

Thoughts about the Foundation Stone

I. The Foundation Stone

THE GENERAL ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY was founded at the famous Christmas Conference,¹ which took place in Dornach, Switzerland, from December 24, 1923, to January 1, 1924, with approximately 800 members attending. Here Rudolf Steiner spoke the Foundation Stone and exhorted his listeners to take these verses into their hearts. The Foundation Stone consists of three similarly structured panels of twenty-two lines each and a different fourth panel of twenty-five lines. The verses were not given all at once, but in parts, spread over different days. In addition, on each of seven days Rudolf Steiner wrote on a blackboard certain sets of selected lines, which he referred to as “rhythms.” He indicated that meditation on these “rhythms” is essential for penetrating to the inner substance of the Foundation Stone.

There exist more than a dozen different translations of these verses. Consultation with several translations is necessary if one wishes to grasp the fine nuances of meaning in the original, for no single translation can render fully all aspects of these verses. Each translator comes up with a compromise. The translation at the beginning of this essay attempts to render faithfully into English the meaning of the German original while retaining as closely as possible its pattern of beat and some of its sound quality, thus preserving its mantric quality in a form suitable for meditation.

II. The Inner Nature, of the Foundation Stone

Born out of fire, through pain and suffering, that magical formula, the Foundation Stone, is destined to guide the souls of seeking human beings, in the present time and in centuries to come, toward solutions of the great riddles of existence, toward overcoming the great scourges of our time—deep loneliness, desperate anxiety, and tragic confusion—by touching the timeless, ever-flowing wellsprings of spirit-life, spirit-love, and spirit-light, behind which the mystery of Christ holds sway.

Ancient Wisdom told that the Dark Age—Kali Yuga—would last till the end of the nineteenth century. The great challenge of the twentieth century was to establish the new, enlightened mysteries, which, unlike the ancient secret mysteries, are open to all who earnestly seek them. Openness and universality are called for in the present time. Openness is the hallmark of the Mystery of Golgotha, the greatest and most universal of all mysteries. Enacted on the physical plane of world historic events, its open secrets await to be illuminated more and more in our time and in times to come.

It was Rudolf Steiner's destiny to meet these challenges. Loftiest cosmic spirit powers, whose central concern is the destiny of mankind, guided Rudolf Steiner to shape the verses of the Foundation Stone as a true spiritual cornerstone, a living seed, for the new mysteries, which recognize the unique and central significance of the Mystery of Golgotha, the Mystery of the Risen Christ.

Note well, the Foundation Stone is a *living* seed. Secretly enfolded therein lies infinite life and wisdom, which spring forth when it is planted in the right soil. Where is this soil that must embrace the seed and bring forth its hidden life? It is the heart, the soul, of the individual human being who has found the way to the new mysteries. How can this seed be kept alive in these arid times and be allowed to germinate, grow, and reveal its hidden treasures? Many a student of anthroposophy has tried to enliven this seed by devoting attention and care to its verses, only to discover after some time that it has become stale. It is no longer life-giving, rather it feels like a foreign object in the soul. If the Foundation Stone, that open mystery, is not approached with the right attitude of soul, it will wither and reveal none of its secret magic. What is the right attitude with which to approach this soul mystery?

Certainly *all* mysteries should be approached with a mood of reverence and wonder, with persistence and clarity of thought, and with

openness and sensitivity. But all of this is not enough. In our time one further step of preparation must be taken, one additional virtue must be cultivated by the seeking human being, and this is indeed the most essential virtue.

What is this most essential virtue? In each cultural epoch one eminent virtue is told about by a major legend. For our epoch Rudolf Steiner indicated that this is the legend of Parsifal's search for the Holy Grail. The eminent virtue that Parsifal must develop is: *To ask at the right time the right human question as it springs from the heart.* People today are quite good at asking all sorts of questions: clever, intellectual, irrelevant, even nonsensical questions. But the ability to ask questions that spring from the heart is often lacking. However, in order to be acceptable to the spiritual world, souls of the present epoch must develop the virtue of asking questions that spring from the heart.

What happens when one approaches the Foundation Stone with questions of the heart? It comes alive and grows—and yields growing answers. These answers are not abstract or intellectual. They are life-forces, which awaken and sustain the soul. Thus conversation with the verses can become a living source of inspiration. This is the magic of the Foundation Stone: it can awaken life-giving, life-sustaining soul forces. But if one fails to approach its verses with questions of the heart one will find oneself, as it were, rejected. Thus the Foundation Stone can be experienced as belonging to the mysteries surrounding the Holy Grail.

The inner conversation with the Foundation Stone might well begin by asking: For whom are these verses intended? The answer springs forth immediately: Three of its four panels open with the call “Human Soul!” (*Menschenseele*) and close with the admonition “May human beings hear it.” The fourth panel tells of Christ's mission on earth, which is valid for all of mankind. The Foundation Stone addresses itself to “all who have ears to hear it.” It is intended for all who are willing to listen to it intimately, to work with it in a living way, with the forces of heart and soul.

Why is the Foundation Stone built of three similar panels and a fourth panel of markedly different tone and structure? This order can be seen as an imprint of the cosmos. Of the twelve signs of the zodiac, four are called principal signs. A simplified view may take these four signs as representing the zodiac. They are:

- Taurus, the Bull, which is related to the human metabolic system: limbs and digestion.

- Leo, the Lion, which is related to the human rhythmical system, centered in heart and lungs.
- Scorpio, the Scorpion, originally called the Eagle, which is related to the human system of nerves and senses, centered in the head.
- Aquarius, the Waterman, more accurately the Etheric Human Form, which is related to the life that permeates and integrates the whole human body.

The four panels of the Foundation Stone clearly relate to the four principal signs of the zodiac: the first panel to the limbs, and thereby to Taurus, the second panel to heart and lungs, and thereby to Leo, the third panel to the head, and thereby to Scorpio, and the fourth panel to Christ as the integrating force of the human body.

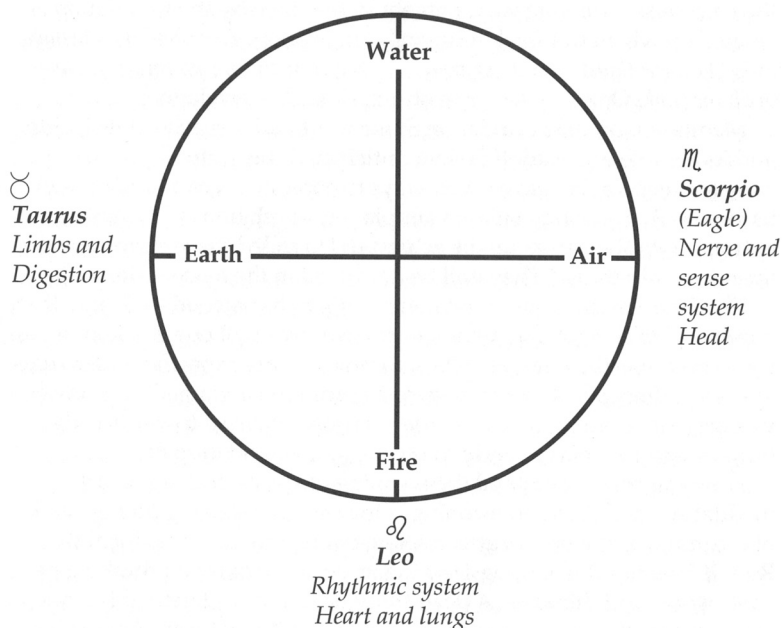
How does the Christ-impulse work as the integrating force of the human body? First, it permeates the limbs, resulting in the upright human posture; secondly, it permeates the rhythmic system, resulting in the faculty of speech; thirdly, it permeates the nerve-and-senses system, resulting in our faculty of thinking. Walking, speaking, and thinking, the human being owes to the Christ Spirit, Who imbued mankind with these forces long, long ago, through three etheric sacrificial deeds, the fruits of which reawaken with each small child when it learns to walk, to speak, and to think. Through these sacrificial deeds the forces of the Bull, the Lion, and the Eagle were made subservient to a higher purpose. This goal became fully manifest in the earthly, fourth sacrifice of Christ at the turning point of time, after the baptism by John, a representative image of the Waterman. Thus the fourfold structure of the Foundation Stone expresses the fact that the human body, the Temple of God, functions according to cosmic laws, of which the signs of the zodiac are an etheric image.

Now when one hears the Foundation Stone call thrice “Human Soul,” this call resounds from the cosmos as well as from our body, and we may ask: Who is it who calls thus three times? The Foundation Stone answers thus: First note that the Spirit who calls means well with the human being, for He points to three tasks, the practice of which will enable one to “truly live,” “truly feel,” and “truly think,” in short, to become “truly human.” Further, observe that the Spirit who calls commands the spirits of all nine hierarchic ranks to perform their tasks in the cosmos in a definite way, namely, so that thereby the foundation is created on which the “truly human” can develop. *Therefore, the One who calls “Human Soul!” is a being who is higher than all nine hierarchies! He is of divine rank.* One may feel awestruck by such a revelation.

The Four Principal Signs of the Zodiac and their Relation to the Human Body.

Life that permeates the whole body

Aquarius



Meditation on the Foundation Stone is difficult because of its length and its complexity. Rudolf Steiner anticipated this difficulty, for he was a master teacher. He gave seven ways to enter into a relationship with its verses. By focusing on seven simple sets of relationships, a living entrance into the verses can be achieved. He called these entranceways the seven “rhythms.” They will be discussed in the next section.

The Foundation Stone is not meant only to be listened to. It asks that one shall “do” something. Out of one’s own free will one is asked to perform three specific inner activities, to practice three specific soul virtues: spirit recalling, spirit meditating, and spirit envisioning. One is advised to engage in three exercises in order to travel the road toward truly human stature. This is clearly the core of the Foundation Stone.

How can one understand the meaning of spirit-recalling, spirit-meditating, and spirit-envisioning? One can give starting points, seeds

of meaning, as it were. They cannot be defined in a conventional way. Rudolf Steiner often emphasized the importance of living thinking in contrast to dead thinking. A dead thought can be understood but not experienced. As soon as it is conceived, it is fully matured. As soon as it is born, it is old. It cannot grow. A living thought, on the other hand, can be experienced. It can be grasped, but only to a certain extent, for the experience of its reality is dependent upon our own maturity. As we grow and mature, so does the living thought within us grow and mature. That is why Rudolf Steiner recommends the use of living characterizations, rather than dead definitions.

The living seeds of meaning that characterize the experiences of spirit-recalling, spirit-meditating, and spirit-envisioning can grow with practice. They must be derived from the Foundation Stone Meditation itself. They will enable us to become better aware of how we live in the element of *time*.

The Foundation Stone refers entirely to the present, the now. But the present can be viewed from several aspects. One aspect is the past insofar as the past makes itself felt in the present through the process of remembering, or recalling. Whenever an event takes place in the past, it will leave a trace somewhere that persists into the present and can then be experienced anew. The first panel of the Foundation Stone Meditation is imbued with this past-oriented aspect of the present. With our ordinary faculty of remembering, we can call into the present many of our experiences of events that happened in the past. The most remote event we can normally recall is a point in early childhood when we first used the word “I,” usually about our third year of life. In a similar fashion spirit-recalling brings into our present awareness what we experienced in a much more distant past, in our past incarnations and in our past states of spiritual existence. The most remote event one can recall in this sense is a moment of indescribable grandeur, which can only become conscious if it is approached with greatest devotion. It is the moment when our “I” began to exist as an identifiable entity within the “I of God,” the World-Creator, the Father. Through the practice of spirit-recalling, we may gradually gain more and more clarity concerning that timeless process of divine creation, whereby being “arises” out of nonbeing. Neither the English nor the German language has an appropriate word for this process of “arising,” of “coming into being.” It is neither an evolutionary process nor a mere becoming. It is a creative event, timeless and enduring. Rudolf Steiner coined a new word for it: “*erwesen*.” In English we

would have to say, “coming into being from non-being.” This indicates the greatest span of time that can be recovered by spirit-recalling.

How can one “*practice*” spirit-recalling? No definite directive can be given, but one thing is certain: practice implies a regularly recurring effort. It may be helpful to start with a brief daily meditation on the words:

“Your own ‘I’ comes into being within the ‘I of God.’”

Such a meditation can gradually lead to the experience of our own divine origin, neither as an abstract idea nor as a source of pride, but as a wonderful, life-sustaining, life-enhancing force. Actualization of this force is the fruit of spirit-recalling. The meditation points to such a result with the words: “And you will truly live.” As one practices spirit-recalling and comes to experience this life-enhancing force, one thereby understands better and better what spirit-recalling really is.

A second aspect of the present has to do with the fact that the present is not merely an isolated point, but rather a moment in a process, in a stream where forward is qualitatively different from backward. Naturally this concept of a moment lends to each moment a quality that depends on the process, or processes, of which that moment is a part.

In contrast to this living idea of time, Newtonian time flows of itself from the infinite past uniformly toward the infinite future. For such a conception of time, each moment has the same quality as any other moment. This mechanical, dead concept of time is not suitable for the description of living entities. For the living world, time is characterized by cyclic processes. The ancients experienced the universe as a living entity, and thus they conceived time in terms of cyclic processes. For them, each moment was qualitatively different, depending on its place in the cosmic cycles, even as each moment of a day is different, depending upon what time of day and what season it is.

Spirit-meditating points to that soul region where cyclic processes, typified by becoming and fading away, play the primary roles. It is the region of equanimity or balance of the soul (*Seelengleichgewicht*). Such a balance is not a static or rigid state of equilibrium. Rather, it involves an ever-recurring alternation of surrender to the world and of retreat into the inner self. Emphasis on the letter “w” in the German text of the verses reinforces this idea of wavelike movement, of swelling and ebbing, of extroversion and introversion. It is a profound mystery that in these

rhythmic processes of the present moment the divine spirit of Christ holds sway.

How can one *practice* spirit-meditating? The verses suggest that a good way to start is to dwell regularly on the words:

“Unite your own ‘I’ with the ‘I of the cosmos.’”

Such a meditation can gradually lead to the awareness that we live not alone in the cosmos. We live not only for the sake of being an individual ego, but also for the sake of being a part of the cosmos. Such an experience can produce a profound transformation of our feeling life. Our feelings can expand their scope, become more differentiated, and gain in richness. They become more and more *true* feelings, as expressed in the line, *“And you will truly feel.”*

A word of caution is in order here. Spirit-meditating is concerned with the polar relation of our own “I” and its environment, the “I of the cosmos” (*Welten-Ich*). It is a deeply veiled and holy mystery how the human soul can only function properly by undergoing a process of rhythmical balancing, wherein our own “I” and the “I of the cosmos” come together and then recede again. For the process of coming together, the word “uniting” was chosen, since this uniting takes place repeatedly, which implies receding as well as returning. In this context “uniting” can *never* mean losing or dissolving our own “I” in the “I of the cosmos.”

What is the “I of the cosmos?” It is related to our own “I” like the shell of a nut to its kernel. Rudolf Steiner uses the term “I of the cosmos” (*Welten-Ich*) as an equivalent for the divine Christ-Spirit or the Son. Spirit-meditating can reveal the nature of the uniting of one’s own “I” with the “I of the cosmos.” As one practices spirit-meditating in this sense, one can come closer to the life-giving Christ-force, which the cosmos can bestow on the soul, and thereby one’s understanding grows of what spirit-meditating really is or can become.

A third aspect of time has to do with the future, insofar as the future casts its image into the present moment. Human consciousness can be directed at *will* to the future by means of our ability to plan, to set goals, and to chart ways of achieving them, that is, by means of envisioning (*erschauen*). This envisioning appears in microcosmic form as the human faculty of setting goals and charting ways to achieve them. However, it has also a macrocosmic form in the eternal divine aims and the divine ways of bringing them about.

What are these divine aims? The verses encourage one to ponder such a question in modesty and devotion, realizing that one can only reach answers of humanly limited validity. Such a divine goal—this may seem surprising at first—is the divine idea of humanity, what human beings may become when all their spiritual potentials of wisdom, love, and strength of goodness shall be fully developed. All angelic efforts are directed toward the realization of this wonderful goal.

Essential to this lofty goal is the creative, spiritual love of each human being. Achieving this quality brings the possibility of free willing, as explained in Rudolf Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom*. In free willing we act under no compulsion—neither from nature nor from nurture—and introduce new primary causes into the world. This free willing can be achieved, however, only if we have first learned spirit-envisioning, which enables us to foresee the image of a future that is not yet present, and thus we can rightly understand how our intent will fit into the world. Such spirit-envisioning requires the presence of an inner light within us. This inner light should not be taken for granted. It is a divine gift, given to human beings for the purpose of leading mankind to freedom.

How can one practice spirit-envisioning in this sense? The Foundation Stone suggests that one can make a beginning by dwelling regularly on the words:

“Light of cosmic being is granted to your own ‘I’ for your free willing.”

Such a meditation can gradually lead to a profound transformation of the quality of one's thoughts. Their abstract, shadowy, foreign-to-the-world character is transformed into one that is mobile, truth-seeking, freely-directed, and more in harmony with the thoughts of the cosmos (*Weltgedanken*). The Foundation Stone indicates such a result in the line: *“And you will truly think.”*

The way in which cosmic thoughts actuate divine aims in cosmic and human evolution is a deep and marvelous mystery. The cosmic thoughts do not force any development, nor do they impinge on human freedom. They provide the inner light, which they draw (*erflehen* = to obtain through ardent supplication) from the spiritual essence of the World (*Weltenwesen*), where it lives and weaves as an emanation of the Holy Spirit, the third aspect of the divine Trinity. Through a wonderful activity this light is passed on to human beings, provided that they seek

it, strive toward it, and ask for it (*erbitten* = to obtain by asking.) As one grows into the practice of spirit-envisioning, one can experience ever more fully the mystery of this spirit light and its relationship to our free willing and strength of goodness. Then one comes to understand better and better what spirit-envisioning really ought to become.

When one begins to fathom how each moment in time has a special quality of its own, one can then grasp the idea that certain moments are of outstanding, decisive importance for the realization of the divine aims. These moments are the “turning points of time.” Among them there is one that is the most important, the most decisive. It is the one that is the subject of narration in the fourth panel of the Foundation Stone.

Meditation on the Foundation Stone means more than a gain in knowledge or insight. One can also experience its healthful, healing quality, if one succeeds in awakening the life-element that slumbers in its verses. One can now understand why the elementary spirits on the whole earth listen to the words of these verses. When Christ walked on the earth, the elementary spirits knew Who He was long before human beings knew (Luke 4: 33-41,) and they cried it out to man. In our time they hear the message of these verses, which they understand, for elementary spirits are part of the etheric body of the earth, which is radiated through by the Etheric Christ. But now they are silent. They and, indeed, the entire cosmos wait in silent hope that human beings may hear it. Is perhaps the Foundation Stone a path for human beings to the experience of the Etheric Christ?

III. The Significance of the “Rhythms”

During the Christmas Conference of 1923, Rudolf Steiner presented the Foundation Stone in a most remarkable way. On most days of this nine-days-long conference, only certain parts of this meditation were recited. Only on December 25 and January 1, the verses were presented in their entirety. On December 25 the four panels were recited in the order 4-1-2-3, while on January 1 the regular order of 1-2-3-4 was given, the same order used when the verses were published a few weeks later. If one looks closely, there were not less than fourteen differences among the versions given on the various days and the printed version. Some differences are minor, but others are quite significant. Such variations in Rudolf Steiner’s presentation of these verses emphasize the fact that he treated them in a living, non-rigid way.

The Foundation Stone Verses

Given by Rudolf Steiner in connection with the Christmas Conference of 1923
in Dornach, Switzerland

1 Human soul!	Human soul!	Human soul!	At the turning point of time
2 You live in the limbs;	You live in the beat of heart and lungs;	You live in the resting head;	Came the cosmic spirit-light
3 Through the world of space they bear you	Through the rhythm of time it leads you	From eternal grounds it discloses	Into the earthly stream of being.
4 Into seas of spirit-being:	Into the feeling of your own soul-being:	The thoughts of the cosmos to you:	
5 Practice <i>spirit-recalling</i>	Practice <i>spirit-meditating</i>	Practice <i>spirit-envisioning</i>	Night darkness
6 In depths of soul,	In equanimity of soul,	In stillness of thought,	Had reached its power's end;
7 Where in the wielding	Where by the surging	Where by the eternal aims of gods	Light, bright as day,
8 World-creator-being	Deeds of world-becoming	Light of cosmic being	Rayed forth in human souls;
9 Your own "I"	Your own "I"	To your own "I"	Light
10 Comes into being	Is united	Is granted	That gives warmth
11 Within the "I of God;"	With the "I of the cosmos;"	For your free willing;	To simple hearts of shepherds;
12 And you will truly <i>live</i>	And you will truly <i>feel</i>	And you will truly <i>think</i>	Light
13 In human cosmic being.	In human weaving of souls.	In human spirit-grounds.	That enlightens
14 For there reigns the Father-spirit of the heights	For there reigns the will of Christ all around us	For there reign the cosmic thoughts of the Spirit	The wise heads of kings.
15 In cosmic depths creating existence.	In cosmic rhythms bestowing grace onto souls.	In cosmic being light imploring.	Light divine,
16 Ye Spirits of Strength,	Ye Spirits of Light,	Ye Spirits of Soul,	Christ-Sun,
16a Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones,	Kyriotetes, Dynameis, Exusiai,	Archai, Archangeloi, Angeloi,	Give warmth
17 Let from the heights ring forth	Let from the East be enkindled	Let from the depths be entreated	to our hearts;
18 What in the depths finds its echo;	What through the West takes on form;	What in the heights will be answered;	Enlighten
19 This speaks thus:	This speaks thus:	This speaks thus:	our heads;
20 From the divine mankind takes being.	In Christ death becomes life.	In the Spirit's cosmic thoughts the soul awakens.	That good may become
21 Thus hear it the elementary spirits	Thus hear it the elementary spirits	Thus hear it the elementary spirits	What from our hearts
in the East, West, North, South:	in the East, West, North, South:	in the East, West, North, South:	We are founding,
22 May human beings hear it!	May human beings hear it!	May human beings hear it!	What from our heads
			We shall guide
			With our purposeful willing.

On each of the seven days from December 26 to January 1, Rudolf Steiner wrote on the blackboard certain sets of selected verses which he called “rhythms.” The use of the word, “rhythm,” in this context has puzzled many anthroposophists, who understand “rhythm” as a regular recurrence of features or patterns. Clearly such a meaning does not fit here. *The American College Dictionary*² gives several meanings of the word “rhythm.” The one that fits here is mentioned in earlier editions of this dictionary but is not widely known and is deleted in more recent editions: “*a proper relation and interdependence of parts with reference to one another and to an artistic whole.*” According to this definition, a “rhythm” can be established by juxtaposing two short parts taken from different places in the verses. The juxtaposition of short parts causes a certain tension to be felt, which impels one to seek for their relationship. In addition, the value of each part within the verses as a whole can be sensed. Thus, each pair of parts which Rudolf Steiner wrote on the blackboard becomes a challenge. We must not rest content with understanding the meaning of each word or phrase. We should try to become aware that in each “rhythm” a double relationship exists: on the one hand, the two chosen parts are related to each other, and, on the other hand, each part is related to the Foundation Stone as a whole.

Meditating on these “rhythms” is a free, creative thought-activity. It can awaken questions that may lead to the kind of living conversation with the verses discussed in section II. The beauty of this approach is that one can become actively engaged in a process of living inner growth. And one can come to recognize that these “rhythms,” which Rudolf Steiner carefully selected, are the seven principal doorways to the living grasp of the entire Foundation Stone. If the Foundation Stone is experienced as a living organic entity, then the seven “rhythms” are its vital organs.

On each of the seven days mentioned, Rudolf Steiner wrote one new “rhythm” (a selected pair of lines) on the blackboard. The accompanying table at the beginning of this section gives a survey of the “rhythms” in relation to the days on which they were spoken.

The “rhythms” I, II, III, and IV each have three columns. “Rhythm” V is special in that the three practices are written in a special geometrical pattern, suggesting as it were a protective dome for the second part of the “rhythm,” which is meant to be the same for the three columns.

“Rhythm” VI occupies a unique place among the “rhythms” in that there is no division of its content into three columns. After this contraction, “rhythm” VII expands again into three separate columns. On the evening of January 1 during the final session of the conference, Rudolf Steiner recited the entire Foundation Stone and then closed with what can be called the “coda:”

Light divine
Christ-Sun
Give warmth to our hearts
Enlighten our heads.

Strictly speaking, this “coda” is not a “rhythm” as it does not consist of two parts.

How can one work meditatively with the “rhythms”? To meditate on the whole Foundation Stone is difficult because of its great length and its complexity. By working with the “rhythms,” one can gain much more meaning from the verses than if one merely recites the Foundation Stone daily, outwardly or inwardly. Working with the “rhythms” can lead to a clearer survey of the meditative content. It is a great discovery, made by Dr. F.W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven,³ that the “rhythms” bear an intimate relation to the days of the week on which they were given. Accordingly, Dr. Zeylmans suggested meditating on the “rhythm” given on Wednesday (December 26, 1923) on every Wednesday, the “rhythm” given on Thursday (December 27) on every Thursday, and so forth, so that in the course of a week one has worked upon all seven “rhythms.” If one does this week after week, the question may then arise: Does one not neglect the Foundation Stone as a whole by focusing only on its parts? I have found it helpful to work with the “rhythms” in the morning and to dwell upon the whole Foundation Stone before going to sleep in the evening.

A noteworthy feature of the “rhythms” is that they come in three columns. How does this feature enter into one’s meditation? Consider the first “rhythm” as an example of how this can work. The three activities of spirit recalling, spirit meditating, and spirit envisioning are here not represented as tasks, for the word “practice” is not included. Rather, the first “rhythm” seems to ask that one consider what these words themselves mean. We have already commented on how the first activity—spirit-recalling—can lead one back to that early stage

of world-evolution when the human "I" came into being within the "I of God."

Wonderful as this realization is, one may feel after a while an incompleteness. The human "I" feels lonely if it can only be aware of itself. It wishes to find something else. This something is given in the second column of this "rhythm." Here, by spirit meditating, the human "I" is united with the "I of the cosmos." How this uniting is to be understood was commented on earlier. As the human "I" becomes aware of the "I of the cosmos" and moves toward union with it, it may be seized by a terrible fear, the fear of losing oneself. As a result the "I" withdraws into its own self, albeit enriched by the momentary contact with the "I of the cosmos." Thus an alternation of approaching and withdrawing can come about. What is the enrichment that the human "I" gains from this process? The third column of the "rhythm" gives the answer to this question. By means of spirit-envisioning the "I" can strive toward inner freedom and achieve it.

This sketchily drawn train of thought is intended to show one possible way that one may proceed from column to column while meditating on the first "rhythm." When this meditation is deepened, one may become aware more specifically of what the "I" gains by the activity performed in each column. The "I" receives spirit-life by coming into being, as indicated in the first column. The force that attracts the human "I" to the "I of the cosmos," as indicated in the second column, can be recognized as spirit love. Through what is contained in the third column, the "I" gains spirit-light. But this light and the freedom that comes with it can become a source of confusion if they are not rightly integrated into the world. The individualized spirit-light wishes to find its connection with the cosmic spirit-light. How this can come about is described in the fourth column.

Each person who would like to take up meditating on the "rhythms" needs to create an individual train of thought when moving from column to column. One should explore various possibilities and hold fast to what seems best, as long as it proves to be alive. Because meditation on a "rhythm" is meant to be a creative and free activity of the mind, many other approaches are possible. The above example is given only as an indication. What matters most is that one forms the habit of regular meditation, and that one does not remain at the level of intellectual thought analysis but rather reaches deeper, so that feelings and the will also become engaged.

The transition from one column of a “rhythm” to the next one is not easy. A different way to work with the three columns of the “rhythms” is to distribute such work over the seasons of the year, so that one works at any one time only with one column of the “rhythms.” I find the following way quite effective. Through March, April, and May one works with the “rhythms” of the first column, which relate mostly to the first panel of the Foundation Stone. Through June, July, and August one works with the “rhythms” of the second column, which relate mostly to the second panel. Through September, October, and November one works with the “rhythms” of the third column, which relate mostly to the third panel. Finally, through December, January, and February one works only with the fourth panel of the Foundation Stone and one allows the “rhythms” to rest. A few examples indicating possible ways of how one might work with one column of a “rhythm” follow.

Consider, for example, the case of a Wednesday in April. One would then choose to consider the first column of “rhythm” I:

Spirit-recalling

Your own “I”

Comes into being

Within the “I of God”

This “rhythm” tells in effect what spirit recalling is. By contemplating this “rhythm” we can become aware that we bear within us that spiritual kernel which we call our “I.” This “I” is of divine origin. In fact, the “I” could not continue to exist if it were not maintained in existence each and every moment by the Creator, the “I of God.” In earlier times the human “I” led a dormant existence, but gradually during the evolution of the world and of humanity it has become more awake. Rudolf Steiner has described the entire evolution of the cosmos and of mankind in chapter four of his basic book *An Outline of Esoteric Science*.⁴ This description can be viewed as the result of spirit recalling on a grand scale. Such considerations can give one a great sense of purpose in life, as well as a feeling of gratitude and awe. Many other feelings can arise and enliven the relationship between these parts and the Foundation Stone as a whole.

Likewise, for a Wednesday in June one would consider in a similar way the second column of the first “rhythm:”

*Spirit meditating**Your own "I"**Is united**With the "I of the cosmos"*

Again the second part of this "rhythm" elucidates the meaning of spirit meditating. Awareness of the union of one's own "I" with the world can be achieved at several levels stage by stage. The highest level reaches the "I of the cosmos." Thus spirit-meditating can guide a person along a path of inner development. Rudolf Steiner describes this path in several works, notably in the fifth chapter of *An Outline of Esoteric Science*. There, union with the "I of the cosmos" is represented as union with the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold," who is then recognized as the Christ-Spirit.⁵ Also in his book *How to Know Higher Worlds*⁶ this path is described, and near the end we find the sentence: "An indescribable splendor shines forth from the Second Guardian of the Threshold; union with Him looms as a far distant ideal before the soul's vision." These descriptions can be viewed as the result of spirit meditating with the widest possible scope by Rudolf Steiner.

A similar treatment of the third column of the first "rhythm" can be developed by relating it to the sixth chapter of *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, where Rudolf Steiner envisions the future consequences of the past evolution of mankind and the world.

As a different and last example, consider the "rhythm" for a Monday in any month from March to November:

*Light divine**Christ-Sun**Thus hear it the elementary spirits in the East, West, North, South.**May human beings hear it!*

The elementary spirits make up the etheric body of the earth. They live mostly near the surface of the earth: the gnomes somewhat below the surface, as far down as plant roots and crystals grow; the sylphs up in the atmosphere, as high as birds and insects rise; and the undines in the domain that lies in between. Only the fire-spirits penetrate deeper and also higher. Thus, on a global scale the realm of the elementary spirits is

mainly a very thin layer, where up and down has very little significance in comparison with the importance of East, West, North, and South. Into the etheric domain of the earth, the sunlight penetrates. The light of the sun not only illumines; it also carries etheric sound, which the elementary spirits can hear. Goethe describes some of these etheric sounds of the sunlight in his “Prologue” to *Faust*: “The sun *resounds* as in olden times in the choir of fraternal spheres.” In the first scene of the second part of *Faust*, the elementary spirits are warned about the thunderous and deafening sound of the rising sun.

Yet another light shines into the world of the elementary spirits. It is the light that shines outward from the Mystery of Golgotha. This light shines as a divine light throughout the etheric body of the earth, the domain of the elementary spirits. It is the light of a different kind of sun. Perhaps the most concrete imagination of this sun and its radiance was envisioned in 1492 A.D. by Matthias Grünewald when he painted the resurrection panel of the altar of the monastery of Isenheim. From this world famous painting one can gain an impression, in a unique and almost magical way, of the etheric sun-like radiance that emanates from the Christ as He rises from the grave. In the etheric realm this Christ-Sun not only illumines. Its light also sounds; it even carries messages which the human heart can hear. The elementary spirits hear this message. Are we human beings hearing it too? What is the message that sounds in this etheric divine light? Through Rudolf Steiner this message has come into expression as a concrete inspiration in the entire Foundation Stone.

May these indications give an impression of how one can work with the “rhythms” of the Foundation Stone, though each person must of course find her or his individual meditative approach to its verses.