

EXCERPTS FROM SELECTED WRITINGS BY SAICHŌ:

“PRAYER ON MOUNT HIEI”

“ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ENLIGHTENMENT FOR ALL MEN”

“VOW OF THE UNINTERRUPTED STUDY OF THE *LOTUS SŪTRA*”

“THE MAHAYANA PRECEPTS IN ADMONITIONS OF THE *FANWANG SŪTRA*”

**Introduction**

Saichō (767-822), posthumously titled Dengyō Daishi, was the founder of the Tendai School in Japan, which became the most prominent branch of Buddhism throughout the Heian period. Saichō learned of the Chinese Tiantai teachings during his trip to China in 804. After returning to Japan, he founded the Enryakuji temple on Mt. Hiei near Kyoto. At that point, the main Buddhist rituals were shifted from being performed at Todaiji in Nara, which followed the Vinaya (Hīnayāna) precepts, to Enryakuji, which adhered strictly to the Bodhisattva (Mahāyāna) precepts. Saichō also wrote important doctrinal commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra*.

**Document Excerpts with Questions**

From *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, George Tanabe, and Paul Varley, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 125, 129, 140, 142-144. © 2001 Columbia University Press. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

**Excerpts from Selected Writings by Saichō**

**“Prayer on Mount Hiei”**

Oh Buddhas  
Of unexcelled complete enlightenment  
Bestow your invisible aid  
Upon this hut I open  
On the mountain top.

[*Dengyō Daishi zenshū* IV, p. 756 (1912 ed.)]

**“On the Possibility of Enlightenment for All Men”**

In the lotus-flower is implicit its emergence from the water. If it does not emerge, its blossoms will not open: in the emergence is implicit the blossoming. If the water is three feet deep, the stalk of the flower will be four or five feet; if the water is seven or eight feet deep, the stalk will

be over ten feet tall. That is what is implied by the emergence from the water. The greater the amount of water, the taller the stalk will grow; the potential growth is limitless. Now, all human beings have the lotus of Buddhahood within them. It will rise above the mire and foul water of the Hīnayāna and Quasi-Mahāyāna, and then through the stage of the bodhisattvas to open, leaves and blossoms together, in full glory.

[*Dengyō Daishi zenshū*, IV, p. 436 (1912 ed.)]

#### **“Vow of the Uninterrupted Study of the *Lotus Sūtra*”**

... I vow that, as long as heaven endures and earth lasts, to the most distant term of the future, this study will continue without the intermission of a single day, at the rate of one volume every two days. Thus the doctrine of universal enlightenment will be preserved forever and spread throughout Japan to the farthest confines. May all attain Buddhahood!

[*Dengyō Daishi zenshū* IV, p. 749 (1912 ed.)]

#### **“The Mahāyāna Precepts in Admonitions of the *Fanwang Sūtra*”**

At that time, the Buddha Shākyamuni, seated under the Bo tree after having attained supreme enlightenment, first set up the Precepts (Pratimoksa): to be filial to one’s parents, teacher(s), members of the Buddhist community, and the Three Treasures. Filial obedience is the way by which one attains the Way. ...

4. In the case of a son of the Buddha lying, urging others to lie, or lying for expediency — whatever the cause ... condition ... method ... or the act of lying — even if one says one sees something without actually seeing it or says one did not see something when one has seen it — a bodhisattva should always give rise to correct speech and [help] all sentient beings to give rise to correct speech and correct views. If, on the contrary, one prompts sentient beings to evil speech or evil views, one commits a most unpardonable offense for a bodhisattva.

[*Fanwang jing*, TD 24, no 1484.24:1004a-5a, CHD]

#### **Questions:**

1. What does the symbolism of the lotus flower in the water mean?
2. What does Saichō imply by the notion of “universal enlightenment”?
3. What is Saichō’s view of correct speech in Buddhism?
4. What does Saichō mean by “filial obedience”?