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Jet ambassador on mission for peace

HERBERT W. Armstrong, 84, founder of the Worldwide Church of God and editor-in-chief of The Plain Truth, is a remarkable figure by anybody's standards.

Whisked around the world in his own Grumman Gulfstream jet, he has come to number world leaders, from King Leopold III of Belgium to President Marcos of the Philippines, among his personal friends.

He is one of a few people to have an open door to the Israeli Government and those of the Arab world.

untaught by education, unrevealed by religion, unused by governments. It is not in competition with, but outside the realm of science, religion, education or government".

And, he says, that message has not been proclaimed to the world since the first century — until now.

Writing in the May issue of The Plain Truth, Mr Armstrong says all civilisation is based on a hostile, competitive self-centred way of life. Because of human nature, man is unable to solve his own problems.

But, he says, there is a bright tomorrow bringing "world peace, universal

bath (because, he says, Christ was crucified on a Wednesday and rose on a Saturday) and says Easter is a pagan festival.

The Plain Truth, Mr Armstrong's widely distributed magazine has been described as "designed to appeal to a middle class, physically and mentally cleanshaven, unquestioning, respectable, entrenched rather smugly in conventional morality for its own sake".

But these criticisms of Herbert W. Armstrong and his Worldwide Church of God notwithstanding, there can be little doubt that he is a man not lightly dismissed.

Combining personal charm with brilliant business acumen, he has created a vast organisation involved in welfare all over the world.

To finance all this, his followers are required to tithe about three-tenths of their gross income; and celebrity concerts, boasting such names as Artur Rubenstein, Horowitz, Callas and I Musici, are held in Los Angeles to benefit the AICF.

Next week, Port Elizabeth, through the initiative of Mr Solly Rubin, district governor of Lions International, will have a chance to meet the remarkable octogenarian who stands at the heart of all this.



On Tuesday morning, Mr Herbert W. Armstrong, one of the world's intriguing characters, will arrive in Port Elizabeth in his private passenger jet. At 5.30pm he will address a single, free, public meeting in the Hotel Elizabeth's Great Room. What does he stand for—and what does he offer?

by Mike McCoy

He has collected an impressive array of honorary doctorates, citations and decorations from almost every corner of the earth.

He has founded three Ambassador Colleges, one of them in England. His main mouthpiece, The Plain Truth, is distributed free and without any commercial advertising, to an estimated 12 million readers a month.

And, through the worldwide network of his Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, Mr Armstrong's church is giving aid to a staggering list of charitable, educational, cultural and research projects.

What is the message of this stocky, white-haired former Quaker and advertising salesman who now claims to be "an ambassador without portfolio for world peace"?

Since founding the Worldwide Church of God — according to handouts, a non-proselyting organisation — in 1934, Mr Armstrong has tried to resolve what he calls "the intolerable paradox of human greatness and human impotence".

In private meetings with world leaders, and through the medium of The Plain Truth, he has argued that the solution to the world's problems, caused by this "intolerable paradox", lies in the "missing dimensions" of knowledge.

This, he says, is "undiscovered by science,

prosperity, universal right education, universal good health".

This utopia, Mr Armstrong says, will arrive when Christ comes again to earth, to crush every government of men, and to change human nature.

"He is coming to abolish war, competition, strife and violence. He is coming to clean up this filthy earth. He is coming to restore the government of God as the all-powerful world government," Mr Armstrong says.

It is this message of "world peace" that Herbert W. Armstrong takes with him — and has now brought to South Africa.

But if his message has Christian overtones, the historical churches have grave reservations about its fundamentals.

His view of "world peace" after Christ's second coming — of utopia on earth — is seen as too literal and naive.

Further, concern has been expressed about the similarity between the beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God and the ideas of the British-Israeli movement. This holds that the White English speakers of Britain and America are descended from the "lost" tribes of Israel — and are therefore God's Chosen.

Other aspects of Mr Armstrong's teachings have caused concern. He denies the Person of the Holy Spirit; he maintains that Saturday is the Sab-