

ay, January 18, 1986

# 'Apostle' of television, Herbert W. Armstrong

LOS ANGELES, Friday: Herbert W. Armstrong, the broadcasting evangelist who was founder and pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, died yesterday at his home in Pasadena, California. He was 93.

Church officials said no official cause of death had been established, but they added that Mr Armstrong's health had been declining for about four months because of a heart ailment.

Mr Armstrong presided as the "chosen apostle of God" over the wealthy fundamentalist Christian church, as well as over the Ambassador College and the Ambassador International College Foundation, both in Pasadena. The Ambassador Auditorium on the campus is a lavish concert hall where famous musicians and artists have performed.

The Church publishes *Plain Truth* magazine and broadcasts television programs on 374 stations around the world, a spokesman said.

Officials of the 80,000-member church announced last Tuesday that Mr Armstrong had named Joseph Tkach, 59, as his successor.

Mr Armstrong was born July 31, 1892, to Horace and Eva Armstrong in Des Moines, Iowa. In 1934, he abandoned a career in advertising to found the radio Church of God with the first broadcast of his program, *The World Tomorrow*.

He incorporated his California ministry in 1947 as the Worldwide Church of God and began spreading his conservative beliefs with alternately fiery and folksy sermons. The religion is a blend of fundamental Christianity, non-belief in the Holy Trinity and some

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tenets of Judaism and Seventh-Day sabbath doctrine.

Members pay the church at between 10 and 30 per cent of their income, and celebrate Passover and Yom Kippur as holy days rather than Easter and Christmas.

Mr Armstrong espoused creationism and enjoying material wealth as a sign of Divine favour — he held that he was preparing his followers for a utopia to be ruled by Jesus.

As membership swelled in the mid-1970s, trouble arose between Mr Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong, his youngest child and heir apparent. The son appeared weekly on 165 television stations across the country as the voice of *The World Tomorrow* and was executive vice-president of the Church.

The church had a strict policy against remarriage for divorced people that required new members to dissolve second marriages and remarry their original spouses.

Garner vehemently opposed rescinding that order and his father's second marriage, to a divorced woman, in 1977. His first wife, Loma, died in 1967.

Herbert Armstrong excommunicated his son in 1978. Garner, supported by some former church members, subsequently charged that his father and other officials had spent millions of the church's estimated \$US60 million annual income on personal expenses.

In 1979, the Attorney-General's office got a court order to place the church in receivership, saying the officials had "looted" \$US1 million a year from funds. The case was dropped in 1980.