

Apocalypse 2012 – by Lawrence E. Joseph

Reviewed by Bruce Scofield

Inscriptions on stone markers erected in the plazas of ancient Maya cities reference a time-count that began on August 13, 3114 B.C.E. This time count, popularly called the Mayan Calendar and academically called the Long Count, is well understood, at least in terms of its internal components. Most important, however, is its end date – which happens to be December 21, 2012. This date being right around the corner is now serving as a deadline of sorts for many humans who sense something is deeply wrong with their lives and the world. It is a hook in time that those who fear the future that we are creating as a species, and a goalpost for those who believe humans can change and correct their mistakes. Some humans are using it as a means to gain power – scare tactics not so different from the proverbial high priest who knows how to predict an eclipse and therefore dazzle the multitudes. With the countdown to 2012 now down to a few years, we will be hearing more and more about the Mayan calendar as time goes by.

In Lawrence Joseph's account of this time marker he reports on his travels to meet with and discuss the subject with those who know, or think they know, something of it, or have some knowledge that highlights that year. He meets with a couple of Maya daykeepers who represent the traditional knowledge. To some extent they resent the usurping of their indigenous tradition by outsiders, but they agree that world changes are coming. He meets with scientists who predict a monster solar cycle culminating in that year and then evaluates the possibilities of an asteroid hit. He considers possible volcanic eruptions, magnetic field energy drops and powerful hurricanes. The Earth itself is taken as the target for this date, but inevitably, the modern Middle East with all its problems figures prominently in this book – as well as everywhere else these days. His conclusion is that anything could happen so we should take this deadline as a wake-up notice and try to figure a way to rise above it – though he doesn't advocate anything specific.

The subtitle of the book is “A Scientific Investigation into Civilization's End.” There is some, but not much, scientific reporting here. We learn, for example, that the scientist Sami K. Solanki and his research team at the Max Planck Institute have recently suggested that solar activity has been at a higher level over the last 60 years than it has been for the past 8,000. Other scientists have predicted that the next solar cycle, due in 2012, will be 30% to 50% stronger than the previous one around 2000-2001. What is not so clearly stated is that this increase still doesn't match the strength of the cycle in the late 1950's – so it's not really a significant aberration. But more disturbing astronomical information comes from Russian scientist Alexey Dmitriev who is suggesting the entire solar system is heading into a destabilizing energy wave. All of these astronomical forecasts are interesting and suggest that cosmic weather does change and maybe its getting a bit scary out there, but these things have happened before and they are not necessarily focused on 2012. The scientific citations in this book are limited and it would have been good to have them contrasted with more conservative reports from other scientists.

Deep into the book Joseph brings in the Bible Code, popularized by Michael Drosnin, in which a detailed analysis of alphabet organization in the Bible appears to reveal embedded messages. Apparently, even here in the Bible we find 2012 as an end date, and it is, of course, written by God. Joseph is enamored of the Bible Code and lists its uncanny charting of history and its predictions, but he doesn't mention that much of the same sort of information was also derived from a similar analysis of Melville's *Moby Dick*. His coverage of ideas from others who have considered Maya calendrics are minimal, which is unfortunate. But he does point to the highly questionable activities of New Age Mayan Calendar promoter Jose Arguelles, author of 1980's book *The Mayan Factor*, an overly imaginative knock-off of Maya calendrics.

The real missing piece in all of this 12.21.2012 mania is astrology (though Joseph does briefly mention some Western astrological predictions that support his case). Few recognize that the Mayan Calendar is, after all, a kind of astrology. It is a unique cultural effort to find meaning in the regular and cyclic movements of the geophysical and astronomical environment. The proper definition of astrology is exactly that – the interpretation of astronomical events in terms of their effect on the biosphere. And in a sense, this entire book is essentially astrological. At one point in the book Joseph says the recurrent theme in his exploration of 2012 is “threat from above.” He must surely mean that it is the sky that predicts and defines our global crisis.

Apocalypse 2012 is certainly worth reading for those who wish to keep up with the latest on this international astrological event that has sprung from ancient Maya civilization.