

NEW TEMPLE ISSUE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
HOW CAN WE SAY FOR SURE THAT THE SGI IS RIGHT?
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The SGI's position is that Nichiren Shoshu's wrong. And Nichiren Shoshu's position is that the SGI's wrong. How can we explain that the SGI *is* right — beyond just saying that the temple's wrong? What evidence do we have to support what we say?

The real question underlying this is whether the SGI or Nichiren Shoshu is correctly practicing Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism. Which side is right about what the Dai-shonin's Buddhism teaches? How do we know this for sure?

The answer can only be found in one place: the Dai-shonin's writings. Once we've studied the Daishonin's writings thoroughly, we can confidently say that the SGI is right. The SGI is teaching a Buddhist practice completely in accord with what the Daishonin writes. And we can cite quote after quote from his writings to support this.

For example, the SGI believes, exactly as the Daishonin writes, that all people are equal. All people are essentially Buddhas.

The Daishonin states in "Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" that "Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless aeons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 22).

In "Letter to Niike," he says that "attaining Buddhahood is nothing extraordinary.... Shakyamuni stated, 'At the start I pledged to make all people perfectly equal to me, without any distinction between us.' Therefore, it is not difficult to become a Buddha" (MW-1, 259).

And in "The Fourteen Slanders," he says, "Bodhisattva Fukyo of old said that all people have the Buddha nature and that if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood. He further stated that to slight a person is to slight the Buddha himself. Thus, his practice was to revere all people" (MW-3, 207-08).

The Daishonin's writings are full of passages like these that declare we are Buddhas. The SGI puts these passages into practice, sharing this message with the world.

Nichiren Shoshu's message, by contrast, is that we have to have priests — especially the high priest — to attain Buddhahood. We are incapable of doing it on our own, incomplete without that priestly intervention. But this idea is found nowhere in the Daishonin's writings. It's at odds with the Daishonin's writings, almost all of which were written to ordinary people, not to priests. Yet the priests suggest that Nikken is the only real Buddha, that he's the only one who can really understand this Buddhism, that ordinary people never can.

But we can, and we do! In "The True Entity of Life," the Daishonin says that "if you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (MW-1, 93). Of course, we do not become of the same mind as him just by being SGI members or just by chanting. It's when we have the same reverence for the people that he did — the same passion that he did for introducing all people to the liberation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo — that we become "of the same mind" as him. The priests have separated themselves from the Daishonin's mind by rigidly sticking to their misconception that they are "above" us.

The temple issue calls on us to move closer and closer to the core of this Buddhism, to reverence for people. Closer and closer to the people, the one and only reason that the Daishonin founded this Buddhism. Closer and closer to the truth of this Buddhism.

Two in a series

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