

Mayans, Meet Chicken Little By Bob Waldrep

“The sky is falling! The sky is falling!”, so said Chicken Little after being struck on the head by an acorn that fell from a tree. In this well-known folktale, Chicken Little fails to recognize it was an acorn that struck her, choosing to believe it was a piece of the sky that fell. Convinced that the sky is falling, she sets out to warn the King of this impending doom. Along the way, she encounters Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Daddles, Goosey Poosey, and Turkey Lurkey and dutifully reports to each what happened to her. Upon hearing this, each joins her quest to warn the King.

Throughout history there have been many people and groups who were real-life “Chicken Littles”; people who have believed and/or convinced others that an apocalypse or the end of the world was at hand. Some even predicted specific dates and convinced large numbers of people their prediction was accurate. Perhaps the best known for doing this are the Jehovah’s Witnesses who, in the previous century, predicted a number of different dates for Armageddon. A more recent example is Harold Camping, who got much media attention with his prediction that the world would end on May 22, 2011 (see our article, *Where Were You when the World Didn’t End?*, CrossingCurrents Vol4:4).¹

As I write, we are just weeks away from the next predicted date for the world’s end, December 21, 2012. The “prophecy” behind this date is said to be found in a calendar developed and used by the Mayans, an ancient civilization that developed in the modern day area of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. Theirs was a highly advanced and dominant culture until its collapse in the 10th Century. Scholars often compare its glory years with that of the Greeks. One textbook describes them as being, “...great builders and artists...scholars and scientists who invented a remarkable calendar, studied astronomy, and pursued mathematics.”²

Whatever conclusions scholars may draw regarding the Maya calendar, its accuracy is not part of the debate. In fact, when it came to marking time, the Mayans were particularly ahead of most, if not all, of their contemporaries. Their priests were students of astronomy, keeping a careful watch upon the heavens from their observatories. As they tracked the sun, moon, and stars they established a calendar that, like ours, was based on a 365-day Solar year.

Unlike our calendar, theirs did not provide for a leap year adjustment and is based on 18 months of 20 days (their numbering system is based on 20 rather than 10, like ours, as the Mayans were barefoot and thus used all twenty digits - fingers and toes - when counting) followed by one month of 5 days, known as the dangerous days.

Since their calendar is regarded as a very accurate way of tracking days, why the controversy; what is it about their “remarkable calendar” that has led some to believe the “sky is falling”? The simple answer is: Mayan scholars noted that, after thousands of years of tracking dates, the calendar seemingly ended on the modern era date of December 21, 2012 (or possibly, December 23) and began to interact as to possible reasons. This discussion was exploited by some outside the field of Mayan studies who began to assert their own theory; namely, that the Mayans ended the calendar because they knew it was the last day of the earth’s existence – that the sky was falling, you might say.

It seems a misunderstanding of what Mayan scholars were actually discussing is the simple answer. The shorter and, perhaps, more accurate answer is: “It’s all about the money”(as is true of so many end-time prophecies). Based on this so-called Mayan prophecy, thousands of books, websites, articles, etc. have been published in recent years promoting the theory that the world will end on 12-21-12. Some of these also offer shelters and other means by which to survive the coming apocalypse – all for a “reasonable” price, of course. One company is selling \$5,300 tickets for a 28-day ‘La Ruta Maya’ bike tour that will begin in Costa Rica and end on Dec. 21 in Belize”. All of this certainly begs the question, if the world is ending on the 21st, why do these doomsday merchandisers need to sell their information, products, and services?

Is there even a market for what these hucksters are selling? Surely, the public is more reasonable and aware than to buy this snake oil. Sadly, a May 2012 Reuters survey found that 10% of respondents in 21 countries (12% of those in the US) agree the Mayan calendar marks the end of the world.³ This is only slightly less than the 14 percent who believe the world will end in their lifetime. With such a built in audience of believers, it is little wonder that the prophecy was the subject of a 2009 Hollywood movie titled, *2012*, starring John Cusack, that earned



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over \$166 million at the box office.

As further evidence of its popularity, one website (december212012.com) devoted solely to end-time prophecies regarding December 21st claims over five million visits per month. In addition to being able to watch a countdown clock on the site, see a list of “celebrity” believers, and buy an endless array of books and other 2012 products; the site also offers advice on how to prepare for and survive the events of December 21, 2012. Interestingly, it also includes this disclaimer:

“The content of ‘The 2012 Network’ is for general information purposes only and does not constitute advice”. (Hmmm, it sounds amazingly similar to the small print included with psychic readings). It goes on to say, “The 2012 Network’ tries to provide content, news and information that is true and accurate as of the date of writing;

however, we give no assurance or warranty regarding the accuracy, timeliness, or applicability of any of the contents. Visitors to ‘The 2012 Network’ should not act upon ‘The 2012 Network’s’ content or information without first seeking appropriate professional advice” (emphasis added).⁴

Seeking a “professional’s” advice actually sounds like good advice. So what do the professionals – those who study and understand Mayan culture - say? It is quite clear from their writings, it is not the community of scholars (nor the descendants of the Mayans, for that matter) who are putting forth or supporting these claims of cataclysmic events and end of the world scenarios that are being tied to the Maya Calendar.

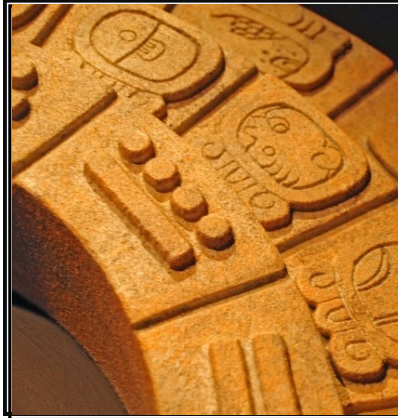
In his book, *It’s Not the End of the World: What the Ancient Maya Tell Us About 2012*, Dr. Mark Van Stone, Professor of Art History at Southwestern College and a widely recognized expert on Maya Hieroglyphs, writes that Maya scholars, “have been watching with amusement and dismay as self-styled experts proclaim that ancient Maya prophets foretold an earth-shattering happening to occur December 21, 2012”.⁵

Who are these “self-styled experts” Dr Stone references? They are, for the most part, doomsday proponents and New Agers. Concerning these so-called Mayan prophecies, Dr. David Stuart, a Professor of Mesoamerican art and writing at the University of Texas at Austin, and author of *The Order of Days: The Maya World and the Truth About 2012*, has said, “[the doomsday predictions are] mostly coming out of New

Age interpretations and mysticism about Mayan calendrics, which are not based on archeology, anthropology or scholarship”.⁶

This begs the question, what is it about the Maya Calendar ending that leads some to believe it predicts the end of the world, or some great cataclysmic change in December of 2012? To understand the answer to this question we must have some understanding of the Maya Calendar.

Just as we keep a count of years, so



In our Western society, every year 31 December is followed, not by the End of the World, but by 1 January. So 13.0.0.0 in the Mayan calendar will be followed by 0.0.0.0.1 - or good-ol' 22 December 2012, with only a few shopping days left to Christmas.”

Dr. Karl Kruszeelnicki

does the Mayan calendar keep what is referred to as a long count. Our count of years begins with the birth of Christ, or what is now commonly referred to as the Christian era – our current year count is 2012 (2.0.1.2). Similarly, the Mayans keep a long count that begins with their date of creation, which is marked as 13.0.0.0.0 (it is not clear why they began with 13 rather than zero) which would correspond with August 11, 3114 BCE in our calendaring.

To better understand their system of dating, Dr. Van Stone offers the following comparison of the Maya calendar and the Gregorian that we use in the West. He writes:⁷

“The Gregorian date Monday, December 29, 2008 records:

Monday = One day in a cycle of 7 days (week)

29th = One in a numbered cycle of 28,29,30, or 31 days

December = One in a cycle of 12 named months

363 = One in a cycle of 365 days

2.0.0.8 = A count of years since the birth of a Christian cycle

This same date written by the Maya records: 7 Manik’ 10 K’ank’in 12.19.15.17.7

Manik’ = One day in a named cycle of 20 days (tzolk’in)

7 = One in a numbered cycle of 13 days

K’ank’in = One in a cycle of 18 named months (haab)

10 = One in a numbered cycle of 20 days

12.19.15.17.7 = A count of years since the birth of the Maya Cycle

As previously mentioned, the Maya Calendar starts at the long count 13.0.0.0.0. On December 21, 2012 the Mayan long count will again hit 13.0.0.0.0. Doomsday proponents and New Agers speculate this means

the Maya calendar will have reached its endpoint and that the Mayans intentionally ended it on that date due to their knowledge there would not be any days afterwards.

This theory/interpretation of the calendar is widely refuted by both Mayan schol-

ars and the present day descendants of the Mayans. Regarding those profiting off the calendar hoax, Felipe Gomez, the leader of the Mayan Alliance Oxlaluj Ajpop, told the French news agency AFP, “We are speaking out against deceit, lies and twisting of the truth, and turning us into folklore-for-profit. They are not telling the truth about time cycles.”⁸

The scholars agree. Last September a group of Mayan scholars met in Merida, Mexico to challenge claims that the calendar prophesied the end of the world. While agreeing that Mayans had at times made prophecies, none were regarding an apocalyptic event to be surmised from their calendar. In fact, the experts agreed that the Mayans fully expected time to continue as they entered a new cycle.⁹ On this point, Dr. Stuart, told The Huffington Post last year, “The calendar not only continues after that date, it goes 70 octillion years into the future.”¹⁰

Based upon his own studies of Mayan hieroglyphics, Dr. Stone concurs stating that, “...the ancient Maya expected the status quo to continue at least 4,000 years into the future. That’s 2,760 years after 2012. They expected no interruption.”¹¹

Perhaps the best way to understand the Maya Calendar reaching 13.0.0.0.0 again is to view it as a reset. As Dr. Karl Kruszeelnicki, so simply and logically puts it, ‘when a calendar comes to the end of a cycle, it just rolls over into the next cycle. In our Western society, every year 31 December is followed, not by the End of the

World, but by 1 January. So 13.0.0.0 in the Mayan calendar will be followed by 0.0.0.0.1 - or good-ol' 22 December 2012, with only a few shopping days left to Christmas." ¹²

Even NASA has chimed in on this in the FAQ (frequently asked questions) section of its website:

Q: Does the Mayan calendar end in December 2012?

A: Just as the calendar you have on your kitchen wall does not cease to exist after December 31, the Mayan calendar does not cease to exist on December 21, 2012. This date is the end of the Mayan long-count period but then - just as your calendar begins again on January 1 - another long-count period begins for the Mayan calendar." ¹³

Experts have also likened it to an automobile odometer that upon turning to 9 next clicks to zero, starting a new cycle in that position. Once the numbers all the way across the odometer reach zero we know that it will start again at 1. We do not expect the vehicle to blow up, stop running, or change into something brand new. Neither should we expect such from the Maya Calendar reaching 13.0.0.0.

As is true of every past "end of the world prediction", as the day is drawing near, those who have been promoting the theory start preparing for a possible failure in their prophecy. Typically, they will claim some misunderstanding or miscalculation and change the date; or, claim the hearer misunderstood them and/or reinterpret the event to be something other than the end of time. This "something" is generally not measurable allowing the so-called prophet to claim to have been right no matter what he previously stated. Here is how one 2012 proponent now speaks of it on his website:

"Regardless of what happens externally on this day, December 21, 2012 is a clear marker of the transition of World Ages. This synchronization is inviting all of human-

ity to open to imagining, envisioning and actualizing the possibilities of gradual, positive transformation of our human culture in harmony with the Earth." ¹⁴

As you can see, the once cataclysmic event that would happen in a measurable moment of time on December 21 is now being presented as "gradual". In other words, "In case nothing happens, don't think it didn't - it is just gradually dynamic instead of suddenly impactful, as originally prophesied".

So, what happens on December 22? Well, other than about 10-12% of the population being disappointed that they are still on planet earth, life should go on as usual. However, true-believers in the Mayan Prophecy, should not despair; a new end of the world date will be just around the corner. In fact, one won't have too long to wait as there are those who have already set dates for 2014, 2017, and 2018, to name a few.

No doubt these new prophets will be offering their own books, trinkets, survival kits, etc. related to their new date. Unfortunately, they will also find an audience that is willing to buy; allowing them to make a financial killing off their new prophecy. So, throw out all the 2012 paraphernalia and make room for the 2014.

Make no mistake about it, Scripture does say there will be an end date, a day when Jesus returns. And when it comes, no one will have a chance to warn "the sky is falling" or make a profit off it; for, Jesus said no one know its day or its hour. (Mt 24:32-36) Even knowing this, it's understandable that people would want to know the date. Even Jesus' disciples were curious and asked when it would come. Here is what he told them:

"See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and

disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." Luke 21:8-9

"Do not go after them." Sounds like good advice. It would have certainly been good advice for those who believed the message of Chicken Little. For, in the earliest tellings of *Chicken Little*, the last character she and her followers met was Foxey Loxey, who tricked them into entering his lair. Once inside, he ate them for dinner. So, in a sense, the end of the world did come for Chicken Little and her troop; just not quite the way they expected.

As for the fox?

You might say, he made a killing off of it.



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Share your thoughts/opinions on this and other topics of concern in today's culture. Even if it's the same as ours we appreciate knowing what you think. Email: info@crosswindsfoundation.org

Culture Tracks

Belief the World Will End in One's Lifetime

- 14% of global citizens believe the world will end in their lifetime
- 22% of Americans believe the world will end in their lifetime
- 8% of those in Great Britains believe the world will end in their lifetime

Belief in the Mayan Prophecy (of 21 Countries polled)

- 10% total polled agree the Mayan calendar marks the end of the world
- 12% of Americans believe the Mayan calendar marks the end of the world
- 20% of those in China believe the Mayan calendar marks the end of the world
- 7% of those in Great Britain
- 4% of those in Germany
- 8% of global citizens express anxiety or fear over world ending in 2012

From May 2012 polling conducted for Reuters



Americanism Alive and Well?

By Linwood Bragan

How would you feel if you turned on the news and heard the anchor say, "Today Americanism was defeated?" By that he meant the concepts that made America great: our work ethic, Judeo-Christian world view, liberty, faith and free enterprise – the principles upon which the nation was founded – were gone.

I hope we never hear such a broadcast. But there are those who would welcome it. If we fail to fight for these precepts, one day we may very well see the fall of Americanism.

To some degree it is already happening. We're not practicing Americanism any more. We are not articulating it. We're not hearing it discussed effectively. We're not voting based on it. Consider that in the recent election Americanism wasn't:

- Offered as important to economic recovery.
- Defended as a serious proposal.
- Even presented, much less debated.

Consider that during the fall elections very few candidates — including Republicans, who typically support conservative ideals — propounded great ideas to rally a nation's patriots and people to their cause. They did not tell of the worth of conservative concepts of: individual freedom, personal responsibility, and a smaller government, taking fewer taxes and having less interference in our lives.

It is time for Americanism to come back into fashion. Not as an anachronism or a novelty put forward by men in colonial garb, wearing knee britches and tri-corn hats; but by serious statesmen who defend its concepts with quality arguments that are well articulated.

When looking at the relevant data compiled by various analytic groups, there are certainly changes overtaking America. Disturbing trends found by both Pew and Barna research groups show a greater disconnect among America's younger generations from our historic national goals, aspirations, culture, and even the most cursory factual knowledge of America's history.

Famous American historian, David McCullough, blames much of this trend on

the glaring fact of young Americans' ignorance of our nation's history. An example he frequently cites is asking college students if the 13 colonies that formed our nation were all located on the East Coast of the United States and many erroneously responding they were spread throughout the nation.

Though not particularly fond of bachelor's degrees in education, McCullough does not place all the blame on teachers. He places greater fault on the family and society at large. We no longer care to know the great story that is America. We are no longer passing along the stories of America. McCullough specifically points to the demise of families eating together and talking at the family dinner table. Without this "table time", there is no set time in which to listen to one another and tell stories to our young of the greatness of America.

Our problem is that we are a nation that has become inarticulate, sometimes uncaring and mostly unaware of our historical roots. If the story of America is put to us in a truthful and attention getting manner, as the recent movie about Lincoln does, we find we can become a citizenry that is motivated to appreciate those self-evident truths. When the love of America and the meaning of her ideals are told in entertaining and meaningful ways, we find Americanism is not so much out of fashion, as out of gas — we simply need to refill the tank.

We need a twofold change. First, for those who know these ideas and ideals we must commit to a new life of what we know has worked. It must be applied and modeled first in our personal lives, and in our professional lives, before we can propound it for the American corporate and political life.

It is up to us, faithful believers, to live an example that will be attractive to the world. We have failed to set our own best examples. It is we believers, who by choosing to imitate the world lost all distinction from it. That lack of distinction left us disarmed, disunited, and frankly disinterested in doing the heavy, hard work of defending the American ideal.

The second part is reaching out to those who are unfamiliar with those ideals. We

have citizens living here their entire lives who have never understood the ideals that constitute America. Additionally for immigrants, rejecting their homeland, coming to America for the American dream, they too need to understand why America is a land flowing with milk and honey. We must not fail to instill a love of America within them, which was once instilled in us.

Americanism may be in the wilderness for a few years. The institutions and ideas that instigated the patriotism, economic growth and renewal of American confidence have grown somewhat dispirited and stale. Even now they're trying to kick off the rust and scales that have stalled their effectiveness.

What we need is a vibrant telling and retelling of America's story; the recounting of our founding, of carving a new nation from the wilderness, of creating a new system of government; of establishing the freedom of the individual. Not an emphasis on every wart, wayward act, and wasted opportunity. America fought to end ancient evils such as slavery and emancipation of children from drudgery and women from second-class status. These have all been accomplished here and exported by Americans to other parts of the world.

America — it's still the greatest concept and destination in the world! We can stand tall, lifting up a standard of hope to rally individuals, families, churches, and civic clubs, to a patriot's dream and a nation's calling to its eternal destiny. These are things we can rightly be proud of and justly defend at each, and every opportunity. It is our heritage, it is our birthright; it is our obligation!

Our forefathers could demand no more. Our children and grandchildren and future generations deserve no less.



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