

BACK TO THE BASICS
THREE PROOFS: DOCUMENTARY, THEORETICAL AND ACTUAL
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The SGI stands accused of making outrageous claims about the benefits of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We enter the courtroom at the climax of the proceedings:

Prosecutor: Your honor, SGI claims that simply by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, doing gongyo, studying and working to share these teachings with others that people can find health, happiness and prosperity. We ask that they prove their claims.

SGI: It is a simple matter to show the validity of our faith, using the time-honored principle of the three proofs.

Prosecutor: What are these so-called three proofs?

SGI: The first is documentary proof. Your honor, the SGI's claims are all based on the Buddhist sutras themselves.

Prosecutor: But your honor, there are many other schools that revere and uphold the sutras but do not make the same outrageous claims.

SGI: We refer to Exhibit A, your honor—the many letters of the Daishonin, wherein he points out again and again that while other schools may seem to base themselves on the words of the Buddha, they actually base themselves on commentaries and treatises by others. Such writings often blur the true spirit of Buddhism, which is that all people are Buddhas. The Daishonin's writings clearly reflect the unadulterated essence of the Lotus Sutra, the heart of all Buddhist teachings. All who embrace the spirit of these writings find true happiness.

Prosecutor: Exhibit A is clear. But you said you had three proofs.

SGI: The second is theoretical proof. Nothing the Daishonin or the SGI teaches goes against reason.

Prosecutor: Your honor, everyone knows religion and reason have always been at odds.

SGI: It's true that reason is limited, and that the intellect alone cannot penetrate the depths of human life and religious faith, but a true religion doesn't contradict scientific fact or sound reasoning based on those facts. As the Daishonin says, "Buddhism is reason" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 839). As Exhibit B—praise from scholars and thinkers the world over—demonstrates, SGI's philosophy is gaining wider acceptance because its reasoned worldview not only accords with common sense but offers new and deeper insights about human happiness and the road to a peaceful society.

Prosecutor: What's your third proof?

SGI: “And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact,” the Daishonin wrote (WND, 599). The true power of the Daishonin’s teachings lie in their ability to affect the human condition, to nurture the spiritual, physical and material realms of an individual’s life.

Prosecutor: Since when is religion concerned with material things, like how much money people make?

SGI: Certainly, spiritual fulfillment is among the foremost reasons people practice any religion. But as Buddhism teaches in its principle of the oneness of life and its environment, one’s spiritual outlook is not divorced from the physical and material realms. A truly powerful philosophy embedded in a person’s heart always finds expression in that person’s daily life. Exhibit C—the testimonies of millions of practitioners worldwide—prove that faith, practice and study as taught in the SGI demonstrably improves peoples lives in every aspect. Through their “experiments” with the Daishonin’s teachings people can see for themselves undeniable “proof of actual fact.”

Judge: The three proofs leave no room for doubt that the Daishonin’s Buddhism can bring health, prosperity and happiness to all who practice it. Moreover, this principle of the three proofs, while specifically used to judge the validity of Buddhist doctrines, can be a powerful way to determine the relative merit of any teaching. I find the SGI not guilty of making outrageous claims and guilty of spreading a teaching so powerful and practical that anyone can prove to themselves just how great it is.