COSMIC CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHANGING COUNTENANCE OF COSMOLOGY

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The diagrams are not included.

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The Changing Countenance of Cosmic Cosmology

CHAPTER 2
The Development of Cosmology in History

Lately, definite proof has been established of the connection of those great stone circles of the ancient Celtic areas with the stars. The single stones in the circles indicated rising points, for instance, of the Sun at certain seasons and many other astronomical facts that modern humanity has rediscovered only with the help of telescopes and computers. Ancient humanity certainly did not have any of the modern contrivances, yet, it was able to do all this with mental capacities that present humanity has lost completely. This is particularly evident in the ancient monuments in Ireland, at New Grange, the Hill of Tara, and others. Humanity in the East and Near East also had a close connection with the world of the stars until rather late, chiefly in Mesopotamia. We have definite proof of these correlations by the discoveries and unraveling of the riddles of the so-called ziggurats in the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris. They were tremendous buildings, resembling pyramids, but terraced, as it were. They carried at the top something like a small sanctuary. This was obviously the observatory of a priest who had been delegated and who was able to follow the courses of the stars. This was not done just for curiosity’s sake, but for definite purposes. We have proof of this, for instance, in certain documents of a king who had it written down: “Today I went to the temple of Ishtar (that is, the temple of Venus), and she told me to do this and that,” which we would now call matters of foreign affairs of state. Obviously, he had consulted, through his priest, the genii of the stars. Entire communities were thus guided by this knowledge of the
movements of the stars, by the rhythms of the planets about which we spoke in the last chapter. The steps of the terraces of these pyramids were painted with colors assigned in those days to the planets. Thus those monuments in Mesopotamia are proof of humanity’s connection with the stars in an un-egotistical sense. This knowledge was used for the guidance of the nations, right down into the sphere of agriculture, and so on.

In Egypt we discover similar traces. The sanctuaries were built along long axes. There was first the alley of sphinx-like statues. Then one entered a kind of forecourt, after that an inner court, and finally the temple itself. At the far end of the temple was the sanctuary, the chapel that contained the effigies of the deity to which the temple was dedicated. It is an established fact that these long temple axes were oriented toward the rising point of Canopus in the constellation of Argo, which was called the Star of Osiris. The long passage of darkness, the halls, and the courts acted like a telescope. The pyramids had shafts leading from the chambers deep down at the base out into the open. These shafts were not meant to be used as passages, because they are oblique. One could not have walked through them. They were also oriented toward the daily orbits of certain stars in the heavens. In these pyramid chambers initiations were obviously performed. For three days the neophyte was put into a deathlike, trance condition, and was even laid into a sarcophagus, deep down under the pyramid, in such a position that upon awakening the neophyte first looked through that long shaft into the external world and saw that star in the heavens. This must have been a tremendous experience.

Then there came a time, and that happened just in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Chaldea, when awareness of the self awakened. This is described, for instance, in the story of Gilgamesh and his friend Eabani, or Enkidu. The two, so the story tells, had killed the Bull that belonged to Ishtar, the Goddess. These are profound Temple Mysteries. This Bull of Ishtar was really connected with the constellation of Taurus, the Bull. Ishtar was the same as Venus. Venus, as one says sometimes in traditional astrology so glibly, is at home in the sign of the Bull. Why is it just the Bull, and why the connection with Ishtar-Venus? Connected with this were experiences of an earlier humanity, which led to the far distant past of Creation. The Bull which that humanity experienced in the heavens appeared to them as an image of the Creative Word, of the Logos that permeated the world and created the physical object world around us. Now, we hear in this story that Gilgamesh and Enkidu had killed that Bull. What does this mean? They withdrew into their selves, at the cost of their waning awareness of the presence of the divine in nature. Egotism was rising up. It had to rise for the sake of the inner freedom of the human being. Humans began to sever their relationships to the divine intelligences in the world of the stars. Thus the gods eventually “died” in the consciousness of humanity.

In this sense we can understand when we hear Gilgamesh say, “As for you Ishtar, I shall bring you down also. I shall treat you as I have treated the Bull.” This is an imaginative description of the moving away from that ancient consciousness that eventually led to the expression we have heard in modern times: “God is dead.” He “died” in these peoples’ awareness only. After Gilgamesh had spoken those words, which on the surface, sound like terrible blasphemy, Ishtar did not leave it at that. She complained to the highest divinity, and Enkidu, the friend of Gilgamesh, died soon after this incident. Gilgamesh was deeply shattered. He had attained the very first trace of egotistical selfhood. He experienced death as something that meets the individual. An earlier humanity was still well aware that when a human being died only the physical body was put aside, that the soul was all the more alive, was residing in the divine world. To tell human beings in those ages about life after death or about reincarnation would have been futile. They would have replied that they knew that anyway, that it was a reality of inner experience for them. But Gilgamesh experienced, after his friend had died, death as fate, as individual fate. Fate was hitting hard, so to speak, at this man who had taken the first steps of emancipation from the divine world. And so we hear then in the story how Gilgamesh sets out to seek his friend. He is led through many adventures, and we become aware in the descriptions that he goes out into the cosmic world. But he meets there terrible monsters; it is a fearful world. There are scorpions and lions and all kinds of terrible creatures that threaten him. Thus the cosmic world is now already far away from him, a world that is strange, even terrible and fateful. The story of Gilgamesh and Eabani describes the attitude out of which astrology slowly grew as it came down to us. It is that astrology which spoke of the connection of human beings with the world of the stars as a complex that inexorably causes their fate and holds them in pitiless dependence.

In other parts of the world, particularly in the West, the ancient connections with the stars were still carried on right into the first millennium AD. Even in the second millennium one can still find traces. This is depicted in the story of King Arthur of the Round Table. The childhood of Arthur is described in mighty cosmological terms. (See Fiona Macleod.) The boy Arthur was invited to ascend a huge staircase up to the heavens. He arrived at the seven stars that make up the effigy of the Plough or the Great Bear. There he was met by seven
 kings. They took him into their midst, and educated and initiated him into the cosmic secrets of the Round Table, which is a vivid imagination of the Zodiac. After this experience he descended again and as King Arthur inaugurated the Round Table on the Earth. We hear then the stories of King Arthur and his knights. They were sent out into the world to help wherever help was required, to protect people who were in danger, and so forth. We see in this a perfect realization of that which was in the heavens as the great and wonderful cosmic order. It was realized on the Earth in quite practical affairs, which concerned the entire human community. King Arthur was also called the Ploughman, because he was deeply associated through his initiation with the mysteries of the Great Bear or Plough. As the king he had to see to it that his people were properly fed. This meant that they had to be educated in the ways of an efficient agriculture, an agriculture that still lived and worked in full harmony with the cosmic rhythms that play into the rhythms of the plant life on the Earth. Therefore it was recognized as a prime necessity to have perfect knowledge of the correlations between cosmos and Earth. The name Arthur seems to have its origin in the Welsh words, Arth Uthyr, which simply means Great Bear. Therefore “Arthur” was probably not a name. It was originally a title, a degree of initiation, in this case into the mystic secrets of the Great Bear or the Cosmic Plough.

This happened in the West. In the East the star wisdom had traveled a different way. It was taken hold of in the end by the egotism of the human being. Individuals wanted to know from the stars their personal fate. They started to ask: How does this or that which happens in the heavens concern me? What will they do to me? Of course, this attitude developed slowly, but in the course of time it became more and more dramatic. All too often one is met head-on in present humanity by this question: What will the stars do to me, what do the star-agencies have in store for me? Unfortunately, this can deteriorate into an attitude of utter fear and helplessness. This was, however, not the end of humanity’s relationship to the cosmos. Times moved on and there came the age of Copernicus. Copernicus, who lived during the 15th and 16th centuries, proposed heliocentric astronomy, but he didn’t really work out in detail. The Sun, no longer the Earth, was considered to stand in the center of the solar system. Those who came after him worked this out in detail, people like Kepler, Newton, and many others. This step was, in a certain sense, a consequence of that egotism which took hold of the star wisdom in Egypt, etc., which had become astrology. Through Copernican astronomy humanity moved still further away from the stars, until the cosmos was finally regarded as a big mechanism, or computer. With all due reservation, one can say that Copernican-ism is a kind of modified Egyptian star wisdom. Of course, in time it radically discarded astrology as sheer folly. But the concept of fate rose to extreme proportions. The Earth was now dethroned. It was considered to be no more than a tiny little planet racing around the mighty Sun.

One can say, of course, that this happened then and in astronomy, but it need not affect us in practical life. Whether the Sun is in the center, or the Earth, this is a matter for the scientists, for the astronomers in their observatories, and it need not concern us practically. However, this is not so. Copernicanism has deeply worked into the social formations and foundations that have developed since. In ancient times we hear of King Arthur’s Round Table, of the mighty temple towers in Mesopotamia. There cosmology, or star wisdom, played directly into social life. Entire communities were directed according to that star knowledge. Yet, the same consciousness that formulated Copernicanism also formed the social life of modern humanity. Machiavelli, a contemporary of Copernicus in the beginning of the 16th century, wrote the book Il Principe. There the monarch is described as someone who should have absolute and unrestricted power. Whatever he does must be correct. He is responsible only to himself and to nobody else. Why should this have any connection with the astronomical world conception that came into being at the same time? The “King” was in ancient times regarded as an earthly representative of the Sun in the heavens. Yet, in all its splendor the Sun was not considered to be the center of the universe, nor was its representative the King. Thus the very form of the Round Table was also a picture of the denial of prerogatives. Arthur was one of the Knighthoods at the Table.

To this, one can object that already long before Christ, oriental despotism had gained great momentum. The truth is that the secret teachings of the ancient temple mysteries had already proclaimed heliocentric cosmologies, whereas in popular conceptions geocentric views were fostered. Evidence exists that this was actually the case, for instance, in Egypt. Because the kings, pharaohs, and so on, were originally initiates of the mysteries, there arose tendencies to build the earthly social orders according to the archetypes of cosmic, heliocentric “Orders,” as king, or pharaoh, centered communities. And now, simultaneously with the popularization of the heliocentric view by Copernicanism, we witness the fact that Machiavelli creates the philosophical concept of the monarch as the absolute and indisputable center of any social order. And indeed, soon enough, Louis XIV, the French king, entered the historic scene and proclaimed: “L’état c’est moi,” I am
the State, I, the King. The “Sun”, in a social sense, had stepped into the center. He and all the monarchs in Europe who could afford it followed his example and built their palaces in a form that was perfectly “heliocentric.” Usually these palaces were built in such a fashion that there was a central round tower, or a similar structure with wings on either side (Fig. 2.1). All the roads and city streets radiated from this central point into the environment like the rays of a Sun. One can still see many of those palaces in European capitals. This was “Copernicanism,” or the heliocentric system, realized in social formation.

Modern humanity has changed all this considerably. We are facing now something like an atomic explosion in the place of the old universe. By the increasing perfection and power of the telescope we have penetrated into the depths of space. Fantastic distances and worlds beyond our own solar system have been discovered. Our own solar world has shrunk into insignificance. The greater universe has grown move and more immense in concept. In fact, it was, and still is, difficult to form an idea of how big this universe is. We don’t know whether it is finite or infinite. The concept of infinity is painful to a science built up on quantity. We have discovered solar systems that are supposed to be much bigger than our own. The central suns of these systems are, according to the calculations, moving at tremendous speeds. Furthermore, they are moving away from a kind of center in greater cosmic space with tremendous velocities, unimaginable by an ordinary human mind. Thus the greater universe indeed looks like an atomic explosion.

A human mentality that has been led to think in such cosmological terms has had corresponding impacts on modern social life. If we look at it objectively, we must admit that the forms of social life, institutions, and so on, of all descriptions are also constantly facing the danger of atomization. What is the solution? Western humanity is easily inclined to think that complete mechanization and computerization is the answer. Again, this seems to coincide with the concepts of modern cosmology that the universe is a vast mechanism. And the suggestion can easily arise from this that the best and most expedient solution in human life and in the community is the complete mechanization and computerization of all concerns and institutions.

This is a road that does not lead to solutions but to the surrender and abdication of the human race. We cannot possibly expect that all humanity will accept this, and therein also lies some hope. Especially the East, that is, western and eastern Asia, cannot follow this trend, and in this fact many of the problems are rooted that have arisen between East and West. The East lives with the dim shadows of a glorious past that speaks, however faintly, in images of the spirit in the cosmos, in the human being, in the kingdoms of nature. If we in the West intend to establish a healthy relationship with the East, we must not imagine that we can do it by the imposition of commercialism and technology. We can do it only by presenting ourselves to the East, to global humanity, as a humanity of spiritual dignity and integrity. And we can attain the means to do it. If we are looking for an archetype for this we must go in “quest of the Grail.” We will then realize that Parsifal, who is seeking the Grail, is our own image. Parsifal is led to the Castle of the Grail. He witnesses all the mysterious events but he does not ask what they mean. Consequently he is ejected from the castle. This is the image of the modern human being who is, just in this age of science, confronted with the riddles of the universe, of the Earth, of itself. But we do not ask, like Parsifal who wanders for years through the world in deep despair and hopelessness. Finally, he meets Trevrizent, who brings the Quest of the Grail back into his consciousness. Now, he enters the castle a second time and can reach out to the new Mysteries, to answers concerning the spiritual nature of humanity, its task within the setting of the entire universe, and so on. For this is the vessel and spirit-content of the Grail. During the sixties and seventies, of the present century, western humanity passed through the deep dark valley created by its own deeds in science and technology. But therein also lies the hope that we may break through, if we can look toward the archetypal meaning of the figure of Parsifal.

As far as we are concerned with our present studies, the modern consequences of Copernicanism constitute just such a deep, dark valley. Yet, it would help nobody to go back to the old good ways of the geocentric world view, for instance, of the Celts or of Ptolemy. We must go through the valley and find new portals and roads to spiritual concepts of the universe. Rudolf Steiner pointed out that in the original Rosicrucian schools of the Middle Ages the pupil was first taught the geocentric perspective of the universe. Afterward he was told that this is how it should be, but that in reality it is not so. On account of the great sin of the Earth and its inhabitants—we may think of the Fall in Paradise—the Earth lost its central position. Only after long and strenuous efforts will the Earth, in the dim future, again be brought into its rightful position. This will be possible only by the acceptance of the Christ impulse. The Christ entered the earthly realm as the representative of the entire solar system. Even as a human being carries in its bodily being an ego that gives meaning and guidance to existence, so is the solar universe permeated by an Ego, and this Ego is the Christ Being. At Golgotha He united with the
Earth, so that the Earth may become “Sun” in the far future. In this process all humanity is involved, regardless of race, nation, religion, and so on.

Thus this viewpoint of the Earth in the center is a perspective that must be realized by inner development, by suffering, by rising to the power of the greater, cosmic self. In order to achieve this we must not hesitate to move through the dark valley of Copernicanism. We must break through it to new spiritual vistas. Copernicanism and modern astronomy have given us, after all, a precise mathematical knowledge of the heavens in modern terms. We can calculate the movements of the planets and many other phenomena theoretically thousands of years ahead or back into the past. This is one of the achievements of modern astronomy. It has discovered many details of the movements of the planets that an earlier humanity had comprehended in a kind of clairvoyant, almost dreamlike perception. Previously such knowledge was preserved in the secrets of the mystery temples and was not open to all humanity. In contrast, modern astronomy is a science that is open to anyone who makes the effort to study it. And this very astronomy, although mathematically founded, can give us the means of looking eventually at the solar universe in new, even spiritual, concepts. In ancient times, still in Greece, humanity was able to look up, by clairvoyant perception, to the cosmos and see not only the visible planets but also the spheres of the planets. The Greeks did not experience the planet as a moving entity but as fixed, so to speak, onto a global sphere that was indicated by the orbit of the planet. All these spheres of the planets were conceived of as being concentrically arranged around the Earth. They were rotated by the divine beings who worked in them, and thus also the planets were moved along their orbits. Movement in the cosmos was caused by divine beings, according to this view.

We have completely lost this, because we have lost the concept of the spheres. No modern astronomer cares for spheres anymore. Movement is caused, according to modern views, by purely mechanical factors in the universe. However, it is just with the help of modern astronomy that we can break through to new concepts of the spheres which offer great possibilities. The orbits of the planets are not arranged in perfect circles, nor do they lie exactly on the common, or ecliptical, plane of the solar system. First of all, we have the Sun in the center according to Copernicanism; but it was Kepler who discovered that the planets do not move in circles but in ellipses around the Sun (see Fig. 2.2). This elliptical path brings the planet at certain times into the so-called perihelion (near distance), and at others into the aphelion (that is, the far distance of the planet from the Sun). These elements, as they are called, are the means to assess the inner life of the sphere. As the planet moves along its orbit, it eventually steps into its perihelion, which means that it will be closest to the Sun. At the aphelion it will be far away from the latter. These positions indicate the condition in which the entire sphere lives at a given time. The visible planets are then like “moons” that reflect the life of the spheres. (The spheres are the space-volume inside the orbits.) At the perihelion the planet has a close relationship to the Sun and thereby an affirmative connection with the entire solar system. At the aphelion it expresses, so to speak, the desire to dissociate from the latter, to fly away from it into outer space, though it cannot really achieve this because the Sun, even so, holds the family of planets together. Thus we can break through to new concepts of a living universe. Just that which seemed to promote the idea of a purely mechanical cosmos offers a hand to get into new vistas in cosmology.

There are other aspects that have been discovered by modern astronomy. These constitute other elements of the planets. They have been established very precisely with the help of modern computation methods. We take again the Sun in the center (Fig. 2.3). We see the planets move around it, together with the Earth. In the diagram we have inserted the orbit of the Earth, and that of another planet. If we take the planes on which these orbits lie, it may at first look as if they were identical. They seem to move on a common plate, as it were. However, a closer inspection reveals that there are slight angular differences. In other words, the orbits of the planets are all inclined, one against the other. We can now take the plane on which the Earth moves in the course of one year and investigate the inclinations of the other planetary planes in relation to the first. Thus we get crossing-points, or cutting lines between these planes. These are the nodes of the planets with the Earth orbit, or ecliptic plane. Each planet thus establishes an ascending and a descending node. The ascending node is the place—related to the Zodiac—where the planet ascends above the ecliptic, the descending node where it descends below. (We have used the symbols that astronomy commonly employs for the nodes.) Of course, these are only mathematical points. We cannot see them. (Neither can we see the perihelions and aphelions of the planets.) We can only calculate them. Nevertheless they are realities of great significance, which refer to the life of the spheres in relationship to the Earth. They indicate that in these places the spheres have the possibility of contact with the Earth and its inhabitants. Thus modern Copernicanism offers us once again the means to come to the
concept of a living universe. We can get astronomical tables that give us the precise positions of the nodes, the precise positions of the perihelion-aphelion lines, and so forth. By working and living with these elements—together with certain amplifications that the geocentric view can provide—we can eventually redeem the Copernican system, the heliocentric system, because we can introduce into it an element of life as against the aspects of the universe as a big machine. And this will become an urgent necessity.

We have investigated the possibilities that are offered by the facts of the nodal and perihelion-aphelion lines (lines of the apsides) very thoroughly. And we have found indeed that at the times when the planets step into these lines, the characteristic workings of the planetary spheres and their beings can be well discerned in earthly matters and historic events. However, we should like to emphasize also that on such occasions it is entirely a matter of conscious human awareness and participation whether these events can be employed on Earth constructively, or whether, on account of neglect or rejection, they will work reproachfully and destructively. This is also part, and not the least, of the new comprehension and relationship of humanity to the cosmic world.

**Cosmic Christianity**

**CHAPTER 1**

*The Movement of Saturn during the Three Years*

We decided to work over the so-called Three Years and in a wider sense over the 33 years, from the birth of Jesus up to the moment of Golgotha. Why do we want to do this? There are many points that one can make in order to justify such an intensive study. The main aspects are the following ones: First, you know that the historicity of the Christ Events, about 2,000 years ago, is by no means established as a fact in modern history. This branch of science is still in doubt. These doubts made it possible, as a matter of fact, for a professor at a German university at the beginning of this century to suggest, in all sincerity, that the Gospels are nothing but fictional stories concocted by clever astrologers who knew the events in the heavens at the time of Christ. On the foundation of this knowledge they concocted the Gospels. You see, this is a very serious matter, and we ought to occupy ourselves with the events closely in order to get insight into the probability of the events. Rudolf Steiner pointed out in one of his lectures that, in deed, the writers of the Gospels had knowledge of the cosmology of the events which took place at the time of Christ. By that time the oral traditions had already ceased, and all the people who had been present during the Three Years had died. However, the writers of the Gospels were convinced that the events did take place on account of the simultaneous events in the heavens. So, all the more we have reason to get these matters very clear and in detail.

Another point is that in order to rise to the heights of Christianity, to the esoteric meaning of the Christ events, we must take into account the cosmic events. Thus inner experience can increasingly become a reality with regard to the Christ Events. This will become more and more evident. One can even say that those events which took place nearly 2,000 years ago will come back to humanity, even as a “Presence”. One day people will realize that not only did they take place 2,000 years ago, but that they can be here and now with humanity—in a new fashion, not in the physical but on a higher plane, on a plane that is accessible only to spiritual experience. A new clairvoyance will arise in humanity. This is a very profound perspective. You know yourself that all religion finds itself at present in a very difficult situation. There are so many problems. We have heard it proclaimed publicly, even by ministers of religion that “God is dead”. You see, if this should be generally accepted, it would mean the end, not only of religion but of Christianity as well. I would like to quote the opinion of Rudolf Steiner, published by the periodical *Blätter für Anthroposophie* [4 Jahrgang, No. 6]: “If the correlation between the Earth and the extraterrestrial world, that is, the cosmic world, is not comprehended again on a level of spiritual understanding, then the Mystery of Golgotha cannot live on, cannot survive into the future.” I think we can feel the gravity of such a statement, “Christianity cannot survive”. What does this mean? It simply means that in order to make the Mystery of Golgotha live on into the future, it will be necessary to grasp, on a spiritual level, the interconnection between the cosmic and the earthly and human worlds, for instance, during the Three Years. Another point, which goes with this, is the fact that we must gradually move onto a the level that St. Paul, nearly 2000 years ago, had reached in the moment when he could say, “Christ in me not I myself, but Christ in me.” To come to such an experience needs a tremendous inner development. Humanity in our present age is called upon to move toward that position. This again needs the knowledge of
cosmic correlations.

Finally, I should point out that humanity of the future will move more and more toward a realization, or a preparation for the realization, of what is sometimes called the “phantom body”, that is, the “resurrection body”. This can be done only by a spiritual knowledge of the correlations between the cosmos and the Earth. Take only the following facts: We so happily rely on nature. Each time a human being is born on this planet, nature provides us with a body. We take it for granted that we are endowed with a physical-material body, but are we aware of how this came about? It is given to us and we take it as a matter of course. We can know, of course, and Anthroposophy gives us all the information we need, that the human being, together with the spiritual hierarchies, builds up the form body, the spiritual form body, in the cosmic world long before incarnation. We receive and bring it down from the cosmos. The Zodiac is the external expression of the spiritual forces of that form body, that body that had been designed, as it were, in the dim past by the divine world. This we receive, and with this we force the earthly matter, which is offered to us at the moment of conception, into a human form. Without that spiritual form body we could not do it, and this is bestowed on us. There will come times when this will cease, when we will be called upon more and more to do it ourselves, to do it as a self. This we will be able to accomplish only if we have the corresponding insight. First, we have to prepare ourselves by creating a knowledge of this correlation between the great cosmos and the incarnation in Earth-matter. This preparation will also have to include the planets—a knowledge of the functions of the planets. It will become more and more necessary. This cosmic form body, which really makes the human form, this eternal archetype, was founded in the very beginning of all evolution.

In the course of human history, this cosmic form body was lost by humanity. At the event of the Fall from Paradise, the human being became deeply involved in “corruptible matter”. Since that time, whenever a human being incarnates, the incorruptible cosmic form body is torn down into the domain where death rules. Thus the human being is irresistibly inclined to take the corruptible body for the only reality. However, the incorruptible body was rescued by the Deed of Christ. This is the resurrection body. This is that body in which Christ appeared to the disciples. It is the form of which He could then even say to Thomas: “Put your fingers into the stigmata, so that you can convince yourself of my Presence.”

We have to prepare for this realization as we move toward the future. In order to take the first steps of preparation, it is necessary that we get a glimpse, at least, that we start to acquire an insight and a knowledge of the correlation between the cosmos and humanity, as it was re-established by Christ.

Now let us go to work. We will start with the planets, and simply look at what the planets did during those three years. There is straightaway a problem that is not easy to solve. It is the so-called Three Years. The question is what is meant by the Three Years chronologically. Some people have formed the opinion that it was three and one third years; that the Baptism took place, if the traditional date is accepted, on the 6th of January, the day of Epiphany, of the year 30 AD. From there we would count three and one third years up to April 3, 33 AD. Another view is that it was only two and one third years. We hear in the Gospel of St. Luke that Jesus was 30 years old when he went down to the Jordan in order to be baptized. That would have been the moment when the cosmic Christ-Being entered the body of Jesus. I have investigated both possibilities very closely, and I myself have come to the conclusion, as far as the cosmic evidence goes, that the version of two and one-third years is more realistic than the other. Jesus then indeed would have been 30 years old, just a few days prior to the 6th of January, the day of Epiphany of the year 31 AD.

We take first Saturn. What is Saturn doing? Saturn is, in a broad sense, an expression; it is not the beings involved themselves, but it is the cosmic expression of the Father Forces in the universe. They inaugurated, in the dim past, evolution. We have to go back as far as Ancient Saturn, according to Rudolf Steiner’s Occult Science, in order to get an idea of the workings of the Father Hierarchy. There exists an intimate relationship between the present planet Saturn and Ancient Saturn. In a sense, the present Saturn with its rings is a perfect image of Ancient Saturn. It is only a smaller, condensed image of the original Ancient Saturn. The latter was as big as the sphere, that is, the volume of space that is contained in the orbit of Saturn. Around that physically very subtle “body”, consisting only of warmth, stood the divine hierarchies in a big circle, like the rings of present Saturn. The living memory of this Ancient Saturn organized, so to speak, the present planet. Thus our present Saturn is, first of all, an image of that Ancient Saturn. And in this sense it is an image of the line of divine intention, the focus that goes through all evolution and which will go through into the far future. It is a line indeed, and this is present in every human form as the power of human uprightness. This element of uprightness in the human form is, in a sense, a kind of metamorphosis of that long line of divine will from the
dim past into the far future. One can regard it as the ordination of evolution by the Father Forces. Thus would Saturn know the dim past, and project, as it were, the past into the future. We can see in it an expression of sublime historic conscience. The movement from the past toward the future is wonderfully expressed in the form of the human skeleton. First, there is from the past the enclosure of the skull. It encloses the brain and has the tendency to contract and to concentrate. Then the skeleton spreads through the body. As much as Saturn guards and hems in the brain, so does it change its character as we move into the body. There is no longer any brain, though still a spinal cord, nerves, and the muscles of the body. The latter are outside and around the bones of the limbs. Indeed, a tremendous metamorphosis has taken place here. Saturn started in the skull and evolved step by step right into the skeleton of the limbs and down into the toes.

Now this Saturn moved, during the Three Years, from the constellation of Gemini, the Twins, through the constellation of Cancer. About the time of Whitsun 33 AD, it entered the constellation of Leo. (See Figure 1.1, taken from the geocentric viewpoint.) What does this diagram tell us? What speaks in this moment from the far spaces of the cosmos? We said that it is a representation—a picture or image—of the Father Forces. What did that Father World pronounce in that moment? Continually, this world speaks through the external medium of the stars. However, we are not listening, or rather, we are no longer capable of listening; otherwise, we could make something of these things by “moral imagination”, and the most wonderful inspirations could rise up in us. This we can learn again, though in entirely new ways. Concerning the Christ events, we imagine that there it was expressed and given an entirely new significance on the Earth through the words and deeds of Christ.

First, we have to go a bit further back from Cancer to the constellations of Aries and Taurus. What do these constellations of the Zodiac represent with regard to the archetypes of the human form? The cosmic-spiritual form body is represented in the constellations, the 12 regions of the Zodiac. There we find the image of the totality of the human form as it was ordained by the divine world in the beginning. Aries is the image of the head. Taurus is the archetype of the larynx, the complete region of the larynx, including the canals leading up into the middle ear. It not only concerns speech but also hearing. The canals, or Eustachian tubes, are like horns going up to the middle ear. The entire organism appears almost literally like a bull. Further back you find the Ram with his horns. This part is still faintly indicated, so to speak, in the lines that lead from the horizontal eyebrows into the vertical line of the nose. Now in Gemini, that is the Twins, there is a division into two. This physiological tendency descended from the region of speech and sound into the symmetry of the human body. Thus it continues throughout the entire body. It started earlier in the head as the two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and so forth. Eventually it becomes in Gemini the two arms and the two feet. In the Bull-larynx region the word is spoken, and now here in Gemini it is realized as movement and deed. The next step, Cancer, or Crab, is the house of the chest. The chest is something wonderful if one understands it in the sense of a spiritual anatomy. It is built of 12 pairs of ribs. This “house” is built according to the cosmic order of 12. The human heart dwells in it, where life is centered, where the breathing organism is at home, and so forth. Then next we come to Leo. Leo is the archetype of all that which dwells within the “house” and from where the circulation radiates out into the totality of the body. So, what does it mean when Saturn is in that position? It says, starting out from the cosmic image of the head, that Saturn has now moved through the region of the cosmic Word, the Logos, and has entered the region of Gemini, the Deed. In that moment the Incarnation takes place. It is done; the “Great Event” is done. Christ enters the body of Jesus. Saturn was, during most of the time of the Three Years, in Cancer. Christ dwelt in the “house,” the house of the originally divine human form, from which were imparted the new impulses of evolution to Earth existence. When Saturn enters Leo, we see something like a mighty communication of cosmic heart forces to the community of the first Christians. At the Whitsun Event they all experienced, as they were sitting there, something of the universality of the Christ impulse. They partook in it as a kind of cosmic communion. This was a tremendous, new manifestation of the meaning of Leo. The ancient symbol of Leo is this: b. You start out from the heart but then you move out to the periphery, for instance, to the periphery of the body, via the stream of the blood circulation. This happened, in a spiritual sense, to the entire community of first Christians who were present at the first Whitsun.

Ancient mythology can tell us wonderful stories of these constellations. Particularly Norse mythology in gives us a wonderful impression of the constellations. It speaks of Gemini, for instance, in connection with the death of Baldur, the God of Light and of the Sun. He is killed by his own brother, Hoedur. The Evil One, Loki, had a hand in it. Odin once wandered through the world and he heard a prophecy that Baldur would soon be killed. He came home to Valhalla in great distress. The gods discussed the matter among them and decided to send messengers into the entire world to extract promises from all beings that they would not touch Baldur, not
kill him. This was done. The messengers came back. Everything had been accomplished to satisfaction. Only one plant was forgotten, and that was the mistletoe. That happened because it did not seem to be a plant of its own; it is attached to other trees and therefore it was forgotten. Loki, the Evil One, knew this. There was now a great festival in Valhalla, and the Gods threw everything they could lay their hands on at Baldur, because they knew nothing could hurt him. Hoedur, his blind brother, did not participate. So Loki crept up to him and asked him, “Why don’t you take part in this sport?” The reply was, “I can’t see a thing.” “I shall help you, I shall guide your hand,” said Loki. He pressed an arrow made of mistletoe into his hand and passed him the bow. Hoedur shot, and Baldur fell dead. We see here “twins”, the God of the Sun and of the Light, and his brother, who lives in darkness because he is blind. This is the blindness that gradually took possession completely of humanity as the gate to the ancient, direct awareness of the spiritual world was closed. And that “blind brother” kills the light. Heaven and Earth were separated. Down in that darkness, a humanity developed that became separated more and more from the reality of a divine world. Baldur, the Sun Being of Promise, was in the heights of the spiritual-cosmic world. There grew a tremendous gap.

Now, we can really see what actually did take place in that moment of the Baptism. It seems to be a contradiction at first. But this is just the wonderful fact: the Christ Event healed and redeemed that split between Heaven and Earth. This happened when John the Baptist heard the voice in heaven of the Father: “This is my beloved Son”. In the usual Bible translation it says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Rudolf Steiner says this translation is incorrect, and it actually should be: “This is my beloved Son in whom I, the Father, realize myself as Self.” A tremendous step in evolution happened then, down on the Earth. The Heavens revealed themselves. They were present in the being of Christ as Self, as I. This is expressed or exclaimed, as it were, by this Saturn who carried the sadness of the cosmic meaning of the Baldur-Hoedur myth. Now he realizes, Heaven and Earth can be united again.

In connection with Cancer, we find in Norse mythology another wonderful story that can explain what happened. The constellation of Cancer is connected with the so-called Bifrost Bridge. This is the bridge that spans the abyss between Asgard, the dwelling of the gods, and Midgard, the dwelling of the human race. At the time of the Twilight of the Gods, this bridge was burnt down, so the myth says. So there was no longer a bridge. What does this mean? It simply wants to tell us that the nature-given connection that existed in ancient times between the spiritual world and the human world—so that humanity could look directly into the spiritual world—was interrupted. After a certain moment it no longer existed. But now, during the Three Years, the bridge was rebuilt; the kingdom of heaven again came close to humanity. Heaven was open again to those of good will. And then at the time of Whitsun, Leo was given a new meaning. The original meaning was this: Once upon a time in the course of creation, the periphery was gathered together in order to build the human heart—originally the archetypal functions of rhythm were right out in the periphery of the cosmos. You find corresponding indications in the book Occult Science by Rudolf Steiner. These functions eventually became enclosed in the chest, the “house” of the human being. From the Christ events on, they can again expand toward the periphery. We can grow again toward the cosmos, but now in such a fashion that we maintain our integrity as a self. All this was spoken into the movement of Saturn during the Three Years by the deeds of Christ.

Now we go on to Figure 1.2. We look at the same thing from the heliocentric point of view, that is, from the viewpoint of the Sun. Again we have here Cancer and Leo. During the latter part of the Three Years, Saturn moved through the perihelion of Venus and eventually through the aphelion of Mars. What does this mean? This is one of the most important aspects of the story and can also give an idea of how one can combine, or reconcile, the geocentric and the heliocentric. For our present purposes, there is no need to insist exclusively on one of the two. To maintain that the world is heliocentric and that is the end of it, or that it is geocentric and we cannot do anything with the heliocentric, is immaterial in our present context. We can make the two cooperate, and then we can get the most wonderful interpretations. What do we mean by this? The planets move, according to the heliocentric point of view, around the Sun. They do not move around the Sun in circles but in ellipses. The Sun is in one of the two foci (Fig. 1.3). The ellipse is the orbit of the planet. It is overdone in the figure for the sake of demonstration. In some cases the differences are much smaller. The perihelion is the position where the planet is closest to the Sun, whereas the aphelion is the position where it is furthest away from the Sun. This orbit indicates the sphere of the planet.

If we want to come to a deeper comprehension of cosmic events, we must enter an investigation of the spheres. The spheres are contained within the orbit of the planet. With this concept we come closer to the perception of the cosmos as a living organism. This endeavor is most important just in our time. We know that
men have landed on the Moon, and there was much speculation on what this means for our knowledge of the cosmos, how this will affect the Moon, and so forth. However, we must not forget that the Moon is only a reflection. The Moon that we see in the sky is only the visible indicator of that completely invisible sphere that is contained within the orbit of the Moon. This sphere is the more important element. It is, so to speak, the workshop of Divine Hierarchies. This is where they work. Thus, for instance, the beings who are connected with Venus have their workplace, so to speak, in the sphere of Venus. The beings of Mars work in the sphere of Mars, and so forth.

For our work it is important to know the difference between perihelion and aphelion. They are deeply connected with that which was introduced into the universe and evolution around the time of the Fall in Paradise. Before the Fall the cosmos was, so to speak, an integrated whole, and humanity lived in this wholeness. At the moment of the Fall humanity came apart. On the one hand the head forces developed. In other words, humanity “ate from the Tree of Knowledge.” It is really a Tree of Knowledge, that which grows into the body. We need only imagine the central nervous system; the brain, as the root system of that tree and the nerves that spread like branches into the entire body. One thing was then withheld from humanity, the Tree of Life, which is the opposite, the other polarity of the human form that then developed. If we imagine the heart and the arteries going out from the heart, we have a picture of the Tree of Life, which spreads through the organism, as it were, against the Tree of Knowledge, the tree of the nerves. Actually the human form was thus distorted. The gods had created it differently.

This polarity was even introduced into the life of the spheres of the planets. Somehow all the spheres of the planets are involved in this. We recall again, for instance, the workings of Saturn, Saturn forming the skeleton. Here we can quite clearly get an impression of the polarity. On the one hand the skull is built by Saturn, which encloses the brain. And on the other hand, the skeleton of the limbs supports the muscular substance, and so forth, from within. This is connected with that stage of evolution around the time of the Fall. Thus we can say that in the perihelion the planetary sphere is really integrated into our solar system. The spiritual beings who are connected with the perihelion within a particular sphere are “interested” in this solar system. They combine with it—identify themselves with it. In other words, we have something like the cosmic equivalent of a head (Fig. 1.3). It is an activity, somewhat faintly similar on a cosmic level with what every human being does with the head when observation combines with perception, etc. In the opposite part, in the aphelion, the planet and its sphere almost look as though they were intent on going off on a rampage in the greater cosmos. It expresses at least the tendency for this, whereas in perihelion, the Sun would hold it back within the solar system. In a certain sense, an element of stagnation is involved in this polarity; an element, however, that facilitates a certain evolution until such times in the future when a breaking out of this state of stagnation will be necessary.

Thus we see here something wonderful during the Three Years: On the one hand Saturn moves through the perihelion of Venus and on the other through the aphelion of Mars. The “head” part of the sphere of Venus and the “limb” part of Mars are engaged. In this is expressed something of tremendous import, even right into our time. In The Changing Countenance of Cosmology, we spoke about Mars. The principle of its movements, of the rhythms of its conjunctions and oppositions to the Sun, it forms two squares, one set upon the other (Fig. 1.4). This is the principle of Mars, which means that it is really set and firmly fixed, consolidated, and absorbed into matter so that it is no longer capable of change and movement. Mars is continually doing this in the world and in us. With Mars is connected the sense of material existence. By following the Eight-fold Path of Buddha, one does actually redeem the double square and make it pliable for seeing the reality of the material world. We need Mars. Every human being needs Mars. This planet is connected with aggressiveness. It is the god of war, whom we need in order to use our senses properly. If I look at certain objects, I must put these objects into their proper places, distances, and so on. I say, “You are there and I am here, and only on that level can I see you.” Otherwise I am in danger of dissolving and “melting” together with the objects, and I would not see them as a self. So, we need Mars, but it can go too far and bind us forever to the material world. In other words, we would get stuck in the first part of the Earth evolution. During the first half, the Cosmic Divine Wisdom was incarnated step by step, precipitated into matter. This is the First Creation, which is described in Genesis.

Venus, which we call the “Evening Star,” was in very ancient times called “Mercury”. The names were exchanged at some point far back in history, Rudolf Steiner says. In Part One, we worked out the elements of this planet that astronomy calls Venus. Thus we came to realize that the conjunctions of Venus with the Sun inscribe a pentagram into the ecliptic. This is a picture of the perfect integration, perfect harmony, within the human form, and still more, within humanity. In other words, it pronounces love and harmony in a cosmic
sense. Traditional astrology also speaks of Venus being connected with love in a more worldly sense. This is correct, but it is only a tiny fraction of the reality of Venus. It is really that impulse of love and compassion, communication with all existing things, which was introduced and practiced by true Christianity.

Saturn moved through this cosmic expression, through the perihelion of the impulse of love, with regard to all future Earth evolution. It is the redemption of Mars, which would want to go its own way of material, loveless, and cold factual existence only, expressed, for instance, in all that happens in its perihelion-aphelion line. Thus Saturn moved, about eight months after Golgotha, through the aphelion of Mars. These lines are moving through the Zodiac in time. At the time of Christ, the perihelion of Venus was in Cancer, where it still is. However, at present it is further toward Leo. The aphelion of Mars, the faster one, was then already in Leo, but the two were then closer together than at present. Indeed, if we did go back into pre-Christian times, we would find that at one point in the history of humanity the two coincided. So, one would find the perihelion-line of Venus being identical with the aphelion-line of Mars. The two were, so to speak, at loggerheads. The one had the “head” part of its sphere where the “limb” part of the other sphere was located. There existed a contradiction between the two spheres, a fundamental contradiction in cosmic terms. How did this express itself?

When in ancient times the great initiates of humanity had problems, they put their questions to the cosmos. They asked, so to speak, the Sun through the medium of the Moon. We can no longer do this. We must, in order to receive answers, look toward the “connections in time”—no longer to space, but time. In other words, what we are going to do now in order to find an answer to our problem, the meaning of that coincidence between the spheres of Mars and of Venus, is to go back in time. We go back to that moment in history when the two actually did coincide. There we find something very interesting. We discover that they coincided about 3200 to 3100 BC. This is the beginning of the Kali Yuga, the Dark Age. Thus, at the beginning of the Kali Yuga you have that unique event. It takes some of these “conjunctions” tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of years to recur. Thus, we can see how the Christ Impulse “timed in” with the historical and physical consequences of the Dark Age of oncoming materialism, in order to lay the foundation for the slow redemption of Mars by the forces of Venus, or, in an occult sense, by “Mercury,” the healing impulse of the cosmos. This we can read in the position and associations of Saturn during the Three Years.