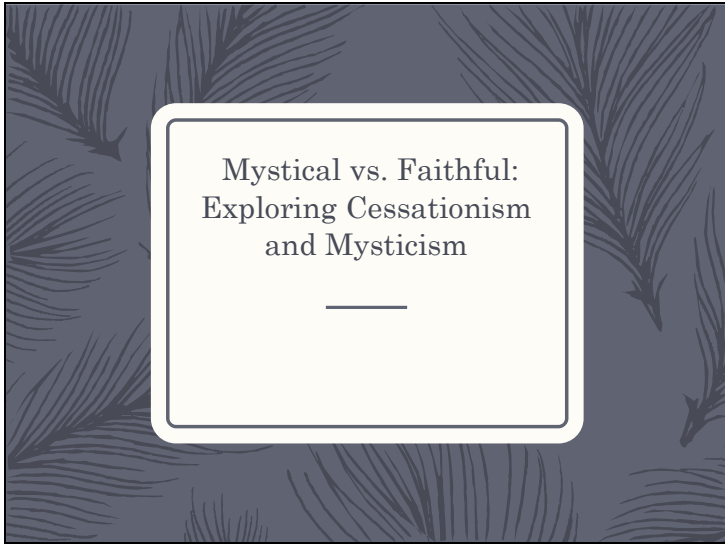



Session 4 Slide 1



Session 4 Slide 2



Session 4 Slide 3



7 biblical arguments for
Cessationism

- (summary of Tom Pennington at Strange Fire written by Tim Challies and later abbreviated)
- ***Do you agree with these points?
How would you argue against this?***

Session 4 Slide 4

1. The unique role of miracles.

- There were only 3 primary periods in which God worked miracles through unique men. The first was with Moses; the second was during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha; the third was with Christ and his apostles.
- The primary purpose of miracles has always been to establish the credibility of one who speaks the word of God—not just any teacher, but those who had been given direct words by God. Notice in Exodus 4:15-17 that for Aaron to be Moses’ prophet he could not speak for himself. He could only speak what Moses told him to. This is what it means to be a prophet. But how were the people to know if a man who claimed to be a prophet was in fact speaking God’s own words? Moses brings this dilemma up with God at the beginning of chapter 4, and God answers by giving him signs.

Session 4 Slide 5

1. The unique role of miracles.

- God enabled Moses to perform miracles for one purpose only: to validate his claims to speak for God. This continues to be the purpose of miracles throughout the Old Testament. Only those who spoke authoritatively and infallibly for God were given the power of miracles.
- When we come to the New Testament we discover this same pattern. The primary purpose of Jesus’ miracles was to confirm his credentials as God’s final and ultimate messenger (John 5:36; 6:14; 7:31; 10:24-26, 37-38). Jesus’ miracles were not primarily a tool for effective evangelism or about alleviating human suffering. The main reason the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to perform miracles was to confirm that he was everything he claimed to be and that he spoke the words of God (Acts 2:22). Jesus gave this same power to the apostles, and their miracles served exactly the same purpose (Acts 14:3; cf. Hebrews 2:3-4).

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2. The end of the gift of apostleship.

- In two places in the New Testament Paul refers to the apostles as one of the gifts Christ gave his church (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4). Although not all spiritual gifts are offices, all offices are gifts to the church.
- One of the gifts Christ gave his church was the apostles, but they were a temporary gift. Most agree that there are no more like the original apostles. No one meets the qualifications anymore, which included being an eye-witness of the life of Christ and his resurrection. You also had to be personally appointed by Christ and be able to work miracles (Matthew 10:1-2). According to these three qualifications, there is no one alive today who is an apostle in the sense that the original 12 were. This gift of Christ to the church disappeared after the apostolic age.

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3. The foundational nature of the New Testament apostles and prophets.

–The New Testament identifies the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20-22). In the context, it is clear that Paul is referring here not to Old Testament prophets but to New Testament prophets. Once the apostles and prophets finished their role in laying the foundation of the church, their gifts were completed.

Session 4 Slide 8

4. The nature of the New Testament miraculous gifts.

- If the Spirit was still moving as he was in the first century, then you would expect that the gifts would be of the same type.
- Consider the speaking of tongues. At Pentecost, the languages spoken were already existing, understandable languages. The New Testament gift was speaking in a known language and dialect, not an ecstatic language like you see people speaking in today.
- New Testament prophecy is direct, infallible revelation. Today, however, prophecy is understood differently. Wayne Grudem, who is the most able defender of this position, says modern prophecy should be prefaced with "I think this is what the Spirit is saying." This is not New Testament prophecy.
- There is a disparity between New Testament and modern day healings as well.

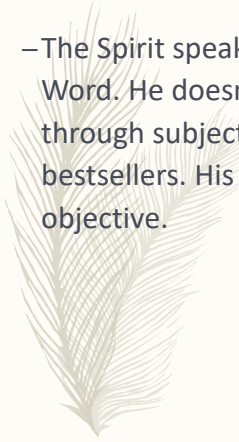
Session 4 Slide 9

5. The testimony of church history.

- The practice of apostolic gifts declines even during the lifetimes of the apostles. Even in the written books of the New Testament, the miraculous gifts are mentioned less as the date of their writing gets later.
- After the New Testament era, we see the miraculous gifts cease. John Chrysostom and Augustine speak of their ceasing. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and B. B. Warfield all agree that the gifts ended after the 1st century and had been given only to confirm the message when it first appeared.
- This raises a huge problem for our continuationist friends. How do they explain the ceasing of miraculous gifts throughout such long periods of church history?

6. The sufficiency of Scripture.

- The Spirit speaks only in and through the inspired Word. He doesn't call and direct his people through subjective messages and modern day bestsellers. His word is external to us and objective.



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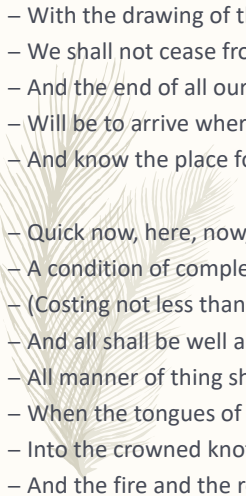
7. The New Testament governed the miraculous gifts.

–Whenever the New Testament gifts of tongues was to be practiced, there were specific rules that were to be followed. There was to be order and structure, as well as an interpreter. Paul also lays down rules for prophets and prophecy. Tragically most charismatic practice today clearly disregards these commands. The result is not a work of the spirit but of the flesh.

Session 4 Slide 12



Session 4 Slide 13

- 
- With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
 - We shall not cease from exploration
 - And the end of all our exploring
 - Will be to arrive where we started
 - And know the place for the first time...

 - Quick now, here, now, always-
 - A condition of complete simplicity
 - (Costing not less than everything)
 - And all shall be well and
 - All manner of thing shall be well
 - When the tongues of flames are in-folded
 - Into the crowned knot of fire
 - And the fire and the rose are one.

From T.S.
Eliot,
concluding
lines of
“Little
Gidding”

Session 4 Slide 14

Caught up to the third heaven

–2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (ANIV) 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.

3 And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

Testing things of the Spirit

– 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (ANIV) - 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil.

– ***Have you ever had supernatural things happen in church that you thought should be 'tested'? How was it viewed or handled?***

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Theologia Germanica

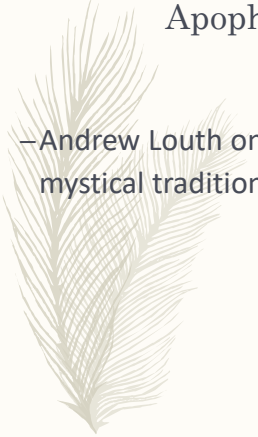
- “People ask: While still in the body could the soul possibly attain some insight into eternity and thereby have a foretaste of eternal life and eternal bliss? The answer given is generally no. In one sense this is a proper answer. For as long as the soul has its gaze on bodily and temporal things, on created objects, and is consequently filled with images of this varied world, eternal life cannot be grasped. If the soul is to gaze or look into eternity, it must become chastened and empty of images and detached from all the created things and, above all, from the claims of self. This is the reason some hold that eternity cannot possibly be grasped in a temporal existence. However, Saint Dionysius considers it possible... the experience is indeed possible and that it may well occur so often in a person’s life that he becomes accustomed to looking into and seeing eternity whenever he so desires. And the glance is like no other. It is nobler, dearer to God, and worthier than anything that the creature can do as creature.” (Theologia Germanica- pg. 68-69)

Session 4 Slide 17

Mysticism defined

- Mystical- def.- relating to mystical or supernatural experience and therefore beyond the material world (Encarta/ msn)
- Greek. Mysterion: something hidden or something concealed, a secret.
- Mk 4:11- “The secret (mysterion) of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside, everything is said in parables.”
- Col 1:26- “the mystery (mysterion) that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.” In vs. 27 this mystery is described as, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
- Rev 10:7- the mystery that will be accomplished
- ***What examples of experience of God can you think of in scripture?***
- ***Does God still meet with people today?***

Session 4 Slide 18



Negative Theology (also called
Apophatic Theology)

–Andrew Louth on the origins of the Christian
mystical tradition

Session 4 Slide 19

Gregory of Nyssa- Life of Moses

- 46. "Since he was alone, by having been stripped as it were of the people's fear, he boldly approached the very darkness itself and entered the invisible things where he was no longer seen by those watching. After he entered the inner sanctuary of the divine mystical doctrine, there, while not being seen, he was in company with the Invisible. He teaches, I think, by the things he did that the one who is going to associate intimately with God must go beyond all that is visible and (lifting up his own mind, as to a mountaintop, to the invisible and incomprehensible) believe that the divine is there where the understanding does not reach."
- 47. "... he should believe that the Divine exists, and he should not examine it with respect to quality, quantity, origin, and mode of being, since it is unattainable."

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Gregory of Nyssa- Life of Moses

- 163. "For leaving behind everything that is observed, not only what sense comprehends but also what the intelligence thinks it sees, it keeps on penetrating deeper until by the intelligence's yearning for understanding it gains access to the invisible and the incomprehensible, and there it see God. This is the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness. Wherefore John the sublime, who penetrated in the luminous darkness, says, No one has ever seen God, thus asserting that knowledge of the divine essence is unattainable not only by men but also by every intelligent creature."
- Essence vs. Energies
- Luminous Darkness

Session 4 Slide 21

- "Trinity!! Higher than any being,
- Any divinity, any goodness!
- Guide of Christians
- In the wisdom of heaven!
- Lead us up beyond unknowing and light,
- Up to the farthest, highest peak
- Of mystic scripture,
- Where the mysteries of God's Word
- Lie simple, absolute and unchangeable
- In the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.
- Amid the deepest shadow
- They pour overwhelming light
- On what is most manifest.
- Amid the wholly unsensed and unseen
- They completely fill our sightless minds
- With treasures beyond all beauty."

Pseudo-
Dionysius-
The Mystical
Theology

(Poem at the
beginning of The
Mystical Theology)

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Pseudo-Dionysius- The Mystical Theology

- “The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing.” (pg. 139)
- “... the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable.” (pg. 139)

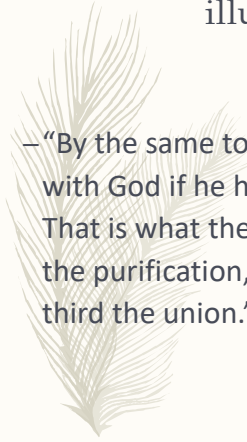
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Pseudo-Dionysius- The Mystical Theology

- God described in negative terms...
- "So this is what we say. The Cause of all is above all and is not inexistent, lifeless, speechless, mindless. It is not a material body, and hence has neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight. It is not in any place and can neither be seen nor be touched. It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. It is not powerless and subject to the disturbances caused by sense perception. It endures no deprivation of light. It passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of all this can either be identified with it nor attributed to it." (pg. 141)
- *Do you think this is helpful description of God? Why or why not?*
- *Have you ever known someone to have an indescribable experience of God? Are you happy with how negative theology explains this?*
- *Is this prayer of emptying oneself biblical? Is it the same eastern prayer or different?*

Session 4 Slide 24

3 fold path- purgation,
illumination, and union



– “By the same token no one can become united with God if he has not before been illumined. That is what the three stages are for. First comes the purification, second the illumination, and third the union.” (Theologia Germanica- pg. 75)

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3 fold path

- Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) - "Our carnal heart is like green wood; it is still soaked with the moisture of concupiscence. If it receives some spark of the fear of God or of divine love the smoke of evil desires and rebellious passions first of all arises. Then the soul becomes strengthened, the flame of love becomes more ardent and more bright, and soon the smoke of passion disappears, and the mind, thus purified, is lifted up to the contemplation of truth. Finally, when by constant contemplation the heart has become penetrated with the truth, when it has attained to the very source of the sovereign truth in all its ardour, when it has been kindled by it, and when it has become transformed into the fire of divine love it feels neither distress nor agitation any more. It has found tranquillity and peace."
- "Thus at the beginning, when, in the midst of dangerous temptations, the soul seeks enlightenment in meditation, there is the smoke and the flame. Afterwards, when it is purified and begins to contemplate the truth, there is flame without smoke. Then, when it has fully found the truth, and charity is perfected within it, it has no longer anything to seek; it rests sweetly in the tranquillity and in the fire of divine love."

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3 fold path- purgation,
illumination, and union

- Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) in *The Twelve Patriarchs and the Mystical Ark* suggests six degrees of contemplation that lead from the natural to the supernatural:
- 1. Simple awareness of things that lead to worship
- 2. The aesthetic stage- awareness of beauty and design in creation
- 3. Sacramental stage- seeing the inner reality of creatures
- 4. Truths according to reason
- 5. Truths above reason
- 6. Truths contrary to reason

Session 4 Slide 27

A few groups worth knowing about

- **Rhineland mystics**- more speculative, apophatic, stressed detachment and spiritual piety- Key figures: Meister Eckhart, Johann Tauler, Henry Suso, and anonymous work used by Martin Luther called *The Theologia Germanica*
- **English Mystics**- Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- **Julian of Norwich**- "He shewed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, which seemed to lie in the palm of my hand; and it was as round as any ball. I looked upon this with the eye of my understanding, and thought, "What may this be?" I was answered... "It is all that is made." I wondered how long it could last; for it seemed as though it might suddenly fade away to nothing, it was so small. And I was answered in my understanding: "It lasts, and ever shall last; for God loveth it. And even so hath everything being- by the love of God. In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it: the second, that God loveth it: the third, that God keepeth it. And what beheld I in this? Truly, the Maker, the Lover and the Keeper. And until I am substantially oned to him, I can never have full rest nor true bliss."

Session 4 Slide 28

Some issues to consider with Mysticism

- Meister Eckhart (1260-1327)- was put on trial for **heresy** by Pope John Paul XXII but died before the end of the trial- ***Is this pantheism, divinisation, or healthy Christianity?***
- From a sermon of his: "In this working God and I are one; He is working and I am becoming. The fire changes anything into itself that is put into it and this takes on the fire's own nature. The wood does not change the fire into itself, but the fire changes the wood into itself. So we are changed into God, that we shall know Him as he is (1 John 3:2). Saint Paul says, "So we shall come to know Him, I knowing Him just as He knows me" (1 Cor 13:12), neither less nor more, perfectly equal."
- From another sermon: The soul has two eyes, one inward and one outward. The inward eye of the soul is the one that sees into being and takes its being from God without anything else mediating. This is its proper function. The outward eye of the soul is the one that its turned toward all creatures, taking note of them by means of images in the manner of a (spiritual) faculty. The person who is turned in on himself so that he knows God by his own taste and in his own ground is freed of all created things and is enclosed in himself as in a veritable fortress of truth.... God does not come to this person. He is there already as being.

Session 4 Slide 29

Some issues to consider with Mysticism

- **Bridal Mysticism- *is this ok? When does it go too far?***
- What sounds like ***universalism*** from Julian of Norwich- Pg. 86- “I shall make all things well.”... Pg. 86- “there is no creature under Christ that knows or shall know until it is done...”
- ***What do you think of this writing by Eckhart? Should this be considered heresy, or can it be defended?***
- ***What do you think of bridal mysticism? Is there a point when is it ok, or where it goes too far?***
- ***What do we do with mystical experience that is used to shape theology?***

Session 4 Slide 30

Mystical or Faithful

– Ephesians 3:14-21 (ANIV)- For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
