

Christian Meditation paths? – Development of a questionnaire for Christian contemplation based on descriptions of Master Eckhart and Teresa of Avila

by Thomas Hohn

Summary

This article examines Christian meditation paths, focused on Master Eckhart and Teresa of Avila. The aim is to develop a questionnaire for Christian contemplation and to find out (a) whether there are different stages of consciousness while contemplating, (b) what kind of physiological and psychological impact they have, (c) what the short-term and long-term consequences of contemplation are, and (d) if these are interrelated. For this project four steps are required:

1. What is Christian contemplation? (Origin and definition)
2. What kind of stages exist in Christian contemplation practice?
3. Study of subjective observations during contemplation and compilation of an item pool.
4. Test of the validity and if necessary changes of the questionnaire.

This article is the basis for the questionnaire and is concerned mainly with step one and two by analysing several meditation experiences of Master Eckhart and Teresa of Avila. First of all, meditation will be defined as a method, a path and / or an experience. On the basis of this definition, the term contemplation, often used for Christian meditations, will be defined. After clarifying the terms, the origins of contemplation will be investigated, an important prerequisite to generate an item pool.

Keywords: Christian contemplation, mysticism, Master Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, questionnaire

Introduction

Are there Christian meditation paths? The question leads us to our own meditation tradition and maybe possible ways of exposure to other meditation paths. The aim is to develop a questionnaire for Christian contemplation and to find out whether there are different stages of consciousness while contemplating, what kind of physiological and psychological impact they have and what the short-term and long-term consequences of the contemplation are, and any relationship between them. The study is part of a larger project led by Prof.

Klaus Engel which is developing questionnaires for meditation paths of other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

In order to develop a questionnaire for Christian contemplation, the different stages during contemplation have to be established on a historical basis. The interest is to learn more about the physiological phenomena of meditation practice and about indications and contraindications. For the philosophical-theological field it is highly interesting how spiritual experience shows up and what kind of physical changes are to be observed. Up to now, we do not know much about our consciousness, about different stages and bodily reactions caused by meditation, especially Christian contemplation. Recent studies developed questionnaires to measure effects of meditation on mindfulness (Buchheld, 2002), physiological impacts, especially EEG activity in “deep meditation” (Ott, 2000), “Meditation Depth” (Piron, 2001), meditative and mystical experiences (e.g. Müller, 1997; Ott, 1995; v. Quekelberghe et al., 1992), and to compare meditation paths (Engel, 1997b). The development of questionnaires concerning the stages of Christian contemplation is a unique project.

At the beginning of this project it is necessary to clarify expressions and to find adequate definitions first of all and then the question of existence and origin of Christian meditation path has to be answered. For the second step, definitions and terminologies have to be specified to enable the discussion of whether there are different stages in Christian meditation and what kind of experiences, emotions, and behaviour are connected with them. The third step is to generate a list of items on the basis of the research from step one and two and to develop a questionnaire which is an efficient test instrument. The fourth step is to test the validity and if necessary to revise the questionnaire. The results will lead to a pilot study.

This article is the basis for the questionnaire and includes mostly step one covering several meditation experiences. A following article has to elaborate steps two, three, and four. As the basis of the item pool, we chose several representative teachers of Christian contemplation, basically Teresa of Avila, Master Eckhart, Pseudodionysius Areopagita, Evagrius Pontikus, the Copt Antonius, further texts of the fathers of desert, Hugo and Richard of St. Viktor, Bernhard of Clairvaux, Wilhelm of St. Thierry, and Bonaventura. Exemplarily, we select Master Eckhart and Teresa of Avila to reveal the richness and diversity of Christian contemplation texts and the possibility to develop a questionnaire concerning different stages.

Step 1: Definition and clarification

Although “meditation” is a Latin term and our western world is dominated by the Christian culture, “meditation” is usually understood as an eastern phenomenon. So the question arises: Are there any ways of meditation in our western tra-

dition? Is meditation really an exclusive eastern practice? If there exists a tradition of meditation in the Occident, where can we find it and how does it appear? Is it possible to find even different stages of meditation experience? And if so, what is the relevance to our modern life?

First of all, the question of existence and origin of Christian meditation paths has to be answered. If this can be answered positively it is further on necessary to clarify expressions and to find adequate definitions. For the second step, definitions and terminologies have to be specified to enable the discussion what kind of experiences, emotions and behaviour are connected with the experiences. As examples of Christian ways of meditation we choose two so-called mystics – Master Eckhart (1260–1328) and Teresa of Avila (1515–1582). Both are well-known representatives of Christian experience with the encounter of the Un-speakable. On the ground of “western” culture, they found very different ways of explore their consciousness and paths to experience life. Eckhart on the one hand finds God by clear thinking and “clearing” the thinking by understanding while Teresa on the other hand recommended a practical way of experience. But the question definitely is: are these mystical experiences meditation paths? Or at least instructions how to practise meditation?

So before we can search for Christian meditation or different “ways”, we have to define what meditation is in general.

Meditation

Meditation is mostly described as a world-wide phenomenon, often founded in a spiritual context, which enables human kind to reach altered stages of consciousness. Meditation can be defined as a method, a path, and as a stage.

1. Meditation as a method or technique is a „looking inside“, which can be practised with or without an object. These objects can be imagined or real. Even an action or ritual can be used as an object for meditation practice. Meditation as a technique can be dynamic and combined with energetic movements or in one position without any movement at all. Meditation can be generally divided in three different forms: extroverted practice, introverted practice and mixtures between these two (Engel, 2000; Shapiro & Walsh, 1984). Those who practise extroverted meditation have a higher awareness of sensations from the environment. Introverted meditation is defined by the concentration on inner processes, so that the practitioner is not aware of the surroundings and even body awareness is very much reduced.

2. Meditation as a path is the consequent exercise of a chosen method to achieve a meditative stage and a spiritual experience transcending the ego. This practice is not limited to a meditation technique, it is part of the daily life.

3. Meditation as a stage can be the result of a meditation method. The stage is between relaxation and tension and shows significant changes of conscious-

ness. The awareness is extended. This experience can be a peak experience or a continuous flow of consciousness. The occurrence can normally be differentiated in several stages or spheres. The deeper the meditation the more subjective time and space awareness change or even disappear. At the end, the ego is transcended in a non-dual level which can be described as a stage of an all embracing awareness in a paradoxical tension between awareness of individuality and the experience of being one with all.

On the basis of this definition, it can be investigated whether we can speak of Christian meditation paths by the example of Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila.

Today's Christianity is seen as a development of European and Near East culture whereas techniques of meditation are generally seen to be of oriental origin. But the term meditation comes from the Latin „meditari“ which means „looking inside“ or „exercise“. The existence of the term suggests that there is a culture of meditation. Indeed three different types of meditation can be distinguished: oratio – meditatio – contemplatio. In the literature about Christian meditation the term contemplation is used often instead of meditation. So the first step is to clarify these concepts.

Contemplation

1. Oratio is a prayer which is meditation in the form of a conversation with the assumed and experienced God or a representative of God (e.g. saints, Maria Mother of God, Jesus Christ). The prayer can be spoken aloud and in groups or silently. There are similarities to the mantras in Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism (mantra, Sanskrit: „mind-tool“ or „tool which is able to form the mind“). This meditation in Christianity is found in a rich prayer tradition, e.g. Lord's Prayer, rosary prayer or the hesychasm of the eastern church. Prayers serve edification to deepen consciousness. But prayer meditation does not necessarily make use of words, it may lead into a deep inner silence beyond any words or thoughts. So Teresa of Avila writes of a silent prayer as a special meditation form which is characteristic for an inner silent stage while praying.

2. Meditatio is the second form. The literature defines meditatio and contemplatio in different ways. We will follow the definition that contemplatio is meditation without any object, meditatio is meditation of an object. Those objects can be a real thing e.g. a picture, a statue, a cross or a stained glass window. The practitioner tries to become one with the object to get closer to the trinity. Another form of the meditatio is the meditation with an imagined object or thought.

3. Contemplatio, as said, is the meditation without any object. The practitioner opens himself for the presence of God:

„In der Bibel lesen wir, daß die bedeutendsten Personen, von denen uns dort berichtet wird, immer wieder aus der Stille und Einsamkeit mit Gott Kraft für ihr Handeln erhielten. Wenn Jesus in der Wüste fastete und betete, so war dies Meditation, denn Fasten in Verbindung mit Gebet ist ein Weg der Meditation und Kontemplation. Und wenn Jesus von „einer Stunde des Wachen und Beten“ spricht, so ist damit das hellwache Da-Sein in der Gegenwart Gottes gemeint, das wir als Kontemplation bezeichnen. „Tempel“ ist ein Ort der Gottesverehrung. „con“ heißt „mit“. Kontemplation wird verstanden als Weg, selbst zum Ort der Gottesverehrung zu werden. Das Verb „contemplari“ (passiv) wird mit beschauen, betrachten übersetzt. In der christlichen Mystik bezeichnet man mit Kontemplation ein inneres Schauen und betrachten von Gottes Wort oder seiner Schöpfung und Gedanken dazu, vor allem aber ein Gegenstandsloses Sichaussetzen dem Wirken des Geistes Gottes, unterstützt durch ein Leerwerden von allen eigenen Gedanken und Vorstellungen ...“ (Rompf, 1991)

Contemplatio is the pure being without any subject or object, an awareness without anybody who is aware. Therefore contemplatio is a meditation which is free of all concepts and images. Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) e.g. demands to become free of all images of God. The mystics describe that the mind calms down while practising contemplatio. The practitioner dives into a space beyond mind into an „ocean of compassion and love“. It is emphasised that it is important to be open without any concept or aim. In the literature about Christian meditation, contemplatio is often seen as the highest stage of meditation. That is the reason why many authors prefer the term Christian Contemplation when speaking of meditation in Christian context.

Originally the concept of oratio-meditatio-contemplatio was developed by Hugo of St. Victor (cogitatio-meditatio-contemplatio, Migne PL 176, Sp.879 A.) and Bonaventura (legendo et meditando, orando et contemplando, De triplici via).

But where is the source of Christian meditation to be found? The above given general definition of meditation shows that Christian mysticism is the origin of Christian meditation paths or can be at least be interpreted as such. The term mysticism has to be defined and specified because it is easily misunderstood and we try to avoid these misunderstandings.

Mysticism

Mysticism comes from the Greek term myein that means „to close eyes, mouth, ears“. That indicates an inner world which only can be seen by looking inside. The mystics wrote that this inner world cannot be understood by an analytical or logical process as the desert cannot be understood by counting the sand. That is the reason why it is very difficult to find a definition of mysticism.

Pseudodionysius Areopagita (500) is the founder of the classical differentiation and definition of mysticism. He defined three stages:

- via purgativa (way of clarifying)
- via illuminatio (way of enlightenment)
- unio mystica (unity with God)

This division is not only a classification of different stages of consciousness, it is further on a description of specific practices. The three stages can be described as follows:

- Via Purgativa
 - Penance
 - Prayer
 - Contemplation
 - Passive Cleansing (through God – cleansing of the senses)
- Via Illuminatio
 - Contemplation becomes meditation
 - Presence of God
 - Visions and/or God speaks to the mystic
 - Revelations
- Unio Mystica
 - Soul united with God
 - Mystical union
 - Transfiguration of thought, speech, and actions.

The unio mystica is the last and highest stage. This mystic stage seems to be highly subjective but one who experienced this level has no doubts about it. The descriptions about this stage are often poetic expressions or paradoxes. It is often described as an overwhelming feeling of deep inner joy and peace or a unity with all beings and God. It seems that language cannot describe this experience in a proper way.

„Der Mystiker hat aber einen immensen Drang, mitzuteilen, was er erlebt hat, denn seine Freude ist so groß, daß er sie nicht für sich behalten kann und will. So beginnt er zu reden, in paradoxen Sprüchen, in Metaphern und Bildern. So ergießt er diesen Freudenstrom, diese unglaublich erfüllende Gotteserfahrung über den meist fassungslosen Zuhörer, indem jedoch eine Saite anspringt, die leise, aber dennoch unüberhörbar nachschwingt. So versucht die gewaltig wogende Sprache des Mystikers eine feine sanfte Melodie anzustimmen.“ (Hohn, 2000)

That describes and gives a hint what mysticism is. A possible definition is that mysticism is a very intensive and existential experience of spiritual understanding of consciousness or as Mieth said, mysticism is a „Intensitätsform theologischen Erkennens in der Begegnung mit existentieller Erfahrung“ (1991). That includes the ecstatic forms of light mysticism and the philosophical brilliance of Meister Eckhart and is based on the trinity of mystical experience: mind, life, and being (for the term mysticism see: Mieth, 1991; Hohn, 2000)

At last the experience of a mystic goes far beyond every imagination of God or any theory or teaching. God is, according to Master Eckhart, superior omni narratione (In Ex. n. 35; LW II, S. 41, 10-12; Manstetten, 1993; Hohn, 2000).

If we take a deeper look into the Christian mystical tradition and its way through the medieval universities we get the impression that there is not only one mystical way. Indeed, the Christianity holds a rich tradition of different ways and therefore several kinds of contemplations or meditations. Each direction had its own way and its specific expression.

Master Eckhart

As an example of a Christian way of meditation, we may take a look at the Dominican monk Master Eckhart who lived from 1260 to 1328. Master Eckhart was deeply moved by the wonder of being, the existence, and the source of all life. He asked: What is the source of life? What is the origin and destination of mankind? What is the human being and what its purpose? Who or what is God and how can he be realized? How can I be concerned with a man called the son of God who lived some hundreds of years ago? Or to say it even clearer: What meaning should have a threefold God to me who dwells somewhere high above but isn't to be realized and experienced here and now? On the background of his own western tradition, Master Eckhart developed a way of spirituality and meditation lived by himself that offers answers to these questions. The heart of his philosophy concerning the potential and purpose of the human being, compresses and expands at the same time the medieval image of human kind. Meister Eckhart's questioning, thinking, and living evolves in the philosophy of the birth of God in the soul. The birth of God in the inner soul stands for a new dimension far beyond our normal daily life understanding of reality and universe. It is an experienced level of a non-thinking-thinking consciousness, interweaved by a paradoxical tension between analogy and univocity, where an enormous nearness between the uncreated God and the incarnated human being is realized.

Eckhardus de Hochheim, a highly decorated Dominican monk, is today well known for his teaching of the birth of God in the human soul and often called a master of life because he lived his teaching which was based on his deep experiences (Ruh, 1985).

The „Beati pauperes in spiritu“ (Mt. 5,3) is Eckhart's direction sign via non-willing, non-knowing, and non-having to the primary ground, to the deepest point of human consciousness. His way leads us through understanding to the emptiness. This emptiness is the missing of all imagination, the poorness of “things in the mind”. If the seeker has the state of non-willing then he gives up his search and while letting go he will be transformed into a finder. In this state he is not knowing anything nor wants he to know anything. He becomes a wise

one. By this non-knowing he knows everything and nothing at all. Master Eckhart once was asked what the sense of life is. It is said that he answered: “The sense of life? I don’t know it – but I love the life!” And so the “finder” is in a state of non-having. Nothing belongs to him and he cannot say “I am this” or “I am that”. The non-willing etc. is not to be mistaken as not willing or not knowing and so on. Master Eckhart doesn’t speak the word for stupidity and lethargy. He means a state of consciousness with clearness and awareness. If a human is non-willing, non-knowing, and non-having than he is empty and “poor”. These are the fundamentals and premises for the birth of God in the soul. If the soul is so empty then God has to flow into the soul.

To reach this state of consciousness several points are important:

to the inner „Abgeschiedenheit“ – the Son of God

- letting go of everything
- have no image of God
- non-willing
- non-knowing
- non-possessing
- non-separated separation

The term “non” is easily misunderstood as “not”. But Master Eckhart doesn’t mean stupidity and aboulie states. Non-knowing means that the person who is meditating has reached a state where he cannot distinguish subject and object. If he knows something a reflection would be necessary. But if there is no difference between the one who knows and that what can be detected than he is the knowing – a knowing without any reflection. In this moment he knows everything and nothing at all what is called non-knowing.

As we see, Master Eckhart is not a representative of different stages or at least he didn’t emphasize them. There are only a few passages e.g. in the *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Johannem* (In Ioh. n. 293; LW III, p. 246), where he is mentioning different stages of consciousness. But still he gives very important hints for the journey in our consciousness.

Teresa of Avila

Teresa of Avila found another way to the core of God experience. Master Eckhart didn’t want to give a description of how to reach the “Gottes ledig sein” – the emptiness of pictures. The understanding of the essence was most important for him, the way after the understanding was free experience. Everybody has his own way to experience world and a different – very subjective – relationship to the environment. That was the reason why he didn’t see a necessity to create a “way” or to speak about different stages. His way is to understand – what is not only an intellectual understanding as we today easily could think. The intellect in the understanding of Master Eckhart was the Latin word “intellectus” which

has to be understood as much more than just rational or logical understanding – it includes an experience which is not separate from world or God (Koch, 1973; Manstetten, 1993). So he didn't give a specific instruction for practice. But he defined the specifics of the deepest "stage" of the oneness with God.

Teresa as a founder of an own order had the desire to give her students something in the hand. So she created the *Bürglein* – the castle – as an example of different stages of experiences of consciousness. This was supposed to be a help in the unknown territory of consciousness. Master Eckhart is sometimes called the thinking mystic. Teresa maybe could be called the experiencing mystic. She took own experiences, compared them with people who had the same horizon in view, and created a way of different stages comparable with a ladder. So she used a total different way of expression, but not only expression, even of the mystical way. Maybe comparable with the differences between raja-yoga and bhakti-yoga or in another way the differences between the *gelug-pa* and *nyingma-pa* in Tibetan Buddhism. Of course, the yoga and the Buddhist paths are not easily comparable to Christian mysticism if we take a closer look at the issue. But maybe it gives a hint how far Teresa and Eckhart are apart. Still they have the same point of beginning – a monotheistic view of the world. And as it seems, they come to a comparable "end point". Both find a unity of themselves respectively human kind and God. But Eckhart is arguing with philosophical exactness and Teresa finds herself in the description of her experience of a stage "in God". But also there are great differences in thinking and verbal expression. For the meditation research today, they provide two different parts of a puzzle about human consciousness which can be experienced through meditation practice. While Eckhart emphasizes the importance of understanding and the experiencing the relationship between subject and focused object, Teresa gives a practical way with significant visible landmarks. Eckhart shows the meditation experience of analogy and univocity and the similarity to God which lies in the way how a human lives and sees the world. Teresa is very interested in answering the question how to reach this state without so much intellectual understanding. But how does her "landmarks" look like? What is her philosophical – or here even more of central interest – her background of meditation experience.

She created four different ways of prayers which already describe different states of minds. First of all, there is a progression from normal meditation and listening to religious texts to true contemplation as she saw it. At the beginning, there is a restless flow of thoughts. The aim at this point is not to be bothered by this – it cannot be stopped, just like the course of the stars. Then feelings will appear e.g. violent fits of weeping, joy etc. These feelings are to be avoided; these are initial reactions and will diminish as time goes by. The practice begins with external cleansing and virtuous behaviour (active cleansing) and goes further by absorption through inner prayer – a passive cleansing. This kind of

cleansing is not only a religious-moral motivated cleansing but also one of the soul.

The next step is the *Prayer of Composure*. This includes to look and concentrate at a picture, prayer, opening the awareness of Christ and see visions. This state is laborious at the beginning, but later it comes of its own accord. A further step is the *Prayer of Quietude*. It is practised by silent devotion. The soul, according to Teresa, behaves silently and discursive thinking diminishes. There is no mind or even the ability to think. Surrendering oneself as belonging to God and pushing aside all obstacles is another sign of this state of consciousness. At his point of meditation experience, she gave the advise that it is enough to speak a word now and again to gently assist meditation and she compared it with the gentle blowing into a fire to keep it burning. In the *Prayer of Union*, an occasionally engagement of the will by corresponding thoughts is sufficient. At the end, the *Prayer of Perfect Union* is the constant rest in union with God.

To make it more easy for the searcher, she developed the allegory of a castle with seven dwellings. So the one who is practising had a help in which state she or he was and what to do. The first three dwellings are *Approaching God*, the fourth to the seventh dwellings are the *Absorption in God*. The dwellings are characterised as follows:

- 1st Dwelling
 - Irregular, prayer lacking in concentration
 - Concentrating is difficult
 - Meditation is hampered by numerous distractions
 - Can hardly enjoy what I am doing
 - Occasional prayer or reflection
 - Brief reflective texts for diversion
- 2nd Dwelling
 - Occasional recognition during prayer
 - Suffers more than in the first dwelling – torn between everyday life and contemplation
 - Occasional recognition conveys a sense of what is to come, but the reality is yet different
- 3rd Dwelling
 - Beginning of systematic inner prayer
 - Prayer daily at fixed times
 - Very slow progress
 - Very tough
 - Teacher / Guide recommended

Absorption in God

- 4th Dwelling
 - Prayer of quietude
 - Deep calm
 - Beginning of mystical experience
 - Passive composure
 - Forceful permeation
 - Cannot be activated – happens spontaneously
 - Deep joy – different from before, deeper (not only from the heart but also from the bottom of my soul)
 - Inner turmoil still there, you can still reflect on yourself and on the object of meditation
 - Strong thought activity still present, just “let the mill-wheels rattle on.”
 - Inner calm permeates all forces of my soul and my whole body

- 5th Dwelling
 - Prayer of union
 - No bond to the world is made
 - Inner senses are bound
 - My will is one with God, the everyday tasks of life can be done (1st Stage)
 - My mind is one with God, only my imagination is still free and disturbs my inner peace (2nd Stage)
 - All the forces of my soul are united with God (3rd Stage)
 - My soul has been robbed of all sensation
 - Thinking is no longer possible
 - My mind no longer understands – it transcends my mind
 - Even if consciousness does not disappear my body and mind are motionless
 - My soul seems to have abandoned my body
 - I catch my breath, reading and speaking are almost impossible
 - The process of meditation strengthens my body
 - Unspeakable pleasure
 - Lasts no longer than 30 minutes
 - The experience cannot be forgotten or doubted
 - It has to be understood that God is in all things

- 6th Dwelling
 - Prayer of ecstatic union
 - External senses are bound together
 - Ecstasy
 - Transports of delight
 - Flight of the mind
 - Catch your breath
 - Warmth dissolves
 - Speech no longer possible, even when the other senses are still active for while
 - Numbness of arms and legs
 - Remaining motionless / freezing in one position
 - Hardly any breathing
 - Soul seems to have been torn out of my body
 - All previous joys of life seem to be illusions
 - (May make me ill)

- 7th Dwelling
 - Prayer of mystical union
 - Entirely new state
 - Transformation and reshaping of the soul
 - External and internal senses are once again free and active; the inner core of the soul remains united with God
 - The depth (of the absorption) cannot express itself in words – there is no cognition
 - The central point does not lose its sense of peace (does not apply to inner and outer senses and passions)
 - Union with God is permanent

Here we have a clear description of meditation experiences. The meditation leads deeper and deeper into the consciousness and gives even a beginner an image what can happens on the way and what is the aim of this meditation. Further on, “Teresa’s Experience Way” shows several bodily and psychological sensations and difficulties on the way which could be highly irritating for somebody who hasn’t experienced something like that before.

Discussion, conclusion and perspective

The experience in our meditation centre shows daily that people are very thankful for these kinds of hints that Teresa has given to us. Some sensations which are quiet normal for an experienced meditation practitioner can frighten somebody who is not used to it. But if a beginner knows that this or that can happen, and that it is even a sign of a specific consciousness state, it is this not only

calming for the interested beginner, it is even a motivation to go further. But Teresa not only gives hints to that what can happen on the way (thousands of thoughts, loosing breath, muscle contractions etc.), she also gives solutions and hints how to go further, what is more than helpful, as everybody knows who is practising meditation.

We have to be very careful when comparing different meditation paths of the different cultures. But as Master Eckhart is compared with the Zen-Masters because of the paradoxical tension in his speech and thoughts, Teresa's dwellings may can be compared with the ten pictures of the ox in the Zen-Buddhist culture.

For our daily life in the western world and our own search for spirituality, Teresa's path could be one which we can go more easily than other paths because we are children of our own culture. Even if we practise Buddhist, Hindu, yoga paths – it is always our understanding which obviously changes the original path. Teresa could now give us a key to our own roots and an adequate meditation description. Especially the contact to the eastern meditation paths and the knowing also of the shamanistic traditions all over the world can give us an impulse and deeper understanding of our own culture and our way of meditation. Maybe this opens also the way to an easier understanding of indications and contraindications and sensations of meditation. So Teresa of Avila could be a great help for our meditation research today. In combination with several other meditation paths in the Christian context, she opens the possibility to create an appropriate questionnaire. Master Eckhart on the other hand helps to specify stages of consciousness.

This article can only give a short impression of mystical and Christian meditation paths. But it can be said that there are definitely meditation methods, paths, and stages in Christian culture as described above. Further on, the richness of mystical traditions and meditation ways enables the discussion what kind of experiences, emotions, and behaviours are connected with them after definitions and terminologies have been specified. These will be the background for a questionnaire which should be able to clarify the physiological and psychological impact of the different stages of the paths and what the short-term and long-term consequences of the contemplation ways are.

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Address for correspondence: Thomas Hohn M.A.
Blumenstr. 15
D-68535 Edingen
Info@kgszentrum.de

e-mail: