

CHIEF PRIEST YUMU YAMANE'S LETTER OF PROTEST TO NIKKEN A FOURTH TEMPLE LEAVES NICHIREN SHOSHU THIS YEAR

While more than 10,000 temple members have resolved in the past few months to disassociate themselves from their local Nichiren Shoshu temples in Japan, another temple has seceded from Nichiren Shoshu. On Nov. 30 in Oguchi City, Kagoshima Prefecture, Kyushu, Renshu-ji temple and its chief priest, Yumu Yamane (once assigned to attend to High Priest Nikken), announced that they were breaking away from Nichiren Shoshu. This move was supported by a unanimous decision between Mr. Yamane and the temple's main lay representatives. In his letter to Nikken, Mr. Yamane explains that he resolved to leave Nichiren Shoshu to maintain the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of this Buddhism, and Nikko Shonin, the founder of Taiseki-ji.

In "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage," the Daishonin, the founder of this Buddhism, states: "Now, in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*, it has been twenty-seven years since I first proclaimed this teaching at Seicho-ji temple. It was at the hour of the horse [noon] on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253), cyclical sign *mizunoto-ushi*, on the southern side of the image hall in the Shobutsu-bo of Seicho-ji temple in Tojo Village. Tojo is now a district, but was then a part of Nagasa District of Awa Province. Here is located what was once the second, but is now the country's most important center founded by Minamoto no Yoritomo, the general of the right, to supply provisions for the shrine of the Sun Goddess. The Buddha fulfilled the purpose of his advent in a little over forty years, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai took about thirty years, and the Great Teacher Dengyo, some twenty years. I have spoken repeatedly of the indescribable persecutions they suffered during those years. For me it took twenty-seven years, and the great persecutions I face during this period are well known to you all" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 996).

It is the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism that the Daishonin inscribed to fulfill the ultimate purpose of his advent in this world. However, it was recently revealed that you, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, once asserted that the Dai-Gohonzon is a forgery. Five months have passed since this fact was revealed. The two notices that the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office issued in the meantime to clarify its position were not convincing. The instruction given out from you on Sept. 18 to all priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu made it clear that you, using your power as high priest, were attempting to put an end to this issue unilaterally and in an authoritarian manner.

Under such circumstances, it is apparent that just following you obediently has nothing to do with the legitimate faith of Nichiren Shoshu, which is based upon the Dai-Gohonzon and stems from the spirit of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin. I am convinced that parting with the current Nichiren Shoshu is the correct thing to do, since the sect is deviating more and more from its founders' hearts, with its current structure where all powers center around you. In the final analysis, you have no faith and are deeply attached to your personal emotions and views. Hence, I have resolved to support Renshu-ji in severing its ties with Nichiren Shoshu. In leaving Nichiren Shoshu, I want to share my personal sentiments

with you.

Needless to say, the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism is the most fundamental object of devotion in this school. We should never have the slightest doubt about its integrity.

However, it was revealed through the memo taken down by Mr. Jitoku Kawabe — which was introduced in July in *Domei Tsushin*, the organ of the Association of Priests Concerned About Nichiren Shoshu and Devoted to Protecting the Law — that you, High Priest Nikken, remarked, sacrilegiously, in February 1978, when you were Study Department chief, that “the Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism is counterfeit. I have found this out through various forms of analysis.”

The contents of this memo were indeed shocking and hard to believe for both priests and believers of Nichiren Shoshu. The two notices issued by the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office, in an attempt to clarify the matter, contained inconsistent information, which necessitated that you write further about this matter. Under these circumstances, your words of guidance were issued on Sept. 18.

But in your guidance, you failed to fully explain practical questions on the meaning of “various forms of analysis,” the crucial part of the Kawabe Memo. Questions on who examined the authenticity of the Dai-Gohonzon, when and how they did it, and why exactly they asserted it was counterfeit were never addressed. Not only that, according to your guidance, your meeting with Mr. Kawabe in February 1978 was for the purpose of refuting the various allegations against the Dai-Gohonzon — but how you refuted the allegations was not mentioned at all. You failed in your guidance to touch upon why Mr. Kawabe did not include your words of refutation in his memo. This is puzzling!

In the end, your guidance only resulted in increasing our doubts regarding your integrity. We can sense in your guidance your authoritarian, deceitful nature.

The Dai-Gohonzon came about when the Daishonin sensed the time had come for him to inscribe the ultimate object of devotion for the happiness of all humanity in the Latter Day of the Law; he had just witnessed a great example of faith in the lives of the Atsuhara farmers. In “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” the Daishonin states, “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” (WND, 736). The Daishonin’s great compassion is the foundation of this Buddhism. As one of his disciples, I have always been asking myself whether I am living up to his spirit.

The fact is, though, that the most responsible person for protecting the Dai-Gohonzon, you, the high priest, have asserted that it is a forgery. I have to say this: You do not have the spirit that the Daishonin had.

I was dispatched to France in 1992 for about four-and-a-half years as a Nichiren Shoshu communication coordinator. Though my understanding of Buddhism was still shallow, I went to France with an ambition to promote kosen-rufu there. However, through my experience in France, I began to see how difficult this will be. Nichiren Shoshu will not be able to fulfill the Daishonin’s mandate of kosen-rufu using the means it now rigidly advocates. I can say this with absolute confidence.

In “The Properties of Rice,” the Daishonin states, “I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province” (WND, 1117). Also, in Buddhism there is the principle of *zuiho bini*, which means adapting the precepts to the locality. What is most important at the time of world kosen-rufu is how we expound the Law in a way grounded in a good

Title: A Fourth Temple Leaves Nichiren Shoshu This Year

Subject: World Tribune 12/17/99 n.3273 p.10 WT991217p10 Oguchi City, Kagoshima, Kyushu, Japan 11/30/99

Author: Yumu Yamane

Keywords: 11/30/99 City Fourth Japan Kagoshima Kyushu Leaves Nichiren Oguchi Priesthood Secede Shoshu Temples Yamane Year Yumu

understanding of the character, culture and customs of the people of each country, in a way that lets people grasp the essence of Buddhism in easy-to-understand language. Just as the rain enriches the land and causes flowers to bloom and fruits to appear, the correct propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism that teaches equality and elucidates the dignity of each individual will enable the blossoming of the unique character of each citizen of France, where respect for individuality is cherished.

While studying French and Buddhism at a college in France, I made every possible effort to convince French people of the validity of Nichiren Shoshu's teachings. However, it was no easy job to expound Buddhism in France, which is basically a Catholic country.

At one point, since things did not go as well as I hoped, I sought advice from Nichiren Shoshu Overseas Bureau Chief Obayashi. His response was impersonal, dispassionate and deeply disappointing. He said: "Convey the doctrines of Nichiren Shoshu of Japan exactly as they are explained in Japan. You don't have to make any effort to convey our teaching in a manner that makes it easier for native people to understand it."

Behind this remark lies the premise that only the high priest is allowed to interpret and digest the Daishonin's teachings. This means that independent minds or democratic rules do not exist in Nichiren Shoshu. In other words, the current Nichiren Shoshu only produces the type of people who cannot think or act for themselves. It is generating people who only act the way they are told.

In other words, Nichiren Shoshu only permits rigid adherence to its difficult doctrines and does not tolerate any conscientious explanation of its teachings that would enable people in each locale to grasp the Daishonin's Buddhism, which can enrich their spirituality. This rigidity in Nichiren Shoshu prevents the Daishonin's Buddhism, supposed to be a world religion, from spreading widely in France. The reality is it is now only accepted by a small number of people in France, many of whom are Japanese. In no way can world kosen-rufu be achieved with the current mentality of Nichiren Shoshu.

In dispatching priests overseas, Nichiren Shoshu does not educate or train them beforehand about the condition and culture of the country they are assigned to. Such a training program—or even the mentality to think that such a system could be important—does not exist in Nichiren Shoshu. Last year in Argentina, Mr. Dorei Ito, a priest dispatched there by Nichiren Shoshu, remarked in the sect's organ that Mother Teresa, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, embodies the function of the devil of mercy. He thus received strict punishment from the Argentine authorities. [He was deported.] This was bound to happen, since the current Nichiren Shoshu dispatches priests without any education about practical matters of the countries they are going to stay in. This incident in Argentina reveals the current mentality of the priesthood: It can't appreciate what is universally appreciated; it can't appreciate anything beyond the barrier of doctrinal differences.

The fundamental evil cause that has created shallowness and closed-mindedness in the current Nichiren Shoshu lies in your distorted character, that which prompts you to regard as slanderous "singing 'Ode to Joy' in German" or "counting years based on the birth year of Jesus Christ."

Putting aside doctrinal matters, when the Pope, the leader of the Catholic Church, a world religion, visits a country, he respects its culture and uses its language as much as possible.

What about you, High Priest Nikken? You not only ignore the spiritual heritage and culture of any country you visit, but you force upon everyone there a strange form of morality that you are attached to, a frame of mind based on the feudalistic lord-subject rela-

Title: A Fourth Temple Leaves Nichiren Shoshu This Year

Subject: World Tribune 12/17/99 n.3273 p.10 WT991217p10 Oguchi City, Kagoshima, Kyushu, Japan 11/30/99

Author: Yumu Yamane

Keywords: 11/30/99 City Fourth Japan Kagoshima Kyushu Leaves Nichiren Oguchi Priesthood Secede Shoshu Temples Yamane Year Yumu

tionship prevalent in the Edo period of Japan, 300 years ago. Your mentality advocates that chief priests blindly follow the high priest, and lay believers blindly follow the chief priests.

When I was in France, the Cold War ended, and the Berlin Wall fell. Gone with the Berlin Wall went various rigid institutions of European society and the spiritual wall that existed in the people's minds. An atmosphere of freedom and equality now permeates Europe.

In contrast, you, the high priest, and Nichiren Shoshu did not send out any hope-filled message to the world. All you did was build more walls, which is reflected in the school's position that you can't get benefit unless you participate in pilgrimages, that you can't get benefit unless you make offerings to the priesthood. Not only that, you attempted to strengthen these walls to contain our believers within them, thus stripping them of freedom and equality. What foolishness!

This indicates that you don't care about the happiness of each believer of each country. The essence of the matter is that you don't understand the crucial point of faith—that world kosen-rufu can only become a reality with our selfless dedication to the practice of faith. Not only the lack of an adequate education system in Nichiren Shoshu but you yourself are functioning as the fundamental obstacle against the progress of global kosen-rufu. You must realize this.

With the 21st century just around the corner, there are a mountain of problems that the world needs to solve. What constitutes the basis of all these problems is the issue of human morality. For this very reason, religious leaders are required to send out valuable messages to society and take appropriate leadership for positive causes.

Taking responsibility in this regard accords with the spirit of our founder, the Daishonin, who taught and spread the Law and, moreover, fought the ultimate battle for the happiness of the people by remonstrating with the lord of the nation.

In contrast, you have no intention whatsoever to take courageous action as displayed by the Daishonin. Even worse, you don't show any compassion to others. You close your eyes to society and the world, only pursuing the happiness of yourself and your family. Small-mindedness and self-righteousness occupy your heart and mind. How clearly you show that Nichiren Shoshu will be out of touch with the changing times and will fail to survive in the 21st century.

The shortcomings of the current, abnormal establishment of Nichiren Shoshu, where all the decision-making powers are in the hands of one individual, you, High Priest Nikken, are apparent to us in Japan. Nichiren Shoshu's ills were manifest in the sudden transference of the Dai-Gohonzon from the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple), without notification to the lay leader of Taiseki-ji or its administrative manager and the ensuing destruction of the Sho-Hondo, which was once proclaimed by High Priest Nittatsu as "the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, the true Eagle Peak and the true Buddha land."

Your authority has continued to expand for the past several years due to your scheming. Nowadays, you can decide the fate of all priests, their families and even lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu.

The greater your power gets, the more cult tendencies Nichiren Shoshu develops, which concerns many of us. And since you are not the type of person who should be in this position in the first place, it is certain that Nichiren Shoshu will roll down the hill to self-destruction.

I returned to Japan in the fall of 1996. I was immediately saddened to see temple mem-

bers speak ill of the Soka Gakkai at their meetings and only pursue immediate benefit in faith.

We embrace the profound Buddhism of the Daishonin, but how our fellow temple members behave defies its profundity. Of this I am deeply ashamed. I really feel a great shame for a lack of virtue on my part, too. However, the person most responsible for this state of Nichiren Shoshu, where the Daishonin's Buddhism's greatness is not duly respected, and the existence of believers is appreciated only in terms of numbers, is you, High Priest Nikken. All you did was force numerical goals upon priests and believers for the amounts of offerings and the numbers of pilgrimage participants. After all, you took away the laity's freedom to think. Your behavior must not be tolerated. I feel a strong indignation toward your conduct.

Renshu-ji temple is the 42nd temple built in the Soka Gakkai's project to contribute 200 temples to Nichiren Shoshu after you took office as the 67th high priest. This temple came into existence thanks to the sincere donations of the Soka Gakkai members in Kagoshima. I am convinced that working together with the Soka Gakkai members from now on to propagate the Daishonin's teachings is the correct way to live my life based on the Law.

While I take a series of actions necessary to secede from Nichiren Shoshu, I insist that you take responsibility, as you stand in the way of kosen-rufu's advancement. That said, I request your earliest resignation from the position of high priest.

Nov. 30, 1999

Yumu Yamane

Chief Priest of Renshu-ji temple

To Mr. Nikken Abe

Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shoshu