

When the Roots Are Exposed, the Branches Wither



THE Three Treatises school too is founded 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 doctrines 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, Nichiren, 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 written in 1278. In this existing portion, Nichiren Daishonin compares the doctrines of the Three Treatises, Nembutsu, Zen, and True Word schools to branches of trees whose roots are exposed 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 Daishonin 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).