

STANDS TO REASON: Doing Nothing Is Dangerous

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If one sees a misguided priest sending others into hell with his evil teachings and fails to reproach that priest and expose his errors, then he himself is an enemy of Buddhism. (“Letter of Petition From Yorimoto,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 216)

Yorimoto of this 1277 letter’s title was Shijo Kingo (his full name being Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Zaemon-no-jo Yorimoto!). The Daishonin sent this letter to Lord Ema, Shijo Kingo’s boss, petitioning for his understanding, writing as if he were Shijo Kingo.

I mentioned previously how 1277 was a crucial year in the Daishonin’s life (see the July 17 *World Tribune*): Some of his staunchest supporters were being persecuted for their allegiance to him. And so it was with Shijo Kingo. Lord Ema had heard false accusations from fellow samurai jealous of Shijo Kingo; he had supposedly disrupted a debate between a Tendai sect adherent and the Daishonin’s follower Sammi-bo Nichigyō.

Thus, as if he were Shijo Kingo, the Daishonin assures Lord Ema in this letter that he has done nothing wrong — and takes the opportunity to fully explain the stance that this Buddhism takes toward slanderous forms of Buddhism.

In other words, the Daishonin explains here why he and his followers would even think of debating with or reproaching priests of other sects. The Daishonin, in giving this explanation, makes a bold statement: In failing to reproach a misguided priest, you become an enemy of Buddhism. In failing to reproach, you become anti-Buddhist.

For eight years, the SGI has been protesting the new teachings of Nikken, relentlessly so. Considering that the SGI membership is much larger than the temple membership, this may seem to some like bullying on the SGI’s part. But trying to re-guide the misguided has nothing to do with the number of people on either of the two sides; it has everything to do with what is Buddhism and what is not.

The SGI protests against Nichiren Shoshu because, plain and simple, it’s now a misguided sect seeking to misguide people. It only pretends to be Buddhist. If the SGI had not done anything when Nikken started to introduce his un-Buddhist teachings in 1991, the SGI would have become an enemy of Buddhism in the Daishonin’s eyes.

Buddhism is all about engaging the misguided, the confused, the suffering, in frank conversation about the true way to happiness. It’s about trying to save people from the hell that their following of erroneous teachings creates for their lives.

To ignore the temple issue is to forget about many, many people. These are, needless to say, *real* people. Their suffering is real.

Think of all the innocent people who might be influenced by Nikken in the future, like all our fellow Americans who do not yet know either the SGI or the temple!

When I look at photographs of family members or friends, I sometimes wonder if any of them will ever meet up with the temple. If I forget that all these loved ones are potential future temple members and think that I don’t have to tell them anything about the temple issue...then, I think, I become their enemy.

The same goes for all those people out there whom I don’t know, all those people yet to meet the SGI or the temple, Nikken’s potential future audience. If I forget that this temple issue is about real people and their real suffering — about putting a stop to that suffering — I think that I then become the last thing that I would want to be: an enemy of Buddhism.

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