

## **A CHIEF PRIEST SPEAKS OUT 'LETTER EXPLAINING THE REASONS FOR SECESSION'**

Nichiren Daishonin states in his "Letter to Lord Ohta and Others": "If I, Nichiren, do not say this, fearing how society will react, I will become an enemy of Buddhism. Chang-an remonstrates with Buddhist scholars of future generations: 'One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender is a voice-hearer who defends the Buddha's teachings, a true disciple of the Buddha. One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent. Those who reproach offenders are disciples of the Buddha. But those who do not oust offenders are betraying the Buddha's teachings.' Since I have taken these words of Chang-an to heart, I will stake my life on scrutinizing this matter" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1003).

Ever since I became a priest at age 31 in 1986, I have been part of the lower ranks of the Daishonin's disciples. Over the years, I have devoted myself to praying for the achievement of the great desire of kosen-rufu and spreading the Law to the best of my ability, although I am a man meager in virtue and heavy with defilement.

However, knowing and hearing of scores of evil doings by Chief Administrator Nikken Abe [the high priest is also the chief administrator], I have gradually developed a suspicion I cannot ignore about where the correct Law and teaching really exist.

And it was revealed last month that Chief Administrator Nikken Abe, appallingly, had once asserted his belief that the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism is a forgery. This incident inspired me to directly reproach the evil of Chief Administrator Abe and the current sect. The following is part of my personal feelings, as Zencho-ji now departs from the Nikken sect.

I was astonished at the report in the *Association Newsletter* of the Association of the Priests Concerned About Nichiren Shoshu and Devoted To Protecting the Law that Chief Administrator Nikken once asserted that the Dai-Gohonzon is a forgery. According to this publication, the chief administrator's outrageous opinion was recorded in a memo taken by Reverend Jitoku Kawabe, chief priest of Nissho-ji temple, after he met with Chief Administrator Nikken. The memo discloses the astounding fact that Chief Administrator Nikken had handwriting analysis done on the Dai-Gohonzon using various methods and came to the conclusion that it is counterfeit.

Needless to say, the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, inscribed on Oct. 12, 1279, fulfilled the purpose of the advent of the Daishonin, the founder of this Buddhism. It should be the basis of faith of Taiseki-ji, the head temple.

Concerning the supremacy of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's successor, calls it the "Dai-Gohonzon of 1279 endowed upon myself, Nikko" ("The Transfer Document from Nikko to Nichimoku"). The 26th high priest Nichikan, also states, "The Dai-Gohonzon of 1279, or the Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, is the ultimate Gohonzon of all. Its inscription signifies the ultimate of all reasons for the founder's advent. It is the supreme basis of the Three Great Secret Laws. Therefore, it is the true object of devotion for all humanity in the whole world" ("Exegesis on 'The True Object of Worship'").

However, Chief Administrator Nikken asserted that this supreme Dai-Gohonzon is counterfeit. This is a totally erroneous view — a view deeply connected with the tarnished

legacy of the five senior priests who betrayed the Daishonin after his death.

No high priest has ever committed such grave slander in the history of Nichiren Shoshu. I can't fathom the depth of anger on the part of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin in this regard.

Yet no explanation has come from Chief Administrator Nikken about this, despite how significant this matter is. If the report in *Association News* is false and groundless, the chief administrator himself should present clear proof of the report's falsity and thereby clear up any doubt within the sect. The fact that he can't provide a convincing explanation means that Chief Administrator Nikken tacitly admits the righteousness of the *Association News* report.

I thus have become convinced that the justice of the Daishonin and the pure current of faith no longer exist in the sect led by Chief Administrator Nikken. Now that this is the case, I will follow Nikko Shonin's admonition to "not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and propounds his own views" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

It is my duty as a Nichiren Shoshu priest to take the erroneous teachings of Chief Administrator Nikken severely to task. This is the fundamental reason why I have resolved to leave the sect.

I cannot forget what happened in the twilight one evening last April: Chief Administrator Nikken suddenly carried out his plan to transfer the Dai-Gohonzon from the Grand Main Temple just as a thief does his business in the night.

I was told that even many senior priests of the head temple had not been informed of the transfer ahead of time. We, many chief priests of local temples, just could not believe it.

This action is no longer such a mystery, now that we know Chief Administrator Nikken once asserted that the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism is counterfeit. In other words, he has been slighting the Dai-Gohonzon in his heart all these years. He has all along been opposed to the Daishonin's correct teachings. This has now been clearly proven.

In the final analysis, he has no seeking mind and no faith.

In the first place, it was a grave slander and denial of his mentor that Chief Administrator Nikken destroyed the Grand Main Temple, which the former high priest, Nittatsu, once declared "the great edifice that should be the High Sanctuary of Homon-ji temple at the time of kosen-rufu."

Also, I have been questioning whether Chief Administrator Nikken legitimately inherited the heritage of Buddhism from the former high priest. Now, learning of his denigration of the Dai-Gohonzon, his grave slander of his mentor and his arrogance, my doubt about the purity of his lineage has changed into a conviction that the lifeblood of Buddhism is not pulsating in his life at all.

Chief Administrator Nikken is applying incredible pressure on the priests and lay believers of his sect toward the accomplishment of a pilgrimage of 300,000 participants and the construction of the Hoando temple in 2002. Toward this, he hopes to collect \$150 million from local temples and temple members over the next three years.

The idea of the Hoando temple came out of Chief Administrator Nikken's desire to enshrine the Dai-Gohonzon there. Now that it is clear that he denies the legitimacy of the Dai-Gohonzon, on what basis can he proceed to gather such a colossal amount of money from priests and lay believers? Many people in the sect must be questioning the validity of his cause.

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Meanwhile, on July 26, I was summoned to appear at Josen-ji temple in Tokyo. What awaited me was a unilateral attack on me by the sect's General Affairs Chief Gikan Hayase and its vice chief, Shinsho Abe [Nikken's son].

Then, on Aug. 6, both of them visited my Zencho-ji temple and again denounced my supporters and me. This incident proved Mr. Shinsho Abe's authoritarianism and abnormality, as well as the Nikken sect's violent, discriminatory nature that has been frowned upon by many in the sect. This incident was a crystallization for me of the distortion and stagnation that I have been sensing in the sect, ever since I became a priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

After graduating from the Science Department of Kyushu University, I worked in the business world. At that time, a great desire to become a priest and contribute to the happiness of all humanity arose within me.

For me, someone who had experienced how things are in society, the reality of Nichiren Shoshu was shockingly anachronistic. The seven years I spent at the head temple constituted the gloomiest period of my life. What I witnessed there was daily violence, the bullying of juniors by seniors, discrimination based on family relations, discrimination against those of us who joined the priesthood later in life by younger priests who were born into priests' families, etc. It all proved the irrationality of the society of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

The sect's manipulative nature came to the surface when Chief Administrator Nikken abruptly dismissed Soka Gakkai Honorary President Daisaku Ikeda from the position of the head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations at the end of 1990 and excommunicated 10 million SGI members toward the close of 1991.

In those days, I was just an acolyte, and I felt strong indignation at the sect's irrational behavior against the SGI members — especially against Honorary President Ikeda, who had been the most instrumental person in enhancing Nichiren Shoshu.

Though disillusioned at the plight of the sect, I am still determined to create harmonious unity between the priesthood and laity some day. I am deeply resolved to be a priest who is pure in faith, like a lotus blossoming out of a muddy pond, in the same spirit of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

Ten years have passed since the temple issue began. As exemplified by the recent disclosure of Chief Administrator Nikken's questioning of the legitimacy of the Dai-Gohonzon, his slanderous acts have now reached the point where they cannot be corrected from within the priesthood.

Thinking people naturally wonder what has happened to this sect to bring it to this point. While the Gakkai continues to grow constantly as it promotes the Daishonin's mandate of world kosen-rufu, the Nikken sect has been rolling down the slope of self-destruction. When we look at the conspicuous contrast between the two, it is easy to tell where the Daishonin's correct teachings now reside. Obviously, the sect has distorted the Daishonin's teachings.

I hereby take action to secede from the sect and to strongly question the responsibility of Chief Administrator Nikken, who has put the sect on the brink of destruction. I thus demand that he resign immediately. I vow to fight the evil of the current Nichiren Shoshu, aiming toward the day of Nikken's resignation.

*To Nikken Abe, Nichiren Shoshu Chief Administrator*

*From Yuren Fujita, Chief Priest of Zencho-ji*

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