The Kindred Heart

Luther on Meditation

JOHN W. KLEINIG

It is easy to underestimate the importance of meditation for Luther. As a novice, he was initiated formally into its theory, and he became steeped in its practice in the monastery.[1] Through meditation, Luther finally resolved the acute spiritual problem which had driven him into the monastery in the first place. His so-called tower experience came to him as a result of his concentrated meditation.[2]

As a monk, Luther knew that the presupposition for fruitful meditation was the heartfelt love and desire for God. But the more Luther meditated, the more he became aware of how much he really hated God. The breakthrough came as a result of 'meditating day and night' upon Romans 1:17,[3] and 'beating' like Moses upon the rock of that word.[4] As he meditated, the rock suddenly opened up and yielded its lifegiving water to him. What was given then changed his whole being. It didn't just change the way he thought *about* God but, more importantly, the way he felt *towards* him. He understood Romans 1:17 and the whole of Scripture as Gospel, and felt 'altogether born again' as if he 'had entered paradise through open gates'.[5] That experience, which came upon him through meditation, shaped all his subsequent teaching and his consequent practice of meditation.

And practise it he did, until the very end of his life. The most obvious evidence of that is found in his Preface to his German Writings from 1539.[6] There he sketches briefly what he regards as 'the correct way of studying theology as taught by David in Psalm 119' and as practised by Luther.[7] He advocates a threefold method of 'prayer' (*oratio*), 'meditation' (*meditatio*), and 'conflict' (*tentatio*). Everything centres around the practice of meditation, for prayer prepares for it and its results are confirmed in the experience of conflict. For Luther, meditation is the key to the study of theology. No one can become a true theologian unless he learns his theology through it.[8]

Yet, despite these clear assertions, modern scholars have largely overlooked the place of meditation in Luther's life and teaching.[9] This neglect is perhaps symptomatic of a deficiency in modern theology and in present-day Lutheran spirituality. We need to recapture what is best in our traditional piety if we are to temper our prevailing intellectualism.

A. LUTHER'S DEFINITION OF MEDITATION

The classic text for instruction in meditation has traditionally been Psalm 1. So it should come as no surprise that Luther gives us his most-carefully-formulated description of meditation in his two interpretations of that psalm. The first comes from 1516,[10] and the second from somewhere between 1518 and 1521.[11] Because these two interpretations of Psalm 1 were composed before and after his

discovery of the Gospel, I shall use them to illustrate both what was traditional and what was new in Luther's teaching on meditation.

We begin with a rather-lengthy but telling discussion from 1516. It assumes, as is always the case with Luther, that the Word of God is the proper object of Christian meditation:

> Meditation is unique to human beings, for even the animals seem to imagine and think. Therefore the ability to meditate belongs to human reason. There is however a difference between meditating and thinking. To meditate means to think persistently, deeply and diligently. Properly speaking, it means to chew over (*ruminare*) something in the heart. So to meditate means to engage as it were in the middle (*medio*), or to be moved in the very middle (*medio*) and centre. Whoever therefore thinks, investigates, discusses etc. inwardly and diligently, that person meditates. But no-one meditates on the law of the Lord unless his desire (*voluntas*) has first become fixed on it. For what we desire and love we chew over (*ruminamus*) inwardly and diligently. But what we hate or despise we pass over lightly and do not desire (*volumus*) deeply, diligently, or for long. Therefore let desire first be sent into the heart as a root, and meditation will come of its own accord. Hence the ungodly do not meditate on the law of the Lord, since like false plants they do not take root in it. Instead they meditate on other things like money, honour, and sex, things in which their desire (*voluntas*) is rooted, things they desire (*volumus*) and love.[12]

A number of significant points comes out in this discussion. First, Luther accepts the traditional view that, since meditation is a rational activity, it is unique to human beings. It is, however, to be distinguished from the normal processes of thinking which are marked by a movement from one thing to another until some conclusion is reached. Meditation arrests the normal course of thought so that the mind focuses on one thing only. It is a kind of concentration which pays persistent attention to one matter in order to penetrate to the very heart of it.

Now, this rather traditional, intellectual understanding of meditation underwent a drastic change under the impact of Luther's study of Hebrew and his discovery of the Gospel.[13] From 1518, he defines meditation as a 'continual chattering and conversation with the mouth'.[14] When a person meditates, he says or sings the same words to himself over and over again. In fact, it is best to meditate out aloud, if possible, for the spoken word needs to go through the ears to penetrate the heart.[15] Meditation involves a kind of extroversion. The written word, spoken out aloud, needs to occupy our full physical and mental attention. He says:

> You should not only meditate inwardly in your heart but also outwardly by repeating the words out aloud and by rubbing (*reiben*) at the written word [like a sweet-smelling herb], by reading and rereading it, carefully, attentively and reflectively, to gather what the Holy Spirit means by them.[16]

After paying full attention to the words, the reader may then go on a merry hunt as he compares them with other passages of the Scriptures which throw more light upon them.[17]

In line with this new appreciation of meditation as a verbal activity comes a change in Luther's anthropology. Reason is now no

longer the unique human faculty which distinguishes man from the animals and makes him like God. Intead, Luther now maintains that, just as birds are meant to chatter and chirp, so human beings are made for speech (*sermoninatio*). That is the proper office (*officium*) and exercise (*exercitium*) of human beings. Since people were made to speak God's Word, they come into their own when they do so.[18] They realize their humanity by meditating on God's Word. There is therefore a shift in Luther's understanding of meditation from thinking and reflecting on God's Word, to speaking and listening to it.

Secondly, Luther fastens on the traditional notion that a person who meditates is like a cow chewing its cud.[19] The cud was the material which was first memorized and then recalled again and again. It was thus savoured and absorbed so that it could be assimilated and give nourishment to the person. This metaphor was traditionally employed to describe the affective rather than the cognitive side of meditation. This is how Luther speaks about it in his commentary on Deuteronomy 14:1:

> To chew the cud, however, is to receive the word affectively (*cum affectu verbum suscipere*) and meditate with supreme diligence so that (according to the proverb) one does not permit it to go in one ear and out of the other, but holds it firmly in the heart, swallows it, and absorbs it into the intestines.[20]

Hearing is as much a physical as a mental activity, for words also affect us physically and emotionally. Since most of our hearing and reading is rather superficial and merely intellectual, we aren't touched and moved by God's Word. If the Word of God is to have its desired effect on us we need to assimilate it both physically and mentally.[21]

Thirdly, Luther goes along with the traditional notion of meditation as an activity which comes from a person's heart, and so involves him at the very centre of his being. As Luther shows, this was usually justified by tracing the derivation of meditation from *medium* (i.e., middle) in Latin.[2] Meditation, then, was considered a kind of concentration. In it, a person engaged the centre of something with the very centre of his being so that it could in turn engage him emotionally. Any human activity in meditation is thus intended to put that person in a passive and receptive frame of mind. Take, for example, a piece of music. When we 'meditate' on it, we allow it to occupy us inwardly and move us profoundly. By concentrating on it, we let the music have its proper effect on us. In a sermon on Christ's Nativity, Luther uses a vivid picture to illustrate the nature and effect of receptive concentration on the Gospel. He says:

> This lesson is like the sun: in a placid pool it can be seen clearly and warms the water powerfully; but in a rushing current it cannot be seen as well, nor can it warm up the water as much. So if you wish to be illumed and warmed here, to see God's mercy and wondrous deeds, so that your heart is filled with fire and light and becomes reverent and joyous, then go to where you may be still and impress the picture deep into your heart. You will find no end of wondrous deeds.[23]

Meditation, then, is a matter of the heart. In it we do not impose ourselves upon God and his Word,[24] but rather seek to have our hearts moved by the heart of God as it is

revealed to us by Christ in the Gospel.[25]

Fourthly, Luther agreed with the traditional view, derived from Psalm 1:2, that the root of Christian meditation lay in the desire for God's Word. If a person truly loved and therefore desired God and his Word, meditation would 'come of its own accord',[26] for 'wherever love goes, there the heart and body follow'.[27] Desire makes a person 'one with the Word of God (as love unites the lover with the beloved)'.[28] It is only natural for 'all who love to chatter, sing, think, compose, and frolic freely about what they love and to enjoy hearing about it'.[29] So desire for God's Word is the foundation for meditation.

But from where does that desire come? How does it originate? Do we produce it in ourselves? The answer to that most clearly demarcates evangelical meditation from medieval, Catholic meditation. Luther had experienced the most acute personal difficulties just at this point in his own practice of meditation. No matter how hard he tried, he could not love God and desire his Law, as he knew he should. But this problem was resolved by the discovery of the Gospel. After 1518, he maintains that 'this desire comes from faith in God through Jesus Christ'.[30] It is a supernatural gift 'sent down from heaven' and given to those who trust in Christ and pray for it.[31] Since no one ever possesses a wholehearted and unambiguous delight in God's Word, each person needs to pray repeatedly for it. Each should 'think of himself in no other way than as one who does not yet love God's Law and desperately needs this desire for the Law'.[32] As 'the desire for the Law of the Lord is not by nature in any man', it must be 'conferred on us from heaven' by our heavenly Father who 'translates us out of Adam into Christ'.[3] The ardent love which comes from the prayer of faith in Jesus, produces the divinely-cultivated and heavenly-nurtured tree of meditation. Faith in Jesus Christ is therefore the key to fruitful meditation, for it produces love of him and desire for his Word.

Lastly, Luther concludes that since humans naturally meditate on what they desire, everybody in fact practises some form of meditation. The ungodly do not meditate on God's Word, but they do meditate on such things as money, status, and sex. They also practise a futile form of 'evil meditation' on Christ and his Word. Because they hate him so much, they keep on thinking and saying evil things about him, for 'just as the lover willingly talks at length about his beloved, so the hater keeps on talking and babbling the worst things about him whom he hates'.[34] Meditation is thus in itself of no great value spiritually. It derives its benefit from its object.

B. LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF MEDITATION

The first pillar in Luther's theology of meditation was the medieval doctrine of affective conformity. This doctrine rested upon the principle that 'like recognizes like'. So, for example, a cold fish can't appreciate the ardent language of an emotional person, or, more extremely, my cat can't understand my conversation with my wife. Both Athanasius and Augustine had taught Luther and his contemporaries that the reader of spiritual writings had to possess the same spirit as the writer if he were ever to appreciate them.[35] This was

especially the case with the poetic language of the Psalms. Not until we have learnt to adapt and adjust our minds and feeling (*affectus*) so that they are in accord with the sense (*affectus*) of the Holy Scriptures, will the Scriptures begin to live and breathe in our hearts, too.[36] This doctrine had a profound effect on the various schools of meditation in the Middle Ages. Despite their many differences, these schools all agreed that a person had to adjust and attune himself to God in some way — whether it be mentally, emotionally, or practically — before God would grant some experience of his grace in infused contemplation. Thus, meditation was thought of as a human work which creates the proper predisposition for the reception of divine grace.

Luther agrees with the schools on the basic principle of effective conformity, but he disagrees on its application. On the basis of Psalm 18:25–26, he enunciates the dictum: 'As you are, so God is to you'.[37] Hence, God's relationship with us 'changes in accordance with the change in our feeling (*affectus*) toward him'.[38] The state of our conscience determines whether God comes across to us harshly or graciously. Our subjective state determines whether we receive the tasteless shell or the sweet kernel of the Scriptures.[39] Yet, we do not by ourselves rectify this incompatibility between ourselves and God; Luther maintains that God does it for us through the power of his Word:

> And note that the strength of Scripture is this, that it is not changed into him who studies it, but that it transforms its lover into itself and its strengths . . . It is light, and therefore they are enlightened: it is truth, and therefore they are disciplined.[40]

By his Word Christ assimilates us to himself. We don't attune ourselves to it; it attunes us to itself by creating faith in us.

This appreciation of God's Word as a means of grace governs Luther's mature understanding of meditation as a sacramental activity. It is expressed most memorably in his Christmas sermon for 1519.[41] He begins with the premise that 'the words and stories of the Gospels are sacraments of a kind . . . by which God works in believers what the histories signify'.[42] Now, the stories in the Gospels differ from the accounts of Livy in that they reproduce in the reader the virtues which they depict to him, for the Gospel is 'the instrument by which God changes us'.[43] Luther therefore speaks about 'sacramental meditation on the Gospel'. He says:

> We meditate properly on the Gospel when we do so sacramentally, for through faith the words produce in us what they portray.[44]

Through meditation Christ performs his saving work in us. He gives us his Holy Spirit and changes us into his likeness.[45]

No treatment of Luther's theology of meditation would be at all complete without a final reference to its connection with the experience of spiritual conflict (*Anfechtung*), which is featured so prominently in his famous preface to his German works.[46] There he sums up his own pattern of meditation with three Latin words: *oratio, meditatio,* and *tentatio.* His formulation appears to stand in deliberate contrast to the traditional medieval pattern of reading (*lectio*), reflection (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*).

Three things are remarkable about Luther's summary.[47] For him prayer comes first, since meditation presupposes faith and receives the gifts of God through faith in his Word. Moreover, he does not distinguish between reading and reflecting on the passage set for meditation, for that tended to separate the Spirit from the letter of the Word.[48] Lastly, temptation, or spiritual conflict, takes the place of contemplation in the traditional scheme. By contemplation, medieval scholars meant the experience of God's presence and grace which came from actual intimacy with Him. This involved the experience of spiritual rapture from this world, and ecstatic union with the heavenly bridegroom. In contrast to this, Luther spoke of the rapture and ecstasy of faith which took a person out of himself and into Christ.

Although Luther, too, believes that by meditation we come to experience God personally through Jesus Christ, he makes it quite clear that we do so paradoxically via his Word in the situation of temptation. He has this to say about temptation:

> This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's word is, wisdom above all wisdom.[49]

As soon as a person meditates and is occupied with God's Word; as soon as God's Word begins to take root in and grow in him, the devil harries him with much conflict, bitter contradiction, and blatant opposition. But these assaults (*Anfechtungen*) prove to be spiritually counterproductive, for by driving him to the end of his tether, they teach him 'to seek and love God's Word' as the source of all his strength and being.[50] In such a situation of temptation, he experiences for himself the power and the truth of God's Word. Temptation turns the student of God's Word into a real theologian, because it exercises and reinforces his faith in Christ. He experiences the power of God's Word in his own weakness. Paradoxically, he sees the presence of God and his grace most fully displayed under its apparent negation in adversity and trouble. Because he bears the word of Christ in himself, he must also bear the cross for it. But, as he bears his own cross, he gets to know himself and Christ whose glory was revealed by his death on the cross. Meditation, then, ultimately elucidates temptation and is itself elucidated by it.

C. THE FRUITS OF MEDITATION

The point of meditation for Luther is, quite simply, to let the Holy Spirit 'preach' the Word of God inwardly to the conscience of the believer. Now this preaching goes far beyond the intellectual exercise of working out the meaning and application of a portion of Scripture. It is the activity of the Holy Spirit who affects the person physically, mentally, and emotionally through the Word.

The clearest account of this process is given in the pamphlet, *A Simple Way to Pray*.[51] Here Luther responds to the request of a layman, and outlines his own method of meditation. He mentions how, suddenly in the midst of a person's meditation, 'the Holy Spirit comes and begins to preach' in his heart with 'rich and enlightening thoughts'.[52] When this happens, 'one

word of his sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers'.[53] The best thing to do then is to 'be still and listen to him who can do better than we can'.[54] Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will experience 'the wondrous things in the law of God' which David mentions in Psalm 119:18.[55] So, then, through meditation the Holy Spirit comes to 'instruct us in our hearts, after they have been brought into harmony with God's Word and cleared of other mental and physical distractions'.[56] Thus the Spirit 'keeps on adding to the light and devotion which he gives us, so that the taste [of God's Word] gets better and better and becomes part of us'.[57] When this happens, the promise of Christ's presence in Matthew 18:20 is realized for us, and we are linked with all the saints through the Holy Spirit. So then, as we meditate on God's Word, the Holy Spirit preaches Christ and gives his gifts to us.

Luther uses two vivid metaphors to describe this experience. The first comes from Psalm 1. The preaching of the Spirit is like a stream of heavenly water which gushes out suddenly into the heart, flooding it and irrigating its barren places. Luther says:

> For those who meditate on the Law the very rock of Scripture gushes forth abundant streams and flowing waters of knowledge and wisdom, and grace and sweetness besides... The experienced person knows that one who meditates on the law of the Lord is taught many things in a short time and suddenly, and a deluge of insights rushes in with 'the voice of cataracts' (Ps. 42:7), so that it is truly a flow, where human endeavour finds it difficult to crawl and move haltingly to the same abundance of truth.[58]

By surrendering himself to meditation on God's Word, that person becomes flooded with the flowing water from the Word. He receives spiritual vitality and life.

The second metaphor is far more common. It comes from God's question in Jeremiah 23:29: 'is not my word like fire?' The words of Scripture are meant to be used as 'flint and steel to kindle a flame in the heart'.[59] When the heart feels spiritually lax and lazy, listless and cold, the gift of the Spirit through meditation fires the heart and warms it so that it is filled with ardour and passion, enthusiasm and devotion.[60] Like a pool of water lit up and warmed by the sun, the heart 'is filled with fire and light and becomes reverent and joyous'.[61]

The experience of illumination is by no means the end of meditation. Not for Luther the monastic disparagement of the active life of the layman in favour of the contemplative life of the monk! He held that the person who meditated properly, learnt how to combine both properly.[62] The more a person inwardly contemplated the incarnate Son of God in the Gospel, the more he would outwardly fulfil the duties of his vocation as commanded by God in the Decalogue.[63] The hearing of God's Word and the reception of the Spirit through meditation on it, led first to 'external works' and then to 'the teaching of others'.[64] The person who meditated produced its fruit by a life lived in service of his neighbour.[65] This was followed by the teaching of others, whether as a member of the church or as a pastor.[66] For Luther himself, his meditation always culminated in his teaching and preaching. It preceded preaching, for, only if 'the Spirit

himself instructs the preacher', will he discover for himself 'that the Kingdom of God is not in talk but in power'.[67]

D. THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION BY LUTHER

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Luther is not interested in discussing the method of meditation. Generally speaking, he prefers to let people find their own way in it. Yet he does make some practical recommendations, and produces some examples of his own experience and meditation for the benefit of his readers. He gives some excellent advice on how to meditate on the Incarnation,[68] on the stories of the Gospels,[69] on the Passion of Christ,[70] on God's works in the light of human misery,[71] and on the Catechism.[72] By far the most detailed treatment of his own practice is found in the pamphlet written for his barber Peter, entitled; *A Simple Way to Pray*.[73] It is, in fact, a textbook on how to use the Catechism as an aid for meditation.

First of all, Luther emphasizes the need for adequate preparation. He recognizes the importance of set times and fixed places for meditation and prayer. The best times: before going to bed at night, and after getting up in the morning. Nothing should be allowed to interrupt these times, for nothing is as important as meditation and prayer. When Luther intended to meditate, he either retired to his room or else he went to the nearest church, if the congregation was assembled there. As to posture, he recommends either kneeling or standing with folded hands.[74]

Once he has settled down, Luther prepares himself physically and mentally for prayer and meditation by reciting to himself the Ten Commandments, the Creed, some words from Christ or Paul, and something from the Psalter.[75] The length of time spent in this depends on his mood and his commitments. By the recitation of these set pieces, he withdraws himself from his previous preoccupations and present distractions in order to concentrate the attention of his body, mind, and heart on the presence of God. Luther maintains:

> Thus if anything is to be done well it requires the full attention of all one's senses and members . . . How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer.[76]

In this way the heart comes back to itself,[77] and is attuned to God's Word.[78]

If he has time, Luther spends some time meditating on each of the Ten Commandments in turn. He makes a kind of rosary out of them with four strands. He describes his practice in this way:

> I think of each commandment as, first, instruction . . . and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer.[79]

The Commandments thus become in turn a textbook, a song book, a penitential book, and a prayer book. In this way Luther listens to God's Law speaking to him in his situation, so that it can do its work on him. If he has ample time, he does the same with the Creed, some portion of the New Testament, or a Psalm. By concentrating on the Gospel, he allows it to arouse his faith in Christ.

Then, once his heart has been kindled with faith and devotion, he spends some time in prayer. First, he

confesses his own unworthiness to come into God's presence, as well as his faith in Christ's commands and promises about prayer.[80] Then he repeats each petition of the Lord's Prayer, and allows it to shape his own prayer. Here is how he describes this practice and the transition to the preaching of the Holy Spirit mentioned earlier in this essay:

> You should also know that I do not want you to recite all these words in your prayers . . . Rather do I want your heart to be stirred and guided concerning the thoughts which ought to be comprehended in the Lord's Prayer . . . I do not bind myself to such words of syllables, but say my prayers in one fashion today, in another tomorrow, depending upon my mood and feeling. I stay however as nearly as I can with the same general thoughts and ideas. It may happen occasionally that I may get lost among so many ideas in one petition that I forego the other six. If such an abundance of good thoughts comes to us we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers.[81]

Once this is done, Luther closes the meditation and prayer with the 'Amen' of all believers in Christ.

Our Catechism arose out of this method of meditation.[82] It was obviously Luther's own preferred method, even though he makes it quite clear that he did not limit himself to it. It was consistent with his distinction between Law and Gospel, and was simple enough for anyone to pursue. Is it possible, I wonder, to revive this use of the Catechism for ourselves and our people?

CONCLUSION

A final quotation will have to suffice to round off Luther's teaching on meditation. It contains some sound advice and offers a timely warning to us who live in an age which tends to dissociate spirituality from morality, and hankers after spectacular spiritual experiences apart from the common worship of the Church. Here it is:

> Let him who wants to contemplate in the right way reflect on his Baptism; let him read his Bible, hear sermons, honour father and mother, and come to the aid of a brother in distress. But let him not shut himself up in a nook . . . and there entertain himself with his devotions and thus suppose that he is sitting in God's bosom and has fellowship with God without Christ, without the Word, without the sacraments.[83]

REFERENCES

1. See the excellent summary found in M. Nicol, *Meditation bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), 21-43. This is, as far as I know, the only major work on Luther's doctrine of meditation.
2. *ibid*, 175-181.
3. *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, and St Louis: Concordia, 1955-) [henceforth cited *LW*], 34:337.
4. The traditional description of meditation as 'beating' on the Word, contains an allusion, via the Vulgate, to the command of our Lord in Matthew 7:7, where 'knock' is translated as 'beat'.
5. *LW*, 34:337.
6. *LW*, 34:283-288.

7. *LW*, 34:285.
8. See *LW*, 34:287.
9. The work of Nicol, cited in Note 1, is a remarkable exception to this trend.
10. *LW*, 10:11-34.
11. *LW*, 14:287-311.
12. This is my own translation, which differs at several significant places from *LW*, 10:17, and depends upon Nicol's fine analysis, *op.cit.* 45-47.
13. See S. Raeder, *Grammatica Theologica* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 262-268, for the influence of Hebrew on Luther's concept of meditation.
14. *LW*, 14:315. cf.14:199, 296.
15. See *LW*, 14:297-298.
16. Instead of quoting from *LW*, 34:286, I have given a more literal translation to retain the traditional image of meditation as rubbing at the herb of God's Word to release its sweetness and healing powers.
17. See Luther's remarks in *LW*, 14:296:

    > This meditation consists first in close attention to the words of the Law, and then in drawing together various parts of Scripture. And this is a pleasant hunt, a game rather like the play of stags in the forest, where 'the Lord arouses the stags, and uncovers the forests' (Ps. 29:9). For out of this will proceed a sermon to the people which is well informed in the Law of the Lord.

    Luther here gives a new scriptural twist to the traditional image of meditation as a merry chase, in which the lover follows the lead of his beloved from worldly delights to heavenly pastures. It is derived from the Song of Solomon, where the lover is compared to a stag (2:17; 8:14). Luther explains, in his commentary on Psalm 29, that the stags are those who are 'quick and adept in their meditations', by which their beloved Lord leads them through the hills and forests of the Scriptures to show them 'the woodland pastures' for them to graze upon (*LW*, 10:136).
18. See *LW*, 14:296 cf. *LW*, 35:254.
19. See the analysis of Nicol, 57-60.
20. *LW*, 9:136. I have changed the translation slightly to bring it closer to the original Latin. Like his predecessors, Luther, in his early years, held that the soul (*anima*) consisted of two faculties, the understanding (*intellectus*) of the mind (*mens*) and the emotions (*affectus*) of the heart (*cor*). The main 'affects' of the heart were joy and sorrow, hope and fear, love and hatred (see *LW*, 10:343; 11:253–255). For Luther, the affective aspect of meditation took precedence over the cognitive, since the 'affects' determined the faith and existence of the person. In meditation, the Word of God claimed and rearranged the 'affects' of a person so that they were shaped by God's grace rather than some other real or imagined good.
21. See *LW*, 11:21. Together with this emphasis on the affective power of God's Word upon the heart comes Luther's belief in its inexhaustibility. Hence in the introduction to a commentary on the tiny Psalm 117, which is meant to serve as an example of how to use the psalms in meditation for the pilgrimage of the heart to heavenly Jerusalem, he asserts:

    > I have taken it upon myself to interpret this psalm, so that one may see how clear God's Word is, how simple, and yet how altogether inexhaustible. And even though everything were reasonable, which is not the case, still it is inexhaustible in power and virtue. It renews and refreshes the heart, restoring relieving, comforting, and strengthening us constantly (*LW*, 14:8 cf. 11:433–435).
22. This derivation is not accepted by modern scholars who, according to Nicol, 46, take *meditor* as the iterative of *medeor*.

23. *LW*, 52:9-10. In this famous sermon, Luther employs two ways of meditating on the mystery of Christ's birth: the first, the imaginative way, is for ordinary people (8-14), the second, the reflective way, is for preachers (14-30).
24. Luther says of the ungodly: 'They are the ones who twist the Scriptures to their own understanding and by their own fixed meditation compel the Scriptures to enter it and agree with it, when it ought to be the other way round'. *LW*, 10:18 cf. 11:431-432.
25. Luther expresses this most memorably in connection with his advice on how to meditate on Christ's Passion. He says:
    > First of all you must . . . see his friendly heart and how his love beats with such love for you that it impels him to bear with pain your conscience and your sin. Then your heart will be filled with love for him . . . Now continue and rise beyond Christ's heart to God's heart . . . Thus you will find the divine and kind paternal heart and . . . you will be drawn to the Father through him. *LW*, 42:13.
26. *LW*, 10:17.
27. *LW*, 14:297.
28. *ibid*.
29. *ibid*. Note, too, the assertion on the same page: 'Love itself will teach meditation'.
30. *LW*, 14:295.
31. *LW*, 14:297. cf. *LW*, 42:11,13.
32. *LW*, 14:310.
33. *LW*, 14:300.
34. *LW*, 14:315. Luther here comments on Psalm 2:1, where the same verb which was used in Psalm 1:2 is used to describe the futile mutterings of the people. The RSV translates: 'The peoples *plot* in vain.'
35. See *LW*, 11:414; 14:310.
36. See *LW*, 14:310.
37. *LW*, 14:287. See G. Metzger, *Gelebter Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964) for a monograph on the affective aspects of faith in Luther. Luther applies the principle of affective conformity to the process of meditation (*LW* 11:37). He says: 'No one can worthily speak or hear any scripture, unless he is touched in conformity with it, so that he feels inwardly what he hears and says outwardly and says, 'Ah, this is true!' The original Latin makes it quite clear that his feelings (*affectus*) are to be conformed to the words of Scripture.
38. *LW*, 9:67 cf. *LW*, 25:219.
39. See *LW*, 10:257.
40. *LW*, 10:333 cf. 11:437,438. Just as memorable is the following passage from *The Freedom of the Christian* (*LW*, 31:349):
    > Since these promises of God are . . . so full of goodness, the soul which clings to them with a firm faith will be so closely united with them and altogether absorbed by them that it not only will share in all their power but will be saturated and intoxicated by them. If a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender spiritual touch, this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that belong to the Word . . . Just as the heated iron glows like fire because of the union of fire with it, so the Word imparts its qualities to the soul.
41. *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1912-1921) [henceforth cited WA] 9:439:13-442:33.
42. *WA*, 9:440:3-5.
43. *WA*, 9:440:16.
44. *WA*, 9:442:23-25.
45. In his discussion on the correct way to meditate on Christ's passion, Luther emphasizes that in meditation it becomes 'a sacrament which is active in us,

while we are passive' (*LW*, 42:13). Here is how he describes its effect:
'This meditation changes man's being and, almost like baptism, gives him a new birth. Here the passion of Christ performs its natural and noble work, strangling the old Adam and banishing all joy, delight, and confidence which man could derive from other creatures, even as Christ was forsaken by all, even God.' *LW*, 42:11.

46. *LW*, 34:283-288.
47. See the discussion of this in Nicol, 97-101.
48. See his argument in *LW*, 11:433-434, where he outlines the oscillation between the external letter and inner spirit in connection with the understanding of Scripture in meditation. The first step is the gift of spiritual understanding, which opens up the letter. The letter in turn increases the spiritual understanding, which then returns to the letter, and so on *ad infinitum*. The external words of Scripture are therefore never mere springboards for a higher, inner, spirituality which can exist apart from them. The basic movement is always from the spirit to the letter.
49. *LW*, 34:287. Luther sums up his understanding of temptation most succinctly in an exposition of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer in *LW*, 42:71-75.
50. *ibid.*
51. *LW*, 43:187-211. This very soon became a Lutheran classic which eventually appeared in 22 German editions. See W. Trobisch, *Martin Luther's Quiet Time* (Kehl/Rhein: Trobisch, 1977) for an English analysis of this work.
52. *LW*, 43:201. I have added the words: 'comes and', which appear in the original.
53. *LW*, 43:198.
54. *LW*, 43:201,202.
55. *LW*, 43:202. The English translation translates *erfahren* incorrectly as 'behold'.
56. See *LW*, 43:209. I have given my own translation of the German text which reads:
Nu das wird und mus der geist geben und weiter leren im hertzen, wenn es also mit Gottes Wort gereimt und geleedigt ist vom frembden geschefften und gedancken *WA*, 35:372.
57. *Luther's Large Catechism*, translated by F. Hebart (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1983), 4 [henceforth cited: *LC*].
58. *LW*, 10:20.
59. *LW*, 43:209.
60. See *LW*, 43:194, 209; 52:13.
61. *LW*, 52:8-9.
62. See *LW*, 6:260-263. See the discussion of this by C. Link, 'Vita Passiva', *Evangelische Theologie* 44 (1984), 315-351.
63. See *LW*, 6:262.
64. *LW*, 14:297.
65. See *LW*, 14:300; 11:513.
66. See *LW*, 14:296, 300-303.
67. *LW*, 14:302.
68. *WA*, 9:439: 13-442:33; *LW*, 52:7-31.
69. *LW*, 35:121. He gives this advice there:
When you open the book containing the gospels and read or hear how Christ comes here or there, or how someone is brought to him, you should therein perceive the sermon or the gospel through which he is coming to you, or you are being brought to him. When you see how he works, however, and how he helps everyone to whom he comes or who is brought to him, then rest assured that faith is accomplishing this in you and that he is offering your soul exactly the same sort of help and favour through the gospel. If you pause here and let him do you good, that is, if you believe that he benefits and helps you, then you really have it. Then Christ is yours, presented to you as a gift.

70. *LW*, 42:7-14.
71. *LW*, 11:19-37.
72. See Luther's Preface to the Large Catechism, *op.cit.*, 1-8.
73. *LW*, 43:193-211.
74. See *LW*, 43:193-194.
75. See *LW*, 43:193.
76. *LW*, 43:199.
77. See *LW*, 43:209. The same phrase occurs at page 194, where the translator inexplicably translates: 'zu sich selbst komen' as 'by such recitation to yourself'.
78. Cf. *LW*, 43:209 with the original and my translation at note 56 above.
79. *LW*, 43:200, and cf. 43:209.
80. *LW*, 43:194.
81. *LW*, 43:198.
82. See *LC*, 7,8 and *LW*, 14:8, as well as the remarks by A. Peters, 'Vermittler des Christenglaubens: Luthers Katechismen nach 450 Jahren', *Luther: Zeitschrift der Luther Gesellschaft*, 51 (1980), 38,39.
83. *LW*, 3:275.