

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Everyone's Equal

I was recently encouraged by an article in the Jan. 24 issue about the conferences at the new Florida Nature and Culture Center. Especially by what Mr. Zaitso said about the reasons why they were so successful, that "here there are no leaders or members. Here we are all just human beings. Here everyone learns something. There is no one with all the answers."

I personally believe that one's position in the organization is transitory and is not relative to what degree of faith or amount of human revolution one has achieved. I have never been encouraged just by someone's position but always by their friendship. As we are all equal in front of the Gohonzon in actuality, I am happy that we are moving towards equality in our practice.

— GREGORY KING, Clearlake Oaks, Calif.

More on Makiguchi

Having read the Dec. 13, 1996, letter from Eric Freedman Dec. 16 and also letters written in response to it in the Jan. 17 issue, I felt compelled to have some input....

My understanding of Eric's letter is not that he "has much to learn about the spirit of pioneers of this organization" as Jim Johannsen writes, nor is he trying to project the "idea that President Makiguchi's bravado and selflessness are some accident of Buddhist history that any number of those with 'shared beliefs' would emulate," as written by Maurice Patrick McCarthy.

When Eric wrote "Let's make sure..." my feeling is he said this because of his concern that the words "die to insure" could be misinterpreted by those who are not yet well grounded in the study of the Gosho and still struggle with the transition from being Christians to Buddhists. The Christian teaching says that Jesus died for our sins. As the Baptist preacher used to say when I was attending church, "He died *once* for *all*." This teaching was puzzling for me because it gave the members of his congregation the idea that Jesus had paid for their sins through dying on the cross. In the mind of his congregation, all they had to do was call on the name of Jesus and all would be forgiven. There was no incentive to change their lives....

LaVora Perry wrote: "I am only guessing that the concept of a person dying for another's sins is Mr. Freedman's real sticking point, because he didn't mention it in his letter." Eric wrote that "died 'for us'...at least to me, brings visions of Jesus Christ on the cross." The symbol and the teaching mean the same: died for our sins. Christianity teaches that all people are sinners, that only Jesus Christ has an enlightened nature. Buddhism teaches that all people can bring about their enlightened or Buddha nature.

Jim Johannsen wrote that "to deny our debt of gratitude to Mr. Makiguchi for maintaining the pure heritage of this organization is the epitome of selfishness." Eric wrote that "he [Makiguchi] has become a symbol and example of strong faith and conviction in one's beliefs" and that "President Makiguchi died in prison standing up for beliefs that we all share..." My interpretation of these statements by Eric is this: The fact that he shares the same belief and faith as President Makiguchi is proof of his highest respect and, furthermore, isn't that what the inheritance of the Law is all about? What better way is there to pay a debt of gratitude?

Let us look with the eye of the Buddha and reason with the wisdom of the Buddha

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before we jump to conclusions that may injure the heart of a Buddha. I am happy that Eric pointed this out and that I have had a chance and the time to respond. Clarification, interpretation, whatever it takes — let us continue together. This organization is sustained and built on this type of communication.

— OLIVIA MEADOWS, Frederick, Md.

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