

Historical background  
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apocalyptic theori...

[History](#)



Discuss the historical background that has resulted in there being so many apocalyptic theories in America. Why might such theories be so accepted in America today?

Most human cultures have myths and stories about the end of the world and modern America is no different in that respect. This is prompted by the need that human beings have to ascribe meaning to the world around them. The founding of the new colonies by Puritans from England was in part fuelled by apocalyptic stories, and again in the middle of the nineteenth century there was an outpouring of millennial fever under New York Baptist leader William Miller. In the twentieth century such fears were again widespread due to the fear of nuclear warfare.

In present day America many of the old certainties of fundamentalist religion are being questioned, prompting some to reject these ideas, and others to cling more tightly to their literal interpretations of scripture. People are also influenced by science fiction, New Age religion, and all kinds of esoteric philosophies. Modern media feed the rational insecurities that people have, exaggerating the threat of natural disasters, wars, and economic crashes and this causes people to seek explanatory narratives that help them to understand what is going on around them, and to find their own role in a precarious world. Anthony Aveni's (2009) imagined correspondent, whom he calls Dylan, is presented as a typical young, educated citizen of a Western liberal democracy, who hears about impending Armageddon and is worried about it. In Dylan's case the reason is his youth and inexperience, which makes him easy prey for charlatans, but there are other reasons such as disillusionment with traditional values, and a thirst for something dramatic

and exciting to relieve the boredom of everyday life. People accept these narratives because there is a gap in their world view, and this is a suitable filler for the empty space.

#### References

Aveni, Anthony F. *The End of Time: The Maya Mystery of 2012*. Boulder, Co: University Press of Colorado, 2009.