

**TEMPLE ISSUE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
SHOULD WE IGNORE NICHIREN SHOSHU?
BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

After Nichiren Shoshu announced last year that the Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo) was to be destroyed, the SGI protested. We could have paid no attention to this move specially designed to anger our members — and to the many other annoying things that the priests have done in recent years, from cutting down the cherry trees to excommunicating all of us twice.

Why validate the priests by making a big deal about the mean-spirited actions that they take?

The SGI has chosen not to remain silent out of a deep respect for the SGI membership, to protect all the SGI members. The Lotus Sutra says that “[if you see a person who accepts and upholds this sutra,] you should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha” (The Lotus Sutra, p. 324). This is the basic spirit of the SGI. To not respect and support sincere practitioners of the Lotus Sutra — to instead persecute them as Nichiren Shoshu has done — is the very definition of slander in this Buddhism.

One lesson of the temple issue, then, is that this Buddhism takes a strong stance on respecting people. When great, wonderful people like the SGI members are being disrespected, we have to do something, say something. As Buddhists, we can’t just ignore that this is going on.

While Buddhism seeks to embrace all people, believing all of us equal, all of us potentially Buddhas, it also declares that those (especially those in positions of power) who abuse the people should be countered. As the Daishonin puts it: “[My disciples] are like an infant emperor wrapped in swaddling clothes, or a great dragon who has just been born. Do not despise them! Do not look on them with contempt!” (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 6, p. 225).

Throughout the Buddhist scriptures and the Daishonin’s writings, there are many examples of ill-intentioned influential people who looked down on good people. In the Lotus Sutra, there is Devadatta; the Daishonin had Hei no Saemon; today, Nikken and his fellow priests resemble these men.

All of these figures play an essential role in Buddhism, showing us the road not to take; their bad examples are an education for us.

You have to wonder if what’s right and what’s wrong would be as clear as they are without these examples. In fact, the Daishonin writes that “Devadatta more than anyone else proved the validity of Shakyamuni’s teaching. In this age as well, it is not one’s friends but one’s enemies who assist his progress” (MW-1, 186).

The appearance of these enemies also accords with the Lotus Sutra’s prediction that as the Law spreads, those who are leading the way for it are sure to be attacked. Nichiren Shoshu’s actions are one proof, then, of the SGI being on the right track. The temple issue is something for us to be very happy about. At the time of the Atsuhara Persecution, the Daishonin writes: “From a mundane view, I, Nichiren, am the poorest person in Japan, but in light of Buddhism, I am the wealthiest person in the world. When I consider that this is all because the time is right, I am overwhelmed with joy and cannot restrain my tears” (MW-3, 296). We can experience the same joy now because of the current situation.

Title: Should We Ignore Nichiren Shoshu?

Subject: World Tribune 08/06/99 n.3254 p.2 WT990806p02

Author: Jeff Farr

Keywords: Answers Farr Ignore Issue Jeff Nichiren Questions Shoshu Should Temple Tribune World

The SGI has introduced the offensive acts of Nichiren Shoshu to the world not because we're just miffed, not because we've given in to anger and emotionalism, but because we have this joy: We are facing today what was predicted 2,500 years ago by Shakyamuni.

Based on our respect for all people, we'll continue to show the world who we are and what we're contributing — and how hard we're working for all people's happiness.

Six in a series

Title: Should We Ignore Nichiren Shoshu?
Subject: World Tribune 08/06/99 n.3254 p.2 WT990806p02
Author: Jeff Farr
Keywords: Answers Farr Ignore Issue Jeff Nichiren Questions Shoshu Should Temple Tribune World