

## *World peace conference at Buddhist center*

*By LI BEI WEN  
Journal Correspondent*



*The gate at the entrance to the City of 10,000 Buddhas has one. This monastery will be the site this month of a world been repainted in more subtle colors, gold the most dominate religious conference, the first ever held in a Western country.*

It will be the first of its kind in the western world when the Conference of United World Religions is held at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Talmage on Aug. 1-8.

The purpose of the conference is to discuss ways to bring peace to the world.

"Our aim is, through collective effort, to arrive at a way to turn the tide of adversity, eradicate wars and bring peace and security to all people. It is hoped that the conference will expand the communication between all major religions, and through a wider scope of interchange, work out practical solutions to pressing problems that beset humankind.

"Those concerned about these issues are urged to attend," said Hsuan Hua, Abbot of the Tethagata Monastery at the City of 10,000 Buddhas, and chairperson of the conference.

Spiritual men and women from all over the world, including several Buddhist monks from mainland China, will be arriving at the local Buddhist University Thursday, according to Hua.

This will also mark the first time in recent history that religious leaders from China have been permitted to travel abroad by their government.

Other monks will represent the different sects of Buddhism, and leaders of other religious sects are also expected.

According to a spokesman at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, more than 1,000 people are expected to attend the event, coming early to also attend a Water-Land-Air Dharma Assembly which will proceed the conference from July 18.

More than half of those attending will be staying on the campus of the school and monastery in Talmage throughout the duration of the two events.

Seventy Sangha members will preside over the platforms during the first Assembly, and ceremonies will include recitation of Sutras and bowing of repentances, which Hua said will include ceremonies that are the most elaborate in Buddhism.

This meeting will include prayers for world peace, the good health and able administration of leaders of all nations, and the prosperity of their countries.

This international event continues until Aug. 1 when the Conference of United World Religions opens.

Plenary sessions, dialogue groups, speeches by representatives of various religions, and informal discussions will make up the daily agenda.

Some of the topics will include "Remolding the Current Mode of Education," "Ethics and Pressing Current Issues," "Establishing a Comparative World Religions Center to Promote Mutual Understanding," "Founding an International Study Exchange Program among Major World Religions as a way to Train Outstanding Leaders of the Future," and "Developing Academic Curricula on Philosophies of Different Religions."

Abbot Hua, a calm, relaxed man of diminutive stature, sat in his sparsely furnished office and spoke of his concerns about the world's present condition.

"We know the world is in a bad place, and the purpose of this conference is to allow a real positive generative influence on people's minds — to turn a spirit of hatred into a spirit of quiet," he said.

Speaking in Mandarin Chinese, with much feeling, he listed six conditions that "caused the world to go bad." These include fighting, greed, seeking outside selves, selfishness, striving for personal advantage and lying.

"If we turn these six around so that people are happy and content with their own possibilities, quite naturally, the world will have no wars, no disasters. Because, if people went by the six rules — no fighting, no greed, and so on, there would be no murders, no drug abuse," he said.

For example, he continued, "Just take AIDS. It is a result of not keeping these six principals. The very root of the problem is that men and women don't follow the rules. They are too free and indulge in sexual promiscuity."

The answer lies in abstinence, he said, adding, "But no one advocates that. They just give them condoms. That doesn't get to the root cause of the problem. We will never eradicate AIDS by advocating this kind of a cure."

The answer to many of the world's problems, he stated, lies inside each person. "The answer does not lie outside, but in turning ourselves around," he said.

Hua's sparkling eyes become intense, and his warm smile becomes troubled when he speaks of the failure of the education system to teach for the good of mankind.

"The professors and staff of our universities, especially the famous universities, must take responsibility for the present situation. They have the power to influence minds and they haven't been doing their job.

"Education," he continued sadly, "is down in the pits now. Kids learn to want to be No. 1. They will stoop low to get good grades so they can get a good job and make money. That is the objective of college now too. No one thinks of acquiring skills to help mankind. People help themselves and not others. The purpose of education is lost if people help themselves only. That is selfish and not public spirited."

"When people are that ego centered, they forget the family, they forget society, they forget their country, and they forget the world at large. It is all lost to, them," he said with a sigh.

People must start by cleaning up their own minds. "We have rotten minds and are polluting the whole world," he noted.

Speaking through a translator, he blamed world leaders for serving themselves and not the people. "Citizens have to take up the responsibility to develop mutual understanding between people and their leaders."

He added, quickly, "Not that we're pointing a finger at world leaders, but world leaders serve the people and should be models."

He sees the world as filled with people who have "gone nuts — acting like lunatics.

"We have forgotten our heavenly conferred mission," he said.

With a sly smile and a direct eye-to-eye contact in anticipation of the listener's reaction, Hua cited three "freaks which will eat people's flesh."

These three are television, computers, and scientific technology.

Television, as he described it, "completely devalues the essence of our children. It rips off the proper righteous vitality of the children."

Computers have the potential of breaking up families, countries, and the world because people don't zero in on their bad effects.

Leaning forward, arms resting on his desk, thin behind the sleeves of his saffron robe, Hua said, "It's the same as TV. There is incredible potential for good things, but people don't use them for that purpose."

He blamed television for damaging people's values with sex and violence, by condoning murder, drug abuse and sexual alliances. "Young people learn this from TV," he said.

Modern technology, according to this student of human nature, is the "biggest monster of all."

It is used, he believes, to develop "high tech killing weapons which every country is developing. They say is to protect their country, but they're really trying to bring an end to humanity.

"These are evidences of very deep evils we're entrenched in. People are unwilling and unreceptive to change. It's like being drunk — drunk in confusion and refusing to change."

The answer, he once again stresses, is to change people's minds.

Once people's minds are changed, all these monsters would change too. Television, computers, and technology would be used to help people.

"We would use these instruments and not let them use us," he said.

Important human attributes that will help bring about peace, he said, are humaneness, which means having compassion regarding fellow human beings, and righteousness, which involves giving the proper energy in all you do in an unbiased and unselfish way.

So, hopefully, the conference will bring together people from all over the world, representing different educational and religious worlds who can transcend sectarian views and work towards universal and selfless goals to benefit all humankind.

The citizens of Ukiah, especially educators, are sincerely invited to attend, the Abbot said.

"We would like to reach out to these people," he said.

Humanity, he acknowledged, is very complex when one first begins studying it. However, he noted, "Within the complexity of humanity, you can still find true principles."

## *Publication of the Buddhist Text Translation Society*

*LISTEN TO YOURSELF: THINK EVERYTHING OVER*, Volume Two. 1983, \$7.00. A collection of Dharma talks by the Venerable Master Hua, giving practical instructions on such subjects as Chan Meditation, Gwan Yin Recitation, and everyday cultivation. Includes second edition of *Pure Land and Chan Dharma Talks*.

# *THE WHITE HOUSE*

WASHINGTON

July 17, 1987

Dear Mr. Hua:

On behalf of the President, thank you for your recent invitation.

You were very kind to extend this opportunity to the President. I regret to write that, due to an already heavily committed schedule, he will be unable to accept your invitation. However, he has asked me to convey to you his best wishes and appreciation for your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,



FREDERICK J. RYAN, JR.  
Director of Presidential Appointments and Scheduling  
Director of Private Sector Initiatives

Mr. Hsuan Hua  
Chairperson  
Dharma Realm Buddhist Association  
800 Sacramento Street  
San Francisco, California 94108



***UNITED STATES SENATE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510***

July 21, 1987

PETE WILSON  
CALIFORNIA

The Venerable Hsuan Hua  
Chairperson  
Dharma Realm Buddhist Association  
Talmage, California 95481-0217

Dear Chairperson Hua:

It gives me great pleasure to send belated congratulations and greetings to everyone associated with the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association on the grand occasion of your week-long "Water, Land, and Air Ceremony."

It is indeed exciting to hear of so many people from all over the world coming together to further their interests and beliefs in a setting of peace and tranquility. Gathering together in the serene atmosphere of meadows, orchards, groves, and farmland is a terrific way to share and further promote your introspective lifestyle and peaceful existence.

It disappoints me that due to scheduling conflicts I am unable to share in your celebration. With many religious leaders representing the world's major religions attending, and with the festivities

of your planned ceremonies -- including prayers for world peace, prayers for the relief of our departed friends, and prayers for the leaders of our nations and their countries -- it sounds as though it will be a very exciting and spiritual week.

Once again, my hopes that you enjoy the greatest success with your "Water, Land, and Air Ceremony," and all my best wishes to you for the future.



Sincerely,  
*Pete Wilson*  
PETE WILSON