

# 佛说阿弥陀经要解

## Commentary on the Amitabha Sutra

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Originally Translated by Dr. J. C. Cleary ---- Mind-Seal of Buddhas  
Humbly Revised by Hsingmean (Edwin) Sha 沙行勉 based on my  
understanding of the scriptures.

**Version: March 17, 2007.** This one has the **Transmission** part. The  
Essence and Introduction, and Main parts are in other files.

(甲) 三流通分。

[Text transmission of AMITABHA sutra]

信愿持名一法，**圆收圆超**一切法门。竖与一切法门**浑同**，横与一切法门迥  
异。

既无问自说，谁堪倡募流通。唯佛与佛，乃能究尽诸法实相。此经唯佛境  
界，唯佛佛可与流通耳。

The Pure Land method of developing faith and vows and reciting the Buddha-name both  
perfectly subsumes and perfectly surpasses all other Buddhist methods. Vertically, it  
intermingles with all the Buddhist teachings; horizontally, it stands apart from them.

Buddha spontaneously gave this Pure Land teaching without being asked. Who is worthy  
to extol it and transmit it? Only when a Buddha communicates with a Buddha is it  
possible to fully express the absolute reality of all the teachings. This *Amitabha Sutra* is  
about a Buddha-realm, and it can only be transmitted from Buddha to Buddha.

文为二：初普劝、二结劝。(乙)初中三：初劝信流通、二劝愿流通、三劝  
行流通。(丙)初中二：初略引标题、二征释经题。(丁)初中六：初东方、六  
上方。唐译十方，今略摄故。(戊)今初。

The final part of the sutra deals with its transmission. This is in two sections: a general admonition to accept the teaching, and a concluding encouragement:

舍利弗，如我今者，赞叹阿弥陀佛不可思议功德之利。

东方亦有阿鞞鞞佛、须弥相佛、大须弥佛、须弥光佛、妙音佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**Buddha says: Right now I am extolling the benefits of the inconceivable merits of Amitabha Buddha.**

**But in the eastern direction there are also countless other Buddhas, like Akshobhya Buddha, and the Buddha "Marks of the Sumeru Mountain", and the Buddha "Great Sumeru Mountain", and the Buddha "Light of the Sumeru Mountain", and the Buddha "Wondrous Voice". Each of them preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth. All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, and which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

不可思议，略有五意：一、横超三界，不俟断惑；二、即西方横具四土，非由渐证；三、但持名号，不假禅观诸方便；四、一七为期，不藉多劫多生多年月；五、持一佛名，即为诸佛护念，不异持一切佛名。

The merits of Amitabha are inconceivable in five senses.

*First*, Amitabha enables us to transcend the triple world "horizontally," without having to wait until we cut off delusion.

*Second*, Amitabha's Pure Land includes the Four Lands [the land where Saints and Ordinary Beings Dwell Together, the Land of Expedient Liberation, the Land of Real Reward, and the Land of Eternally Quiescent Light], so that we do not have to go step-by-step to arrive at them. [i.e. once reborn in the Pure Land, we will never retrogress]

*Third*, Amitabha's merit makes salvation possible for us by simply invoking his name, without having to resort to meditation methods.

*Fourth*, Amitabha's merit makes salvation possible in seven days, without requiring many eons and many lifetimes.

*Fifth*, by invoking the name of one Buddha, Amitabha, we are protected and kept in mind by all the Buddhas.

此皆**导师**大愿行之所成就，故曰阿弥陀佛不可思议功德之利。又行人信愿持名，全摄佛功德成自功德，故亦曰阿弥陀佛不可思议功德之利。下又曰诸佛不可思议功德，我不可思议功德，是诸佛释迦，皆以阿弥为自也。

All this is the result of the great vows and deeds of our guiding teacher Amitabha. That is why Buddha speaks of "the benefits of the inconceivable merits of Amitabha Buddha."

Furthermore, when Pure Land practitioners recite the Buddha-name with faith and vows, they are gathering in all the merits of the Buddhas, and making them their own merits. This is another reason why Buddha speaks of "the benefits of the inconceivable merits of Amitabha Buddha."

Later on in the text, Sakyamuni Buddha speaks of "the inconceivable merits of all the Buddhas" and also my inconceivable merits." Here Sakyamuni Buddha is saying that all the Buddhas, as well as he himself all consider Amitabha as themselves.

阿闍（音同触彳义`）鞞，此云**无动**。佛有无量德，应有无量名。随机而立，或**取因**，或**取果**，或**性**，或**相**，或**行愿**等。虽举一隅，仍具**四悉**。随一一名，显所诠德。劫寿说之，不能悉也。

"Akshobhya" means "**Immovable**". Buddha has countless virtues, and so he must have countless names, each established according to the teaching situation. Sometimes these names are based on **causal conditions**, sometimes on **results** achieved, sometimes on **inherent nature**, sometimes on **apparent characteristics**, sometimes on **practices or vows** or other things. Although each name only refers to one aspect of Buddhahood, each name still includes the four modes whereby a Buddha preaches. Each name illustrates a particular quality of Buddhahood. If we were to try to express all the qualities of the enlightened ones, we could talk till the end of time and never be able to finish.

东方虚空不可尽，世界亦不可尽。世界不可尽，住世诸佛亦不可尽。略举恒河沙耳。此等诸佛，各出广长舌劝信此经。而众生犹不生信，顽冥极矣。常人三世不妄语，舌能至鼻。藏果头佛，三大僧祇劫不妄语，舌薄广长可覆面。今证大乘净土妙门，所以遍覆三千。表理诚称真，事实非谬也。

标出经题，流通之本。**什师**顺此方好，略译今题，巧合持名妙行。奘师译云《**称赞净土佛摄受经**》。文有详略，义无增减。

Space in the east is infinite, and there are an infinite number of worlds there. Since there are an infinite number of worlds, there are also an infinite number of Buddhas who dwell in those worlds. Thus the sutra refers to "countless other Buddhas." All these Buddhas are using their eloquence to urge us to have faith in this sutra. If we sentient beings still fail to have faith in this sutra, we are being utterly stupid and **benighted**.

[One of the traditional marks of a Buddha is a "long, broad tongue".] If an ordinary person tells no lies for three lifetimes, his tongue will be long enough to reach his nose. The Buddhas mentioned in this sutra have realized the wondrous Pure Land teaching of the Great Vehicle, and so their tongues are long and broad enough to cover a whole galaxy of worlds. This symbolizes that they are truly in accord with absolute reality -- it is fact, not fiction.

The title of the sutra as it circulates among us today, *The Amitabha Sutra Spoken by Buddha*, was devised by the master translator **Kumarajiva**, who knew that we Chinese like brevity. It skillfully matches the wondrous practice of reciting the Buddha-name. Master Hsuan-tsang translated the sutra with the longer title, *The Sutra Extolling the Pure Land Accepted by Buddha*. The two translations differ in style, but there is no change in the meaning.

#### (戊) 二南方

舍利弗，南方世界有**日月灯佛、名闻光佛、大焰肩佛、须弥灯佛、无量精进佛**，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**In the worlds of the southern direction there are countless other Buddhas, like the Buddha "Lamp of the Sun and Moon", and the Buddha "Light of Renown", and the Buddha "Great Flaming Shoulders", and the Buddha "Lamp of the Sumeru Mountain", and the Buddha "Infinite Progress". Each of them preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth. All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, and which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

#### (戊) 三西方

舍利弗，西方世界有**无量寿佛、无量相佛、无量幢佛、大光佛、大明佛、宝相佛、净光佛**，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**In the worlds of the western direction there are countless other Buddhas, like the Buddha "Infinite Life", and the Buddha "Innumerable Characteristics", and the**

**Buddha "Innumerable Banners", and the Buddha "Great Light", and the Buddha "Great Illumination", and the Buddha "Mark of Reality", and the Buddha "Light of Purity". Each of them preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth, All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, and which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

无量寿佛，与弥陀同名。十方各方面同名诸佛无量也，然即是导师亦可。为度众生，不妨转赞释迦如来所说。

The Buddha "Infinite Life" has the same name as Amitabha. In all the worlds of the ten directions, Buddhas who share the same name are innumerable. It is also possible that the sutra here is referring to our guiding teacher Amitabha. For the sake of saving sentient beings, there is no harm in the Buddha Amitabha praising what the Tathagata Sakyamuni teaches in this sutra.

#### (戊) 四北方

舍利弗，北方世界有焰肩佛、最胜音佛、难沮佛、日生佛、网明佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**In the worlds of the northern direction there are countless other Buddhas, like the Buddha "Flaming Shoulders", and the Buddha "Supreme Voice", and the Buddha "Unstoppable", and the Buddha "Born of the Sun", and the Buddha "Netted Light". Each of them preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth. All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, and which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

#### (戊) 五下方

舍利弗，下方世界有师子佛、名闻佛、名光佛、达摩佛、法幢佛、持法佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**In the worlds of the nadir there are countless other Buddhas, like the Buddha "Lion", and the Buddha "Repute", and the Buddha "Light", and the Buddha "Dharma Banner", and the Buddha "Upholding the Dharma". Each of them**

**preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth. All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, and which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

此界水轮金轮风轮之下，复有下界非非想天等，乃至重重无尽也。达摩，此云法。

Below our mundane world there are an infinite number of galaxies and beyond it there are also an infinite number of galaxies, including the heavens of desire, of form, and the formless heavens, and so on.

The word "Dharma" means "teaching", "truth", "method".

(戊) 六上方

舍利弗，上方世界有梵音佛、宿王佛、香上佛、香光佛、大焰肩佛、杂色宝华严身佛、娑罗树王佛、宝华德佛、见一切义佛、如须弥山佛，如是等恒河沙数诸佛，各于其国，出广长舌相，遍覆三千大千世界，说诚实言：汝等众生，当信是称赞不可思议功德一切诸佛所护念经。

**In the worlds of the zenith there are countless other Buddhas, like the Buddha "Pure Voice", and the Buddha "Sojourner King", and the Buddha "Incense Fragrance", and the Buddha "Fragrant Light", and the Buddha "Great Blazing Shoulders", and the Buddha "Body of Multicolored Jewel Flower Garlands", and the Buddha "Sala Tree King", and the Buddha "Precious Flower Virtue", and the Buddha "Sees All Truths", and the Buddha "Like the Sumeru Mountain". Each of them preaches in his own land with the eloquence of a Buddha, and covers a whole cosmos, speaking the truth. All of you sentient beings should believe this scripture extolling their inconceivable merits, which all Buddhas protect and keep in mind.**

此界非非想天之上，复有上界风轮金轮及三界等，重重无尽也。问：诸方必有净土，何偏赞西方？答：此亦非善问。假使赞阿鞞（音同触イメ）佛国，汝又疑偏东方，展转戏论。

These are the infinite worlds that are located toward the zenith, above our mundane world. They too have many layers, and [like our mundane world] include realms of desire, of form, and formlessness, in an infinite number of levels.

*Question:* There are certainly pure lands in all directions, so why make a special point of praising Amitabha's Pure Land in the west?

*Answer:* This is not a good objection. If we made a point of praising Akshobhya's Pure Land in the east, you would wonder why we were emphasizing the eastern direction, and go on and on with your specious reasoning.

问：何不遍缘法界？答：有三义。令初机易标心故，阿弥本愿胜故，佛与此土众生偏有缘故。

盖佛度生，生受化，其间难易浅深，总在于缘。

缘之所在，恩德弘深，种种教启，能令欢喜信入，能令触动宿种，能令魔障难遮，能令体性开发。

*Question:* Why not make the whole universe the focal point [instead of Amitabha's Pure Land]?

*Answer:* There are three reasons. We focus on Amitabha's Pure Land because this makes it easy for beginners to orient their minds, because Amitabha's fundamental vows are supreme, and because Amitabha has a special link with the sentient beings in our world.

The Buddhas offer salvation to sentient beings, and sentient beings accept the Buddhas' teachings, but in this process there are differences in degrees of difficulty and ease and profundity and shallowness -- it is all a matter of karmic links.

Depending on where the karmic affinities of sentient beings lie, the Buddhas extend the virtue of their benevolence, and stimulate the development of those sentient beings with all kinds of teachings. They can enable sentient beings to experience joy in the teaching and have faith in it, they can spark the development of the seeds of goodness from past lives, they can make it hard for the barriers of delusion to screen the sentient beings off from the truth, and they can enable sentient beings to bring forth their self-nature.

- [ 一、世界悉檀，佛开始时，先顺世界之凡情，宣说浅近之事理，以令闻者欢喜和信受；  
二、各各为人悉檀，佛审察众生的根机，及程度之浅深，而说各人所须要之法，令众生发起正信，增长善根；  
三、对治悉檀，对嗔多者教以慈悲观，痴多者教以因缘观，障多者教以念佛观，如是普施种种之法药，以去除众生的恶病；  
四、第一义悉檀，佛见众生的机缘既熟，便为之说诸法实相，以令众生一起悟入圣者之道。]

诸佛本从法身垂迹，固结缘种，若世出世，悉不可思议。尊隆于教乘，举扬于海会，沁入于苦海，慈契于寂光，所以万德钦承，群灵拱极。

Fundamentally all the Buddhas manifest their teaching activities from within the Dharmakaya. They solidify sentient beings' affinity with the truth and develop their seeds of enlightenment. Whether within the world or beyond it, the deeds of the Buddhas are all inconceivable. They energize teaching vehicles and expound them to vast audiences. They plunge into the ocean of suffering where sentient beings dwell, and use their

compassion to enable them to harmonize with the **quiescent light**. Thus do the Buddhas exemplify the myriad virtues and epitomize the highest spiritual powers.

当知佛种从**缘起**，缘即法界。一念一切念，一生一切生。一香一华，一声一色，乃至受忏授记，摩顶垂手。十方三世，莫不遍融。

故此增上缘因，名**法界缘起**。此正所谓遍缘法界者也。

We must understand [the fundamental Buddhist principle] that the seeds of enlightenment **arise within the causal nexus**. The causal nexus is the universe as a whole. [With enlightened perception], when the Buddhas are mindful of one, they are mindful of all, and when one is born, all are born: there is one scent, one flower, one sound, one form. When the Buddhas accept our repentance and give us guarantees of enlightenment, when they rub our heads and reach down their hands to us, they create a universal fusion of all the worlds of the past, present, and future in the ten directions.

Therefore, this element that will accelerate us toward enlightenment, this method of reciting the Buddha-name, arises from within the causal nexus, and our Pure Land practice is precisely an instance of what you were calling "taking the universe as a whole as the focal point".

浅位人便可决志专求，深位人亦不必舍西方而别求华藏。若谓西方是权，华藏是实，**西方小，华藏大者**，全堕众生**遍计执情**。以不达**权实一体**，大小无性故也。

People at a shallow level should resolve to devote themselves to seeking birth in the Pure Land. But people at a profound level should not abandon Amitabha's Pure Land in the west and seek the Flower Treasury World [Vairocana Buddha's universal pure land] instead. If you think that Amitabha's Pure Land is an expedient device, but Vairocana's Flower Treasury World is a true reality, if you think that Amitabha's Pure Land is small, but Vairocana's Flower Treasury World is large, you are completely **under the sway of imaginary ideas and emotional clings, attachment by pervasive discrimination**. How so? Because you have not comprehended that **provisional expedients and true reality have a single essence**, and that categories like big and small have no set identity.

#### (丁) 二征释经题

舍利弗，于汝意云何，何故名为一切诸佛所护念经？舍利弗，若有善男子、善女人，闻是经**受持者**，及闻诸佛名者，是诸善男子、善女人，皆为一切诸佛之所护念，皆得不退转于**阿耨多罗三藐三菩提**。是故舍利弗，汝等皆当信受我语，及诸佛所说。

**Why do you think this is called the sutra that is protected and kept in mind by all the Buddhas?**

If there are good men and good women who hear this scripture, **accept it, and uphold it**, and they hear the names of all these Buddhas, all these good men and good women will be protected and kept in mind by all these Buddhas, and all of them will reach the level where they do not turn back from **unexcelled, correct, complete enlightenment**.

Therefore, all of you should faithfully accept what I say and what all the Buddhas have said.

[（术语）Anuttara-samyak-sam%bodhi，佛智名。旧译曰无上正遍知，无上正遍道。真正遍知。一切真理之无上智慧也。维摩经佛国品肇注曰：“阿耨多罗，秦言无上。三藐三菩提，秦言正遍知。道莫之大，无上也。其道真正，无法不知，正遍知也。”净土论注曰：“佛所得法，名为阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。阿为无，耨多罗为上，三藐为正，三为遍。菩提为道，统而译之，名为无上正遍道。”新译曰无上正等正觉。真正平等觉知一切真理之无上智慧也。法华玄赞二曰：“阿云无，耨多罗云上，三云正，藐云等。又，三云正，菩提云觉，即是无上正等正觉。”智度论八十五曰：“唯佛一人智慧为阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。”]

此经独诠无上心要，**诸佛名字**，并诠无上圆满究竟万德，故闻者皆为诸佛护念。又闻经受持，即执持名号。阿弥名号，诸佛所护念故。

This sutra is devoted to revealing the supreme essentials of mind, the names of various Buddhas and their supreme, perfect, ultimate virtues. Thus those who hear this sutra are protected and kept in mind by all the Buddhas. Those who hear this sutra and accept its teachings will consistently recite the name of Amitabha, and the name of Amitabha is itself protected and kept in mind by all of the Buddhas.

问：但闻诸佛名，而未持经，亦得护念不退耶？

答：此义有局有通。

《占察》谓杂乱垢心，**虽诵我名而不为闻**。以不能生决定信解，但获**世间善报**，不得广大深妙利益。

*Question:* What about those who only hear the names of the various Buddhas, but do not uphold the teachings of the sutra -- are they also kept in mind by all Buddhas and protected against **backsliding**?

Answer: There is a partial answer to this, and a comprehensive answer.

The *Sutra on Divining the Results of Good and Evil Karma* says that those who **intone** the Buddha-name in a confused, unfocused, defiled state of mind are not hearing any Buddha names because they do not generate decisive faith and understanding. By reciting the Buddha-name they only obtain worldly merits, and they do not get the far-reaching and profoundly wondrous benefits of reciting the Buddha-name.

若到**一行三昧**，则成广大微妙行心，名得**相似无生法忍**，乃为得闻十方佛名。

此亦应尔。故须闻已执持至一心不乱，方为闻诸佛名，蒙诸佛护念。此局义也。

Those who singlemindedly recite the Buddha-name to the point of total concentration, called "One-Practice Samadhi", achieve the mind of vast and wondrous practice. This is called attaining the **similar upholding of non-arising nature of all existences**. By doing this these people truly hear the names of the Buddhas of the ten directions.

This is the way it must be with the sutra as well. After you hear it, you must put it into practice by reciting the Buddha-name. When you recite the Buddha--name to the point of singlemindedness, then you are really hearing the names of the Buddhas, and then you become protected and kept in mind by the Buddhas. This is the partial answer.

通义者，诸佛慈悲，不可思议，名号功德，亦不可思议。故一闻佛名，不论有心无心，若信若否，皆成缘种。况**佛度众生**，不简怨亲，恒无疲倦，苟闻佛名，佛必护念，又何疑焉。

The comprehensive answer is this: The compassion of the Buddhas is inconceivable, and the merits of their names are also inconceivable. Therefore, once you hear a Buddha-name, no matter whether you are mindful or not, or whether you believe in it or not, it always becomes the seed of an affinity with the truth. Moreover, when the Buddhas **bring salvation to sentient beings**, they do not sort out friends and enemies: they go on working tirelessly for universal salvation. If you hear the Buddha-name, Buddha is bound to protect you. How can there be any doubts about this?

然据《金刚三论》，根熟菩萨为佛护念，位在**别地圆住**。盖约自力，必入同生性乃可护念。今仗他力，故**相似位**即蒙护念。乃至相似位以还，亦皆有通护念之义。

下至一闻佛名，于同体法性有资发力，亦得远因终不退也。

Based on the **Treatise** of Diamond Sutra, Buddhas protect those Bodhisattvas who have reached the first level of the ten-stage of Bodhisattva's path in Particular teaching or the first abiding stage in Round teaching. By the self efforts, they must enter the nature homogeneous to the Buddha's thoughts in order to be protected by Buddhas. Now we count on other's power, so with **Similar-Buddha** status we can be protected by Buddhas. Those with status below Similar-Buddha status will be protected by Buddhas in general.

Even those who have just heard the Buddha-name once share in the essential true nature of phenomena; hearing the Buddha-name means they have a basis to work from, and have found what will be the cause of their enlightenment in the long run, which they will never lose.

[又名**六即佛**，天台智者大师，立**六即佛**义，以示由凡夫修行，乃至佛果的位次，即

一、理即佛，一切众生，虽轮回六道，日处尘劳烦恼中，与觉体相背，然而佛性功德，仍然具足，故名“理即佛”。

二、名字即佛，或从知识处，或由经典中，得闻即心本具不生不灭的佛性，于名字中，通达了解，知一切法，皆为佛法，一切众生，皆可成佛，点头会意，豁然有悟，故名“名字即佛”。

三、观行即佛，这是圆教五品外凡位，不但解知名字，更进一步依教修观，知一切法皆是佛法，心观明了，理慧相应，故名“观行即佛”。

四、相似即佛，这是圆教十信内凡位，初信断见惑，七信断思惑，八九十信断尘沙惑，在此位上的行者，于观行中，愈观愈明，愈止愈寂，虽未真悟实证，而于理仿佛，有如真证，故名“相似即佛”。

五、分证即佛，这是于十信后心，破一分无明，证一分三德，即入初住，而证法身，从此成法身大士，其间从初住起，各各破无明，证三德，至等觉共历四十一位，破四十一分，故名“分证即佛”。

六、究竟即佛，这是从等觉，再破最后一分无明，则惑尽真纯，彻证即身本具的真如佛性，入妙觉位而成佛，故名“究竟即佛”。兹列表说明如下：



阿耨多罗，此云无上。三藐三菩提，此云正等正觉。即大乘果觉也。

**圆三不退**，乃一生成佛异名。故劝身子等皆当信受。闻名功德如此，释迦及十方诸佛同所宣说，可不信乎！初劝信流通竟。

(丙) 二劝愿流通

The sutra uses the Sanskrit term *anuttarasamyaksamhodhi*, which means unexcelled, correct, complete enlightenment. This is the awakening that is the fruit of the Great Vehicle.

To say you have reached the level where you do not fall back (non-retrogression) from **your position, from your practice, or from your mindfulness**, is another way of saying you will become enlightened in one lifetime. Thus Buddha urges all his listeners to believe in what this sutra is saying and accept it, and to have faith that the merit of hearing the Buddha-name is like this. Can we refuse to believe what Sakyamuni and all the other Buddhas have communicated to us?

This is the end of the section in which Buddha urges us to have faith in the sutra. Next Buddha urges us to make vows.

舍利弗，若有人已发愿、今发愿、当发愿，欲生阿弥陀佛国者，是诸人等，皆得不退转于阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，于彼国土，若已生、若今生、若当生。是故舍利弗，诸善男子、善女人，若有信者，应当发愿，生彼国土。

**All those people who have vowed, or are vowing, or will vow to be born in the land of Amitabha Buddha reach the level where they do not turn back from unexcelled correct, complete enlightenment, whether in their past lives, their present lives, or their future lives. Therefore; all good men and good women, if they have faith, must make a vow to be born in that land.**

已愿已生，今愿今生，当愿当生，正显依信所发之愿无虚也。非信不能发愿，非愿信亦不生。故云若有信者，应当发愿。

又愿者，信之券，行之枢，尤为要务。举愿则信行在其中，所以殷勤三劝也。

复次愿生彼国，即欣厌二门。厌离娑婆，与依苦集二谛所发二种弘誓相应。欣求极乐，与依道灭二谛所发二种弘誓相应。故得不退转于大菩提道。

Those who have vowed to be born in the Pure Land in the past have already been born there. Those who are now vowing to be born in the Pure Land will be born there at the end of this lifetime. Those who in future lives vow to be born in the Pure Land will be born there in the future. Here Buddha is demonstrating that vows that are made on the basis of pure faith are sure to come true. Without faith, we cannot make vows. Without vows and faith, rebirth cannot occur. That's why Buddha says, "If they have faith, they must vow to be born in that land."

Again: vows are a token of faith, and the key link for practice. Making vows is then a most crucial component. *When Buddha mentions vows, faith and practice are included.* That's why he repeatedly urges us most earnestly to make vows.

When we vow to be born in Amitabha's Pure Land, we are demonstrating our *disgust* with the mundane world, and our *joy* in the Pure Land.

In feeling aversion to the mundane world, we are matching with two of the great vows of Bodhisattvas [to deliver all sentient beings from suffering, and to cut off countless afflictions] that were generated by the first two Noble Truths [the truth of suffering, and the truth of the formation of suffering].

In joyously seeking the Pure Land, we are matching with the other two great vows of Bodhisattvas [to master the endless variety of Buddhist teaching, and to consummate the

Supreme Path] that were generated by the other two Noble Truths [the truth of the path, and the truth of ending suffering]. By doing this we reach the stage where we do not fall back from the path of Great Enlightenment.

[众生无边誓愿度、烦恼无尽誓愿断、法门无量誓愿学、佛道无上誓愿成。此四弘誓愿是菩萨所立，]

问：今发愿但可云当生，何名今生？

答：此亦二义。一、约一期名今，现生发愿持名，临终定生净土。

二、约刹那名今，一念相应一念生，念念相应念念生。妙因妙果，不离一心，如称两头，低昂时等。

何俟娑婆报尽，方育珍池。只今信愿持名，莲萼光荣，金台影现，便非娑婆界内人矣。

极圆极顿，难议难思，唯有大智，方能谛信。

*Question:* If we make vows now, is it not correct that all we can talk about is the life to come, not this present life?

*Answer:* There are two senses here. One concerns a lifetime called the present one. If we vow in the present life to recite the Buddha-name, when we die we are sure to be born in the Pure Land.

The other is about an instant called the present. If our Mind accords with the Mind of Buddha Amitabha for one moment, we are born in the Pure Land for one moment. If we reach accord moment after moment, we are born in the Pure Land moment after moment. Wondrous cause and wondrous effect are not apart from the One Mind. They are like the two ends of a balance, going down and up and sometimes being level.

Why do we have to wait until our life in the mundane world is over before we can be born in the Pure Land's jewel ponds? All we have to do is develop faith and vows and recite the Buddha-name right now, and the lotus bud in which we will be born in the Pure Land is already in bloom, and the image of the Pure Land's golden thrones appear before us -- *at that moment* we are no longer inhabitants of this mundane world.

Reciting the Buddha-name is then the highest form of the complete and sudden teaching: hard to rationalize; difficult to conceive. Only those with great wisdom can truly believe in it.

(丙) 三劝行流通二：初诸佛转赞、二教主结叹。(丁) 今初。

舍利弗，如我今者，称赞诸佛不可思议功德。彼诸佛等，亦称赞我不可思议功德，而作是言：释迦牟尼佛，能为甚难希有之事，能于娑

婆国土五浊恶世，劫浊、见浊、烦恼浊、众生浊、命浊中，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，为诸众生，说是一切世间难信之法。

Just as I am now extolling the inconceivable merits of all the Buddhas, all those Buddhas are likewise extolling my inconceivable merits, with these words: "Sakyamuni Buddha is able to carry out a most difficult and rare task. In the world "Endurance" [this world], in an evil world of the **Five Corruptions -the corruption of the age, the corruption of views, the corruption of afflictions, the corruption of sentient beings, and the corruption of life** -- he is able to achieve unexcelled, correct, complete enlightenment, and to expound the Truth which all beings in all worlds find hard to believe."

诸佛功德智慧，虽皆平等，而施化则有难易。

净土成菩提易，浊世难。为净土众生说法易，为浊世众生难。为浊世众生说渐法犹易，说顿法难。

为浊世众生说余顿法犹易，说净土横超顿法尤难。为浊世众生说净土横超顿修顿证妙观，已自不易，说此无藉劬劳修证，但持名号，径登不退，奇特胜妙超出思议第一方便，更为难中之难。故十方诸佛，无不推我释迦偏为勇猛也。

Although the merits, virtues, and wisdom of all the Buddhas are equal, the way they bestow their teachings differs in degrees of difficulty and ease.

Achieving enlightenment in the Pure Land is easy, compared to achieving enlightenment in our corrupt mundane world. Explaining the Dharma to the sentient beings in the Pure Land is easy, compared to explaining the Dharma to the sentient beings in our corrupt mundane world. Explaining the gradual form of the Buddhist Teaching to the sentient beings in our corrupt mundane world is easy, compared to explaining the sudden form of the Buddhist Teaching.

Explaining the sudden forms of the Buddhist Teaching other than the Pure Land teaching to the sentient beings in our corrupt mundane world is easy, compared to explaining the sudden Pure Land teaching of **horizontal transcendence**.

Explaining the Pure Land teaching of horizontal transcendence with its **sudden practice and sudden realization and wondrous contemplation** is not easy. But the hardest of all is explaining this **supreme skillful technique, this special surpassing wonder, this Pure Land method that goes beyond all conceptualizations**, and teaches us that we do not need laborious cultivation, but have only to recite the Buddha-name in order to ascend directly to the level where we do not fall back from the path to enlightenment. That is why all the Buddhas of the ten directions put forward our Sakyamuni Buddha as the most **valiant** of all.

劫浊者，浊法聚会之时。劫浊中，非带业横出之行，必不能度。

见浊者，五利使，邪见增盛。谓身见、边见、见取、戒取及诸邪见，昏昧汨没，故名为浊。见浊中，非不假方便之行，必不能度。

The sutra speaks of the world of the Five Corruptions. What does this mean?

The **corruption of the age** means that this is a time when all sorts of corrupt phenomena are gathered together. If not for the Pure Land practice which enables us to **transcend the mundane world "horizontally," even though we take our karmic burden along with us**, deliverance would surely be impossible.

The **corruption of views** means that misguided views proliferate: **the “body” view that our bodies are entities we possess, the “extreme” view that we are annihilated after death (nihilism) or else live on forever (eternalism), the “attachment” view that what we cling to with our arbitrary opinions is best, and the “precept” view that we will find salvation by our own subjectively chosen methods, and any other wrong views.** Because we are deluded by such views, and utterly submerged in them, this is called the corruption of views. Amidst the corruption of views, if we do not make use of the expedient means of the Pure Land teaching to discover our Mind we surely cannot be saved.

烦恼浊者，五钝使，烦恼增盛。谓贪、嗔、痴、慢、疑，烦动恼乱，故名为浊。烦恼浊中，非即凡心是佛心之行，必不能度。

众生浊者，见烦恼所感粗弊五阴和合，假名众生，色心并皆陋劣，故名为浊。众生浊中，非欣厌之行，必不能度。

命浊者，因果并劣，寿命短促，乃至不满百岁，故名为浊。命浊中，非不费时劫，不劳勤苦之行，必不能度。

The **corruption of afflictions** means that **compulsions and confusions** caused by **craving, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt** are increasing more and more, causing trouble and chaos. Amidst the corruption of afflictions, without the Pure Land practice that affirms that our ordinary minds are one with the Buddha-mind, we surely cannot be saved.

Under the influence of the corruption of views and the corruption of afflictions, the five skandhas mix together in a coarse and debased way, giving rise to what are provisionally called sentient beings: hence the term the **corruption of sentient beings**. Sentient beings are debased both at the level of form and at the level of mind so they are called corrupt. Given the corruption of sentient beings, without the practice of **shunning the mundane world and joyfully seeking the Pure Land**, salvation is impossible.

The **corruption of life** means that our causal basis and hence the results we realize are both degenerate, and our life spans are shortened, and do not reach a hundred years, so they are called corrupt. Given the corruption of life, we cannot be saved without the Pure Land practice, **which does not require many hundreds years of laborious practice.**

复次只此信愿庄严一声阿弥陀佛，转劫浊为清净海会，转见浊为无量光，转烦恼浊为常寂光，转众生浊为莲华化生，转命浊为无量寿。

Moreover, faith and vows and the adornment of the name of Amitabha **transform the corruption of the age into an assembly of purity, transform the corruption of views into infinite light, transform the corruption of afflictions into the eternal still light, transform the corruption of sentient beings into beings born by transformation from lotuses in the Pure Land, and transform the corruption of life into infinite life.**

故一声阿弥陀佛，即释迦本师于五浊恶世，所得之阿耨多罗三藐三菩提法。今以此果觉全体授与浊恶众生，乃诸佛所行境界，唯佛与佛能究尽，非九界自力所能信解也。

诸众生，别指五浊恶人。一切世间，通指四土器世间，九界有情世间也。

Thus each recitation of the Buddha-name is a method of achieving unexcelled, correct, complete Enlightenment practiced by our fundamental teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha, in the midst of this evil world of the Five Corruptions. In this sutra Sakyamuni Buddha is taking the whole essence of this enlightenment and bestowing it on sentient beings of this evil and corrupt world. This is the realm which all the Buddhas experience, and which only the Buddhas can experience fully. It is not something which those in the other nine realms **(the hell-beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the asuras, the human beings, the devas, the shravakas, the pratyekas, and the Bodhisattvas)** can fully comprehend by their own power.

When the other Buddhas extol Sakyamuni for teaching the Pure Land method to "sentient beings," this means the people in our evil world of the Five Corruptions. When the sutra mentions "all worlds," it means all the nine worlds sentient beings inhabit.

(丁) 二教主结叹。

前劝信流通是诸佛付嘱，此本师付嘱。嘱语略别从通，但云一切世间，犹前诸佛所云汝等众生。当知文殊、迦叶等，皆在所嘱也。

The previous admonition to believe in the Pure Land teaching was the command of all the Buddhas. Below is the command of our teacher Sakyamuni Buddha. Here Sakyamuni addresses all the sentient beings in all worlds, as the Buddhas before addressed themselves to "all you sentient beings." We must realize that the Bodhisattvas like Manjushri and the Arhats like Mahakashyapa are also included among those to whom this command is given.

**舍利弗，当知我于五浊恶世，行此难事，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，为一切世间说此难信之法，是为甚难。**

**Know then that in the midst of this evil world of the Five Corruptions, I am able to carry out this difficult task, attain unexcelled, correct, complete enlightenment, and**

**expound the Truth which is so hard to believe for beings in all worlds. This is indeed most difficult!**

信愿持名一行，不涉施为，圆转五浊。唯信乃入，非思议所行境界。

设非本师来入恶世，示得菩提，以大智大悲，见此、行此、说此，众生何由稟此也哉！

Having faith, vows, and the practice of reciting the Buddha-name is not a matter of contrived action. Only through faith can we enter into this complete transformation of the world of the Five Corruptions into the Pure Land. This is not a realm that mere thinking can get us to.

If it were not for our fundamental teacher Sakyamuni Buddha entering into our evil world, showing the attainment of enlightenment, and using his great wisdom and great compassion to reveal this, practice this, and teach this, how would sentient beings have received this message?

然吾人处劫浊中，决定为时所囿，为苦所逼。

处见浊中，决定为邪智所缠，邪师所惑。

处烦恼浊中，决定为贪欲所陷，恶业所螫。

处众生浊中，决定安于臭秽而不能洞觉，甘于劣弱而不能奋飞。

处命浊中，决定为无常所吞，石火电光，措手不及。

We live amidst the **corruption of the age**, and we are certainly imprisoned by our time, and **harried** by suffering.

We live amidst the **corruption of views**, and we are certainly **enmeshed** in misguided knowledge, and deluded by false teachers.

We live amidst the **corruption of afflictions**, and we are certainly **ensnared** by craving and desire, and burdened by bad karma.

We live amidst the **corruption of sentient beings**, and we certainly rest complacently in stinking filth, without being aware of it, and are willing to stay degraded and weak, without exerting ourselves to rise any higher.

We live amidst the **corruption of life**, and we are certainly swallowed up by impermanence, with our lives flashing by too quickly for us to cope.

若不深知其甚难，将谓更有别法可出五浊，烽燧宅里，戏论纷然。

唯深知其甚难，方肯死尽偷心，宝此一行。此本师所以极口说其难甚，而深嘱我等当知也。初普劝竟。

If we do not deeply understand the severe difficulties we are facing, if we think that there is some other method besides Pure Land practice that can extricate us from the Five Corruptions, we are lost in a **welter** of empty arguments inside a burning house.

Only if we deeply realize the seriousness of the difficulties we are facing, will we be willing to exterminate our dishonest attitudes, and value Pure Land practice for the treasure it is. This is why our teacher Sakyamuni Buddha went to such lengths to explain to us what a dire situation we are in, and make us realize the implications.

## (乙) 二结劝

Finally the sutra reaches its conclusion:

佛说此经已，舍利弗，及诸比丘，一切世间天人阿修罗等，闻佛所说，欢喜信受，作礼而去。

**When Buddha had finished preaching this scripture, Shariputra and all the monks and all the other gods and humans and asuras and the rest who had been listening, having heard what the Buddha said, rejoiced and faithfully accepted it. They all bowed in homage and departed.**

法门不可思议，难信难知，无一人能发问者。佛智鉴机，知众生成佛缘熟，无问自说，令得四益，

如时雨化，故欢喜信受也。身心愉悦名欢喜。毫无疑问名信。领纳不忘名受。感大恩德，投身归命，名作礼。依教修持，一往不退，名而去。

The Pure Land teaching is inconceivable. It is difficult to believe in and difficult to understand: no one could have asked Buddha about it. But Buddha in his wisdom **discerned the dynamics of the situation** and realized that the circumstances were ripe for sentient beings to become enlightened. Thus he expounded the Pure Land teaching without being asked, to enable sentient beings to **benefit by hearing the truth, to benefit by helping others and doing good, to benefit by shunning evil, and to benefit by experiencing the supreme truth.**

Buddha's Pure Land teaching was like timely rain, so the sutra says his listeners "rejoiced and faithfully accepted it." "Rejoiced" means they felt delight of the body and mind. "Faithfully" means they had no doubts or ambivalence. "Accepted it" means they took it in and would never forget it. The phrase "they all bowed in homage" signifies that they were moved by the Buddha's great benevolence, and entrusted themselves to him. Their departure signifies that they went on to practice consistently according to what Buddha had taught them, and never turned back.

经云：末法亿亿人修行，罕一得道，唯依念佛得度。

呜呼！今正是其时矣。舍此不思议法门，其何能淑。

旭出家时，宗乘自负，藐视教典。妄谓持名，曲为中下。后因大病，发意西归。复研《妙宗》《圆中》二钞，及云栖《疏钞》等书，始知念佛三昧，实无上宝王，方肯死心执持名号，万牛莫挽也。

## Afterword

The sutra says: "In the Dharma-Ending Age, among hundreds of millions of people who cultivate Buddhist practices, there will rarely be even one who attains enlightenment. They will only find salvation if they rely on reciting the Buddha-name."

Alas! Our contemporary age is precisely the time of which the sutra is speaking. If we abandon this inconceivably powerful method of reciting the Buddha-name, how can we become pure?

When I first left home and became a monk, I prided myself on being a follower of Zen, and I looked down on the scriptures. I wrongly imagined that reciting the Buddha-name was an adaptation of Buddhism suited for those of average and below average capacities.

Later on, due to a grave illness, I developed the aspiration to go to Amitabha's Pure Land. After I studied various Pure Land writings, like the commentaries Miao--tsung and Yuan-chung as well as the Commentary on the Amitabha Sutra by Chu-hung, I finally came to realize that the Buddha-Recitation samadhi is truly the supreme jewel. Only then did I become utterly focused on reciting the Buddha-name -- wild horses couldn't drag me away from it.

吾友去病，久事净业，欲令此经大旨，辞不繁而炳著，请余为述要解。余欲普与法界有情同生极乐，理不可却。举笔于丁亥九月二十有七，脱稿于十月初五，**凡九日告成。**

所愿一句一字，咸作资粮。一见一闻，同阶不退。

**信疑皆植道种，赞谤等归解脱。仰唯诸佛菩萨摄受证明，同学友人随喜加被。**

西有道人满益智旭阁笔故跋，时年四十有九。

A friend of mine who was a long-time Pure Land practitioner wanted to make the great meaning of the Amitabha Sutra clearly apparent in straightforward language, so he asked me to set forth an explanation of the essentials of the sutra. My wish is to enable all sentient beings in the world to be born together in the Pure Land. I could not refuse to serve a good cause, so I set to work writing a commentary on the sutra in late autumn, **1647, and completed the draft nine days later.**

My hope is that every line and every word of this commentary will serve as "life provisions" for Pure Land practitioners, and that everyone who reads or hears about it will progress to the level where there is no falling back.

May those who have faith in the Pure Land and those who are in doubt about it both plant seeds of enlightenment. May those who praise the Pure Land and those who slander it alike reach liberation. I hope that this commentary is accepted and approved by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. I hope my fellow students and friends to add more or protect the work as they like.

*Written by Ou-i, a man of the Path, age forty-nine.*