

Know the Difference: Two Different Religions
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New members joining the youth division today may not know about the temple issue — even though simply by joining they are becoming, retroactively, “excommunicated” Buddhists. Whether we are new members or not, we owe it to ourselves to periodically reexamine the basics of the temple issue, its history and the questions it raises, which is what this series will do.

At first, studying the temple issue may seem to have little to do with us. To the many SGI members who have studied the six-year-old conflict, though, it’s been a great clarification process. Learning through the Nikken sect’s example what Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is *not*, what this Buddhism *is* becomes much clearer. What could have more to do with our lives as Buddhists?

Nichiren Daishonin taught that any person can attain enlightenment through his or her efforts, just as Shakyamuni did in ancient India. In fact, in “The Izu Exile,” Nichiren writes that “the Lord Shakyamuni...is none other than each of us” (*Letters of Nichiren*, p. 409).

Nichiren’s Buddhism promotes a brand of humanism that insists each of us has the tremendous self-sufficiency of Buddhahood inside. This idea, however, the Nikken sect has rejected, stating on many occasions that an intermediary — the priest — is necessary between us and the Mystic Law.

Since 1991 the SGI and the Nikken sect have gone in different directions, teaching two different philosophies. Obviously, as SGI members, it’s important for us to be clear on the difference.

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