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The Cover Design

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THE COVER DESIGN

The most sensitive areas of the human experience tend to be the ones that are ripest with symbolism: love, death, food, health, and spirituality, among others. The passage of time and its related issues, such as youth, old age, new things, and old things, have acquired their share of symbols as well. It is appropriate to have Peter Jordan, a printer from Mainz (the cradle of printing in the West), help us enter a new era with his printer's device: a representation of Cronus, hoisting the New Year's Baby in the air. Now a common and seemingly innocuous image, it does have a darker history.

Cronus was a pre-Hellenic deity, later worshiped by the Romans as Saturn. Among Cronus' themes was agriculture, which is reflected in the harvest festivals of Kronia (in Attica) and the better-known Saturnalia. He is frequently depicted with several attributes, as he is here in the reproduction of Jordan's device. Primary among them is the sickle (by some interpretations a sword), the baby, and symbols of time such as an hourglass. Cronus was the youngest of the twelve Titans and the son of

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Uranus (God of the Heavens) and Gaea (Mother Earth). His connection with the sickle does have to do with his tie to agriculture, but it has another possible twist. Gaea bid him to castrate his father in order to separate Heaven from Earth. He became the head Titan, married his sister Rhea, and because he was warned by Uranus and Gaea that he would be dethroned by one of his own sons, swallowed most of his children, one a year: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and last, Poseidon. However, Rhea took the newborn Zeus to Crete and had Cronus swallow a rock. Zeus, of course, grew into the prototypical hero, forced his father to vomit up his siblings intact and living, and then conquered and vanquished him to a deserted island. Saturn is perhaps more closely allied with agriculture, and the intertwined legends of the two deities have created a more general Father Time.

Jordan was active in Mainz between 1531 and 1536. In his reproduced device are several symbols of the passage of time: Cronus, the New Year's Baby (in this context about to be swallowed whole), the sickle (representing the annual harvest), the hourglass, a rolling ball, and a flying ball.

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