Appendix 34

Deepening our Experience of the Festivals through the Calendar of the Soul

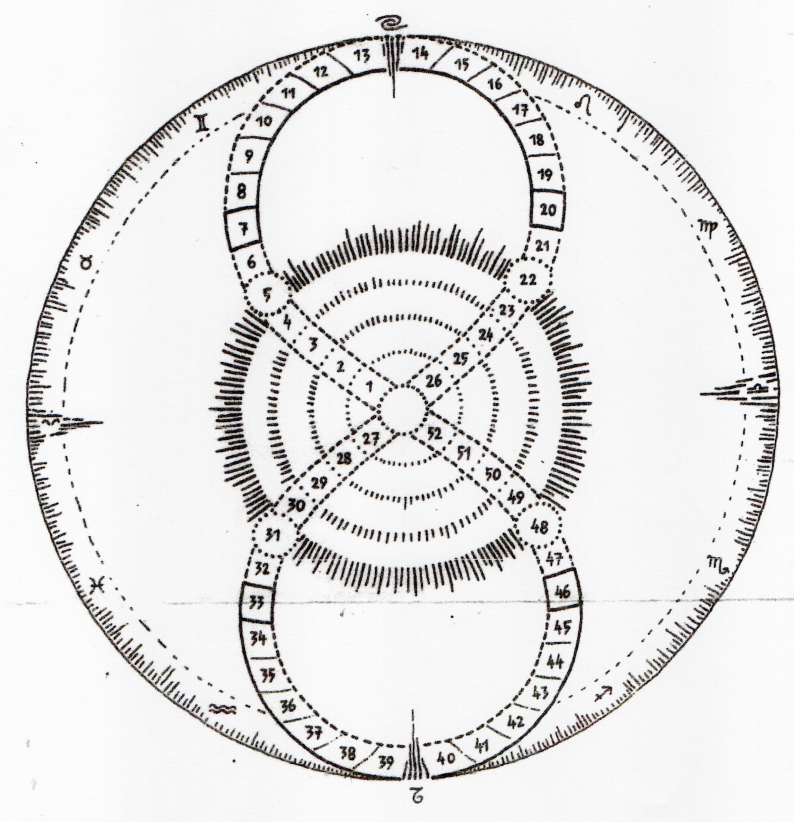
"A kind of summary of these weekly moods [of the Calendar verses) will lead eventually to quite a new outlook upon the festivals, especially in their relation to Christianity. Such a new outlook is really needed. Reorientation towards festivals would have a great effect upon social life in general."

Eleanor Merry, *The Year and Its Festivals*

This essay will go into two complementary directions and bring together much that has been covered in previous essays/appendices. It will explore the transitions that take place four times during the year at mid-season between one major festival and the following one. They correspond to the threshold verses of cross 7: verses 7, 20, 33, 46. In addition it will look at how the transitions help us prepare the mood for the four festivals of Easter, St. John, Michaelmas and Christmas.

The verses of cross 7 come at mid-season, midway between a festival and the following one: verse 7 falls midway between Easter and St. John; verse 20 midway between St. John and Michaelmas; verse 33 between Michaelmas and Christmas, and 46 between Christmas and Easter. These verses could be qualified as threshold, or warning verses because they alert us to a danger and prepare us for the mood of the following festival. They are strikingly recognizable because they are the only verses to speak about a threat (verses 46 and 7) or about death (verses 20 and 33).

Many themes are overlaid in the course of the Calendar, among which a couple of them will interest us here. They are interwoven within the major polarity of the Calendar, that of Nature Consciousness and Self-Consciousness. The most important point of the Calendar is Easter, which corresponds to verse 1. In the lemniscate, which usually portrays the Calendar, Easter and Michaelmas correspond to the point of intersection of the two loops. At the top are shown verses 1 to 26 of spring and summer, the time of Nature consciousness. Below the intersection point we have verses 27 to 52 of fall and winter, which is the time of Self-consciousness (see image below)



In the first half of the Calendar (verses 1 to 26) we entrust ourselves to the cosmos and our soul expands into the cosmic ethers, losing some of our self-awareness. We can also say that at this time of the year matter expands into spirit. In the second half of the year (27 to 52) the ethers pull back toward the Earth—spirit contracts into matter. The soul contracts into itself and the Self emerges in fuller awareness.

For the purpose of our work it is useful to keep in mind that the time of Nature consciousness is also a time in which our consciousness retraces the past of human evolution into the present, whereas the time of Self consciousness goes from the present into the future. In addition the time of Nature consciousness corresponds to the time between death and re-birth, whereas the time of Self consciousness represents the most conscious path of initiation between birth and death.[1]

With all of the above in mind we will look at how the four threshold verses represent turning points of human consciousness, how they form times of trial and temptations and how they help shift consciousness from one cardinal festival of the year to the next one.

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[1] See Appendix 32: *Excarnation, Incarnation and Initiation in the Calendar of the Soul*, available at https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/CoS-Appendix-32-Initiation-and-Life-After-Death-in-the-Calendar-of-the-Soul-.pdf

In what follows we will concentrate our gaze on the verses of Crosses 6, 7 and 8, which is to say to the verses preceding the threshold verse, the verse itself and the following one. These will help us to see how the transition takes place from one theme to another one. In addition, we will paint in broad brushstrokes the themes that culminate in a particular festival. For more detail about these we refer the reader to the appendices that cover the four quadrants of the Soul Calendar—each one going from one festival to the following one.[2] The whole builds up to show how the Calendar of the Soul offers us a qualitative different experience of the festivals than the ones to which we are more accustomed, such as Rudolf Steiner's festival lectures or the Act of Consecration of the Human Being.

In this overview we want to give the reader an overview of the course of the year and what makes this path unique through the Calendar of the Soul. We can now look at the four transition between the festivals of the equinoxes and solstices. To set the stage we will start just after Easter with verse 7 and give a very brief background to this position in time.

At the time of Easter the soul has prepared herself by radically transforming the power of thinking into what the Calendar qualifies at one point as "cosmic thinking" (verse 48). The power of thinking ascends at the time in which in Nature we see the influx of the cosmic formative forces of early spring. The "joy of growth" that we see in Nature is a manifestation of the realm of cosmic life, which is the equivalent of the Biblical "tree of life," the union of life and tone ethers. Transformed thinking can bring to consciousness through initiation that which has been lost to human experience and preserved from the otherwise destructive human influences by the wise guidance of the spiritual world.

From Easter to Saint John Tide

Transitioning to Easter from the end of the time of Self-consciousness is the equivalent of a conscious death. Through the "spirit birth," or birth of the higher Self in the soul (verses 44-45), and the power of cosmic thinking experienced consciously (verse 48), the soul has acquired a foothold in the spiritual world and can experience Easter as the time in which Christ draws near and brings our soul to the renewed garden of Eden (see verse 3). Spiritualized thinking reconnects with the realm of the cosmic formative forces from which it originates, the realm which the Calendar calls "cosmic

[2] See Appendices 25, 27, 28 and 29 at https://millenniumculmination.net/.

life." Thinking, however, wanes (verse 2) just as it would in the time after death. This is then the background that brings us to verse 7.

In the intervening time the soul has also further expanded in the realm of cosmic light (light ether), particularly in verses 4 and 5. In so doing it has a continued experience of Easter resurrection in the curbing of "narrow selfhood's inner power" (verse 5). This is restated in verse 6 in which something more is added: "There has arisen from its narrow bounds my Self." Whereas at Easter the more direct experience was that of a rejuvenated body through the influx of the etheric forces emanating from the Christ, now toward ascension the effect of the Resurrection is felt in the Self.

We find ourselves in the spring and at an unusual place. Verse 7 is not only symmetrically placed between Easter (verse 1) and the St John period (verses 12-13) but also between Ascension (verse 6) immediately preceding verse 7, and Whitsun (verse 8), immediately following it. At Easter the soul feels rejuvenated by the realm of cosmic life injecting new life into the body. At Ascension the etheric body feels united with the sphere of the Sun through the conjunction of the spheres of cosmic life and cosmic light (from verse 5 in "Within the light that" rises "out of spirit depths").

We'll now look more closely at the nature of the transition around verse 7.

Verse 6 (Ascension)	**Verse 7**	**Verse 8 (Whitsun)**
There has arisen from its narrow limits My self and finds itself As revelation of all worlds Within the sway of time and space; The world, as archetype divine, Displays to me at every turn The truth of my own likeness.	My self is threatening to fly forth, Lured strongly by the world's enticing light. Come forth, prophetic feeling, Take up with strength your rightful task: Replace in me the power of thought Which in the senses' glory Would gladly lose itself.	The senses' might grows strong United with the gods' creative work; It presses down my power of thinking Into a dreamlike dullness. When godly being Desires union with my soul, Must human thinking In quiet dream-life rest content.

In the sequence of verses 6 to 8 we find the following themes:

- 6 and 7 are tied by the theme of the Self: to a flash of intuition concerning the Self—"there has arisen from its narrow bounds my Self"—follows the danger of the Self "flying forth."

- Verse 7 calls our attention to the central quality of intuition / boding, which from now on we will call "sensing of the heart."
- Verses 7 and 8 restate the waning of the power of thinking: "[intuition] replace in me the power of thinking" becomes "must thinking in quiet dream life rest content."
- Verses 6 and 8: to a flash of revelation follows the awakening of a new disposition of soul (sensing of the heart) and the waning of the faculty of thinking.

Verse 7 plays a pivotal role around Self and thinking. If the soul wants to preserve the Self from flying forth it must let thinking "in quiet dream-life rest content" (8) and call the sensing of the heart "to rightful vigor in divining" (7).

Before looking at the next major festival we can dwell for a moment on the polarity between Ascension and Whitsun, also mediated by verse 7. This is the path that Christ's disciples walked ahead of humankind immediately after Easter.

At Ascension the soul has a glimpse of the nature of its higher Self in Christ. This is also the time in which we can feel closest to the manifestation of Christ's reappearance in the realm of the etheric. However, just as in the case of the disciples, we can lose sight of the dimension of our lower Self/earthly ego in its narrow limits. We know that after Easter and before Whitsun the disciples lived in a dream-filled state. At Whitsun came an awakening with the descent of the Holy Spirit, which characterizes Whitsun as the festival of the free individuality. The awakening is called for in verse 7 through the newly emerging sensing of the heart that contrasts the tendency to excarnate and dream.[3]

The above warning of verse 7 serves to ward off the Luciferic temptation. Let us see how. In pre-Christian times the period of spring leading to Saint John was one of excarnation purposefully sought. In the movement of ecstasy thus generated the initiates and priests sought to commune with the spiritual world and find direction and guidance for working with agriculture, with the sacramental life, or with larger aspects of social life. The culmination of this movement took place at the St. John festival with the burning of the bonfires, whose tradition we have inherited.

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[3] See Luigi Morelli, *Appendix 32: Excarnation, Incarnation and Initiation in the Calendar of the Soul*, available at https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/CoS-Appendix-32-Initiation-and-Life-After-Death-in-the-Calendar-of-the-Soul-.pdf

In modern time, the Calendar reminds us, this is no longer possible. The self "flying forth" is seen as a "threat." Since the Calendar also tells us that because the power of thinking "would ever lose itself" in "the senses' glory" we need to strengthen another quality of soul—in German called *ahnung*—that is variously translated as boding, intuition, prophetic feeling, expectation, etc. The more general "sensing of the heart" seems to better cover the various shades of meaning that the term *ahnung* and its derivatives acquire throughout the year.

Through the sensing of the heart the soul can feel more contained within itself than it would if it let itself go to what feels immediately natural at this time of the year. Through the restraining effect we come to realize that there are two ways of living through a season. One that we could call "natural," which is what we naturally feel inclined to do if we do not live our life under the influence of the Christ impulse. The second one is what the Calendar calls us to practice—being influenced by the life of the seasons but in an active way, which tempers the excesses—concretely speaking the tendency to dream in summer and to fall asleep in winter.

In the time between Easter and St. John the soul is called to expand into the spheres of cosmic life, cosmic light and cosmic warmth—in essence the four ethers since cosmic life covers the life and tone ethers—and make room for the presence of cosmic Word to inspire us most during the St. John season. This is a time for receiving with devotion the gifts of the cosmos. At the same time the soul is very aware of the shortcomings of the Self, variously called "fetters of my selfhood," "narrow selfhood's inner power," "narrow will of Self." It welcomes what the cosmos brings as a way to curb the lower self. In essence, the interval from Easter to St. John is an overall time of expansion and purification in order to become vessels for the gifts of the cosmos. If we fall short of this challenge we continue the Luciferic temptation of detachment and illusion that was spelled out in verse 7.

From St. John to Michaelmas

In approaching the Michaelmas season we will start by looking at the transition formed by verses 19 to 21. With verse 20 the soul prepares itself to the end of the time of Nature consciousness (around verses 26 and 27 of the Michaelmas season). In relation to the journey of incarnation and excarnation the soul finds itself close to the time of earthly birth, followed by the consciously pursued spiritual development on Earth. Michaelmas is the

festival calling us to consciously pursued self-knowledge undertaken with courage. In the lead-up to it we see several themes playing out.

Verse 19
In secret to
encompass now
With memory what
I've newly got
Shall be my striving's
further aim:
Thus, ever
strengthening,
selfhood's forces
Shall be awakened
from within
And growing, give me
to myself.

Verse 20
I feel at last my life's
reality
Which, severed from
the world's existence,
Would in itself
obliterate itself,
And building only on
its own foundation,
Would in itself bring
death upon itself.

Verse 21
I feel strange power,
bearing fruit
And gaining strength
to give myself to me.
I sense the seed
maturing
And expectation, light-
filled, weaving
Within me on my
selfhood's power.

- Verses 19, 20: memory affirms what it has received from the macrocosm; feeling affirms the importance of strengthening the soul's conscious link with the latter in order not to bring death upon itself.
- Verse 20 speaks about affirming "my life's reality" and its essential link to the macrocosm.
- Verses 20 and 21 are linked by the power of feeling: feeling our own life's reality is followed by feeling the emergent power of the Self.
- Verses 19, 21: 19 announces selfhood's forces in becoming; verse 21 confirms "selfhood's power" (also called "strange power") bearing fruit. The first verse talks about "give me to myself"; the second verse confirms "give myself to me" (*Mich mir selben giben* in 19; *mir mich Selbst verleihn* in 21). As is often the case the two verses are mirrored around the threshold verse. Note that the two cardinal faculties of the spring and summer—memory (19) and sensing of the heart (21)—practically bring their role to a close. *Ahnung* will only reappear in verse 27.

What is this world foundation upon which the soul must build and what is the death that it risks bringing upon itself? To start with, between the periods of Self-consciousness and of Nature consciousness we find ourselves in a time sequence from the past to the present, and from the life before birth to the time of incarnation. We come to the world of the present and its global cultural vacuum. It's not surprising therefore that Michael summons our courage and desire for self-knowledge.

When we look at even a few millennia ago, the soul still carried echoes of the ancient clairvoyance. For the ancient Greeks it came without saying

that thoughts had a cosmic origin and these still had an enlivening power upon soul and body. Only at present do we see thinking as the property of our own soul, or the product of our physical brain. This is then the challenge outlined by verse 7 calling us to sense our life's reality in relation to the world's existence. We will not find this relationship along the paths that modern civilization offers, quite the contrary.

> "Today the soul enters the body in a way which is consumptive. To an ever increasing degree this is the case; the souls which are born today have some destructive influence and lame the body, gradually dragging death forces through it. If evolution is to continue this way it will lead to the undermining and decline of earthly life."[4]

Two interrelated phenomena go hand in hand with what is said above. Ideas that come from tradition and/or the modern materialstic outlook no longer carry real life and warmth. Consequently our soul life is more and more impoverished and our will lamed.

Through what materialistic science offers the soul we can no longer find what connects it and grounds it in life on Earth, nor what can carry it into the life after death. It is the equivalent of a soul-death, in fact what the Book of Revelation calls the "second death."

> "This is something which must be considered in all earnestness today, when the idea continues that non-understanding can relate to obsolete dogma, that only laming, deadening can come through non-spiritually penetrated scientific knowledge, and that the soul must experience a second death, suffer a soul death."[5]

The soul that incarnates in the present finds itself in front of the warning of verse 20. Superficial interest alone would naturally direct us to science for answers to satisfy our thirst for knowledge and connection. But this science alone cannot reconnect us to "world existence." With this science alone my "life's reality" would "obliterate itself" and "bring death upon itself." We must then seek to lay the foundations for a science permeated by the spirit and concretely see how the material is permeated by the spirit.

> "As a result the souls coming out of a previous earthly life can take up this spirit-filled natural science, become fructified and thereby enable their vitality to be carried forward to the next incarnation.

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[4] Rudolf Steiner, *Natural Science and the Anthroposophical Movement*, lecture of 16 January 1921.
[5] Ibid.

> The continued existence of the soul, its health, in fact the continued existence of the soul life itself, the aversion to the soul death of humanity depends upon the spiritualization of our natural knowledge!"[6]

With verse 20 we find ourselves at the transition between life before birth and incarnation, and in evolutionary terms at the transition into modern consciousness. It is only natural that we need to spur the soul to the energetic call to self-knowledge, a call to strengthen the power of selfhood. This is how verse 20 lays the foundation for the soul preparation necessary to take on the Michaelic sword, the one that calls the cosmic spirit to "renew itself by self-cognition, and from the darkness of the soul create the fruit of self-engendered will" in verse 24 that shortly precedes Michaelmas. No less is required by the challenge of our time.

In essence then the time between St. John and Michaelmas is one of assimilation and elaboration of the gifts received from the cosmos. What the soul has received serves to curb the lower self and lend strength to selfhood power (verses 16, 21, 22, 24). Thus only an energetic and decisive thirst for knowledge and the discipline to pursue it is a worthy celebration in the sense of a future Michaelmas festival.

From Michaelmas to Christmas

The beginning of the autumn follows the progressive rise of the Michaelic (self-engendered) will and of the power and light of thinking roughly from verses 28 to 32. The sequence of verses 32 to 34—which we will follow more closely—marks the integrating rise of feeling to surround will and thinking. The three verses mention feeling right from the first line: "I feel my own force" (32), "I feel at last the world's reality" (33) and "In secret inwardly to feel" (34).

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[6] Rudolf Steiner, *Natural Science and the Anthroposophical Movement*, lecture of 16 January 1921.

Verse 32
I feel my own force,
bearing fruit
And gaining strength
to give me to the
world.
My inmost being I feel
charged with power
To turn with clearer
insight
Toward the weaving of
life's destiny.

Verse 33
I feel at last the
world's reality
Which, lacking the
communion of my
soul,
Would in itself be
frosty, empty life,
And showing itself
powerless
To recreate itself in
souls,
Would in itself find
only death.

Verse 34
In secret inwardly to
feel
How all that I've
preserved of old
Is quickened by new-
risen sense of self:
This shall, awakening,
pour forth cosmic
forces
Into the outer actions
of my life
And growing, mould
me into true
existence.

- Verses 32-33 are linked through feeling and the stress on the importance of the world. Verse 32 gives me to the world in such a way that I'm then ready to commune with it and recreate it in my soul (verse 33).
- Verses 33-34: the call to contribute to the world is followed by new-risen sense of Self and the consequent ability to pour cosmic forces into my deeds. Through these cosmic forces I can meet the world's needs.
- Verses 32, 34: my own force, which was gaining strength in verse 32 is confirmed and enhanced in verse 34, in which it takes a new qualitative nuance since it speaks about "pour[ing] cosmic forces." Here we see once more how verses are reflected on both sides of a threshold verse.

During the time leading to Christmas the soul strengthens the power of thinking in such a way that it is purified and becomes an objective instrument for acquiring a new perspective on the world. It becomes in the Calendar's terms both the "light of thinking" and the "power of thinking" and offers the human being an alert presence in the world, rather than the tendency to fall asleep which is natural if we have not embraced the Christ impulse.

To the light of thinking is added the metamorphosis of the Michaelic will in conjunction with feeling. We increasingly witness what the calendar calls "warmth of heart," closely associated with courage or gladness from verses 37 to 43. Thus, under the influence of the cosmic Word consciously harbored in the soul (from verse 36) light of thinking and warmth of heart

prepare us to a Christmas in which speak the wisdom of the kings and the heart warmth of the shepherds. We close the year with verse 39 emphasizing the light of thinking ("power of thinking growing clearer") and verse 40 calling on to "love-worlds of the heart."

Verse 34 invites us to contemplate the importance of the "sense of Self". The sense of Self is that stage in which we take in hand our cosmic responsibility by recognizing that the "second being in us", our higher Self, has been directing the course of our biography. When the sense of Self awakens, we vow to restrain our lower drives and let ourselves be led by our higher Self as best we can. And we seek to be led by the Guardian in crossing the threshold to the spiritual world in an orderly way.

A choice is offered to the soul at this point. The higher knowledge awakened for higher deeds (that carry cosmic forces) can be exerted selflessly or pursued for egotistic purposes. If we are inclined to the first we will meet the Lesser Guardian of the Threshold and the Higher Guardian, behind whom stands the Christ being. But we can otherwise start using the forces of the lower ethers for egotistic purposes. Then we chain world evolution to the forces of the adversaries and bind the Earth on a way to decline. This is a prelude to the Ahrimanic temptation that we will find more fully expressed in verse 46.

From Christmas to Easter

We continue to pursue the path of initiation and after Christmas it reaches the important stage of the "spirit birth", the birth of the higher Self in the soul (verses 44 and 45). We can now see how this plays out in verses 45 to 47.

Verse 45
My power of thought
grows firm
United with the spirit's
birth.
It lifts the senses' dull
attractions
To bright-lit clarity.
When soul-abundance
Desires union with the
world's becoming,
Must senses'
revelation
Receive the light of
thinking.

Verse 46
The world is
threatening to stun
The inborn forces of
my soul;
Now, memory, come
forth
From spirit depths,
enkindling light;
Invigorate my inward
sight
Which only by the
strength of will
Is able to sustain
itself.

Verse 47
There will arise out of
the world's great womb,
Quickening the senses'
life, the joy of growth.
Now may it find my
strength of thought
Well armed by powers
divine
Which strongly live
within my being.

- Verses 45-46 are linked through the complementarity of the forces of the soul: to thinking of 45 is contrasted memory and the power of the will in 46. Memory is the force which must be called upon to hold together thinking, feeling and willing.
- Verses 46-47: the strength of will of memory of 46 becomes "strength of thought armed by powers divine which live with strength within my being" in 47.
- Verses 45 and 47 link the fullness of the power of thought which sheds light upon the senses' revelation of 45 and the power of thinking whose strength can match the "joy of growth that quickens the senses' life" in 47.

The desired outcome of the integration of the soul forces can be contrasted by a failed initiation succumbing to egotistical one-sided development of one force of the soul at the expense of the others which results in pathological soul states. The desire to use the faculties of the soul for egotistic purposes can also be used deliberately and in opposition to world evolution, forming the epitome of the Ahrimanic temptation.

In the preparation for Easter, cosmic Word received in full consciousness cleanses our will and through it we attain "cosmic thinking" (verse 48) which, "focusing its mighty rays, awaken(s) love in human hearts." Being able to exert cosmic thinking means attaining Imagination and in future also Inspiration and Intuition. We become co-creators because through our thinking we are no longer separated, no longer spectators. We acquire a participatory consciousness, we become part of what Steiner calls the "world-becoming," at least at the times in which we live in our Imagination. We overcome the veil of maya spun by our senses and the enchantment of Nature. This is the concrete response offered to threshold verse 33. In becoming participants in world-becoming we start to join the Tree of Knowledge to the Tree of Life, from which all human beings were severed at the time of the Fall.

The above then is the preparation for Easter time. In dying on the cross and resurrecting the Christ being has reopened access to the life and tone ethers, which the Bible calls the "tree of life" and the Calendar "cosmic life" and related expressions. Before Easter our thinking has resurrected and made possible for the soul to partake of the sphere of cosmic life. Christ has reinvigorated our weakened etheric bodies and offered us the way and the strength to face the decline of a materialistic civilization.

At Easter our thinking starts to die, just like it does with the life panorama experienced immediately after death. This sacrifice renders possible that "out of heaven's distances streams life-strength into human bodies, uniting by its mighty energy the spirit's being with our human life." Immediately after we are told that "Out in the sense-world's glory the power of thought gives up its separate being, and spirit worlds discover again their human offspring, who germinates in them" (verse 2). The sphere of the Tree of Life is the realm in which human beings "germinate," and this brings forth memories of our primeval, innocent state of being (verse 3).

In closing I hope to have given a concrete idea of how the Calendar of the Soul can form a complementary approach to what we receive from Rudolf Steiner's lectures on the festivals or through the services of the Christian Community. I would argue that, in keeping with the stated original intention of the Calendar, this is the middle way of feeling, which is fruitully accompanied with artistic work and artistic feeling.[7] A very well known example of accompanying art are the drawings of Karl König, now followed by those of numerous other artists.

[7] It was the artist Imma von Eckardstein who approached Rudolf Steiner in 1911 about creating a "theosophical calendar," which the latter approved. And in December of the same year Steiner announced the forming of a "Foundation for Theosophical Art" (*Stiftung für Theosophische Kunst*) and attended its first meeting. Unfortunately, this was the only meeting ever held. The Calendar of the Soul was the first and only initiative to come out of the association. It was accompanied with drawings of the zodiacal signs by von Eckard-stein.