When the Roots Are Exposed, 
the Branches Wither

The Three Treatises school too is 
found on texts that are lacking 
in reason. If persons who are blind 
encounter its teachings, they are led 
into error. But if wise persons of clear 
vision do so, then the falsity of its doc-
trines becomes apparent. When the 
roots are exposed, the branches wither; 
when the springs dry up, the current 
ceases to flow—such is the natural 
principle.

The Nembutsu school, the Zen 
school, and the True Word school have 
roots that are founded in error and 
their springs lead to deception. But 
if their roots and their springs are 
exposed to view, though this may be 
done by so lowly a person as I, Nichi-
ren, then, so long as Heaven's design 
is to bring about a time when the 
great Law will spread abroad, those evil 
teachings will be defeated and the true 
Law will be established—there can be 
no doubt of this.

Do you realize that already the time 
is at hand when these evil teachings 
will vanish? I may be despised and 
mercilessly hounded...

Background

This is a fragment of a letter, the date 
and recipient of which are unknown, 
but one view suggests that it was writ-
ten in 1278. In this existing portion, 
Nichiren Daishonin compares the doc-
trines of the Three Treatises, Nembu-
tsu, Zen, and True Word schools to 
branches of trees whose roots are ex-
posed and to rivers whose springs, or 
sources, have dried up, and establishes 
that the Latter Day of the Law is the 
time when the great Law will spread. 
Concerning "the great Law," the Dai-
ohonin states in The Teaching, Practice, 
and Proof, "Superior Practices, the 
leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, 
has already made his advent in this 
world, so the great Law, the essence 
of the Lotus Sutra that was entrusted 
to him, will spread without fail" (I, 
p. 482).