



Fact or Fiction: The Social and Cultural Beliefs That Drive Dooms Day Prophecies

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Fact or Fiction: The Social and Cultural Beliefs that Drive Dooms Day Prophecies

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A Thesis in the Field of Anthropology and Archaeology
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

This thesis explains some of the social and cultural dynamics behind dooms day prophecies, and why some people believe that other humans can accurately predict the end of the world. Throughout recent history, groups such as the Millerites (early 20th century) and the New Age Mayanists (late 20th century) claimed to know when the end of days would occur, and each provided reasons for believing in the apocalypse. For example, the Millerites believed that in order to get into heaven, a person must surrender his/her earthly possessions and live in poverty. As a result of their servitude and Godliness, God would spare them from hell on earth and they would be accepted into Heaven. According to the New Age Mayanists, the earth goes through cycles based on the ancient Mayan calendar and at present, it is completing one of these cycles, bringing with it the end of our current world. I explain why the social and cultural beliefs that sustain these and other doomsday movements continue to be popular and gain followers. People need to feel wanted, such as they are a part of a movement. Although dooms day has not happened, people continue to congregate and donate their money and resources to groups that promise nothing other than salvation from the apocalyptic end of our planet.

In support of my research, I provide data vis-à-vis the group mentality of individuals that embrace such beliefs, beginning in Biblical times and culminating in modern times, and in so doing, explain why dooms day cults are still popular and growing even though all prior dooms day prophecies have been inaccurate.

I also include a literature review of some generally accepted academic theories that explains why cultural belief systems regarding dooms day prophecies are more prevalent in some communities, yet less common in others. My research provides unique insight into the dooms day prophecy phenomenon that began thousands of years ago with Zoroastrianism and Biblical prophecies , yet still influences contemporary Western culture.

For several thousand years, beginning with the Christians and Muslims, up to the present-day New Ager's (also known as Neopagans, are a group of people who believe the apocalypse will occur as a result of environmental abuse on planet earth) numerous groups have attempted to predict the end of days. Consequently, such groups developed profitable businesses, and experienced monetary gain at the expense of the believers. Some end-of-days groups and cults such as the Evangelical Christians, have made large sums of money selling the concept of Armageddon to believers, who in turn succumb to materialism at the expense of forgoing their own religious beliefs. Other dooms day groups, such as the Millerites, attract followers that live in abject poverty in the name of their god or spiritual leader.

In order to understand modern-day views on dooms day prophecies, I include the results and analysis of a survey (n=572) prepared specifically for my thesis that identifies attitudes and preferences towards this topic. By providing the above-mentioned data and information, my research demonstrates that many more people believe in prophets and dooms day prophecies than I had anticipated. I had initially suspected that lower income and less education played a factor in

people's beliefs, or gullibility. However, after researching my topic, and gathering the responses to my survey, I have found that scholars and scientists who are more educated and respectively receive higher income, are among the groups who do believe in dooms day prophecies. Is it because they have greater access to scientific papers and books or is it because they are free to pursue interests and topics that are encouraged in an academic and scientific setting? The answers to these and other questions await the reader below.

Dedication

To all of my friends and colleagues that kept encouraging me to persevere, even
through the hard times.

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Introduction

This thesis explores (1) how some individuals throughout history have profited monetarily from predicting the end of the world by exploiting the notion of eternal damnation; (2) why groups of individuals have forfeited their wealth and their time to follow false prophets that claim to predict the end of days; and (3) why some individuals continue to believe in dooms day prophecies. A history of prophecies, dating back several thousand years, from so-called experts that claim to be able to predict the end of the world demonstrates that some individuals are susceptible to believing that humans possess the ability to foresee the future, while others are not. For instance, between April, 1843 and April, 2014, there have been at least 90 different instances of so-called dooms day prophecies that have attempted to identify the exact date on which the world will end. In each instance, thousands, and sometimes millions of people, blindly accepted the accuracy of these predictions, and subsequently gave their time and money in order to avoid eternal damnation. My thesis does not analyze all 90 of these prophecies; doing so would fall outside the scope of my research since my goal is to understand current attitudes and preferences towards dooms day prophecies. Thus, I focus on several of the more notable and publicized prophecies because it is more such as that they have influenced modern-day Western thought and culture.

That thousands, or even millions of people have been influenced by dooms day prophecies to the point that it affects a change in their life begs the following questions: why do some humans believe that other humans can accurately predict the end of days, while others hold no such belief? Why do some individuals blindly follow such predictions? How have such assertions impacted contemporary Western culture?

I hypothesize that factors such as age, level of income, level of education, political affiliation, and religious background influence individual beliefs sufficient to cause some people to believe in dooms day prophecies. In order to test my hypothesis, I have prepared and analyzed a survey (n=572) , which was disseminated through various social media channels. My analysis suggests that level of education and level of income are strong indicators of an individual's belief in dooms day prophecies; people with a lower the level of formal education, and a lower the level of income are more likely to believe in dooms day prophecies. By contrast, individuals who are more educated and/or appreciate a higher level of income tend to be less convinced that other humans can predict the end of days. Considering the lack of scientific data supporting dooms day prophecies, it is logical to suggest that individuals with a higher level of education would be less inclined to make decisions based on the word of a prophet. Thus, it also makes sense that most individuals in this group (highly educated) would not join end-of-days cults or movements. Notably, there is a small percentage of highly educated individuals that join (or start) cults, and are thus able to attract other educated people to join their cause. In some instances, the more educated

people are more successful in attracting participants because they are able to wield information in powerful and effective ways. By contrast, the less educated are often more willing to follow a charismatic and informed leader because they rely on his or her skills to lead them in what they perceive to be the right direction.

My research also includes information vis-à-vis how people view themselves in relation to their religious group. For example, what is their role within the group, and what are their responsibilities within the group? Some scholars suggest that groups such as the Neopagans are more accepting of outsiders as compared to other groups, such as Heaven's Gate, who tend to close themselves off from outside involvement. My research includes data on how these groups mingle within the local community, and it suggests that while most of them are benign, and exist peacefully, others are extremely influential, and cause harm to its members and to the community en large.

Central to my thesis is the notion that dooms day prophecies can be powerful enough to cause individuals to forget their core religious beliefs, and isolate themselves and their families for the sake of the movement. For instance, the Mayan Dooms Day prophecy, which predicted that the world would end on December 21, 2012, created a worldwide fervor that caused many believers to abandon their jobs and their lifestyles, and lose focus of their true religious beliefs. (Sitler 2006) By and large, Mayan Dooms Day groups believed that no one else mattered, and they exhibited exclusionary behavior towards others that did not believe. Other groups also practice exclusion of non-believers. For

instance, the Evangelical's believe that they do not need to worry about the rest of society, or “outsiders”, because when the Rapture comes, the believers will be saved, and the non-believers will be punished and suffer Hell on earth. (Monahan 2008)

Both LaHaye and Jenkins have capitalized on people’s fear of the End of the World by reinventing and capitalizing on an old principle called dispensational Premillennialism, which teaches that Christians who believe and follow the Bible will not have to endure the tribulation described in the Book of Revelations as a horrific period of intense suffering. (Monahan 2008) Popularized in the latter part of the 19th century by preacher John Nelson Darby, dispensational Premillennialism was eventually embraced by Evangelical Christians who believed in the Rapture Prophecy and is now enjoying a resurgence in popularity as a result of the Left Behind novels. Not only is the Rapture phenomenon very popular today in the United States but the country has seen a rebirth in New Age beliefs that sprouted in the 1960’s and 1970’s during a time of unrest and turmoil.

The New Age and Neopagan movements draw upon those of us who are tired of the daily rituals of life and are seeking a higher (spiritually) place in this world. Many of these people are from the academic community, such as students, teachers, and professors. Those who are also attracted to this type of movement tend to be more educated in general and are often seeking an alternative belief system focusing on social change in order to better the world; they welcome the opportunity to share their views with anyone willing to listen. Over the years, the

New Age movement has gained thousands of followers and claimed not to profit monetarily such as other similar religious and spiritual groups. Still, there are more fringe groups attracting people such as the Ancient Astronaut Theorists and the New Age Mayanists. Both groups, referred to as cults, claim to be nothing more than an alternative to mainstream religions. Whether one believes in a Mayan dooms day prophecy or an alien induced prophecy, the resources, such as written materials, on line informational videos, and social gatherings and retreats, are available to anyone seeking the alternative knowledge. Unfortunately, Heaven's Gate was a religious cult, which was founded on apocalyptic principles, and led to the death of over 20 people back in the late 1990's. Because we are free to choose our own way to worship, many people are taken advantage of, and others simply go too willingly into the congregations of those looking for mere profit.

Chapter one focuses on the Evangelical Christians and their Rapture Movement, which was popularized by the influential fictional novel series, *Left Behind*, LaHaye and Jenkins (1995). By definition, Evangelicals are the product of Fundamentalists and Dispensationalists who believe in the Christian Bible and its teachings. The movement originated during the early 1800s in the eastern portion of the United States. (LaHaye and Jenkins 1995) Evangelicals assert that the Rapture Phenomenon, which refers to the End of Days in the Book of Revelations, marks the time when people loyal to God will be called up to heaven before Hell reigns on earth. (Brummett 1991) According to Evangelical beliefs, those who do not believe in God will suffer his wrath on earth, and the world will

be cast into war, famine, and many natural disasters. (Frykholm 2004) As a result of the Evangelical fervor that is inherent in many of their churches, they are often despised by other religions, and their beliefs are often deemed conservative (as opposed to progressive) and radical by other mainstream religions. (Frykholm 2004) Notably, Evangelicals have raised millions of dollars for their churches through the sale of books, movies, and publications that pertain to the end of days movement. (Frykholm 2004) This fact is important because many of the Evangelical leaders have profited from this business, thus raising important questions vis-à-vis the true financial and psychological nature of Evangelical dooms day prophecies. Put differently, it is logical to suggest that the Evangelical church has exploited the fears of their congregation for personal monetary gain. I explain the popularity of this moment, and why thousands of people have willingly given their money and their time to the Evangelical church. (Frykholm 2004)

In Chapter two, I conduct a literature review of some of the more commonly accepted academic theories vis-à-vis end of days prophecies such as Zoroastrianism (600 BCE-650 CE), one of the world's oldest religions whose end of days prophecy refers to a "final renovation of the universe." (Boyce 1984) I also analyze specific theories that find their roots in Biblical teachings. The purpose of this chapter is to explain why people in ancient times believed that the world was going to end, and how those beliefs have survived for centuries. A common trait among these beliefs is the existence of a prophet that foretells the end of days, and warns disbelievers of the consequences. I explain why the

writings of these prophets continue to influence modern-day society sufficiently to cause people to donate money, leave their jobs, and follow the word of individuals that claim to know when the world will end.

In chapter three, I explain why Modern Mayanists, many of whom are respected scientists and religious leaders, adhere to an end of days scenario, and still believe in the ancient Mayan Doomsday Prophecies, albeit the uneventful passing of December 12, 2012 (12/12/12). Some Modern Mayanists, such as author Frank Waters, believed that the new world would be ushered in by the end of the current Mayan Long Count Calendar and was more of a metaphysical and spiritual transformation, while author Daniel Pinchbeck adheres to the belief of a more violent end of our world caused by cosmic disturbances in the earth's axis. (Palmer 2011)

I explore the reasoning behind these beliefs, and I explain why some scholars and religious leaders maintain their views, despite the lack of concrete evidence that would otherwise support them. In addition, I also perform a literature review of ancient Mayan texts that some scholars believe hold clues to the future of the world, and may even warn us of impending disasters, both manmade and natural.

Chapter four concentrates on extraterrestrial, or alien, theories. I explore various theories advanced by modern-day scientists and scholars that believe our planet was visited by aliens. According to the Ancient Astronaut Theory (AAT), aliens have bestowed upon humans various intellectual gifts, such as scientific

knowledge, advanced technology, and genetic enhancements. This theory represents an alternative way of thinking as compared to mainstream religions or cults, such as Christianity, Islam, and Neopagans. AAT's consider astronomy as a core discipline, and use it as a means of studying ancient texts in order to pinpoint a time and place when the aliens will return to Earth and save humanity from the apocalypse. (von Daniken 1999) I explore ancient texts from Egypt, Arizona (Hopi Indian culture), Central America, and Sumeria, and I explain their social and cultural relevancy to AAT. I also explore the Heaven's Gate Cult, whose leader, Marshall Applewhite, believed that an alien spaceship was hidden in the tail of the Hale Bop comet. The aliens were, according to Applewhite, coming to take the cult members to a higher place of spiritualism and understanding. Applewhite convinced his members to relinquish their possessions, live in a commune, and ultimately commit mass suicide. (Melton 2002)

Chapter five focuses on the Neopagans, or the New Agers, who believe that a better and more enlightened world awaits humanity, ready to emerge when the planets are aligned properly. Neopagans come from all walks of life and welcome all people into their fold. The Neopagans are unique in that they do not charge for seminars, they invite the local community into their communes, and both guests and believers are free to come and go as they please. (Pike 2004) In other words, the Neopagans, do not seek to profit from their membership, but rather, they focus on environmental acts of aggression against the planet, and firmly believe that the Earth will retaliate, thus bringing on an environmental apocalypse. (Pike 2004) Only those with survival skills and spiritual

enlightenment will survive into the next age, and the survivors will re-populate the earth with peaceful humans that desire to live in harmony with the planet and the cosmos.

All five chapters focus on doomsday prophecies, the religious and cult leaders, and the people who follow these leaders. The religions and cults draw people in via a promise for eternal salvation, whether it be through a God-like savior or a benevolent alien. In these aforementioned chapters, factors such as age, economic status and religion, to name a few, are studied because my hypothesis suggests that some of these factors hold influence over people's decisions to join a religion or cult whose primary focus is doomsday.

Chapter I.

Evangelical Christians and Their Fundamentalist Roots

Evangelical Christians have turned the End of Days fear into a profitable machine by publishing books and magazines, making motion picture deals with production studios, and holding seminars. All of this is made possible because, in certain social settings, people become fearful of the unknown, and are willing to put their trust into religious leaders who claim to have all the right answers about why the world is in trouble. The Evangelical Christians have taken some of their ideas vis-à-vis End of Days prophecies from the Fundamental Christian Movement, which was started by Protestants in the early twentieth-century. Gribben (2009) claims that the early Fundamentalist's, who were deeply committed to what they claimed to be an original, traditional and true Christianity, felt overwhelmed by the growing modernity of the world, resulting in the evil accumulation of wealth, and the dangerous frivolities and amoral behavior associated with such wealth. (Gribben 2009) The Fundamentalists wanted to get back to the God of their Bibles, and back to the basics of primitive Christianity, and by doing so, removing themselves completely for all from the amoral society and its temptations. (Cross 1950) Early writings focused on ridding oneself of such sins as, "worldliness...flippancy...frivolousness...time-wasting...pride," causing many devout followers to soon recognize that the only way to God was through good works, piety, and in many cases, poverty. (Gribben 2009) As religious leaders soon realized, a great way to keep their flocks out of trouble was

to warn them against the evils of the world by way of, “dispensational prophecy fiction.” The Dispensational movement became popular in the United States in the 1800's after being introduced by James Ingliss, a lay preacher. He introduced it to a small group of Evangelicals who were receptive to the idea of the Bible being organized into periods of time. (Cross 1950) Dispensationalism gets its name from an interpretative system of Biblical time, meaning that Biblical history is divided by God into precise periods or ages for specific administrative purposes. They believe that a literal 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ will continue and merge with the New heavens and the new earth, after the evil is destroyed on earth. (Walvoord 2001) Inglis initially learned of Dispensationalism through a monthly magazine entitled *Waymarks in the Wilderness*, published roughly between 1854 and 1872. (Gribben 2009) Although not the first form of prophecy fiction published, the monthly paper spoke of the end of days as an ordered progression towards the 1000 year reign of Christ. People believed that they would receive blessings from Christ, after surviving hell on earth as a result of their faith. The first articles to speak of a 1000 year reign of Christ and an orderly progression of Biblical times were first published in Germany in 1901 in a weekly Pietist paper titled “Sabbathklänge.” (Gribben 2009) The papers focused on the Rapture, and led believers away from an orderly history of the Bible but still remained focused on end of days and the coming of Christ on earth. These articles were quite controversial at the time, as they went against the local Catholic Church and its teachings. (Harris 1998) Although published in other languages, early prophecy fiction gained a foothold, and was later adapted by and catered to

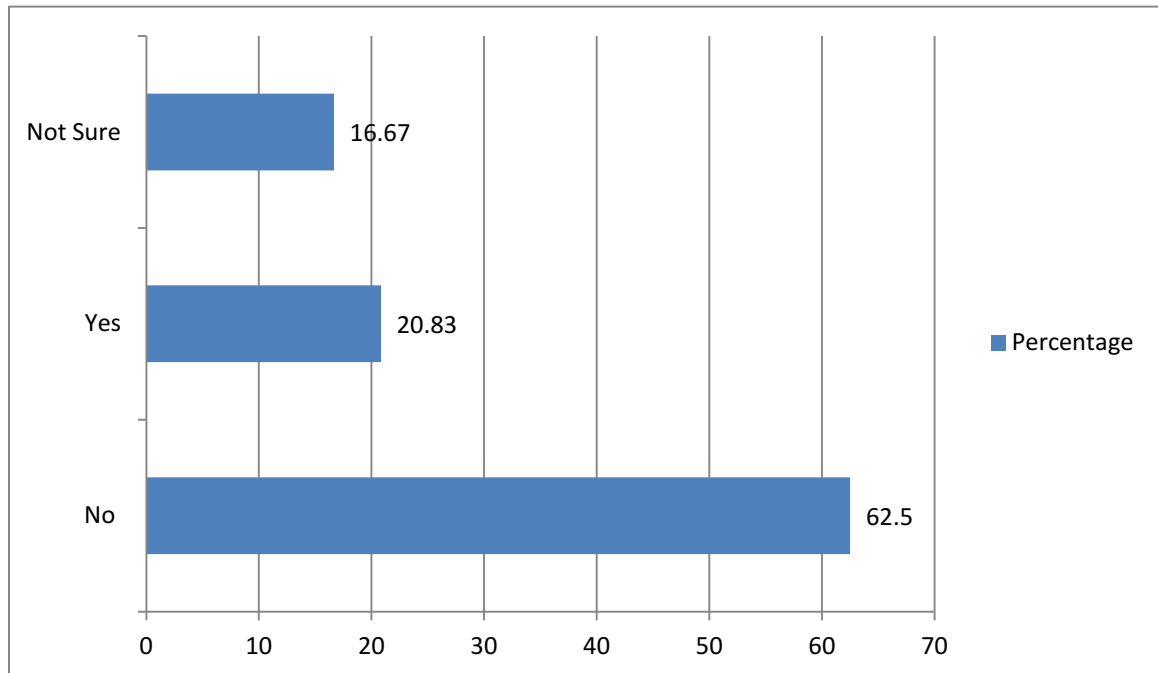
the Fundamentalist movement in the United States. (Harris 1998) The novels and other prophecy literature served to unite the faithful against the evils of the modern world and gave them a higher purpose-preparing for the Second Coming of Christ or The End of Days. At the turn of the century in America, many people were not as literate or as educated as today. Leaders of the early Evangelical Christian movements capitalized on the mostly ignorant populations by spreading ideas of the impending end of days. As my hypothesis states, I claim that uneducated or less educated people are willing to follow a leader if their sense of belonging is met in a social and cultural setting. Because the population was less educated and less sophisticated, educated religious leaders convinced people to give up their possessions and their ungodly ways in the name of a religion or cult that claimed to offer eternal salvation in lieu of a hell on earth.

The Fundamental Christians take the stories and lessons from the Bible literally, and there is no room for symbolic or historical interpretation. For example, in the Old Testament, Moses was the main prophet that God used to spread His word. Other prophets such as Jonah and Abraham also spread the word of God, and some fundamentalist theologians believe these men (Jonah and Abraham) were chosen in order to strengthen their faith. (Harris 1998) The Bible is embraced as the authoritative book full of prophets and dooms day stories that have become models for contemporary end of the world movements. Others, however, do not adhere to the Fundamentalist view of Christianity, and view the Bible as a book of stories; the ultimate book of prophecy fiction. (Harris 1998) The Fundamentalists are criticized as exceptionally charismatic and extremist in

their beliefs, scaring other people away, rather than bringing them in to the fold. Consequently, they are often viewed as radicals by more main stream Christian sects who deem their practices unnecessary and drastic. Niels Hvidt, author of *Christian Prophecy: the Biblical Tradition*, asserts, “Prophets are easily associated with religious fanatics, who, in an ecstatic spirit, preach doom and gloom to people attracted by sensational spirituality.”(Hvidt 2007) Evangelicals are known for their practice of speaking in tongues, rolling on the floor, while consumed with the spirit of God (holy rollers), and for raising their arms in the air praising the word of God. (Harris 1998) To some outside viewers, these religious practices are seen as outrageous, disruptive and misleading. Below in Figure 1., responses from people who profess not to believe in dooms day prophecies can be seen in the graph.

Figure 1 illustrates the results of my survey that was disseminated via social media outlets in the United States over a course of 3 months. Although a majority of respondents (62.5%) indicated that they did not believe in doomsday prophecies, a review of the current literature suggests that doomsday belief and interest is more popular than ever in the United States. By contrast, 20.83% of respondents indicated that they do believe in doomsday prophecies, thus indicating that the popularity of dooms day groups and media outlets influence our homes and electronic devices.

Figure 1. Survey Question: Do You Believe in Doomsday Prophecies?



The Fundamentalists prided themselves on holy living and on premillennial expectations of the Second Coming. (Gribben 2009) American and British fundamentalists joined forces and started Bible Institutes in the late 1800's in the United States so that they could pass on their teachings to new members and train pastors who would go forth and spread the word. (De Camp 1968) Dispensationalists often co-mingled with fundamentalists because they both agreed on a “holy doctrine” when referencing the age of the Spirit and “entire sanctification.” (Harris 1998) The Dispensationalists believe, however, that each book in the bible reflects a different period of biblical history, rather than a continual history. Eventually, both religious groups often joined congregations, especially in the Northeastern part of the United States in what was to become the famous Burned Over District

The Fundamentalist's identity became apparent and culminated in what would become one of history's most famous trials - the Scope's Monkey Trial. In 1925, Mr. Scopes, a substitute high school biology teacher, was accused of teaching evolution in the classroom. Ironically, most people during this time scarcely knew what evolution was, let alone the consequences of teaching the subject. As a result, Mr. Scopes was prosecuted and found guilty of teaching evolution and ordered to pay a one hundred dollar fine. The trial set the stage for the Fundamentalists and the outcome had implications that followed this religious group well into the later part of the 20th century as a result to their activism and anti-evolutionary rants at the Scope's Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee. (Harris 1998) Ironically, Scopes never testified because he claimed that he was not even sure what evolution was or that he had actually taught it to his students. (De Camp 1968) The Fundamentalists' argued that only God's word took prevalence over all other human knowledge (science); while the Evolutionists or Modernists, claimed that evolution was not consistent with religion. The outcome of the trial created a great divide between people who believed in creationism and those who believed in evolution. Scope's lawyer filed an appeal, claiming that, among other things that Scope's right to teach evolution had been violated under the Free Speech Amendment. Although the court did not overturn the initial ruling, many states decided to allow their science and science text books to be taught and written by scientists, rather than by biased religious leaders. (De Camp 1968) After the trial, the Fundamentalist Movement became known throughout the country as a culturally backward, anti-intellectual phenomenon driven by

psychological and economic forces. (Harris 1998) As a result, the fundamentalists were forced to redefine themselves, their religious philosophy, and create a positive, more reliable identity in order to attract believers, believers who backed their ideals with financial support, culminating in the Rapture culture popular among Evangelical Christian churches today.

George Marsden, a historian who has written extensively on the interaction between Christianity and American culture, particularly on Christianity in American Evangelicalism, established that the fundamentalist coalition of the 1920's comprised both denominational traditionalists and advocates of theologically innovative doctrines. (Cross 1950) Marsden suggests that the evangelical movement in America got its start from the fundamentalist evangelical tradition, whose heritage was rooted in revivalism, or the mass appeal of "tent revivals" and Bible institutes that swept across the United States in the 1920's. (Harris 1998) These organs, established initially for the propagation of Premillennialism ideas, came to embrace the theology of the holiness movement and later of the wider fundamentalist movement. The fundamentalists published books and writings on the Five Points of Fundamentalism, specifically focusing on scripture, traditional doctrines, and the rest comprised attacks on Darwinism, complaints of particular cults, writings on missions, and personal testimonies. (De Camp 1968) Marsden's perception of these Five Fundamental's was that they were nothing more than a restatement of earlier claims that the biblical scripture or word of God, was the highest authority, outweighing any scientific evidence or claim that an anti-fundamentalists could concoct. In order to perpetuate their

teachings and religious beliefs, these believers began an organic movement of homegrown religious indoctrination, now commonly known as revivals. Bible institutions were also set up across not only parts of New York, but in Connecticut, as well. The Bible institutes became headquarters for the fundamentalist efforts, and were especially significant after the 1920S when many fundamentalists separated from the other denominations such as Calvinism, the Millenialists, and the Dispensationalists. (Walvoord 2001) Some of the more radical minded fundamentalists joined with the Millenialists, which became the new core of the growing evangelical movement in the United States at that time. This new religious fervor was centered on a Second Coming of the Christian god, Christ, after a period of hell on earth; after which time, Christ would come down from the heavens to earth and accept those people who repented and accepted him as the one and true God. (Cross 1950)

Figure 2 Survey Question: I believe that some religious people (such as Prophets), but non-religious people can foresee the future.

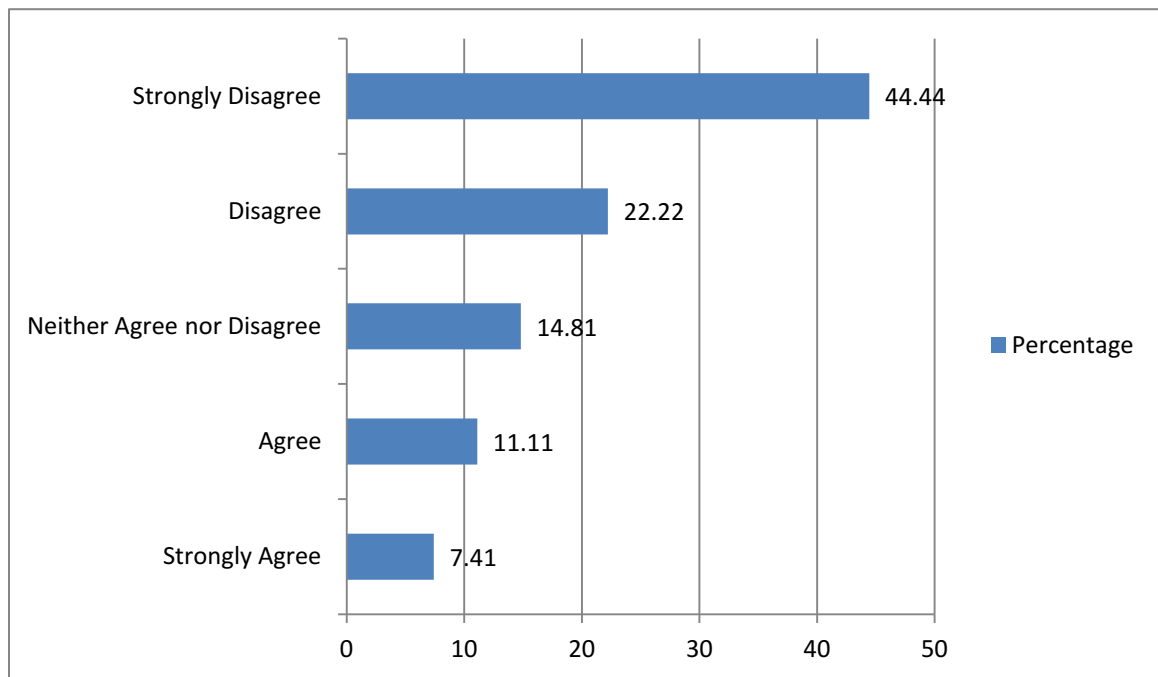


Figure 2 indicates that (66.66%) do not believe that anyone can foresee the future. 18.52% responded positively about their belief in prophets, religious or not.

Notably, Miller was able to gather hundreds of people into his fold that believes he was a prophet. He gained popularity and became known as the Father of the Adventist Movement in upstate New York when he claimed that Christ would come to earth in 1843 to claim the faithful. (Cross 1950) Yet, Miller is no different than any person who claims to be a prophet of God, then gains support for his or her cause, and eventually misleads hundreds of people because there was no Second Coming of Christ or any other said deity today or in history.

The Fundamentalists prided themselves on holy living and on premillennial expectations of the Second Coming. (Harris 1998) American and British

fundamentalists joined forces and started Bible Institutes so that they could pass on their teachings to new members and train pastors who would go forth and spread the word. (Harris 1998) Millenialists often co-mingled with fundamentalists because they both agreed on a “holy doctrine” when referencing the age of the Spirit and “entire sanctification.” (Gribben 2009) As a result, by the middle of the nineteenth century, preachers were regularly fulminating against the “dangerous proclivities of prose fictions and their effects on those who consumed them. These criticisms were regularly voiced within the premillennial communities that most vigorously insisted upon separation from the rapidly perishing world.” (Gribben 2009) Although disagreeing on some aspects of the Christian bible, both religious groups often joined congregations, especially in the Northeastern part of the United States in what was to become the famous Burned Over District. The Burned Over District refers to a region, during the early nineteenth century, where a particular phase of religious development occurred, specifically in the areas of western and central parts of New York. (Cross 1950) These areas of New York became synonymous with the Second Great Awakening, referring to the second coming of Christ.

Figure 3. Survey Question: I believe that some people possess the ability to foresee the future.

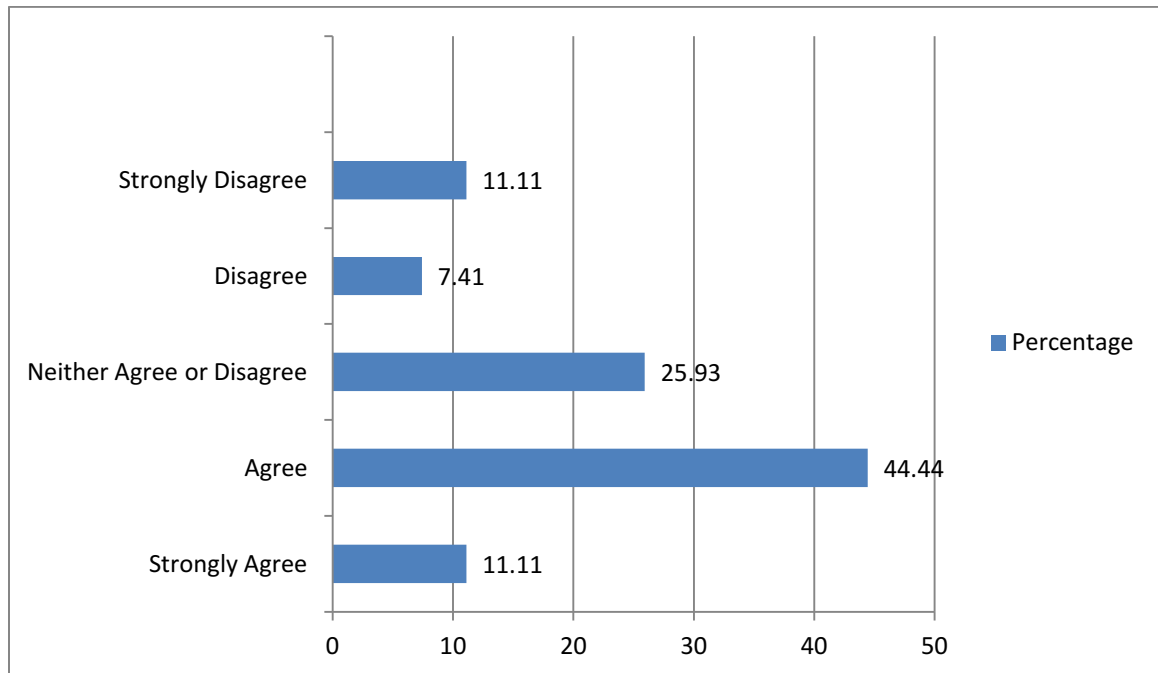


Figure 3 indicates that 44.44% believe that some people possess the ability to foresee the future. Respondents were given the option to leave personal comments at the end of the survey. I have selected a few comments that are relative to Figure 3.

Question: In your own words, tell us why you do not believe in Doomsday / End-of-World Prophecies?

Respondent 1.: I do not think that one specific person or a group of people can predict the end of the world or even things that will happen in the near future. It does not make sense and if they could predict it then wouldn't they have predicted bad things already.

Respondent 2: Every prophet or sooth sayer has come up with a doomsday scenario and when it will occur. We will die in a catastrophic event, only because that is how our world works.

Among others for example, the Baptist and Methodist congregations rose so rapidly during 1800-1820, that the religious leaders and pastors believed that religious reform and civil reform would lead to a better world before Christ actually came to earth to claim his faithful. (Harris 1998) Social reform was also important to the believers that stood behind women's rights, abolition, and the utopian social experiment. However misguided they may have been religiously, the converts were fighting for rights of the underserved and underrepresented, which would later lead to the enactment of many civil rights laws. (Harris 1998) For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an early feminist from Seneca Falls, NY, an area in the Burned Over District. She established the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which was devoted to women's suffrage and rights. (Cross 1950) At the time, many people were attracted to alternate forms of religion and social reform. As a result, people that were disenchanted with current religious and social practices founded Spiritualism, Mormonism, the Oneida Society, and many other groups. Many of these groups and religious sects believed in the Second Coming of Christ or End of Days referred to in the Book of Revelations, none more literal than the Millerites, who were believers of Premillennialism, or the physical Second coming of Christ. (Harris 1998) Millerites were followers of the teachings of William Miller, a farmer and lay Baptist preacher that lived in the Burned Over District in New York. He was a believer in biblical prophecy who

spent years intensively studying the meanings of the prophecies, especially Daniel. (Cross 1950) The Book of Daniel 8:14 states, "...Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." According to Cross (1950), Miller became the father of the Advent movement, preaching in revival tents in many states that the end was near and people needed to repent and find God. Miller was often preaching to large audiences up to twice a day, and people were flowing in from surrounding areas to come to western New York to hear his prophecies on the Second Coming. As Miller traveled New England and New York, he developed a following of people that sold all their possessions and followed him around the region. Miller took the Bible literally and interpreted the passage as a 2,300-day prophecy, where the earth would be cleansed and Christ would come and take his believers into heaven, leaving the rest of the earth and its inhabitants to wallow in hell and damnation. Miller claimed that the 2,300-day period started in 457 BC, and according to his calculations, the world would end on or before 1843. (Cross 1950) However, when it did not, he recanted and stated that he was off one year because he did not allow for the Jewish calendar. This lack of an End of Days phenomenon was known throughout New England and the Burned Over District as The Great Disappointment, and as a result, Millerites found themselves victims of cruelty and criminal acts because other people became disenfranchised over Miller's incorrect prophecy predictions. Schisms in Miller's congregation were created between those that continued to believe and those that felt betrayed by Miller's misinformation regarding his misinterpretation of the Bible. (Cross 1950) Martyrdom and poverty were not so unbearable

because the hardened Millerites truly believed that they were God's chosen people, and as Christians, were accustomed to suffering for their beliefs. Most of the other denominations welcomed Millerites into their fold but Miller himself, was excommunicated from the Low Hampton Baptist Church in New York. (Cross 1950) The Millerites were just one of many faiths to emerge out of the Burned Over District, and one of many faiths that fizzled out when one or more of its' leaders prophecies' about the apocalypse failed to come to fruition.

The Evangelical Christians of today have not given up their worldly possessions to follow a prophetic leader, but have instead, enjoyed the success of popularity and resurgence in the belief in the Rapture, due to impending threats from military groups, environmental disasters, and the dooms day effect.

Chapter II.

Prophecy and Dooms Day in the Ancient Times

Prophecy takes its form from specific religious traditions such as Judeo-Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhism, going back to ancient historical times. (Boyce 1984) For example, Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, preaches that only when the world is destroyed, can it reemerge in a pure form and humanity will be saved. (Boyce 1984) Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster in ancient Iran in c600BC, and asserts the existence of a supreme deity in charge of two minor deities, each representing good and evil. The foundation for Zoroastrianism is based on a "cosmic renovation" where all souls will return to light at the end of the world, even those who were banished to darkness. (Boyce 1984) The religion encourages free will and believers are encouraged to do good in order to gain a place in the new post-apocalyptic world where peace reigns. It is important to note that other major world religions borrowed the concept of believing in one god or deity (monotheism) from Zoroastrianism, such as Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism, and Islam. (LaRondelle 1989) All major religions, such as those mentioned previously, are centered on a supreme deity who is over the two or more minor beings, represented by good and evil. The supreme deity has prophesized the end of the world, whether it is based on cycles of birth and rebirth of the world or a catastrophic war between good and evil where those who do not believe in the said faith are punished and those who are believers are saved. Prophets such as

Mohammed, John the Apostle, Zoroaster, and ancient Mayan priests are believed to have special powers of foresight when it comes to predictions of the End of Days in their respective religions and cultures. (Denning 1999)

Throughout the history of humankind, specific beliefs pertaining to the end of the world and Dooms Day prophecies pop up in different cultures around the world at different periods. The outcome of these predictions and beliefs, however, has all remained the same - nothing has happened. Yet despite this fact, Dooms Day cults and prophecies thrive and have even become profitable, especially in the United States, where not only is it part of a mainstream religion, but it has grown into an apocalyptic genre in the multi-billion dollar film industry. (Magee 1975) The American film industry feeds off people's fascination with prophecy and End of Day phenomenon, such as the Mayan 2012 Prophecy and The Rapture, for example. Although neither prophecy has been fulfilled, television shows, cable specials, and big budget Hollywood movies have been produced detailing the accounts of these prophecies and beliefs that have and continue to fascinate us.

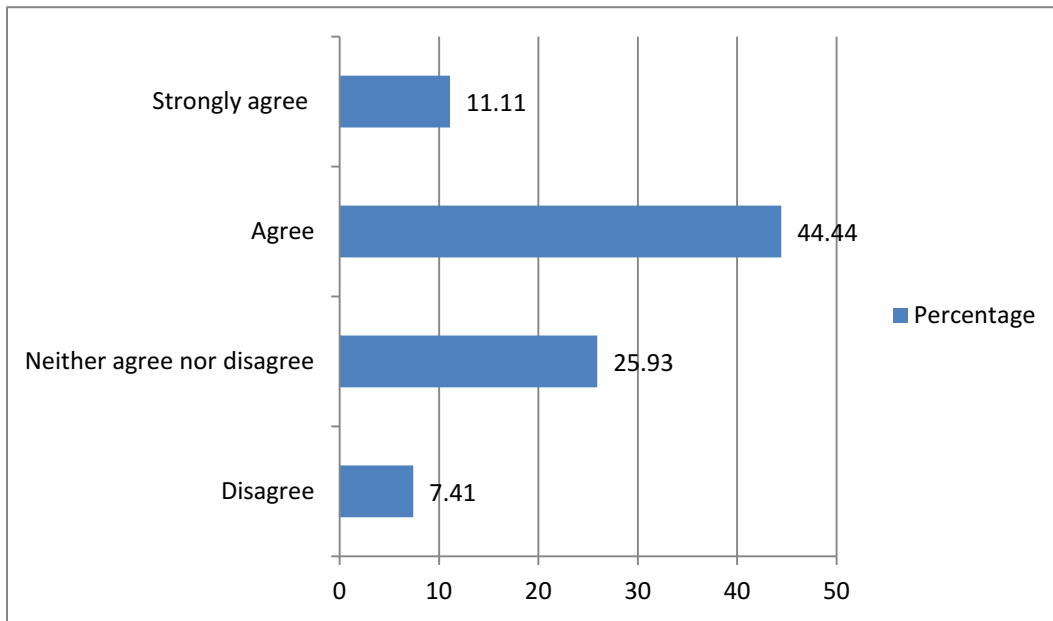
In the Bible, ancient Christians were tormented by the Romans because of their belief in the prophecy of a God who would one day come and save them from bondage. In his book, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience*, Tom Landes (2011) discusses the millennial experience as supposedly experienced by early followers of the Christian God. He provides an example of the prophet, Noah, who was chosen by God to deliver a message of mandatory repentance to the people of Ninevah. Landes (2011) asserts that Noah

was more of a social reformer rather than a prophet because, “Reformers can often sound apocalyptic alarms and promise nearly millennial results just to motivate people. After all, apocalyptic rhetoric may be the hardest to sell, but once it “takes,” no motivation is more powerful. According to Landes (2011) apocalyptic thinkers are too advanced for their time and he ponders whether or not they were merely misinterpreted during their life time due to their advanced ways of thinking about society. After reading his chapters on naysayers and early religion, I have concluded that some early Christian reformers were seen as prophets to those who did not understand their ideas and concepts. Landes refers to these social reformers and proposed prophets as roosters, or “those who crow from their apocalyptic podiums to the persons below, or ‘owls’ as Landes calls them. (Landes 2011) The roosters have crowed out the demise of our times throughout history, while those of us who actually believe in end of days dogma sit around and worry about when we’re going to die. The owls, or those people who ponder and worry about things they cannot change, belong to three distinct groups. Landes asserts there are different kinds of owls: (1) millennial owls—who believe the millennium will come, but, for a variety of reasons, believe that now is not the time (quiet optimists); (2) reluctant owls—who do not believe the millennium will come, although they do not such as the world as it is (quiet pessimists); and (3) aggressive owls—who such as or accept the world as it is, and will resist any effort to change it, unless it be to their advantage. (Landes 2011) Society will never move forward as long as the owls do not cooperate as a group, while the roosters gain power through their religious fervor and promises

of a better after life, albeit Christian or otherwise. Although the roosters live among the owls as charismatic leaders or zealots, the owls are cool-headed, wise, and maintain the backbone of society. Owls are referred to in sayings and poems and are often a symbol to wisdom in many cultures.

In Judaism, for example, Yochanan ben Zakkai, a rabbinic priest (67-73 CE), is quoted in the ancient texts, “If you have a tree shoot in your hand and someone says to you, ‘Here is the Messiah’—go and plant the tree, and afterwards go and greet him.” (Collins 2000) This quote was supposedly given to him from an owl. In the Christian faith, the quote was attributed to Martin L. King, a famous rooster of the apocalypse. Both Judaism and Christianity had prophets, or social reformers, and there were always plenty of people who needed guidance. Even in ancient times, needy and misguided masses needed a leader, or rooster. The leader may have been Noah or someone else, but each time the leader had an important message that was made more powerful by using an apocalyptic theme to get his message across.

Figure 4. Survey Question: I believe that some people possess the ability to foresee the future.



Chapter III.

Mayan Apocalypse-2012: Doomsday Prophecy and the Modern Mayanists

Figure 5. Mayan Long count Calendar



End of days prophecies come from different sources and different countries but are popularized in the United States by academics, mystics, spiritualists, and persons simply seeking to become part of a movement. The Mayan 2012 Doomsday Prophecy developed from a misunderstanding of a spiritual and New Age movement encouraged by academics, scholars, and a following of Mayanists who claimed to have secret knowledge of the end of days. One such person was Jose Arguelles, born Joseph Anthony Arguelles. He was an American Professor of Art History and Aesthetics who believed in New Age spiritualism and mysticism. (Palmer 2011) He is known as the main organizer of

the Harmonic Convergence, which was the first globally known meditation event. He was responsible for encouraging thousands of people to gather on the summer solstice in sacred sites throughout the world on August 16, 1987, to experience a “harmonic convergence” and spiritual enlightenment through mediation. However, nothing unusual happened and Arguelles quickly changed his dates in line with authors Terrence and Dennis McKenna, who argued that the Mayan long count calendar was unit to measure the countdown to December 21, 2012-the day of galactic spiritual convergence. (Palmer 2011) Arguelles and the McKenna's believed that the ancient Mayan shamans communicated with their gods via a drug-induced trance, receiving information that helped them plot the future of the cosmos and predict the end of the world. Because Arguelles was a New Age artist and spiritualist who also relied on drug-induced mediation for enlightenment, specifically LSD, he believed that the ancient Mayan shamans acquired knowledge “beyond our understanding.” (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993) To further give credibility to their beliefs, John M. Jenkins, an American esoteric author, published a book on the Maya 2012 prophecy based on the “relationship between the galactic centre and the winter-solstice Sun.” (Jenkins 1998) Jenkins claims in his book, “Maya Cosmogenesis 2012”, that the world would experience a “significant galactic alignment” on December 21, 2012. Apparently, an alignment of the winter solstice Sun with the galactic equator was supposed to result in a great opportunity for spiritual growth and aid in the transition from one world to another. Ironically, Jenkins's perception was misinterpreted and turned into a 2012 doomsday by Modern Mayanists and those seeking to garner attention

for their radical beliefs. As a result, Jenkins (1998) work was misinterpreted. He gathered his information by studying astronomy, specifically the theory about the galactic equator, which says that from earth, an observer can see the position of the Milky Way and mentally draw a line through the center, creating a cosmic equator. It offers a framework for astronomers when referencing the middle of the galactic cosmos. Jenkins took the theory and expanded upon it, claiming that, “by acknowledging the center of the winter solstice Sun as viewed from Earth, which was aligned with the galactic equator in 1998, in 2012, the next cosmic alignment would occur...”. (Palmer 2011) Jenkins also stated that it was, “legitimate to regard an alignment as a situation where any part of the solstice Sun as viewed from the Earth covered the line of the galactic equator, and that was the case throughout a 36 year period centered on 1998. On that basis, therefore, the last day of baktun 13 in 2012 qualified as a galactic alignment.” (Palmer 2011) The Milky Way has a 'dark rift' in the center, causing the winter solstice Sun to align in 2012. To the ancient Maya, the Milky Way's 'dark rift' was synonymous with the gateway to their spiritual and physical underworld, known as Xibalba. Xibalba, according to the ancient Mayan texts, was located in the mouth of a cave located in Guatemala in Central America and played an important role in Mayan cosmology. The cave was referenced in Mayan art as a Cosmic Monster mouth. Although Jenkins was able to tie the entrance to Xibalba and the 'dark rift' of the Milky Way together to develop his own 2012 spiritual cosmic prophecy, astronomers have since proven that the Sun won't be lined up with the actual

middle of the galaxy in 2012, allowing no galactic convergence-spiritual or otherwise. (Palmer 2011)

Figure 6. Mayan monster mouth facade, Campeche, Mexico.

<http://tinyurl.com/mpmslv>



Jenkins's theories regarding galactic convergence and a great spiritual awakening based on the Mayan long count calendar were expounded upon and sensationalized by Daniel Pinchbeck, author of, “2012: The Year of the Mayan Prophecy.” Pinchbeck (2006) went further and expanded upon Jenkins's 'dark rift' theory claiming, “The Sun will rise within the dark rift at the center of our Milky Way Galaxy, an event that occurs once every 25,800 years.” He also linked the dark rift to the center of the Mayan cosmos where spirits and kings entered into a

different dimension to access secret knowledge about the cosmos. In his second book, "2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl," Pinchbeck claimed that the black hole was not heralding a doomsday event but rather would lead earthlings into a new age of spiritual enlightenment guided by the Meso-American god, Quetzalcoatl. (Pinchbeck 2006) Quetzalcoatl translates into English as the Feathered Serpent and is one of the major deities of the ancient Mexican pantheon of gods. For example, in the Toltec culture (9th through 12th centuries), Quetzalcoatl represented the evening and morning stars and was linked to the worship of heavenly bodies. The Aztecs, however, believed he was the inventor of the calendar and books, and was the guardian of artisans. Quetzalcoatl was also linked to the planet Venus and represented the resurrection of the evening and morning stars in both the Aztec and Mayan cultures. (Palmer 2011) These ancient cultures worshipped the same deity and linked him to the heavens. Pinchbeck ran with the idea that Quetzalcoatl would return on December 21, 2012 and be responsible for the emergence of some cosmic force through the dark rift, causing a gravitational pull on the earth that would lead to a new age. He does not specify if the end of the world would ensue but rather focuses on spiritualism and cosmic knowledge that the ancient Meso-American cultures acquired via their shamans. Pinchbeck bases his information on ancient Aztec, Toltec, and Mayan gods and their tradition of shamanism. Ancient shamans or medicine men would consume pulque, an alcoholic beverage made from the maguey plant, and go into trance such as states so they could communicate with the gods. (Coe 1995) Many ancient stone carvings and pictographs illustrate the shamans and Mayan royalty in their

trances, which involved bloodletting from the person's penis or tongue in order to show reverence to the divine energy of the cosmos, while also serving as a blood sacrifice to the gods. Both men and women participated in the bloodletting ritual, as seen in Fig. 7. Royal Mayan men and women would pierce a body part in a public ceremony in order to induce extreme pain and visions of ancestors and gods who would communicate with them show their power over the lay people and their influence with the community of deities. In the Maya tradition, for example, they believed that the gods gave their blood to create humans, so by performing bloodletting, the Maya shamans and royals were giving of themselves in return to complete the cycle of life and renewal. (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993)

Although interested in the ancient Meso-American writings and stories connected with celestial gods, Pinchbeck did not go into the end of day's scenario on a cataclysmic level such as author Frank Waters did in his book called "Mexico Mystique", which references the different creations of our present world in reference to the ancient Meso-American cultures.

Figure7. Mayan Queen Xoc drawing a thorny cord through her tongue. Lintel 24 of Structure 23, Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico.¹



Frank Waters was an American Indian author who wrote about the different worlds or Creations that existed in the genesis stories of the Aztec and Mayan cultures. Both cultures have creation myths that have three to five worlds, the final culminating in a world catastrophe that supposedly would have ended our world. This supposed end of the world was based, once again, on the Mayan

¹ <http://www.the-art-minute.com/bloodletting-with-lady-xoc-a-womans-work-is-never-done/>

long count calendar, where the end of the long count or the 13th baktun, corresponded to December 21, 2012. (Palmer 2011) A baktun refers to 20 katun cycles of the ancient Mayan calendar and it has 144,000 days, equal to 394.26 tropical years. (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993) The Classical period of Mayan civilization happened during the eighth and ninth baktuns of the current calendrical cycle. According to the calendar, the current baktun began on 13.0.0.0.0, which equals December 21, 2012, if one uses the GMT (Goodman, Martinez, and Thompson). (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993) The GMT method is currently used to correlate the current creation started on September 6, 3114 BC in the Julian calendar to the Mayan long count calendar to reach the date of December 21, 2012, or the end of the world. (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993)

Although the Aztecs also had a similar creation myth, Waters bases much of his theory on the Mayan creation myths, which is what this paper is focusing on as it relates to the 2012 Dooms Day prophecy. Waters states that the different worlds of the Maya refer to different levels of existence, and that after the current level or Creation of earth is destroyed by a physical incident such as an earthquake or flood, the world will be plunged into chaos. Both the Maya of the Yucatan and Guatemala have a creation myth, the first consisting of four cycles and the latter of three. Both myths are recorded in sacred texts that have survived through the ages for researchers and authors to study and theorize in relation to dooms day. According to Waters, the writings of the “Maya of the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, including the sacred book Chilam Balam, refer to four world ages. The first, peopled by a race of dwarfs, who were believed to have built the

ruined cities of the region, was destroyed by a flood, as was the second, peopled by a race termed “the offenders”. The third age, which was the present one to the Mayan writers, would also end in a flood. A fourth age would then arise, and would meet the same fate as the others.” (Waters 1989) The Maya of Guatemala refer to the *Popul Vuh*, as their sacred book of creation that refers to just three world ages. "The first was created by the gods Tepeu (or Huracan) and Gucumatz, who peopled it with animals and then tried to create human beings from mud. However, these crumbled to dust as the mud dried, so were allowed to be washed away by the waters of a flood, terminating the age. The gods then created men from wood and women from rushes, but this new race of humans lacked the intelligence to communicate with the gods and became wicked. Hence, the storm god Huracan stirred up a great flood to end the second age, and monsters were set loose to devour the humans who had escaped the flood, although some survived to become monkeys. To people the new age, humans with greater intelligence were then created from maize dough.” (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993) Interestingly enough, both groups of Maya have a similar creation myth that ends the world(s) with water- a flood. Waters could have easily interpreted this myth as it relates to the long count calendar, come to theorize that the Maya had foreseen the future, and predicted the end of the present creation. The ancient Maya used what is referred to as precession of the equinoxes, or the Platonic Year, which is caused by the slow wobbling of the earth's polar axis in order to track the movement of the planets and stars. (Jenkins 1994) In his book, *The How and Why of the Mayan End Date in 2012 A.D.*, John Jenkins (1994) asserts that, "the earth's wobble

causes the position of the seasonal quarters to slowly precess against the background of the stars. Given that other ancient cultures such as the Egyptians, had this ability to track precession, it makes sense that the Mayans could also do this." The article asserts that the knowledge the Mayans had could have enabled them to track precession and determine the winter and summer solstices. Rather than predicting the end of the world, as some Modern Mayanists believe, Jenkins (1998) argues that the ancient Mayans were predicting the end of a cycle on the Long Count calendar. Jenkins also researched the astrological calendar for December 12, 2012. He found nothing out of the ordinary that would indicate support for the apocalyptic fervor the Modern Mayanists share regarding the end of days.

Waters, along with Jenkins and Pinchbeck, all believed that the Maya had used their advanced knowledge of astronomy to predict the future and plot it out on their calendars. As a result, many people in the early 2000's were swept up in apocalyptic fever based on what they had read, heard, or seen on television. Thankfully, the previously mentioned authors and the ancient Maya were wrong, allowing me to research and write about this topic.

Another different but interesting Doomsday Prophecy has become popular in the past 40 years and it deals with the belief that aliens are responsible for our savior, and ultimate destruction of the planet. Both Ancient Astronaut enthusiasts and the Heaven's Gate Cult are and were convinced that an alien race will come to earth and save the believers, while the non-believers will suffer horrible

destruction on earth. Their beliefs are similar to the Evangelicals and their Rapture culture, and only differ in who or what is the real savior-Christ or aliens.

Chapter IV.

Ancient Alien Theory and the Heaven's Gate Cult

Another type of doomsday cult that focuses on alien intervention has become popular in the last 60 years, especially after World War II ended. Believers of such phenomena hold to their belief that aliens will come to earth and save those who believe in extraterrestrial life, and enslave or destroy the humans who do not believe. Still, others believe that aliens will provide spiritual enlightenment to humans on how to save Earth from a dooms day scenario if we just open our minds to their influence. One example of this devotion is similar to the cargo cult worship that developed in Melanesia during and after World War II, which some humans can compare to the worship of aliens.

This fascination with Dooms Day is bolstered even more so when tragic events occur such as the mass suicide of the Heaven's Gate followers in California in 1997, a cult led by founder Marshall Applewhite. (Schweitzer 2010) The media coverage sensationalized the mass suicide of Applewhite and his followers and at the same time, reinvigorated the Dooms Day phenomena and the people who believe in such prophecies. Heaven's Gate was founded on principals of apocalyptic doctrine and new age teachings that claimed the earth was coming to an end and the only way to survive was to leave their earthly bodies behind and meet up with the higher beings, or UFO's, who would lead them to salvation. (Martin 1994) The believers also subscribed to the Ancient Astronaut Theory, which claims that UFO's have been visiting planet earth for centuries and have come and gone in order to help human's advance, both physically and spiritually.

(Martin 1994) Ancient Astronaut Theory is purported to explain all human being's origination and ancestry by claiming aliens were present on planet earth many years ago. They were supposedly sent down by superior alien beings to help us discover tools, sciences, art, etc. to better our civilization. In his first book, *Chariot's of the Gods*, author and Ancient Astronaut Theorist, Erich von Daniken (1999) claims that humans were not biblically created but genetically engineered by alien beings. The Heaven's Gate followers also followed this theory in terms of believing that they would be resurrected into alien beings once this human life was over. The group as a collective, referred to themselves as "walk ins", meaning that their physical bodies were being inhabited and prepared by extraterrestrial beings for the "recycling", or what commonly became known as the mass suicide. The followers gave up most or all of their personal possessions to become part of a collective, which prepared itself for the End of Days. Once freed from their "vehicles", they could pursue higher interests with intelligent life and watch below as the people of earth suffered the inevitable "recycling" or apocalypse.

The inhabitants of small and isolated Pacific Islands had never experienced outside people or cultures until the Japanese and Americans clashed during World War II. The Japanese came first, for example, to the island of Papua, with their technology and advancements. They brought weapons, canned food, clothes, and vehicles, all of which had never been seen before by natives. (Landes 2011) When the Japanese left, the Americans who conquered the Pacific dropped food and other cargo to service members on the ground stationed at the

airbase. The native Papuans assumed the cargo or gifts were from their ancestors and gods and that the Americans were messengers or incarnations of gods, coming to rescue and save the people from the effects of war. The Papuans set up shrines and worshipped the cargo because they observed that the material goods of white people gave them status and power in colonial society. The Papuans even made items such as radios and hats out of coconuts and straw as a way to try and gain access to the prestige and power of the new material goods that so fascinated them. (Landes 2011) The cargo or *kago* cult became synonymous with any attempt by these cultures to replicate and worship items from a modern, especially a western society and is now used by anthropologists to describe such behavior. Robert Landes, author of “*Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience*,” relates in his book how people who believe in UFO dooms day cults behave similarly to the Melanesians in the World War II era. He states, “The parallels between the *kago* cults and UFO beliefs are striking, all clearly bearing the same millennial imprint. Creatures from a civilization vastly superior in technology to ours will land on our planet and bring with them salvific *kago* that will take us from this current catastrophic world of violent self-indulgence to a millennial era of abundance and peace. The *kago* will consist of both hyper-technology and the kind of evolutionary wisdom that will enable us to overcome the insane hostilities and greed that seem to consume us. It constitutes a classic millennial narrative about how we get from this world destined for destruction to the perfect kingdom via extraterrestrial cargo ships.” Landes (2011) argues that although some people believe that UFO's come to us as saviors

from another planet, UFO's may also be annalistic and out to conquer and destroy the human race. Comparing the two cults, to some, is not realistic, however, I see no difference in a primitive culture waiting for a cargo plane to drop canned goods from the sky and an advanced alien ship bringing modern humans technology that will either enhance or eradicate their current society. Still some people believe and are convinced that UFO's have visited the planet and are currently making regular visits to Earth in order to prepare humans for the coming apocalypse. Some of these humans even went so far as to name their cult, follow a leader, and even take their own life because they believed they'd be transitioning to a better life with the aliens.

Fig. 8 Erich von Daniken², author and Ancient Astronaut Theorist

<https://www.google.com/search?q=ages+of+the+Maya&safe>



In 1997, the followers of Heaven's Gate, led by Marshall Applewhite, committed suicide because they were convinced the world was ending and that their only chance at salvation was by leaving their earthly bodies and transcending to the heavens to align with alien beings. (Martin 1994) These cultists followed the dogma of the Ancient Astronaut Theory, popularized by Erich von Daniken, author of *Chariots of the Gods*. Von Daniken (1999) claims in his book that our planet has been visited many times in the past by aliens who had superior technology and who came to earth only to help ancient humans. Von Daniken also claims that humans were not created by a God but were engineered by aliens.

² <https://www.google.com/search?q=ages+of+the+Maya&safe> (cited July 15, 2015).

Mainstream scientists and academics who regard his research as pseudoscience dismiss his theories. (Martin 1994) However, Heaven's Gate leader, Marshall Applewhite, not only believed in Ancient Astronaut Theory, but he went so far as to claim that the aliens were the cultist's only way to survive the coming apocalypse on Earth. Applewhite had his followers convinced that they had to shed their earthly bodies before the world ended and that the arrival of the Hale-Bopp comet in 1997 was their sign from their alien benefactors. (Abanes 1998) According to Applewhite, an alien spaceship was “hiding in the tail of the comet and in order to leave with the aliens and ascend into heaven, the Heaven's Gate followers had to shed their earthly bodies or “containers”.” (Abanes 1998) Heaven's Gate believed that their heaven had aliens in it instead of a religious god or a pantheon of gods as other religions do, such as Judaism or Christianity, for example. The cult was founded on principals of ufology, Gnosticism, and Apocalypticism. As a result, many people were attracted to this new idea of an alien paradise where the aliens were responsible for caring for and nurturing humans into higher and more intellectual beings. Applewhite's version of the biblical rapture was to occur via a spaceship rather than thorough a physical and spiritual transformation. The apocalyptic theme is present in this form of worship, just as it is in other, more traditional religions. Ironically, Applewhite recruited followers because they said they believed in “Jesus and only through them could normal people without hope find salvation.” (Hall, Schuyler and Trinh 2000) Their version of how to get to Jesus was quite different from the traditional route

but many people found their rhetoric appealing and abandoned their families and friends to seek an alternative lifestyle

Fig. 9 Hopi Rock art in Grand Canyon, AZ. ³



Another form of apocalyptic thinking that combines alien benefactors and a new age belief is currently known as the Aquarian Age and is rooted in ancient Mayan and Hopi astrological theories and traditions. (Pike 2004)

³ <http://www.crystalinks.com/hopi.html> (cited July 15. 2015)

Chapter V.

Neopagans and New Agers

The New Age believers popularized this theory in the 1960's when anything spiritual was popular in counter culture and disagreed with mainstream religions. The Hopi tradition of spiritualism was and is very attractive to people seeking an alternative to mainstream religions and societal norms of conformity. The Hopi believe there are nine worlds: the three previous worlds that we have already lived in, the current fourth world, and the three worlds we have not yet experienced.⁴ According to the Hopi tradition, "...a gourd full of ashes would be invented, and when dropped from the sky, would boil the oceans and burn the land..." (Waters 1989) Waters goes on to compare the gourd to our present world, stating that the atomic bomb is the gourd that will end our world. Many people agree with Waters and other Hopi supporters because of the rapid negative changes our earth is currently experiencing.

In the 1960's and 1970's, the movement was aimed at social and personal growth and encouraged communal living and equality among men and women. (Pike 2004) The New Agers and Neopagans, as they were called, also got involved in environmentalism, the feminist movement, and rallied for political equality, hoping to usher in a future utopia where peace prevailed. At the time, some astrologers were popularizing the theory that "when the sun entered the constellation of Aquarius on the day of the spring equinox, the Aquarian Age

would arrive.” (Pike 2004) In the 1980's and 1990's, Neopagans concerned themselves with environmental issues and the physical and spiritual destruction of the earth. However, more recently, Neopagan author, Marian Green points out that, “although some astrologers claim that the transition from one age to the next (Piscean to Aquarian) will be a time of chaos and cataclysm, some believe the shift will be more gradual.” (Pike 2004) Green is not alone in her beliefs but many more New Agers and Neopagans believe that an era of cleansing on a global scale must occur in order for the New Age or Pagan Era to begin. Author and New Age activist, an Ojibwa Indian, Sun Bear, claimed in his book, “*Black Dawn, Bright Day: Indian Prophecies for the Millennium That Reveal the Fate of Earth*,” that many people will die and the chaos and great destruction will occur before the peaceful age. (Bear 1992) Sun Bear believed that humans had the power over their own fates and could make the necessary changes needed to survive such an apocalypse. He even goes so far as to draw a map in his book so that surviving humans would have a “safe place to live and lists of supplies to help survive a cataclysmic event. (Bear 1992) Sun Bear (1992) goes on to state that, “People will learn new ways of existing harmoniously on the planet, and shall share the same level of consciousness, found in their own individual ways.” Sun Bear is not alone in his apocalyptic beliefs. Other Neopagans and New Agers believe that a utopian society cannot occur until a great catastrophe has befallen our planet. The New Age movement remained strong and in the early 2000's and it gained many more followers from the New England area of the United States.

In the early 2000s, many Neopagans and New Ager's came from the New England area, encompassing New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, to name a few. People in New England tend to be better educated and more liberal in their religious beliefs, a far cry from their Dispensational forefathers. (Ringel 1994) A sub-culture of medieval fantasists existed in New England during the early 2000's and it is because of their interests that they discovered New Age teachings. These outsiders consisted of Wiccans or modern day witches, Odinists, and Neo-druids. These non mainstream groups had been adhering to ancient practices of earth worship and were/are strong believers in the local history and folklore surrounding witchcraft. As a result of the Neo Pagan movement and its popularity in the early 2000s, these smaller sub-cultures were able to integrate themselves into the larger movement and gain wider acceptance by fellow believers. (Ringel 1995) The environmental and metaphysical connection that New Ager's and Neopagans associate with the movement, makes it more popular and attractive to those seeking an alternative to Judeo-Christian religions. The New Ager's 'end of days' speaks about environmental and spiritual disasters, rather than a physical collecting of souls into the heavens.

New Age writer Marianne Williamson predicts that “in the ‘end of days’ we will not escape the horrors of the world through vehicles that soar into outer space, but through vehicles that soar into inner space. Those vehicles are our healed minds. (Pike 2004) Through research on the New Ager's and Neopagans, it appears as if they are focusing on an end of days of the metaphysical, rather than a physical. One that is necessary for a New Age to erupt and bring forth a world

of peace and spiritual healing. The end of the world seems very necessary in order for the New Age agenda to be born, one of spiritual healing and social awareness that is currently lacking in our present world.

New Agers are similar to Evangelical Christians who also advocate a form of the Rapture, be it spiritual or physical. For example, in the 1970's, author, teacher, and New Ager Melinda Bollar Wagner, studied a group of students from a metaphysical death group. Her research and input from students led her to believe that people who are enlightened will have a different experience than those who are not. (Pike 2004) Her research led her to conclude that, "The enlightened would be allowed to reincarnate on earth, and the unenlightened would not." (Pike 2004) The enlightenment she refers to is comparable to the physical Rapture that Evangelical Christians speak about, the main difference being that those not chosen for the Rapture are left behind to face hell on earth. Similarly, Neale Donald Walsh, author and spiritualist, believes that New Agers will find transcendence through themselves and their acts of peace, rather than one God, as the Evangelicals do. (Walsh 2002) Walsh (2002) claims that there will be a world left of believers and non-believers, and that "the New Agers will affirm their unique role in shaping the new Aquarian Future. Those who were enlightened would be permitted to pro-create and advance and those who were not enlightened would fall behind. New Agers promote a spiritual cataclysm as a sort of global cleansing but do not completely rule out the necessity of a physical apocalypse. Still other New Agers believe that only a highly enlightened and a special chosen few will bring on the apocalypse themselves because their

yearning to transform themselves and society is so strong. For example, New Ager and author, David Spangler states that the, “Age of Aquarius has passed and humans must work together to bring their personal lives into alignment with the global shift. In order to do this they must undergo a personal initiation that may be difficult and painful.” (Spangler 2010) Neopagans and New Agers embrace this way of thinking on a personal rather than a global scale because they believe that individuals can spark change, rather than the world as a whole. Spangler asserts, “[t]his kind of apocalyptic thinking is on a personal, not a global level, and involves psychological rather than material destruction and rebirth. (Spangler 2005) They envision a utopian society where change and hopefulness will inspire all people to want to be better, in all ways. Although some Neopagans and New Agers lean more towards individual change and enlightenment, they still argue for a communal system that it is environmentally friendly and encourages group participation on all levels. Neopagans have created sanctuaries all over the United States where people who want to join the movement can visit in order to become one with nature and start the self-healing process. (Pike 2004) In the Sierra Nevada foothills in California, for instance, Neopagans have created a sanctuary called Gaia’s Oasis where visitors from the surrounding cities can come, experience spiritual healing, and educate themselves on the New Age movement. The sanctuaries offer peace and freedom from the outside world and encourage visitors to join the local communities and support the New Ager lifestyle. Other New Agers and Neopagans purchase areas of land and develop their own communities and practice peaceful living, while they in turn, prepare for the

apocalypse. One such community in Massachusetts called Glenwood Farms was established as a New Age spiritual center where people live together. Often, there are schools and houses and the members support themselves via an agrarian lifestyle. They believe that by leaving the city life and its' vices, they will be shielded by any apocalypse, as it would only affect the wicked in the cities across the United States. Because the New Agers and Neopagans choose to associate themselves with apocalyptic doctrine, they are often ignored and shunned for their beliefs by mainstream science and religious groups.

Figure 10. Survey Question: Which, if any of the following explains why you believe in Doomsday / End of the World Prophecies.

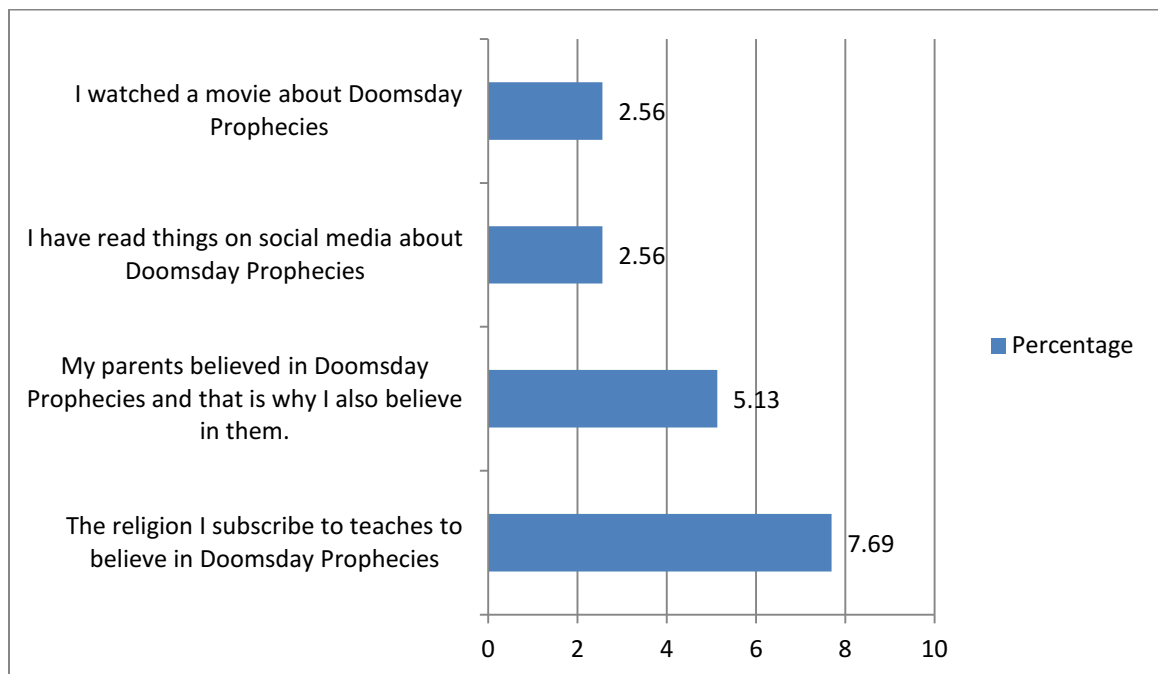


Figure 11. Survey Question: Which, if any of the following explains why you do not believe in Doomsday / End of the World Prophecies.

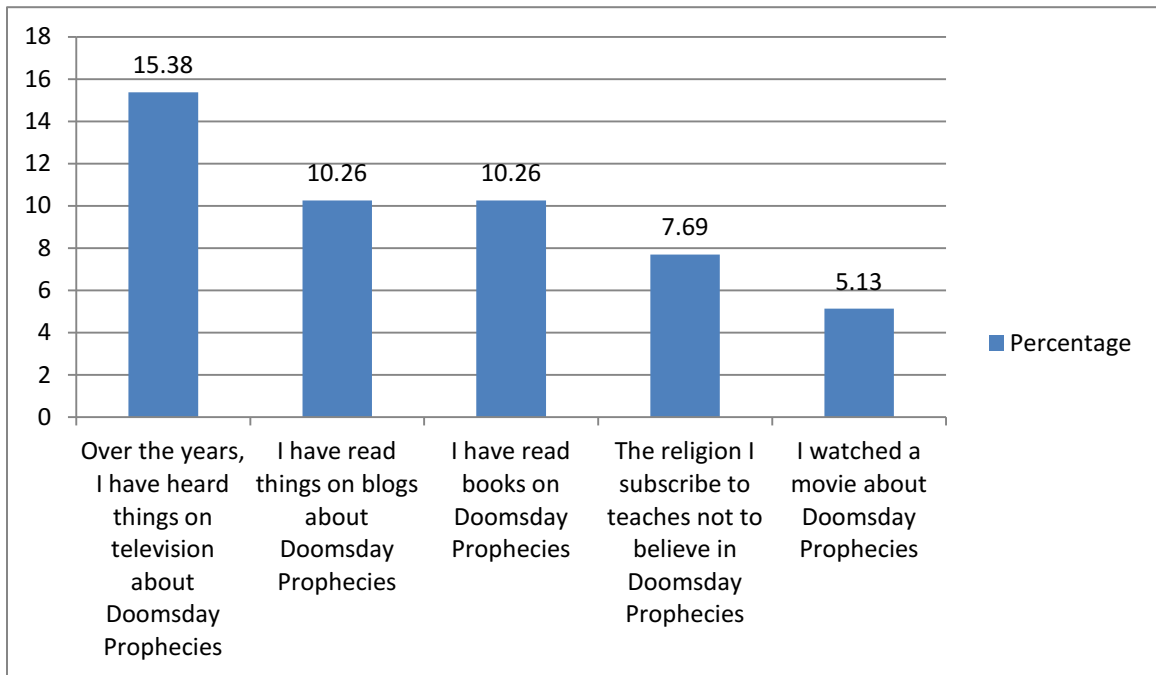
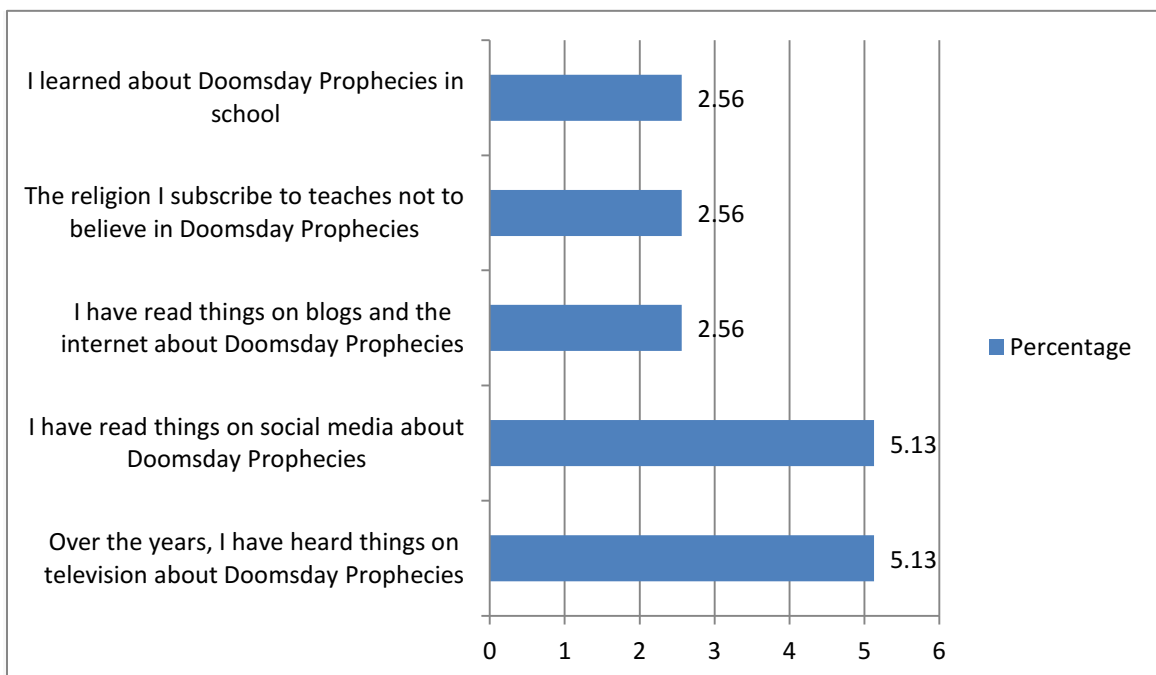


Figure 12. Survey Question: Which, of the following, if any explains why you are not sure about Doomsday / End of the World Prophecies?



Mentioned previously, the Rapture phenomenon has brought notoriety and financial gain to the group of Evangelical Christians who wrote, distributed, and cashed in on the book series, *Left Behind*. The book series cashes in on rapture fiction, while responding to and creating “crisis and instabilities of modernity.”(Oldring 2013) The *Left Behind* fiction novels written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have sold more than 63 million copies worldwide, rivaling sales of contemporary famous authors such as John Grisham and J.K. Rowling. (Monahan 2008) Adding to this source of revenue, are the DVD’s, audio books, gift cards, comic books, and a major motion picture. The two authors are now considered two of the most influential figures in the religious right movement in entertainment America today. (Standaert 2006) LaHaye and Jenkins have cashed in on people’s fears of being left behind when, according to *The Book of Revelations*, God calls his believers up into Heaven before the world war and the ultimate end of the world. The believers are safe and the non-believers are left to suffer eternal damnation in a world marred with war, famine, greed, and eventually eternal suffering. People are so willing to believe in an idea that offers comfort, that they will latch on to a thought or suggestion that others believe in, in order to fit in to a group or religion. The Rapture phenomenon has also allowed Christian publishing houses to cash in on the money generated by the popularity of this and other Christian books related to Doomsday and the end of the world.

The new apocalypse industry focuses on bringing Christians and their money into the fold via mixed media and the recurring belief that if “you don’t believe, you will most certainly perish.” (Lamy 1996)

Figure 13. Survey Question: Please indicate your current level of income.

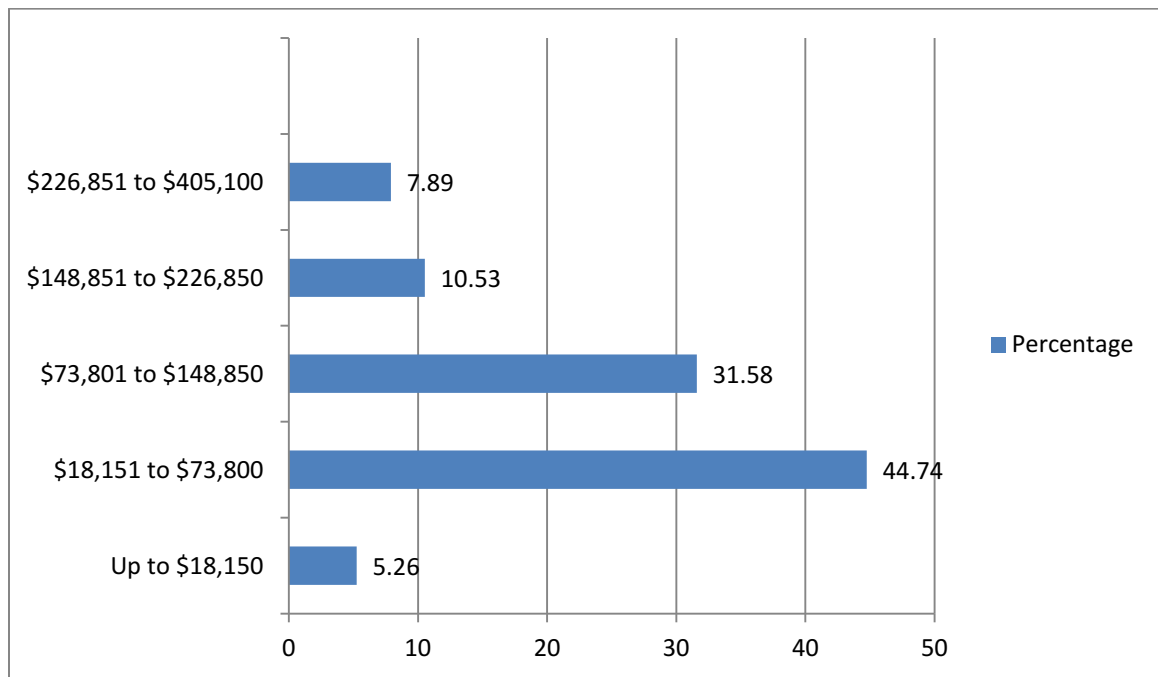
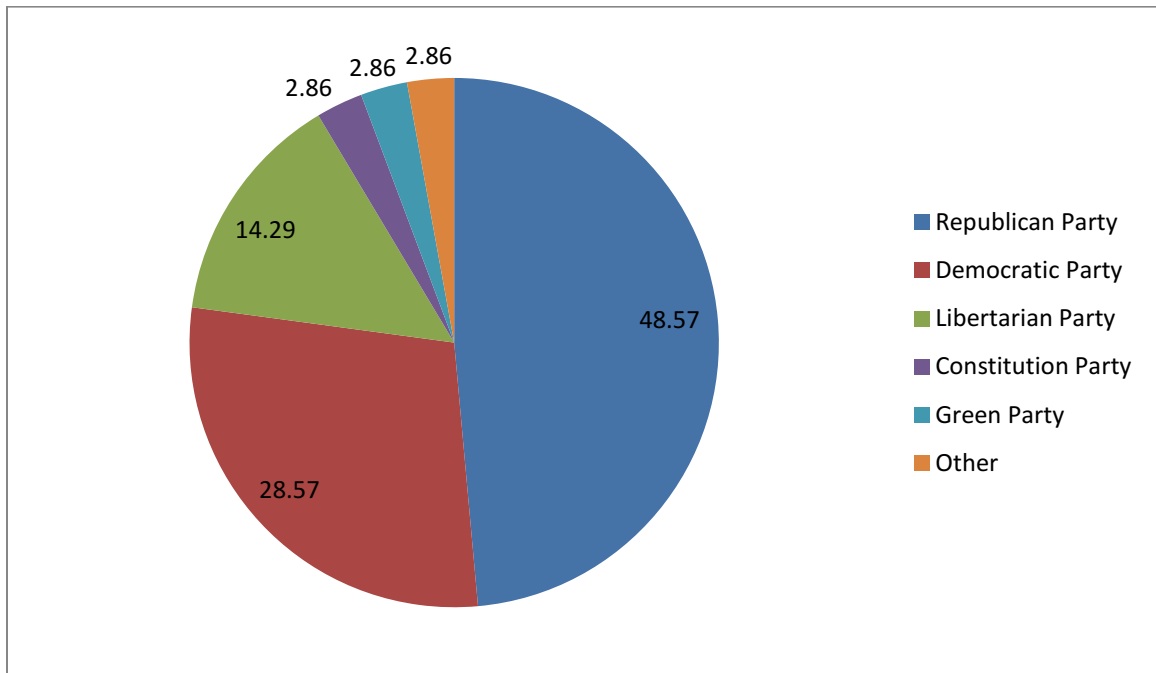


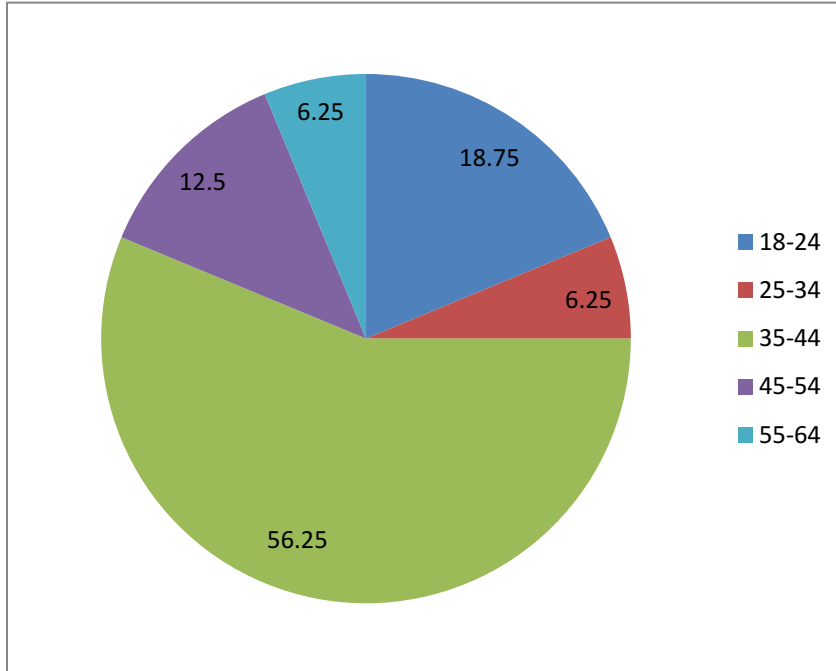
Figure 14. Survey Question: Which political party best represents your views?



Not only is a belief in the Rapture necessary, but a belief and understanding of how technology plays into our modern day society is necessary in order for the believers to spread their message of doom and gloom for all non-believers. In the book, *Left Behind*, the authors focus on how the Anti-Christ tracks people by implants and “Those who neglect to get the mark when it is made available will not be allowed to buy or sell until such time as they receive it.” (Shuck 2005) In other words, if you do not accept the mark of the beast, you will not be able to interact within the society; you and your family will be outcasts and surely starve to death. The mark of the beast is compared to the acceptance of a digital society where the Internet connects us all at any given time of day or night. Information is available to us at our leisure. Not having a computer or Smart Phone means, a person has no way to connect with society and therefore, joins the non-believers in a world without information and complete digital non-

connectivity. The fact that both the non-fictional and fictional worlds overlap by a connecting thread of technology, aids in the reinforcement of said novels and adds credibility to their interpretation of world events. (Shuck 2005) Ironically, it is fascinating to note that the Rapture can be interpreted as encouraging materialism and discouraging progressive social intervention because those who believe in the Rapture do so without having to acquire great wealth or without receiving any financial help from others. (Monahan 2008) All you need to have in order to escape the impending apocalypse is faith in a Christian God; you do not need to befriend others or work in a society for the greater good of all. The Rapture is also a selfish movement that requires no contact with outsiders, or non-believers. One does not have to become active in a community or help others to escape the end of the world. One merely has to believe and make sure one's nuclear family is in the fold, so that they will be saved when the time comes. According to Monahan (2008) contemporary rapture fiction "harmonizes with millennial capitalism"; thereby promoting extreme consumerism, isolationism and social polarization that promotes many of the problems that lie at the root of many social problems today. It is ironic to think that the rapture is such a selfish belief focused on saving only those in the faith yet the research has proven that this particular Dooms Day prophecy resides within a closed circle of believers who share no interest in saving anyone who does not share their belief. By refusing to connect with the outside world, people who believe in such prophecies promote a disconnected way of thinking that disavows them of all social responsibility for their actions, behaviors and beliefs.

Figure 15. Survey Question: Age



Although I have discussed only a few of the Dooms Day prophecies that are prevalent in today's world, there are many more that are inclusive and whose members only wish to better themselves and not society as a whole. They believe in the end of the world as an event and that all they do on a daily basis, leads up to one major event such as a second coming of Christ or the arrival of alien beings from another planet. As a result, these believers disassociate themselves from daily life, as we know it, focusing only on the result.

Chapter VI.

Findings

The dooms day prophecies and theories that have been studied and reviewed in this paper all have one thing in common-they never happened as predicted. People from the ancient Maya to the modern Baptist community have been taught to believe in prophecies by their respective religious leaders, leaders who saw an opportunity to captivate an audience and create a phenomenon. In some cases, such as the Biblical prophets, the argument is more vague because it is hard to determine whether or not they were referring to their current political and social situations or speaking to a future that they would never see. We will never know if the writers of the books in the Bible such as Abraham, were genuinely concerned with our end as humans, or if they were disturbed by the political drama and using written metaphors as references. Did the Ancient Maya really come up with a calendrical system to predict the future demise of our world or was it a way to monitor the stars to help them plant their seasonal crops? My research indicates that although the Maya were interested in the end of our world, much of their calendar system was used for solar calculations for their growing cycles and to measure the time in a day. For example, the Maya from the Yucatan in Mexico are known for their ability to track the stars, particularly Venus and Mars, in order to determine the length of one 12 our day. According to Barbara Tedlock, (1982) Mayanist and author, " the ancient Maya were great horologists, students of time...they measured the lunar cycle and solar year: lunar and solar

eclipses; and the risings of Venus and Mars with great accuracy." The Maya's knowledge of astronomy and the universe has led many people to believe that they were able to predict the future or the end of the world. It is true that the Maya creation myth talks of four cycles of the world, but Mayan scholars believe that it refers to different kingships and political events, rather than a physical ending of the earth. Ironically, the Ancient Astronaut Theorists (AAT's) believe that the ancient Maya were visited by aliens long ago and as a result, the Maya received advanced knowledge of science, art, and astronomy that aided them in building their society.

The AAT's are convinced that aliens visited our planet long ago and gave some ancient peoples the knowledge to produce advanced technology, such as knowledge of the solar system. According to Erich von Daniken (1999), father of the AAT Theory, "Aliens have been visiting our planet for thousands of years, so why is it not conceivable that they may want to save us from extinction?" von Daniken believes that aliens want to help humans avoid planetary destruction by giving us advanced technology. However, because humans are self-destructive, the aliens will come back before the apocalypse to save those of us willing to go. Unfortunately, the AAT Theory is not widely accepted by the scientific community and von Daniken's work is not considered a real science. However, AAT's do have a numerous following who devote themselves to researching potential ancient alien encounters all over the world. The theory has become so popular that a television series called Ancient Aliens airs weekly on the History Channel. Unlike the AAT's who are peaceful people, the Millerites and the

Heaven's Gate followers were committed to captivating leaders who led them down a path to their own apocalypse, both physical and mental.

People who follow leaders such as Miller and Applegate are searching for something to fill a void inside and are seeking acceptance. They want to belong to a part of something bigger than themselves, even if it leads to their own demise, personal or financial. Whether it is the Second Coming of Christ or an alien enlightenment, people need to believe in something better than what they are currently experiencing in their own lives. Miller predicted the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in 1843, while Marshall Applewhite predicted the aliens were coming in the tail of the Hale Bop comet in 1995. (Cross 1950) Both were incorrect, yet the wide range of time between the two predictions tells us that people want to at least consider the possibility of an end of days scenario. Is it because some people are weaker than others and look for a leader in times of crisis? Or is it because some leaders exploit the weaknesses' of others in order to turn a profit or gain popularity for themselves? In almost every instance that I have read about, leaders such as Miller and Applewhite were seeking prominence in their field and needed other's to follow them in order to legitimize their teachings or belief system. To emphasize my point, I have taken this excerpt from author Barry Brummett, who states that, "[w]e find it distasteful when a speaker today, in our presence, seriously predicts the imminent descent of the Whore of Babylon from the sky; we identify as seers and saints those who made the same claim 2,000 years ago. Certain questions naturally arise about those who literally expect the end of the world in our day: Why do they think this? Why do some people believe them?

How do their exhortations work to persuade an audience and to move that audience to actions and commitments?" (Brummett 1991)

Why, after all these years, are we as humans, still fascinated with the end of our own world? After all, none of these prophecies have come true, and we all survived the 2012 Prophecy which was supposed to have been the one to end us all. For example, Evangelicals preach that apocalyptic doctrine is a way of life and they truly believe that the end times are near; we just have to wait for them. Some New Ager's are sure that we are in the Age of Aquarius and soon, the planets will align properly to jump start the next wave of destruction on our planet. Because so many people believe in so many different doomsday prophecies, it is hard to pin point one being more popular than another. Exploitation, however, does appear to be common among all the groups I have studied with one exception. Ironically, the Neopagans and New Ager's are the only group I have studied that do not take advantage of the weak, rather they are people who hold advanced degrees, many of them teachers and philosophers, who have chosen to follow a different spiritual path of personal and physical enlightenment. They believe in transcending of the self to a better spiritual place, whether that place is with the aliens or a god is not clear to me.

The Neopagans and New Ager's find solace in holistic healing, group living, and environmental concerns that are often in the forefront of today's world. They also believe that the world is a living being and that after so much abuse by humans, it will one day lash out, resulting in the New Age end of days. (Pike 2004) The current trend for the Neopagan/New Ager movement is all about self-

education and becoming one with the harmonious nature of one's inner being. They are not all hippies or societal rejects, as many people would such as to believe. They are professors, scientists, business men and women, students, historians and spiritualists, to name a few. New Ager's choose to become who they are, and do not follow a leader or preacher simply because God told them to do so. They do, however, believe in the apocalypse, but more on an metaphysical and environmental level rather than a religious one. Their views are based on an ancient astrological system of predicting the future planetary events by understanding the relationship of the planets in the present. (Pike 2004)

According to historian Catherine Albanese (2008), “[t]he heavens in astrology are divided into twelve zodiac signs named for the constellations. The signs stay the same but, the constellations move in cycles. Each line up with its corresponding sign for a little over 2,000 years, and the entire cycle takes over 25,000 years to complete.” This prior age is called the Piscean Age and now, New Ager's are waiting for the Aquarian Age, which will in turn signal the apocalypse. The New Agers believe that after the earthly apocalypse, those who survive will be shown how to live in a cleansed environment by their fellow enlightened teachers. (Hoopes 2011) At no point in the readings about New Agers or Neopagans does it state that the wealthy will die and the poor and righteous shall prevail, rather they focus on healing the earth and learning how to live after the apocalypse has occurred.

Unlike Evangelicals or Millerites, Neopagans and New Ager's accept that if one wants status or information, all one has to do is seek it out, as in workshops

or channeling sessions. According to author Sarah Pike, “Neopagan festivals that teach skills and knowledge on how to get to the next age are open to everyone. These religious movements do not seek converts and believe that individuals are on their own spiritual paths.” (Pike 2004) As a result, people can seek out Neopagan and New Ager information because it is made available to the public without a catch-no monetary donation necessary. Networks of Neopagans and New Agers meet in communities throughout the United States to participate in healing rituals, group meditation, and other community events, which are all open to anyone. (Albanese 2008) Currently, Neopagan and New Ager's are focusing on all ages of life in order to secure their future beliefs are carried out. Most Neopagan families live in regular cities and suburbs and intermingle with everyone else. Very few families choose to live in seclusion communally, as was the case in the 1960's and 1970's when the movement really took a hold in American culture. Neopagan and New Agers seem to thrive on knowing a new and better world is to come out of an apocalypse, rather than building one through exploitation and greed.

Exploiting the weak and poor is a recurring theme in my readings. The preachers from all the religions in the Burned Over District took advantage of those who were disenfranchised in order to fill their congregations with the faithful. (Cross 1950) The Methodists stole parishners from the Lutherans and the Lutherans stole parishners from the Baptists and so forth. No one religion was better than the other, it was all about who had the biggest congregations and the most donations to further God's cause. Sadly, many poor people were duped into

giving their money to the slick tongued preachers, and wound up with nothing but their Bible and their faith left to show for it. However, because the Millerites preached poverty as a solution to the evil world, many congregations thought they were doing God's work. (Cross 1950) It is interesting to think that by keeping oneself poor, one would avoid the Devil's temptations. Even today, many modern Baptist Churches preach that money and power is the Devil's playground, and in order to avoid evil, a person must remain righteous and avoid becoming wealthy. I know this for a fact because I grew up in this environment and looking back, I find it to be completely bizarre and unfounded. My experiences aside, evil and sin has long been associated with wealth, power, and money. After reading many different articles and chapters of various books, my research indicates that this belief started back in ancient times, flourished in the middle ages, and has existed well into today's church environment.

From the Millerites to the Fundamentalists, the desire to keep the evil world at bay is a prominent theme of their teachings and testimonies. The Fundamentalists, who got their roots from the Millerites, hold certain readings in the Bible to be literal, unlike the Evangelicals who take most of the writings in the Bible on faith. (Gribben 2009) The Evangelicals are big on the Rapture and continue to make money from their movies, books, and other sources of media. People willingly give to this group because the Evangelicals preach the end times are near, and if you want to be saved, not only must you help the cause via donations, but you must join the congregation. Evangelical churches are strong and growing stronger in the United States, particularly in the South and Mid

West. Their numbers have doubled since the early nineteen eighties and continue to grow, especially after the success of the Left Behind Series written by Tim LaHaye and Tom Jenkins. (Frykholm 2004) Demographically, these parts of the country tend to remain in lower income and blue collar communities where religion is a big part of daily life. Often, people do not have economic and social opportunities to go to college or better themselves, so they stay with the religion that they have always known. (Gribben 2009) There is also, in many cases, no encouragement or reason to move away. After all, if a person is raised with the philosophy that God will take care of you if you believe in Him and go to church every Sunday, there is no incentive to seek further knowledge or success.

Chapter VII.

Research Methods

To test my hypothesis, I conduct a targeted survey that determined income, level of education, and level of education. I expected to find that persons with a higher level of education showed no interest or believed in dooms day prophecies. However, the data suggests that people holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree do believe in doomsday prophecies and are more open to the suggestion of alternative religions. The null hypothesis suggests that level of education is not correlated, or is weakly correlated, to a belief in Dooms Day prophecies. I initially thought that persons with a lower education or none at all, would be more willing to believe in such things as end of days prophecies or an alien apocalypse. The only exception remains the Evangelical Christians who have a large following in the Southern United States. A majority of their members live below the poverty line and inhabit the southern region of the United States. (Keister 2012) Contributing to this poverty is the fact that many Black and White Protestant families believe that going into the ministry is a worthy and humble profession. People that go into the ministry are not required to obtain a higher education and do not make a high income. As a result, the poverty and ignorance level remains and the family is not elevated into a higher social economic status. Many times, the mother or wife is expected to stay home and care for the children, forcing the family to rely on one income. Often, these families have multiple children, putting further strain on the financial situation of these families.

(Keister 2012) Professor of Sociology, Lisa A. Keister (2012) writes that, “[m]any Conservative Protestants also view money as belonging to God. People are considered managers of the money but should consult God or God’s agents on earth regarding decisions to use their money.” As a result, Conservative Protestants continue to remain at the lower income levels in this part of the United States. The survey aided in determining why people with a lower education level believe, if at all, in a collective approach to the “Rapture philosophy”, which targets Evangelical Christians into believing that the only way to heaven is through financial support of the church and it’s respective belief system. The survey helped determine the attitude and preferences of people who believe in any type of Doom’s Day prophecy, and if so, which one(s). This has helped me understand the popularity of the major known prophecies, such as the New Age Mayan Dooms Day prophecy, the Rapture, and the Ancient Astronaut Doms Day prophecy, and ultimately, why these people are attracted to such prophecies, especially when so much data has been collected to dispute these above-mentioned beliefs. My survey was disseminated through a variety of social media platforms, such as Facebook, and LinkedIn, and I invited people within my own network to take the survey. To prevent survey fatigue, I kept the survey no longer than 4-5 minutes in duration. Given the size of my own network, I was able to achieve a significant number of respondents. Potential respondents were pre-screened for the following criteria-age, level of education, and type of degree obtained.

This research is important because it will provide a better understanding of why, in general, people believe in precognition; and more specifically, why certain groups of people believe in Dooms Day prophecies. I hope to uncover why people feel the strong need to belong to a group or cult whose beliefs lie outside the norm. I also think it is important to know the direction of the countries beliefs and how our nation's religious groups may or may not be affected in the future.

Chapter VIII.

Research Limitations

My research primarily focuses on Dooms Day cults and prophecies that are popular in the United States, where as there are numerous other cults and prophecies that are popular around the world. For example, the Rapture Phenomenon started in the United States by Evangelical Christians, has spread worldwide and remains popular to this day. Other prophecies and cults have sprung up in Western Europe, the Middle East and Asia but my research is limited to the United States due to time and focus.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that a large percentage of individuals that believe in dooms day prophecies exhibit a lower level of formal education, and a lower level of annual income. This suggests that years of formal education might be positively correlated to social and cultural exclusion; as a person becomes more educated, they are less likely to take the word of a so-called prophet regarding when the world will end, and instead might focus more on assessing facts and data when determining whether they believe in dooms day prophecies. This further suggests that college (higher education) is an important factor in making helping people determine their core beliefs about when life and the world will end.

That education and income are often positively correlated also indicates that individuals that earn less money, and are thus less educated, are more susceptible to believing the word of a religious or cult leader. In turn, such individuals tend to give these leaders money, even though their income level is lower than average. People from lower economic brackets tend to be more religious and willing to believe in religious leaders who claim that belief in a god or gods is the only way to eternal salvation. These religious and cult leaders cater and market to lower income demographics, knowing that the less educated are far more willing to believe than those individuals who have a formal education and can think rationally about their future.

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