

Preface

THIS volume contains the translations of works from the Soka Gakkai publication *Nichiren Daishonin gosho zenshu* (The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin). The translations were first published by the Nichiren Shoshu International Center (NSIC) over a period from 1979 to 1995 in a seven-volume series entitled *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*.

A total of 172 works make up this series, including the Daishonin's five major works (*On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, *The Opening of the Eyes*, *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, *The Selection of the Time*, and *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude*).

Columbia University Press published 85 of those 172 translations, 12 in 1990 in *Selected Writings of Nichiren*, and 73 in 1996 in *Letters of Nichiren*.

Eager to have all the translations under one cover, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) members asked that they be published in one volume. Thus the Soka Gakkai decided to publish the present volume—all 172 works in chronological order.

We would like to say a word here about the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. In order to spread his ideas and hand them down to the future, the Daishonin composed a huge number of works. His disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin, called those the Gosho—literally, honorable writings. Nikko Shonin did his utmost to preserve them as the sacred texts of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Thus a remarkable number of the Daishonin's works are extant in his own hand. In terms of content, we find that his works and closely related texts may be divided into four groups: (1) treatises setting forth doctrine, (2) writings remonstrating with government authorities, (3) letters offering advice, encouragement, or consolation to believers, or ones in answer to questions, and (4) writings conveying the Daishonin's orally transmitted teachings (none of the latter, however, are included in the present volume).

In setting out to publish this volume, we decided to make some revisions in the translations of the *Major Writings* series. We wanted not only to express the meaning of the original text more exactly in some places, but also to make the translations even more readable. That is, in *Major Writings*, the titles of the various sutras and other documents referred to by the Daishonin, and the names of such figures as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, appear in romanized Japanese. Those are rather difficult to read, and the meaning, of course, is unclear. So we resolved to translate both titles and names into English.

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There was also another reason why we made the decision to translate the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. When the Central Asian scholar-monk Kumarajiva (344–413) translated Sanskrit Buddhist sutras into Chinese, he translated those names. From one point of view, it may seem odd to translate people's names. But Kumarajiva probably did so because those names do far more than simply identify people; they express the ideals and doctrines of Buddhism. For instance, a bodhisattva named Avalokitasvara appears in the Sanskrit Lotus Sutra. Kumarajiva translated that name as Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, thus clearly communicating one aspect of the humanism that imbues the Lotus.

We hope that, for a greater understanding of the text, readers will first peruse the Introduction, which presents historical background, a summary of the Daishonin's life, and comments on his works. The Translators' Note offers a summary of points that merited special consideration in the course of translating.

At the back of the book, we have provided a glossary, maps of thirteenth-century Japan, and other reference materials that we believe will enhance reading.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Dr. Burton Watson, former Columbia University professor and award-winning translator of Chinese and Japanese literature. His unstinting cooperation in the translation of this volume, his generous permission to use his translation of the Lotus Sutra, and his graciously allowing us to make some minor changes in that translation helped make this publication possible.

The Foreword of this volume was written by Daisaku Ikeda, the president of SGI and a world leader of the peace movement. Valuable advice is presented there about not only the merits of the works of Nichiren Daishonin, but also how believers in his teachings might read those works. We are deeply grateful for Mr. Ikeda's contribution.

We hope that this volume will be read by people throughout the world. We hope too that it inspires believers of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to deepen their faith, create truly joyous lives, and make a reality of the Daishonin's most profound wish—the peace and happiness of all humankind.

The Goshō Translation Committee