

THE WISDOM OF THE LOTUS SUTRA, VOLUME 1

Q52: The Daishonin states: "The teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures all partially explain the phenomena inherent in one's life. They do not explain them as the Lotus Sutra does. " In what manner does the Lotus Sutra give other teachings and philosophies their proper perspective? (p. 13)

The non-Buddhist teachings set forth in the outer writings and the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings of the inner scriptures all teach no more than fragments of the Law inherent in one's life. They do not expound it in its entirety as the Lotus Sutra does. (MW-5-181) All philosophies other than the Lotus Sutra are nothing more than fragments, parts of the great law of life. Basing ourselves on such fragments, even though they may contain partial truths, will not enable us to realize a thorough-going revitalization of all aspects of our lives. Indeed, philosophies that expound only partial truths end up distorting our lives. The Lotus Sutra, on the other hand, teaches the one, fundamental Law that unifies all these fragmentary teachings, gives them proper perspective, and allows each to shine and fulfill its function within the whole. That is the "wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. "

Q53: What negative effects may result from basing our view of life solely on "the teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, " instead of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 13) [see above]

Q54: The Lotus Sutra begins with the phrase "This is what I heard. " In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, " how does Nichiren Daishonin interpret this phrase? (p. 16)

How should we read the Lotus Sutra? In the "ongi kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings), Nichiren Daishonin says: "Thus I have heard" means to listen to the meaning and significance of each passage and phrase of the twenty-eight chapters [of the Lotus Sutra] as a teaching that expounds the reality of one's own life. That which is "heard" is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. (Gosho Zenshu, p. 794). Each passage and phrase of the Lotus Sutra is teaching about oneself, the entity of the Mystic Law. The sutra is not discussing something far removed from our own lives.

Q55: The Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings states: "His body neither existing nor not existing, neither caused nor conditioned, neither self nor other. . . . " What does "his body" refer to in the context of the sutra? How did second Soka Gakkai president Toda interpret the meaning of "his body"? What is the significance of Mr. Toda's realization to humankind? (pp. 22-23)

Endo: By early March, he had already read the entire text three times, and had just begun reading it for a fourth. It was then, when pondering the meaning of a difficult passage in the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings (Muryogi Sutra), an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, that he suddenly realized that "the Buddha is life itself. " Mr. Toda's thoughts raced with excitement: "The Buddha is life itself! It is an expression of life! The Buddha does not exist outside ourselves, but within our lives. No, it exists outside our lives as well. It is an entity of the cosmic life! "

Saito: Mr. Toda used the word life precisely because he had perceived the Buddha as a real entity.

Advanced Study Questions and Phill's selection of answers Pages 1-55 of Vol 1 Wisdom of Lotus Sutra

Q56: What does Nichiren Daishonin say are the three meanings of myo [of myoho, the Mystic Law]? These are the attributes of what? (p. 24)

The infinite and unbounded state of Buddhahood can be described as a state in which the freedom, openness and harmony of life are realized to the maximum extent. Nichiren Daishonin says myo [of Myoho, the Mystic Law] has three meanings: "to open, " "to be endowed and perfect" and "to revive. " These are the attributes of life, and the attributes of a Buddha as well.

Q57: In the Lotus Sutra, what is the meaning of the expression "teacher of the Law"? (p. 50)

In the Lotus Sutra, a "teacher of the Law" is someone who propagates the Lotus Sutra after Shakyamuni's death. In Japan, the word hosshi is usually thought to refer to a priest. However, its original meaning is simply "one who teaches the Law, " and it includes both priests and lay followers. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni addresses these "teachers of the Law" as "good men and good women. "

Q58: The Daishonin states: "When one knows the Lotus Sutra, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs. " In light of this passage, what is the primary focus of the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 55)

Saito: Dr. Cox studied Christianity. In spite of the differences between the two religions, he felt a great sympathy with Buddhism. Whether a person has a prejudiced view of life or a correct view of life cannot be measured by their religious denomination or to what doctrines they subscribe.

Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin said that some people come to a correct view of life through systems of thought and philosophies other than Buddhism. One who encounters the Lotus Sutra but is prejudiced and does not try to apprehend its true greatness is inferior, he asserted, to the wise men and saints of non-Buddhist teachings. #####He also wrote, "When one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (MW-1-82). The wisdom of the Lotus Sutra is a wisdom that improves society and brings happiness to the people. Unless it accomplishes those things, it is not true Buddhist wisdom. On a broader level, I think we can say that all wisdom that improves the lot of the people, that contributes to their happiness, is the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra.