

**TEMPLE ISSUE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
**WHY HAVE SGI MEMBERS BEEN EXCHANGING THEIR GOHONZON?**  
**BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

For the last five years, many SGI members have been exchanging Gohonzon inscribed by Nikken for Gohonzon inscribed by the 26th high priest, Nichikan, who lived in the 18th century. Why have they been doing so?

A little history is necessary to explain: Once Nikken became high priest in 1979, he began inscribing the Gohonzon for new members of the SGI. Until 1991, the SGI happily propagated the Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon throughout the world.

But when Nikken excommunicated the SGI in 1991, started altering Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings and began propagating his delusions worldwide, Nichiren Shoshu separated from the mainstream of the Daishonin's Buddhism and became its own, new religion. The SGI continued to correctly carry out the teachings of the Daishonin and the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shoshu did not.

In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin says that the Gohonzon is "the banner of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 211). Conferring the Gohonzon is one way that this Buddhism can spread. Today, the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon is "the banner of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra" of the SGI, which is practicing Buddhism correctly.

To practice this Buddhism correctly means to practice it with the same mind or heart as the Daishonin. Of course, we do not get the same spirit as him just by joining the SGI or receiving the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. It's only when we have the spirit to educate ourselves and others about the Daishonin's true philosophy—when we are determined to speak the truth of this Law for all people's sake—that we can say we are practicing correctly.

The point is that this is what many people feel the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon represents today: the correct practice. It is the banner behind which the correct practice is being taught. Only in the SGI is this spirit taught. Only in the SGI is this spirit put into practice.

Nikken's excommunication of all SGI members in 1991 and again in 1997 made it clear that he had no desire to save people; excommunicating these millions of people, he said at the time, guaranteed them a trip to hell. From 1991 to 1993, no one could receive the Gohonzon from Nichiren Shoshu unless they promised to part with the SGI. In 1993, reformist priests thus came up with the idea of the SGI starting to confer the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. (Nichikan is known as a high priest who brought the Daishonin's spirit back to the priesthood at a time when it had been forgotten.)

First, new SGI members received the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon. Soon, there were many requests from other members to exchange their Nikken-transcribed Gohonzon for the Nichikan-transcribed; this began in 1994.

There's a lesson to this history: The temple issue is not the case of two different organizations both practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism and simply not being able to get along with each other. It's the case of two organizations that both say they are practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism—but one is not. Again, Nichiren Shoshu has become its own religion, one that actually has nothing to do with the Daishonin's Buddhism. This is why the SGI sometimes calls it the Nikken sect.

*Four in a series*