PREFACE

The *Taiping jing*, or *Scripture on Great Peace*, sets forth views on social and political organization that are exceptional. There is nothing quite like them in other texts from ancient and early medieval China. The text proclaims that the traditional gap between the status of men and of women and also between leaders and followers must be narrowed. It also questions the reliability of scholarly traditions of reasoning and demands that the belief in heaven's life-giving power be the sole principle of human action. It invites every concerned individual to enter into an ongoing dialogue with everyone else. Humankind, faced with the possibility of an imminent and violent end to the world brought about by the crimes that men have committed throughout history, is called upon to jointly mobilize its resources. There is therefore no doubt that this text has a lot to say, but it is not easy to access its message. Recent Chinese editions and Chinese-language translations of the text, however, have eliminated some of the problems inherent in accessing its message, and this translation is deeply indebted to them.

My involvement with the *Scripture on Great Peace* has been of some duration, and thanks are due to many colleagues and friends, and in particular to everyone in Daoist studies. From my perspective, Daologists across the world have shown themselves to be true followers of the *dao*, open, cooperative, and happy to share information and invite others to venture into their field. Special thanks are due to Christoph Harbsmeier for initiating this translation project. The librarians at the University of Sydney's Fisher Library and at the University of New South Wales have helped

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