

STANDS TO REASON: Why Hate Buddhism?

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The Devil of the Sixth Heaven hates the Buddha's Law... (“Conversation Between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 119)

This 1265 letter, recipient unknown, is written in the Q-and-A format that Nichiren Daishonin often used. An unenlightened man meets a sage, ostensibly the Daishonin; they talk back and forth about this Buddhism, and, in the end, the man is convinced by the sage to try practicing.

After the man has made this decision, the sage asks him to practice for his whole life, warning him how hard it will be — about the “devils and demons” that will surely try to stop him (MW-5, 119). (This is similar to the Daishonin’s warning I wrote about previously, that from the day you take faith, you should be prepared to face powerful enemies.)

One of the points the sage makes in this final encouragement/warning is that “the Devil of the Sixth Heaven hates the Buddha’s Law...” (MW-5, 119). This is another evocation of the psychology of Buddhism’s powerful enemies — why they want to destroy Buddhism, why they want to stop us from practicing. It’s not merely that they want to abuse the Law, as I discussed last time, but that they *hate* the Law. They hate Buddhism.

As simple as this is, this also makes a lot of sense. They’re enemies of Buddhism because they hate it.

The revered Ritsu priest Ryokan was a good example of this. I’ve talked about Ryokan using the Ikegami brothers’ father to get at the Daishonin and conspiring with the Pure Land sect to accuse the Daishonin’s followers of violent crimes Ryokan himself instigated. It was, obviously, hate that he felt toward this Buddhism. Where did it come from?

In 1271, when Ryokan prayed for rain at the government’s urging, the Daishonin challenged him: If it rained within seven days, he’d become Ryokan’s disciple, he announced. The Daishonin meant to show society that Ryokan’s Buddhism didn’t work, and, well, it didn’t — in seven days it never rained once. Ryokan was humiliated, so it’s easy to see, knowing his arrogant nature, why he then came to hate the Daishonin’s teachings with such a passion (not to mention the Daishonin himself).

There will always be people who will hate this Buddhism, wanting to be greater than it — and who will hate us as its practitioners. Nikken is today’s example, but in the future there’s sure to be more of his and Ryokan’s type. While this Buddhism allows us to set ourselves free, truly free, that’s not what Nikken, Ryokan and company want. They hate for people to be free or to think for themselves. “Let us think for you!” they cry. “Don’t practice that Buddhism! Practice *our* Buddhism!” If we want to be free, the price we must pay is to deal with people like this.

The starting point for this freedom is always, of course, our inner reformation. Recently, in the Philippines, SGI President Ikeda shared how “all meaningful action must start from the inner life, its exploration and development, and the resultant transformation of individuals.” The internal world thus becomes action. Or, our inner freedom grows to where it *must* be shared, to where it must be expressed in the outer world as words, ideas, our ways of living. We cannot, after a point, hide how we feel — that would be impossible.

Once that freedom’s put out there, once it’s set in motion, it’s sure to meet its enemies: people who hate freedom, who hate the Law.

There’s no way around them when your destination is freedom.

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