

# The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping

## Part 1

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Reactions To Harold Camping, Mr. Camping's End Of The World Predictions, His May 21st And October 21 Predictions, Harold Camping Has Been Wrong Before, Scriptures Regarding True And False Prophets Of God, Negative Effects Of False Predictions And Prophecies, Satan's Expendable Tools, A War Of Thoughts And Words To Cast Doubt Upon God's Word, False Predictions Encourage Endtime Scoffers, An Uncertain Sound, Darkness For Light And Bitter For Sweet, Ravening Wolves, Years Spent With A Misguided Cult, Lessons Learned From Cult, Let God's Word Be Your Only Guide, Not Necessarily Being Evil, Harold Camping's Erroneous Date Calculations, Earth Age And Flood Date, Revelation's Five Months, The Earth And Heavens Are Destroyed By Fire, True Prophet Of God vs The False Prophet, Followers' Reactions To Harold Camping's Prophetic Missteps, Quotes Regarding UFO Cultist And Christian Cultist Reactions To Their Misguided Leaders From Some Of My Earlier Articles, Camping's Core Group Of Followers, Is Camping Undeterred?

Harold Camping. Just hearing the name will immediately result in a variety of reactions. Some people will simply roll their eyes upwards in disbelief as if to say, "Please, not again!" Other people will quickly break out into a sarcastic smirk. Yet others might return a word or two of mockery, or possibly worse. However, at this late date, I suspect that very few people will offer a kind word, or a nod of approval, for this man, or for what he represents. In fact, a lot of Christians will no doubt feel embarrassed and ashamed, due to the fact that our Christian faith has become associated with Camping. In short, anyone who is at all familiar with the name Harold Camping will not remain neutral.

For those of you who may not be familiar with him, Harold Camping is an elderly, self-proclaimed prophet who predicted that Jesus was going to return to the Earth on May 21st of this current year -- 2011 -- at which time the Rapture would occur. Following this Earth-shaking event, during the next five months, after true Bible-believing Christians had been spirited from the Earth, Camping predicted that the world would be bombarded with plagues, earthquakes, wars, famine and other deadly calamities, before it meets its ultimate destruction on the 21st of October of this same year.

Yes, I know; you have heard all of this before. Ho-hum. But before you decide to quickly end reading this series, let me tell you -- in case you missed it in the title -- that I for one do not agree with Mr. Camping's interpretation of the Scriptures. I believe that Camping is simply misguided and dead wrong.

As a longtime Bible student, and being quite familiar with

the prophecies of the Books of Daniel and Revelation, as well as with the prophecies of Jesus Christ that are found in the Gospels, and with additional prophecies that are found in a number of the Epistles, I fully understand the current end-of-the-world hype. However, based on my personal understanding of said prophecies, I pointed out last May on the Endtime Prophecy Net Blog, that Harold Camping was way off-base in his assertions. At that time, I also noted that Camping was seriously misleading his followers by way of his erroneous broadcasts on his Family Radio Network.

According to a news article that I read at the time, Camping has won thousands of converts across the United States since he first began making his end-of-the-world predictions. The power of his doomsday message is such, that it has resulted in serious divisions occurring between members of his own family; that is, between those family members who embrace Camping's teachings, and those who reject his beliefs.

What I find so sad regarding the situation with Camping, is that similar to what I wrote in my 2007 series "Sorry . . . Jesus Is Not Coming At Any Moment!", this is not the first time that he has made such an erroneous prediction. As it turns out, Camping made a similar prediction in 1992, when he claimed that Jesus Christ would return in 1994. Well, it is rather obvious that the man was wrong in that case, as he is mistaken at this current time as well.

Now, as a Bible-believing Christian who has been reading and studying God's Word for over forty years, I too believe that everything that is stated in the Scriptures will indeed come to pass in God's chosen time, but I honestly do not believe that the time is now, as Harold Camping claims. If you want to better understand why I say this, then I encourage you to read some of my articles which deal with eschatology -- that is, Endtime prophecies and the end of the world -- that are found here on our Endtime Prophecy Net website.

One would think that rational people would stop and think to themselves, "Wait a minute! Camping has been wrong before, so why should I trust him now?" Yet despite this obvious fact, Camping's Family Radio Network broadcasts have still managed to attract thousands of followers, including what one would think to be hard-working, clear-headed American parents. As I point out in a number of other articles, the Bible is filled with verses which warn us of false prophets. In fact, it even advises us how we should respond to such false prophets, as you can see by the following verses:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."  
Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by heir means; and my people love to have it so: and what will

ye do in the end thereof?"  
Jeremiah 5:31, KJV

"For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD."  
Jeremiah 29:9, KJV

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."  
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."  
Matthew 24:11, 24, KJV

"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."  
Mark 13:22, KJV

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."  
2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."  
2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"  
2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."  
2 Peter 2:1, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."  
1 John 4:1, KJV

While I may seem to come across rather strongly for some of you, please understand that I do not doubt Harold Camping's sincerity as a Bible-believing Christian. However, having said that, we must all recognize that he is a misguided man.

Not only that, but my concern is that rather than advance the cause of Christ, as with so many other false, wannabe prophets who have appeared in our modern times, Camping's erroneous teachings are going to do the exact opposite. In other words, such false predictions and interpretations can only result in one thing, and that is in even more people hardening their hearts, mocking our faith, and being harder to reach with the Gospel of Salvation. With good reason the Apostle Peter wrote the following in his second Epistle:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."  
2 Peter 3:3-4, KJV

So you see, the more false prophecies that are pronounced, and fail to come to pass, the more our faith suffers harm; because not only do sincere Christians begin to look like gullible, naive fools, but non-believers begin to doubt every single word that we say, including the all-important message of Salvation which we try to share with them. In fact, personally, I can't help but suspect that the Devil himself might be behind this mischievous scheme.

In other words, as I have mentioned before, Satan sets up these false prophets through his deceptions, and then he humiliates them when their predictions fail to come to pass. Such people are Satan's expendables. He uses them, abuses them, and then he just throws them away once they have been discredited by the world. But Satan doesn't care, because he has accomplished his purpose, which is to sow more seeds of doubt in the Word of God. As I explain in other articles, it is indeed a war of words, and of thoughts and ideas, and our mind is the battleground. But the end result is that we not only have a long list of end-of-the-world false prophets who have appeared on the world stage since our faith was born two millennia ago, but we also have an increasing number of scoffers and mockers as well, who feel totally justified in their position.

There is another side to this issue, and it concerns how such false predictions and interpretations affect weaker Christian brethren. In writing about the Gifts of Tongues and the interpretation of Tongues, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote the following:

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"  
1 Corinthians 14:8, KJV

A visitor remarked in our Endtime Prophecy Net Chatroom that even though Harold Camping was wrong, his trumpet "was heard round the world, and it lasted for days!". While that may be true, what good did it do? How did it inspire belief in our Christian faith? It didn't. In fact, as I noted earlier, it did the exact opposite. Furthermore, since when has God made it His practice to use false prophets who preach predictions which fail to materialize, as a means to preach the truth? I don't find that method being regularly used anywhere in the Bible. I can think of only one example in the Old Testament

where God purposely sent a lying spirit, because the parties involved -- a certain unnamed king of Israel -- did not want to hear the truth anyway. Please refer to the story of the true Prophet of God named Micaiah which is found in the First Book of the Kings, chapter twenty-two.

So as I said, I find the idea of God's Prophets preaching misguided false prophecies and predictions in order that the truth might be heard, quite preposterous. In fact, what I do find in the Scriptures are verses such as the following one which expose the treacherous practice of deception, such as calling black, white, and white, black:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"  
Isaiah 5:20, KJV

In short, Harold Camping didn't just make an uncertain sound -- as Paul writes above -- he in fact made a false sound; a sound which can result in confusion and uncertainty amongst the flocks of the Lord. If there is a lesson to be learned from examples such as Harold Camping, it is that we all need to be very careful that we don't seek to justify or cover up when our fellow Christian brethren make such public mistakes which seriously harm our faith. As the Apostle James informs us:

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."  
James 5:19-20, KJV

As we saw earlier, Jesus did not hesitate to expose the false prophets in His own day. He even referred to them as ravening wolves. As such, we should not be afraid to do the same thing today either when it becomes necessary; and in my opinion, it does become very necessary when their mistake can have such a profound negative effect on the overall perception of our faith.

Please don't misunderstand me, or attempt to twist my words. I am not saying that Harold Camping is an evil, ravening wolf in sheep's clothing. As I stated earlier, Camping is probably a very sincere, dedicated Christian man who loves Jesus. I do not believe that he is purposely trying to mislead people. In fact, I think the same thing can be said for other Christian false prophets as well. Maybe not all of them, but at least some of them. In other words, they sincerely believe in their hearts that God has shown them certain things -- even certain things from the Scriptures -- and that they are preaching the truth.

I speak from personal experience, so you would do well to listen. If you read a sufficient number of my articles, you will piece together enough evidence to figure out that forty years ago, I too joined an organization which later turned out to be a misguided cult. Of course, I did not know that at the time. I was quite young, rather naive, and obviously very desirous to serve the Lord in some way. Then I heard about a particular Christian organization. Convinced that

joining them was God's Will for my life, I left my former life behind, I became a member of the organization, and I proceeded to dedicate the next fifteen years of my life to them entirely.

Like so many other people who join such groups, I became totally indoctrinated by them, I believed as they believed, and I preached as they preached. When they said that Jesus Christ was going to return in a certain year, I didn't doubt it for a minute. I preached that date as God-inspired truth, and I was very sincere about it, but I was sincerely wrong, because they were wrong. The year in question came and went, and Jesus still has not returned. Does this mean that God's Word is wrong? Of course not! It simply means that how they chose to interpret the Bible was wrong.

Have I learned anything from the experience? You bet! Not only have I matured as a Christian and gained both Wisdom and Spiritual Discernment, but I have also learned to trust in no one, or in anything, except in God's Word. Call me a hardened skeptic, but unless I have been fully convinced of a particular teaching or doctrine through the Scriptures, I do not accept it, and you would be wise to do the same. Let God's Word be your only guide. A little bit of skepticism is a healthy thing, particularly when it comes to questionable doctrinal issues. In fact, don't even believe anything that I teach, unless you are personally convinced of it from the Scriptures.

Now, obviously, during the years that I preached that Jesus would return in a particular year, I was not outright evil, or even intentionally trying to deceive people. I was simply convinced that what I had been taught was the truth; and who would not want to share the wonderful "truth" of the year of Christ's Return with everyone? So it is with people who join particular denominations, organizations, groups, cults, etc. Their leaders have taught them to believe a certain way, and trying to convince them otherwise may not be easy. They are not necessarily evil deceivers; they may simply be misguided in a doctrinal sense. Furthermore, as we all know, the older a person is, and the longer they have believed a certain way, the more difficult it is to change their mind. This may very well be the case with Harold Camping and similar misguided false prophets.

After I became aware of Harold Camping's Endtime predictions, I visited his website in order to determine exactly how he arrived at the conclusion that the date May 21, 2011 marks the Earth being 7,000 years old. His error was not difficult to find. In the opening paragraphs on his web page, he states that based upon his personal Bible studies, the Great Flood which swept the Earth in Noah's day occurred in the year 4990 BC. That date -- which intentionally makes his prediction fit what he has chosen to believe -- is incorrect; based not only upon my own Biblical studies, but upon the studies of many other Bible scholars and students as well.

For the record, many such people -- myself included -- place the date of Creation at approximately 4000 BC. As I explain in the article called "The Earth Is Under 7,000 Years Old!", my personal calculations -- which are based upon Biblical genealogies and other events in the Bible, as well as upon

historical data -- convince me that Noah was born when the Earth was just about 1,056 years old. The Bible informs us that the Flood occurred some five hundred years later -- when Noah was five hundred years old -- when the Earth was about 1,556 years old.

Now, using simple math -- and rounded figures for the sake of simplicity -- if 4000 BC was the date of Creation, that means that the Great Flood would have occurred about 1,556 years later, at which time the date would have been 2,444 BC, and not anywhere near 4990 BC as Harold Camping claims. Observe the following simple mathematical equation:

$$4000 \text{ BC} - 1,556 \text{ years} = 2444 \text{ BC}$$

In contrast, based upon his personal beliefs, Camping had to juggle numbers and dates so that the current year -- 2011 -- would mark the completion of 7,000 years of Earth history, as well as the beginning of the Millennial Rule of Jesus Christ. Thus, by placing the Great Flood at 4990 BC, it seems that he simply did the following:

$$\begin{aligned} 4990 \text{ BC to year } 0 &= 4,990 \text{ years} \\ \text{year } 0 \text{ to } 2011 \text{ AD} &= 2,011 \text{ years} \\ 4,990 + 2,011 &= 7,001 \text{ years since the Flood} \end{aligned}$$

Thus, according to Harold Camping, this year would mark the first year of the new millennium, which would herald Christ's Return, and the beginning of His Millennial Rule on Earth; at least that is the way that I understand what I read on his website a number of months ago. Obviously, I cannot remember everything that I read at that time, but that is the gist of it. On a side note, please note that I haven't updated "The Earth Is Under 7,000 Years Old!" in many years, and it no doubt requires a good update. Nevertheless, most of what it states is still valid information, if you wish to consider reading it.

But concerning misguided "prophets" such as Harold Camping, who preach specific dates or years for Christ's Return, let me again refer you to my five-part series "Sorry . . . Jesus Is Not Coming At Any Moment!". Three other related articles which come to mind which also touch on the topic of false prophets are the following:

The Office Of A Prophet  
Modern False Prophets And Worldly Ecumenism  
Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets?

What I find mind-boggling is the fact that even though Harold Camping was humbled and humiliated and fell flat on his face regarding his May 21st predictions, he hasn't quite given up on his "prophetic ministry". Camping now insists that he was just confused regarding some of his earlier interpretations, and claims that May 21st was actually an "invisible judgment day" which only occurred in the Realm of the Spirit. I would respect the man more if he would just say "I was wrong." So what does he now believe concerning his end-of-the-world predictions?

According to Camping's latest interpretations, the physical destruction of Planet Earth will now occur on October 21st,

without a lead-up time of five months, which supposedly was to have been marked by global calamities, according to his earlier predictions. For those of you who are not familiar with the Book of Revelation, while I haven't delved deeply into Mr. Camping's teachings, I am assuming that he derived the five-month period from the following verses that can be found in Revelation chapter nine:

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months."  
Revelation 9:5-10, KJV

Concerning the physical destruction of the Earth by fire, as I mention in a number of my own articles which deal with the end of this present world, Mr. Camping probably had verses such as the following in mind:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."  
2 Peter 3:9-14, KJV

So while some of Harold Camping's beliefs seem to have at least a partial Scriptural basis -- at least in a twisted sort of way -- nevertheless, like many other people, both Christian and non-Christian alike, I am left flabbergasted by his recent remarks, which he shared in a 90-minute speech that was broadcast online, as well as via his Family Radio Network. The fact of the matter remains that Mr. Camping has now struck out twice with his 1994 prediction, as well as with his May 21st prediction. Should we really expect any different from his October 21st prediction? Just wait until you hear what the Comet Elenin folks are saying regarding September and October of this year!

Allow me to again share with my readers a few verses that



are found in the Old Testament, which deal with the office of a Prophet:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."  
Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."  
Ezekiel 33:33, KJV

So there we see a clear contrast between a true Prophet of God, and a false prophet who is motivated by his own pride and vanity. In your opinion, which one does Harold Camping seem to represent? If not the former, then pray tell why.

At this point, one of the things which is of concern to me -- that is, aside from how Harold Camping's blunders will affect the overall perception of our Christian faith -- is how his followers will choose to react to his very obvious prophetic missteps. Obviously, as a result of my own former affiliations with a cult-like organization, I have a rather clear idea regarding how some of Camping's followers will probably choose to react. Allow me to share with you a few excerpts from some of my earlier articles where I discuss these issues. In part two of my 2010 series entitled "2012: New Age Deception And Psychobabble" I note the following:

----- Begin Quote -----

"This is a common reaction with cults and other manipulative groups. In other words, when a leader is exposed as a false prophet, the more dedicated followers will simply forgive him for his blunders, wash over his mistakes, and they will continue to place their faith in his writings, until the time arrives for them to purchase his next book, which many of them will gladly do."

----- End Quote -----

In part nine of my updated 1997 twenty-part series entitled "Nature of the Alien : ET's, Demons or a Government Plot?" I also state the following:

----- Begin Quote -----

"As I already said, we have heard of similar predictions like these for decades, from many self-proclaimed prophets, seers, psychics and contactees. Every single one of them has failed. Of course, as is usually the case, the leader offers a vague explanation which satisfies the most devoted followers, and they continue living in their state of delusion. Sometimes, the date for the predicted UFO landing is moved up, or else the followers are told that by our own decisions, we humans have helped to change the course of events. This is exactly

what occurred with the Nibiru prediction. Supposedly, Nibiru was going to arrive in 2003; now it is 2012, according to a few websites that I have visited."

"In short, a plausible excuse for failure is always provided. The psychic, prophet, seer or channeler must maintain their credibility with their followers at all cost; and the blind followers are usually quick to forgive their leader. I speak from personal experience, and have observed this firsthand. So these people who make predictions of massive UFO landings on a certain date, or who say that Jesus will be coming back in a particular year, or who claim that such-and-such will happen on a specified date, are committing a grave mistake; and it may in fact end up being their own grave, if they are proven to be wrong."

----- End Quote -----

So while some of Harold Camping's current followers are no doubt very disappointed, confused, wondering what to do, and in some cases are probably contemplating abandoning the man due to his previous failed predictions -- if they have not already done so -- nevertheless, there will be a core group of followers who will maintain undying faith in Camping's words and predictions, because they are just that deceived, and absolutely nothing will persuade them otherwise. As I responded to an individual who made a comment on the Endtime Prophecy Net Blog, while it may surprise some people, despite his rather obvious prophetic errors, the possibility exists that Harold Camping will continue making misguided prophecies and interpretations. If his 1994 false predictions did not sway or deter him, and if his May 21, 2011 false predictions did not stop him in his tracks, why should we expect him to desist from his foolishness now? Will October 21st make any difference? We shall soon find out.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping

Part 2

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Disavowing Cult Leader's Teachings And Rewriting The Cult's History Are Protection Mechanisms And Self-Preservation Tools Frequently Used By The Cults, Deceiving And Being Deceived, Indelible Mark Left On The Internet For Many Years To Come, Be Slow To Speak And Save Yourself From The Embarrassment Of Being Wrong, Undergoing Mental And Spiritual Renewal Process Through Studying God's Word, Difficulty Of Leaving The Cult,

Freed From Effects Of Cult Indoctrination And Brainwashing, Excerpt From "Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults", Anyone -- Regardless Of Age -- Can Become Trapped Within A Cult, Camping's Followers After October 21st, Is Camping's Group Really A Cult?, Doctrinal Disagreements Don't Justify Using Cult Label, Size Is Not Valid Criteria For Applying Cult Label, Majority Is Not Always Right, Articles Regarding Roman Catholic Church, Home Fellowships Versus The Powerful Denominations, Majority Denominations Engage In Psychological Manipulation, Dictatorial Pastors And Priests, Importance Of Doctrinal Unity, Freedom To Choose Our Own Christian Beliefs

However, I also suspect that once Harold Camping has made his departure from this current life -- he is quite elderly -- if his organization somehow manages to hold together, the members who remain within the group may gradually begin to disavow themselves of his more controversial -- and obviously flawed -- teachings. If they don't outright take that approach, then they may simply endeavor to rewrite the organization's history and claim that they were misrepresented by the media. In other words, they may possibly adopt the position that the media intentionally misinterpreted and purposely twisted what Mr. Camping actually said and taught.

Both of these approaches are self-preservation tools and protection mechanisms which are frequently used by cults. In fact, if the truth be told, they are used just as frequently by people, governments and organizations who have absolutely nothing to do with dangerous and deceptive cults. Let's face it; intentional deception is just part of the evil world in which we live. As we saw earlier, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."  
2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

There is a problem with these two approaches, however. If we consider the fluid nature of the Internet, and how quickly information propagates to the furthest corners of the world; not to mention the many archival websites which now exist; as well as the practice of many Internet users to download and store interesting information on their hard drives for future reference; it is going to be extremely difficult -- in fact, I would say impossible -- for Harold Camping's organization to completely erase the online history of their prophetic errors.

The same thing can really be said of any cult, organization, government or individual. Once information is out there in the wild, blue yonder of the Internet, it is out there, and it does not matter whether the information is true or false. Once we commit something to the Internet, we have left an indelible mark which will be very difficult to erase. In the case of misguided cults and false prophets, their own false prophecies and failed predictions will serve as a testimony against them for years to come, whether they like it or not.

This is one of the primary reasons why I always strive to be very careful regarding what I teach and write online. It is also why you won't find anything in my articles where I make

any attempt to provide specific dates for prophetic events. Without an outright, unmistakable confirmation from the Lord, it is utter foolishness -- and auto-destructive -- to do so. I learned this important lesson many years ago. Sadly, some Christians -- such as Harold Camping -- still haven't managed to learn it, and Camping is just one of many individuals who continue to spout of their Biblically-unsupported nonsense on the Internet. If you really want to be smart, then consider the wisdom that is contained in the following verses:

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise."  
Proverbs 10:19, KJV

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."  
Ecclesiastes 5:2, KJV

"A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."  
Proverbs 29:11, KJV

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."  
Matthew 12:37, KJV

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"  
Romans 9:20, KJV

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"  
James 1:19, KJV

In a word, if you really want to spare yourself from some unnecessary future embarrassment, then simply follow the wise advice that is contained in the previous verses, and keep your mouth shut, unless you are absolutely certain that a prophecy or prediction is of the Lord, and not just from your own mind, ego, vanity or even from Satan the Deceiver and the Father of Lies himself.

For those people who do choose to abandon Harold Camping's fold, I feel very sorry for them; because while I do believe that they are making the right choice to do so, I also know from personal experience that such people may continue to be affected by Harold Camping's erroneous teachings for years to come; and they may be plagued with doubts and confusion which may prove to be very difficult to overcome. They will in fact be forced to forsake certain mistaken ideas and beliefs, and will also have to rebuild their faith in and understanding of God's Word from the foundation, through a careful examination -- or re-examination -- of the Scriptures.

As I have explained in previous articles, as we allow the Light and Truth of God's Word to penetrate the depths of our hearts and minds, the darkness of delusion, false teachings, etc., begins to melt and burn away. As the Apostle Paul so eloquently writes in his Epistle to the Roman brethren:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."  
Romans 12:1-2, KJV

Undergoing this mental and spiritual renewal process will not be an easy task for some former cult members, because cult indoctrination and brainwashing is a rather powerful thing to have to overcome. It takes a very strong hold of one's mind, and it does not easily let go. In my case, it required a full ten years to really rid myself of my doubts, confusion and most of my mistaken beliefs. Of course, I was with a cult for fifteen years, so it really depends on how long a person has been exposed to and involved with a cult. Allow me to share with you a lengthy excerpt from my updated 1997 three-part series entitled "Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults". Hopefully, it will assist you in better understanding why it can be so difficult for a former cult member to fully break away from the influence of a cult:

----- Begin Quote -----

It is an established fact that in order for an individual to become a happy, successful and productive member of any type of regimented society, group or organization, such as the aforementioned cults, he must first be willing, or perhaps be induced, to surrender his free will for the supposed good of the whole. In other words, he must be transformed into an obedient member of the collective whole. One of the initial stages in this subtle process is to convince the new recruit that his former value system and/or frame of reference is wrong. To accomplish this, the new recruit is first made to doubt the validity of his old way of thinking by showing him its inherent flaws and weaknesses. To prove this point, the recruiter may point to the current dismal state of society, and attribute it to following the old way of thinking. Much of what the recruiter says will indeed be true, and the new member will find himself readily agreeing with much of the recruiter's words. At this point of the process, a bridge of trust has begun to form.

At the same time, the new member is made to question his own self worth. He will be constantly reminded of his own human imperfections in order to further weaken his resistance. The recruiter will paint himself as a friend whose only interest is to save the new member from the error of his old ways of thinking and doing things, and thus invoke appreciation from the new member. In short, a power struggle is underway in which the recruiter is slowly seeking to dominate the will of the new member.

While all of this is occurring, the new recruit is likewise being slowly bombarded with the new doctrine, so that the old frame of reference is forgotten, and replaced by the new. It is similar to a form of mental rewiring, or brainwashing, if you prefer. Any manifestation of doubt, or resistance, by the new recruit is looked upon as potential disobedience and even disloyalty and is immediately brought to the attention of the new recruit, usually in a subtle, intimidating manner. Being

as he wants to please his new spiritual masters, and show his worthiness, the new member will amend his ways, thus further diminishing his ability to think on his own. Of course, so that the new member doesn't become overly discouraged by the constant reprimands during the initial stages of this subtle process, he is also constantly reminded that he is chosen and special, and a part of a small elite group called either by God, his country, or the superiors of his organization. In short, the recruit's desire to belong to something, and to be accepted, is fulfilled, and he acquires a true sense of loyalty.

Eventually, after days, weeks or months, depending upon the character of the individual, the process is complete, and the member loses all free will, and becomes totally dependent on the recruiter for both his spiritual and material needs. He has acknowledged his own lowly state, and is thankful to even be a part of the movement, society or organization. He's also aware that his continued participation in the organization is conditional upon his willingness to remain submissive. At the same time, a double-psychology is brought into play whereby the new member is made to feel that in spite of the physical privations or psychological hardships he may have to endure, (even though the leaders may actually live quite well off in some cases), to leave the group would be equivalent to total failure on his or her part.

In the case of religious cults and organizations, quite often the new member is made to feel that to fail the organization, or the group leader, is equivalent to failing God; and living with the conscience of having failed God, or at least with the belief of having failed God, is difficult for anyone to bear. Religious organizations and churches refer to this "betrayal" of the faith as backsliding. A person who has been a victim of heavy indoctrination by a religious cult, and then chooses to leave, or manages to escape, can sometimes take many years to overcome the influence of the group; and sometimes they never do. As I noted earlier, while most people have the impression that thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate UFO cult died as a result of their death pact, the truth is that forty-one members actually died. Two of them chose to take their lives later; apparently believing that they had failed their leader and missed the boat on March 26, 1997; which is the day that the thirty-nine bodies were discovered in Rancho Santa Fe.

So as I was saying, the new member becomes just another part of the collective whole, and would never doubt that his older brothers, elders, superiors or whatever they call themselves, have his best interests at heart. From this moment forward, and once the indoctrination and brainwashing process has been completed, the new recruit's entire objective will be to do as he is told, and to simply be an obedient submissive member who will do his best to please his new masters, and carry on the work of the organization. After all, he doesn't want to acquire the reputation of being a troublemaker, and face the danger of excommunication. If he proves himself, with time, he may even find himself moving up in the ranks and becoming responsible for other members below him. He may acquire the status of being an "older brother", or possibly a leader.

Given enough time, the desire to please and impress the cult

leader can become excessive and reach a dangerous level. Cult fanaticism reveals itself in different ways. It may involve performing special deeds, such as having sex with the cult's leader, or engaging in heroic acts, such as being willing to die for the belief system of the group, or perhaps even to die in the line of duty in order to protect the cult leader himself. This has become known as the "martyr syndrome"; that is, being willing to die for a cause, or for a person, as a means to demonstrate one's worthiness, or even to convince oneself that one is truly worthy. In some cases, as we have seen, it stems from self-doubt and an inferiority complex which has been slowly instilled in the new recruit over the years by those who are seeking to dominate him."

----- End Quote -----

Having now read the previous paragraphs, perhaps you will be able to view cult members, and former cult members, from a more realistic and compassionate perspective. Similar to my own experiences of many years ago, as a result of a naive decision which may not have been properly and fully weighed and investigated, and which was perhaps made when they were rather young, many people have become trapped within cults of one kind or another, sometimes for many years; in fact, even for decades. As a result of their limited knowledge of the Bible, even older people can become mesmerized by and trapped within quasi-Christian and other kinds of cults. If you doubt that this is so, then consider the tragic story of Jim Jones and the People's Temple cult, which I discuss in the aforementioned series.

To reiterate, my main point is this: Anyone, regardless of their particular age, can become mesmerized by, deceived by, and trapped within a cult, if they are not careful. Young people are not the only victims of the cults. Some extremely bright minds have become members of cults. Conduct your own research if you doubt my words.

At this current time, we are now only five days away from October 21, 2011. As I have already stated, Harold Camping and his organization are convinced that wonderful things of Celestial Importance are going to occur on that day; namely, the Return of Jesus Christ. If we assume that they are wrong -- and I most certainly do -- it is only reasonable to also assume that on the following day, Camping's followers will be even more discouraged than they already are. I suspect that by that time, even more of his followers will be willing to leave his organization and disassociate themselves from it. At that time, they will require all of the spiritual support that they can get. If you feel so led, please pray for them.

At this point in our discussion, allow me to share with you a few personal observations I have made over the years, as well as offer a few thought-provoking questions for your personal reflection. While I have freely used the words "cult", "cults" and "cultist" in this commentary, let me draw your attention to the fact that at no point have I outright accused Harold Camping of actually being a cult leader, or his organization -- Family Radio Network -- of being a cult.

It is indeed true that I have amply described for you some of the subtle tactics which are often employed by cult leaders

as a means of subjugating and controlling their members. Even so, having never been a member of Harold Camping's group, I honestly don't know anything about their internal workings, and I really don't care to find out. Therefore, I have no legitimate grounds for accusing Mr. Camping of being a cult leader. Maybe someone else will step forward and make such an accusation, but it won't be me.

But there is more. Stop and consider this: If we begin to accuse other churches, denominations, organizations or people with whom we do not agree in a doctrinal sense of being cults and cultists, where does it end? As I have stated before, if we put two dozen pastors or theologians together in the same room and ask them to interpret the meaning of the same verse, it is possible that we will end up with as many as two dozen different interpretations of that same verse. It should be clear then that doctrinal disagreements aren't necessarily sufficient grounds for launching the cult accusation at each other.

In my view, neither should size be used as a valid criteria in determining whether or not a group should be labeled as a cult. In a stereotypical sense, cults are usually defined as small, secretive groups which embrace strange and potentially dangerous beliefs, and which are usually led by a charismatic leader who exerts overpowering control over the group. Out of curiosity, I decided to refer to the dictionary application that is included with my operating system, in order to find out how it defines the word "cult". One definition states "a relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister."

I must admit that my jaw dropped upon reading the previous definition, because it is so liberal, and so subjective. We must ask ourselves: Who is this "others" that the dictionary mentions? Furthermore, what makes their personal opinion of what is to be regarded as "strange or sinister" valid? The truth is that what may be considered strange to one person, may not be viewed as strange by another person whatsoever; and this doesn't just apply to religion either. As they say, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". What may be viewed as fashionable and beautiful to certain tribes of Africa may be viewed as strange and ghastly to people in America.

It's also important to realize that, contrary to the commonly accepted definition, not all cults are small; and it is in fact due to this very reason that some cults may not even be recognized as cults by a lot of people. It may surprise you to learn how many modern churches and denominations started out as small groups of people who embraced beliefs which, in their day, were viewed as a bit strange and unusual by the majority. Is it possible that numbers have somehow magically transformed some former cults into respectable denominations today?

Of equal importance is this question: Exactly who benefits from the previous definition, if not the larger established churches and denominations? If there is one thing that the Scriptures teach us, it is that contrary to popular opinion, the majority is not always right. Jesus and the Twelve were right, while the Scribes and the Pharisees were wrong. The lone Prophet Micaiah was right, while the false prophets of



the king of Israel were wrong. Elijah was right, while the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were wrong. Noah and his family were right, while the rest of the world was dead wrong, and they soon ended up dead as well. And on and on it goes. It becomes clear then that just because the majority holds to a particular opinion does not necessarily mean that it is right. One man standing alone with God is the majority.

This very same principle concerning majority opinion applies to modern Christianity as well. For example, the largest and most powerful church in the world today is not always right either. In fact, there are plenty of things wrong with it. If you have examined a sufficient number of my articles, then you will know that I strongly disagree with a number of the Biblically-unfounded doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. If you wish to further explore this topic, then I encourage you to read the following articles and series:

- [1] Cardinal Ratzinger's Rebellion
- [2] Have You Read The New Scriptures Yet?
- [3] History Of The Authorized KJV Bible
- [4] Lies And Deceptions Of The Roman Catholic Church
- [5] Lying Wonders Of The Endtime
- [6] Mary Worship, Christianity And Roman Catholicism
- [7] Our Pagan World: The Easter (Ishtar Goddess) Myth Exposed
- [8] Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism And The Trinity
- [9] To Pray Or Not To Pray? That Is The Question

Taking the previous thoughts a step further, let's consider another related topic which I also recently discussed on the Endtime Prophecy Net Blog. Let me ask you another question.

Why is it, that if a small group of dedicated Christians get together in the privacy of a fellow Christian's home in order to engage in Christian fellowship, perhaps participate in a Bible study, and share a potluck dinner, they are viewed with suspicion by their neighbors, perhaps suspected of being drug traffickers or some other danger to society, or perhaps even quietly accused of being some strange cult; yet if those very same people attend a church service on Sunday where there is likewise Christian fellowship, a Bible study before mass, and perhaps an after-service potluck or snacks as well, they are viewed as respectable members of society?

Let's take off the blinders. Can you see how our perspective has been purposely manipulated and warped by the majority denominations -- which are really government-controlled due to their tax-exempt status -- so that we have been trained to view any religious activity which occurs outside of a church building as strange and potentially sinister? Why is this? Is it right? Is this the freedom of religion that is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution? Furthermore, who really gains when this kind of attitude is implanted in people's minds, if not the majority denominations themselves?

Taking these points into consideration, is it possible that persecution against private Christian fellowships -- such as home churches -- is at least partly inspired by, promoted by and supported by the "respected denominations", who are fearful that they will lose their members to one of these home fellowships?

I have already mentioned some of the traits which have been used to describe cults. Now it is time for a bit of honesty.

The truth is that the way that certain church members blindly follow the teachings and doctrines of their pastors, priests, ministers, bishops, archbishops -- and yes, even the Pope in Rome -- one would almost think that said churches are cults, and their leaders, cult leaders. Some of them certainly exert a great deal of power and control over their members. In many instances, these dictatorial leaders have their congregations believing exactly as they believe themselves; and if a person does not fully concur with their belief system, out they go! You simply cannot become a member of that church unless you become one of the pastor's doctrinal clones.

This type of dictatorial pastoral attitude appears to be particularly prevalent in some of the smaller rural churches. I personally experienced this kind of harsh attitude several decades ago in some of the Southern churches in the United States. Some of those churches are like cliques and pastoral fan clubs where the priest or pastor has his inner circle of devotees, and his word -- and teachings -- is law. Doesn't that sound very similar to brainwashing and cultic activity? I am reminded of the Apostle Peter's admonition concerning such overbearing, dictatorial pastors and ministers. Peter wrote:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."  
1 Peter 5:2-3, KJV

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I wholeheartedly agree that doctrinal unity is an extremely important part, and in fact a vital component, of any Bible-based church. No church will be able to survive for very long unless they're unified in word and doctrine. However, at the same time, people must be permitted to freely make up their own minds, after God's Word has been shared with them. A forced belief system is no belief system at all, if it is not truly felt and believed from one's heart. Whether one is a Christian living in the United States, or a Muslim who lives in Iran, true faith is where one's heart is at, and not just where one's mind is at. This kind of faith cannot be coerced by governments, or by religious bodies, or through violence. It must be freely chosen. But concerning the importance of doctrinal unity, consider the following verses:

". . . Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"  
Psalms 133:1, KJV

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."  
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, KJV

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

John 17:11, 21-23, KJV

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

John 10:16, KJV

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 15:6, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:1-3, 14-16, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Philippians 2:2, KJV

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

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The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping

Part 3

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Fanatical Catholic Pope Personality Cult Worship, Extreme Secrecy, Something To Hide And Guilty Until Proven Innocent, Catholic Secrets And Mysteries, Mary Cult Worship And Other Strange And Non-Biblical Roman Catholic Doctrines, Pope As The Vicar Of Christ, Difficulty In Defining What Is A Cult, Harold Camping And Family Radio Network: A False Prophet But Not A Dangerous Man, Harmless Groups Versus Dangerous Cults Marshall Applewhite And Heaven's Gate UFO Cult, Jim Jones And Peoples Temple Cult, David Koresh And Branch Davidians, Order Of The Solar Temple Cult, Closing Remarks & Questions

Returning to the subject of cult-like activities within the major denominations, anyone who has spent any amount of time in any of the Latin American countries, or perhaps in any of the other nations which are dominated by Roman Catholicism, knows that in some of them, the Pope is almost treated like a god. While the Vatican may not necessarily approve of this kind of fanatical behavior -- I really wonder though -- they certainly do not seem to discourage it either. If we can be honest with ourselves, the charismatic aura which has been carefully crafted and sustained around the Pope, and which has resulted in this type of fanatical behavior, amounts to personality cult worship, plain and simple.

So let me ask you an important question: How is this deep, fanatical devotion to the Pope any different from a similar attitude of fanatical respect and devotion being expressed for a particular leader by members of a group which has been declared a strange and possibly dangerous cult? What defines the former as being acceptable, while the latter is not? Can you see my point? Is it possible that fanatical Pope worship is deemed acceptable -- at least by Roman Catholics -- simply because the Pope heads a majority religion, while the leaders of the so-called "cult" do not? In other words, does being in the majority necessarily make Roman Catholic fanaticism okay, while cultic fanaticism is to be condemned?

As we saw in part two, another trait which has been commonly and liberally used to describe alleged cults is secrecy. When anyone is accused of being secretive -- whether they belong to a cult or not -- the natural reaction of most people is to assume the attitude "Oh, they must have something to hide!", whether it is truly deserved or not. In the case of cults, or

at least alleged cults, this attitude can easily evolve into the stereotypical view that all cults are guilty until proven innocent. We may not know exactly what those nasty cultists are guilty of, yet somehow, we convince ourselves that they must surely be guilty. Have you ever found yourself thinking in this fashion?

Here again, for the sake of argument, I must make a necessary comparison. If there's any branch of modern Christianity that is rather notorious for being secretive, it is most certainly Roman Catholicism. Many of you are no doubt aware of how hard the "holy mother church" has endeavored for many decades now to conceal the sins of its many pedophile priests; even going so far as to move them from one parish to another, when their sins became known. This makes the Roman Catholic hierarchy accomplices to the crime. While this may be one of the Roman church's deepest, darkest secrets in our modern day, I must also wonder how many other deep, dark and terrible secrets remain hidden to this day in Roman Catholic vaults, in the Vatican Library, and elsewhere.

If you are relatively familiar with Roman Catholicism, then you may know that the entire religion is built around this culture of secrecy and mystery. Even the Roman Catholic laity seems to be in on the act. What I mean by this is that they appear to have a special attraction to anything within their faith which is labeled as a secret or a mystery; such as the secrets of Fatima, for example. Just categorize something as a secret or a mystery, and it will draw the Roman Catholic faithful by the thousands or by the millions; and before you know it, a new holy site has been declared, and a shrine has been set up. While the conservative Roman Catholic hierarchy at the Vatican may not necessarily or openly support such endeavors by the Catholic laity, again, they certainly don't seem to do anything to discourage such behavior either.

I have noticed that there is yet one more way in which the word "mystery" comes into play within Roman Catholicism. No, contrary to what some of you may think, I'm not referring to Mystery Babylon the Great who we find mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Rather, I am referring to the fact that this word "mystery" is sometimes used to provide the Vatican with a way to justify and explain some of their misguided beliefs, when there really are no Scriptures to support said beliefs. In other words, when an inquiring Catholic will ask a certain question -- particularly a doctrinal question -- for which an answer cannot be provided, a priest may reply with a smile on his face "Oh, it's a mystery." This seems to put a quick end to the discussion, with the inquiring Catholic saying "Oh, okay."

This leads us to the final subject which I wish to use for a comparison: Roman Catholic doctrines. You may recall that in part two, I mentioned that according to my operating system's dictionary, one of the traits assigned to cults is that they embrace strange doctrines, and engage in strange practices. Now, obviously, to a dedicated Roman Catholic who is loyal to Rome and the Vatican, there is absolutely nothing strange or unusual about Roman Catholic doctrines or practices. On the other hand, for those of us who are not Catholics, and who possess an in-depth knowledge of the Scriptures, there are some rather serious problems with a number of doctrines and practices which are promoted by the Roman Catholic Church.

Being as I discuss some of these erroneous and non-Biblical doctrines in some of the aforementioned articles -- please refer to part two of this series -- I won't be going into great detail here. Suffice it to say that they include such beliefs as the following:

[1] The infallibility -- or inerrancy -- of the Pope.

[2] Transubstantiation: the belief that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are actually transformed into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, which is akin to cannibalism, and which contradicts the Biblical mandate concerning drinking blood.

[3] The Immaculate Conception: the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born without the stain of original sin, which contradicts verses such as Romans 3:10 and 3:23.

[4] The Assumption: the non-Biblical belief that Mary was received into Heaven without having ever experienced physical death and decay, which contradicts such verses as Romans 6:23 and Hebrews 9:27.

[5] The belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is Co-Redemptress and Co-Mediatrix with Jesus Christ, which contradicts such verses as 1 Timothy 2:5.

[6] The belief that Jesus had no biological brothers or sisters, which contradicts such verses as Matthew 12:46, 13:55, 27:56, Mark 6:3, 15:40, John 7:3-5, Acts 1:14 and Galatians 1:19.

[7] The belief that Salvation cannot truly be obtained outside of the Roman Catholic Church, which contradicts such verses as John 14:6, 6:37, 10:28 and Acts 4:12.

At this time, I am going to summarize and compare all of the previous points in a list for your consideration. In this list, "RCC" stands for Roman Catholic Church. Observe:

Trait		Cults	RCC
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1. Charismatic leader	✓	✓	
2. Overpowering authority	✓	✓	
3. Dictatorial figure	✓	✓	
4. Personality cult worship	✓	✓	
5. Fanatical followers	✓	✓	
6. Extreme secrecy		✓	✓
7. Strange doctrines	✓	✓	
8. Strange practices	✓	✓	

I should also add the fact that just as certain cult leaders have claimed to be Jesus Christ returned in the flesh, within Roman Catholicism, it is also believed that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ; that is, the sole representative of Jesus Christ on Earth. Some people have interpreted this title as meaning even more than that; that is to say, that the Pope isn't just the representative of Jesus Christ, he is in fact the replacement of Christ, as in the Antichrist. Personally,

I have yet to be fully convinced of this interpretation.

While some of you -- particularly my Roman Catholic readers -- will object to, and no doubt take offense at my using the Roman Catholic Church as an example in my previous remarks, as I mentioned earlier, my objective is to demonstrate how the word "cult" is a very subjective term. In other words, how we choose to define a cult, and determine who is a cult and who isn't a cult, depends a lot, not only on what we are instructed to believe by governments and religionists alike, but also on our own personal upbringing, prejudices and perspective.

We can apply these very same criteria to other religions -- both Christian and non-Christian alike -- politicians, movie stars, and just about anyone else, and will probably arrive at some interesting conclusions. However, because we have been discussing cults in a purely Christian sense, the Roman Catholic Church has been the perfect object for comparison. So am I actually suggesting that the RCC is a cult? What do you think? Formulate your own opinion.

Perhaps now you can understand why I am hesitant to refer to Harold Camping as a cult leader, or the Family Radio Network as a cult. If Camping's organization is a cult, then based on a very liberal definition of the word, we must conclude that so are many other modern Christian and quasi-Christian groups and denominations which may have beliefs and practices with which we don't agree, and which we may personally view as being rather strange and even non-Biblical.

Thus, I prefer to limit myself to referring to Mr. Camping as a misguided false prophet. Given his track record, that is, the fact that he has clearly made some predictions -- or prophecies -- which have not come to pass in the timeframe that he predicted, I think we can all agree that Camping is indeed doctrinally misguided and confused. As such, based upon the Scriptures, it would seem that "false prophet" is an appropriate, valid, applicable term to use to describe him. After all, once we arrive at October 21st, and nothing happens, Mr. Camping will have three strikes against him; that is, his 1994 date, his May 21, 2011 date, and his final October 21, 2011 date.

However, while Harold Camping may be a false prophet, in my view, he is by no means a dangerous one. As I explained in part one of this series, Camping has indeed done great harm to our Christian faith through his false predictions; a harm which has been greatly augmented by the mass media which is always hungry for a sensationalistic story to print; but the man is really not dangerous. He is simply a misguided old man who made some serious errors in his interpretations of the Bible. As we also saw in part one, in Deuteronomy we are told "thou shalt not be afraid of him."

If we really want to discuss dangerous cults, then we should focus our attention on the ones which have already shown a propensity for violence, including mass murder and suicide. As I state in the three-part series entitled "Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults", this would obviously include Marshall Applewhite and the Heaven's Gate UFO cult, whose bizarre doctrines concerning UFO's and the Comet Hale-Bopp,

ultimately led to the untimely death of forty-one people in Rancho Santa Fe, San Diego, California in 1997 by murder and suicide. Applewhite claimed to be the incarnation of Jesus.

It would also include the alleged atheist Jim Jones and the People's Temple cult, whose strange belief system -- which was an odd mix of communism and quasi-Christianity -- led to the murder and suicide of 909 men, women and children in the jungles of Guyana, South America in 1978. According to some surviving witnesses, People's Temple members even practiced their upcoming mass suicide in ghastly rituals referred to as "White Nights".

Then, of course, there is also David Koresh and the Branch Davidians; a cult which -- contrary to the peaceful doctrine of Jesus Christ -- apparently bought and sold weapons. There is also the claim made by federal agents that David Koresh claimed to be the Second Coming of Jesus. While there is a lot of debate concerning exactly what occurred on the final day of the confrontation between the Branch Davidians and the BATF, the tragic result is that in the end, eight-two Branch Davidians -- men, women and children -- died needlessly, and horribly, in 1993, just outside of Waco, Texas, along with four BATF agents from the U.S. Government.

Finally, there is Joseph Di Mambro, Luc Jouret and the Order of the Solar Temple cult, which was based in both Canada and Switzerland. Somewhat similar to how the Heaven's Gate UFO cult members' bodies were found neatly in their own beds, all dressed in the same outfits, over one hundred members of the Order of the Solar Temple were also found dead, with their bodies neatly arranged in a circle. It is believed that they had a murder-suicide pact.

The groups that I have just mentioned to you are real cults. They are, or at least were, dangerously deceptive cults. They had very dangerous ideas and practices, which ultimately led to their members' demise; in most cases by their own hands.

It is my opinion that these are the kinds of cults with which we should most concern ourselves, and not with more or less harmless Christian groups which may possibly have doctrines and practices which may be different from our own. I am not suggesting that we should totally ignore Christian churches, organizations or people who preach false doctrines which may possibly confuse God's sheep, and potentially harm our faith. Such deceptions should indeed be exposed, just as I have done with this series, and in other articles as well. However, if it is a matter of priorities, then it behooves us to expose the really dangerous cults first.

Allow me to leave you with some final thoughts and questions for your personal consideration and reflection.

Is it possible that in our haste to want to put down others with whom we don't agree, we have been overly liberal in our usage of the words "cult" and "cultist"? If so, is it because we recognize that these are powerful buzz words which will automatically invoke a negative response from the hearer? If that is the case, then it is important that we realize that if we are going to be so liberal in our usage of such words, we shouldn't be surprised if someday someone else makes the



very same accusation about us. Furthermore, what if our very own government one day declares that our Christian faith is also a dangerous and misguided cult which needs to be stamped out? Then what?

Think about it.

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