

# Mysteries of the Soul

## Reflection 9 - Working with the nine spiritual gifts

### **Spiritual text: The Bible, I Corinthians 12:4-31**

In this programme Mysteries of the soul we have approached the human soul from different angles, always based on the philosophical ideas of several spiritual traditions. Such a working method is useful in order to come to a correct understanding of the soul. And such a correct understanding is essential in order to allow the personality-soul, the soul and the spirit-soul to develop in a harmonious way. It is important to be aware that the mysteries of the soul are so formidable that everything that we say about them can be only fragmentary. What is more: what can words say about something that has no yesterday, no today and no tomorrow?

In the beginning we may be like the blind men in a well-known Sufi story who try to determine what an elephant is like by feeling it and make false conclusions (see image 9). The blind man who touches the trunk of the elephant says that the elephant is a kind of snake. The blind man who feels the tusk concludes that the elephant is a kind of spear. The blind man who holds the ear is under the impression that the elephant is a rug. The blind man who embraces the leg of the elephant is of the opinion that the elephant is a type of tree. The blind man who examines the side of the elephant's torso with both hands experiences a wall. And the blind man at the tail thinks that the elephant is a rope. If these blind men would share their findings with each other in order to get a better understanding of the elephant through a joint effort, they might – after a long period of research – come to a model that forms a better approximation of reality. If their blindness could be cured, they would – in a fraction of a second – get a much more accurate impression of the elephant. But this impression would be very restricted too, even if other senses would be involved in addition to seeing and touching. You can examine the behaviour of an elephant but you will still know nothing about the feelings and thoughts of that elephant. You also know nothing at all about the essence of the form that we call 'elephant'. For this purpose you would have to become an elephant yourself. And even if you were an elephant, the question is whether you would have an impression of the archetype 'elephant', of which you yourself would be one of the many manifestations.

### **Regenerative development**

The soul is part of several dimensions that are far beyond the time and space of the sensory perceptible world. If you want to get to know the soul, you must become soul. Spirit-soul development is now more important than ever. All the possibilities to consciously work on this development are now abundantly available. Yet, at the same time, there are still powerful counterforces in our world that want to lull the awakening souls to sleep again. Instead of driving humanity towards a regenerative development through which the new man comes into being – the man who forms a living connection between heaven and earth – these negative forces would drive humanity towards a degenerative development process. Spirit-soul development does not unfold automatically. It requires much attention, which is hard to summon up as an individual. In practice it therefore proves to work well if you go

the spiritual path jointly with like-minded others. When there is intensive collaboration in reflecting the spiritual light within a group of gnostic-striving people, then many sleeping souls can be awakened and become active.

There are countless religious, humanistic and idealistic groups in the world that we can refer to as 'schools for the soul'. People are working together in these groups to promote all that is good, true and beautiful, based on the desire for a beautiful world in which people treat each other with respect, respecting nature and the environment and perhaps also God or the transcendent. Such soul schools play an important role as they stimulate the development of soul qualities within man. There are many soul schools in the world, but there are only a few spiritual schools. Spiritual schools focus not only on the development of the soul but particularly on the spirit-soul. Spiritual schools are mystery schools where pupils of the mysteries endeavour to make themselves, the population and the earth spiritual; to transform them to a higher state of being with the aid of the spiritual light. It requires an enormous amount of time and attention to build up a spiritual school that spreads a great liberating force into the world.

Peter Huijs, in his book 'Called by the World Heart', writes that J. van Rijckenborgh, one of the founders of the School of the Rosycross, once said that it takes a hundred years before the entire apparatus of a spiritual school is completely ripe. Jesus founded a spiritual school in which his disciples could develop into apostles, into people who were capable of receiving and conveying the fire of the holy spirit. The first Christian communities founded by the apostle Paul in the first century can be regarded as incipient spiritual schools.

### **Spiritual powers**

Certain spiritual powers will develop in the pupil of the soul in whom a certain degree of renewal has been realised, especially one who endeavours to encourage others to also go the spiritual path. It is obvious that we do not refer here to the psychic powers that are called the lower iddhi in The Voice of the Silence. In chapter 12 of his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul mentions nine gifts of the spirit.

*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.*

- 1. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom;*
- 2. and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit;*
- 3. to another faith by the same Spirit;*
- 4. and to another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit;*
- 5. and to another workings of miracles;*
- 6. and to another prophecy;*
- 7. and to another discernings of spirits;*
- 8. to another divers kinds of tongues;*
- 9. and to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)*

All these nine powers are given in order to establish the community, or the sangha, to every man's profit. That community builds and maintains a joint force field, in which spirit-soul development can come into being. A certain gift comes to expression more strongly in one

person than in another, and it is also possible – sometimes even necessary – that several of these spiritual gifts be given to one person. Just as with common talents, all these gifts will show

greater development the more they are used. In this work the saying 'practice makes perfect' applies, but this practice must always be based on inner elevation. These spiritual gifts are set out in detail by J. van Rijckenborgh in the third part of his book *'The Coming New Man'*. A large part of this reflection is based on his explanations.

### **Group unity**

Of course there are more than nine spiritual gifts, but as far as reaching gnostic fulfillment in group unity, it is sufficient to restrict ourselves primarily to the nine points mentioned above and continue to consider them in their mutual coherence. All the powers mentioned are needed. Since they are not distributed equally among the members of the community, it is important that these members cooperate. Harmonious cooperation is essential not only to meet each other's shortcomings and to complement each other with regard to personal skills, but also and particularly to develop a force field in which an abundance of holy spirit power can bring about inner renewal.

The first-mentioned power of the spirit is *'the word of wisdom'*. This gift means that the servant can project his or her inner understanding onto listeners who have receptive hearts by means of the spoken word. The listeners easily understand what is meant and then many questions may arise in them as it concerns ideas with which they are not yet familiar. In order to answer those questions, the servant can deploy the second power: *'the word of knowledge'*. In this way a subject is considered rationally on the basis of inner understanding so that there does not need to be a contradiction between what the heart understands and what the head thinks. *'The gift of faith'* – the third power that Paul mentions, though in reality it precedes the other eight powers – relates to the reflection of the spiritual light mentioned earlier. As soon as the sleeping spirit-spark awakens in a person, he will start reflecting the spiritual light without the spirit-spark bearer having to do anything for it him or herself; it concerns a process that unfolds beyond consciousness. As the pupil of the soul progresses on his or her spiritual journey, the reflection becomes more intense.

When a person reflects the spiritual light, this will contribute to the awakening of the sleeping spirit-spark of people in the environment of the person concerned. And when pupils of the soul gather for a service in a temple, for example, the reflection of the spiritual light may be so powerful that its awakening influence will stretch far beyond the temple walls; yes, it can even influence other parts of the world because the soul, the spirit-soul and the released light forces are not bound to time and space.

### **Healing**

Viewed from the heavenly spheres we, as humanity, are sick, even though we may be balanced personalities with perfectly healthy bodies. The microcosms in which we live have been damaged and the soul and the spirit-soul are not yet active, or barely active, in the personality-soul. For this reason the spiritual path is called a path of healing or sanctification. That is why Jesus ordered his apostles to not only proclaim the gospel but also to heal the sick.

In his first letter to the congregation of Corinth, Paul called this '*power of healing*' a gift by the spirit, and he was not referring to medical assistance. It is very important that we are aware that the gift of healing does not relate primarily to healing physical ailments or diseases, but to healing the whole microcosm. As a result of this healing, the microcosm will reconnect with the heavenly spheres where it originated: the royal parental home in the East in the '*Hymn of the Pearl*'.

The gift of healing implies that the servant can contribute to making a pupil of the soul autonomous with regard to the absorption of light forces. The servant can prepare a group of pupils so that an ignition can take place within them, enabling them to independently attract and convert light forces, thus contributing to the healing of the microcosm. The process of healing or sanctification of the microcosm can alleviate physical ailments and diseases somewhat, but most of the time they do not disappear. Often, however, it does become easier to live with any physical difficulties because the pupil of the soul identifies with them less, or even not at all.

The fifth gift of the spirit Paul calls '*workings of miracles*'. Here he refers to the power of a servant, on the basis of inner elevation, to collect light forces within herself that can be poured out over people in her environment, as they wish, thus encouraging them to go – or continue going – the spiritual path.

The sixth gift of the spirit that Paul mentions can manifest itself in a servant only when the five previous gifts have been received and the person concerned has worked with them intensively. It is the '*gift of prophecy*' which, contrary to what is often thought, has not so much to do with predicting the future but rather involves creation of the future on the basis of inspiration from heavenly spheres.

### **Prophecy**

Propheying means that a servant who is entirely immersed in the serving spiritual work has an inner vision of what is needed in the near future in order to execute the work of liberation, efficiently and effectively; and subsequently endeavours with all his might, in cooperation with others, to realise that vision concretely. Countless prophets are active in this world. Not all of them convey a pure message. How do you recognise whether what they say and write is correct or not? You can investigate if their vision is in accordance with what authentic spiritual traditions teach. You can also rely on your heart, but if you have just begun your spiritual journey, your power of discernment may still be limited.

*'The power of discernment'* – the seventh gift of the spirit that Paul mentions – will develop on the gnostic path. If you have received that gift, you will not have to investigate extensively whether or not something is right. You will know in a fraction of a second to what extent a teaching, a human being or a group is pure. You will know, for instance, that the so-called speaking in tongues, as practiced by some Christian circles, has nothing to do with the holy spirit, but concerns, in fact, spiritual séances. These séances consist of confused messages relayed by unsophisticated human entities on the other side of the veil of death. They are dotted with Christian and spiritual clichés and are passed on to certain persons who are in trance and act as mediums.

Yet Paul speaks about '*speaking in tongues*', considering it a spiritual gift – the eighth in his listing. However with these words he means something quite different than the mediumistic practices that various groups have made of it. If a person is really inspired by the holy spirit, that can be sensed; some sensitive people can observe this in the shape of fiery tongues in the aura around the head –the tongues of fire that are mentioned in the Pentecost story in the Bible, in Acts 2.

When a servant in whom the spirit-soul is active testifies to the spiritual path, the sound of the voice will act as a carrier wave for a high energy from the heavenly spheres. To be able to say something about realities that go far beyond the sensory perceptible world, he or she must use symbols and concepts the significance of which is not immediately clear: veiled language and mystery language. Such spoken language can penetrate deeply into the listeners and have a transforming influence. Yet it is important that they receive a rational understanding as well. That can be achieved by explaining what the veiled language and the mystery language really imply. And this brings us to the ninth and last gift that Paul mentions: '*the interpretation of tongues*'.

### **Living experiences**

Contemplations, explanations and clarifications are all very well, but we must remember that not everything can be explained, and this is specifically characteristic for the mysteries. Pupils of the mysteries attain inner knowledge on the basis of living experience. In these nine narratives based on nine classical spiritual texts from different spiritual traditions, we have tried to clarify the path of spirit-soul development that you can follow based on the more than four-hundred year old living tradition of the Rosycross. We hope that these texts on the mysteries of the soul have contributed to the actual or future ignition of your inner lamp, so that you will become and remain a person who is inspired by the spirit. And when your new soul flame is burning, we still have the following advice for you: keep your lamp burning and make sure to have sufficient oil!

We conclude this programme 'Mysteries of the soul' with a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke.

*Have patience with everything  
that remains unsolved in your heart.  
Try to love the questions themselves,  
like locked rooms  
and like books written in a foreign language.  
Do not now look for the answers.  
They cannot now be given to you  
because you could not live them.  
It is a question of experiencing everything.  
At present you need to live the question.  
Perhaps you will gradually,  
without even noticing it,  
find yourself experiencing the answer,  
some distant day.*  
Rainer Maria Rilke