rare. My mind is ever distracted and single-mindedness is impossible to achieve. I am forever negligent and lack diligence. Although the Buddha's Vow is said to be profound, how can the Buddha possibly receive me? Such thoughts appear truly sensible; arrogance is not aroused and self-conceit nonexistent. Yet there is the crime of doubting the inconceivable power of the Buddha. Does one know what power the Buddha possesses, when one says that because of one's karmic evil it is impossible to be saved? Even those wrongdoers who commit the five grave offenses, because of ten utterances, attain birth in an instant; even more so those who never go so far as to commit the five grave offenses, and in merit far surpass that of ten utterances."
If karmic evil is deep, all the more aspire for the land of bliss. It is said: "Nor rejecting those who break precepts and whose evil karma is profound." If your good is slight, think even more on Amida. It is said: "[With but] three or five utterances, the Buddha comes to welcome us." Do not meaninglessly despise yourself, weaken your heart, and doubt the Buddha's wisdom, which surpasses conceptual understanding. Suppose that there is a man at the bottom of a tall cliff unable to climb it, but there is a strong man on the cliff above who lowers a rope and, thinking to have the man at the bottom take hold of it, tells him he will draw him up to the top. However, the man at the bottom holds his arms back and refuses to take the rope, doubting the strength of the man pulling and fearing that the rope is weak. Thus it is altogether impossible for him to climb to the top. If he unhesitatingly followed the man's words, stretched out his hands and grasped the rope, he would be able to climb at once. It is difficult for people who doubt the Buddha's power and who do not entrust themselves to the power of the Vow to climb the cliff of enlightenment. One should simply put out the hand of trust and take hold of the rope of the Vow.

The Buddha's power is without limits; even the person deeply burdened with karmic evil is never too heavy. The Buddha's wisdom is without bounds; even those whose minds are distracted and self-indulgent are never rejected. The mind of trust alone is essential. There is no need to consider anything else. When trust has become settled, the three minds are naturally possessed. When the entrusting to the Primal Vow is true and sincere, there is no heart empty and transitory. When there is no doubt in the anticipation of one's birth in the Pure Land, there arises the thought of directing merit toward it. Hence, although the three minds seem to differ from each other, they are all included in the mind of trust.

Third is the mind aspiring to be born in the Pure Land through directing merit. The term is self-explanatory; therefore, I need not explain it in detail. It is to turn over the merit of the three modes of action of the past and present and to aspire to be born in the land of bliss.

Next, the text of the Primal Vow reads: "If sentient beings say my Name even ten times but do not attain birth, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment." Concerning these ten nen, some people have doubts and state: "The person who has one thought (nen) of rejoicing in the Lotus Sutra reaches deeply to the ultimate truth which is neither accommodated nor real. Why are the 'ten nen' of the Vow understood to be utterances of the Name?" To answer this question: in describing the nature of the people of the lowest grade in the lowest rank, the Contemplation Sutra states, "Upon reaching the moment of death, a person guilty of the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions and burdened with all kinds of evil follows, for the first time, the encouragement of a true teacher,
barely says the Name ten times and is born at once in the Pure Land." This does not at all mean quiet contemplation or deep reflection; it is simply saying the Name with the lips. The sutra states: "If you cannot think..." This has the meaning of not thinking deeply. It also states: "Say the Name of the Buddha of immeasurable life." This encourages us simply to say the Buddha Name. The sutra states: "When you say Namu-muryoju-butsu (literally, "Namu Buddha of immeasurable life") ten times, because you say the Buddha's Name, with each utterance the evil karma of eight billion kalpas of birth-and-death is eliminated." The words "ten times" mean simply saying the Name ten times. You should understand the text of the Primal Vow in this way. Master Shan-tao profoundly realized this import and restated the Primal Vow: "If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters say my Name as few as ten times and yet are not born, may I not attain supreme enlightenment." The words "ten times" signify reciting with the lips.

1. Next, some people also say, "The Nembutsu at the moment of death contains a profound virtue. Extinguishing the five grave offenses in ten utterances is the power of the Nembutsu at the moment of death. The Nembutsu of ordinary times lacks such power."

Reflecting upon this: True, the Nembutsu at the time of death is particularly excellent in virtue. However, it is necessary to understand this fully. When people are about to die, a hundred sufferings assail them and right-mindedness is easily disturbed. At such a time, how is it that thinking on the Buddha has great virtue? In thinking about this, when one is gravely ill, nearing the end, and one's life is in peril, it is easy for trust to arise naturally. In actually observing the habits of people, we see that when they are without troubles they do not put trust in doctors and diviners, but when severely ill they have full trust in them. If they are told that the disease will be cured with a certain treatment, people believe that it will truly be cured; they will even swallow bitter medicine and undergo painful treatment. When they are told that they will live longer if they perform a certain ceremony, they spare no expense and expend their energies in ceremonies and prayers. Thus, because their attachment to life is deep, if they are told they can prolong it, they have profound trust. The Nembutsu at the moment of death should be understood in this manner. When you feel that the final moment of life has come and that you will not live, the suffering of your next life suddenly appears - the fiery car of hell approaches or tormenting demons fill your eyes. Thinking of how to evade such suffering and escape from such terror, you hear about the attainment of birth through ten utterances from a true teacher; suddenly a profound, momentous mind of trust arises in you and you have no doubt whatever. Because the revulsion against suffering is strong and the desire for happiness keen, one immediately awakens the mind of trust upon hearing that birth into the land of bliss is imminent. It is like trusting a doctor or
an exorcist upon hearing them say that life will be lengthened. If one is of this mind, even though it is not one's last moment - if the mind of trust is established - the virtue of each utterance in ordinary times is equal to the Nembutsu at the moment of death.

2. Next, people often say: "Even if I entrust myself to the power of Amida's Vow and aspire to be born in the land of bliss, it is difficult to know my defiled karma from past lives. How can I attain birth so easily? There are a variety of karmic obstacles. 'Succeeding' karma does not necessarily take effect during the life in which it was created, but in lives to come it may bear fruit. Thus, although we have received birth into human life now, we may possess the karma for the evil paths without our knowing. If the power of such karma is strong and brings about birth into the evil courses, will it not be difficult to attain birth in the Pure Land?"

Although the sense of this is quite sound, such people are unable to sever the net of doubt and create deluded views by themselves. Karma, more or less, may be compared to a scale. It tips towards the heavier weight. If the power of my karma for birth in the evil courses were strong, then I would not have been born into human life but would have fallen first into the evil paths. This much is clear from having already received birth into human life: though we may possess karma for evil courses, that karma is weaker than the observance of the five precepts which brought about our birth into human life. If this is so, such karma cannot obstruct even the five precepts; how could it obstruct the virtue of ten utterances? The five precepts are acts of defiled beings; the Nembutsu is a virtue of undefilement. In the five precepts no help from the Buddha's Vow is found, but we are guided to saying the Nembutsu by Amida's Primal Vow. The virtue of the Nembutsu, moreover, is superior to even the ten precepts and surpasses all the good of the three worlds. How much more does it surpass the scant good of the five precepts? Evil karma does not obstruct even the five precepts, it can never be an obstacle to birth.

3. Next, people again say: "The attainment of birth by ten utterances by people guilty of the five grave offenses comes about through their past good. It is difficult to possess such past good. How can we attain birth?"

Here, too, it is because they are lost in the darkness of folly that they vainly entertain such useless doubts. The reason is that those full of past good will cultivate good in this life also and fear doing evil acts. Those scant of past good will prefer evil acts in this life and not perform good. We clearly know the good and bad of past karma from the way this life is led. We lack a pure heart, however, so we know that our past good is minimal. But though our karmic evil is heavy, we do not commit the five grave offenses, and though our good acts are
few, we deeply entrust ourselves to the Primal Vow. Even the ten utterances of someone guilty of the five grave offenses comes about through that person's past good. How could it be, then, that the saying of the Name throughout one's life is not also due to one's past good? How can we think that the ten utterances of someone guilty of the five grave offenses is due to past good, while our own saying of the Name throughout a lifetime is through our past good which is shallow? A little wisdom is an obstruction to enlightenment, so it is said; truly, here is an example.

4. Next, some who follow the way of the Nembutsu say: "The essence of the path to birth in the Pure Land is a trusting mind. Once this mind of trust has become settled, it is not always necessary to recite the Nembutsu. The sutra teaches: 'say it even once'; hence, one utterance is understood to be sufficient. When one seeks to accumulate many utterances, it is, on the contrary, a failure to trust in the Buddha's Vow." Thus they greatly mock and gravely slander those who recite the Nembutsu, saying that they are people who do not truly believe in the Nembutsu.

These people first of all abandon all Mahayana practices in the name of "single practice of the Nembutsu," and then, adhering to the doctrine of "once-calling," they stop saying the Nembutsu. This is the means the demons have used to deceive the sentient beings of this latter age. In such explanations there are both good and bad points. In principle the statement that one utterance suffices as the act for birth in the Pure Land is perfectly true; nevertheless, it is going too far to say that the accumulation of a large number of utterances shows the lack of a trusting mind. It does show, however, a lack of a trusting mind if one believes that one utterance is insufficient and birth requires accumulating a great number of utterances. Though one utterance suffices as the act for birth, some may think that it is important to accumulate more and more merit while passing their days and nights, and so, if they say the Name, they recite it day and night, and the merit increases more and more and the cause for birth becomes even more determined. Master Shan-tao stated that as long as one is alive, one should constantly say the Nembutsu. Are we to say such people lack trust? To dismiss them with ridicule would be wrong. "One utterance" actually appears in a passage of the sutra. Not to believe it is not to believe the Buddha's word. Thus, one should believe in the settling of birth with one utterance, and further continue saying the Name without negligence throughout one's life. This is the true meaning of the teaching.

Although there are many important doctrines concerning the Nembutsu, they can be summarized in the preceding way. Some people who read this will surely ridicule it. Nevertheless, both belief and slander will become a cause for each one's birth in the Pure Land. With the pledges of friendship in this life - brief as a
dream - to guide us, we tie the bonds for meeting before enlightenment in the coming life. If I am behind, I will be guided by others; If I go first, I will guide others. Becoming true friends through many lives, we bring each other to the practice of the Buddha-way, and as true teachers in each life, we will together sunder all delusion and attachment.

Honored Shakyamuni, the teacher,

Amida Buddha, compassionate mother,

Avalokitesvara, on the left,

Mahasthamaprapta, on the right,

The great ocean of immaculate beings,

The ocean of the three treasures,

Throughout the dharma-realm:

Single-heartedly I think on your witness;

Pity and comfort me, and hear my prayer.

The Clarification of Once-calling and Many-calling

By Ryukan

These days the practice of the Nembutsu is being entangled in vigorous debate over the doctrines of once calling and many calling. This debate touches on matters of crucial importance and demands that we exercise great care. Both the advocacy of a position of once-calling that rejects many-calling and the advocacy of many-calling in denunciation of once-calling run counter to the essential meaning of the Primal Vow and fail to take into account the teaching of Shan-tao.

Many calling is nothing but the accumulation of single callings, for human life is such that a person should consider each day that this may be his last, each minute that this may be the end. From the very moment of our birth, this realm
of impermanence is merely a fleeting and temporary dwelling; our lives may be compared to a lantern flame before the wind, or likened to dew upon a blade of grass, and there is no escape anywhere for even a single person, whether wise or foolish, from the extinction of breath and the draining away of life. If our eyes may close forever even in this present instant, then we say Namu-Amida-butsu, aspiring to be saved by Amida's Primal Vow and welcomed into the Pure Land of perfect bliss, based on our trust in the supreme virtues embodied in a single calling and our reliance on the great and vast benefit of that one calling.

As life continues, this single calling becomes two or three callings; they accumulate, so that one moment becomes an hour, then two hours; a day or two; a month, a year, two years, ten or twenty years, eighty years. The immutable nature of our existence is expressed truly in the statement that we should wonder how it is that we are still alive today, and whether this very instant will be our last in this world. Therefore, Shan-tao prays, "May all people constantly desire that the excellent conditions and surroundings appear before them at the time of death," earnestly encouraging us to say the Nembutsu from moment to moment, neither forgetting nor neglecting it for even a single instant, until the time we are actually born in the Pure Land. If a person maintains that many-calling is necessary, even though there is no many-calling separate from once-calling, nor any once-calling apart from many-calling, then surely he is a greater enemy of the Pure Land teaching than those who simply ignore such passages of the Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life as the one that teaches:

When sentient beings hear the Name, say it even once in trust and joy, sincerely turn over their merits [toward attainment of birth], and aspire to be born in that land, then they shall attain birth and shall dwell in the stage of non-retrogression.

Or the one that reveals that

If a person thinks on that Buddha even once, he will attain birth.

Or the one that declares beyond doubt:

If there are persons who, having heard the Name of that Buddha, leap and dance with joy and say it even once, know that they receive the great benefit; that is, they acquire the unexcelled virtues.

Or also those of Master Shan-tao, who, in accord with the intentions of the sutra, determined:

Saying the Name even once in joy, all attain birth.
With ten voicings or one voicing - a single utterance - all decisively attain birth.

If, however, because of belief in this, you adhere single-mindedly to the position of birth through once-calling and declare that many-calling is erroneous, then do you intend to overlook the words of the Primal Vow, "Saying the Name perhaps even ten times," and ultimately take the teaching of saying the Name for one to seven days in the Smaller Sutra to be pointless? Do you also regard as erroneous the teaching of Master Shan-tao? Based on these sutra passages, he instructs us to practice without interruption for a long period of time:

Single-heartedly practicing the saying of the Name of Amida alone - whether walking, standing, sitting, or reclining - without regard to the length of time, and without abandoning it from moment to moment: this is called "the act of true settlement," for it is in accord with the Buddha's Vow.

Vow that to the end of this life there will be no retrogressing, and that you will make the Pure Land your single goal.

To break with Shan-tao's teaching and slander it after having once entered the Pure Land gate is to be an even greater enemy than people of other teachings and different understandings. Such people, forever remaining, as stragglers in the three courses, have no chance of emerging; it is wretched. Hence it is taught:

The Buddha comes to welcome those who, at the upper limit, spend their entire lives in the Nembutsu,
Down to those who say it only ten or three or five times.
Solely through the greatness of the universal Vow,
Foolish beings, when they become mindful of it, are brought to attain birth.

And further, one truly knows now, without so much as a single thought of doubt, that Amida's universal Primal Vow decisively enables all to attain birth, including those who say the Name even ten times, or even but hear it.

Those who say the Name for seven days or one day, down to ten voicings or one voicing - a single utterance - will unfailingly attain birth.

These passages teach beyond all doubt that there should be no controversy over the positions of once-calling and many-calling; the person who has simply entrusted himself to Amida's Vow should continue to say the Nembutsu until the end of his life, with birth in the Pure Land as his goal. You must not cling to one or the other extreme. I have been unable to express my innermost thoughts as I would like; still, I hope the reader will be able to grasp my meaning through these notes.
Those who adhere to once calling as well as those who cling tenaciously to many-calling invariably meet with inauspicious deaths, for both deviate from the meaning of the Primal Vow. Consider this carefully. It cannot be said too often that you must avoid confusing the truth that many calling is itself once calling and that once calling is many calling.

Namu-amida-butsu.

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