

日應上人教化集

**ENLIGHTENING
MESSAGES:
ETERNAL BUDDHA;
IN US, IN THE WORLD**

By Bishop Nichiou Itagaki



Honolulu Myohoji
2003 Nuuanu Ave.
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Preface—When Bringing Out This Collection

The former head of Butsugenji, Bishop Nichiou Itagaki, had carefully kept a journal. In May 1957, he entered this temple, which is a holy place of St. Nichiren's Izu persecution. At the time the temple was terribly run down. He and his wife, the nun, Rev. Myotei Itagaki, often shed tears of remorse. Bishop Nichiou made it his lifelong goal of bringing enlightenment to all through the Lotus Sutra, when his master resided in Izu, and the unification of Buddhism (all religions) through the Odaimoku. How could the true spirit of the Lotus Sutra be propagated? He was determined to dispel the wrong and manifest the true with the country at its base, and he sought the essence of the Lotus Sutra with his body, words and mind. His daily religious practices and enthusiasm was so intense that others could never do the same. Each word and phrase of his journal, which were written during his chanting or in the dead of the night, are just as they are, messages that speak to us as we remember his lifetime.

The warm countenance of our respected teacher, who shed tears as he spoke of his experience of clearly seeing the figure of Shakyamuni Buddha and St. Nichiren, when seated in the founder's hall, and chanting, while praying to the Sun and the Moon,

is the true value of the Lotus Sutra, which Bishop Nichiou had attained and spoke of, and it also speaks of the foundation of Buddhism and the preciousness of the transmission to our temple that serves St. Nichiren.

Now, when we again confirm, from within his writings the figure of Bishop Nichiou, who always gave sermons and enlightening messages and discussed the true teachings and the peace of the land, we have compiled one portion to create a collection of enlightening messages, which will further establish within each one of us a true connection to the Truth.

“The Truth is the teacher of the various Buddha and what is precious to the various Buddhas is found in the Truth. If that is so, those who seek to repay their debt of gratitude to the Buddha, must repay that debt to the Truth.” Just as it is taught in the *Shion-sho*, I close my message for this publication by sincerely praying that the merits of our respected teacher, the eighth Bishop of our temple, Rev. Nichiou, who devoted himself exclusively to bringing enlightenment to all, will widely spread to all living things.

Tenth Bishop, Rev. Keiyu Itagaki
Butsugenji, Kaiko-zan

The Lifespan of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Secret Divine Power

How are we understanding Shakyamuni Buddha, who had actually appeared in this world?

Nearly all of us understand that Shakyamuni Buddha was born as a prince of the Shakya clan of Kapila castle. He slipped away from the king's castle and engaged in ascetic practices for six years. He left Gaya, and in a place not far from it, he sat under a Bodhi tree, and there he attained anokutara-sammyaku-samobai, namely, he achieved Buddha Wisdom and perfect enlightenment. And Shakyamuni Buddha died under the two sala trees in Kushinagara at the age of eighty.

This, however, is not the truth. This matter is especially made clear by The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Since there is no end to the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha, His life exists everlastingly. What is more, He is the real Eternal Buddha, who was enlightened long ago, from the very start, and from that time on, He has not rested for even an instant, and is saving humankind. This is described as Kuonjitsujo (Enlightened Eternally from the Remote Past). And Kuonji of Mt. Minobu takes the name Kuon (Eternal) from Kuonjitsujo.

During the fifty years of sermons by Shakyamuni Buddha, the most important is His declaration that He (the Buddha) is the Eternal Buddha, who was forever enlightened from the remote past, and the sermons until now were the preliminary arrangements for us to accept His having been enlightened eternally from the remote past.

The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter is Nyorai Juryo Hon 如来寿量品 in the original Japanese. Since the character ju寿 means life, it refers to the measurement of the Buddha's life. Nevertheless, the fact that a person's life is eternal alone is not something to be congratulated about (the character ju寿 also means to wish well and to congratulate). It is used because the Buddha's activities and His accomplishments are inspiring and deserving of gratitude.

Yet what were the activities of Shakyamuni Buddha and His accomplishments? If we take a superficial view of the actualities of His appearance in this world of the short period of eighty years, His lifespan is limited. However, when we firmly hold to the truth that the Buddha, who assumed human form and appeared in the Saha world ("the land of endurance," the world in which we live in), is the Kuon Jitsujo Buddha (Enlightened Eternally from the Remote Past Buddha), we know that Shakyamuni

Buddha's work is infinite and it extends from the past, present and to the future.

This is called the *Buddha's Secret Divine Power*. The *secret (himitsu)*, which is used here is not the secret and hidden that we ordinarily think of. It refers to immeasurably profound. Divine power speaks of action that influences its surroundings. When it is combined to be the Buddha's Secret Divine Power, the entire universe and Shakyamuni Buddha are joined in oneness. The work of and the achievements of saving all living beings, forever and inexhaustibly, are being described. That is to say, by Buddha's Secret Divine Power, we are describing the everlasting work of the Universal Absolute One—the fundamental work of appearing to all and giving birth to all living beings and nurturing them. In the Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter, the Buddha's Secret Divine Power is explained after the declaration of the Kuon Jitsujo (Enlightened Eternally from the Remote Past).

The Buddha declares: "It is many hundreds of thousands of billions of trillions of innumerable of kalpas since I became the Buddha." (It is not that I appeared in India and became the Buddha for the first time, but from eternity, with no beginning, I have achieved Buddhahood.) During that time the Buddha has always expounded the Truth and taught countless living beings and guided them to the way

to Buddhahood. And it is the same at the present moment.

Even after concluding His activities for eighty years in the Saha world, the Buddha teaches: “In order to save the living beings, I use an expedient and manifest My extinction. What is more, the reality is that I have never passed away. I always reside here and teach the Truth. Through various divine powers, the living beings, who are suffering from erroneous views, cannot see Me although I am close to them.” The Buddha tells us that He is indestructible, but to save the living beings, He manifests His extinction (temporary concealment). Yet when we yearn for and adore the Buddha, and accumulate good deeds, since He is eternally present and indestructible, He is always in this Saha world, and although the Buddha cannot be seen with our eyes, we can see Him in our mind.

The Buddha is standing beside the delusional living beings, who are forgetting to elevate their delusive mind from their desire for the material things that are before their eyes. It is said, however, that they refuse to see Him with their eyes or minds. Yet for those who believe in the Lotus Sutra, “the Buddha exists, although He has passed away.”

And finally the Buddha says: “I am always thinking how can I have the living beings enter

the unsurpassed Way and quickly achieved Buddhahood.”

Just as is stated here, the Buddha is thinking about how to, by all means, have the delusional living beings enter the way of the Buddha and quickly achieve the same mental sphere as the Buddha by using every means possible. “How to” and also “quickly”—such compassionate thoughts truly manifests the Buddha’s great compassion. In the *Honzon-Sho*, St. Nichiren writes: “From His great compassion, the Buddha concealed in a satchet the gem of the five characters Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo of the Lotus Sutra, and hung it on the necks of the infants of all ages to come (latter age after the Buddha’s demise).” I believe that these words also speak of the Buddha’s intentions.

Each of the sutras, which Shakyamuni Buddha expounded, are blessed, and none are lacking in value. However, the Lotus Sutra, in particular, within The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter, there is the declaration of Kuon Jitsujo (Enlightened Eternally from the Remote Past), and because the compassion of the Buddha is being expounded, it is only natural that we say that “infinite merits” are gathered in this sutra.

In the Lotus Sutra, especially when we come to The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter,

Shakyamuni Buddha Himself declares the eternal life and compassion of the Absolutely Perfect One. In his *Kaimoku-Sho*, St. Nichiren writes that if there were no The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter, it would be like the heavens without the sun and moon, a country without its ruler, and a human being with no soul. That chapter is the life within the entire Buddhist canon.

Let us understand that the Life of Shakyamuni Buddha is Life that embraces both compassion and wisdom. Let us carefully recite The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter with all our heart.

The True Practitioner of the Lotus Sutra Will Be Protected

The practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, St. Nichiren, made the Mind of the Most Honored One Who Has Attained Enlightenment, his own mind, and through the Lotus Sutra, which clearly revealed the long cherished hope of the Eternal Buddha, he worked to unify Buddhism. It is for that reason that he experienced many persecutions. The banishment to Izu, the banishment to Sado, the swords and staffs of Komatsubara, the persecution of Tatsunokuchi—these were all terrible religious persecutions.

Nevertheless, on each occasion many people are protecting the Saint. Is this not proof of the truth that the true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra will be protected by all the protective deities and good gods? It goes without saying that this is probably the manifestation of the secret divine powers of the Buddha.

In Dharanis, chapter 26, Kishimojin (Mother-Of-Devils) says: "Anyone who troubles the expounder of the Truth, shall have his head split in seven pieces like the branches of the arjaka tree." This is the pledge of Kishimojin, who is a frightening mother, who had given birth to one thousand children, but ate the children of others, one after another. Shakyamuni Buddha saw this, and hid her youngest child, which was most dear to her, to admonish her. From that time, she becomes a reformed deity. Kishimojin is speaking about the arjaka tree, which has fruit that always breaks into seven portions when it falls to the ground. She pledges that those who cause trouble for the expounder of the Lotus Sutra will have their heads broken into seven like a arjaka tree branch. (This particular tree does not exist in Japan. The pomegranate, which is similar to this tree, is planted in places where Kishimojin is worshiped).

The estate steward, Kagenobu Hojo, who was a follower of the nembutsu and attacked St. Nichiren

during the incident at the Komatsubara persecution, fell from his horse, was afflicted by a fever and died from madness. Doesn't this indeed match the words of the sutra by Kishimojin that those who slander the expounder of the Lotus Sutra will have their heads smashed to seven pieces?

During the Tatsunokuchi persecution the Saint was certain to be beheaded, but the sky cracked loudly with thunder that dazzled and blinded the executioner, and he could not bring down his blade to behead the Saint no matter how he tried. While it goes without saying that the story of lightening striking the blade is probably the exaggeration of later people, like a rabbit with horns, the fact that the Saint could not be beheaded is thought to be truly the manifestation of the lightening of the power of the Buddhist Truth and divine power through Taishaku-Ten (originally the Hindu God, Indra, who protects Buddhism and its followers).

Bishamon-Ten (one of the Four-Quarter Kings who protects the peaching place of the Buddha and hears the Truth) also makes the pledge: "World Honored One, with this divine spell, I will protect the expounder of the Truth. I will also protect the person who keeps this sutra so that he will not be afflicted by various troubles within a hundred yojana (distance of a day's journey by the king's chariot)."

The Lotus Sutra clearly sets forth the Buddha's intentions and it is a record of His compassion. The person who expounds this sutra, has the protection of the many Buddhas from their sympathy for the sutra's words, the Gods and Buddhas, and the power of the Buddhist Truth. He communicates with heaven, with earth and the many exalted ones of the three treasures.

The enlightened Buddha's compassion manifests His form in the realm of the cosmic law, which is the whole universe. He becomes the God of salvation and the protective deities. His representatives are Yakuo Bosatsu (Medicine-King Bodhisattva), Yuze Bosatsu (Brave-In-Giving Bodhisattva), Jikoku Tenno (World-Holding-Heavenly-King), Kishimojin Jurasetsu-nyo (Mother-Of-Devils and Ten Female Devils).

When we do not compromise the righteousness of the Lotus Sutra, and assert it, it goes without saying that the Eternal-Buddha Shakyamuni, and all the good gods will protect us. It is essential that we live with this strong affirmation.

The Unification of Buddhism (All Religions)

What those who aspire to follow Buddhism must first think about is that the object of worship for their faith is Shakyamuni Buddha.

Moreover, among all the sutras, which Shakyamuni expounded to save all living beings, the Lotus Sutra truly unifies the minds of all humankind, and is it not a precious sutra that brings peace to the world?

It is just as Shakyamuni Buddha declares: “I have taught many sutras, but among them the Lotus Sutra is supreme.” (The Teacher of the Dharma chapter)

St. Nichren read the words of the Lotus Sutra with his mind, experienced and mastered it with his body, and did he not revive the soul of Shakyamuni Buddha? He became the messenger of Shakyamuni Buddha and the messenger of the Lotus Sutra, and did he not pray for the peace of the world from the land of Japan? And that was also his intention while looking at the rising sun, when facing the Pacific Ocean at Asahigamori, and reciting the Daimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, and praying that the entire world revert to the Lotus Sutra.

There are no differences of religious denomination before Shakyamuni Buddha. Through the Myoho

Renge Kyo (Lotus Sutra of the Wondrous Truth) all Buddhism (all religions) can be unified. As for the interpretation of the sutra's words, the sole and finest method is to follow the teachings of St. Nichiren.

St. Nichiren often taught about one mind with different bodies.

In the writings of St. Nichiren, it is taught: "All things can be accomplished when the different bodies are of one mind, but when the same bodies are of different minds, nothing is done. This is prescribed by more than three thousand non-Buddhist scriptures. The King of Yin had seventy thousand horsemen but the battle was lost because they were one body with different minds. The King of Chou had eight hundred men, but they won because the different bodies were of one mind."

St. Nichiren is telling us that for all things different bodies being of one mind is important. If the minds cannot become one because of concerns about small things, success is not possible. This is clear from the teachings of the more than three thousand non-Buddhist scriptures, and it is established in those writings. Although the King of Yin had a large army with seventy thousand horsemen, they were in a state of the same body with different minds—and since they could not

come together, they were defeated in battle. On the contrary, while the King of Yin had a small number of eight hundred men, the mind of each person was joined together, and that is why they had won.

Today's Buddhism (religions) lack in unity and are in a state of confusion. It resembles these writings of St. Nichiren. What goes by the name of Buddhism teaches the Truth of the Buddha. I believe that we must earnestly read the Lotus Sutra, discard the small religious denominational differences, revive the Buddha's intentions and the soul of St. Nichiren, and work for the unification of Buddhism (all religions).

“The Lotus Sutra teaches the Mind of the Buddha, as It is. Since the Mind of the Buddha is a good mind, even if a person with no understanding reads this sutra and reverts it, he will receive benefits.”

This holy land, where the soul of St. Nichiren, who was enlightened to the truth of being the child of the Buddha and the child of the Dharma (Truth), is placed, as the training place for the unification of Buddhism (all religions), to the minds of those who have faith in the Buddha, let us even more convey the Buddha's compassion and the compassion of St. Nichiren, and I believe that we must use to the fullest extent the karmic affinity of the appearance of the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha from the seas off Izu.

It Is Difficult to Be Born As a Human Being—Let Us Truly, At This Moment, Move to Action

It is not possible that all living things are born by coincidence from nothing. The soul exists from eternity, it is born through the power of karma, and cause and condition.

We have not been born in the harsh three evil paths of hell, hungry ghosts and animals, but in the world of human beings. This is a great blessing. It goes without saying that it is a blessing (有難い arigatai, literally, difficult to encounter, rare) with a sense of gratitude, but it is also a blessing from the viewpoint that *it is rare* to be born as a human being.

Unless there is considerable amount of fruit from our causes, we cannot rise up to the world of human beings. This is also true from the standpoint of the law of cause and condition.

To be born as a human being is more rare than to see a udumbara flower that blooms only once in three thousand years. Shakyamuni Buddha also teaches that it is like a blind turtle (a one-eyed turtle), which comes out of the depths of the seas only once a hundred years, finding a board that

floats on the seas with a single hole, and what is more it is a board that can carry the turtle with a hole that fits the turtle's head. To that extent it is difficult to be born as a human being.

No matter how they may complain of their misfortune, when we think about the suffering when being born in the worlds below the world of human beings, birth in our present world is a incomparable blessing. If we should fall into the worlds beneath the world of human beings, it is most difficult to once again return as a human being. To fall into a hell like the Avici hell, where there is no respite from suffering, is to be plunged into despair. There is no way to accumulate merit there. Even when born in the world of animals, it is hopeless to accumulate merit. We must first receive life in the world of human beings, which is difficult to achieve, and be grateful that we are being born as a human being.

To say nothing of the fact of being born as a human being, and to encounter the teachings of Buddhism during that time is something that is practically impossible.

If we are fortunate to receive life as a human being, and to also have even a slight connection with the teachings of Buddhism, there is probably no greater joy for us. This is especially true if we were born in Japan and that we could encounter the

Lotus Sutra, which expounds the true intentions of Buddha and is filled with His compassion. There is no greater happiness than this.

There is nothing more pitiful, if, in spite of this, we fail to do good deeds that summon good fruits and spend our days listlessly. If we do not move into action here, where are we intending to do so?

In his *Shinchi Goshō*, St. Nichiren admonishes us by using an example of a bird suffering from the cold.

In the snow-covered mountain a bird is tormented by the cold and immediately thinks about building its nest. It cries while thinking it will build its nest at daybreak. However, when the sun comes out and the morning sun shines on it, the warmth makes the bird sleepy, and it forgets to build the nest. This continues, and for its entire life the bird cries in vain. All living things are the same.

We have received the valuable gift of life in the human world, which is difficult to receive, and it would be too late if we shed the tears of remorse of the bird suffering from the cold at the verge of our death. After falling to hell and choking from the smoke of the flames, we pray that we will next be born as a human being and offer everything to the three treasures, and pray for a future Buddhahood.

Nevertheless, when the time come that we are born as a human being, the winds of fame, honor and wealth are strong, our mind is used for meaningless things, and it is easy to neglect our important training in Buddhism and the accumulation of merits.

St. Nichiren also tells us in the *Ji Hokke Mondo Sho*: “As long as we have received life as a human being, which is difficult to receive, we could never be commended for living with no purpose. In addition, if we have gone to the trouble of following a religious faith, let us believe in the teachings of the One Vehicle, which is the true intentions, as is, of the various Buddhas and the direct path to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. Shakyamuni Buddha teaches that those who receive and keep the Lotus Sutra are the most superior of all living beings. There is no uncertainty about these wise words of Shakyamuni Buddha.”

What is more, human life does not remain forever in this world, it passes by like the flow of mountain water. There is no guarantee that someone, who is alive today, will also be alive tomorrow. A person’s lifespan moves quickly from youth to old age. That speed is like a galloping horse that runs away. The Buddha often admonishes us about this.

The time to move to action is “now.” Our human body, which is difficult to receive, has been given life, and although we cannot see Him, the time to meet Shakyamuni Buddha is “now.”

In the holy place where St. Nichiren experienced the Izu persecution, I deeply believe that we must embrace the faith of the true Lotus Sutra, and daily apply ourselves devotedly to our faith.

The Mind Is the Means, Wealth Is the End

Is it not the case that our mental satisfaction is indeed the basis of the prayer Shingan Joju (Realization of One’s Dearest Wish)? Just as it is stated in the writings of St. Nichiren, the treasures of the mind are superior to the treasures in a storehouse.

No matter how much wealth we may have, if we do not have good health, it would be difficult to lead an ordinary life. And to lead an ordinary and upright life, we must have religious faith. So, while we might have wealth and good health, even if we have good health, if our mind is not proper, nothing will go right.

If there is no mental harmony and mental peace in the family, our wealth becomes a source of harm. It becomes the source of conflict among one's descendants. A storehouse full of wealth and even the money from the new-rich land speculation becomes the source of conflict among one's descendants and the origins for digging up evil deeds. No matter how much wealth we may have, if we do not know the proper path for a human being and are lacking in love and gratitude, our wealth may instead become the source of severing relations with our family to our remotest descendants. That is why it goes without saying that Shakyamuni Buddha, and also St. Nichiren are stressing that the treasures of the mind are superior to a storehouse of wealth and a bodily treasury.

Even if we are poor and possesses not a single item of wealth, the wealth of religious faith makes our mind abundant, and from there feelings of gratitude arise, our body has been received from our parents, and we have our mind's parent called the Buddha. When we feel that we have acquired eternal joy, will we not have true and eternal posterity?

Even with a small earthquake, with each such earthquake we worry about the damage to the house and the loss of our wealth. We immediately worry about landslides and cracks in the ground that we

can see, but there is really nothing more frightening than a person's mental hell that cannot be seen. The mind's earthquakes create family quarrels and a society of strife.

Today we seem to be living in fine buildings and are free of all want. In those homes family members quarrel with one another, the husband forgets his debt of gratitude to his wife, the wife does the same to her husband, and the children do not appreciate the kindness of their parents, and live freely as they please. The home is in disarray. And to say nothing of the fact that the more the wealth, the quarrels never end, and there are no true feelings among the relatives. Their eyes are blinded by only wealth and material possessions. Parents and children and even siblings, who share the same flesh and blood, sever their relations because of the wealth of their parents. They must cleanse their mind and live a proper life through the true teaching. The ends must not be mistaken for the means. We must first bring forth the treasures of the mind and live a mentally abundant life. By so doing, an appropriate amount of wealth will naturally come to us.

In the Kegon Sutra, it is written: The mind is like a master artist. He skillfully draws the various scenes of the world. Thoroughly complying with the five aggregates (the five constituent elements of existence)—matter, perception, mental conceptions,

volition and consciousness—he cannot help but produce his works as the consequences of actions that arise.” As stated here mental and material things that occur in the phenomenal world are completely the drawings of the mind. If our mind is in order, our actions would also naturally be well ordered.

It is like a spider and its web. No matter how many times the web is removed, if the essential matter of the spider is not removed, a web again appears. It is important to clearly know the means and the ends. Everyone wants to paint a good painting in human life and weave a good web. To do this we must establish a proper mind, which is the basis for all things.

Let Us Treat Nature with Care

The sun unselfishly shines over the earth and the earth blesses us with such foods as rice, wheat, vegetables and fruits, and various plants that are medicinal herbs for illness, and the bounty of the mountains. We must be grateful to the blessing of the earth from bottom of our heart. I would like to see the vapor rise from the earth. The city is covered with concrete and the vapor from the earth cannot

escape. The ground is also the storehouse for every type of mineral, including oil, coal and diamonds.

What about water, the blessing of every type of water—the oceans, rivers, lakes and marshes?

How great are the nutrients in water? From nori, wakame seaweed, kelp, sea grass, to large fish like sharks and tuna, to tiny little shrimp—all are living in water. In the same way that gold and diamonds come from the earth, coral and pearls are growing in water. These days, we do not express our thanks to the seas but are fighting for the fish that have been raised there. While the resources of the sea are being given a second look, it would be senseless if conflicts broke out because of that. We must be grateful to these products of the sea such as fish, nori and wakame seaweed.

Moreover, we could not live without seawater and salt. We can put up with the lack of sugar, but what would happen if there were no salt? I was drafted and went to China. It was as though we toiled for a day for a little salt.

We cannot go without water even for a single day. No matter how science may progress, it cannot create water. The water to wash our body and possessions, the water to restore life to drying trees and plants, and in the old days, to measure

horizontalness, the horizontal level of water was used.

We worship the Sun, as the Father, we worship the Earth as the Mother, as human beings who are embraced between them, we have a body.

Even for a brief moment during the day, I ask that you think about the blessings of heaven and earth. By so doing our mind and body can be harmonized. Flowers bloom and the birds sing in nature. People delight in the beautiful colors and the pleasant fragrances of the flowers that bloom in nature, and the beautiful chirping of the birds is most beautiful music.

By looking at the sea and watching the mountain, wisdom comes forth from within.

The beauty of the comfortable natural life that we now live is disappearing and our spiritual culture is dramatically declining. The blessings of heaven, the blessings of earth, the blessings of water, the air, the blessings of the wind—if any one of these are missing, life could no longer be supported and daily life would be impossible. We must be aware of this.

Ignorance of the blessings of the earth becomes earthquakes, and ignorance of the blessings of

the wind and water takes form as the disasters of windstorm and flood.

There is no catch for tomorrow if we deplete the seas by thinking that the fish are only for the sake of money. Even with abundant catches of large fish, they are discarded when there are no profits from poor prices. Excessiveness is wrong. Today's Japan is not good because rice and vegetables are being overly harvested under the thinking of producing an abundant crop. We cannot help but think about sharing that excess with countries, which do not have enough food, and the needy people.

Despite the fact that it is good to plant what is suited to nature according to the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter, we are growing crops, which are no longer seasonal due to the agrochemicals, chemical fertilizers and the power of science. And when new things come up, they are quickly copied, processed in many ways and made into frozen foods. Is this perhaps because we are being overly blessed by nature?

Nature is destroyed, and we are filling the land, water and the air with the harm from the poisonous substances that have been born from science from the materials of the blessings of nature. It is because of this that various new illnesses arise that are even destroying the human body. Is this acceptable?

The glimmer of diamonds and gold are only visible to their possessors. It is individualism and material light that make people envious. Nevertheless, the light of the Sun unselfishly shines over all things. And its benevolent warmth is the bright light that fosters all things in the universe.

“The three lights of the heavens (the sun, moon and stars) warm the body, and the five grains of the earth nurture the soul.” Just as these words by St. Nichiren describe, we are receiving immeasurable blessings from the universe and nature. To treat nature with care and to make the earth magnificent is probably our reply to the Buddha and the Universe, who are declaring themselves as the master of the earth.

The Universe and the Buddha, without resting for even a second, are giving life to all things while embracing us in their great benevolent light and warm compassion.

Whether the earth becomes a heaven and paradise or a defiled land depends on our way of thinking.

***Gassho* (Hands Joined in Reverence)**

When a person joins his hands in reverence (*gassho*), his thumbs become his father and mother and are turned to his body. His remaining four fingers, on both his left and right hand, are facing heaven.

At this time I would like to think seriously once again about our *gassho*. Please look at the sinews that run horizontally on the joints of your fingers. Your thumb has two sinews. The remaining four fingers each have three sinews. On both your left and right hands there are twenty-eight sinews.

The Lotus Sutra is made up of twenty-eight chapters, and the number of sinews of our hands joined in reverence (*gassho*) is the same. When our left hand as the *Myo* (wondrous) is brought together with our right hand as the *Ho* (Dharma, Truth) the Lotus Sutra of twenty-eight chapters is naturally bestowed upon our body. Even if we do not know the fine details of the words of the sutra, when Shakyamuni Buddha, who expounded this sutra, rises up in our mind, and we chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, isn't it true that our chanting of the *Odaimoku* (Sacred Title) reaches even heaven and the Buddha?

When we see the ten fingers of our hands in reverence, I hope that you will think about the ten realms within our mind (the worlds of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, cause knowers, hearers, heaven, human beings, fighting devils, animals, hungry spirits, and hell).

People are saved with these hands. Things are created by and sustained with these hands. With our single thought, these hands may even become the Buddha's hands. When Shakyamuni Buddha comes forth in our mind and we chant the Odaimoku, our hands become hands of Truth and they even become hands that reach heaven and the Buddha.

Among the forms of the Bodhisattva Kannon, there is the Senju Kannon (Kannon with the One Thousand Arms). While the thousand arms is probably manifesting the greatness of the Bodhisattva's compassion, isn't it true that it is manifesting the fact that a single thought possess a hand of a thousand compassions?

If we earnestly join our hands in reverence (gassho) and chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo from the bottom of our heart even once, can we not, in a single voice, call forth the sixty nine thousand, three hundred eighty four characters of the Lotus Sutra? Isn't this truly the power of the Odaimoku?

The Bodhisattva Kannon, who is answering the wishes of the sentient beings of the world by changing His form in various ways, is brought forth by the wondrous sound, when we chant Myoho Renge Kyo (the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wondrous Truth), and He will probably protect us as the Bodhisattva.

When we also reverently read the Kannon Sutra (chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra) and live our lives with a mental awareness like the Kannon, the world will probably become like the Buddha World. And, who is it that expounded the words of that sutra? If we have carefully read the Lotus Sutra, that sutra was expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha, and we would know that the Bodhisattva Kannon is also a manifestation of the virtue of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Lotus Sutra is like the Dainichi Rin (the Great Sun). The soul of Shakyamuni Buddha is positioned here.

We must now touch on the ten realms.

The *world of the Buddha* is the world where one is enlightened and is causing others to be enlightened. It is the world where self-benefit and the benefiting of others are accomplished perfectly. In other words, it is sphere where another's matters and one's own matters are perfectly thought about

at the same time. It is the world of great compassion where one would even travel to the depths of hell to save someone.

The *world of the bodhisattva* is the sphere where one trains in and seeks enlightenment, seeks the way to Buddhahood and wishes to save others and bring them enlightenment. It is the level where the next step is the world of the Buddha, and while although very little, the “ego” remains, it is the world where self-benefit and the benefiting of others can be performed. And it is the world where we can think about others without our self-interests. Since the Lotus Sutra is being expounded to the world of the bodhisattva, as is explained in the Introductory chapter, it is called the truth to be taught to the bodhisattvas and the sutra that is protected by the Buddha.

The *world of the cause knowers* is about learning the cause for things. It is the sphere of those who have seen the form of nature and achieved their unique enlightenment. It is likened to the sphere of a great scholar. That is to say, it is a world where one has learned from nature and possesses the desire for advancement.

The *world of the hearers* is the world where one hears the voice of the Buddha, hears the teachings of the Buddha and trains oneself. It is the world of

effort to seek the way and know the truth of human beings. Like the cause knowers it is the world of seeking advancement and the love of learning.

The *world of heaven*—while it is a world where one receives excellent pleasures, still one does not know when suffering will come. For the time being, it seems to be free of suffering. It is perhaps a world that is not the world of the actualities. It is like a world where we envision in our head that we will be free of suffering if we win hundreds of thousands or millions in a lottery, but that world is not real. Nevertheless, human being have in their mind such a world with no suffering, namely, a dream-like world.

The *world of human beings* is the sphere where sufferings and happy things are balancing each other out. “In human life there is happiness if there is suffering, and there is suffering if there is happiness.” The Japanese often say this. Yet the world of human beings is such a world. This is probably true for human beings in the world of the senses.

The *world of fighting devils* is the sphere where the mind of jealousy is strong and conflict never ends. On a smaller scale this is marital quarrels to the struggles between the workers and capitalists. On the larger scale the scene of carnage that emerges from a world war is also possible from the human mind.

The *world of animals* describes a sphere like beasts where the inhabitants are stupid and cannot survive unless there are nurtured and fed by human beings. It is about a world where people prey on another in order to protect oneself. Where did this come from? It is from not knowing our debt of gratitude. Our father and mother, all living things, the king, the three treasures—when we are completely unaware of our debt of gratitude to these, the world of animals is what appears. St. Nichiren often said: “Those who do not know their debt of gratitude are like animals.”

The *world of hungry ghosts* is a world of greed that arises from being unable to acquire food and drink. It is the world where the mind of greed appears, where one continues to have desire for things even after being given. This world often appears as the desire for wealth, the desire for fame, desire for life (wish to live longer).

The *world of hell* is truly a troubled world. It is a world where suffering does not end. Cause and effect are denied, good cause and good result, bad cause and bad result are not believed in, and it is a world with no logic or reason. The Buddha often teaches us about direct cause, indirect cause and result because it is most important for a human being to know this.

The above ten realms are occurring variously in the mind of each human being. Moreover, each of the ten realms contains another ten realms, and a human being is a wondrous body of each of the ten realms containing the other nine in themselves.

Whether we make this world the World of the Buddha or the world of the three evil paths (hell, hungry ghosts, animals) depends on the way of thinking of each person. Several times a day, in the mind of the same human being, the world of hell to the World of the Buddha appears.

“This brute! That brute!” “That little devil!” “I was deceived by him.” When we think these thoughts we are in the world of desires. Our mind has been stolen by a desire that is before our eyes, we even lose our true mind, and without being able focus our mind, we give rise to the three evil paths. Feelings of vexation and hatred are the realm of the fighting devils. When the three evil paths appear, call forth a mind of compassion by thinking “What a pitiful person”; “I should try to be more understanding and to do my best for his sake.” And our mind of the bodhisattva and also our Buddha Mind will appear.

Even when feeling vexed or when our wishes have been realized, we, human beings, want to gassho (join our hands in reverence). And when

joining our hands in gassho, we control our mind of the three evil paths of hell, hungry ghosts and animals, and we wish to join our hands in reverence with the mind of the bodhisattva and the Buddha Mind. There is nothing more noble and also frightening as the human mind. It communicates with the Buddha and it also can be in hell. Within a single thought there are three thousand worlds.



Worshippers with their hands in gassho before the altar.

Afterword

Afterword—A Word from the Translator

I am most grateful to have this opportunity to translate the messages of Bishop Nichiou Itagaki, which have been given the title *Eternal Buddha; In Us, In the World*. These were selected from *Nichiou Shonin Kyoke Shu* by our Head Minister, Rev. Takamasa Yamamura. I understand that this booklet will be the first in a mini-series to introduce the insights and wisdoms of this very famous Nichiren Shu minister of modern times.

These writings, which cover a variety of themes on our faith, are in many ways self-explanatory. There is one topic that perhaps needs to be explained as it was added to the translation to give further relevancy to the message in the context of our times.

The item that I am referring to is 仏教の統一 Bukkyo Toitsu or the unification of Buddhism. This is mentioned in the preface to the original work by Bishop Keiyu Itagaki, and it is also treated as a topic in the selection, “The Unification of Buddhism” in this booklet. In both instances (All Religions) has been added to the translation.

Rev. Yamamura and I have chosen to do this to add relevancy to the writings of Bishop Nichiou in

the light of the religious diversity of our present day community. Moreover, this addition is based on information on our faith, which has been available to us for several decades now, but has not been taken notice of. On the bookshelf of our temple, and other Nichiren Shu temples, there is surely a copy of *Introduction to the Lotus Sutra*, a translation of the writings of Dr. Shinjo Suguro by the Nichiren Buddhist International Center, published in 1998. On page 35, in the discussion on Expedients, chapter 2, there is a clear statement of the concept of the unification of Buddhism that includes the religions of the world.

It reads: “Great Master Chihi-I extolled the teaching of the One Vehicle as the unifying principle of Buddhism, presenting it as the doctrine which ‘opens the Three to reveal the One (Vehicle)’ or ‘encompasses the three with the One.’ Since the Three Vehicles symbolize all the sects of Buddhism united through this principle, the One Vehicle could also mean the unity of all religions of the world, non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist.

“In reality, however, we all live in a world of relativity. We cannot ignore the fact that different opinions and different understandings of the world have always existed. According to the Lotus Sutra, this diversity of opinions should be appreciated and understood as valid steps we are taking on the road

to the human ideal of the ultimate truth and ultimate value.”

This understanding empowers our faith and gives intensity to the light that shines from our daily devotions to the object of our faith, the Gohonzon. By no means is the Gohonzon simply an object of worship, such as a statue of the Buddha, but it is a symbol of a living universe of Truth, which is joined in an Ultimate Reality, and emanates from that single living Reality. In that universe, the Eternal Buddha, God, bodhisattvas and gods, saints, holy men and women, the essence of ourselves, and all beings, are being celebrated and revered. Each, in its own way, is fulfilling a sacred purpose for the realization of a more perfect world (the Buddha Land) upon this earth.

When bringing out this translation, I am most grateful to the guidance and insights from Rev. Yamamura, who has introduced us to the writings of Bishop Nichiou, and also to Dan Liu, the President of the Honolulu Myohoji Mission, for his dedication and undying support for our temple’s efforts to bring forth its relevant and much needed message for our times. It goes without saying that this booklet could not have been possible without the support of our Board of Directors, and our devoted members and friends. Thank you to you all.

Dean Makinodan