

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH  
Because Beliefs Have Consequences**

**BY TED MORINO  
SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF**

**Q: Why is it important to distinguish correct teachings from incorrect teachings in Buddhism?**

A: One of Nichiren Daishonin's greatest endeavors was to clearly distinguish between correct and incorrect teachings. Before the Daishonin took on this revolutionary task, Buddhist sects in Japan colluded with one another with the attitude "We are all Buddhists regardless of the differences in what we teach." They were satisfied with this pseudo-unity and hid their doctrinal shortcomings.

Sadly, this non-discerning attitude reflected the priests' indifference toward the happiness of the people. Strictly speaking, the priests of these sects had no genuine sense of responsibility to enable people to establish true happiness. Rather, they were more interested in preaching to and receiving material offerings from lay believers, and in their own secular prosperity. These priests didn't want people to develop self-reliant faith because it would threaten their *raison d'être*. And they didn't care whether people would apply Buddhist teachings to daily life. So many Buddhist priests said what sounded sweet to the ears of their followers instead of elucidating the essence of Buddhism.

Buddhist sects that do not directly enable people to attain Buddhahood are incorrect, Nichiren Daishonin asserted. He demonstrated that people attain Buddhahood by basing their lives upon the True Law, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — not through the "special powers" or intercession of priests. In "On the Chanting of the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra," he states, "You should discern what is right or wrong through the doctrines expounded, not through the teacher's special talents or occult powers" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 16). Priests felt so threatened by the Daishonin's clear-cut teachings that they enlisted the Japanese government authorities in a concerted effort to quiet and even persecute the Daishonin to death and to harass his followers.

In the Daishonin's day, the True Law was buried under piles of distorted doctrine and superstition, which the priests used to attract followers and enjoy their submissiveness. To combat the entrenched hypocrisy of these religious authorities, the Daishonin was unyielding in his criticism, tirelessly pointing out the negative influences that unenlightened priests exerted in people's lives. In this same spirit, the SGI has taken a stand against the Nikken sect's distortions of the Daishonin's teachings. Because of selfish motives, Nikken has lapsed into doctrinal corruption, favoring form over substance, obedience over self-reliance, shallowness over depth, falsehood over truth.

Beliefs have consequences, and, ultimately, we each choose what we believe. By honing our ability to distinguish correct teachings from incorrect — and by discussing the teachings with others — we connect ourselves with the heritage and humanity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

**WT**