Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people (Exodus 19:5).

PREFACE

Many authors have written previously about the life and work of Herbert Armstrong. As a polarizing public figure, he has been a lightning rod of controversy, eliciting strong responses both in reproach and in defense. Quite a few therefore have sought to capitalize upon his notoriety, from one perspective or another. What then is the purpose for generating one more book about Mr. Armstrong at this late date? Has not everything been said that can be said? Are there not already enough comprehensive works providing sufficient perspectives from which to evaluate? Is this perhaps just one more attempt by an aspiring author to ride his posthumous coattails into the limelight? These are the questions you will be answering for yourself as you evaluate the material that follows.

By and large, current books about Herbert Armstrong fall into one of two categories: either they seek to laud him as the infallible last-day Elijah, prophesied to restore all things and to warn the world in advance of the return of Jesus Christ, or else they denigrate him, seeking to repudiate his legitimacy as having been an inspired servant of God at all. The former typically include much advocacy rhetoric, matched with an agenda to promote the author as the legitimate successor to Mr. Armstrong. These writers often claim prophetic biblical titles for themselves and seek to parlay an affinity for Mr. Armstrong’s work into a following for themselves. On the other hand, the list of derogatory works is long, and often demonstrates an author’s desire for some form of personal catharsis—through tabloid character assassination—to deal with
scars from past church association. There are some few authors who might be said to constitute a third category of writer. These have attempted to analyze the history of Herbert Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God from a detached, scientific perspective. Their focus is upon the "what and why" of member reactions, based upon specific stimuli from church association, but they typically concede no personal belief about God's actual involvement one way or another.

What about this author? To make it easier to get the gist of this work from the outset, here is a clear declaration of motive. You are not being asked to sift through hundreds of pages before the author's real intent finally emerges. You will receive that explanation right now, up front, and in plain language. There is no need to hunt for it by thumbing through the final chapters out of order.

This author is an admitted partisan, believing that Herbert Armstrong was indeed an inspired servant of God, sent not by his own will, but by the will of God to fulfill key prophecies of the Bible for the last days—before the imminent return of Jesus Christ to this earth. He believes that what emerged from the work of Herbert Armstrong was a manifestation of the true Church of God in this age, a phenomenon unlike any other religious work of our time. He believes that without the work of that particular man, none of us would understand the real keys to Bible truth, including who is God, what is man, and why this whole physical creation exists at all. For that reason, Herbert Armstrong will be considered in this book with the utmost respect and personal appreciation.

Notwithstanding, in contrast to the traditional zealots who have written books thus far, this author will show that Herbert Armstrong—although absolutely called and commissioned by God as an inspired representative of Jesus Christ in this age—departed from the correct path in his old age, not because he became evil-minded, but because of the overwhelming influence of men around him who did not really love the Truth as did he. This, too, was an absolute fulfillment of prophecy for the last-day Church of God, even though very few have ever come to recognize it. There is an absolute reason
that God allowed these events to transpire, and in fact He is the One who orchestrated them. It was necessary to prove every one of those whom He had called, to know whether we were merely following a man, or whether we had truly verified that Way of Life as a divine gift from God. It is the story of God’s ingenious work to test and to prove a called-out people, to prepare them for a glorious future as firstfruits in the Family of God. This book will make the case for the divine nature of Mr. Herbert Armstrong’s incredible work, and highlight the positive aspects of that work which endure today.

Another unique aspect of this written work includes shining a very bright light upon Mrs. Loma Armstrong, the faithful wife of Herbert Armstrong, who influenced him more than most begin to realize. It was during the time of her partnership with him that Herbert Armstrong produced such incredible results, and it was after her death that everything began to change. No other writer has noticed this, but ample proof is found in the historical record. More than any seem to realize, she was a key part of his final legacy.

Believing that Mr. Armstrong himself departed under pressure in the 1970s from the very revelation of God which he had once taught us all to hold dear, this author will be ridiculed and rejected by both the worshipful zealots as well as the Herbert Armstrong haters. Because this book will make the case for the legitimacy of his work under the authority of God, the haters will mock. But because this work will also show that Mr. Armstrong made serious mistakes in his old age which triggered the very destruction of the church that he loved, those partisans who accept no other reality than that Mr. Armstrong—as the "last-day Elijah"—was basically infallible, will heap ridicule with perhaps even more vehemence than the others.

The interpretation of church history you are about to explore is truly unique from that which has been published to date by any of these other writers. Whether you ultimately find the arguments credible or not, it is definitely a "different take" from any other major work published in the last forty years. It is not actually a "new take" at all, but one that has been much more obscure in comparison to the popular theories that abound today. If enough time has elapsed
to allow many to admit to themselves that these other "takes" are inadequate and somehow unsatisfying, perhaps the time is finally right to present an answer which may fill in some mysterious blanks.

What is the real reason for this book at this time? The author is pastor of one of those many remnant groups that came out of the Worldwide Church of God in past decades. He makes no claim to prophetic title nor any other grand commission for self-aggrandizement. He believes earnestly that the portrayal of events and circumstances documented in this work answers the key questions about why the work of Herbert Armstrong was so compelling, yet seemed to disintegrate in the end. Most of the evidence will be presented from the very words of Herbert Armstrong himself. You will not be asked to believe some wild and unsubstantiated theory of the author. When these facts are highlighted, and then organized into proper sequence, you just might be amazed to find that an incredible plan unfolds which reveals a divine tapestry of God's work that has still been operating uninterrupted through all of the seeming chaos. That work is still going on. There is still purpose and direction. That is the very good news.

Surely this author is just trying to get more members for his own church, right? Some will certainly believe that to be so. The community of former members of the Worldwide Church of God has become a very jaded bunch indeed. But come now! If one believes earnestly in a way of life that he thinks will lead to salvation, and he is willing to sacrifice personally to walk in that way, it is natural that he would desire fellowship with others who share in that same belief. And if it might just turn out to be the right way—as opposed to one of the myriad counterfeits being sold out there today—of course that would be another strong motivation for publishing. What author writes without the hope of inspiring others to find value in his perspective? Anyone who claims otherwise is being dishonest. Only the reader can determine for himself whether this work has any spiritual substance. Please put it to the test and determine that for yourself.
There is another reason for this book. It is not part of some grand scheme to try to do "a Work" like Mr. Armstrong did, with the hope of copying the success he experienced in building a large religious empire. That principle will become very plain in the following chapters. But there is definitely a spiritual motive: to be acquitted before God as a minister of Jesus Christ—to avoid becoming a hireling, and to seek out the lost sheep who have been scattered due to the corruption of Israel's shepherds (Ezekiel 34:2–5; Jeremiah 50:6). No grand commission to the world is claimed. But a responsibility in good conscience toward those called ones who have become troubled and confused cannot be ignored.

For whom then is this book really written? There are many out there in one of two broad categories who have provided inspiration for this work. The first includes those who were touched by the Worldwide Church of God to some degree in decades past, but who are still very troubled because they have never really found an explanation that makes complete sense of the collapse of that church. If you are one who feels there are still too many loose ends that make these other writers' conclusions seem forced and shallow, then this book is for you. Secondly, if you are one of those who only recently has discovered the teachings of Herbert Armstrong and are finding value in them for the first time, and you are struggling to reconcile all you are being told happened during the last seventy years in that original church, this book is likewise for you. Hopefully it will provide another perspective to consider as you seek to verify whether or not there is anything of real value in the unique life's work of Herbert and Loma Armstrong.