

# THE PAINFUL TRUTH

Denis Micheal Rohan  
Ushering in the Apocalypse

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# Chapter 1

## Denis Michael Rohan

“Michael Rohan” redirects here. For the Scottish fantasy and science fiction author, see [Michael Scott Rohan](#).

**Denis Michael Rohan** (1 July 1941 – 1995) was an [Australian](#) citizen who, on 21 August 1969, set fire to the pulpit<sup>[1]</sup> of the [Al-Aqsa mosque](#), in [Jerusalem](#). Rohan was arrested for the arson attack on 23 August 1969. He was tried, found to be insane, and hospitalized in a mental institution. On 14 May 1974 he was deported from [Israel](#) “on humanitarian grounds, for further psychiatric treatment near his family”. He was subsequently transferred to the [Callan Park Hospital](#) in [Australia](#). In 1995, he was reported to have died under psychiatric care.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 1.1 Motives

Rohan, a Christian, stated that he considered himself “the Lord’s emissary” and that he tried to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque acting upon divine instructions to enable the [Jews of Israel](#) to rebuild the [Temple](#) on the [Temple Mount](#) in accordance with the [Book of Zechariah](#), thereby hastening the second coming of [Jesus Christ](#).

Rohan was a subscriber of *The Plain Truth* magazine published by the [Worldwide Church of God's \(WCG\)](#) founder [Herbert W. Armstrong](#) and stated that he had begun his attempt after reading an editorial by Armstrong in the June 1967 edition.<sup>[3]</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper in [London](#) pictured Rohan on its front page with a copy of *The Plain Truth* magazine sticking out from his outside jacket pocket.

On 26 September 1969, Armstrong, in a letter to financial contributors to his *The World Tomorrow* program, distanced himself from Rohan:

Every effort, it seems, is being made to link us with it in a way to discredit the Work of God. The man, Rohan being held as the arsonist, the dispatches say, claims to be identified with us. This claim is **TOTALLY FALSE**. The first any of us at [Pasadena](#) ever heard of this man was when the press dispatches began coming over the Teletypes in our News Bureau. Checkups revealed that this man had sent in for and received a number of our Correspondence Course lessons. Last December he had sent in a subscription to **The PLAIN TRUTH**. But any claim to any further connection or association with us is an absolute lie. Two million others subscribe to **The PLAIN TRUTH**. 100,000 others subscribe to the Correspondence Course lessons. These are sent to any and everybody who requests them, **FREE**. But such subscriptions do not connect us with such subscribers or any act any one of them might commit, any more than a subscription to the [New York TIMES](#) makes that newspaper responsible for any acts committed by its subscribers.

Prior to the Rohan incident, in 1968 Armstrong, via WCG’s sponsored [Ambassador College](#), had become involved with the [Israeli government](#) in archaeological digs in the area of the [Temple Mount](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

## 1.2 Response

### 1.2.1 Israeli Chief Rabbinate response

According to the *Jewish Political Studies Review*, author Yoel Cohen recorded that the official Israeli Chief Rabbinate adopted a mostly conservative stance toward the capture by Israel of the Temple Mount in 1967, in response to questions of whether to rebuild the Temple and reinstitute the sacrificial service to whether to allow Jews to ascend the Temple Mount to pray:

Given the uncertainty where the Temple building itself was located, Unterman and Nissim (Israel's chief rabbis at the time) decided to impose a complete ban on the Mount. Dr. Zerah Warhaftig, the Religious Affairs Minister, who favored preserving the "status quo", fearing that permission to Jews to pray on the Mount would inflame the Arab world, spoke to the two rabbis about the political dangers.<sup>[5]</sup>

Cohen further footnoted these remarks with comments from an interview:

Dr. Warhaftig said that in 1967-68 he had favored the erection of a small synagogue in the area of El Aqsa, but once he saw the violent reactions after the Michael Rohan arson at El Aqsa in 1968, he concluded that such a step would not be possible. "Had it just been a matter of the Palestinians," Warhaftig said, he would have favored prayer facilities for those Jews who insisted on such prayer rights, even though it transgressed the decisions of the chief rabbis. But once he saw the emotional strength of feelings throughout the Moslem world, he did not pursue this idea.<sup>[5]</sup>

### 1.2.2 Arab/Muslim reactions

#### U.N. resolution

On 28 August 1969 a complaint was submitted to the United Nations Security Council by twenty-four Muslim countries in response to the Al Aqsa arson attempt. Mohammad El Farra of Jordan stated:

Today, my delegation joins the 24 other members, representing 750 million adherents of the Muslim faith, which requested a meeting to consider another, more serious tragedy, namely of Al Aqsa Mosque, and the fire which severely damaged that historic Holy Place on the morning of 21 August 1969. The Israeli authorities introduced more than one explanation for the start of the fire and at last charged an Australian with the arson. According to news that originated from Israel sources, the Australian suspect is a friend of Israel who was brought by the Jewish Agency to work for Israel.

The Jewish Agency arranged for the Australian to work in a Kibbutz for some months, so that he could learn the Hebrew language and acquire more of the Zionist teaching. The report published in the *Jerusalem Post* - an Israeli newspaper-of 25 August 1969 concerning the life of this Australian in the Kibbutz and his dreams of building Solomon's temple casts doubt on the case and adds to the fears and worries of the Muslims about their holy shrines; it also throws light on who is the criminal and who is the accomplice.

#### Response by and on behalf of Yassir Arafat

Yassir Arafat later developed a regular television interview speech in which he would refer back to this act of attempted arson, while avoiding mention of Rohan by name.

The Palestinian newspaper, *La Presse Palestinienne*, reported the following:

During an assembly commemorating the 1969 arson attempt on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Zakaria al-Agha, a member of the PA Executive Council, made a speech on Arafat's behalf, stressing the determination of the Palestinian people to continue along the path of Jihad until the occupation ends.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 1.3 See also

- Jerusalem syndrome
- Adam Everett Livix

## 1.4 References

- [1] Jews and Muslims to share al-Aqsa Mosque? (Report). Al Jazeera English. 13 Nov 2013.
- [2] "Sydney Morning Herald" 6 October 1995
- [3] Armstrong, Herbert W. (June 1967). "Personal from the Editor: "Jews take Jerusalem!"". *The Plain Truth*. Ambassador College. p. 1. Retrieved 9 August 2013.
- [4] *Time* 3 September 1973.
- [5] Cohen, Yoel (1999). "The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in the Temple Mount Question". *Jewish Political Studies Review* **11**.
- [6] La Presse Palestinienne. *La Presse Palestinienne*. 22 August 2001.

## 1.5 External links

- Ambassador Report article (page 16) on Armstrong's response
- *Rohan and the road to the apocalypse* - Audio and transcript of a *Background Briefing* program broadcast on ABC Radio National about Rohan (23 August 2009)
- Official Israeli Policy toward the Temple Mount



## Chapter 2

# Mosque

“Masjid” redirects here. For the villages in Iran, see [Masjed, Iran](#).

A **mosque** (/mɒsk/; Arabic: مسجد *masjid*, plural مساجد *masājid*), is a place of worship for followers of Islam.



*The Masjid al-Haram was the first mosque, and it is the holiest site in Islam*

There are strict and detailed requirements in Sunni *fiqh* for a place of worship to be considered a mosque, with places that do not meet these requirements regarded as *musallas*.<sup>[1]</sup> There are stringent restrictions on the uses of the area formally demarcated as the mosque (which is often a small portion of the larger complex), and, in the Islamic *Sharia* law, after an area is formally designated as a mosque, it remains so until the Last Day.<sup>[1]</sup>

Many mosques have elaborate domes, minarets, and prayer halls, in varying styles of architecture. Mosques originated on the Arabian Peninsula, but are now found in all inhabited continents. The mosque serves as a place where Muslims can come together for *salat* (صلاة *ṣalāt*, meaning “prayer”) as well as a center for information, education, and dispute settlement. The imam leads the congregation in prayer.

## 2.1 Etymology



*The Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Iran is a complex which contains the mausoleum of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam of Twelver Shi'ites*

The word entered English from a French word which probably derived from Italian *moschea*, a variant of Italian *moscheta*, from either Middle Armenian մզկիթ (*mzkit'*) or Medieval Greek μασγίδιον (*masgídion*) or Spanish *mesquita*, from the Arabic مسجد *masjid* meaning “place of worship” or “prostration in prayer”, either from Nabataean *masg<sup>h</sup>dhā* or from Arabic سجد *sajada* meaning “to bow down in prayer”, probably ultimately from Aramaic *s<sup>h</sup>ghēdh*.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 2.2 History

The first mosque in the world is often considered to be the area around the Kaaba in Mecca now known as the Masjid al-Haram.<sup>[3]</sup> Since as early as 638 AD, the Masjid al-Haram has been expanded on several occasions to accommodate the increasing number of Muslims who either live in the area or make the annual pilgrimage known as *hajj* to the city.<sup>[4]</sup> Others regard the first mosque in history to be the Quba Mosque in present-day Medina since it was the first structure built by Muhammad upon his emigration from Mecca in 622.<sup>[5]</sup>



*Quba Mosque in Medina is one of the oldest mosque in the world.*

The Islamic Prophet Muhammad went on to establish another mosque in Medina, which is now known as the Masjid an-Nabawi, or the Prophet's Mosque. Built on the site of his home, Muhammad participated in the construction of the mosque himself and helped pioneer the concept of the mosque as the focal point of the Islamic city.<sup>[6]</sup> The Masjid al-Nabawi introduced some of the features still common in today's mosques, including the niche at the front of the prayer space known as the *mihrab* and the tiered pulpit called the *minbar*.<sup>[7]</sup> The Masjid al-Nabawi was also constructed with a large courtyard, a motif common among mosques built since then.<sup>[6]</sup>

### 2.2.1 Diffusion and evolution

Mosques had been built in Iraq and North Africa by the end of the 7th century, as Islam spread outside the Arabian Peninsula with early caliphates. The Imam Husayn Shrine in Karbala is reportedly one of the oldest mosques in Iraq, although its present form – typical of Persian architecture – only goes back to the 11th century. The shrine, while still operating as a mosque, remains one of the holiest sites for Shia Muslims, as it honors the death of the third Shia imam, Hussein ibn Ali.<sup>[8]</sup> The Mosque of Amr ibn al-As was reportedly the first mosque in Egypt, serving as a religious and social center for Fustat (present-day Cairo) during its prime. Like the Imam Husayn Shrine, though, nothing of its original structure remains.<sup>[9]</sup> With the later Fatimid Caliphate, mosques throughout Egypt evolved to include schools (known as *madrasas*), hospitals, and tombs.<sup>[10]</sup>

The Great Mosque of Kairouan in present-day Tunisia was reportedly the first mosque built in northwest Africa, with its present form (dating from the 9th century) serving as a model for other Islamic places of worship in the Maghreb. It was the first to incorporate a square minaret (as opposed to the more common circular minaret) and includes naves akin to a basilica.<sup>[11][12]</sup> Those features can also be found in Andalusian mosques, including the Grand Mosque of Cordoba, as they tended to reflect the architecture of the Moors instead of their Visigoth predecessors.<sup>[12]</sup> Still, some elements of Visigothic architecture, like horseshoe arches, were infused into the mosque architecture of Spain and the Maghreb.<sup>[13]</sup>



*The Great Mosque of Kairouan, in Tunisia, is the oldest mosque in the Muslim West.*

The first mosque in East Asia was reportedly established in the 8th century in Xi'an. However, the Great Mosque of Xi'an, whose current building dates from the 18th century, does not replicate the features often associated with mosques elsewhere.<sup>[14]</sup> Indeed, minarets were initially prohibited by the state.<sup>[15]</sup> Following traditional Chinese architecture, the Great Mosque of Xi'an, like many other mosques in eastern China, resembles a pagoda, with a green roof instead of the yellow roof common on imperial structures in China. Mosques in western China were more likely to incorporate elements, like domes and minarets, traditionally seen in mosques elsewhere.<sup>[14]</sup>

A similar integration of foreign and local influences could be seen on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java, where mosques, including the Demak Great Mosque, were first established in the 15th century.<sup>[16]</sup> Early Javanese mosques took design cues from Hindu, Buddhist, and Chinese architectural influences, with tall timber, multi-level roofs similar to the pagodas of Balinese Hindu temples; the ubiquitous Islamic dome did not appear in Indonesia until the 19th century.<sup>[15][17]</sup> In turn, the Javanese style influenced the styles of mosques in Indonesia's Austronesian neighbors—Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines.<sup>[16]</sup>

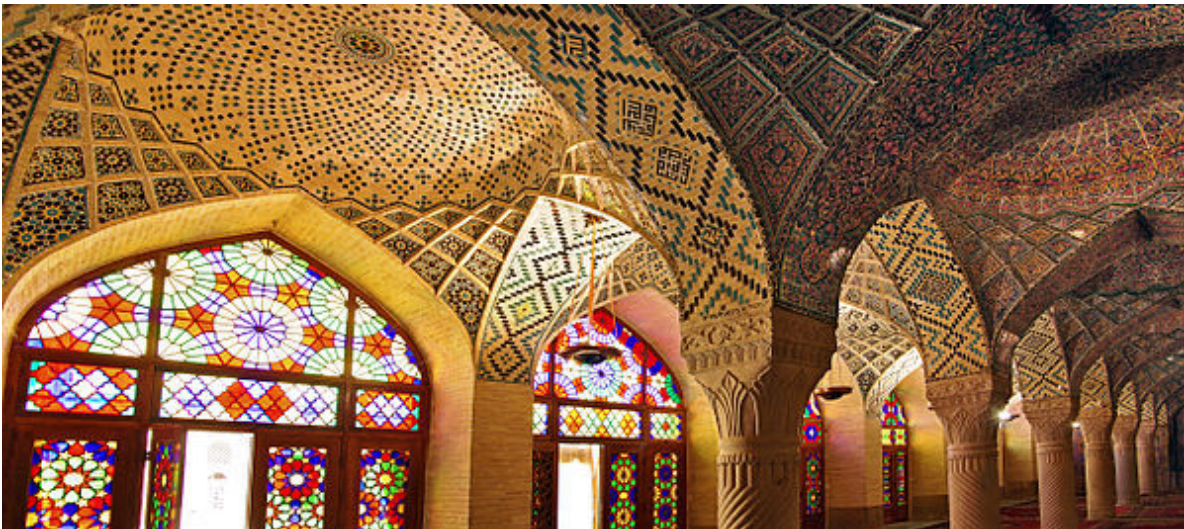
Muslim empires were instrumental in the evolution and spread of mosques. Although mosques were first established in India during the 7th century, they were not commonplace across the subcontinent until the arrival of the Mughals in the 16th and 17th centuries. Reflecting their Timurid origins, Mughal-style mosques included onion domes, pointed arches, and elaborate circular minarets, features common in the Persian and Central Asian styles.<sup>[18]</sup> The Jama Masjid in Delhi and the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, built in a similar manner in the mid-17th century,<sup>[19]</sup> remain two of the largest mosques on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>[20]</sup>

The Umayyad Caliphate was particularly instrumental in spreading Islam and establishing mosques within the Levant, as the Umayyads constructed among the most revered mosques in the region—the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.<sup>[21]</sup> The designs of the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque were influenced by Byzantine architecture, a trend that continued with the rise of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>[22]</sup>

Several of the early mosques in the Ottoman Empire were originally churches or cathedrals from the Byzantine Empire,



*The Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque standing on the eastern side of Naghsh-i Jahan Square, Isfahan, Iran.*



*Inside The Nasir al-Mulk Mosque or Pink Mosque in Shiraz, Iran*

with the Hagia Sophia (one of those converted cathedrals) informing the architecture of mosques from after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.<sup>[25]</sup> Still, the Ottomans developed their own architectural style characterized by large central rotundas (sometimes surrounded by multiple smaller domes), pencil-shaped minarets, and open facades.<sup>[26]</sup>



*The Great Mosque of Xi'an incorporates traditional elements of Chinese architecture.*

Mosques from the Ottoman period are still scattered across Eastern Europe, but the most rapid growth in the number of mosques in Europe has occurred within the past century as more Muslims have migrated to the continent. Many major European cities are home to mosques, like the **Grand Mosque of Paris**, that incorporate domes, minarets, and other features often found with mosques in Muslim-majority countries.<sup>[24]</sup> The first mosque in North America was founded by **Albanian Americans** in 1915, but the continent's oldest surviving mosque, the **Mother Mosque of America**, only dates back to the 1930s.<sup>[27]</sup> As in Europe, the number of American mosques has rapidly increased in recent decades as Muslim immigrants, particularly from South Asia, have come in the United States. Greater than forty percent of mosques in the United States were constructed after 2000.<sup>[28]</sup>

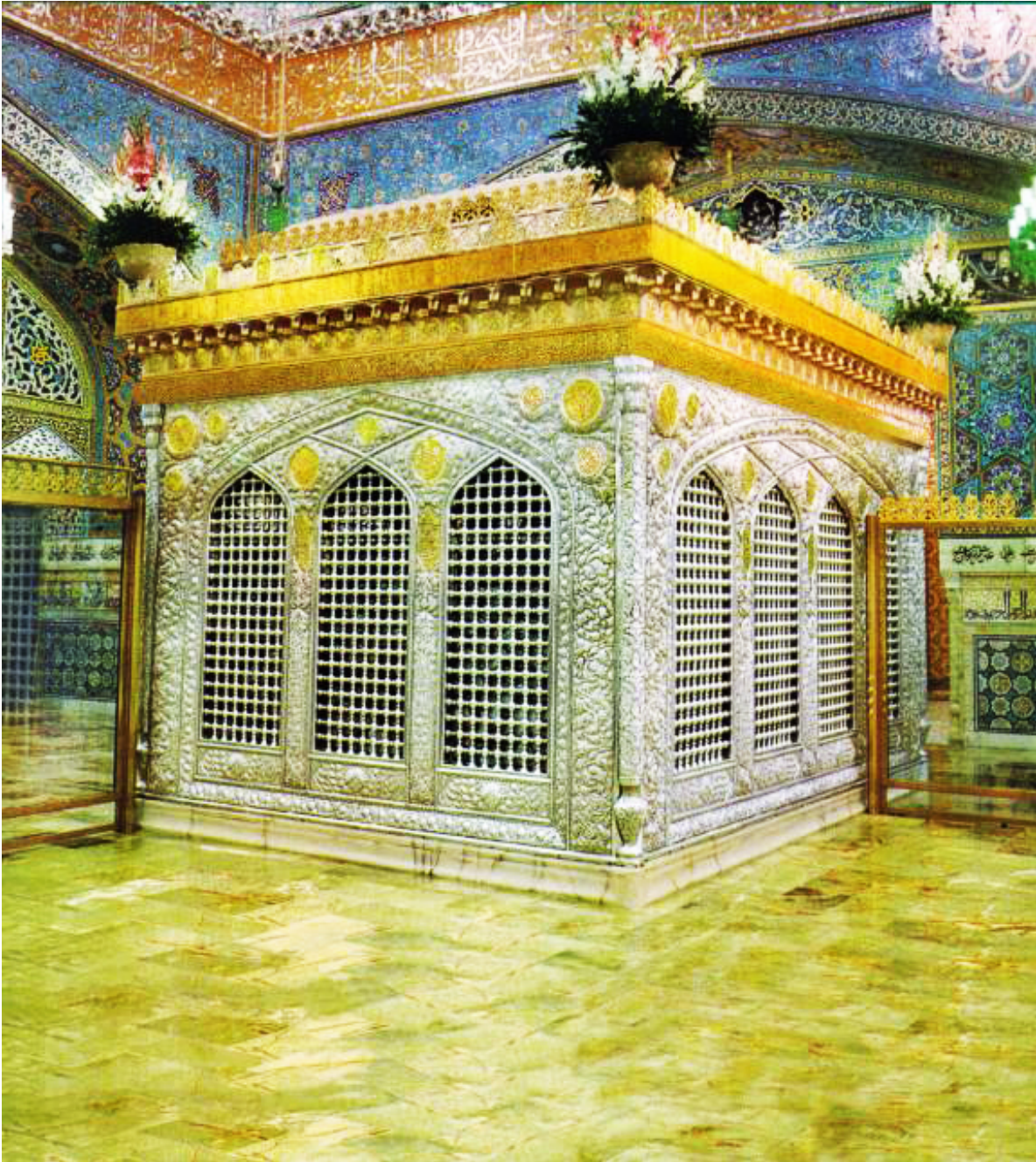
### 2.2.2 Conversion of places of worship

Main article: **Conversion of non-Muslim places of worship into mosques**

According to early **Muslim** historians, towns that surrendered without resistance and made treaties with the Muslims gave the Muslims permission to take their churches and synagogues. One of the earliest examples of these kinds of conversions was in **Damascus, Syria**, where in 705 **Umayyad caliph Al-Walid I** bought the church of **St. John** from the **Christians** and had it rebuilt as a mosque in exchange for building a number of new churches for the **Christians** in **Damascus**. Overall, **Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan** (**Al-Waleed's** father) is said to have transformed 10 churches in **Damascus** into mosques.<sup>[29]</sup>

The process of turning churches into mosques was especially intensive in the villages where most of the inhabitants converted to **Islam**. The **Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun** turned many churches into mosques. **Ottoman Turks** converted nearly all churches, monasteries, and chapels in **Constantinople**, including the famous **Hagia Sophia**, immediately after capturing the city in 1453 into mosques. In some instances mosques have been established on the places of **Jewish** or **Christian** sanctuaries associated with **Biblical** personalities who were also recognized by **Islam**.<sup>[30]</sup>

Mosques have also been converted for use by other religions, notably in southern **Spain**, following the conquest of the **Moors** in 1492.<sup>[31]</sup> The most prominent of them is the **Great Mosque of Cordoba**. Outside of the **Iberian Peninsula**, such



*Inside the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Iran.*

instances also occurred in southeastern Europe once regions were no longer under Muslim rule.

### **2.3 Religious functions**

The *masjid jāmi'*, a central mosque, can play a role in religious activities such as teaching the Quran and educating future imams.



*Kampung Hulu Mosque, the oldest mosque in Malaysia influenced by the Malay, Chinese and Hindu architecture.*

### 2.3.1 Prayers

There are two holidays (*Eids*) in the Islamic calendar, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, during which there are special prayers held at mosques in the morning. These Eid prayers are supposed to be offered in large groups, and so, in the absence of an outdoor *eidgah* larger mosques will normally host them for their congregants as well as the congregants of smaller local mosques. Some mosques will even rent convention centers or other large public buildings to hold the large number of Muslims who attend. Mosques, especially those in countries where Muslims are the majority, will also host Eid prayers outside in courtyards, town squares or on the outskirts of town in an *Eidgah*.<sup>[32][33]</sup>

### 2.3.2 Ramadan events

Islam's holiest month, *Ramadan*, is observed through many events. As Muslims must fast during the day during Ramadan, mosques will host *iftar* dinners after sunset and the fourth required prayer of the day, *maghrib*. Food is provided, at least in part, by members of the community, thereby creating nightly potluck dinners. Because of the community contribution necessary to serve iftar dinners, mosques with smaller congregations may not be able to host the *iftar* dinners daily. Some mosques will also hold *suhoor* meals before dawn to congregants attending the first required prayer of the day, *fajr*. As with iftar dinners, congregants usually provide the food for suhoor, although able mosques may provide food instead. Mosques will often invite poorer members of the Muslim community to share in beginning and breaking the fasts, as providing charity during Ramadan is regarded in Islam as especially honorable.<sup>[34]</sup>

Following the last obligatory daily prayer (*Isha'*) special, optional *tarawih* prayers are offered in larger mosques. During each night of prayers, which can last for up to two hours each night, usually one member of the community who has





*Jama Masjid in Delhi remains India's largest mosque and a classic example of the Mughal style of architecture.*

memorized the entire Quran (a *Hafiz*) will recite a segment of the book.<sup>[35]</sup> Sometimes, several such people (not necessarily of the local community) take turns to do this. During the last ten days of Ramadan, larger mosques will host all-night programs to observe *Laylat al-Qadr*, the night Muslims believe that Muhammad first received Quranic revelations.<sup>[35]</sup> On that night, between sunset and sunrise, mosques employ speakers to educate congregants in attendance about Islam. Mosques or the community usually provide meals periodically throughout the night

During the last ten days of Ramadan, larger mosques within the Muslim community will host *I'tikāf*, a practice in which at least one Muslim man from the community must participate. Muslims performing itikaf are required to stay within the mosque for ten consecutive days, often in worship or learning about Islam. As a result, the rest of the Muslim community is responsible for providing the participants with food, drinks, and whatever else they need during their stay.<sup>[35]</sup>

### 2.3.3 Charity

The third of the Five Pillars of Islam states that Muslims are required to give approximately one-fortieth of their wealth to charity as *zakat*.<sup>[36]</sup> Since mosques form the center of Muslim communities, they are where Muslims go to both give *zakat* and, if necessary, collect it. Prior to the holiday of Eid ul-Fitr, mosques also collect a special *zakat* that is supposed to assist in helping poor Muslims attend the prayers and celebrations associated with the holiday.

## 2.4 Contemporary political roles

See also: Political aspects of Islam

The late 20th century saw an increase in the number of mosques used for political purposes. Today, civic participation is



*The Shah Jahan Mosque, built in 1889, was reportedly the first mosque in the United Kingdom; today, the country has more than 1,500.<sup>[23][24]</sup>*

commonly promoted in mosques in the Western world. Because of the importance in the community, mosques are used for preaching peaceful coexistence with non-believers, even in times of adversity.

Large mosques sometimes play a political role as well. In Islamic countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq (after 2003), political subjects are preached by imams at Friday congregations on a regular basis.<sup>[37]</sup> In other Islamic countries, imams are usually banned from mentioning political issues.

### 2.4.1 Advocacy

Countries with a minority Muslim population are more likely than Muslim-majority countries of the Greater Middle East to use mosques as a way to promote civic participation.<sup>[38]</sup> American mosques host voter registration and civic participation drives that promote involving Muslims, who are often first- or second-generation immigrants, in the political process. As a result of these efforts as well as attempts at mosques to keep Muslims informed about the issues facing the Muslim community, regular mosque attendants are more likely to participate in protests, sign petitions, and otherwise be involved in politics.<sup>[38]</sup>

Nevertheless, a link between political views and mosque attendance can still be seen in other parts of the world.<sup>[39]</sup> Following the al-Askari Mosque bombing in February 2006, imams and other Islamic leaders used mosques and Friday prayers as vehicles to call for calm and peace in the midst of widespread violence.<sup>[40]</sup>



*Inside one of the domes of the Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran*

## 2.4.2 Social conflict

See also: [Islamophobia and Israeli–Palestinian conflict](#)

As they are considered important to the Muslim community, mosques, like other places of worship, can be at the heart of social conflicts. The [Babri Mosque](#) was the subject of such a conflict up until the early 1990s when it was demolished. Before a mutual solution could be devised, the mosque was destroyed on December 6, 1992 as the mosque was built by [Babur](#) allegedly on the site of a previous [Hindu temple](#) marking the birthplace of [Rama](#).<sup>[41]</sup> The controversy surrounded the mosque was directly linked to rioting in [Bombay](#) (present-day [Mumbai](#)) as well as [bombings](#) in 1993 that killed 257 people.<sup>[42]</sup>

[Bombings](#) in February 2006 and June 2007 seriously damaged Iraq's [al-Askari Mosque](#) and exacerbated existing tensions. Other mosque bombings in Iraq, both before and after the February 2006 bombing, have been part of the conflict between the country's groups of Muslims. However, mosque bombings have not been exclusive to Iraq; in June 2005, a suicide bomber killed at least 19 people at an [Afghan Shia mosque](#) near [Jade Maivand](#).<sup>[43]</sup> In April 2006, two explosions occurred at [India's Jama Masjid](#).<sup>[44][45]</sup>

Following the [September 11 attacks](#), several American mosques were targeted in attacks ranging from simple vandalism to arson.<sup>[46]</sup> Furthermore, the [Jewish Defense League](#) was suspected of plotting to bomb the [King Fahd Mosque](#) in [Culver City, California](#).<sup>[47]</sup> Similar attacks occurred throughout the [United Kingdom](#) following the [7 July 2005 London bombings](#). Outside the Western world, in June 2001, the [Hassan Bek Mosque](#) was the target of vandalism and attacks by hundreds of [Israelis](#).<sup>[48][49][50]</sup>

## 2.4.3 Saudi influence

Although the Saudi involvement in mosques around the world can be traced back to the 1960s, it was not until later in the 20th century that the government of Saudi Arabia became a large influence in foreign mosques.<sup>[51]</sup> Beginning in



*The Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453*

the 1980s, the Saudi Arabian government began to finance the construction of mosques in countries around the world. An estimated US\$45 billion has been spent by the Saudi Arabian government financing mosques and Islamic schools in foreign countries. *Ain al-Yaqeen*, a Saudi newspaper, reported in 2002 that Saudi funds may have contributed to building as many as 1,500 mosques and 2,000 other Islamic centers.<sup>[52]</sup>

Saudi citizens have also contributed significantly to mosques in the Islamic world, especially in countries where they see Muslims as poor and oppressed. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1992, mosques in war-torn Afghanistan saw many contributions from Saudi citizens.<sup>[51]</sup> The King Fahd Mosque in Culver City, California and the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy in Rome represent two of Saudi Arabia's largest investments in foreign mosques as former Saudi king Fahd bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud contributed US\$8 million<sup>[51]</sup> and US\$50 million<sup>[53]</sup> to the two mosques, respectively.

## 2.5 Architecture

### 2.5.1 Styles

Further information: Islamic architecture

*Arab-plan* or hypostyle mosques are the earliest type of mosques, pioneered under the Umayyad Dynasty. These mosques have square or rectangular plans with an enclosed courtyard and covered prayer hall. Historically, in the warm Middle Eastern and Mediterranean climates, the courtyard served to accommodate the large number of worshippers during Friday prayers. Most early hypostyle mosques had flat roofs on prayer halls, which required the use of numerous columns and supports.<sup>[30]</sup> One of the most notable hypostyle mosques is the Great Mosque of Cordoba in Spain, the building



*Inside the Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, Indonesia, during Eid ul-Fitr.*

being supported by over 850 columns.<sup>[54]</sup> Frequently, hypostyle mosques have outer arcades so that visitors can enjoy the shade. Arab-plan mosques were constructed mostly under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties; subsequently, however, the simplicity of the Arab plan limited the opportunities for further development, the mosques consequently losing popularity.<sup>[30]</sup>

The first separate brand within mosque designs started appearing in Persia (Iran). The Persians had inherited a rich architectural legacy from the earlier Persian dynasties, and they started incorporating elements from earlier Parthian and Sassanid palace-designs into their mosques, influenced by buildings such as the Palace of Ardashir and the Sarvestan Palace.<sup>[55]</sup> Thus, Islamic architecture started witnessing the introduction of such structures as domes and large, arched entrances, referred to as *iwans*. During Seljuq rule, as Islamic mysticism was on the rise, the four-iwan arrangement took form. The four-iwan format, finalized by the Seljuqs, and later inherited by the Safavids, firmly established the courtyard facade of such mosques, with the towering gateways at every side, as more important than the actual buildings themselves,<sup>[55]</sup> and they typically took the form of a square-shaped, central courtyard with large entrances at each side, giving the impression of being gateways to the spiritual world.<sup>[56]</sup> Soon, a distinctly Persian style of mosques started appearing that would significantly influence the designs of later Timurid, and also Mughal, mosque designs.

The Ottomans introduced central dome mosques in the 15th century. These mosques have a large dome centered over the prayer hall. In addition to having a large central dome, a common feature is smaller domes that exist off-center over the prayer hall or throughout the rest of the mosque, where prayer is not performed.<sup>[57]</sup> This style was heavily influenced by Byzantine architecture with its use of large central domes.<sup>[30]</sup> Hajja Soad's mosque took a pyramid shape which is a creative style in Islamic architecture.

The Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan in a relatively unusual design fuses contemporary lines with the more traditional look of an Arab Bedouin's tent, with its large triangular prayer hall and four minarets. However, unlike traditional mosque



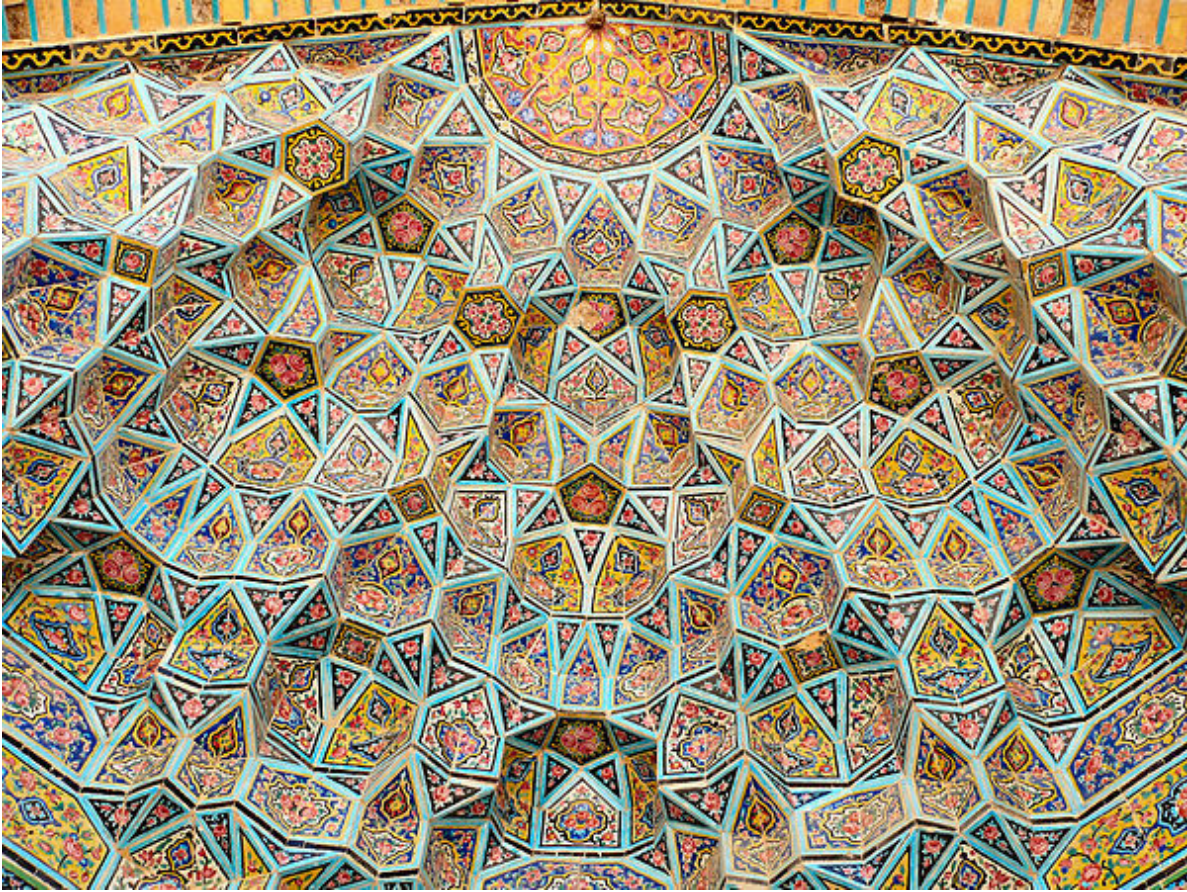
*Iftar at Taipei Grand Mosque, Taiwan during Ramadan.*

design, it lacks a dome. The mosque's architecture is a departure from the long history of South Asian Islamic architecture. It is one of the most outstanding and modern Islamic architecture examples in the world.

Mosques built in Southeast Asia often represent the **Indonesian-Javanese style architecture**, which are different from the ones found throughout the Greater Middle East. The ones found in Europe and North America appear to have various styles but most are built on Western architectural designs, some are former churches or other buildings that were used by non-Muslims. In Africa, most mosques are old but the new ones are built to give it a look of the Greater Middle East. This can be seen in the **Abuja National Mosque** in Nigeria and others.

## 2.5.2 Minarets

A common feature in mosques is the minaret, the tall, slender tower that usually is situated at one of the corners of the mosque structure. The top of the minaret is always the highest point in mosques that have one, and often the highest point in the immediate area. The tallest minaret in the world is located at the **Hassan II Mosque** in Casablanca, Morocco.<sup>[58][59][60]</sup> It has a height of 210 metres (689 ft) and completed in 1993, it was designed by Michel Pinseau. The first mosques had no minarets, and even nowadays the most conservative Islamic movements, like **Wahhabis**, avoid building minarets, seeing them as ostentatious and hazardous in case of collapse. The first minaret was constructed in 665 in Basra during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Muawiyah I. Muawiyah encouraged the construction of minarets, as they were supposed to bring mosques on par with Christian churches with their bell towers. Consequently, mosque architects borrowed the shape of the bell tower for their minarets, which were used for essentially the same purpose—calling the faithful to prayer.<sup>[61]</sup> The oldest standing minaret in the world is the minaret of the **Great Mosque of Kairouan** in Tunisia,<sup>[62][63]</sup> built between the 8th and the 9th century, it is a massive square tower consisting of three superimposed tiers of gradual size and decor.<sup>[64]</sup>



*Nasir al-Mulk Mosque vault ceiling shiraz,iran*

Before the five required daily prayers, a *muezzin* calls the worshippers to prayer from the minaret. In many countries like Singapore where Muslims are not the majority, mosques are prohibited from loudly broadcasting the call to prayer (*adhan*), although it is supposed to be said loudly to the surrounding community. The *adhan* is required before every prayer. However, nearly every mosque assigns a *muezzin* for each prayer to say the *adhan* as it is a recommended practice or *sunnah* of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. At mosques that do not have minarets, the *adhan* is called instead from inside the mosque or somewhere else on the ground.<sup>[35]</sup> The *iqama*, which is similar to the *adhan* and said immediately before the start of prayer, is usually not said from the minaret even if a mosque has one.

### 2.5.3 Mihrab

A mihrab is a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the *qibla*. That is, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying. The wall in which a *mihrab* appears is thus the "*qibla* wall."

*Mihrabs* should not be confused with the *minbar*, which is the raised platform from which an Imam (leader of prayer) addresses the congregation.

### 2.5.4 Domes

The domes, often placed directly above the main prayer hall, may signify the vaults of heaven and the sky.<sup>[65]</sup> As time progressed, domes grew, from occupying a small part of the roof near the mihrab to encompassing the whole roof above



*East London Mosque, the first mosque in European Union which was allowed to broadcast the adhan and the biggest Islamic centre in Europe.*

the prayer hall. Although domes normally took on the shape of a hemisphere, the Mughals in India popularized onion-shaped domes in South Asia.<sup>[66]</sup> Some mosques have multiple, often smaller, domes in addition to the main large dome that resides at the center.

### 2.5.5 Prayer hall

The prayer hall, also known as the *musallah*, rarely has furniture; chairs and pews are generally absent from the prayer hall so as to allow as many worshippers as possible to line the room.<sup>[67]</sup> Some mosques have **Islamic calligraphy** and Quranic verses on the walls to assist worshippers in focusing on the beauty of Islam and its holiest book, the Quran, as well as for decoration.<sup>[35]</sup>

Often, a limited part of the prayer hall is sanctified formally as a masjid in the sharia sense (although the term masjid is also used for the larger mosque complex as well). Once designated, there are onerous limitations on the use of this formally designated masjid, and it may not be used for any purpose other than worship; restrictions that do not necessarily apply to the rest of the prayer area, and to the rest of the mosque complex (although such uses may be restricted by the conditions of the *waqf* that owns the mosque).<sup>[1]</sup>

In many mosques, especially the early congregational mosques, the prayer hall is in the hypostyle form (the roof held up by a multitude of columns).<sup>[68]</sup> One of the finest examples of the hypostyle-plan mosques is the **Great Mosque of Kairouan** (also known as the Mosque of Uqba) in Tunisia.<sup>[69]</sup>

Usually opposite the entrance to the prayer hall is the *qiblah* wall, the visually emphasized area inside the prayer hall. The qiblah wall should, in a properly oriented mosque, be set perpendicular to a line leading to Mecca, the location of the *Kaaba*.<sup>[70]</sup> Congregants pray in rows parallel to the qiblah wall and thus arrange themselves so they face Mecca. In the qiblah wall, usually at its center, is the mihrab, a niche or depression indicating the direction of Mecca. Usually the mihrab is not occupied by furniture either. Sometimes, especially during Friday prayers, a raised *minbar* or pulpit is located to the side of the mihrab for a *khatib* or some other speaker to offer a sermon (*khutbah*). The mihrab serves as the location where the imam leads the five daily prayers on a regular basis.<sup>[71]</sup>





*Protest by the English Defence League calling for a mosque in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to be shut down*

### 2.5.6 Ablution facilities

As ritual purification precedes all prayers, mosques often have abluion fountains or other facilities for washing in their entryways or courtyards. However, worshippers at much smaller mosques often have to use restrooms to perform their ablutions. In traditional mosques, this function is often elaborated into a freestanding building in the center of a courtyard.<sup>[54]</sup> This desire for cleanliness extends to the prayer halls where shoes are disallowed to be worn anywhere other than the cloakroom. Thus, foyers with shelves to put shoes and racks to hold coats are commonplace among mosques.<sup>[67]</sup>

### 2.5.7 Contemporary features

Modern mosques have a variety of amenities available to their congregants. As mosques are supposed to appeal to the community, they may also have additional facilities, from health clinics to libraries to gymnasiums, to serve the community.

## 2.6 Makeshift and temporary structures for Islamic worship

A temporary place set aside for Islamic worship is called a musalla (*Jama'at Khana* in South Asia). A musallah is often not part of a permanent endowment (*waqf*), or it is otherwise not intended to become a permanent legal masjid (as defined in the Sharia). Often musallas are used while a community looks for a piece of land for a permanent masjid, or the establishment of a masjid is not practical at the time. They could be located in rented apartments, industrial units or store



*Funded by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad is the largest mosque in Pakistan.*

fronts.<sup>[1]</sup>

## 2.7 Rules and etiquette

Mosques, in accordance with Islamic practices, institute a number of rules intended to keep Muslims focused on worshipping God. While there are several rules, such as those regarding not allowing shoes in the prayer hall, that are universal, there are many other rules that are dealt with and enforced in a variety of ways from mosque to mosque.

### 2.7.1 Prayer leader

Appointment of a prayer leader is considered desirable, but not always obligatory.<sup>[72]</sup> The permanent prayer leader (imam) must be a free honest individual and is authoritative in religious matters.<sup>[72]</sup> In mosques constructed and maintained by the government, the prayer leader is appointed by the ruler;<sup>[72]</sup> in private mosques, however, appointment is made by members of the congregation through majority voting. According to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, the individual who built the mosque has a stronger claim to the title of imam, but this view is not shared by the other schools.<sup>[72]</sup>

Leadership at prayer falls into three categories, depending on the type of prayer: five daily prayers, Friday prayer, or optional prayers.<sup>[72]</sup> According to the Hanafi and Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence, appointment of a prayer leader for Friday service is mandatory because otherwise the prayer is invalid. The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools, however, argue that the appointment is not necessary and the prayer is valid as long as it is performed in a congregation. A slave may lead a Friday prayer, but Muslim authorities disagree over whether the job can be done by a minor.<sup>[72]</sup> An imam appointed to lead Friday prayers may also lead at the five daily prayers; Muslim scholars agree the leader appointed for five daily services may lead the Friday service as well.<sup>[72]</sup>

All Muslim authorities hold the consensus opinion that only men may lead prayer for men.<sup>[72]</sup> Nevertheless women prayer leaders are allowed to lead prayer in front of all-female congregations.<sup>[73]</sup>

### 2.7.2 Cleanliness

See also: [Ritual purity in Islam](#)

All mosques have rules regarding cleanliness, as it is an essential part of the worshippers' experience. Muslims before prayer are required to cleanse themselves in an ablution process known as *wudu*. However, even to those who enter the prayer hall of a mosque without the intention of praying, there are still rules that apply. Shoes must not be worn inside the carpeted prayer hall. Some mosques will also extend that rule to include other parts of the facility even if those other locations are not devoted to prayer. Congregants and visitors to mosques are supposed to be clean themselves. It is also undesirable to come to the mosque after eating something that smells, such as garlic.<sup>[74]</sup>

### 2.7.3 Dress

Islam requires that its adherents wear [clothes](#) that portray [modesty](#). Men are supposed to come to the mosque wearing loose and clean clothes that do not reveal the shape of the body. Likewise, it is recommended that women at a mosque wear loose clothing that covers to the wrists and ankles, and cover their heads with a *hijab* or other covering. Many Muslims, regardless of their ethnic background, wear Middle Eastern clothing associated with Arabic Islam to special occasions and prayers at mosques.<sup>[35]</sup>

### 2.7.4 Concentration

As mosques are places of worship, those within the mosque are required to remain respectful to those in prayer. Loud talking within the mosque, as well as discussion of topics deemed disrespectful, is forbidden in areas where people are praying. In addition, it is disrespectful to walk in front of or otherwise disturb Muslims in prayer.<sup>[75]</sup> The walls within the mosque have few items, except for possibly Islamic calligraphy, so Muslims in prayer are not distracted.<sup>[76]</sup> Muslims are also discouraged from wearing clothing with distracting images and symbols so as not to divert the attention of those standing behind them during prayer. In many mosques, even the carpeted prayer area has no designs, its plainness helping worshippers to focus.

### 2.7.5 Gender separation

Further information: [Gender segregation and Islam](#)

There is nothing written in the Qur'an about the issue of space in mosques and gender separation. However, traditional rules have segregated women and men. By traditional rules, women are most often told to occupy the rows behind the men. In part, this was a practical matter as the traditional posture for prayer – kneeling on the floor, head to the ground – made mixed-gender prayer uncomfortably revealing for many women and distracting for some men. Traditionalists try to argue that Muhammad preferred women to pray at home rather than at a mosque, and they cite a *hadith* in which Muhammad supposedly said: “The best mosques for women are the inner parts of their houses,” although women were active participants in the mosque started by Muhammad. Muhammad told Muslims not to forbid women from entering mosques. They are allowed to go in. The second Sunni caliph 'Umar at one time prohibited women from attending mosques especially at night because he feared they may be sexually harassed or assaulted by men, so he required them to pray at home.<sup>[77]</sup> Sometimes a special part of the mosque was railed off for women; for example, the governor of Mecca in 870 had ropes tied between the columns to make a separate place for women.<sup>[30]</sup>

Many mosques today will put the women behind a barrier or partition or in another room. Mosques in South and Southeast Asia put men and women in separate rooms, as the divisions were built into them centuries ago. In nearly two-thirds of American mosques, women pray behind partitions or in separate areas, not in the main prayer hall; some mosques do not admit women at all due to the lack of space and the fact that some prayers, such as the Friday Jumu'ah, are mandatory for men but optional for women. Although there are sections exclusively for women and children, the Grand Mosque in Mecca is desegregated.<sup>[78]</sup>

### 2.7.6 Non-Muslims in mosques

Under most interpretations of *sharia*, non-Muslims are permitted to enter mosques provided that they respect the place and the people inside it. Prophet Muhammad once allowed a group of Christians to pray inside Al-Masjid al-Nabawi for their Sunday worship.<sup>[79]</sup> A dissenting opinion and minority view is presented by followers of the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence, who argue that non-Muslims may not be allowed into mosques under any circumstances.<sup>[72]</sup>

The Quran addresses the subject of non-Muslims, and particularly polytheists, in mosques in two verses in its ninth chapter, *Sura At-Tawba*. The seventeenth verse of the chapter prohibits those who *join gods with Allah*—polytheists—from entering mosques:

It is not for such as join gods with Allah, to visit or maintain the mosques of Allah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity. The works of such bear no fruit: In Fire shall they dwell.  
—Quran, *Sura 9 (At-Tawba)*, ayah 17<sup>[80]</sup>

The twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter is more specific as it only considers polytheists in the Sacred Mosque, the *Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca:

O ye who believe! Truly the Pagans are unclean; so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque. And if ye fear poverty, soon will Allah enrich you, if He wills, out of His bounty, for Allah is All-knowing, All-wise.  
—Quran, *Sura 9 (At-Tawba)*, ayah 28<sup>[81]</sup>

According to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, these verses were followed to the letter at the times of Muhammad, when Jews and Christians, considered monotheists, were still allowed to the *Masjid al-Haram*. However, the Umayyad caliph Umar II later forbade non-Muslims from entering mosques, and his ruling remains in practice in present day Saudi Arabia.<sup>[30]</sup> Today, the decision on whether non-Muslims should be allowed to enter mosques varies. With few exceptions, mosques in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Morocco do not allow entry to non-Muslims. For example, the *Hassan II Mosque* in Casablanca is one of only two mosques in Morocco currently open to non-Muslims.<sup>[82]</sup>

However, there are also many other places in the West as well as the Islamic world where non-Muslims are welcome to enter mosques. Most mosques in the United States, for example, report receiving non-Muslim visitors every month.<sup>[83]</sup> Many mosques throughout the United States welcome non-Muslims as a sign of openness to the rest of the community as well as to encourage conversions to Islam.<sup>[84][85]</sup>

In modern-day Saudi Arabia, the Grand Mosque and all of Mecca are open only to Muslims. Likewise, the Al-Masjid al-Nabawi and the city of Medina that surrounds it are also off-limits to those who do not practice Islam.<sup>[86]</sup> For mosques in other areas, it has most commonly been taken that non-Muslims may only enter mosques if granted permission to do so by Muslims and if they have a legitimate reason. All entrants regardless of religious affiliation are expected to respect the rules and decorum for mosques.<sup>[35]</sup>

In modern Turkey, non-Muslim tourists are allowed to enter any mosque, but there are some strict rules. Visiting a mosque is allowed only between prayers; visitors are required to wear long trousers and not to wear shoes, women must cover their heads; visitors are not allowed to interrupt praying Muslims, especially by taking photos of them; no loud talk is allowed; and no references to other religions are allowed (no crosses on necklaces, no cross gestures, etc.) Similar rules apply to mosques in Malaysia, where larger mosques that are also tourist attractions (such as the *Masjid Negara*) provide robes and headscarves for visitors who are deemed inappropriately attired.<sup>[87]</sup>

In certain times and places, non-Muslims were expected to behave a certain way in the vicinity of a mosque: in some Moroccan cities, Jews were required to remove their shoes when passing by a mosque;<sup>[88]</sup> in 18th-century Egypt, Jews and Christians had to dismount before several mosques in veneration of their sanctity.<sup>[89]</sup>

## 2.8 See also

- Holiest sites in Islam
- Imam khatib (Sunni Islam)
- Imamah (Shi'a doctrine)
- List of the historical structures in the Isfahan province
- Lists of mosques
  - List of mosques
  - List of the oldest mosques in the world
- Loudspeakers in mosques
- Muezzin

### 2.8.1 By size

Further information: List of large mosques

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*The Mosque of Islamic Solidarity in Mogadishu is the largest mosque in the Horn region.*



*Inside the Shah Mosque isfahan, iran*



*Al-Hakim Mosque in Cairo is an exemplar of Fatimid architecture.*



*Jamea Masjid in Preston, known for its 'castle-like' Islamic architectural design.*



*The Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul*



*The Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran*





*Prophet Mohammad Mihrab in Masjid al-Nabawi, Medina*



*Mihrab in the Shah Mosque Isfahan, Iran*



*The hypostyle prayer hall in the Great Mosque of Kairouan.*



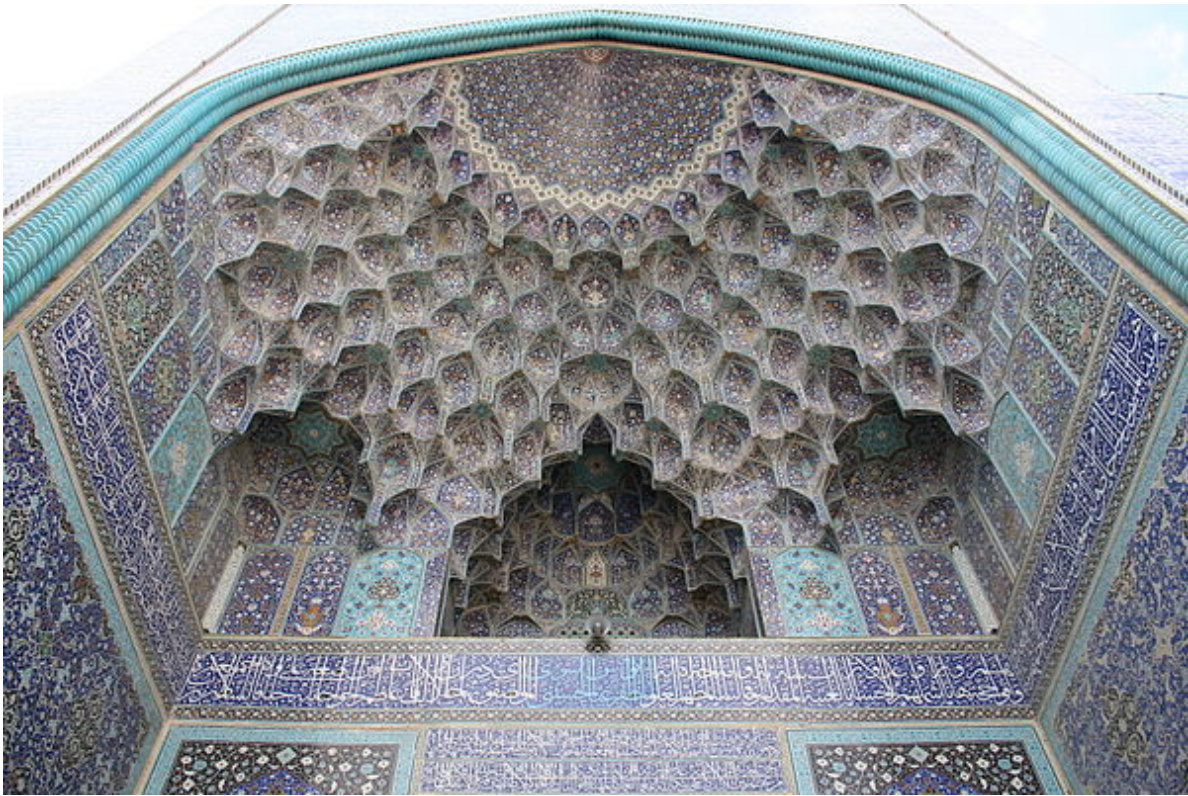
*The wudu ("ablution") area, where Muslims wash their hands, forearm, face and feet before they pray.*



*Muslims praying inside a mosque in the Netherlands.*



*Storage for shoes*



*Entrance to Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran.*



*Women's prayer hall in the Khadija Mosque in Berlin, Germany.*





*the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque vault ceiling shiraz, iran*



*Barack Obama and Michelle Obama at the Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta.*



*President George W. Bush inside the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C.*



*The Badshahi Mosque (Royal Mosque) in Lahore, Pakistan, built by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, is open to non-Muslim tourists.*

## Chapter 3

# Herbert W. Armstrong

“Herbert Armstrong” redirects here. For the poisoner, see [Herbert Rowse Armstrong](#).

**Herbert W. Armstrong** (31 July 1892 – 16 January 1986) founded the [Radio Church of God](#) which was incorporated 21 October 1933 and was renamed [Worldwide Church of God](#) 1 June 1968, as well as starting [Ambassador College](#) (later [Ambassador University](#)) 8 October 1947. He was an early pioneer of radio and tele-evangelism, originally first officially taking to the airwaves on 7 January 1934 from the 100-watt station [KORE Eugene, Oregon](#). Armstrong preached the comprehensive combination of doctrines in the entire Bible, in the light of the New Covenant scriptures, which he maintained came directly from the Bible.<sup>[3]</sup> These theological doctrines and teachings have been mistakenly referred to as [Armstrongism](#). His teachings included the interpretation of biblical prophecy in light of [British Israelism](#),<sup>[4]</sup> and required observance of parts of the covenant Law including [seventh-day Sabbath](#), dietary prohibitions, and the covenant law "Holy Days".

Armstrong proclaimed during his lifespan that, behind world events, loomed various Biblical prophecies. In late 1951, Dr. Herman Hoeh (a then recent graduate of Ambassador College) said, with conviction, that Mr. Armstrong was “an apostle”, one sent forth with the same commission as the early disciples were given, to preach the good news message. Mr. Armstrong oftentimes said that, like John the Baptist (Elijah), he was a voice preaching in a spiritual wilderness of religious confusion. For this reason he was considered to be both an "Apostle" and end-time "Elijah" proclaiming the Gospel of God's Kingdom to the World<sup>[5]</sup> before the return of Jesus Christ. He also founded the [Ambassador International Cultural Foundation](#), which promoted the arts, humanities, and humanitarian projects.<sup>[6]</sup> Through his role with the foundation, Armstrong and his advisers met with heads of governments in various nations, for which he described himself as an “ambassador without portfolio for world peace.”<sup>[7]</sup>

### 3.1 Early life

Herbert Armstrong was born in [Des Moines, Iowa](#), on July 31, 1892, into a [Quaker](#) family. He regularly attended the services and the Sunday school of First Friends Church in Des Moines.<sup>[1]</sup> At age 18, on the advice of an uncle, he decided to take a job in the want-ad department of a Des Moines newspaper, the *Daily Capital*.<sup>[8]</sup> His early career in the print advertising industry which followed had a strong impact on his future ministry and would shape his communication style.<sup>[9]</sup>

On a trip back home in 1917, he met Loma Dillon, a school teacher and distant cousin from nearby Motor, Iowa.<sup>[10]</sup> They married on his 25th birthday, July 31, 1917, and returned to live in Chicago.<sup>[11]</sup> On May 9, 1918, they had their first child, Beverly Lucile, and on July 7, 1920, a second daughter, Dorothy Jane. In 1924, after several business setbacks, Armstrong and family moved to Eugene, Oregon where his parents lived at the time. While living in Oregon, they had two sons, Richard David (born October 13, 1928) and Garner Ted (born February 9, 1930). Armstrong continued in the advertising business despite the setbacks.<sup>[12]</sup>

## 3.2 Beginnings of ministry

During their stay in Oregon, his wife, Loma, became acquainted with a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day), Emma Runcorn. Emma and her husband O.J. were lay leaders in the Oregon conference of the Church of God, Seventh Day, a seventh-day-keeping Adventist group that rejected the authority of Ellen White and her teachings. Loma became persuaded the Bible taught Sabbath observance on Saturday, the seventh day, one of the beliefs of that church.<sup>[12]</sup> Her assertion of this to her husband was met with dismay and appeared to him to be “religious fanaticism.”<sup>[13]</sup> She challenged him to find biblical support for Sunday observance. As his business was struggling against larger competitors, Armstrong had the time to take up this challenge. He began what would become a lifelong habit of intensive, lengthy Bible study sessions. He soon felt God was inspiring this, opening his mind to truths that historical Christian churches had not found or accepted. Shortly after, as related in his autobiography, Armstrong would take up a similar study on the topic of evolution of the species after a conflict with his sister-in-law.<sup>[14]</sup> His studies on Sabbath and evolution convinced him that his wife was right, and that the theory of evolution was false.

He was eventually baptized, along with his brother Dwight L. Armstrong, in the summer of 1927 by Dr. Dean, the non-Sabbatarian pastor of Hinson Memorial Baptist Church in Portland, Oregon.<sup>[15]</sup> It is unknown, however, if he ever joined this denomination.<sup>[16]</sup> He would later recollect over four decades later that he believed, “On being baptized I knew God then and there gave me HIS HOLY SPIRIT!”<sup>[17]</sup> Despite his own unique teaching on baptism his own account is noteworthy for the absence of any mention of the process of laying on of hands or a special prayer in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, which were considered fundamental for membership in the Worldwide Church of God and reason for many a new convert’s rebaptism.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 1931 Armstrong became an ordained minister of the Oregon Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day).<sup>[15][19]</sup> The existence and history of this church became a significant factor in Armstrong’s later beliefs.<sup>[20][21]</sup>

While a member of The Church of God (Seventh Day), Armstrong became acquainted with ministers John Kiesz and Israel Hager who began to suspect that Herbert was a little too arrogant and tended to go against church doctrine. They cited Armstrong’s refusal to submit to the Church of God ministers to be baptized but went out to a local Baptist minister instead as a point. After his ordination, Armstrong allied himself with two other rogue ministers by the names of Andrew Dugger and C. O. Dodd, both of which had composed a book called *A History of the True Religion, from 33 AD to Date*, in which they claimed that the New Testament Church of the first century had secretly descended through history and eventually became the Sabbath-keeping Church of God (Seventh Day). Dugger also predicted that the apocalypse would occur in 1936. Eventually, this led to Dugger and Dodd’s ouster and when they promised to make Armstrong an apostle in their new church, The Church of God (Seventh Day), he joined with them.<sup>[16]</sup>

After severing ties with the Church of God (Seventh Day) as the result of doctrinal disputes, he began to teach a form of British Israelism, which would later make up his book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.<sup>[22]</sup> His ministerial credentials with Dugger’s church were revoked in 1938.<sup>[15]</sup> This, Armstrong believed, indicated God was now directing him in leading a revived work into the next “church era.”<sup>[21]</sup>

## 3.3 Radio and publishing

In October 1933, a small 100-watt radio station in Eugene, Oregon, KORE, offered free time to Armstrong for a morning devotional, a 15-minute time slot shared by other local ministers.<sup>[23]</sup> After positive responses from listeners, the station owner let Armstrong start a new program of his own. On the first Sunday in 1934, the Radio Church of God first aired.<sup>[24]</sup> These broadcasts eventually became known as *The World Tomorrow* of the future Worldwide Church of God.<sup>[25]</sup> Shortly thereafter, in February, 1934, Armstrong began the publication of *The Plain Truth*, which started out as a church bulletin.<sup>[24]</sup> It was at this time that Armstrong began to make prophetic claims and among them were the claims that Hitler and Mussolini were the prophesied Beast and False Prophet of the Book of Revelation who would deceive the nations for a short time just before the return of Jesus Christ. This piqued the interest of his audience. The broadcast expanded to other cities, and in 1942 began to be broadcast nationwide from WHO of Des Moines Iowa, a 50,000-watt superstation.<sup>[25]</sup> Donations began to pour in, and although he claimed to be very poor at the time in his autobiography, other members of the Oregon Church of God later reported that they would often see Armstrong dining in Portland’s finest restaurants as they passed by outside.<sup>[16]</sup>

Critics point to statements in his early writings that proved to be inaccurate.<sup>[26]</sup> For example, a statement from a lead article in the February 1939 edition of *The Plain Truth*, about a coming world war, said this:

*By way of brief review of previous articles, and radio messages, notice, first, that this war will involve ALL nations. It will be the first real world war. Secondly, it will center around Jerusalem....And thirdly, this war will END with the Second Coming of Christ!*<sup>[27]</sup>

From his new contacts in Los Angeles, Armstrong began to realize the potential for reaching a much larger audience. He searched for a suitable location and chose Pasadena, California, as being ideal as it was a conservative residential community. During this time, Armstrong also reflected on starting a college to aid the growing church, by teaching and training young men and women. Hence, in 1946 Armstrong moved his headquarters from Eugene to Pasadena and on March 3, 1946, the Radio Church of God was officially incorporated within the state of California.<sup>[25]</sup> He purchased a lavish mansion on Millionaires Row just off of the Rose Parade route on Orange Grove Boulevard, quickly acquired his own printing plant, and was broadcasting internationally in prime-time radio time slots. On October 8, 1947, his new college, Ambassador College opened its doors with four students.<sup>[25]</sup>

### 3.4 International expansion

During the 1950s and 1960s, the church continued to expand and the radio program was broadcast in England, Australia, the Philippines, Latin America, and Africa. In 1953, *The World Tomorrow* began to air on Radio Luxembourg, making it possible to hear the program throughout much of Europe.<sup>[25]</sup> The beginning of the European broadcast provides the context of a booklet published in 1956 called *1975 in Prophecy!* In this book Armstrong put forward a controversial vision of what the world could look like by 1975—featuring illustrations of mass burials and tidal waves destroying cities.<sup>[28]</sup> Overall he thought that World War III and Christ's glorious return were at the doorstep and that world peace and utopia would follow. Armstrong believed that God had exciting plans for mankind that would see the end of such wars—though the message went far beyond an earthly utopia.<sup>[29]</sup>

Several books and booklets focused on the key events that would signal the imminence of Christ's return, and taught of a specific end-time prophecy to be fulfilled, manifested in the form of European peacekeeping forces surrounding Jerusalem, at which time God's Church would be taken to a place of protection, or "place of safety"—possibly Petra in Jordan.<sup>[15]</sup> World War III was predicted to be triggered by a "United States of Europe" led by Germany which would destroy both the United States of America and the United Kingdom.<sup>[30]</sup> From the place of safety they would continue the work and prepare to help Christ establish Utopia upon His return.

In 1952 Armstrong published *Does God Heal Today?* which provided the details on his doctrine on healing and his ban on doctors. Among his tenets were that only God heals and that medical science is of pagan origin and is ineffective. He believed that most illnesses were caused by faulty diet and that doctors should prescribe proper diet rather than medicine. He taught that members are not to go to doctors for healing but must trust in divine healing alone.<sup>[31]</sup> This was his teaching despite his father's death in 1933 after "an all-night vigil of prayer."<sup>[32]</sup> This teaching has been the cause of much controversy as individuals influenced by such teachings came to die.<sup>[33]</sup>

The book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* was published in 1954. It became the most well-known and requested church publication, with over six million copies distributed.<sup>[34]</sup> In this book, Armstrong makes the claim that the peoples of the United States, the British Commonwealth nations, and the nations of Northwestern Europe are descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.<sup>[35]</sup> This belief, called British Israelism, formed the central basis of the theology of the Worldwide Church of God.<sup>[36]</sup>

Franz Josef Strauss, a major politician in post-WWII Germany, became the target of the broadcasting and publishing media blitz that Armstrong unleashed upon Europe through the daily offshore pirate radio station broadcasts by his son Garner Ted Armstrong, *The Plain Truth*, and the Ambassador College campus at Bricket Wood in Hertfordshire, England. Strauss was portrayed as being the coming Führer who would lead a United States of Europe into a prophetic World War III against the U.S. and U.K. at some time between 1972 and 1975, and emerge victorious. In 1971, Strauss played along with the prophetic interest shown in him, as Herbert W. Armstrong recalled in a 1983 letter: "I entertained him at dinner in my home in Pasadena, and he spoke to the faculty and students of Ambassador College. I have maintained contact with him."<sup>[37]</sup> Strauss also appeared in an interview on *The World Tomorrow* television program.

The volume of literature requests for material written by Armstrong continued to grow during the 1960s and 70s, and the literature was translated into several languages and distributed to a worldwide audience. They were distributed for free “as a public service.” *The Plain Truth* magazine continued to be published and circulated, eventually reaching a monthly press run of eight million.

On April 15, 1967, Armstrong’s wife Loma died, three and a half months before their 50th anniversary. Before she died he sent a co-worker letter that has often been criticized for its harsh tone to “failing” members and for its calls for more money.

## 3.5 Worldwide Church of God

Main article: [Worldwide Church of God](#)

On January 5, 1968, the Radio Church of God was renamed the *Worldwide Church of God*.<sup>[38]</sup> Shortly before, the church began to broadcast a television version of *The World Tomorrow*.<sup>[25]</sup> The program would eventually expand to 382 U.S. television stations, and 36 television outlets internationally, dwarfing televangelists Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, and Jim Bakker.<sup>[39]</sup> By this time, [Garner Ted Armstrong](#), the son of Herbert W. Armstrong, was the voice and face of the program. It was speculated that with his charisma and personality, he was the logical successor to Armstrong, but doctrinal disagreements and widespread reports of extramarital sex led to his suspension in 1972.<sup>[15][40]</sup> After initially changing his behavior he returned, but these issues resurfaced, coupled with his challenging his father’s authority as Pastor General, resulting in him being permanently “disfellowshipped” (the church’s term for excommunication) in 1978.<sup>[41]</sup>

### 3.5.1 Ambassador International Cultural Foundation

With the assistance of church accountant and adviser [Stanley Rader](#), Armstrong created the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation in 1975. The foundation was funded by the church.<sup>[15]</sup> The foundation’s efforts reached into several continents, providing staffing and funds to fight illiteracy, to create schools for the disabled, to set up mobile schools, and for several archaeological digs of biblically significant sites.<sup>[42]</sup> These humanitarian projects led to Armstrong receiving a series of invitations to meet with prominent heads of state, including (among others) [Margaret Thatcher](#), Emperor [Hirohito of Japan](#), King [Hussein of Jordan](#), and [Indira Gandhi](#). Armstrong was also internationally recognized as Ambassador for World Peace.<sup>[42][43]</sup>

#### Honors

- [Order of the Sacred Treasure](#), from the Japanese government<sup>[44]</sup>
- [King Albert I A watch](#) (one of four specially commissioned by King Albert, after the armistice, to be made from an iron canon ball), presented by His Majesty [Leopold III of Belgium](#) in November 1970, for most significant contribution toward world peace;<sup>[45]</sup> Armstrong was also a founding board member of the [King Leopold III Foundation for the Conservation of Nature](#)<sup>[46]</sup>
- [Presidential Merit Medal](#), presented by President Marcos of the Philippines in 1983 in the Manila Presidential Palace<sup>[47]</sup>
- [Commander of Our Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand](#)<sup>[48]</sup>

## 3.6 Final years

In 1977, Armstrong, then in his 80s, married Ramona Martin, then 38, a long-time member and church secretary who had a 15-year old son from a previous marriage.<sup>[49]</sup> The controversial marriage would last for only a few years. The

Armstrong separated in 1982, with Herbert Armstrong returning to live in Pasadena full-time, and the marriage finally ended in divorce in 1984.<sup>[50]</sup> During pre-trial proceedings in the divorce case, Armstrong's lawyers had sought to limit evidence of a sexual nature regarding his prior incestuous conduct but his wife's attorneys said "it was crucial since the church leader alleged Mrs. Armstrong had breached an agreement of love and fidelity."<sup>[51]</sup>

In his latter years, Armstrong stated that he did not know whether or not Christ would return in his lifetime but did know, based on the sequence of events in the Bible, that the Lord's return was approaching. He had long written of his belief that the primary sign to look for would be some sort of dissolving of the Eastern Bloc alliance under Soviet control, followed by those nations' subsequent incorporation into an eastern leg of a United States of Europe.<sup>[28]</sup> In August 1985, Armstrong's final work, *Mystery of the Ages*, was published. He wrote that "time may prove this to be the most important book written in almost 1,900 years"<sup>[52]</sup> and called it a "synopsis of the Bible in the most plain and understandable language." It was more or less a compendium of theological concepts, as articulated by Armstrong, which included the notion that God deliberately coded the bible "so that it would not be understood until our modern time".<sup>[53]</sup>

In September 1985, with his failing health widely known, Armstrong delivered his final sermon on the Feast of Trumpets in the Ambassador Auditorium. He spent his final days confined at his home on the college campus in Pasadena, California, on South Orange Grove Boulevard.

Almost until his final days, there was uncertainty about who would succeed Armstrong in the event of his death. The church's Advisory Council of Elders, acting on a clause in church by-laws added in 1981, was to select a successor after his death,<sup>[54]</sup> yet Armstrong reportedly worried about the ramifications if certain individuals were selected, such as his son Garner Ted or evangelist Roderick Meredith.<sup>[55][56]</sup> Finally, Armstrong opted to select the next Pastor General personally.<sup>[55]</sup> Armstrong told the Church's Advisory Council of Elders of his decision to appoint evangelist-rank minister Joseph W. Tkach on January 7, 1986.<sup>[57]</sup> Tkach had worked closely with former church executive Stanley R. Rader prior to Rader's retirement from active service with the Church, and had been ordained to the ministerial rank of evangelist along with Rader and Ellis LaRavia in 1979.

Armstrong died shortly before 6:00 a.m. on January 16, 1986, only nine days after naming Tkach as his successor. He was 93.<sup>[58]</sup> Approximately 4,000 people attended his funeral, including a number of political figures from other countries. He was buried in Altadena's Mountain View Cemetery between Loma and his mother, Eva Wright Armstrong. Evangelist Herman L. Hoeh, a long-time church member and one of the first graduates of Ambassador College, officiated at the graveside service, and Tkach gave the closing prayer.

### 3.7 Theology and teachings

Main article: [Armstrongism](#)

- Worldwide Church of God (WCG) members believed that Herbert W. Armstrong was Christ's apostle in the 20th century. Armstrong taught that God only works through "one man at a time" and that he was God's selected representative on earth for his time.
- Armstrong taught a form of Sabbatarianism, explaining that; by creating the Sabbath (on the seventh day of creation, through resting - not working) God "HALLOWED the seventh-day of every week (Ex. 20:11)" and therefore made "future TIME holy!" Resting on the Sabbath day is thus commanded for all mankind and should be kept holy from Friday sunset to sunset on Saturday.<sup>[59]</sup> The Worldwide Church of God conducted its worship Services during that period, accordingly, on Saturdays. Armstrong further explained that Christ is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mt. 12:8) for it is He who 'made' it for mankind, thus it is a "blessing.. to be ENJOYED, to spiritually REFRESH, in blessed fellowship and communion with CHRIST!"<sup>[60]</sup> He believed that the observance of Sunday as the "Lord's Day" was a papal and/or satanic corruption introduced without authority from God or the Bible.<sup>[61]</sup>
- Armstrong adhered to a form of British Israelism which stated that the British, American and many European peoples were descended from the so-called Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, using this belief to state that biblical references to Israel, Jacob, etc., were in fact prophecies relating to the modern day, with literal application to the USA, Britain, and the British Commonwealth. In the course of this teaching, he also accepted the concept of an Assyrian-German connection and often made identifications of other nations in "Bible prophecy", such as Russia and China.<sup>[62]</sup>



- As a result of this, Armstrong believed that a unified Europe (identified by him as a “revived Roman Empire” and as the “beast” of Revelation 13) would oppose Jesus at his **second coming** in the battle of **Armageddon**. Furthermore, he stated repeatedly that this unified Europe would have previously defeated and enslaved the American and British peoples.<sup>[63]</sup> He often pointed to the European “Common Market”<sup>[64]</sup> or **European Community** as its precursor, but tended to refer to it as “a kind of United States of Europe.” Splinter groups (previously members of the Worldwide Church of God) today usually identify the current **European Union** as the unified Europe Armstrong devoted much writing to.
- Armstrong taught that God’s purpose in creating mankind was to “reproduce Himself”, and that the process of being “born again” was not instantaneous—that the believer (as a result of **baptism** by immersion) was only “begotten” until reborn as a spirit being at the return of Jesus.<sup>[65]</sup> These “begotten” believers were referred to by him as the “firstfruits” of a divine harvest and were perceived as the “true Christians” of the current age. The (re)birth of the “begotten” was referred to as the “first **resurrection**.” As Christ is “the **FIRST** born from the dead” (Col. 1:18), Armstrong concluded that many other “sons” (begotten by God’s Spirit) would also be brought “to glory” (Heb. 2:10) at that “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5). Those ‘begotten’ will then be instantaneously ‘born anew’ (John 3:3) but not again, “a second time”, as “perishable” flesh and blood mortals (1 Cor. 15:53) but as “imperishable”, immortal Spirit ‘God’ beings. He concluded that; “Until the resurrection, therefore, we cannot see, enter into or inherit the Kingdom of God. **WE CANNOT BE BORN AGAIN UNTIL THE RESURRECTION!**”<sup>[66]</sup>-
- Armstrong continually preached that Jesus Christ would return to earth to “rescue” humanity from the brink of self-annihilation, resulting in the establishment of “God’s government” during a 1,000 year ‘Millennium’ and utopia under the rulership of Christ and his “first fruits”, constituting of Armstrong’s believers converted into “spirit beings” at the “first resurrection”. During this period of time, those surviving the “great tribulation” would be given the chance to voluntarily accept “God’s way of life.”<sup>[67]</sup> Christ is in heaven “until” the “times of restitution” (Acts 3:19-21) when God’s government, world peace and utopian conditions shall be restored to this earth.<sup>[68]</sup>-
- Armstrong did not accept the concept of eternal judgment in this life. He believed that those who had died as unbelievers prior to the return of Christ existed in a state of “unconsciousness” (see **Soul sleep**) until a second resurrection, during which they would be offered the choice to submit to God’s government.<sup>[69]</sup> As part of this tiered resurrection, the truly “wicked” who would not accept God’s government and laws in any form would be judged guilty of rebellion against God and annihilated (cease to exist). This included “first fruits” that had previously rejected their “calling”, therefore committing the “unpardonable sin”, who would be resurrected in a third resurrection to face their judgment and “eternal death”. Armstrong identified this as the “second death” mentioned in the book of **Revelation**.<sup>[70]</sup> This was considered the fate of all “first fruits” (baptized members) that “leave the church” - i.e. depart from Armstrong’s teachings, causing members some reluctance to question church authority and teachings at risk of being considered rebellious or being excommunicated and effectively condemned to eternal death at the third resurrection.
- In Armstrong’s view, the **scourging** of Jesus prior to **crucifixion** “paid the penalty” for physical disease and sickness, allowing the option of divine healing.<sup>[71]</sup> The crucifixion itself was considered to be the act which enabled God to allow humanity into the three-tiered resurrection scheme, as Jesus had paid the initial death penalty for breaking the Law.
- Armstrong did not accept **Trinitarianism**, believing it to be a doctrine of satanic authorship as part of a “counterfeit Christianity” (which he identified as the **Roman Catholic Church**). Armstrong taught that the Father and the Word were co-eternal, but that the Holy Spirit was not an actual person. He believed that the **Holy Spirit** was part of God’s essence, a power emanating from him that suffused all creation, and especially believers, and through which God was omnipresent and able to act at all places and at all times.
- Because of his teachings identifying both the primacy of Sabbath and the “identity of modern Israel”, Armstrong would come to accept that the Mosaic Law had not been “done away.” Although he excluded certain segments he regarded as “already fulfilled”, “ceremonial” or otherwise unfit, he taught adherence to the Levitical food regulations and the observance of the “Holy Days” of the Mosaic Law.<sup>[72]</sup> The Worldwide Church of God taught seven ‘Festivals of God’ (Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, Last Great Day) and regarded such to be ‘worship’ days including Sukkot or “Feast of Tabernacles.” The latter was practiced by setting up church “conventions” in various cities worldwide to which their various

congregations had to attend, leaving homes and booking into hotel-type accommodation. For many, this eight-day festival was a 'highlight' of the year.

- As part of a larger paradigm in which common observances were often discarded, Armstrong rejected traditional holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween and the celebration of birthdays, stating that all of these were of pagan origin. A similar principle extended also to the display of crosses and depictions of Jesus.
- Armstrong placed much emphasis on faith in God for healing and taught against the medical practice, except in the case of “repair” (setting of broken bones, cleansing of wounds, etc.).<sup>[73]</sup> Medical intervention was consequently frowned-upon, there were consequently numerous controversial incidents involving death of members or member’s children due to lack of medical attention. Armstrong spoke highly of principles of good diet (outside of the Levitical food regulations) and proper living, and members of the Worldwide Church of God as a result tended to gravitate towards whole grains, home-grown vegetables etc., although such acts were not an express tenet of faith.
- Armstrong taught against fornication, masturbation, adultery, homosexuality and other practices he viewed as aberrations, authoring the book *God Speaks Out On The 'New Morality* (later retitled *The Missing Dimension in Sex*) on the subject. As a result of this fundamentalist view on morality, he also taught against the use of cosmetics, long hair on men, and other matters of personal appearance.
- Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God viewed Revelation 2, which contains seven messages to seven churches in Asia Minor at the time of its writing, to actually be descriptive of seven “church eras” in chronological order. He stated that the “Sardis” church era ended with his severance from the Church of God (Seventh-Day) and that the “Philadelphia” era officially began in October 1933. “Laodicea” would follow wherein lukewarmness would be the “dominant Church attitude at the end.” His great concern was that they, “undoubtedly of the Philadelphia era”, were “in serious danger of BECOMING also the Laodicean era.”<sup>[74]</sup> He apparently modified such era teaching from an earlier version preached by a previous Church of God, Seventh Day minister, G. G. Rupert.<sup>[75]</sup> This concept has assumed greater importance among current WCG splinter groups, as those that practice Armstrong’s teachings tend to view the modern Worldwide Church of God (and sometimes other splinter groups) as “Laodicean” or entirely Protestant.<sup>[76]</sup>
- Armstrong instituted a three-tiered annual tithing process for his followers. The first tithe (10% of member’s gross household income) went to the Worldwide Church of God organization, which viewed itself as the “Melchizedek priesthood” with Jesus Christ as the High Priest with the rank of Melchizedek, which priesthood superseded the Levitical priesthood, and thereby entitled to support by tithes. The second tithe (a second 10% of member’s gross household income) was saved by members and used as individual support during the “Feast of Tabernacles.” The third tithe (a third 10% of members gross household income), which was paid every three years per member, was used to support widows and other members in need.<sup>[77]</sup> The church did not overtly solicit funds from outside but did accept donations from “co-workers” and commonly sent “co-worker” letters that often called for money to be sent.<sup>[78]</sup>

## 3.8 Criticism and controversy

Armstrong’s teachings and the church he created have been the subject of much criticism and controversy.<sup>[79]</sup> Armstrong’s theology and teachings are defended by his followers,<sup>[80]</sup> but face criticism from ex-followers<sup>[81][82]</sup> and the greater Christian community.<sup>[83]</sup> Common points of criticism and controversy include:

### 3.8.1 Theological

- **Salvation:** Armstrong believed that repentance, faith and the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit enables true and full obedience to God’s law, but stressed that keeping God’s law (and repentance upon having sinned) is a requirement for salvation.<sup>[84][85]</sup> Critics state that Armstrong taught salvation as being legalistic obedience to God’s law, including such laws as Sabbath keeping, dietary laws, and other laws kept by Ancient Israelites but not typically kept by 'mainstream' Christian denominations.<sup>[83][86]</sup>

- **The Covenants:** Armstrong taught that the **New Covenant** is an 'amplification' of the **Old Covenant**, and that certain laws (excluding temple and unenforceable ancient civil laws) from the Old Covenant are still in effect for Christians. This included laws such as literal Sabbath keeping, 'Clean and Unclean' meats and Holy Day observances.<sup>[87]</sup> He believed that the New Covenant was yet future, to be finalized as a marriage covenant between Christ and the Church and that Christians currently existed 'between' the two Covenants.<sup>[88]</sup> Critics say that Armstrong confused the two Covenants and selectively picked which aspects of the two Covenants to keep.<sup>[89]</sup>
- **Gospel of the Kingdom:** Armstrong taught that a reason for Jesus Christ's presence on earth was to proclaim the Gospel message of a literal Kingdom of God that will be established on earth at Christ's 'second coming', and that the message of the Kingdom should be the focus of the gospel rather than the person of Christ.<sup>[90][91]</sup> Critics indicate that this represents a diminishment of the person and importance of Christ, through whom salvation is attained, and that this represents a flawed understanding about the nature of the Kingdom.<sup>[92]</sup> Armstrong taught that - the gospel "of" Christ - began to change to - a gospel "about" Christ - around twenty to thirty years after the founding of the Church in 31 A.D. He made the extraordinary claim that the gospel Christ brought (of the Kingdom) had "not been proclaimed to the world" for about 1,900 years "until the first week in 1953" when he began preaching it again on Radio Luxembourg.<sup>[68]</sup>
- **Prophetic predictions:** Proponents believe that Herbert Armstrong was inspired by God and had the gift to understand prophecy. They believe that many of his predictions were inspired.<sup>[93]</sup> Armstrong was considered gifted with spiritual understanding also and that, through him, God was revealing the true meaning of parts of the Bible which, till his time, had remained locked or sealed (so could not be correctly understood). That desire for understanding had been with Armstrong since he was a small boy, "always wanting to know 'why?' or 'how?'" That obsession for understanding was to have a great influence on founding the Plain Truth magazine and Ambassador College in later years.<sup>[94]</sup> According to critics, Armstrong's predictions were rife with speculation and remain mostly unfulfilled.<sup>[95]</sup>
- **British Israelism:** Armstrong taught a form of British Israelism, which is the belief that those of Western European descent, notably England (Ephraim) and the United States (Manasseh), are direct descendants of the ancient northern Kingdom of Israel. This theory is inconsistent with the findings of modern research on the genetic history of Jews.<sup>[96][97][98][99]</sup> It is commonly criticized for poor standards of research,<sup>[100][101]</sup> and general inconsistency with archeological, anthropological and linguistic research.<sup>[102][103][104][105]</sup>

### 3.8.2 Personality, personal conduct, and governance

<sup>[106][107][108]</sup> Armstrong was often criticized for having lived in extravagant wealth in comparison to a few church members. Personal luxuries enjoyed by Armstrong included a personal jet, the finest clothing, furniture and other conveniences.<sup>[109][110][111]</sup>

### 3.8.3 Teachings inferred from the Bible

Armstrong taught the observance of principles that he believed could be inferred from biblical intent.<sup>[112]</sup> Examples of these teachings include:

- Women were not allowed to wear makeup because it was believed that this was not pleasing to God. Armstrong stated: "*God's Church, the now imminent Bride of Christ, is not going to rise to meet the returning Christ in the air with painted faces and plucked and repainted eyebrows! How cleverly, without our suspecting it, did Satan influence leading ministers to derail the Church in many ways!...Now JESUS CHRIST, through His chosen apostle, is going to RULE on this question once and for all!...How did it get into our mid-and-latter 20th century society? FROM PROSTITUTES!... Women do not use makeup to PLEASE GOD today – for I can tell you ON HIS AUTHORITY it is NOT pleasing to HIM!*"<sup>[112]</sup>
- The use of medicine and doctors was discouraged because members were expected to place their faith in God for healing.<sup>[113]</sup> Armstrong stated: "*Here's God's instruction to YOU, today, if you are ill. If we are to live by every Word of God, we should obey this Scripture. God does not say call your family physician...He does not say, call the*

*doctors and let them give medicines and drugs, and God will cause the medicines and drugs and dope to cure you... Instead God says call GOD'S MINISTERS. And let them PRAY, anointing with oil (the type and symbol of the Holy Spirit). Then GOD PROMISES He will HEAL YOU!*"<sup>[114]</sup> Various members suffered discomfort and even death due to reluctance to resort to medical help, yet Armstrong made use of doctors and medicine later in his life.<sup>[115]</sup>

- Divorce was strongly discouraged. At times this was strictly enforced by requiring members that had previously divorced and remarried to divorce their new spouses so that they were not “living in adultery”.<sup>[116]</sup> Armstrong acknowledged that this belief caused significant hardship for many members but argued that this hardship was the consequent result of the earlier 'sin of divorce'.<sup>[116]</sup> This policy was changed by Armstrong at a later time. Interracial marriage was also discouraged as Armstrong emphasized requirements for Ancient Israelites (who, according to *British Israelism*, became Western Europeans) to remain racially and religiously separate from other nations.<sup>[117]</sup>
- As the Bible teaches that “the body is the temple of God’s Spirit,” Armstrong believed that it should therefore be kept in good health and presented in a manner glorifying to Christ. Members were consequently expected to conform to strict dress codes.<sup>[118][119]</sup> Long hair and piercings were not allowed for men, whereas makeup and short hair were frowned upon for women. Members were expected to dress conservatively and modestly, and required to do so for church. Smoking was considered to be a spiritual sin<sup>[120]</sup> and was grounds for a minister to refuse baptism. Critics contend that these requirements base salvation on the 'teachings of men' rather than the grace of God or the instructions of the Bible.<sup>[121]</sup>
- Armstrong concluded that a third resurrection would take place, in which the incorrigibly wicked and those who had been converted (baptized members of WCG) but had 'fallen away' (left WCG) and who also had not repented in the “Great Tribulation” would be resurrected and sentenced to eternal death in the 'lake of fire.' Critics reject this interpretation.<sup>[122]</sup>

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- Assyria-Germany connection

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## 3.13 Further reading and video resources

### 3.13.1 Pro-Armstrong

- *Herbert W. Armstrong Searchable Library* His writings before they were edited by the Philadelphia Church of God which now owns the copyrights to some of his works.
- Herbert W. Armstrong Compendium
- The World Tomorrow Broadcast

### 3.13.2 Anti-Armstrong

- About Our Founder, Worldwide Church of God
- *The Painful Truth. A collection of Facts, Opinions and Comments from survivors of Herbert W. Armstrong, Garner Ted Armstrong, The Worldwide Church of God and its Daughters.*
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## Chapter 4

# The Plain Truth

The *Plain Truth*, a free of charge monthly magazine was first published by the founder of The Radio Church of God, later named The Worldwide Church of God, Herbert W Armstrong in 1934 as a typed document; gradually developing into an international free of charge news magazine sponsored by WCG church membership.

In 1986, The Plain Truth domestic circulation had reached 8.4 million (contrasted with Time magazine's circulation of 5.9 million in 1986). At its peak, subscriptions to The Plain Truth in the United States reached near 1 in 8 households. International subscriptions such as New Zealand's 1 in 20 households were popular. The Plain Truth was published in seven languages.

After Armstrong's death in 1986, the WCG leadership sought to repudiate the core principles of WCG Church doctrine and eventually quashed all publication of Armstrong's writings; eventually even changing the name of the organization, offering magazine subscriptions for sale and embracing protestantism.

The magazine is no longer in print. Two unrelated organizations currently publish a magazine under the same name: one in the United States and one in the UK.

### 4.1 External links

- [Plain Truth Ministries](#)
- [The Plain Truth, U.K. edition](#)
- [Archived issues](#)

## Chapter 5

# The World Tomorrow (radio and television)

*The World Tomorrow* is a radio and television half-hour program which had been sponsored by the Radio Church of God (later renamed Worldwide Church of God (WCG) while under the direction of Herbert W. Armstrong). It originally ran from 1934 to 1994.<sup>[1]</sup> A 15-minute version of the radio program (but under varied translations of *The World Tomorrow* name) was broadcast by various speakers in the French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish languages. The World Tomorrow television program is in current production after having resumed in 2004, and airs in numerous major U.S. television markets. The rights to the name were obtained by the Church of God, Worldwide Ministries of Sevierville, Tennessee, through the United States Patent and Copyright office.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 5.1 Radio

Herbert W. Armstrong secured a temporary 15-minute slot on KORE, Eugene, Oregon on October 9, 1933. This became a permanent half-hour slot on January 7, 1934. This broadcast was originally called the Radio Church of God after the church that sponsored the program.

Herbert W. Armstrong created the program and founded the church. Following the 1939 World's Fair in New York the broadcast was renamed *The World Tomorrow* following the theme of the fair, "the World of Tomorrow." In 1968 the Radio Church of God changed its name to the Worldwide Church of God.

### 5.2 Television

There are three eras of *The World Tomorrow* on television.

#### 5.2.1 1950s

The first era featured Herbert W. Armstrong speaking from a Hollywood sound stage in the 1950s before the advent of videotape when all syndicated programs had to be recorded on film. The original series was shown on a portion of the ABC Television Network for half an hour, once a week in black and white.

#### 5.2.2 1967 to 1994

The second era began in 1967 beginning with black and white before changing to color in 1968. These continued well into the 1980s. The presenter was originally Garner Ted Armstrong and then following his departure from his father's church in mid 1978 and subsequent founding of his own church, the Church of God International,<sup>[3]</sup> Herbert W. Armstrong resumed the presentation. The thrust of the broadcasts was largely to present how current events in the world tied into the

church's views of **Biblical prophecies**. Both the radio and televisions of *The World Tomorrow* invariably informed their audience how to receive the church's **magazine**, *The Plain Truth*, the content of which was largely similar to that of the broadcasts.

Following Armstrong's death in 1986, the television program was presented by **David Hulme**, David Albert, Richard Ames and Ronald Kelley on a rotating basis until 1994 when doctrinal shifts in the Worldwide Church of God and declining revenues led to the program's cancellation.<sup>[4]</sup>

### 5.2.3 2004 to present

The third era began in 2004 with the acquisition of *The World Tomorrow* trademark by The World Tomorrow Evangelistic Association. This third installment of "The World Tomorrow" television program is presented by Leon Daniels and other guest hosts. In the spring of 2014, archived broadcasts hosted by Herbert W. Armstrong copied from the U.S. Library of Congress national archives, began to air once again. The World Tomorrow regular presenter of recent years, Dr. Bruce Horne, died May 22, 2014. The World Tomorrow can now be seen on national television beginning December 6th, 2014. It airs at 8:00am EST on 279 cable stations of [www.TheWalkTV.com](http://www.TheWalkTV.com) sabbath mornings, every Saturday. The World Tomorrow with Herbert W. Armstrong airs immediately following his son Garner Ted Armstrong's telecast, which airs just preceding The World Tomorrow, at 7:30am EST on [www.TheWalkTV.com](http://www.TheWalkTV.com). Garner Ted Aukerman is in current talks to become the new host of The World Tomorrow, after having declined the producer's requests for the past three years that he become the program's presenter.

## 5.3 Format

The programs originated daily in a half-hour format, primarily from a studio located on the campus of **Ambassador College** in Pasadena, California, which was owned and operated by the church as a then-unaccredited liberal arts institution. Other studios were located at Ambassador College, **Bricket Wood**, Herts, England and Ambassador College (later accredited as **Ambassador University**) at Big Sandy, Texas, USA.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 1958, **Garner Ted Armstrong**, youngest son of Herbert Armstrong and his wife Loma Armstrong, took over the narration of the half-hour all-talk presentation. The voice and style of **Garner Ted Armstrong** was often compared to that of news commentator **Paul Harvey**, whom Armstrong attempted to emulate.<sup>[6]</sup>

The program was introduced and concluded by the voice of Hollywood radio and television announcer **Art Gilmore**. *The World Tomorrow* concluded with an early Hollywood-produced music jingle over which Art Gilmore gave the program address which varied according to the country that it was being aired in, or where its broadcast was intended to be received.<sup>[7]</sup>

### 5.3.1 International versions

A 15-minute and usually once-a-week version of the same program (but under varied translations of *The World Tomorrow* name but which are also now-defunct), was broadcast by various speakers in the French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish languages.<sup>[8]</sup>

- **French:** The French language edition was primarily aired in parts of **Canada** and **Haiti** over several local stations and in Europe over the super-power station **Europe 1**. The presenter was **Dibar Apartian** who recorded the programs in the same studio used by Herbert W. and later Garner Ted Armstrong on the Pasadena, California campus of Ambassador College. The program was also supported by a French-language edition of *The Plain Truth* magazine.
- **German:** The German language edition was primarily aired in Europe over **Europe 1**. The presenter was a graduate of Ambassador College in Pasadena where the program was recorded. The program was supported by a German language edition of *The Plain Truth* magazine.
- **Italian:** The Italian language edition was primarily aired in **Montreal** and **Toronto**, Canada over two local stations. The presenter was also a graduate of Ambassador College in Pasadena where the program was also recorded.

- **Russian:** The Russian language edition was primarily aired for a short period of time in the 1950s-1960s over the super-power station **Radio Monte Carlo**, which was beamed towards the **USSR**. The presenter was a Russian language Hollywood presenter who both translated English scripts and then recorded the programs.
- **Spanish:** The Spanish language edition was primarily aired in parts of **South America**, although it was also aired from **Porto, Portugal**. The original presenter was **Dr. Benjamin Rea** who was Vice-Chancellor of **Ambassador College** at **Bricket Wood** in **Hertfordshire**, **England** which is where he recorded the programs in the radio studio located on the campus. The program was also supported by a Spanish language edition of *The Plain Truth* magazine.

## 5.4 Rights to use title

The rights to the name of *The World Tomorrow* broadcast were obtained in 2004 by Earl and Shirley Timmons, who were longtime friends of Garner Ted Armstrong and his wife Shirley Hammer Armstrong, and founder Herbert W. Armstrong. The rights to the program name were granted by the United States Patent Office upon approval of the Timmons application.

The Timmons, members of WCG, and Garner Ted Armstrong's Church of God International and Intercontinental Church of God, split from the Armstrong organization after the death of Garner Ted Armstrong and formed a breakaway independent group named Church of God, Worldwide Ministries with its headquarters in Sevierville, Tennessee.<sup>[9]</sup>

## 5.5 Archived episodes

Senator Bob Dole ordered the preservation of all copies of *The World Tomorrow* broadcast episodes from 1972 through 1986 in the Film and Television archives of the United States Library of Congress. Dole was in attendance at the Anwar Sadat White House state dinner with Garner Ted Armstrong on April 4, 1977. The dinner was hosted by then President Jimmy Carter.<sup>[10]</sup> *The World Tomorrow* hosted by *Herbert W. Armstrong* along with the *Garner Ted Armstrong* 1970's television broadcasts, are the only television programs of a religious and biblical nature that are preserved in the national archives.

Garner Ted Armstrong became a personal friend to Anwar and Jehan Sadat after doing a series of interviews with the former Egyptian president for *The World Tomorrow* broadcast. GTA had also done a series of programs entitled Agriculture and the American Farmer, and Senator Dole was serving on the Senate committee for agriculture, at the time.

The Library of Congress collection was unknown to exist until it was discovered mid April 2009. Garner Ted Aukerman was searching for a hardback copy of Garner Ted Armstrong's 1981 book "Peter's Story", to include in the annual fall Feast of Tabernacles church raffle, when he discovered the preserved archived broadcasts. Aukerman, a baptized member and supporter of the Armstrong evangelistic association and church, received a phone call from Dole's personal assistant who confirmed his inquiry the Senator did indeed instruct the broadcasts preserved, after the Senator learned the younger Armstrong split with the elder on June 28, 1978. Aukerman subsequently spoke with Art Gilmore three months prior to Gilmore's passing, and obtained his written permission to use Gilmore's archived voice over work for re-airing and repackaging the archived broadcasts. Three copies of the archived Library of Congress Garner Ted Armstrong program collection have been repackaged and aired by Mark Armstrong, eldest son of Garner Ted Armstrong, who serves as the shows producer and President of Operations of the organization.<sup>[11]</sup>

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- [4] "No More World Tomorrow", *Ambassador Report*, Issue 55, May, 1994

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## Chapter 6

# Ambassador College



*Seal of Ambassador College*

**Ambassador College** (1947—1997) was a four-year, liberal arts college run by the Worldwide Church of God. The college was established in 1947 in Pasadena, California by radio evangelist Herbert W. Armstrong, leader of what was then the Radio Church of God, later renamed the Worldwide Church of God. The college was approved by the State of California to grant degrees.

In 1960 a second campus was opened at Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire, England, and in 1964 a third campus was opened in Big Sandy, Texas. At the time Ambassador closed for financial reasons in May 1997 it had operated for 50 years and had become regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

## 6.1 Brief history

The history of Ambassador College was tied to the development of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God. The name *Radio Church of God* was initially selected, in the 1930s, because Herbert Armstrong started the church as a radio program in Eugene, Oregon. The ministry grew to include publishing, and congregations were formed, first in the United States and then gradually in other countries—hence, the eventual name change to “Worldwide Church of God.”

After Armstrong moved his operations to California, he founded Ambassador College in 1947. The college began acquiring lavish mansions on Orange Grove Blvd. in Pasadena, culminating in the acquisition of the Hulett C. Merritt mansion, formerly belonging to an iron ore mining magnate, in the late 1950s. Hulett Merritt was the Chairman of US Steel and made his millions on the Mesabi Iron Range in Minnesota. Hulett Merritt’s estate “Villa Merritt Ollivier” in Pasadena was built on four acres for \$1,100,000 in 1905 - 1908. This area on South Orange Grove Avenue was referred to locally as “Millionaires’ Row” (per the City of Pasadena’s Architectural and Historical Survey of 1997). Mr. Merritt’s mansion was located at 99 Terrace Drive and bounded on the north by Olcott Place and on the west by South Orange Grove Avenue. After Hulett Sr.’s death in January 1956, the property was purchased by Herbert W. Armstrong from Hulett’s four surviving grandchildren in October 1956 because it was adjacent to Ambassador College. Villa Merritt Ollivier was renamed “Ambassador Hall” and Ambassador College subsequently obtained permission to close Terrace Drive. Thereafter, the residence and street address for the former Villa Merritt Ollivier was renamed Ambassador Hall, 100 S. Orange Grove Blvd., Pasadena.

This mansion with a sunken Italian garden, a rosewood-paneled room, and a basement swimming pool, became the centerpiece of the campus until the Auditorium was built. The College built two modern classroom buildings flanking Ambassador Hall and the formal Italian sunken garden, with a plaza in the center, joined the three buildings and the garden into an academic center. Hulett Sr.’s former mansion was also featured as the opening scene in the old TV show “The Millionaire” looking upward from the tree lined steps towards the hill with the mansion and towering palms above. The Pasadena 1997 Architectural Survey stated at Page 2.1-33: “The Hulett C. Merritt’ House is significant as the residence of one of Pasadena’s most celebrated millionaires and foremost residents of South Orange Grove Blvd.”

The college was designed to prepare youth for life and service in church. In the earliest days of Ambassador, male students frequently graduated into the ministry of the church. By the 1970s, that occurred less frequently. As the church grew in membership, in the 1960s and 1970s, a smaller and smaller proportion of applicants could be accepted, some applicants having to wait years for acceptance.

The motto of the college was *Recapturing True Values*. Although most students of the college were associated with the church, it was not a strict requirement. Nonetheless, the students and faculty were primarily those with church affiliation.

Throughout most of its history, Ambassador operated under state approval or its international equivalent. Regional accreditation was not sought, primarily because it required that the college have a functioning board that was separate and distinct from the church’s administration.<sup>[1]</sup> Armstrong resisted this requirement, apparently concerned that such a separation would result in the truth of God, as he believed and taught it to be, being watered down at an Ambassador that would become increasingly secular. He held this opinion despite the fact that numerous accredited colleges and universities around the country were operated by the Catholic Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Christian denominations, without those organizations being required to alter church teachings.

The final phase of Ambassador began in the late 1970s and was characterized by constant uncertainty and indecision. The Ambassador campus at Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire, England, was closed in 1974, as operating funds were deemed necessary for other functions of the Worldwide Church of God. For similar reasons, the Texas campus was shuttered in 1977, and all students who wished to were offered the opportunity to transfer to the original campus in Pasadena,



California. In the interim the decision had been made by church leadership to pursue regional accreditation in California. However, in 1978 President **Garner Ted Armstrong**, son of college founder Herbert Armstrong, announced that everything would be moving back to the Texas campus,<sup>[2]</sup> with the California facility becoming a graduate school. Within months, however, the younger Armstrong was ousted from all positions in the church and college due to an unrelated scandal,<sup>[3]</sup> and Herbert Armstrong, recovered from a heart attack, announced that Ambassador was closing its doors altogether.

That stance was softened just as quickly, however, and the decision was made to continue operating Ambassador as a scaled-down academic institution more in line with a **bible college**. That began in August 1978. Eventually, Ambassador returned to full four-year status, operating with state approval but not regional accreditation.

In 1981, Herbert Armstrong decided to reopen the Texas campus,<sup>[4]</sup> which was still owned by the church. In 1985 he decided to close that campus again.<sup>[5]</sup> In January 1986 Armstrong died, and his successor as church leader, **Joseph W. Tkach**, decided to keep the Texas campus open.<sup>[6]</sup>

The roller coaster of closings and openings was possible only because Ambassador was not regionally accredited. State approval to grant degrees (a requirement in most states, including California and Texas) is all that had been sought by the institution.

However, the dynamic of higher education in the United States soon began to have an effect on independent, unaccredited colleges like Ambassador. For many years, regional accreditation was not required for colleges to open in various states—only state approval was needed. By the late 1980s, however, many states began to require that a college, after having operated for a certain number of years, would have to move from state approval to regional accreditation, or be closed. Ambassador was at a crossroads, in that it either had to seek regional accreditation, or reduce to a bible college offering diplomas rather than recognized degrees, or close its doors for good.

The board of regents of Ambassador, still comprising members of the Worldwide Church of God, decided to merge all operations at one location and seek regional accreditation. The decision was made to separate the college from the church's base of operations in California, and move all college operations to the Big Sandy, Texas, campus. The California college closed permanently in 1990.<sup>[7]</sup> Students on the Pasadena campus and many faculty members who were pursuing advanced degrees were transferred to the Big Sandy campus, which was in the midst of a construction boom to accommodate the influx of new personnel and to support the regional accreditation efforts.

Ambassador College at Big Sandy, Texas, began the process of applying for regional accreditation from the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**. Accreditation was granted in 1994.<sup>[8]</sup> That same year the college underwent a name change to *Ambassador University*. This new period of transformation was short-lived, however. For decades Ambassador did not have an **endowment fund** separate from the church. School officials had begun the process of establishing the first dedicated operating endowment in Ambassador's history, but there was not sufficient time to build the endowment. Doctrinal controversy within the Worldwide Church of God led to numerous splits and church spinoffs, and the resulting decrease in membership and contributions to the church led to a rapid decline in the annual financial subsidy the church had historically provided to the university. In December 1996 the university's **board of regents** voted to close the institution once and for all.<sup>[9]</sup> In May 1997, with the university having just concluded its 50th anniversary year, Ambassador closed its Pasadena campus doors. However, the Ambassador College legacy lived on in the form of **Grace Communion Seminary** (an educational institution affiliated with Grace Communion International (GCI), a member of the National Association of Evangelicals). Grace Communion Seminary is a business name of Ambassador College (AC), a California non-profit religious corporation with federal 501(c)(3) status, founded in 1947 at Pasadena, California, as a church-related liberal arts college. In 1990 AC transferred its student body to an affiliated campus in Texas. In 2003 Ambassador College, doing business as Ambassador College of Christian Ministry, began offering courses online in areas of biblical studies, theology, and Christian ministry, providing a diploma and a graduate program. Since 2005 the diploma program, under the name of Ambassador College of Christian Ministry, has continued as a GCI training program in Christian ministry, administered under the auspices of the GCI affiliate in **Australia** at [www.ambascol.org](http://www.ambascol.org). Grace Communion Seminary, administered from **Glendora**, California, limits its educational programs to graduate level courses in pastoral ministry. All programs are open to academically qualified men and women who desire to expand their education in biblical studies and theology and their service in pastoral ministry in the evangelical tradition.



*Seal of Ambassador University*

## **6.2 Pasadena campus (1947-1990)**

Aside from being the identified sponsor of *The World Tomorrow* radio broadcast for a time (although the costs for the broadcast were paid by the church), the college in Pasadena became locally well known for its Ambassador Auditorium worship and concert venue, which for 20 years was host to many renowned artists from classical music to jazz. The concert series closed in 1995. The auditorium was largely unused for a decade until a portion of the Ambassador campus was sold to interdenominational Maranatha High School and a smaller portion, including the auditorium, to HRock Church.

In September 2006, the Pasadena City Council approved the redevelopment of the remaining Ambassador campus space into the “Westgate Pasadena” complex, a large mixed-use development consisting of 820 condos and apartments as well as 22,000 square feet (2,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of commercial space.. In June 2008, a large portion of the project was foreclosed and several other related projects were canceled.<sup>[10]</sup>

In the Fall of 2010, TBS released the *Glory Daze* about 1980s college life which was filmed in the buildings and on the



*The Ambassador Auditorium and surrounding buildings, December 2008. The site is now owned by Harvest Rock Church of Pasadena, CA.*

campus of the former Ambassador College in Pasadena. In 2013, TBS released the reality show *King of the Nerds*, also filmed on the campus.

The former Fine Arts and Science buildings were demolished in 2013.

### 6.3 Bricket Wood, UK campus (1960-1974)

The Bricket Wood campus operated for 14 years at *Hanstead House*, a few miles north of London. The estate had belonged to *Annie Henrietta Yule* and her daughter *Gladys*, who used it for their *Arabian horse breeding farm*, the *Hanstead Stud*. The college operated in the house and grounds for fourteen years. Leading administrators on the campus included *Ernest L. Martin*, *Roderick C. Meredith*, *Ronald L. Dart*, and *Raymond F. McNair*.

It closed in 1974, and was sold shortly thereafter to the *Central Electricity Generating Board*. It was used as a management training facility, first by *CEGB* and then *HSBC*, closing in 2011. A housing development is now being planned. The athletic facilities are open for public use.

### 6.4 Big Sandy, TX campus (1964-1977, 1981-1997)

The history of the Big Sandy campus can be divided into six periods: 1) its use by the *Radio Church of God* as a festival center for the *Feast of Tabernacles*, local church congregation site, and *Imperial Schools* campus (1952–1974), 2) the initial period that the campus was open as a four-year college, 1964–1977, 3) the period in which the college was closed but continued to be used as a church meeting site, 1977–1981, 4) reopened as a two-year junior college, 1981–1989, 5) four-year consolidated campus, 1989–1997, 6) following the closure in 1997, remained vacant until the sale to the *International Alert Academy*, 1997–present.

The Big Sandy campus opened in the fall of 1964. Since the early 1950s, the campus had been used as a location for the annual *Feast of Tabernacles*. The campus closed in the fall of 1977, with students and faculty transferred to the Pasadena campus.

During the period from 1977 to 1981, the campus was used as a feast site and was used by the local congregation of the *Worldwide Church of God*. After several near sales of the property, the decision was made to reopen in the fall of 1981.

For a while, the Big Sandy campus included an organic farm, consistent with the college's emphasis upon personal health and bodily purity.<sup>[11][12][13][14][15][16][17]</sup>

When the campus reopened, it initially served as a two-year junior college, with students having the opportunity to apply to transfer to Pasadena after two years. In the fall of 1989, the campus returned to a four-year format.

In the fall of 1990, students and staff from Pasadena were transferred, as plans were underway to seek accreditation. Numerous buildings were constructed almost overnight, including five dormitories, an administration building, a music building and lecture hall, and an office building. Accreditation was achieved in the summer of 1994. However, doctrinal division began to occur a year later in December 1995, ultimately leading to the closure of the campus in 1997.

The campus is now the site of the International Alert Academy (Air Land Emergency Resource Team), and was used to accommodate refugees from Hurricane Katrina in the fall of 2005. The campus golf course, renamed Embassy Hills Golf Course, is now open to the public.

## 6.5 AICF - Ambassador International Cultural Foundation

Ambassador College also sponsored archaeological excavations in Israel. Together with a related Ambassador International Cultural Foundation it sponsored both the Ambassador Auditorium concert series and many appearances by Herbert Armstrong in the company of world statesmen and women. The two organizations also jointly sponsored educational projects in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Jordan.

## 6.6 Successor institutions

Several Ambassador graduates and former administrators have led efforts to replicate the school in other settings.

When Ambassador closed in 1997, the Worldwide Church of God established the Ambassador Center at Azusa Pacific University. This later gave way to the online Ambassador College of Christian Ministry, which is headed by Ambassador's last president, Russell K. Duke.

Former WCG minister Gerald Flurry established Imperial College in Edmond, Oklahoma, based a great deal on the Ambassador model. To avoid confusion with Imperial College of London, the school is now Herbert W. Armstrong College. One of the campus landmarks is a rock considered to have been used by Herbert W. Armstrong as a "prayer rock" when he lived in Oregon.

The United Church of God established the Ambassador Bible Center at its Ohio headquarters. The program is not accredited.

Garner Ted Armstrong, president of Ambassador from 1975 to 1978, established Imperial Academy in Tyler, Texas. However, student enrollment was quite small and the program is now defunct.

Roderick C. Meredith established the online Living University in the fall of 2007. The university is based at the Living Church of God's headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina. The chief executive officer is Dr. Michael P. Germano, former vice president of academic affairs at Ambassador.

Prophecies of Dystopic "Old World, New World" Transitions Told: The World Tomorrow radio broadcasts to the United Kingdom: 1965-1967; Eric Gilder and Mervyn Hagger. p. 205-222. Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest. ISBN 978-973-637-159-2. - with particular reference to Ambassador College at Bricket Wood in England.

## 6.7 Notable alumni

- Ryu Shionoya
- Daniel Truhitte, American actor
- Bill Guthy, co-founder of Guthy-Renker<sup>[18]</sup>

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## 6.9 External links

- Ambassador College - Alumni Community Website, historical archive saved on archive.org
- Ambassador Envoy yearbooks
- Information on Transcripts from Ambassador University
- Spherical Panoramas: Ambassador College Campus, Pasadena, California
- Ambassador Auditorium
- Sale of Ambassador Auditorium
- Harvest Rock Church Purchasers of Ambassador Auditorium and part of the campus
- Harvest Rock Church Photo Gallery Shows part of the old Ambassador College Campus
- Ambassador Report, a publication critical of Herbert Armstrong
- Auction of Ambassador College Library
- Ambassador College Pasadena Campus photos, circa 2004

## Chapter 7

# Grace Communion International

**Grace Communion International (GCI)** is an evangelical Christian denomination based in Glendora, California, United States.

Founded in 1934 as **The Radio Church of God**, Pastor General **Herbert W. Armstrong** had a significant, and often controversial, influence on 20th-century religious broadcasting and publishing in the United States and Europe, especially in the field of interpreting biblical **end-time prophecies**. Within a few years after Armstrong's death in 1986, the succeeding church administration completely reversed the denomination's doctrines and teachings to be compatible with mainstream **evangelical Christianity**, while many members and ministers left and formed other churches that conformed to many, but not all, of Armstrong's teachings. In 2009, the church adopted its current name.<sup>[1]</sup>

The GCI is a member of the **National Association of Evangelicals**, and has 50,000 members in 900 congregations in about 100 countries.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 7.1 History

#### 7.1.1 Beginnings

The Radio Church of God began with Herbert W. Armstrong, who in 1931 was ordained by the **Oregon Conference of the Church of God (Seventh-Day)**, an **Adventist** group, and began serving a congregation in **Eugene, Oregon**. On January 7, 1934, Armstrong began hosting a broadcast on a local 100-watt radio station **KORE** in Eugene. It was essentially a condensed church service on the air, with hymn singing featured along with Armstrong's message, and was the launching point for what would become the Radio Church of God. In 1933, the Church of God (Seventh-Day) split. Armstrong, who sided with the **faction centered in Salem, West Virginia**, fell out with the local congregation over various doctrinal issues, especially his espousal of **British Israelism**.

Although his views were rejected by the local congregation, he gained a growing following of his own, chiefly through his **World Tomorrow** broadcasts and the *Plain Truth* magazine. Armstrong moved to **Pasadena, California**. To facilitate the work of the growing church, he incorporated it on March 3, 1946, as the *Radio Church of God*. In 1947, **Ambassador College** was founded in Pasadena by the church, and the campus served as the church's headquarters.

The broadcast of *The World Tomorrow* went into Europe on **Radio Luxembourg** on January 7, 1953. In 1956, Armstrong published the booklet *1975 in Prophecy!*, which predicted an upcoming nuclear war and subsequent enslavement of mankind, leading to the **return of Jesus Christ**. He explained that the book was written to contrast the spiritual condition of the world to the modern inventions that scientists were promising for the year 1975.

In 1971 Armstrong criticized teachings that Christ would return in 1975 and that the church should flee to a "place of safety" in 1972, as no man knew the time of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36 and 25:13). Armstrong wrote that 1975 would be the least possible year for Christ's return.<sup>[3]</sup>

Because of his strong emphasis on these prophetic dates, the church grew quickly in the late 1960s and, on January 5,

1968, was renamed the *Worldwide Church of God*.<sup>[4]</sup>

Armstrong's son, **Garner Ted Armstrong**, who had been given the responsibility to host the radio and later the television version of *The World Tomorrow*, was formally **disfellowshipped** by his father in 1972. While church members were told at the time that the reason was Ted Armstrong's opposition to some of his father's teachings, Ted Armstrong later admitted that the actual reason was his relationships with many women. Armstrong, who resumed the broadcasting duties of *The World Tomorrow* program, did not reconcile with Ted before his death.

Armstrong's church was both authoritarian and totalitarian in its treatment of the membership. To maintain member loyalty, Armstrong's ministers indoctrinated them that they had been "called" by God into the only true Christian church on Earth and that all other Christian churches were Satanic counterfeits. If a called member were to question church doctrines, the member would be in peril of losing salvation and being cast into the lake of fire on Judgment Day. Further, ministers could arbitrarily disfellowship suspect members for any type of disloyalty. Disfellowshipping was openly announced in Sabbath services on a weekly basis but the reasons were rarely given. Still the church grew on a worldwide scale.

Armstrong taught a strict doctrine of tithing to the members. Ten percent of a member's gross income was to be given to the church, and yet another ten percent was to be saved for traveling to one of the church's annual feast days, the Feast of Tabernacles. Every third year, members were commanded to give a third tithe, slated to care for the "widows and orphans" of the church. Finally, the church observed seven high holy days throughout the year, on which members were asked to give offerings while baskets were passed. Every month Herbert Armstrong would mail out a co-worker letter to millions of non-members, as well as his members, in which he would claim that the church was on the verge of financial collapse. In reality, the church headquarters in Pasadena rested on prime real estate and had been modestly estimated to value \$300,000,000. Armstrong's mansion was on Orange Grove Boulevard, on the route of the annual Rose Parade. The church possessed several such mansions in that area, known as Millionaire's Row, and had built other large facilities on the thirty-acre property, leading up to the building of a spectacular concert hall dubbed *Ambassador Auditorium*.

Armstrong spared no expense in the building of his Auditorium. External walls were made of emerald **onyx**. The walls in the outer lobby were a rare pink onyx, and expensive chandeliers, including two that had been owned by the Shah of Iran, hung from the **gilt** ceilings. In the concert hall, the walls were decorated in **rosewood**, so delicate that visitors were forbidden to take flash photographs.

### 7.1.2 1970s

In 1970, the first of many groups to splinter from the Worldwide Church of God were founded. Carl O'Beirn of Cleveland, Ohio, led the group that may have been the first to leave, the Church of God (O'Beirn). Others followed that year, including John Kerley's Top of the Line Ministry in 1978; the Restoration Church of God; the Church of God (Boise City) in Boise City, Oklahoma; Marvin Faulhaber's Sabbatarian, a group also known as Church of God (Sabbatarian); and the Fountain of Life Fellowship of James and Virginia Porter. These factions survived well past Herbert Armstrong's death in 1986, most retaining the name *Church of God* because Armstrong had pointed out that this is the name God calls his true church in the Bible.

When the fall of 1972 came and the time to flee to a place of safety did not occur, there was yet another exodus of members. However, church leaders created a **red herring** to divert members from believing the prophecy had failed. They blamed the members themselves for not being faithful enough; then they proclaimed a new gospel—that Armstrong was to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation and kingdom on Earth, as commissioned in the last chapter of Matthew, before Jesus would return. Armstrong set about to do this with the help of some public relations aides and King Leopold of Belgium. Armstrong did end up meeting with many world leaders to whom he would present expensive gifts, then preach to them that there were "two ways"—one the way of giving and the other the way of getting. He preached this message until his death.

#### **Ambassador International Cultural Foundation**

During the sixties "Armstrong had sought to put into stronger action what he later termed God's *way of give*".<sup>[5]</sup> To Armstrong and his students, this was generally said to include "the way of character, generosity, cultural enrichment, true education: of beautifying the environment and caring for fellow man." He began undertaking humanitarian projects in underprivileged locales around the world, which sparked the creation of the church-run Ambassador International

Cultural Foundation (AICF) in 1975. The Foundation's efforts reached into several countries, providing staffing and funds to fight illiteracy, to create schools for the disabled, to set up mobile schools, and to conduct several archaeological digs at significant biblical sites. The church auditorium hosted, at highly subsidized ticket prices, hundreds of performances by noted artists such as Luciano Pavarotti, Vladimir Horowitz, Bing Crosby, Marcel Marceau, and Bob Hope.<sup>[6]</sup> Nevertheless, ticket sales could still not pay for the appearances of world-renowned performers, so Armstrong used church tithe money to subsidize these performances without informing his congregation of how "God's holy tithe" was being spent.

*Quest* was a periodical that was published monthly by AICF from July 1977 to September 1981. Originally published under the title *Human Potential*, the project was directed by Stanley Rader as a secular outreach of the church-funded AICF. *Quest* publishers hired a professional staff unrelated to the church to create a high-quality, glossy publication devoted to the humanities, travel, and the arts. The original name and design of *Human Potential* were conceived in the aftermath of Armstrong's poorly received *1975 in Prophecy!*, a publication which caused accusations of false prophecy to spread like wildfire. (The use of the year 1975 was defended by church ministers as a device to explain Biblical prophecy, by contrasting it with the scientific world's declaration of 1975 as the year of technological "Utopia".)

The AICF had become secular in its approach and thinking. Thus, the church began to cut back on its funding. Eventually, because the AICF was perceived to have strayed from its original goals, it was discontinued by Armstrong and its assets were sold to other interests.

### Scandal and conflict

In 1972, many members were disappointed that the events predicted by Herbert Armstrong did not come to pass. Most were unaware that Herbert Armstrong had been predicting the end of the world on the radio as far back as World War II, when he had proclaimed Hitler and Mussolini the Beast and False Prophet of the Book of Revelation. After the war ended, Armstrong attended a meeting in San Francisco in which a proposal was made to create the United Nations. He had also read a quote from Winston Churchill proposing the creation of a United States of Europe. This was a springboard for a new set of prophecies in which the European Union would rise up to become the Beast Power. While the European Union was an idea in the making, the nations of Europe were far from united, as the union itself was still another 20 years in the future. Because church literature such as *The Wonderful World Tomorrow*, *1975 in Prophecy!*, and many others had attempted to pinpoint the date of Christ's return, members continued to wait anxiously for the Second Coming. Armstrong cleverly never predicted a date in his sermons, but this did not prevent his evangelists (such as Gerald Waterhouse) from presenting detailed, step-by-step accounts of the Second Coming in their sermons, which included Armstrong himself as one of two witnesses of the Book of Revelation.

Herbert Armstrong began to speak openly and critically of his son. The senior Armstrong voiced disapproval of Garner Ted's practice of attributing specific dates to end-time prophecies. Garner Ted also spoke of greatly expanding the church's media ministry on the model of the Church of Christ, Scientist with its widely read *Christian Science Monitor*. Herbert W. Armstrong vehemently disagreed.

In a report in the May 15, 1972, edition of *Time* magazine, Herbert Armstrong was reported to have said that Garner Ted was "in the bonds of Satan."<sup>[7]</sup> The elder Armstrong did not elaborate, but it was speculated that Herbert was alluding to Garner Ted's alleged problems with gambling and adultery with Ambassador College co-eds, and to serious doctrinal differences. Garner Ted Armstrong was soon relieved of his star role within the church.

Garner Ted led a secret coup to gain control of the Church and displace his Father. But it was Garner Ted who was to be removed. While Garner Ted Armstrong was being removed, Stanley Rader was orchestrating the church's involvement in a number of corporations which Rader and Herbert W. Armstrong established. Critics saw Rader's moves as an attempt to seize control of the church. Rader characterized his involvement as that of an advisor and claimed that his advice was opening doors for Armstrong that a strict theological role would not have allowed for. Herbert Armstrong claimed that he did not approve of the establishment of the AICF, which Rader set up ostensibly to give the elder Armstrong a role as the "Ambassador for World Peace without portfolio".

As the church was experiencing internal crises, its external, public face was also crumbling. Church followers had anticipated the removal of the church faithful to Petra, Jordan, to await the prophesied apocalypse.

Despite the scandals of 1972, the church continued to grow in the 1970s, with Herbert Armstrong still at the helm. In 1975, Armstrong baptized Stanley Rader, who until then had been a practitioner of Judaism despite his association with



the church.

After being left a widower by the death of his wife, Loma, eleven years earlier, Armstrong married Ramona Martin, a woman nearly fifty years younger, in 1977 and moved to Tucson, Arizona while recovering from a heart attack. While Armstrong recuperated in his home in Arizona, he administered and guided church affairs through Stanley Rader and the church administration. The church continued to be headquartered in Pasadena.

With Garner Ted Armstrong resuming his role within the church, the rivalry between the younger Armstrong and Stanley Rader intensified. As the accusations of Garner Ted's past resurfaced, Herbert W. Armstrong started giving more responsibilities to Stanley Rader. This action was infuriating to the younger Armstrong, who thought it his birthright to take over as the leader of the Church. The adultery problems that reportedly had previously driven Garner Ted from the church allegedly continued unabated. In 1978, after a failed attempt to seize control of the Church from the Elder Armstrong, Garner Ted Armstrong was disfellowshipped a final time. Garner Ted moved to Tyler, Texas, and there founded a splinter group, the Church of God International. He later spearheaded a coalition of six ex-ministers who brought accusations of misappropriation of funds directed against Herbert W. Armstrong and Stanley Rader to the Attorney General of California. Contending that Herbert W. Armstrong and Stanley Rader were siphoning millions of dollars for their personal indulgences, the Attorney General's office seized the Pasadena Campus. This action was later determined to have been illegal.

Herbert Armstrong's daughter, Dorothy Matson, contacted her brother Ted prior to his final disfellowshipping and made a startling confession to him. She confessed that her father had molested her for ten years of her childhood until she finally was able to leave home. This infuriated Ted who met with his father to confront him. In a rage he shouted, "I could destroy you with this information!" This was how Armstrong described Ted being in the "bonds of Satan," "Just as Lucifer rebelled against God during his rebellion, so Ted has threatened me by rising up and saying, 'I could destroy you father.'" He conveniently left out why Ted could have destroyed him. This led to Ted's ousting. Distraught, Ted contacted fellow minister David Robinson who authored a book entitled *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*, which included the story of Dorothy's molestation. Robinson met with Armstrong in his Tucson home and told him his book included the story of the incest. Armstrong admitted to Robinson that the story was indeed true. When Herbert's wife Ramona found out she immediately divorced him. Armstrong was cross-examined in court about the incest, but he pled the fifth, refusing to incriminate himself.

### Receivership crisis

Garner Ted Armstrong blamed Stanley Rader for his two-time ousting from his father's church. Garner Ted and other former and discontented members of the Worldwide Church of God prompted the State of California to investigate charges of malfeasance by Rader and Herbert W. Armstrong. In 1979, California Attorney General George Deukmejian placed the church campus in Pasadena into financial receivership for a half year. The State of California went through the Church's records.

The matter gained the attention of Mike Wallace who investigated the church in a report for *60 Minutes*. Wallace alleged that there had been lavish secret expenditures, conflict of interest insider deals, posh homes and lifestyles in the higher ranks, and the heavy involvement of Stanley Rader in financial manipulation. No legal charges were leveled against Herbert W. Armstrong, Stanley Rader, or the Worldwide Church of God. Wallace invited Rader to appear on *60 Minutes* on April 15, 1979. Wallace showed Rader a secret tape recording in which Herbert Armstrong was purported to have alleged that Rader was attempting to take over the church after Armstrong's death, reasoning that the donated tithe money might be quite a "magnet" to some evangelists. Rader abruptly ended the interview.<sup>[8]</sup> This tape was later alleged to have been made about someone else, and illegally taped by one of the 6 embittered ex-members who had gone to the State of California with the accusations.

In the meantime, Herbert W. Armstrong switched the Worldwide Church of God Inc. corporations to "Corporate Sole" status, making him the sole officer and responsible party for the affairs of the corporations.

In referring to the investigation of the California Attorney General, Rader wrote *Against the Gates of Hell: The Threat to Religious Freedom in America* in 1980, in which he contended that his fight with the Attorney General was solely about the government's circumventing religious freedoms rather than about abuse of public trust or fraudulent misappropriation of tithe funds.

The California Second Court of Appeals overturned the decision on procedural grounds and added as dicta, “We are of the opinion that the underlying action [i.e., the state-imposed receivership] and its attendant provisional remedy of receivership were from the inception constitutionally infirm and predestined to failure.”<sup>[9]</sup>

Stanley Rader left his positions within the church in 1981. While remaining a member, he left the public spotlight as an attorney, and retired.

### 7.1.3 Armstrong’s death and doctrinal changes

On January 16, 1986, Herbert Armstrong died in Pasadena, California. Shortly before his death, on January 7, 1986, Armstrong appointed Joseph W. Tkach Sr. “... succeeding me as pastor general, in the difficult times ahead”.

As early as 1988, Joseph W. Tkach Sr. began to make doctrinal changes. Doctrinal revisions were made quietly and slowly at first, but then openly and radically in January 1995. They were presented as new understandings of Christmas and Easter,<sup>[10]</sup> Babylon and the harlot,<sup>[11]</sup> British Israelism,<sup>[12]</sup> Saturday Sabbath,<sup>[13]</sup> and other doctrines.

In general, Tkach Sr. directed the church theology towards mainstream evangelical Christian belief. This caused much disillusionment among the membership and another rise of splinter groups. All these changes, the church admits, have organizationally brought about “catastrophic results,” though they believe that it is spiritually the best thing that ever happened to them.<sup>[14]</sup> During the tenure of Joseph Tkach Sr., the church’s membership declined by about 50 percent. His son, Joseph Tkach Jr., succeeded him after his death in 1995.

Eventually all of Herbert Armstrong’s writings were withdrawn from print by the Worldwide Church of God. In the 2004 video production *Called To Be Free*, Greg Albrecht, former dean of WCG’s Ambassador College, declared Herbert Armstrong to be both a false prophet and a heretic.<sup>[15]</sup>

### 7.1.4 Women’s ordination

In 2007 the Worldwide Church of God decided to allow women to serve as pastors and elders.<sup>[16]</sup> This decision was reached after several years of study.<sup>[16]</sup> Debby Bailey became the first female elder in the Worldwide Church of God in 2007.<sup>[17]</sup>

## 7.2 Beliefs and practices

### 7.2.1 Current teachings

After Armstrong’s death, the church’s new leadership began a process of theological revision. The church now claims to be considered within the evangelical mainstream as shown by its acceptance into the National Association of Evangelicals. Its doctrinal summary highlights mainstream Protestant beliefs such as the Trinity, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that faith in him is the only way to receive salvation, and that the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of God.<sup>[18]</sup>

### 7.2.2 Historical teachings under Armstrong

Main article: [Armstrongism](#)

Until Armstrong’s death, the Worldwide Church of God adhered to its founder’s teachings. The most notable feature was Armstrong’s version of British Israelism, which was based on reading the account of Jacob blessing his sons (Genesis 49) as end-time prophecy. Armstrong saw in it a description of national characteristics of contemporary descendants of Jacob, and deduced that the United States, the British Commonwealth and several countries situated in northwestern Europe were actually the Lost Tribes of Israel. Armstrong held that these countries played a central role in the end times that were about to begin.

Armstrong rejected the doctrine of the **Trinity**, regarding it as a pagan concept absorbed into mainstream Christianity.<sup>[19]</sup> Armstrong contended that God was not a closed **Trinity** but was instead building a family through the Holy Spirit, which Armstrong considered to be God's powerful unifying essence guiding and bringing to remembrance those things which Christ taught. Armstrong contended that the Spirit is not a distinct personality like the Father and the Son. Armstrong also taught that members of the church would actually become members of the God family themselves after the resurrection. Armstrong rejected as unbiblical the traditional Christian views of **heaven**, **hell**, eternal punishment and salvation.<sup>[20]</sup>

The church strictly observed the **Saturday Sabbath**, **annual festivals** described in the twenty-third chapter of **Leviticus**, and strongly advocated the **clean meats** of **Leviticus 11**. Members were encouraged to tithe and to follow a dress code during services. They were discouraged from marrying outside the church. In fact, these practices are still observed in several of the Church's remaining branches today. Herbert W. Armstrong summarized his teachings in his book *Mystery of the Ages*, published shortly before his death. This book was the centerpiece of a titanic struggle between the Philadelphia Church of God and the remnant of the Worldwide Church of God under Joseph Tkach Jr. The battle went as far as the United States Supreme Court. At that point, however, the leaders of the WCG decided to drop the case and give over not only *Mystery of the Ages*, but also several other works originally written by Armstrong.

Under Armstrong's leadership, the Worldwide Church of God was accused of being a **cult** with unorthodox and, to most Christians, heretical teachings.<sup>[21]</sup> Critics also contended that the WCG did not proclaim salvation by grace through faith alone, but rather required works as part of salvation. The late **Walter Martin**, in his classic *The Kingdom of the Cults*, devoted 34 pages to the group, claiming that Armstrong borrowed freely from **Seventh-Day Adventist**, **Jehovah's Witnesses** and **Mormon** doctrines.<sup>[22]</sup> Armstrong contended that all Church doctrine could be proved simply and effectively through the **Bible**, and that one did not need to "accept on faith" any of the Worldwide Church of God's doctrinal beliefs.

## 7.3 Structure

### 7.3.1 International

Grace Communion International has a **hierarchical polity**. The ecclesiastical policies are determined by the Advisory Council of Elders. Members of the Advisory Council are appointed by the President. The President, who also holds the title of Pastor General, is chief executive and ecclesiastical officer of the denomination. A Doctrinal Advisory Team may report to the Advisory Council on the church's official doctrinal statements, **epistemology**, or **apologetics**. The President may **pocket veto** doctrinal positions he determines to be **heretical**. However, the President is also a member of the Doctrinal Advisory Team, and so he is aware of and involved in the activities of that committee.<sup>[23]</sup> Historically, Presidents, as chairmen of the board of directors, have appointed their own successor. This and the President's power to appoint and remove members of the Advisory Council have remained areas of concern even among those who applaud the church's doctrinal changes.

The Church maintains national offices and satellite offices in multiple countries. Pastor General Joseph Tkach, Jr. periodically travels worldwide in personal appearance campaigns to congregations in diverse intercontinental areas, such as Great Britain, Africa, and the Philippines. However, membership and tithe income originate primarily from the eastern United States.

### 7.3.2 Regional and local

In the United States, denominational contact with local assemblies or local church home small group meetings, i.e., **cell churches**, is facilitated by district superintendents, each of which is responsible for a large number of churches in a geographical region (such as Florida or the Northeast) or in a specialized language group (such as Spanish-speaking congregations).

Local churches are led by a senior pastor, pastoral leadership team (with one person designated as a congregational pastoral leader), each of which is supervised by a district pastoral leader. Some senior pastors are responsible for a single local church, but many are responsible for working in two or more churches. Salary compensation for the paid local church pastor, if available, is determined by the local church.

Most local church groups retain the long-standing traditional policy of meeting in leased or rented facilities for meetings or services. The trend since 2000, however, has been to adopt a local church setting blending into the local milieu with headquarters retaining administrative oversight functions. As of 2005, the church established a new computer system of financial checks and balances for church budgets at the local level. Also, GCI now mandates a local Advisory Council, which includes a number of volunteer ministry leaders (some of whom are also called deacons), and often additional elders or assistant pastors.

## 7.4 Finances

The early Worldwide Church of God used a three-tithe system, under which members were expected to give a tithe or ten percent “of their increase,” usually interpreted as a family’s income.

- The first tithe, 10 percent of a member’s total income, was sent to church headquarters to finance “the work”, which was all operations of the church, as well as broadcasting and publishing the church’s message.
- The second tithe was saved by the individual member to fund the member’s (and his family’s) observance of the annual holy days, especially the 8-day-long Feast of Tabernacles. Unlike the first tithe, these funds were not sent into the church but retained by the member.
- A third tithe was required in the third and sixth years of a personal seven-year tithing cycle, and it was also sent to headquarters. The third tithe was used to support the indigent, widows, and orphans - distribution was decided privately at the discretion of the ministry.

In contrast to many other churches’ religious services, the practice of WCG was not to pass around offering plates during weekly church services but only during holy day church services (seven days each year). These funds were considered “freewill offerings” and regarded as entirely separate from regular tithes. The church also gathered funds in the form of donations from “co-workers,” those who read the church’s free literature or watched the weekly TV show but did not actually attend services.

Under Joseph W. Tkach Sr., the mandatory nature of the church’s three-tithe system was abolished, and it was suggested that tithes could be calculated on net, rather than gross, income. Today, the GCI headquarters has downsized for financial survival. The denomination sold much of its property, including sites used for festivals, campsites built for teenagers, its college campuses, and private aircraft. They discontinued publishing all the books, booklets and magazines published by Armstrong.

To further economize, the church sold its properties in Pasadena and purchased an office building in Glendora, California. Formerly, the church’s membership—meeting in rented halls on Saturdays such as public school buildings, dance halls, hotels and other venues—sent all tithe donations directly to the denomination. Under the new financial reporting regime, local churches are permitted to use 85% of funds for locally for ministry, including constructing local church buildings for use by the congregations. As of 2007, 85 percent or more of all congregational donations stay in the local area, with 15 percent going to the church’s headquarters in Glendora for ministerial training and support, legal services, and denominational administration.

## 7.5 Related denominations

From the 1970s through to the 1990s several of the *Sabbatarian Churches of God* that adhered to some of Armstrong’s teachings separated from WCG. Due to the significant doctrinal changes which occurred in WCG throughout the 1990s, the largest percentage of ministers and members left WCG during this decade. This resulted in the formation of many denominations. There is significant overlap in their teachings with those of Herbert W. Armstrong. Most claim to teach “all” of the truths restored through Herbert W. Armstrong, most notably the *Philadelphia Church of God* (1989). The “PCG” purchased the copyright to several of the books and booklets of Herbert W. Armstrong and systematically changed both the wording, content and meaning of what Armstrong wrote. They maintain that Armstrong was right and that they are preaching and teaching the very same teachings and are in fact a continuation of the parent WCG.

Global Church of God, the Living Church of God (1993, 1998), United Church of God (1995), and the Restored Church of God (1998).<sup>[24]</sup> The United Church of God (UCG) is the largest of these denominations.<sup>[25]</sup>

- Church of God International (org. 1978)
- Philadelphia Church of God (org. 1989)
- Twentieth Century Church of God (org. 1990)
- Church of God (Philadelphia Era) (org. 1991)
- Church of the Great God (1992)
- Global Church of God (1992)
- United Church of God (1995)
- Church of God Fellowship (1992)
- Living Church of God (1998)
- Restored Church of God (1998)
- Church of God, an International Community (1998)
- Pacific Church of God (2009)
- Church of God, a Worldwide Association (2010)

Most teach that they are the continuation of the WCG and many have also rewritten Armstrong's books and booklets. Some have altered them to fit the splinter church's particular church doctrines.

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## 7.7 Notes

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- Gerald Flurry, *Malachi's Message to God's Church Today*. “A thorough explanation of *how* and *why* the Worldwide Church of God rejected Herbert Armstrong's teachings, and how to hold fast to Herbert Armstrong's teachings.”
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## 7.8 External links

- Grace Communion International official website
- Statement of beliefs
- Writing of H.W. Armstrong
- Archive of the *Ambassador Report* publication published from 1975 through 1999
- Exit & Support Network—aiding those spiritually abused by Worldwide Church of God and offshoots
- God's Work NOW Holding fast to the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong
- Herbert W. Armstrong Searchable Library
- *Bad News Religion: The Virus That Attacks God's Grace* by Greg Albrecht, World Publishing (2004), ISBN 0-529-11954-4
- *Journal: News of the Churches of God* independent non denominational monthly newspaper.
- Word of His Grace Ministries Support and Biblical Backing for ex-'Armstrong' members.
- “Called to be Free” Documenting how the doctrinal changes in WWCG occurred after Armstrong's death. From the point of view of current WWCG leadership.

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