

The Sixth Sun Has Risen

A Reflection by Robert Francis

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Have you ever seen a picture of a sunset? Of course you have. How could you tell it was a sunset? Sunsets and sunrises look a lot alike, and every time you see a sunset where you are, others see the Sun rise where they are.

On Thursday, December 19, I was standing in line at the Wal-Mart listening to a man in front of me voicing some sort of disagreement with the check-out clerk. Finally, the man shrugged his shoulders and quipped, "Oh well, in two days we'll all be dead anyway."

It amazes me to think how many were looking toward December 21, 2012 as the final sunset or "the end of the world". Of course, few took it seriously; most considered it no differently than some Christian-fringe doomsday prognostication with no understanding that for every sunset there is also a sunrise.

In the international / intertribal "American Indian" way of figuring, the years flow not in straight lines but in cycles. There are 52 years to each cycle. One hundred cycles of years or 5,200 years is an Epoch or World or Sun. This is an approximate measure. From our perspective in the Earth, the stars move in cycles and must be in alignment for the next Epoch to begin. For this reason, there will be a number of "empty years" at the end of an Epoch. By the position of the Earth in relation to the stars, December 21, 2012 marked not only the beginning of a new Epoch cycle but also the completion and beginning of a greater cycle of 26,000 years or five Epochs, Worlds or Suns.

By the way, December 21, 2012 may have been the end of the Mayan Calendar, an ancient calendar marking the passage of four Epochs, but the ancient Cherokee calendar marks the passage of seven Epochs and continues on for at least another 10,400 years. The Epoch just past was the Epoch of the Heron.

Toward the beginning of the Epoch of the Heron, a prophecy was made. It was said that the Epoch or World or Sun would end in "Nine Hells" or nine especially difficult and unbalanced cycles of 52 years each, the first of the Nine Hells began in 1519 C.E., the year Cortez first set foot in Mexico. The last of the Nine Hells ended in 1987 and marked the end of the previous Epoch of 5,200 years. I was born in the Ninth Hell as were most of you who are reading this. The World or the Epoch of the Heron ended in September 1987. We then entered a period between the Worlds, between the setting of the Fifth Sun and the rising of the Sixth Sun, a precarious time not unlike the inauspicious Whirlwind Days that precede the New Fire Ceremony at the end of each winter, empty years, a time of illusion but also a time when many illusions begin to be revealed and the process of rebalancing begins.

For many years, I have looked forward to the rising of the Sixth Sun. In 2011, I got word of a minority viewpoint that the Sixth Sun would rise on October 29, 2011. Here at the Daksi Grounds, some of us were up and out watching the Sun rise that day. It was indeed a very special Sunrise, a promise of new life to come. For a long time I planned to have our 2012 Winter Sweat or Osi Ceremony on December 21, even if that day did not fall on a weekend. Then, as I considered, the thought came to me that since for Cherokees the day begins at Sunrise, December 21 would mark the end of the empty years, but the Sixth Sun would rise on December 22. So, Saturday, December 22 was

the day of the Winter Sweat at the Daksi Grounds. We were up to watch the Sun rise that morning.

On that day, I found myself formulating a prayer in my mind before saying it aloud. I was thinking, "It's time! The time has come for the healing and renewal of the Earth."

But, I never voiced that prayer, for the Spirits said to me, in no uncertain terms, "This is done! The Earth is healed and renewed."

Although, no doubt, there are those who will continue the old dirge that we are living in the "end times" or "last days", in reality, the old is already gone. The new has come! It is for us to be aware and to live in this reality. Those who are familiar with the Chickamauga Cherokee story of "Grandmother Turtle", part of our origin epic, will recall that Creator gives responsibility to Creation, even to the extent of calling Creation into co-creatorship. The stories of our oral tradition are not simply about those who lived in the "long ago". The stories are about *us*, now. The Sixth Sun has risen; the New World has come into being. This, right now, is the time of Creation when anything is possible. Helper Spirits are freed as never before in my lifetime. I feel and experience this reality. Of all who have ever lived in the Earth, no one has ever been closer to the presence of Creator or had powerful, benevolent spiritual help more readily accessible and available than we have right now.

The last World and especially the Nine Hells at the ending of the last World constituted a time characterized by people being afraid to think for themselves. It was a time in which we trusted the "experts" to tell us what to believe. "Experts" in theology, "experts" in politics, "experts" in medicine and "experts" in finance often deceived people, using fear as a primary tool of manipulation and control.

The Sixth Sun has risen. We are now in the Sixth World, the Epoch of the Sunflower. That for which we have waited and watched has arrived. What this New World will be is yet to be seen. Will it be just like the Old World, or will it be better? Will we human beings be courageous enough to lift our faces and to open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds? Will we finally learn to see, hear, feel and think for ourselves? Whatever this New World will be, it will be what we make it.

When a child is born there is promise of life renewed in the Earth for another generation. The Sixth Sun has risen, giving promise for a New World, a New Epoch of life in the Earth.