

STANDS TO REASON: Great Proof

By JEFF FARR

Associate Editor

**Even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact.
("Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*,
vol. 6, p. 111)**

In a 1275 letter to the believer Nishiyama Nyudo, Nichiren Daishonin criticizes the True Word sect for lacking actual proof. Why does he bring this up to Nishiyama? Although Nishiyama had become a lay priest under the Daishonin, he previously had been a True Word believer.

The Daishonin was primarily opposed to True Word for ranking its esoteric teachings above the Lotus Sutra and revering the Buddha Dainichi; the True Word practice was made up entirely of esoteric rituals.

In explaining that True Word is actual proof-less, the Daishonin introduces the Buddhist concept of the three proofs: documentary, theoretical and actual. To have documentary proof means that your religious practice matches what Shakyamuni Buddha taught in his sutras. To have theoretical proof means that your practice makes sense, that people can understand it. To have actual proof means that you can show how your practice works, i.e., some concrete examples of the benefit it brings. The Daishonin believed that the practice he upheld had all three.

And actual proof is more important than the other two, he says in this letter.

Although it might seem strange at first, the Daishonin, based on his study of the Lotus Sutra, places much importance on persecution as a form of actual proof. He says that "if you propagate [this Buddhism], devils will arise without fail. Were it not for these, there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching" (MW-1, 145). And that "only by making [enemies] appear can I be a votary" (MW-4, 20–21).

SGI President Ikeda likewise points out that, as an organization putting into practice the Daishonin's teachings, the SGI has summoned forth the persecutions of the three powerful enemies, which today include Nikken and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. This is actual proof, President Ikeda asserts.

The whole temple issue, then, is a great example of actual proof.

Of course, showing actual proof is not just about attracting enemies. How we have grown as individuals, how we have helped people, how we have changed people's lives, is also our actual proof. We should never forget, in fact, that what the temple issue is really about is saving people from the misery that following powerful enemies leads to. There are many people now spiritually at risk due to Nichiren Shoshu's influence — people who don't know the real difference between the SGI and the temple.

Our efforts to speak of the greatness of our organization are, indeed, efforts to protect these people and efforts to show great actual proof.

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Author: Jeff Farr

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