

Astronomical Letters

By Willi Sucher while at Albrighton Hall – November 1951 to 25 December 1952

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Dear Friends,

You will find enclosed a calendar of the major star-events during the period from Michaelmas 1951 to Christmas. I intend, thereby, to assist the work done in the few study groups on cosmology that have established themselves in Great Britain.

The interpretation, which I have added, is a first attempt to put into writing some of the thoughts that I had in trying to contemplate the events in the sky. You will realize that this attempt is not yet fully inclusive. I, myself, regard it as a first step toward more comprehensive communications. You will agree with me that the first steps are always the most difficult ones.

I intend to bring out these communications at intervals, although I cannot promise regular intervals. My hope is that they will help to enliven the work in the study groups and that they will become the basis of a lively correspondence. For instance, I suggest that in time a special section of Questions and Answers may be included in these communications.

I would be grateful if I could hear your ideas and thoughts occasionally about this new venture. Meanwhile, I should like to ask you to treat these communications as confidential information.

With all good wishes, *Willi Sucher*

Letter 1 - November 1951

A Few Thoughts About the Major Events During this Period

The dominating events of this year, which attract our attention first of all, are the oppositions of Saturn and Jupiter. All such happenings have a certain history, and they recur according to certain rhythms. The last opposition of Saturn and Jupiter took place 60 years ago in 1891-2, in roughly the same part of the Zodiac as at present—April 1891 in Leo-Aquarius; August 1891 in Leo-Aquarius; March 1892 in Virgo-Pisces [Ed Note: This is from the geocentric, Earth centered view].

We realize that conjunctions and oppositions of the two planets in the same constellations alternate according to a rhythm of about 30 years. Conjunctions or oppositions are repeated according to a rhythm of about 60 years. For instance, oppositions in Leo-Virgo/Aquarius-Pisces took place in 1891 and 1951, conjunctions in Leo-Virgo in 1861 and 1921. In 1981 another set of conjunctions will occur in Virgo. During the same years, the points of conjunctions or oppositions move slowly in a forward direction through the Zodiac. For example, the first two oppositions of 1891 took place in Leo-Aquarius, while the third one in 1892 had already moved into Virgo-Pisces.

We can therefore follow up the movement of these events through the Zodiac in past history. Thereby we find, for instance, a set of similar conjunctions and oppositions in Virgo-Pisces during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries AD. In this way, we detect interesting relationships between these events in the cosmos and historical happenings in humanity.

The sequence of conjunctions or oppositions in Virgo-Pisces in the course of the 11th to 13th centuries coincided, among many other incidents, with the flourishing culture in the South and Southwest of France, which was initiated and borne by the Cathars and Albigenses. The Cathars were a Christian sect, which appears to have been somewhat of a blending of Oriental Manichean teachings and Celtic world-conceptions. For instance, the movement of the Troubadours originated in this cultural sphere. Historic personalities, such as Wolfram von Eschenbach, Chrétien de Troyes, and many others who created the great romances of the Grail's legend, had connections with this movement. The Cathars and Albigenses were regarded by the Roman Church as extreme heretics, and by the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries, the highest authorities of that church inaugurated a number of Crusades against them. In scenes of unspeakable cruelty, the Cathars' movement was crushed and finally exterminated by the Inquisition. Their last stronghold, the famous mountain fortress of Montségur, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, was taken by the hordes of the Crusaders in March 1244, and the defenders were burned alive at the stake. This was the death blow for that highly spiritual movement. In 1246 a great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter took place at the feet of the constellation of Virgo.

Between 1007 AD and 1246, a number of conjunctions and oppositions had occurred in Virgo, or Virgo-Pisces. The event in 1246 was the last one in Virgo, because the following conjunctions had already moved into Libra. Only since 1892 do the conjunctions, or oppositions, appear again in Virgo.

There exists a rather extensive literature on the Cathars—mostly in French—that gives, in part, a much distorted picture of this movement. One of the best known books is by Schmidt called *Histoire et doctrine de la secte des Cathares ou Albigeois* - 1849. I could detect only one English work by Maitland called, *Facts and Documents Illustrative of the History, Doctrine and Rites of the Ancient Albigenses and Waldenses* - 1838.

In order to reach a deeper understanding of the present oppositions, we shall now consider the planets from the viewpoint of the activities of the Spiritual Hierarchies.

The sphere of Saturn is, as we know, the sphere of the Thrones or Spirits of Will. The movements of Saturn are an external manifestation of the Divine Will, which is the foundation of all physical existence. We are thinking of the great sacrifice of the Thrones already at the beginning of Ancient Saturn, which has been described by Rudolf Steiner in *Occult Science* and in the lecture cycle *Evolution From the Aspect of Realities*. A specific indication of the Divine Will is provided by the position of Saturn in the constellations of the Zodiac. At present Saturn is in Virgo. We can read the message of Virgo according to the suggestions in *Isis Sophia II*. First we read the wonderful picture of the first round of Ancient Sun evolution, when “life” was infused into the still lifeless human image. Then we can find the cosmic memory of the first round of Ancient Moon, when the details of Ancient Saturn and Ancient Sun were recapitulated. Finally, we can see in Virgo a premonition of the last stage of the “Earth” evolution. Thus Saturn would proclaim the Will of the Spiritual World, inherent in all evolution, to work and to bring to life that grand Imagination, for instance, in chapter XII of the Revelation of St. John, the destiny of the “Woman in Heaven” and the birth of the “Son of Man”, the hope of all creation. The listening to this message in meditative practice can open inspiring vistas with regard to the significance of the present time. Also a study of the background and the destiny of the aforementioned movement of the Cathars can help to create a vivid picture of the deeper impacts and tendencies in the present age and the near future. Not that we imagine simply a repetition of those historic events. We are living in a similar age but on an entirely different level. Many happenings at present can become very translucent by such contemplations.

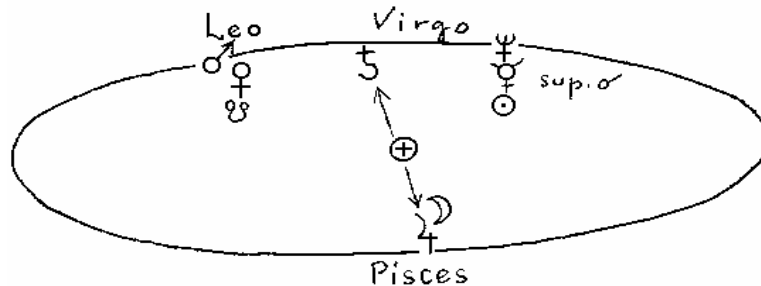
Jupiter in Fishes is in opposition to Saturn. Jupiter marks the sphere of activity of the Kyriotetes or Spirits of Wisdom. Among all the great features of this hierarchy described in *Occult Science* etc., we remember especially one fact: the One who incarnated in the body of Jesus at the time of the Baptism in the Jordan and Whom John the Baptist recognized as the “Lamb of God”, is the Head of the hierarchy of the Kyriotetes. John the Divine describes Him in the Book of Revelations as the One who says of Himself: “I am the Alpha and I am the Omega.” He holds the seven stars in His hand and is the Divine Master of all cosmic evolution and life—the seven stars representing the seven great stages of evolution: Ancient Saturn, Ancient Sun, Ancient Moon. In time, those stages follow each other consecutively. In the hands of the One who is “the Alpha and the Omega,” they are ever present as divine archetypes working in the entire universe and ordering it in manifold ways.

The constellation of Fishes reminds us of the seventh round of Ancient Saturn, when the Cosmic Human had been created in the “image of God” (see *Isis Sophia II*). Furthermore, we can perceive in this constellation the seventh round of Ancient Moon, when the Divine Wisdom working in evolution had been incorporated in external manifestation. Finally, we can see there the first, initial round of the Earth evolution, when Ancient Saturn was recapitulated.

Thus Jupiter in Fishes while in opposition to Saturn can be contemplated as a gentle admonition for us from the Divine World, to practice the Wisdom of the “Seven Stars”, the creativeness of “sevenfoldness” in all that concerns our inner life. There are many ways to do this; for instance, in our meditations and prayers. The Lord’s Prayer in its cosmic sevenfoldness is the archetype of all such inner discipline, and the awareness of this great attribute of the “Lamb of God” can become very practical in daily life. For example, if we have to await the development of certain matters, we can well develop an inner certainty of the stage of development on which they have arrived at a given time. We may realize that such an affair has reached, for instance, the Ancient Moon stage at a certain time and that we must await a definite interval of further evolution until it can be expected to have matured or, in other words, will have advanced to the Vulcan stage. A kind of inner surety and disciplined “patience” can thereby be developed. Thus at present Jupiter proclaims a strong need, as it were, for methodical practice of a meditative life.

Having in mind this background of the oppositions of Saturn and Jupiter, we can proceed to descriptions that are more detailed. The situation in the sky on 29 September, Michaelmas Day, must interest us especially. In the course of this day, the conjunction of Saturn and the Sun took place. At the same time, the Moon had nearly reached the phase of New Moon. The actual conjunction of the Moon with the Sun occurred in the early morning hours of 1 October. We may read this event as a unique cosmic reminder to be aware of the great message of Saturn, which we tried to indicate above. That it happened on Michaelmas Day emphasizes the Michaelic character of this message. In the conjunction with the Sun we might see an implication that the impact of Saturn should be received in the realm of the worldwide greatness of the human "I" (the Sun being the sphere of the Exusiai), but not in any kind of narrowness of the soul. The New Moon can be read as a sign that we will only be able to experience the greatness of these events and signs in the sky through spiritual activity. The sphere of the Moon is the sphere of the Angels, the great messengers of the Divine World, who manifest themselves in our imaginative thought activity. The New Moon in distinction from the Full Moon would indicate a need for a more inward life in the realm of the consciousness-soul.

The second opposition of Saturn and Jupiter took place on 15 October. During those days, the heavens opened the curtains to a really magnificent and inspiring display (see diagram below). On 13 October, the superior conjunction of Mercury with the Sun took place in the constellation of Virgin. On the following day, the Sun and also Mercury were in conjunction with Neptune. Meanwhile the nearly Full Moon had moved into the opposite part of the Zodiac and came into conjunction with Jupiter in Fishes. During all those days, Mars and Venus were close together in Lion. Finally, on the 15th the opposition of Saturn and Jupiter occurred.



It is rather difficult to interpret these events, because it is a really complex study. But it might be helpful if we tried to form a picture. The planets in Lion and in Virgin form something like the background in the cosmos of one of those medieval altars with three great paintings, side by side. In the opposition, Jupiter stands with the Moon, which as a waxing Moon expresses more the power of universal creativeness, demanding reverence from our soul. Jupiter's appearance in Fishes can be transmuted into the Imagination of the High Priest of the Cosmos who officiates at the Altar of the Universe, or the Earth. Behind this Altar, out in cosmic space in Lion and in Virgin, there appear great pictures of past evolutionary cycles bearing deep implications with regard to our present time. It is important to realize that the middle one of those cosmic "Altar-pictures" is Saturn in Virgin. What we said above about the message of this planet is the leading impulse of the whole form.

Some of the details we shall work out further by considering the star events in November and December. November seems to be almost entirely dedicated, as it were, to aspects of Venus with other planets. On the 14th the opposition of Venus and Jupiter will take place, on the 21st Venus will conjunct with Saturn, and on the 29th it will be in conjunction with Neptune.

We see in Venus, the planet that marks the sphere of the Archangels (the "occult Mercury" sphere). They carry the messages of the Divine World into the region of relationship within and between the kingdoms and beings of nature, including our human kingdom. In humans it works into the region of our feelings, and the message can become Inspiration, if it is lifted up into our consciousness.

Therefore, we can regard those aspects of Venus with Saturn and Jupiter as admonitions from the Divine World to bring to life those exalted messages of Saturn and Jupiter as Inspiration in the realm of our relationships. We need not proclaim them out into the world; the more we carry them diligently as silent proclamations in our hearts, the more they will become effective. It seems that Venus indicates, by the opposition to Jupiter, that first we ought to acquire the inner power of meditative practice to which Jupiter is pointing in Fishes. Then we can approach that great message of the future of the Earth and of humanity, which

Saturn is proclaiming in the cosmos with its conjunction with Venus.

We can go one step further by trying to interpret the gestures of Venus during this year and the following year; its Occult-Mercury sphere is more strongly connected with the “Shepherd-stream” in Christianity. In August-September of this year, Venus performed a loop (went retrograde) in the constellation of Lion (at present coinciding with the sign of Virgo). With this event, a certain spiritual situation arose in humanity that could be very well observed during those days. In humanity, the Mercury-Shepherd-stream of love is not yet much inclined, generally speaking, to take the external star-cosmos into consideration. There can even be found a certain fear of star wisdom, in which the world of the stars is usually conceived of as an overpowering, certainly awe-inspiring, but mysterious domination of the universe. These feelings and apprehensions are justified as far as they refer to the shadows of an ancient and miscomprehended star wisdom. However, our evolution tends toward a certain spiritual amalgamation of the Shepherd- and the King-streams. In other words, the Divine World is working toward an interpenetration of the Cosmos of Love and the Cosmos of Wisdom. The Cosmos of Wisdom, including Star Wisdom, must be re-awakened and revived through esoteric Christianity. Only then can it be absorbed by the Cosmos of Love, which is to a certain extent represented by the Shepherd-stream.

In the loop of Venus in Lion, we can witness the cosmic correspondence toward attempts in humanity to work for a Christian Star Wisdom and to kindle in simple Shepherds’ hearts an understanding for the need of such a star wisdom in human evolution. At the time of the loop, an inner struggle took place. One could not yet speak of an achievement at the time, but Venus has since moved out of the loop and will gradually advance through the Zodiac, coming into a superior conjunction with the Sun on St. John’s Day in 1952. This conjunction will take place in the constellation of Twins. The planet will then be far beyond the Sun, with its sphere extended, as it were, to majestic dimensions. It suggests far less the aspect of struggle, as it does during the loop, but rather of loftiness and of a difficulty to comprehend deeper spiritual impacts. The position of this event in Twins emphasizes a need for the contemplation of the cosmic background of the “I” and the evolution of the “I”. (See *Isis Sophia II*; Ancient Saturn and Ancient Sun evolution, especially the notations in the Gemini rounds.) That which expressed itself as a struggle, in connection with the loop in Lion, ought to mature in the region of the “I” by overcoming the natural inclination toward inner narrowness. In other words, the Wemyss Bay Meeting, however small or isolated it may have been in the totality of the anthroposophical movement, may have produced a seed that can grow into one helpful means of leading one step further toward a fruitful union and cooperation of the streams of Shepherds’ Hearts and Kings’ Heads. This hope is not entirely unfounded, judged by the results since that meeting.

The month of December will bring two events in connection with Mars. On the 1st, there will be an opposition of Mars to Jupiter and on the 18th a conjunction of Mars with Saturn. Mars circumscribes the sphere of the Dynamis or Spirits of Motion. For instance, the cosmic story of the coming into existence of planetary movement is connected with their activity. Behind their impulses appears the background of the emancipation and falling away of the “creature” from the Godhead. The faculty of Selfhood and Freedom was bought at the cost of this great emancipation. The inner longing of the emancipated “creature” for union with the Divine origin (in other words, the becoming conscious of the Sin of the World) was balanced by the Spirits of Motion through their creating the possibility to move from one impression or contact to another. This faculty was expressed on a grand cosmic scale by the movements of the stars, especially the planets. In the external universe, as well as in our inner world, the possibility was thereby established to compensate, to a certain extent, for the feeling of loneliness and exile.

The gestures of Mars and its sphere are therefore an expression of the contrast, one might even say of the conflict in consciousness, between an internal and external world. Mars entered the constellation of Lion about 17 September and is still in that constellation at present, and about 16 November it will enter Virgin. These two constellations remind us of the initial rounds of the Ancient Sun—Virgin also of the Ancient Moon (see *Isis Sophia II*). Therefore, this Mars confronts us with the deeper background of the cosmic foundations of “life” and “consciousness”. The age-old longing of a gradually emancipating humanity, who seek communion with the Divine World in a spiritual cosmology, is reflected in this Mars in Lion and in Virgin. However, it is that aspect of cosmology and cosmosophy, which we sometimes call the “old” representation, which bears the traces of sadness springing from the realization of the gradual loss of the ancient vision. Mars stands in the sky like a

grave warning to not fall back into the ancient pre-Christian ways, which were founded entirely on different world conditions. At the same time, we can hear in the voice of Mars a calling out for redemption and for filling the gap with a new Christian star wisdom.

In this sense, we may also understand the aspects of Mars with Jupiter and Saturn. The essential message of Mars is amplified by the opposition to Jupiter, pronouncing that the redemption and rejuvenation of the star wisdom can only be achieved on the basis of the development of the modern Christian meditative discipline. (Recall what we said above about Jupiter as being the image of the High Priest of the cosmos.) Here we can also imagine that if such admonitions are not received with sincerity they must cause great difficulties and inner obstructions.

This cosmic admonition is followed by the conjunction of Mars with Saturn on December 18. We see that after the need for the inner discipline is indicated, there appears a premonition of the grand vision of the Earth's and our own cosmic future, in the sense of that "great wonder in heaven" described in Revelation XII. This we recognize as the great message of Saturn in Virgin. Mars moving into conjunction with Saturn can be read as a signpost to the country of that new star wisdom that must be discovered if we are to fulfill our spiritual mission. Mars is representative, as we said, for that yearning of ancient humanity for a spiritual communion with the Divine World through star wisdom. In post-Christian times, Mars will represent the yearning, as it were, of the cosmos of the stars for participation in that "new cosmos" which entered the earthly world through the Christ Impulse. This new cosmos is the Bride of the Future Jerusalem according to the Revelation of John the Divine. It is the new *Isis Sophia*, who is akin to the Woman in Heaven in Revelation XII.

The conjunction of Saturn and Mars in Virgin just before Christmas also reflects something of the tremendous "War in Heaven" of which Revelation XII is speaking. By no means must we imagine that the preparations in our present age for those great events in the future will be undisturbed by the adverse forces in the world. However, the great Inspirations that we can perceive by penetrating through the external events in the sky can become the sources of inner comfort and strength. In the nearness of Mars and Venus at the time of the opposition of Saturn and Jupiter (October 15), lies something like a yearning for the healing and redemption of the ancient star wisdom by Occult-Mercury, the sphere of healing that penetrated Mars, the representative of the Ancient Moon-Wisdom. (See Rudolf Steiner's lecture of 18 December 1912, Neuchatel, Switzerland, *The Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*, in which he speaks of the deed of Buddha on Mars in 1604.)

Finally, we may guide our vision to the inferior conjunction of Mercury with the Sun on 17 December. This conjunction is, of course, the culmination of a loop of Mercury at that time. It was preceded by a superior conjunction of this planet on October 14 in the constellation of Virgin. The loop will take place above the tail of Scorpion.

In Mercury (the sphere Occult-Venus), we see the indicator of the sphere of the Archaic, the Spirits of the Ages. They are the hierarchy that stand not only as the great directing power above the destiny of nations by the Archangels, but they are the guides of the long cultural ages of humanity. Therefore they appeal to our will nature, which is normally veiled in almost complete unconsciousness. It is that realm in us where the deeper spiritual impulses of our individuality can mature, but only after long ages of inner evolution through a number of incarnations.

In that superior conjunction of Mercury with the Sun on 13 October, we might recognize something like a rising up of more or less dim memories of impulses carried into this life from previous incarnations. This is strongly emphasized by the simultaneous conjunction of Neptune with Sun and Mercury. In Neptune we have a cosmic representative of what it is within us that relates us to the occult, to the working of the Spiritual World. When this triple-conjunction took place, subconscious memories of past incarnations may have entered human souls who had an individual connection with this part of the Zodiac. They may have been faint memories of the elimination of the Cathars or other similar persecutions. Externally they can have been sources of seemingly unaccountable irritation.

Mercury will move from this background into that loop in December in Sagittarius/Scorpion. The loops are like a kind of compression, or descent, into more earthly spheres. Behind the loop in December stand those great pictures of the Ancient Sun and Ancient Moon evolutions, indicated by the Scorpion-Eagle. (See *Isis Sophia II*, the 5th and 6th round of Ancient Sun and the 3rd and 4th round of Ancient Moon.) As an echo within

us, this event may lead to inner experiences of severe testing of those memory pictures coinciding with Mercury in Virgin and also of calling for a transformation of hitherto unconscious notions and soul habits derived from previous incarnations. Universal love and understanding, even of the most foreign and adverse spiritual impacts, ought then to be cultivated. Thus, glimpses of the slow but sure working of the karma of humanity through the ages may be attained.