


# Italian pentecostalism's understanding of *glossolalia*

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## Title

### **Italian pentecostalism's understanding of *glossolalia***

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#### **Title page**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Concetta and my daughter Keren, who have been very dear and very patient to me and have lovingly encouraged me to complete this research.

## **Declaration**

I, Giovanni Rizzo, declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the North West University for the degree Magister Theologia has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university; that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### **1.1 Proposed title**

**Title:** Italian pentecostalism's understanding of *glossolalia*.

**Key words:** Holy Spirit, indwelling of the Spirit, sovereignty of the Spirit, gifts of Holy Spirit, supernatural events, cessationism, continuationism, Italian Pentecostals, Reformed theology, pentecostal / charismatic theology, pentecostal / charismatic experiences, influence of culture.

### **1.2 Abstract**

Italian pentecostalism believes that the signs and wonders attested to in the book of Acts are to be repeated during the last days, the eschatological age that will introduce the second coming of Christ. Their continuationism stands in contrast to the cessationism found in the majority of Protestant traditions that believe that miracles had ceased after the death of the last apostle or at the end of the apostolic age with its establishment of churches across the *oikoumene* (Maldonado, 2014:216; Wagner, 1999:11; Boulton, 2001:10; Wigglesworth, 2005:57; Rinaldi, 2008:201,227-228,267-269,272-274, 280; Bonnke, 2008:26,28-29). A fundamental characteristic of the Spirit is to be always present and active,<sup>1</sup> as during the creation of the universe he "moved upon the face of the waters", manifesting the presence of God waiting to be at work (Ge, 1:2; Grudem, 2015:155; Bevere, 2016:17). The same Spirit "dwells" in every Christian believer, who represents God's new creation (Moltmann, 1994:17,87,122). The research discusses the practice and teaching about the *charismata* in Italian Pentecostal churches in a critical manner in relation to their continuationism, to contrast it to cessationism, in order to evaluate these arguments in terms of what the New Testament teaches about *charismata* and their continuation in the church.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is true regardless of whether the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and His activity are recognized by the churches.

### **1.3 Background and problem statement**

#### *1.3.1 Background*

Grudem (2015:527) says that the interest in the gifts of the Spirit has increased since the 20th century, due to the influence of the pentecostal and charismatic movements, with chapters dealing with the topic in nearly all textbooks of systematic theology, which is different from texts written by people during the last generations (Wagner, 1999:9; Welker, 1995:17; Gajewski, 2003:37; Introvigne, 1996:48; Rinaldi, 2017:9,15-16,18-22,24,26; Cymbala, 2012:29; Grudem, 2015:527; Moltmann, 1994:11-12). Paul Tillich speaks of the "correlation" between the Holy Spirit and humans. In this part, Tillich deals with the "manifestation of the spiritual presence in the human spirit", in "historical humanity" and in the "spiritual community". The spiritual community is the result of the main event, the event of the work of the Spirit of God (Tillich, 2003:163). Welker (1995:11-13) also states that no one can doubt that nowadays, many people who belong to the charismatic movement have experienced the Holy Spirit in their life, with demonstrations of the power of God acting through and for men (Introvigne, 1996:104, 148-151).

In this study, attention is given to how Italian continuationist and cessationist theologians consider the practice of *glossolalia*, before passages concerning *glossolalia* is exegeted in order to evaluate these arguments and their validity for the present-day church. While it is true that there may be manifestations distorting, in part or totally, the work of the Spirit by human reaction, it is contended that acceptance of the "supernatural" experiences of Christian believers as a demonstration of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit should critically be revisited (Grudem, 2015:532; Hywel-Davies, 2012:251). This study attempts to discern a way between the continuationist and cessationist viewpoints concerning *glossolalia* found in the contemporary Italian Christian church.

#### *1.3.2 Problem statement*

In Acts 2:16-17, Peter explains the events on the day of Pentecost as the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28) and adapts this text to the circumstances of the event

(Bible, 1991/'03). In referring to "the last days", Peter applies it to the period of the apostles and the first church, and the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit. Peter implies that the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the new era of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecost event would continue. There seems to be nothing to suggest that Luke believed that after the inauguration of the new era the gifts and, in particular, that of *glossolalia* would cease. The activity of the Spirit characterises the eschatological era of the church. Cessationist theologians (some Reformed Protestants and Roman Catholics) state that the promise was only for the apostles and their days, and for the establishment of the early church, and that miracles ceased after the era of the apostles (Keener, 2016:chap.2; Wagner, 1999:11; Kendall, 2016:154-158; Grudem, 2015:536-537).

Nowadays, there is a search for the "supernatural" by a growing number of people who are especially interested in visible manifestations (Boulton, 2001:10). Many Pentecostal churches, for this reason, continue to grow very fast (Boulton, 2001:10. Maldonado (2014:14, 31) says that there is a new generation that experiences an unsatisfied hunger for an intimate relationship with God in which He reveals his supernatural power. The risk is that it might lead to exposure to other forms of supernatural powers of diabolical origin (Rinaldi, 2017:9; Kendall, 2016:23-24; Carson, 2017:216,244-246; Cymbala, 2012:34-35; Naso & Salvarani, 2009:72,74-81,83-85).

The question is whether this growing search for the supernatural is reflected in Scripture, for there are cessationist theologians who claim that supernatural events have ceased. To answer the question, it is necessary to consider various texts of the New Testament, for instance: "Follow charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you can prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1), (Bible, 1991/'03). Another text is: "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; [...]; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mk 16:17-18), (Bible, 1991/'03). The question is whether the believers referred to in the text are believers of all times, including our own.

In the light of different viewpoints, **the research question is:** How does one evaluate the actuality of supernatural events from a Scriptural point of view and in the light of the contemporary pentecostal experiences in progress, especially in Italy?

Further questions arising from this are:

- 1) What has been taught and practised, in the history of Christianity, on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural events?
- 2) What are the arguments of the theologians who state that gifts of the Holy Spirit and supernatural events have ceased after the era of the apostles?
- 3) What are the arguments of the pentecostal and charismatic theologians who state the actuality of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of the supernatural events?
- 4) How should one evaluate the authenticity of pentecostal and charismatic experiences in the light of the different viewpoints?
- 5) How should one evaluate these different arguments and perspectives in terms of the New Testament?

## **1.4 Objectives and aims**

### *1.4.1 Objective*

The objective of the research is to clarify both in a theoretical way, from the point of view of Scripture, and in an experiential way, through the witness of believers, the subject of possible continuationism of *glossolalia*, comparing different points of view of two traditions, a pentecostal continuationist and Protestant cessationist.

### *1.4.2 Aims*

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) describe the history of the doctrine of *glossolalia* in the Christian church;

- 2) study and evaluate the arguments of the Italian theologians who state that *glossolalia* had ceased after the era of the apostles;
- 3) study and evaluate the arguments of Italian pentecostal and charismatic theologians who argue for the actuality of the *glossolalia*;
- 4) evaluate the current practice of *glossolalia* among Italian pentecostal and charismatic believers in order to evaluate their authenticity;
- 5) locate Scriptural evidences on *glossolalia*, interpret the applicable Scriptural passages and identify biblical principles to serve as guidelines to rediscover the practice of *glossolalia*.

### **1.5 Central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument of this research is that the Christian church is divided between some who believe that the practice of *glossolalia*, as a vital part of the early church's experience of the revelation of the Spirit in inspired speech and signs of healing and deliverance, are to be continued in present times while others believe that it ceased at the death of the last apostle. The arguments in the Italian church are reviewed and compared to the information the New Testament provides about *glossolalia*, in order to show a way forward that might contribute to a better ecumenical understanding among different Christian traditions.

### **1.6 Methodology**

The following methods are used to answer the various research questions:

- 1) to achieve the first three aims, a history of the doctrine of *glossolalia*, arguments of Italian cessationist theologians re *glossolalia*, and arguments of Italian pentecostal and charismatic theologians re *glossolalia*, a comparative analysis of the literature is conducted. The literary analysis employs evaluation, comparison and analysis of different resources;

- 2) to achieve the fourth aim, an evaluation of contemporary Italian experiences of *glossolalia*, auto-ethnographical observations will be made based on direct observations of charismatic experiences, especially of *glossolalia*, in the context of the Italian pentecostal church to which the researcher belongs, and compared to charismatic experiences described in books cited in the research. The experiences will be evaluated using Scripture and theological literature as lens;
- 3) to achieve the last aim, an evaluation of the arguments concerning *glossolalia* in the light of the Scriptures, the grammatical-historical method will be used as exegetical tool.

### **1.7 Concept clarification**

“Italian Pentecostals:” Italian Pentecostals, starting from the 1980s and 1990s, have experienced significant growth. They have much in common with classical Pentecostals, as far as doctrine is concerned, but they act as independent groups, such as “Parola della Grazia”, “Ministero Sabaoth” and “Missione Paradiso” which, in addition to having numerous new converts, also attract members of existing Pentecostal churches. These denominations have revived, with much emphasis, the attention to the supernatural, and the desire to return to the fervour of the apostolic church, to baptism in the Holy Spirit as an “experience” of *glossolalia*, following salvation and healing of body and soul, which are perhaps the strongest attractions for interested people. Classical pentecostals are linked to the origins of pentecostalism which arose in Italy in the first decades of the 20th century and developed especially in the post-war period. Currently it seems that these classical Pentecostals, for example the “Assemblee di Dio in Italia” and the “Chiesa Apostolica in Italia”, have slowed down in their growth.

“Charismatics:” Those who are part of the “charismatic renewal” that originated in the 1960s within the American Episcopal, Lutheran and Catholic Church. They believe and practice the *charisma*, including *glossolalia*, healing and prophecy within existing mainline churches, without giving rise to autonomous movements as the Pentecostals did.

“Cessationism:” The assertion that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, healings and tongues ceased after the end of the era of the apostles, including *glossolalia*.

“Continuationism:” The assertion that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, healings and *glossolalia* have not ceased and will not cease as long as the age of the church lasts. According to the continuationists, the Holy Spirit has the important role in the church to give believers the necessary power to be witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8), (Bible, 1991/'03). Therefore, God has sent him to bear witness to the word of his grace and to grant signs and wonders to be done by the hand of believers. Therefore, believers must not quench the Spirit (1 Th 5:19; Bible, 1991/'03), but respect his sovereignty and receive his gifts.

### **1.8 Provisional classification of chapters**

1. Introduction: research proposal
2. History of the doctrine of *glossolalia*
3. Arguments of Italian cessationist theologians re *glossolalia*
4. Arguments of Italian pentecostal and charismatic theologians re *glossolalia*
5. Evaluation of contemporary Italian experiences of *glossolalia*: authentic or suggested?
6. *Glossolalia* in the light of the Scriptures
7. Summary, conclusion and possible future research

### 1.9 Schematic presentation

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
What does history learn about the way the Christian church thought through the ages about the continuation of the <i>charismata</i> ?	The aim is to analyse and clarify the doctrine of <i>glossolalia</i> in the historical development of the Christian church.	Comparative literature review.
What are the arguments of the theologians who state that <i>glossolalia</i> has ceased after the era of the apostles?	Study and evaluate the arguments of the theologians who state that <i>glossolalia</i> has ceased after the era of the apostles.	Comparative literature review.
What are the arguments of the pentecostal and charismatic theologians who state the actuality of <i>glossolalia</i> ?	Study and evaluate the arguments of the pentecostal and charismatic theologians who state the actuality of <i>glossolalia</i> .	Comparative literature review.
How can one evaluate the authenticity of current charismatic experiences in the light of the different viewpoints?	Investigate, by means auto-ethnographical observations, <i>glossolalia</i> and evaluate its authenticity.	Auto-ethnographical observations.
In the light of Scripture, how do the arguments of cessationists and continuationists compare re <i>glossolalia</i> ?	Locate scriptural evidences on <i>glossolalia</i> , interpret it and identify biblical principles to serve as guidelines.	Grammatical-historical exegesis of relevant texts.

## CHAPTER 2

### History of the doctrine of glossolalia

From the Pentecostal believer's point of view, the *glossolalia* is equivalent to the gift of tongues, and is the most common spiritual gift because it is received at the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which it is considered the obvious sign (Porrello, 2007:36). According to Bonnke (2008:102) the evidence of speaking in other tongues eliminates any uncertainty about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which being real, must be demonstrated tangibly and not go unnoticed.

This gift is followed by all the other gifts that the Spirit distributes as He wills (1 Cor 12:11), (Bible, 1991/'03).<sup>2</sup> Thus the *glossolalia* can be considered the gift that first testifies of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon believers and, at the same time, its continuity testifies of the continuity of the other miraculous gifts. Therefore, this gift is also the most controversial and discussed gift with regards to its validity, continuity or disappearance (Wagner, 1999:160).

The *glossolalia*, or gift of unknown tongues, is that ability, given by the Holy Spirit to the members of the Body of Christ, to speak directly with God in a language never learned or it is also that ability to receive an inspired and immediate message of God to communicate to his people (Wagner, 1999:161), whereby the *glossolalia* also takes on the character of prophecy when it is accompanied by the gift of the interpretation of tongues (Rinaldi, 2008:280).

The *glossolalia* is, for Pentecostals and Neo-pentecostals, an indispensable experience that follows the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because for them, *glossolalia* is a new form of language that marks spiritual power and allows new forms of expression in prayer and praise to God (Welker, 1995:21).

The New Testament, particularly in the Book of Acts and the first Pauline letter to the Corinthians, attests that *glossolalia* is one of the manifestations of "the oldest

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<sup>2</sup> The pronoun "He" referring to the Holy Spirit, is found in the King James Version translation. This emphasizes the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person. However, there should be no question of ascribing a gender identity to him.

Christian spirituality" (Rinaldi, 2008:284); it represents the beginning of the Church's aggregating activity, as opposed to what happened in Babylon, according to Genesis 11:1-9 (Bible, 1991/03), with the confusion of languages. The *glossolalia* was the miracle of the day of Pentecost performed by the Holy Spirit; and the sensitive presence of the Spirit was attested to by the manifestation of the *glossolalia* (Rinaldi, 2008:284). The evidence of the spread of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian era was attested by the *glossolalia* (Rinaldi, 2008:285).

## **2.1 Biblical models of the descent of the Spirit: the shekinah of OT and the Pentecost of NT<sup>3</sup>**

*Shekinah* is a biblical term of the Hebrew language, literally translated as "dwelling". Its meaning in the Old Testament indicates the "physical" presence of God, that is, the divine presence that is really manifested even with signs that are perceived through the human senses. *Shekinah* actually indicates the divine Spirit dwelling in believers, and "that we experience in his vitality against the stiffening of sin and the freezing of death" (Moltmann, 1994:73). The theologian Welker (1995:13) affirms that the divine Spirit is present and works among men and upon men,<sup>4</sup> sovereignly and "regardless of our possibility and willingness to experience it".

It is reasonable to think, therefore, that even today believers must expect the Holy Spirit to act as in the past, as it has always done, and that his descent at Pentecost is the biblical New Testament model of what the Church must expect from the work of the Holy Spirit (Spurgeon, 2011:7). The first disciples after they were heartened by the sight of the risen Jesus Christ were even more strengthened by the knowledge that they had received the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who was sent to them as a gift from the Father precisely in accordance with the intercessory prayer of the risen Saviour himself (Rinaldi, 2008:215), that He might dwell, as in the *shekinah* of the Old Testament, not only in them but also in the following generations, forever and not temporarily (Spurgeon, 2011:8), and that He might manifest his power not only

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<sup>3</sup> By biblical models of the descent of the Holy Spirit the author means to speak of biblical examples that describe how the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in the OT and NT. Because the Holy Spirit acts like the wind that blows where it wants and can always surprise.

<sup>4</sup> "...men and about men" is part of a quote from Welker. This statement is not meant to discriminate against women, but to include all of humankind.

at the time of the apostolic generation but still today and in the future as it has been from "the beginning. According to the Pentecostal model, in fact, God works on people near and far, that is, in relation to time, He has worked in past times, He works in the present and He will work in future times (Welker, 1995:13).

Spurgeon (2011:7-8), the famous Reformed Baptist preacher of the 19th century, said that the Holy Spirit, being God, cannot change or diminish his power over time, so believers grieve Him when they think that today He works less than He has worked in the past. The Holy Spirit, in fact, was sent by the Father "until the coming of the Lord and never returned". Only if He is present can He be quenched and grieved, therefore by Christian believers, He cannot be grieved by the world because He does not dwell there (Bonnke, 2008:108).

In Acts 1:8 (Bible, 1991/'03) the Lord Jesus promises strength, through the outpouring of the Spirit, to carry out the mission of evangelisation. Acts 2:39 (Bible, 1991/'03) also confirms that the promise is for all believers whom God will call, and Acts 1:4 states that it is the promise of the Father (Keener, 2016:chap.11). Indeed, from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost until the return of the Lord, the Church must be equipped with the "power" necessary for the mission of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom with full effectiveness (Grudem, 2015:529); to carry out this mission the Church must therefore seek to make abundant use of spiritual gifts, which also serve the purpose of edification of the Church itself, that is, the Body of Christ (1Cor 14:1,12), (Bible, 1991/'03). Spiritual gifts must continue to exist and be exercised, therefore, for the benefit of the Church as long as she exists on earth, and until the second coming of the Lord (Grudem, 2015:537-538), which will coincide with the long-awaited event of the Rapture of the "born again," who will meet "the Lord in the air" to be with him forever (1Th 4:15-17), (Bible, 1991/'03).

Pentecost marked the beginning of a new era, the era of the "last times. In fact, Pentecost, edification on what preceded it in the Old Testament, inaugurated something new: with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit it conferred the power of ministry on all God's people to fulfil their evangelistic mission on earth (Keener,

2016:chap.2). As long as the people of God have this mission to accomplish, they will need the power of the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2016:chap.11).

## ***2.2 The charismatic character of the early Church, a model for the Church today***

The book of Acts presents believers with the charismatic model applied to the Church, narrating the experiences of the first Christian communities, which were formed while the apostles were still alive. The first Christian communities are "animated by the Holy Spirit which they received from God" and which nourishes in them enthusiasm, courage and inspiration. As the historian of Christianity, Rinaldi (2008:227-228) states, the narrations in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, relating to the origins of the first Christian communities, are "an example for us Christians today" and above all they are reliable because they are narrated by a historian who lived at that time and who was personally involved in that context, this was the evangelist Luke, author also of the Gospel of the same name.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul with his letters (Rinaldi, 2008:272), especially the one addressed to the Corinthians, highlights the pre-eminent role that the Holy Spirit had in distributing gifts and ministries to the members of the first Christian communities and for the benefit of the members themselves to perform miraculous operations; even in those communities outside Jerusalem where the apostles did not work directly, and where they did not exercise direct influence with their spiritual authority. In these communities, spiritual gifts were exercised with miraculous signs that had the effect of attracting new members and at the same time served for the edification of individual members of the communities themselves (Rinaldi, 2008:267-268). In his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:18), (Bible, 1991/'93), the Apostle deals abundantly with the gift of tongues in many ways to explain their use and usefulness, and he himself boasts of the abundant manifestation of this gift in his personal devotion (Bonnke, 2008:92).

The Apostles, who were still alive during the first century of Christianity's history and who represented the guarantor authority of divine revelation, recognised and made official through the laying on of hands the conferring of ministries and spiritual gifts

(Rinaldi, 2008:268), and especially the initial gift of the baptism of the Spirit with the sign of the *glossolalia* (Ac 6:6; 8:17; 19:6), (Bible, 1991/'93). The laying on of hands was only a symbolic instrument that did not confer authority on the ministers of the church (Rinaldi, 2008:268), but served only for their recognition, because everything that happened, it is good to emphasise it again, by the Holy Spirit directly, and, therefore, not by any ecclesiastical authority (1 Cor 12:11), (Bible, 1991/'93). In this regard, the historian Rinaldi (2008:273-274) cites as an example what happened in the early centuries of Christianity with regard to one of the most important ministries widespread in the early church, that of liberation from demonic possession and vexation, explaining that this example can also apply to what happened with all other ministries and miraculous gifts. It is recounted in the Gospels that the ministry of liberation from demonic possessions and harassment was one of the most important aspects of Jesus' ministry on earth, and it is written in the Gospel of Mark which was given by Jesus himself to his disciples (Mk 16:17), (Bible, 1991/'93). Now, it happened that while initially this ministry was conferred directly by the Holy Spirit on members of Christian communities, it was later institutionalised, because it was conferred by an ecclesiastical authority, thus losing its charismatic character.

Rinaldi (2008:340-341) affirms that "among the most relevant aspects of the history of Christians in the second century was the decline of the charismatic dimension of worship and the incipient regulation of the liturgy" with ever more rigid formulas and this was certainly due to the process of institutionalisation that transformed the aspect of the Church (Rinaldi, 2008:280). Therefore, in the course of a few centuries, already in the second century at the time of the Fathers of the Church, the exercise of charisms began to "go out", the gift of *glossolalia* began to rarefy (Carson, 2017:224), and the charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit remained in shadow, almost alien to the Church, for almost two millennia (Bonnke, 2008:26). Theologians and teachers, like Augustine of Hippo, elaborated the teaching on salvation only on the basis of "grace", effectively obscuring the person of the Holy Spirit on whom the pentecostal experience focuses attention. They therefore attributed God's spiritual actions and the power of God to an impersonal power, rather than to that power which was given through the baptism of the Spirit by speaking in tongues (Bonnke,

2008:26-29,104). While, it is certain that the early church was "charismatic and visionary" and accompanied by "supernatural sacred" daily (Rinaldi, 2008:269) worship meetings were animated by the exercise of charisms, which were widespread in early Christian communities (Rinaldi, 2008:280). The books of the New Testament describe all this in detail (Rinaldi, 2008:201). In modern times the evangelist Bonnke witnessed, during his evangelisation campaigns in Africa, how hundreds and thousands of people were suddenly baptised with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues at the same time (Bonnke, 2008:94).

### ***2.3 The disappearance of the glossolalia in the first centuries of Church history and the "Montanist" interval***

However, the ability to speak in unknown tongues, i.e. *glossolalia*, one of the most widespread manifestations in the early church, also a consequence of the modern pentecostal miracle and a sensitive attestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, began to disappear from the cults that were held in Christian communities since the early centuries (Carson, 2017:223).

The only brief historical interval during which the *glossolalia* reappeared in a significant way dates back to the time of the Montanist movement, between the second half of the second century and the first decades of the third century, disappearing again around the year 220. During this period, in fact, the Montanist movement tried to revive the use of charisms, *glossolalia* and prophecy in particular (Rinaldi, 2019:17), as a reaction to the almost total disappearance of these spiritual gifts, and as a reaction to the hierarchy of communities that was growing at that time (Rinaldi, 2008:285). The Montanist movement opposed the charism against the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, the charismatic practice within a few years was so radicalised by the Montanists that they placed the text of Scripture in second place, using it simply as a pretext (Rinaldi, 2019:17). Thanks to the compilation of the biblical canon of the New Testament, which was being completed in those years, the Montanist movement was fought with the biblical Word, collected and transcribed, and declared heretical movement until its complete decline (Rinaldi, 2019:17). The church, in fact, had to defend itself from the abuses of the Montanist movement,

especially from the exasperated use of prophecy (Carson, 2017:227). The same movement therefore cannot be counted among the fathers of the modern pentecostal movement (Rinaldi, 2019:18), which places fidelity and obedience to Scripture among its priorities.

Around the fourth century, however, the Greek bishop and theologian John Chrysostom already had no knowledge of the gift of *glossolalia* (Rinaldi, 2008:285), making no mention of it in his writings, even though it is a gift clearly attested to in the New Testament.

Indeed, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles the gift of *glossolalia* is clearly documented by Luke as the initial sign that characterises baptism in the Holy Spirit (Horton *et al.*, 2016:1959). Luke documents in three passages of Acts (Ac, 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:1-7), (Bible, 1991/'93) that the experience of the *glossolalia* is an outward expression so closely related to baptism in the Holy Spirit that it is a normal experience for the early Church and from the context of these passages it is clear that God wants it to be a normal experience for the Church today (Horton *et al.*, 2016:1960,1964,1971). In chapter 16 of Mark's Gospel, verse 17 mentions speaking "new tongues" as one of the signs that would accompany the life and ministry of believers (Horton *et al.*, 2016:1788). However, the passage from verse 9 to verse 20 of the Gospel of Mark is missing in two of the oldest Greek manuscripts but is present in many others, in most of the ancient Greek manuscripts and in all those that have been used to write the New Testament. Therefore, this passage has been accepted by many scholars and experts of the Bible as a text written by the biblical author in all likelihood. But even if it had been added later to the original text, this passage from the Gospel of Mark is accepted as a text that is certainly inspired and authoritative like the rest of Scripture and is a testimony to the experience of the Church in the first century, which also attests that believers spoke "new tongues" (Horton *et al.*, 2016:1786).

Also in the First Letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul speaks of the *glossolalia*, which seems to be the gift most admired and sought after by the Corinthians, and therefore normally spread among them, so much so that Paul compares it with that

of prophecy, and exhorts the Corinthians to seek the gift of prophecy more because it is more useful because it gives the ability to communicate an understandable message and edification to the others who listen (Bosio, 1997:103,113). The *glossolalia*, anyway, represents the sign of the spread of the Holy Spirit on every individual in recent times, which was foretold by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29), (Bible, 1991/93).

Indeed, there are other historical testimonies that provide evidence that for several centuries, throughout the history of the church, there have been sporadic manifestations of charismatic gifts. Carson (2017:223) affirms that this historical evidence is important to fight against any doctrine that stubbornly wants to prove that charismatic manifestations are false or even of demonic origin. It is true, on the other hand, that from Montanism onward there were no great charismatic movements until the beginning of the twentieth century with the birth and development of the modern pentecostal movement.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***2.4 The glossolalia, sign of the descent of the Holy Spirit on believers***

According to the historian Spini (2002:251-252), a careful reading of the New Testament clearly shows that every believer after baptism in water must expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whose descent is attested precisely by the sign of the *glossolalia*, that is, "speaking in other tongues" as happened on the day of Pentecost; because it is quite evident that the evangelist Luke considered the *glossolalia* of Pentecost as an external sign and initial physical proof of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Even though there are scholars who say that Luke did not intend to teach that the Holy Spirit should always be accompanied by tongues (Keener, 2016:chap.3). Moreover, this experience, which represents the "seal" of the baptism of the Spirit on Christian believers, according to Pentecostals and Charismatics can be accompanied by other charismatic gifts such as the interpretation of other tongues, prophecy and healing of the sick, as it is written in

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<sup>5</sup> It cannot be denied that the Holy Spirit over the centuries has moved many people through the manifestation of his gifts; however, by "great charismatic movements" we mean those in which a considerable number of people were involved at the same time, and which attracted attention through the manifestation of charismatic gifts, beginning with glossolalia. This is what happened at the beginning of the 20th century.

the book of the Acts of the Apostles and in several Epistles, especially the Pauline ones (Spini, 2002:252).

According to the evangelist Bonnke (2008:92,103-105), speaking in tongues is the sensitive sign of the Holy Spirit and its manifestation has brought about an extraordinary change in evangelism, such that it can be considered "as the most important development since the beginning of the twentieth century".

Over the centuries in Christian worship, "spontaneity" and the "natural exercise of charismatic gifts" have been replaced by a "codified and repetitive, formal and rigid ritual" that has artificially limited the very freedom of the Holy Spirit in guiding Christian communities (Rinaldi, 2008:280). Moltmann (1994:216) affirms, in fact, that modern liturgies abound in sermons but in fact grant nothing to spontaneity, because they programme everything that must be said and heard. Therefore, in churches, which are also part of the Body of Christ, where rigid liturgies are applied, only a few are allowed to speak, while the rest are only allowed to listen. On the other hand, Moltmann (1994:216) says again, by "speaking in tongues" God has allowed everyone to have a new experience of personal faith, and he wanted to give the power to speak to everyone, allowing "mute" people to be able to open their mouths and express what they themselves feel and experience personally thanks to the inspiration of the Spirit, making everyone participate actively in the life of the Body.

## ***2.5 Glossolaly and prophecy***

The Apostle Paul exhorted the search for charisms and above all the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1), (Bible, 1991/'93). The *glossolalia* accompanied by the gift of interpretation is equivalent to the gift of prophecy (Rinaldi, 2008:280), as it is possible to transmit a testimony by means of an understandable "word" which is given at the appropriate time, which obviously does not violate Scripture, and which is given by the direct action of the Holy Spirit who inspires words. Moltmann (1994:216) also affirms that speaking in tongues can be interpreted by the Holy Spirit and that it can communicate a prophetic message, which is not deduced from doctrine, nor from a natural psychological reaction to a certain situation, but is rather

an inspired and relevant message for the precise time and circumstances in which it is communicated. In fact, contrary to what Waldron (2019:22,45) states, Pentecostals know well that prophecy today must add nothing to Scripture (Keener, 2016:chap.2), let alone compete with it (Grudem, 2015:538); in fact, prophecy is not intended to lay any new foundation with respect to the infallible content of the New Testament, which has already been laid once and for all and is contained in the closed biblical canon. For a Pentecostal, Scripture is sufficient and its absolute authority should not be compromised (Grudem, 2015:538-539). However, prophecy must have the same nature of infallibility as biblical prophecy in order to give specific direction and advice for the edification of believers in the church at all times and circumstances. Otherwise, in fact, a prophecy of a lower degree, therefore without divine authority, could be dangerous and misleading, and would be of little use for the edification of believers.<sup>6</sup> Scripture does not speak of inferior prophets but warns against false prophets, who are a more serious threat than those who, despite being prophets, can in good faith hear or miscommunicate God's communication. In judging prophets, the criteria set forth in Deuteronomy 18:22 and 13:1-5 remain valid, as well as in 1 John 2:22 for those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, 1 John 4:2-3 for those who deny that Jesus came in the flesh, and 1 Corinthians 12:3 for those who declare that Jesus is an anathema (Bible, 1991/'93), and for all those false prophets who promote immorality (Keener, 2016:chap.7).

For it is true that the foundation of the Church was first laid through the apostles and prophets, it is also true that afterwards the superstructure of the Church is being built, which needs just as many suitable apostles and prophets to build it. Therefore, the apostles and prophets of today are not engaged in laying any new foundation, but are engaged in edification of the superstructure of the Church of Christ. Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:10 about the construction of "God's building" (Bible, 1991/'93). He says that he laid the foundation as a wise architect, and that others have the task of edification of the superstructure (Mk 16:18; Eph 4:11-13), (Bible, 1991/'93). For the same reason, the gift of tongues and the related gift of

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<sup>6</sup> The gift of prophecy should be considered with great caution, but the criteria for evaluating its validity remain biblical ones; among these, it is important that prophecy never contradicts Scripture, but rather clearly indicates that it follows its principles.

interpretation are useful for the edification of the Church and have not ceased to be equal to prophecy. The continuity of these gifts is proven by the testimony of millions of Pentecostal and charismatic believers in the world who speak in other tongues.

## ***2.6 The institutionalisation of ecclesiastical hierarchies: an obstacle to the exercise of gifts***

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the "institutionalisation of ecclesiastical hierarchies" is the main cause of the loss of "spontaneity" and "natural exercise of charismatic gifts", replaced by a "codified and repetitive, formal and rigid ritual" (Carson, 2017:12). The "institutionalisation of ecclesiastical hierarchies" has been and will continue to be the main enemy of any Christian awakening movement. The construction of an ecclesiastical hierarchical structure has constituted, throughout the history of Christianity, a real process of transformation in the church. However, this hierarchy has found its justification in part in the need to fight against heresies and to defend the apostolic deposit and sound doctrine; as well as in the need to defend the Church from excesses in the exercise of charisms, in particular from excesses found in the exercise of the gift of prophecy.<sup>7</sup> The Montanist movement, for example, exasperated the exercise of the gift of prophecy to such an extent that it was declared a heretical movement. However, from the story of Montanism it was possible to make a deduction to the advantage of the continuity of charismatic gifts, i.e. that the church knew and cultivated prophecy. It certainly considered the exercise of the gift of prophecy valid until before the abuses of the Montanist movement (Carson, 2017:225) and until then there was no reason to fear that prophecy might compromise the "apostolic deposit" (Carson, 2017:227). It can thus be said that the church's position against the exercise of prophecy was an ecclesiastical reaction (Carson, 2017:227). In fact, however, the church took a theological position against any charismatic movement as an attitude of self-defence.

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<sup>7</sup> Montanism has unfortunately highlighted how human nature can tend to abuse the use of charismatic gifts bordering on pure fanaticism, to the point of putting the authority of Scripture in second order. The spiritual authorities of the church should always watch and examine to ensure that the exercise of charismatic gifts does not overstep the principles of Scripture. An improper use of prophecy could also cause it to be despised, so the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians urges that prophecy not be despised. From a Pentecostal perspective, however, to be afraid to consider charismatic gifts good and to stop seeking them would be to quench the Spirit. While this is also why the Apostle Paul exhorts, again the Thessalonians, not to quench the Spirit.

As a result, the charismatic ministries began to be replaced by the institutional ministries of bishops, priests and deacons and as a result of this, women who had previously actively exercised charismatic gifts in the church (1 Cor 11:5), (Bible, 1991/'93), who were directly involved by the Holy Spirit on a par with men (Rinaldi, 2008:269), began to be ousted from all ecclesiastical hierarchies which unfortunately took on a purely masculine character, among other things in a strongly patriarchal social context. Instead, the promise contained in Joel 2:28-29 (Bible, 1991/'93), concerning the experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit expected for eschatological times and already lived by the early Christians, is made in equal measure to both women and men (Moltmann, 1994:273). This effectively eliminates all privilege of men over women, just as, in the same promise, all privilege of the elders over the young and the masters over the slaves are also eliminated, because no distinction is made between them in the dimension of the Spirit (Rinaldi, 2008:269).

### ***2.7 The era of the kingdom of the Holy Spirit inaugurated by Jesus***

The promise contained in Joel 2:28-29 in fact represents the era that was inaugurated by Jesus (Bible, 1991/'93), and it is the era of the kingdom of the Holy Spirit, in which all can experience their gifts personally and all can enter into a new relationship of fellowship with God (Moltmann, 1994:273). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it began to happen on the day of Pentecost leads to a pneumatological church (Moltmann, 1994:274), and makes it a prophetic and eschatological people. It is true what Waldron (2019:93) says about the uniqueness and unrepeatability of the Pentecost event in redemptive history, but it is equally true that Pentecost was the beginning of an experience that never stopped. This event was precisely the foundation and inauguration of the Christian church that developed in the eschatological era (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and the disciples of the Messiah are people of the era of the Messiah and the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2016:Intr.). Although, as Moltmann (1994:274) states, both hierarchical and Christocentric ecclesiologies preclude believers from experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the first Christians did at Pentecost.

The era inaugurated by Jesus still lasts, because the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its prophetic expressions, the exercise of the *glossolalia*, did not cease immediately after Pentecost, nor can it be inferred from the language of Luke that he had in mind the planned cessation of that activity of the Holy Spirit before the return of the Lord (Keener, 2016:chap.2). Thus today many people, not subject to these ecclesiologies, live the experience of the real presence of the Spirit of God filling believers with power (Welker, 1995:11), both in the exercise of personal piety and in enabling them to exercise ministry in the context of the Christian community and in view of witnessing to the world. This statement cannot be denied because to the people who have lived, and those who are living, this profound experience of God's presence in the Holy Spirit are part of a religious movement characterised by a strong dynamism in the missionary field and is expanding numerically (Rinaldi, 2019:3). In fact, in the context of Christianity the Pentecostal movement has acquired considerable importance because it has grown in a short time and continues to grow in an exponential way, such as to assume planetary proportions (Welker, 1995:17). This expansion is unique in the history of religions, not only in the world but also in Italy (Rinaldi, 2019:3).

### ***2.8 The context of the birth of the pentecostal movement***

The historian Rinaldi (2019:22) affirms that there is a very convincing thesis, supported by various scholars, that pentecostalism derives from the movements of Holiness, which in turn derive from Wesley's Methodism (Rinaldi, 2017:24). Wesley, in turn, was influenced by the pietist currents that developed within early Protestantism, that is, the historical one of the Reformation (Introvigne, 1996:17,19). Pietism arose in the second half of the seventeenth century as a movement of renewal to promote spiritual awakening in the Lutheran Church, which had stiffened in institutional formalism, losing the fervour of the initial faith. The pietists referred to the universal priesthood of all believers, and gave greater importance to personal reading and meditation on the Bible than to the liturgy, diminishing in fact the authority and mediating position of the clergy. They also placed great emphasis on conversion and personal holiness, as well as communion of members and witnesses (Rubboli, 2007:48-49).

The historian Spini (2002:251-252) also states that the pentecostal movement was born as an awakening movement from Wesley's spirituality and Methodism, as well as from 19th century revivalists such as Spurgeon in England and Moody in America. From the reading of the New Testament, especially from the testimony of the Acts, the churches involved in these awakenings were convinced that baptism in water should be followed by that of the Holy Spirit with the sign of *glossolalia*, and that this gift should be followed by other charismatic gifts (Spini, 2002:252).

### *2.8.1 The awakening movements of the late nineteenth century and the different interpretations of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit".*

The birth of pentecostalism, what can still be defined as a first root not necessarily characterised by interest in the sign of *glossolalia* and other miraculous gifts (Introvigne, 1996:23-24), was also influenced by other currents, which were born especially in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. These were characterised by their own peculiar interpretation of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit"; in fact, many preachers and groups belonging to these currents spoke of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" but understood it in different ways. Naturally, these different interpretations of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" were based on the work of sanctification and perfection of the believer, and not yet on the experience of the *glossolalia*, which will become indispensable for the Pentecostal movement. One current led to the formation of other denominations within the Holiness current; it deviated from classical Methodism, because it believed that in addition to the two experiences of justification and sanctification, as a work of grace, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit", also called "baptism of fire", constituted a third experience. Another current was formed within the Presbyterian Calvinist world, thanks to an awakening at Oberlin College, Ohio, in which Charles G. Finney and Asa Mahan were the protagonists, who taught above all about the "perfection" of the believer through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which consisted more in giving the believer greater strength for witness and service to the Gospel (Introvigne, 1996:23-24). Another very important current of interpretation of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" developed from 1875 onwards from the "Keswick Movement" in England, where several conferences were held, led by Anglicans and with people of different denominations. These were rather open to

different interpretations of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Introvigne, 1996:24), but were particularly influenced by the doctrine of groups of holiness preachers from the Baptist world, separated from the Methodist Holiness movement. The main characteristic of their doctrine was to consider the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a third work of grace. A new interpretation of the Keswick Movement considered the baptism of the Holy Spirit an experience for the "suppression" of man's sinful nature, and not an uprooting (Introvigne & Zoccatelli, 2018).

Already in the eighteenth century, but especially in these great revival movements of the nineteenth century some interest in healings, *glossolalia* and prophecy also began to manifest itself; for example in Presbyterian circles with Charles G. Finney (Introvigne, 1996:24-25; 2004:22-23). In addition, thanks to famous preachers such as Dwight L. Moody, who did not come from Methodism, there were occasional experiences of *glossolalia* in his revivals, although they were not widely followed (Introvigne, 1996:24,28; 2004:30), because Moody also preferred to understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a force given to the believer for witness and service to the gospel (Introvigne, 2004:23). There were also occasional manifestations of *glossolalia* with the Scotsman Edwards Irving, who was pastor of the Apostolic Catholic Church (Introvigne, 1996:28). Finally, *glossolalia* also manifested itself in religious movements of Christian origin such as the "Mormons" and the "Shakers", although these did not continue with this experience, so it can be said that *glossolalia* manifestations occurred in some historical phases, but sporadically until the beginning of the 20th century when the modern pentecostal movement exploded (Introvigne, 1996:28; 2004:30-31).

### *2.8.2 At the basis of pentecostal theology characterised by glossolalia is Methodist theology*

First of all, it must be said that the notion of "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is of Methodist origin (Introvigne, 1996:22). Therefore, in particular, the origin of the pentecostal movement from Methodism is also important to recognise a theological and doctrinal basis for the pentecostal movement (Rinaldi, 2019:21), which added to this tradition, speaking in other tongues as a sensitive experience to attest to the

baptism of the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:213). Although many scholars are of the opinion that speaking in other tongues should not constitute the indispensable proof that one has been baptised in the Spirit (Carson, 2017:214), the pentecostal experience shows that an exegesis in favour of tongues, even of Acts 8, is correct, thanks to the fact that the frequency with which the experience of the *glossolalia* is manifested can be very high. The "sword of experience", as the evangelist Bonnke (2008:33) states, is the weapon that succeeds in solving those difficult questions that cannot be solved differently.

However, it is evident, as has been said, that behind the birth of the pentecostal movement there was a time of preparation, so that the pentecostal explosion did not come suddenly out of nowhere. The birth of pentecostalism, in fact, was preceded by the awakening movements of the eighteenth century, which helped to nourish in believers a certain spiritual fervour (Gajewski, 2003:37), and the desire for sanctification and a strong renewal of the life of faith. In particular, in the eighteenth century, Methodism was born and developed, from which derives the notion of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Introvigne, 2004:20), by the brothers John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. In the second half of the eighteenth century Methodism became an autonomous denomination, after it began to separate from the Church of England, and spread to North America. Whitefield, however, soon separated from the Wesley brothers and founded the "Methodist Episcopal Church" through evangelisation work among the English colonies in America (Gajewski, 2003:38). Within Methodism, in the 19th century, the expression "baptism of the Holy Spirit" became common (Introvigne, 2004:21), although it was more connected with the power of sanctification (Introvigne, 1996:22), and not with the experience of the *glossolalia* (Rinaldi, 2017:15-16). Therefore, from a theological point of view, the expression "baptism of the Holy Spirit", which had become more widespread in the Holiness current and which was linked to sanctification, was reinterpreted by pentecostal charismatics, because they attributed to it the "new content" of the experience of *glossolalia* (Introvigne, 1996:21,23).

For his part, Wesley, in his theology, emphasised above all the concept of inner holiness connected with the power of the Holy Spirit (Introvigne, 1996:22), whereby

holiness is impossible without the support of God's spiritual gifts and the continuous search for his presence to grow in hope, faith, love (Benecchi, 2005:38-39), and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18), (Bible, 1991/'93).

Later, in the United States, in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the context of Methodism, the movements of holiness arose in order to restore strength to Wesley's thought because it had lost his original doctrinal clarity (Rinaldi, 2019:20). These movements of holiness placed at the centre of doctrine and faith the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as the second work of grace for the process of sanctification of the Christian (Rinaldi, 2019:19-21). This consisted of an experience of "perfection" of the believer (Introvigne, 1996:23), which in the movements of holiness was even more radicalised, breaking somehow with classical Methodism (Introvigne, 2004:21-22). These radical evangelicals of the late nineteenth century wanted to live by experiencing what they studied in Scripture and expected that God would still work according to what they read in it (Keener, 2016:chap.1), especially in the Acts and letters of Paul (Spini, 2002:252). At the same time another awakening developed among the American churches, by Jonathan Edwards, called the "Great Awakening" (Gajewski, 2003:38). The main characteristic of these awakenings was their ability to bring the churches closer to the masses (Gajewski, 2003:37) because the churches had moved away from them by assuming their institutional forms " cold and in plaster" and devoid of spiritual fervour (Rinaldi, 2008:269) and it is precisely this spiritual force of renewal that was later transmitted to the pentecostal movement, fighting against all forms of institutionalisation and spiritual cooling of the churches (Introvigne, 2004:12-13,17-18). While interest in healings, *glossolalia* and prophecy began to manifest itself in the great revival movements of the nineteenth century, for example in the Presbyterian environment with Charles G. Finney (Introvigne, 1996:24-25; 2004:22-23) and thanks to famous preachers, such as Dwight L. Moody, who did not come from Methodism (Introvigne, 1996:24,28) and understood the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a force given to the believer for witness and service to the Gospel (Introvigne, 2004:23); and Edwards Irving, who was pastor of the Apostolic Catholic Church (Introvigne, 1996:28). The *glossolalia* occasionally manifested itself in Dwight

L. Moody's awakenings (Introvigne, 2004:30), and also manifested itself in religious movements of Christian origin such as the "Mormons" and "Shakers," though these did not continue with this experience to this day (Introvigne, 1996:28; 2004:30-31).

## **2.9 The "pentecostal-charismatic movement"**

The awakening movements described above prepared the ground for the religious movement called the "pentecostal movement", which therefore was not born just suddenly (Introvigne, 1996:22). This is made up of denominations or groups, which derive their origin from the pentecostal awakening in 1901 (Grudem, 2015:527), in Topeka, Kansas, the United States, Methodism and some Baptist churches (Welker, 1995:18). At the beginning the pentecostal movement was rejected and isolated from the churches of origin, which, however, could not stop its rapid spread in Latin America and Africa (Welker, 1995:18-19).

Rinaldi (2019:18) affirms that the theological "identity card" of this movement is "the experience and doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This movement in fact follows a doctrine according to which, after conversion (Grudem, 2015:527) and the experience of "new birth", the believer expects a "second visitation of the work of grace" which coincides with the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Rinaldi, 2019:18). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is characterised, first of all (Gajewski, 2003:39), by speaking in tongues and then by the search for and use of all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (Grudem, 2015:527). The Holy Spirit, when baptising the believer, primarily works for the shaping of his character and for his progressive sanctification; therefore, without the main purpose of sanctification, the *glossolalia* and the expressions of all spiritual gifts, which are manifested after baptism, would be reduced to mere and useless spectacular manifestations (Rinaldi, 2019:19).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and *glossolalia* became widespread among the major Protestant denominations in the USA and Canada (Introvigne, 1996:62). In 1960, in fact, in parallel with the pentecostal movement, a second charismatic movement was born in the United States (Welker, 1995:19), called the "charismatic movement" or "charismatic renewal". This movement spread

within the Anglican, Episcopalian and Reformation churches, Presbyterian and Lutheran, as well as within the Methodists, Mennonites and Baptists (Introvigne, 1996:60). The "charismatic renewal" was characterised precisely by the experience of the *glossolalia* and other miraculous gifts, but was not accepted by the same denominations in which it spread (Kendall, 2016:110); in fact, the shepherds involved in the movement were suspended or removed. Then, starting in 1970, most of these denominations accepted the "charismatic renewal" and tried to keep it under control, managing it through special committees (Introvigne, 1996:62).

In 1967 the charismatic renewal also spread rapidly within the Catholic Church (Welker, 1995:19), with the birth and development of the "renewal of the Spirit" groups (Introvigne, 1996:63), and in 1971, again charismatic renewal also spread within the Greek Orthodox Church (Welker, 1995:19).

In the Catholic Church the charismatic movement was born and developed thanks to the interest that was aroused in two assistants of the theology department of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the success of the charismatic movement; in fact, in the two assistants there arose interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which they transmitted to about thirty students, after having personally experienced the *glossolalia* themselves (Introvigne, 1996:63). These historical events are important for their subsequent diffusion in Italy, both as a pentecostal movement and as a charismatic renewal within the Catholic Church.

The purpose of "charismatic renewal", unlike the pentecostal movement (Grudem, 2015:527), since its inception has not been to separate from Protestant or Catholic churches to try to constitute new denominations (Grudem, 2015:528), but to constitute a force for renewal within the churches themselves by exercising all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, parallel to the charismatic renewal, the movement of the Neo-Pentecostals was born, which tends to remain within the churches where it was born and developed, but adopts the theology of classical pentecostalism, that is the one born from the initial awakening of 1901 in the USA, whose fundamental points are: the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, the conception of baptism of the Baptists and baptism in the Holy Spirit characterised by the experience of

*glossolalia*, as a central experience for the growth of faith and sanctification of the believer (Welker, 1995:19).

In the span of a single century, the twentieth, the whole movement characterised by the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit associated with the *glossolalia* and a strong focus on charismatic experiences (Gajewski, 2003:39), especially the pentecostal one, grew rapidly and spread worldwide (Boulton, 2001:10). This happened by forming new denominations and minority groups, however important, which are able to penetrate transversally into all Christian denominations; even in Latin America, the pentecostal movement represents the majority of Protestants and has penetrated the Roman Catholic Church (Carson, 2017:11). All this rapid development has resulted in the "pentecostal movement" being recognised as "the second largest family of Christians in the world, second only to the Roman Catholic Church" (Bartleman, 1998:21-22).

### *2.9.1 The origin of the pentecostal movement, and its worldwide expansion*

The historical origin of the pentecostal movement has become legendary (Introvigne, 2004:32). Initially, on the first day of the twentieth century, a young woman, Agnes Ozman (1870-1937) (Introvigne, 2004:34), lived the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evident sign of speaking in other tongues (Introvigne, 1996:22), as the Spirit gave her to express herself (Bartleman, 1998:8). The experience was like the pentecostal experience described in Acts 2, in which Jesus' disciples received "the gift of tongues," or *glossolalia* from Greek (Bonke, 2008:92-93), as a sign and proof of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Acts 2 tells that the disciples, with the gift of tongues, received the ability to communicate the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom to foreigners who came from different parts and who were present at the event, attracted by the very audible manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Bible, 1991/'93), these foreigners observed that the disciples made themselves understood by speaking in the language of each of them; however, these tongues had certainly never been studied by the disciples (Rinaldi, 2017:19-20). Ozman's experience was the result of the practical conclusion of an intense study based on the Scriptures that testify to evident signs associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Bartleman,

1998:8). The study led to the elaboration of a precise theory associating *glossolalia* with "baptism with the Holy Spirit" (Introvigne, 2004:37); this association in fact laid the theological foundations of the characteristic pentecostal doctrine (Napolitano, 2015:38). Within a short time 12 more students, after Ozman, were baptised in the Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in other tongues (Bonnke, 2008:66-67). This group of students was part of the Betel Bible School directed by Charles Parham (Bonnke, 2008:66), in Topeka, Kansas, who was a former Methodist who had moved to the holiness movement (Introvigne, 2004:32).

Subsequently, the pentecostal movement began to grow, diversifying into various movements, so much so as to make any generalisation about it reductive (Carson, 2017:11); in fact, these different movements have taken on peculiar characteristics according to the contexts in which they developed (Gajewski, 2003:37).

Initially, in the early 1900s, there were three pentecostal awakenings, in which the manifestation of speaking in tongues as a consequence of "baptism with the Holy Spirit" was common, in three geographical areas: the first in Topeka in Kansas in 1901; the second in Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906, where the mission, animated by the preaching of Pastor William Seymour (1870-1922), which was centred precisely on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, (Bonnke, 2008:67), was called the "American Jerusalem," and the baptism of the Holy Spirit for all coincided with the experience of the *glossolalia* (Napolitano, 2015:38); and the third in Wales between 1904 and 1908 (Introvigne, 2004:32). From these three awakenings, particularly from Azusa Street (Napolitano, 2015:38), the pentecostal movement began to expand worldwide so rapidly that it "took on a miraculous appearance" (Introvigne, 1996:29-31).

There were other pentecostal revival focal points, characterised by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the sign of tongues, in Chile and Argentina in 1909, in Korea between 1903 and 1907, and in India between 1905 and 1907 (Rinaldi, 2017:20).

The birth and development of pentecostalism in Chile had no direct relationship with the pentecostal awakening in Los Angeles in 1906. This fact plays much in favour of the reliability of charismatic experiences, which evidently originate from the direct

action of the Holy Spirit. It was in fact a Methodist pastor, Hoover, from the United States, who in the city of Valparaiso began to spread Pentecostalism by teaching that the coming of the Lord would be preceded by the restoration of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in the Acts of the Apostles. When in 1907 phenomena of *glossolalia*, healings and visions began to appear, the growth of the movement was such that in 1930 it already counted more than one million Pentecostals out of thirteen million Chileans, or about 12.6% of the population (Introvigne, 1996:110-111).

The specialist in religious statistics, David B. Barrett (Bartleman, 1998:21-22), noted that in 1988 the pentecostal movement had just over 176 million Pentecostals distributed as follows: 22 million in the United States and Canada, 37 million in Latin America, 67 million in Asia, 42 million in Africa, 2 million in Oceania and 6 million in Europe. In 1995 a quarter of the Christians in the world were pentecostal or charismatic, i.e. about five hundred million out of two billion, scattered throughout each nation and across various churches and missions, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Introvigne, 1996:48).

Within the Latin American Catholic Church, according to an estimate made in 1988, between six thousand and eight thousand Catholics, more or less practising, who adhered to a different religious movement, nine out of ten of these preferred the pentecostal movement to other religious movements (Introvigne, 1996:48).

According to more recent statistics, according to the Corporation Latinobarómetro, a private agency with headquarters in Santiago de Chile, between 1995 and 2014 the number of Latin American Catholics continued to decline overall by 13%, while the evangelicals grew while continuing to welcome new converts from the Catholic Church. The same trend is confirmed by the research of the Pew Research Centre, based in Washington, according to which, until 2014, the number of Latin American Catholics has fallen to 69% of the total population, while the overall percentage of evangelicals has risen to 19%. Among these evangelicals, the Pentecostals are those who grow most and rapidly, and in this way they tend to snatch the primacy from the Catholic Church (Metalli, 2019).

According to statistics by David Barrett and Vinson Synan, presented at the ninth "American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization" in July 1995 in Orlando, Florida, the growth of Pentecostal-Charismatics occurred with a daily increase of about 54,800 "conversions" (Introvigne, 1996:80-81).

Keener (2016:chap.5) quotes an article in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research which even estimates a worldwide charismatic presence of 614 million; while an article in L'Espresso in 2016 states that Pentecostals worldwide have reached 644 million, and are still growing. (Sironi, 2016).

Finally, to conclude this overview of statistics, there is a last update with the report of the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, which reports (see table 1) the following pentecostal/charismatic growth data (Zurlo, Johnson, at al., 2020):

**Table 2: Pentecostal/charismatic growth data.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>mid-2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2050</b>
<b>Total members</b>	981,000	57,637,000	442,677,000	644,260,000	703,639,000	1,031,500,000

It is evident that due to its dizzying growth the pentecostal movement is considered the most vital religious phenomenon of modern time and the most remarkable religious movement in history (Welker, 1995:17). Even if the statistics provide disparate results (Keener, 2016:chap.5), they all attest that the pentecostal movement has had overwhelming success spreading in all denominations and churches (Welker, 1995:18).

Therefore, in the light of what has been said about its dizzying development, says the director of CESNUR and professor at the "Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum" in Rome, Introvigne (1996:7), that it makes no sense to define, or precisely despise, the Pentecostal movement with the categories of "deviation", "sect", "aberration" or the phenomenon of little relevance.

### *2.9.2 The birth of the Italian pentecostal movement among emigrants in America and its expansion in Italy*

The pentecostal experience began to expand rapidly among the many Italian emigrants to the United States and South America, and later also from America to Italy, thanks to one of its greatest exponents Luigi Francescon (1866-1964) (Spini, 2002:251). He already led the first Pentecostal church born in Chicago between April and September 1907, which became a missionary centre to spread the Pentecostal experience among Italian emigrants to the United States and South America, and also to Italy (Napolitano, 2015:39). In 1908 another distinguished pioneer of Italian pentecostalism, Pietro Ottolini (1870-1962), began to organise pentecostal meetings in New York, which were also attended by Giuseppe Petrelli who was one of the most authoritative witnesses of Italian pentecostalism and, as Napolitano (2015:40) defines him, "a pentecostal theologian of the origins".

However, when the pentecostal movement arrived in Italy, it was opposed by the political authorities of the fascist regime, for whom it represented a threat to the Italians. In fact, during the Fascist dictatorship, the "Buffarini Guidi" circular was issued on April 9, 1935 (D'Auria, 2015), in which the Italian pentecostal movement was labeled as a threat to "the physical and psychological integrity of the race" (Spini, 2002:252). This circular, therefore, banned the pentecostal cult, and remained in force until 1955, when it was finally repealed. With the repealing of the Circular, not only did the Italian pentecostal movement obtain its freedom of worship, but in fact in Italy freedom of worship was recognised for all non-Catholic religious denominations, and, finally, it obtained the acquisition of those rights that were in fact already proclaimed in the Constitution that came into force in Italy on January 1, 1948 (Rinaldi, 2019:45). It was possible to reach this important historical goal thanks to the firmness of Italian pentecostal believers, fervent in the faith even if not very cultured, who did not allow themselves to be intimidated by the harassment and persecution of the Fascists. On the contrary, circumstances allowed a generation of "tenacious preachers convinced of the need to evangelise" to be formed, which was tempered by fascist persecution (Gajewski, 2003:39-40). These tenacious preachers continued to fight against the provisions of the Buffarini Guidi

Circular without giving up, helped also by some intellectuals, judges and honest and enlightened politicians with an open mind (Rinaldi, 2019:50). There was a long march of these preachers, between 1945 and 1955, which produced excellent results until the repeal of the Circular and the conquest of freedom (Rinaldi, 2019:15). From this moment on, in Italy, after the Second World War, the pentecostal movement "experienced a strong increase". There was also a strong increase in internal immigration, and Italians from the south began to move to the north where they began to open churches in many cities (Gajewski, 2003:40). Most of these churches organised themselves (Grudem, 2015:527), others were given an organisational structure such as the Assemblies of God in Italy, and also forms of collaboration and communion among the churches began to emerge, giving birth to the Federation of Pentecostal Churches in Italy (Gajewski, 2003:40).

The Italian Pentecostals, starting from the eighties and nineties of the last century, have experienced significant growth with the birth of other autonomous pentecostal groups. They have much in common with the classical Pentecostals, as far as doctrine is concerned, but they act as independent groups, such as the "Parola della Grazia", the "Ministero Sabaoth" and the "Missione Paradiso" which, besides having numerous new converts, also attract members of existing Pentecostal churches. These denominations have revived, with much emphasis, the attention to the supernatural, and the desire to return to the fervour of the apostolic church, to baptism in the Holy Spirit as an "experience" of the *glossolalia*, after the salvation and healing of body and soul, which are perhaps the strongest attractions for those concerned. By classical Pentecostals are meant those who are linked to the origins of pentecostalism which arose in Italy in the first decades of the 20th century and developed especially after the war (Gajewski, 2003:39). At present it seems that these classic Pentecostals have slowed down their growth, probably because they have taken the form of large organisations. Among these is, for example, the Church of the "Assemblee di Dio in Italia", which was founded as a national organisation after the pentecostal conference in Rome in 1946 (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007:127); and the "Apostolic Church in Italy", which was founded in Italy in 1975 thanks to the

missionary activity of the Welsh Evangelical Apostolic Church (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007:125-126).

It should be pointed out that these denominations are not part of the movement identified as the "third wave", to which, since the 1980s, the so-called "evangelicals" have belonged, which have distinguished themselves from the pentecostal movement and the charismatic movement, while boasting experiences with the Holy Spirit (Welker, 1995:19-20). The evangelicals constitute a current that crosses several denominations, including the pentecostal one, and are characterised by the defence of doctrinal orthodoxy, the search for spiritual renewal and a strong spirit in the activity of evangelisation (Rubboli, 2007:79-80).

#### 2.9.2.1 The PGD "Parola della Grazia" Church

The PDG church "Parola della Grazia" was founded in Palermo, Sicily, in 1985 by the pastors Lirio Porrello and Beniamino Cascio, now both apostles of what has become a real movement. They began with about thirty people who gathered in a small place of worship. Very soon they had to move to a larger place of worship because they began to grow rapidly in number, according to the natural peculiarity of the Pentecostals. The growth was such that in 1987 they had to move to an even more spacious place of worship and already in 1988 they reached the number of about 1400 members. Currently the church meets in a place of worship, opened in 2001, with a capacity of 2500 seats, where three services are celebrated on Sundays, to give the opportunity to participate to about 5000 members, distributed in the three services. In a short time, the church in Palermo has opened several missions in different Italian cities and abroad, and other pre-existing pentecostal communities have joined. The Apostles Porrello and Cascio are collaborated by various pastors.

The belief of the church is based first of all on faith in the Holy Bible as an infallible guide in all things concerning the doctrine and practice of belief and it is based on faith in the Trinity, of which the Holy Spirit is the one who lives in the believer to give him a supernatural power. Moreover, the PGD church believes in salvation by grace, as a gift of God after repentance. The "New Birth" of the believer, which one has with salvation, is followed by baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit,

accompanied by the sign of speaking in tongues, to give every believer, son of God, a supernatural power, which is also manifested in the healing of soul and body. Finally, the PDG believes in the return of the Lord Jesus and in the following millennial Kingdom, before the final judgment.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2.9.2.2 The "Ministero Sabaoth"

The "Ministero Sabaoth" in Italy was born with Roselen Boerner Faccio, a woman pastor, consecrated to the ministry in the Brazilian church "Christian Community Verbo Vivo", and sent as a missionary from Brazil to Italy where she began in 1996, in Milan, with small meetings at home, called "gospel". In a very short time the group grew so much that it had to meet in a mini theatre, and then from 2000 in a larger place of worship, where various activities were started for evangelisation purposes. The church continued to grow and had to move into more and more spacious places of worship. In 2016 the church had about 800 members, among whom other pastors were appointed. In 2008, the Sabaoth Ministry founded new churches in various Italian cities and abroad, and appointed several pastors to collaborate with Pastor Faccio.

The "Ministero Sabaoth" identifies itself as a Pentecostal Protestant church, which emphasises the return to a living faith like that of the early Christians, based on the Bible as the only doctrinal foundation. It believes in the Trinity, in the "New Birth", in water baptism by immersion and baptism in the Holy Spirit, whose initial evidence consists of speaking in other tongues. It believes that the gift of the *glossolalia* is followed by all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.9.2.3 The "Missione Paradiso"

The "Missione Paradiso" was born, with the Apostle Enzo Incontro, in 2012 and in a very short time it grew to over a thousand members. Immediately it spread to Italy, setting up various branches in as many cities, and appointing several pastors who collaborated with the Apostle Enzo Incontro.

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<sup>8</sup> PDG. 2016. <http://www.paroladellagrazia.it/it/>. Date of access 25/06/2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ministero Sabaoth. 2018. <http://www.sabaothchurch.com/>. Date of access 25/06/2020.

Even "Missione Paradiso" believes in the Bible as the only doctrinal, infallible and immutable foundation, it believes in the Trinity, in baptism in the Holy Spirit, with the evident sign of *glossolalia*, and in the supernatural power of God.<sup>10</sup>

### ***2.10 The overwhelming effect of the pentecostal movement***

The pentecostal-charismatic movement has had a very strong impact on the vast panorama of contemporary theology, but it cannot be considered only from an academic point of view because personal experience is very relevant in it (Carson, 2017:10-11), of which the *glossolalia* is in first place.

As we have seen, the overwhelming effect of the pentecostal movement is so real and relevant that it has brought considerable benefits to the whole of Christianity, in particular to the Protestant evangelical movement, also making it able to resist any secularising tendency (Gajewski, 2003:39). This has been possible thanks to the fact that even before a church pentecostalism is a movement that draws its strength from an identity strictly adhering to the Bible (Rinaldi, 2017:9), and not only from experience (Bonnke, 2008:8). The overwhelming effect of the pentecostal movement has also contributed to rekindle people's hunger and interest in the sacred and religious, in a historical context in which civil society now seems to be all involved in the process of secularisation (Welker, 1995:17), with a strong tendency to abandon all that is religious and sacred to constitute, in contrast, a strongly secular society (Introvigne, 2004:9).

On the other hand, for Pentecostals and Charismatics, such rapid growth attests that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world today and that all believers can and must experience it. Indeed, the awakening of Azusa Street in the early twentieth century, in which the baptism of the Holy Spirit was experienced by speaking in tongues (Boulton, 2001:10), has been regarded as one of the few events in history that have had a great influence on the history of the modern church (Bartleman, 1998:7).

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<sup>10</sup> Missione Paradiso. 2020. <https://www.missioneparadiso.it/>. Date of access 25/06/2020.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Arguments of Italian cessationist theologians re *glossolalia***

The reference literature on the subject of cessationism, as well as that on the subject of Pentecostalism, used for this chapter and the following one is actually mostly by foreign and not Italian authors.

This choice is motivated by the fact that it has been easier for the author to find books by foreign authors, because, probably up to this moment, there are not many Italian Pentecostal authors who have written in a systematic way a Pentecostal theology that speaks about the validity of the charismatic experience today as in the time of the primitive church. Nor, probably, are there many Italian authors who have dealt specifically with cessationism.

The author knows from experience that Italian Pentecostal theology, above all, is taught through the means of preaching and teaching given during meetings in local churches, evangelical gatherings and conferences. On these occasions, one speaks of one's own experiences and those of the members of one's church, also citing verses of Scripture that attest to the biblical validity of these experiences. The teaching materials often consist of handouts distributed on such occasions, or recorded multimedia materials produced by pastors and teachers.

Italian literature found deals mainly with the theme of Protestantism in general, which for little or no reason is concerned specifically with the pentecostal world and the exercise of charisms. In fact, this literature aims to expose the Christian message in the Protestant perspective, especially in comparison with the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (Subilia, 1985:8). In some books on Protestantism, or on the theology of the twentieth century (Ferrario, 2011:274), some paragraphs are found that deal briefly with the pentecostal movement, mentioning the history of its birth and development in Italy (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007:125-128) and underlining the main characteristic that distinguishes it, namely that for Pentecostals the *glossolalia* is the normative and necessary sign of the

baptism of the Holy Spirit (Rubboli, 2007:95). Therefore, in this chapter the theories of cessationism are set out with reference to foreign scholars, taking into account the fact that such theories have a character of global diffusion and are certainly shared also by the Italian cessationists of the non-pentecostal evangelical churches. Mostly in Italy there is the group of moderate evangelicals, and above all there is that of those who are uncertain about the validity of spiritual gifts according to Scripture; they cannot be defined as pentecostal or charismatic, nor as cessationists.

The Baptist Church, better identified as "UCEBI" Unione Cristiana Evangelica Battista d'Italia, among its articles of faith only admits that the Holy Spirit "manifests Himself in the various gifts and vocations to the service of the Lord in the Church throughout the world".<sup>11</sup> The Methodist Church in Italy, better identified as "OPCEMI" Works for the Evangelical Methodist Churches in Italy, makes no mention of the Holy Spirit by talking about the history of its origins and growth.<sup>12</sup> The Chiesa Evangelica Valdese shares the same Confession of Faith with the Methodist Church, Confession Of Faith Of 1655, in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned as the third person of the Trinity, He is the inspirer and the one who guides in the reading of Scripture, and He is the one who produces faith to lean on God's mercy.<sup>13</sup> There is also the Presbyterian Church in Italy which among its articles of faith mentions the Holy Spirit as the one who "builds the church and gives power to its members for adoration, service and mission".<sup>14</sup> These churches make no reference to baptism in the Holy Spirit and his charismatic gifts.

### ***3.1 Definition of cessationism***

The purpose of this study is not to ridicule the cessationist viewpoint, but rather to consider it, not denying its value and its ability to convey valid biblical teachings. Rather, the purpose is to find through comparison a way to strengthen the Pentecostal point of view, which sees in its own experience the confirmation of how

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<sup>11</sup> UCEBI. 2020 <https://www.ucebi.it/chi-siamo/confessione-di-fede.html>. Date of access 09/07/2020.

<sup>12</sup> OPCEMI. 2020 <http://www.metodisti.it/chi-siamo/#metodisti>. Date of access 09/07/2020.

<sup>13</sup> Chiesa Evangelica Valdese. 2013. [https://www.chiesavaldese.org/aria\\_cms.php?page=11](https://www.chiesavaldese.org/aria_cms.php?page=11). Date of access 09/07/2020.

<sup>14</sup> Chiesa Presbiteriana in Italia. 2020 <https://www.chiesapresbiteriana.com/chi-siamo>. Date of access 09/07/2020.

it reads the Bible. On the other hand, Pentecostals find that cessationists consider the cessation of charismatic gifts as apriori, as a matter of principle, so their arguments are worthy of deep attention but conditioned by what they want to assert as a matter of principle.

Moreover, cessationists tend to ridicule the experience of speaking in other languages in particular, without considering that this experience involves millions of people around the world, so it is worthy of greater and more respectful attention.

According to Kendall (2016:159), cessationism is a hypothesis, because it is a teaching that is not clearly expressed and based on Scripture, as are other doctrinal teachings known and shared by the Christian world. Therefore, the term cessationist is used to indicate those theologians who are not pentecostal or charismatic by their choice, because they claim that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing and speaking in tongues have ceased. Therefore, as Waldron (2019:13) states, the term cessationist is not meant to be an offensive label against these theologians at all, but it is only the term that defines their point of view.

According to the historian of Christianity Rinaldi (Rinaldi, 2017), cessationism affirms that the sign of tongues and other charismatic gifts, of which the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters speak, ceased when the first generation of the apostles died. That is, those whom Waldron (2019:21-22) defines as the only apostles of Christ, special figures whose apostolate is limited to the only historical period in which they lived, the first century AD, after which their presence in the church was lost forever, also determining that the gift of the apostle, the greatest of all gifts, was no longer granted to the church.

According to Waldron (2019:14-17), cessationists are those who believe and teach that miraculous gifts have ceased and are therefore no longer given to the church and are no longer available to believers of this time. Therefore, there are no longer miracle workers (Waldron, 2019:109), who in the time of the apostles had the gift of working miracles whenever God made use of them. The cessationists only admit that God can now perform miracles (Waldron, 2019:109), or supernatural works, occasionally, according to his sovereign will, as a manifestation of his providence

(Kendall, 2016:155,169). Therefore, since miracle workers in today's church are non-existent (Kendall, 2016:155), today's divine miracles are quite different from the kind of miraculous gifts of the past (Waldron, 2019:109), as worked by charismatic people. According to the famous evangelist Graham (2000:175), however, the nearer the last times, of which the prophets Joel and Hosea spoke, the more God will grant those signs and wonders be performed, so that miracles will increase, and serve as a demonstration of God's power to convince the skeptics of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Kendall (2016:157) affirms that cessationism is above all a point of view of reformed theology. But it is also the point of view of fundamentalism, which from its origins is "dispensationalist", because it divides the history of the Church into various circumscribed and concluded periods, which correspond to the "dispensations" of God's grace (Introvigne, 1996:26). One of these dispensations concerns the early church, which was characterised by the experiences of *glossolalia*, healings and miracles, which consequently ceased with the closure of the dispensation of the first apostles. Therefore, fundamentalists distance themselves from the Pentecostals (Introvigne, 1996:22).

Cessationists, however, admit that the church was born and developed with the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit, because these were necessary and adapted to the special situation of the early church (Graham, 2000:175). Now, however, they are convinced that God spontaneously and sovereignly chose to no longer reveal Himself in an immediate, direct, and supernatural way as He did with the early church (Kendall, 2016:154,157). Therefore, cessationists claim that charismatic gifts and miracles ceased in the first century or at most in the first centuries of the church's history (Grudem, 2015:536). For some cessationists spiritual gifts and miracles would have ceased around 70 A.D., while for others after

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<sup>15</sup> Billy Graham does not represent the continuationists, because he affirms that he was baptised of the Holy Spirit at the moment of his conversion, as the cessationists think, and he does not admit the experience of the continuationists of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second experience after conversion with the sign of the gift of *glossolalia* (Graham, 2000:61,63-64).

However, it seems that in his statements he is more than just a moderate cessationist for he does not categorically exclude the experience of the *glossolalia*, but rather speaks of the existence of different opinions in the interpretation of Scripture concerning the gift of the *glossolalia*, and respects those who believe in it (Graham, 2000:72). Also, just as he does not exclude that believers may receive gifts of healing or miracles, and that under certain circumstances it is necessary for believers to perform signs and wonders (Graham, 2000:155,168-169,175).

100 A.D. after the death of the apostle John, and for others after 337 A.D., i.e. after the era of Emperor Constantine (Kendall, 2016:154,169).

### ***3.2 Did the end of the apostolic era and the closure of the Canon of the NT mark the end of the glossolalia?***

#### *3.2.1 The end of the apostolic era*

According to the theory of the cessationist Waldron (2019:16) shared by most cessationists, the apostles, the prophets, those who speak in tongues, i.e. those who have the gift of the *glossolalia*, and every other operator of miracles, i.e. those who have the gift of performing miracles very frequently, would have ceased as a result of the fact that Christ would never again constitute in the church other apostles of the same dignity as his "twelve" (Waldron, 2019:21-23,31,39). In fact, the only apostles of the Church would have been those whom Christ had chosen, and had constituted, during his earthly ministry and to whom, later, after his ascension into heaven, he had added by direct constitution only the apostles; Matthias to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, Paul and James (Waldron, 2019:44, 47-48).

One of the main requirements that made the dignity of these apostles of Christ unique (Waldron, 2019:33) was to have seen the physically resurrected Christ (Rinaldi, 2008:268). Therefore, today no other apostle could boast of this requirement (Carson, 2017:210) and indeed no one did, for Jesus Christ parted from his apostles and ascended into Heaven (Fabris, 1984:72), and is now seated at the right hand of the Father until his return (Ac 1:9-11; 2:33; Col 3:1), (Bible, 1991/'93). It is interesting to note that the account of the ascension, although considered symbolic by several scholars, is nevertheless described by Luke as a visible event; that is, as a truly lived experience to emphasise its concreteness and historicity, and to attest that the apostles were also truly the eyewitnesses of the ascension (Marshall, 1990:69,71), as they were of the risen Christ. It is evident that this is a type of approach to Scripture, especially pentecostal, which without any embarrassment believes in supernatural events, considering them as narratives of historical events that happened as they are described and were really lived by the protagonists involved.

The absence of the Apostles, therefore, even before the closing of the New Testament Canon, of which they are the foundation, would have constituted in the history of the church a kind of doctrinal dividing line between the New Testament church and the church of the post-apostolic era to the present day (Waldron, 2019:27). This dividing line would separate the era of the miraculous gifts of the New Testament church, closely linked to the presence of the apostles as instruments of witness to their message and ministry (Waldron, 2019:37-39.49-51), from the era of the later church when the miraculous gifts and *glossolalia* would cease because they were no longer needed by the post-apostolic church (Grudem, 2015:536). Consequently, according to the cessationists, miraculous gifts should no longer even be sought after by believers (Waldron, 2019:52).

But the pentecostal viewpoint is different, because it believes that there are apostles in the Church today, and that they have never been absent throughout the Church's history, because Christ never stopped constituting them (Eph 4:11), (Bible, 1991/'93). However, in light of this, one could only agree with Waldron when he places modern apostles in a position of "lower dignity" than the New Testament apostles (Waldron, 2019:33). For example, because modern apostles lack at least some typical New Testament apostles' requisites, such as not being able to be eyewitnesses to the risen Christ (Rinaldi, 2008:268), but above all because modern apostles could no longer possess another, even more important and indispensable requisite, whereby the twelve of Christ were formed to be the foundation of the deposit of truth, and the "foundation of the building of the holy temple of the Lord" (Eph 2:20), (Bible, 1991/'93). However, it should be noted that Waldron himself, at one point, dealing with the subject of the prophets and their disappearance concomitant with that of the apostles, explains that Moses, as a prophet, had a higher dignity than the prophets Aaron and Miriam, because of the unique way God manifested to him. However, the authority of Aaron and Miriam as prophets was not inferior to that of the prophet Moses, even though they were in a position of dignity inferior to him, because otherwise they would have been false prophets (Waldron, 2019:34,61-63,77). Why then should this reasoning not be taken as valid for both prophets and apostles?

It is plausible, and it is quite clear, that the apostles and prophets of today could not have the same dignity as the New Testament apostles and prophets, precisely because the latter laid the foundation of the New Testament exclusively (Rinaldi, 2008:268). However, this should not at all exclude the possibility that Christ continued to constitute other apostles and prophets in later epochs, in the course of the building up of His Church. In fact, these successive apostles and prophets, even if of lower dignity, would have the task of defending with authority equal to that of the New Testament apostles and prophets the integrity of the foundation already laid by the New Testament apostles and prophets themselves. The subsequent apostles and prophets would not have the responsibility, not delegated to them by Christ, to lay any other foundation, and they would act without contradicting Scripture, which is already complete and infallible as it has been understood entirely in the biblical canon, which is absolutely closed for the whole of Christendom, and to which there is nothing to be added or removed (Graham, 20002:145). God no longer reveals any truths that are not already contained in Scripture (Graham, 20002:145). Therefore, if Waldron's theory on the doctrinal dividing line (Waldron, 2019:27), which would consequently mark the end of all charismatic gifts with the lack of the primitive apostles, is at least questionable; then its conclusion that the *glossolalia* and other miraculous gifts have ceased is also questionable.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 4 from verse 11 to verse 13, teaches that the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, therefore the whole group of the five ministries and not only some, are guides that Christ gives to the Church so that they may play a necessary and indispensable role for the Body of Christ, that is still in the process of formation and growth. The aim is that it may be built up to attain perfection in the unity of faith, in the knowledge of the Son of God and in the fullness of Christ in order to resemble him in character, that is, to reach "the height of Christ's perfect stature" (Eph, 4:13), (Bible, 1991/'93), which has not yet been attained (Waldron, 2019:70). Therefore, Pentecostal Christians, on the basis of the authoritative writings of the New Testament apostles and prophets (Waldron, 2019:70), contrary to Waldron's point of view, rather want to fully recover the apostolic message, and fully relive what is extinct for most

Protestantism, namely the apostolic and prophetic New Testament tradition as the biblical model narrated in the New Testament (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007: 125). From this it can be seen how God works actively for believers, even today, so that they can fully experience the gift of the Spirit that Christ sent (Keener, 2016:81), while sitting at the right hand of the Father (Ac 2:33), (Bible, 1991/'93). How could a church without such authoritative leaders achieve these goals? Could it be enough for the church to have Scripture without it being ministered by suitable guides?

Moreover, if the greatest gift given to the New Testament church, that of the apostle is no longer present and consequently, according to Waldron's theory (2019:23,50-51) of the "cascading disappearance" of spiritual gifts and some ministry, there are no longer prophets, those who speak in tongues, miracle operators and miraculous gifts, why should only some of the ministries, namely the evangelists, pastors and teachers, continue to exist instead? In fact, evangelists, pastors and teachers are on the same list as the Apostle in Ephesians 4:11, along with the apostles and prophets (Bible, 1991/'93). The church without all the ministries of Ephesians 4:11 (Bible, 1991/'93) would have no guidance except the Scripture alone given to every believer for a free and arbitrary interpretation.

If, on the other hand, the apostles and prophets are still given by Christ to the Church, as in the past, and still carry out their ministry in today's church, then, as already mentioned, it invalidates Waldron's "theory of the cascading argument", according to which with the disappearance of the apostles, the prophets, the speakers of other tongues and the operators of miracles would necessarily also have disappeared, precisely because all these special gifts would theoretically have had a close link only with those first apostles. In fact, this would lead to a heavy consequence for the Christian faith, that is, if things corresponded with what Waldron says, then it would also have to be concluded that the testimonies told in the New Testament would be unrepeatable and would be reduced to mere stories of a very remote past, of great relevance for the history of past salvation, but of little relevance for the faith of today's believers from the point of view of personal experiences.

Keener (2016:Intr.) states that if Pentecostal and charismatic churches have made world Christianity grow in an "explosive" way, then this is a sign that pentecostal readings of Scripture and pentecostal hermeneutical approaches should be given special attention by all theologians and biblical interpreters. In fact, a more faithful reading of Scripture seems to be one that sees the biblical narrative as a model for experiencing God's way of working in this world (Keener, 2016:chap.2).

### 3.2.1.1 "Miraculous powers" as signs to testify to the ministry of Jesus and the New Testament apostles

Some cessationists also cite Hebrews 2:4 to testify that miracles are now relegated to the past, whereas, for other scholars, the author of the letter to the Hebrews would actually seem to want to reassure all believers that God has sworn to them directly to accompany the work of salvation with his own divine witness (Kendall, 2016: 165), through signs, wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Heb 2:4), (Bible, 1991/93), extending these miraculous signs to all and not only to the apostles. In fact, according to most cessationists, God would have ordained "miraculous powers", as "signs," only to attest first the ministry of Jesus and then that of the apostles (Carson, 2017:210), that is, for the sole purpose of authenticating and attesting the divine authority of the message (Graham, 20002:174), which had been entrusted to them (Waldron, 2019:22-23). Subsequently, since Jesus and the apostles were no longer present (Waldron, 2019:22), and the message transmitted by them was fixed in the biblical canon, no further attestation was needed (Carson, 2017:210), except that the "signs" would serve only for the initial period of the church's growth, to authenticate its first preaching of the Gospel (Grudem, 2015:536), and to give the initial impetus to the first believers, giving their faith encouragement and credibility (Kendall, 2016:155). With regard to the latter purpose, the less severe cessationists admit that when evangelising those areas where the context can be similar to that of the early church, such as areas of the Third World not yet evangelised (Kendall, 2016:169), then it can happen that evangelisation is accompanied by miracles even today, as "signs" to authenticate the preaching of the gospel (Graham, 20002:175). This was also the view of Calvin and Luther (Kendall, 2016:169), who were the "intellectuals" of

Christianity who in fact gave impetus to cessationism as early as the 16th century, because they believed that miraculous powers had been entrusted only to the first apostles, and feared the charismatics because of their ways of doing things and their overly allegorical approach to Scripture (Kendall, 2016:155-156).<sup>16</sup> Finally, it can be seen that there are some passages in the Book of Acts and in the second letter to the Corinthians (Ac 2:43; 5:12; 2 Cor 12:12), (Bible, 1991/'93), in which expressions such as: "signs of the apostles" are reported, which testify that there is indeed a connection between the miraculous signs and the apostles. However, these passages are few and do not prove that the miraculous signs have only the function of attestation of the apostolic ministry. In fact, the miraculous signs also have a connection to the new era inaugurated by Jesus (Carson, 2017:211).

### *3.2.2 Closure of the Canon of NT*

To the absence of the New Testament apostles, Waldron (2019:47-48) also adds another fundamental motivation, which is the closure of the New Testament Canon as a consequence of the cessation of spiritual gifts.

In fact, a fundamental principle on which cessationists rely, to attest to the historical moment and the reason for the cessation of miracles and charisms, is the completion and fixation of the Canon of Scripture, which would have occurred under the guidance of Attanasius of Alexandria (296-373 B.D.) around the fourth century (Kendall, 2016:154-155). However, it is interesting what Keener (2016:80) points out, namely that some of the most radical cessationists claim that, in fact, there is no biblical text that clearly announces the disappearance of spiritual gifts after the closing of the canon, and that there is not even a text to the contrary. But this argument is very strange, because it is unthinkable that Scripture did not bother to announce very clearly such an important change that would take place in the history of redemption, compared to the prophetic models of the Old and New Testaments.

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<sup>16</sup> Since Calvin and Luther did not entirely rule out miraculous powers serving as signs to authenticate the preaching of the gospel in the lands where it was first preached, they can be considered moderate cessationists. However, their distrust of charismatics held back the development of a charismatic movement of the magnitude of the one that then freely developed in the early twentieth century. However, their testimony plays in favour of the continuity of charismatic gifts after the era of the early apostles.

While, on the other hand, it is clear that there is no evidence in Scripture of the disappearance of prophecy (Keener, 2016:81), which rather impregnates the entire biblical history and should be sought according to the command expressed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:1 (Bible, 1991/'93). Thus the cessationist theologian, who supports all this, in truth does so by virtue of his own logical deduction, only to prove his own theology, but this deduction in fact has no scriptural basis (Keener, 2016:81). The cessationists, especially those with a reformed orientation, are actually conditioned by the fear that the unique authority of the Bible will be questioned and that too much attention will be paid to subjective and unreliable guidance through prophecy, which therefore necessarily ended with the completion of the New Testament (Grudem, 2013:21).

The closing of the Canon of Scripture defined the Bible in its completeness, and defined the completeness of the revelation of the apostles and prophets in the New Testament, of which the writings are inerrant, infallible, and sufficient. For this reason, according to the cessationists, no further manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church was necessary (Waldron, 2019:10).<sup>17</sup> In fact, according to this cessationist theory, miraculous gifts served only during the promulgation of Scripture, so that today they are no longer needed because there are no more new Scriptures (Grudem, 2015:539).

Thus *glossolalia*, prophecy, healings, and all direct revelation by the Holy Spirit "ceased" when the New Testament was completed with the revelation of the New Testament apostles and New Testament prophets, since these represent exclusively the infallible foundation of the biblical Canon itself. The Bible, as the complete, fully authoritarian, inerrant, infallible Word of God and the only source worthy of unique and exclusive attention, became then sufficient in the building up of the church and believers. Indeed, it can be observed, thanks to the study of the history of

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<sup>17</sup> Attention is focused especially on Waldron, among the cessationists with a Reformed orientation, since he is the one who seeks to demonstrate the total and final cessation of charismatic gifts with the end of the first apostles. As acceptable as his arguments are, for example about the closing of the Biblical Canon, from the Pentecostal point of view his radical cessationism is not so shareable. The author believes that, unlike Waldron, reformers like Moltmann and Welker are more open to a less radical cessationism that looks at the Pentecostal movement as an event to be evaluated with special consideration. The author as a Pentecostal feels more comfortable with the thinking of Moltmann and Welker.

Christianity and the development of the church, that there is a certain temporal coincidence between the definitive institution of the Canon of Scripture and the diminishing of miracles (Rinaldi, 2008:341), until their complete disappearance in the first centuries of the church's history. Therefore, it has been deduced that the presence of the Bible led to their disappearance, because it made them no longer necessary (Kendall, 2016:168).

### 3.2.2.1 The closing of the biblical Canon and the attainment of "Perfection"

Some cessationists think that precisely with the definitive formation of the Bible, which took place thanks to the agreement reached by the whole church on the definitive Canon, that "perfection" of which the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 (Bible, 1991/'93) was achieved, by virtue of which, as would have been predicted by the Apostle Paul himself, the abolition of prophecy and knowledge and the cessation of tongues would have been determined (Grudem, 2015:537). These spiritual gifts, therefore, would no longer have any validity for the church, not even for the church of today. That being so, the "perfection" of the Church would already have been achieved, so that it would no longer have any connection with the event of the return of the Lord (Grudem, 2015:537), for which the Church is waiting. But, as the pastor of the Westminster Chapel in London, Kendall (2016:165), states, although most Christians agree that the Bible is perfect, it should be pointed out that the "perfection" of which the Apostle Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 13 might actually be referred to the attainment of "perfect love", and in any case it might be better referred to the "perfection" that believers will actually achieve when they are in heaven. That is, this perfection should be achieved when the Lord returns, with the experience of the complete redemption of believers (Rm 8:23), of which the Holy Spirit is now the guarantee (Eph 1:14), because then believers will see God face-to-face and the knowledge will be full (Bible, 1991/'93), that is, complete and without false impressions or limited perceptions (Grudem, 2015:537-538). It will then happen that spiritual gifts, which are "imperfect" because they provide partial knowledge, such as prophecy and tongues that are characterised by incompleteness of content (Grudem, 2013:155), will cease while love, which is superior to gifts (Grudem, 2013:154-155), will continue eternally (Grudem, 2015:538). The imperfection of

spiritual gifts, therefore, should be referred to the partial content that they communicate and not to their essence given by divine provenance, for perfect knowledge is not of the present state in which believers find themselves, but of the eternal state in which they will be after Christ's return. In fact, Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, does not specify the time of the end of the gifts of prophecy and tongues (Waldron, 2019:74). Instead, he speaks of the limits of prophecy using the metaphor of the "mirror" to explain the limitations of the vision the prophet still receives, because it is quantitatively that revelation communicates a partial knowledge of the subjects it deals with (Grudem, 2013:156-157).

The fact is that the cessationists do not want to consider that the gifts are useful tools given to the church for its edification, for as long as it is present on earth (Grudem, 2015:538) so the content they can provide is certainly always valuable, even if it is a portion of knowledge compared to the complete knowledge that will be reached when Christ returns, when believers will see Him face-to-face (Keener, 2016:80). Even the prophet John the Baptist (Mt 11:2-3; Lk, 7:18-19), (Bible, 1991/'93), for example, demonstrated a limited revelation which, together with his preconceptions, led him to mistakenly doubt the identity of Jesus as the expected Messiah (Keener, 2016:chap.7).

Finally, since the perfection of the Church is achieved through the action of ministries, as Keener (2016:chap.2) states, it seems absurd to argue that with the completion of the canon the goal of unity of the multiform Body of Christ would be lost because the ministerial gifts of Ephesians 4:11-13 (Bible, 1991/'93) would be lost. In fact, given the compactness of the group, it is also strange to maintain that only some gifts would have disappeared while others would not.

### ***3.3 What are cessationists' expectations of God?***

Kendall (2016:164) affirms that one of the limitations that most affects cessationists in personally experiencing the power of God is their lack of expectation in this regard, and their being content with understanding the purely intellectual gospel. This type of intellectual approach, mediated by doctrines with their complex historical events, is contrasted by the direct reference to Scripture by the Pentecostals, who

with great spontaneity see in the message an immediate implementation through the action of the Holy Spirit (Ferrario, 2011:275).

The theologian Barth in 1929 spoke of an idealistic vision of the continuity of the Spirit of God and man, affirming that the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of promise" only in an eschatological sense; therefore, this constitutes the expectation of the "totally other" in the eternal perspective, beyond this earthly life; therefore "now" the Holy Spirit remains absolutely precluded from all human experience (Moltmann, 1994:17-18).

Instead, Tillich, in his pneumatology, presents life in the Holy Spirit as a life experience of women and men who are in search of their happiness, through their search for fullness and realisation of their potential. For them there is the "gift of the Spirit", which Tillich calls "Presence of the Spirit", and it is the opening of the transcendent to humanity (Ferrario, 2011:104).

Tillich speaks, in fact, of the "correlation" between the Holy Spirit and man. Tillich deals with the "manifestation of the spiritual presence in the human spirit", in "historical humanity" and in "spiritual community". The Spiritual Community is the result of the main event of the work of the Spirit of God (Tillich, 2003:163). That is, the "Spiritual Community" is the space that is crossed by the Spirit of God and this space goes beyond the visible church, the one where, by the grace of God, undeserving people experience that they are accepted by God. However, at the same time the Holy Spirit works not only in the space of the church, but also in all areas of society and the world (Ferrario, 2011:104).

Therefore, contrary to the thought of Karl Barth, for whom the Spirit of God remains the "totally other" for this time, Moltmann (1994:226) affirms that it is possible to experience the Spirit of God, because He is present in man through the outpouring that God makes upon all flesh, which consequently becomes spiritual, so that God is "in believers" and they are "in God", which therefore does not represent an otherness that is far from them at all.

It is considered very interesting to cite Moltmann, even though he is a theologian who is part of the Reformed tradition, because he presents the Holy Spirit in language that may be appropriate for a systematic Pentecostal theology. As well as for the fact, as will be reiterated in section 4.6.3, that he himself does not consider himself opposed to the charismatic phenomena that are manifesting themselves in the Pentecostal movement throughout the world, even though he has not personally had a charismatic type of experience and even though he believes that he can neither explain nor contradict it (Moltmann, 1994:215).

For Moltmann (1994:324) every action of God and every human experience of God "has a pneumatic character", because believers experience God's action in their lives through the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the proof of God's communion, friendship and love (Moltmann, 1994:31). So, the charismatic experience, Moltmann says again, is an experience of intimate communion with God that is superior to that between the Creator and the creature, a mutual *perichoresis*, a mutual indwelling between God and his people. When the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost He brought a fundamental, more intimate innovation in the relationship between God and the human creature (Graham, 2000:28).

Bonnke (2008:104) says that according to the biblical interpretation of the cessationists it is necessary to seek only the fruit of the Holy Spirit and not his charismatic gifts. Although, according to Bonnke, it is clearly expressed in Scripture that while on the one hand the Apostle Paul expressly wrote that first of all one must desire love, on the other hand he also wrote that one must not forget to seek "ardently" spiritual gifts; and among these, in particular, he wrote that it is necessary to try ardently to prophesy, and not to prevent speaking in other languages at all (1 Cor 14: 1,39), (Bible, 1991/'93).

The famous 19th century Reformed Baptist preacher Spurgeon (2011:80), who was neither a continuationist nor a hard cessationist, said that while on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit manifested Himself with miraculous signs, and those who received Him spoke in other tongues, prophesied and performed works of healing, later these manifestations were considered transitory and no longer necessary. They

were in fact replaced by those permanent and more important gifts that allow those who possess them to bless and lead others to become children of God and, therefore, to do works far more important than physical miracles. Also because, according to Spurgeon (2011:100-101), these permanent gifts present in believers, (certainly Spurgeon refers to the gifts that confer the extraordinary ability to witness and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but exclude miraculous gifts), attest to the experience of the passage of the Holy Spirit from "with us" to "in us" in a more intimate relationship. For as long as the Holy Spirit was with the apostles He helped them to work miracles, but when it was in them, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, they stopped working miracles and speaking in tongues and learned to know the Holy Spirit more intimately. However, according to Spurgeon, the sensitive manifestations of the Holy Spirit disappeared, so every believer can only expect to feel it in his soul (Spurgeon, 2011:101).

Waldron (2019:109-110), who claims to be a convinced cessationist, admits that Spurgeon could have charismatic experiences, but states that Spurgeon was actually completely unaware that God could perform miracles through his ministry or that God could use him as a prophet. Although there is evidence that while Spurgeon was preaching, he may have been revealing to members of his church things about their specific circumstances of life that he himself did not know at all. Waldron, in fact, seems to want to forcefully state that such experiences "of a miraculous nature" were completely random, in order to prove his cessationist theory at all costs. Instead, one could cite that episode in the Gospel of John 11:49-52 which highlights the unawareness of the high priest Caiaphas when he prophesied that Jesus had to die to save the nation (Bible, 1991/93). The Apostle John in fact points out that Caiaphas did not actually make that statement "by himself", but prophesied because he was the high priest of that year, even though he was not aware that he was in fact prophesising.

### ***3.4 Does the baptism of the Holy Spirit coincide with conversion or is it a distinct and subsequent experience?***

According to the conservative evangelical vision, contrary to what is sustained by the Pentecostals, baptism with the Holy Spirit is an event that occurs in every believer at the moment of conversion; that is, according to this vision all believers who have faith for their salvation are automatically baptised with the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:164). In fact, this "reformed version of baptism with the Holy Ghost" is based on 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For we were all baptized in one Spirit to form one body, Jews and Greeks, slaves and free; and we have all been watered in the same Spirit" and on 1 Corinthians 1:5,7: "[...] you have been enriched with all things [...]", therefore, "do not lack any gift while you wait for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Bible, 1991/'93). All cessationists are convinced that the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at the moment of conversion. However, the consequence of this view is that baptism with the Holy Ghost would actually take place in the believer in a totally unconscious way, and because it would take place at the moment of the new birth it would correspond to an event and not an experience (Kendall, 2016:178-180). Therefore, after believing in order to be saved, the believer would be led to believe that he or she has no need to seek any other baptism that might be accompanied by sensitive manifestations, such as speaking in other tongues and exercising other spiritual gifts. Moreover, according to Grudem (2015:538), in 1 Corinthians 1:7 Paul saw spiritual gifts as temporary equipment for the ministry of believers, and therefore linked in them the possession of such gifts with their ongoing activity of awaiting the return of the Lord (Bible, 1991/'93).

Here we want to quote Welker, even though he is a Reformed theologian, because he highlights a shortcoming on the part of cessationists, conditioned by their rigid paradigms, in not wanting to give more attention and consideration to the worldwide Pentecostal movement.

Thus, Welker (1995:11) asks himself, "Is it possible that hundreds of millions of people, such is the magnitude of the charismatic movement in the world today, have taken on a great blunder? Rather, it could be that the secular world, which has also

entered the Church characterised by its formalised and institutionalised religious systems, has practically acquired a tendency to see nothing beyond a reality built according to its own rigid paradigms, and therefore not to seek to experience "new things" in the power of God and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, who has instead been sent to work on earth for the good of men as He wants. In particular, the Holy Spirit has been sent to work visibly in the Church and in every single believer, to whom He gives his power. Nor, on the other hand, to emphasise, as many cessationists do, the possible doctrinal alterations and possible excesses of certain pentecostal movements, which have indeed proved dangerous for the church (Carson, 2017:226). These can constitute a valid justification for not wanting to expose oneself to "the multiplicity of different perceptions and attestations of the Spirit, as well as a familiarity with his own reality," which is characterised by the supernatural surprising and out-of-the-ordinary. Keener (2016:Intr.) affirms that it is possible to prevent "the unbridled subjectivism of popular charismatic excesses" by a more careful study of Scripture, but this study must have a true biblical meaning, only if it leads to a Christian experience "shaped by the experience of Pentecost", which represents the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church.

Now millions of people who have experienced salvation, contrary to many books that have been written about the Holy Spirit, can testify that the "seal of the Holy Spirit" can be experienced directly (Eph 1:13), (Bible, 1991/'93), consciously and well informed (Kendall, 2016:90). And also that sanctification, which is not received as the "seal," is rather an inevitable effect of it (Kendall, 2016): 90), for it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that sanctification can be achieved (Graham, 2000:107). Nevertheless, the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit determines that the moral virtues become possible characteristics in the Christian, just as it becomes possible to move from doctrine on God to a relationship with God (Keener, 2016:Intr.). This is something on which cessationists should reflect, for all Christians place sanctification, which continually matures after salvation, in the foreground, and mature Pentecostals know that without the pursuit of sanctification *glossolalia* would be of no importance.

### ***3.5 Reading the Scripture is always conditioned by the reader's pre-comprehension***

Often the prejudices one has against charismatic experiences can, above all, have a negative effect on those who possess them. In reality, it seems that today the church has lost its capacity for discernment, making it difficult for believers to perceive God's closeness, i.e. it seems that the church has lost that "sensitivity to grasp the divine action that is taking place through the work of the Holy Spirit" (Welker, 1995:14). Incidentally, once again, like Moltmann, Reformed theologian Welker presents language that could be thought of, at least in part, as a suitable guide for a systematic Pentecostal theology.

These prejudices may derive from a purely rational reading of Scripture that analyses only its grammar and meaning in context, but does not consider it as a life force, as the Word of God, which requires one to embrace with faith its message to be lived in experience (Keener, 2016:chap.5). This is an engaging reading that leads to an experience of faith, which is in contrast to the purely rational and cold one, devoid of any involvement of feelings, but at the same time does not want to be so irresponsible as to produce a totally subjective interpretation. The cessationists are in fact opposed to a pentecostal reading of Scripture that has been and is purely based on the possibility of experiencing it, because of course this has always been the approach that has guided Pentecostals in the way they read Scripture. If this reading approach can be judged as a limitation for Pentecostals, it must be made clear that all, in fact, not only Pentecostals but all evangelicals, both Continuationists and Cessationists, read Scripture within the limits of the pre-comprehension deriving from their own experiences, their own culture and their own tradition. In fact, it is difficult for anyone, no matter how hard they try, to read free from their own assumptions and mental categories (Keener, 2016:chap.1). Keener (2016:chap.13) affirms that the most radical cessationism approaches Scripture with a purely intellectual approach and, even if unintentionally, is in fact non-believing, therefore, cessationism diminishes the demand for faith on the part of the text, and nullifies any expectation on the part of the believer that God can still act today as it is written.

Instead, the relevant message that every believer must be able to grasp from the biblical text is that God is continually active in history and in the life of each human. It is necessary to have an open and free mind to make considerations based first of all on the history of Christianity and the development of the Church, looking also at the burgeoning development of the pentecostal-charismatic movement and its contemporary experiences; trying to adapt the initial assumptions to also initiate a dialogue between the different points of view between cessationists and continuationists. Even if, as has been said before, it must be admitted that for anyone, as is the case for a historian who has his own historiographic vision, it is impossible to have a completely neutral vision and therefore devoid of subjective components; such a vision remains rather only a goal to be reached approximately (Rinaldi, 2019:13). Honestly, in fact, it must also be admitted that both the historical studies of non-charismatic authors and those of charismatic authors lack objectivity because both tend to be attached to their own preconceived conclusions (Carson, 2017:223-224). In fact, both adopt the same evidence to affirm opposing opinions about the existence of charismatic gifts. However, both cannot manipulate the historical facts, and the statistical data linked to them, attesting to the rapid and remarkable development of the pentecostal-charismatic movement.

### *3.5.1 Dialogue between charismatics and non-charismatics is desirable.*

According to Carson (2017:12), it would be desirable that an authentic dialogue takes place between charismatics and non-charismatics, between continuationists and cessationists, in order to get to know each other better, trying to put aside mutual prejudices, especially those found in non-charismatics.<sup>18</sup> Non charismatic people, in fact, believe that charismatics are arrogant, tend to be exalted before other believers, lacking humility and fidelity in Christian service. They also believe that charismatics do not possess a deep biblical understanding and are incapable of

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<sup>18</sup> The author believes, sharing Carson's opinion, that a possibility of dialogue can be found between charismatics and non-charismatics. Of course the author believes that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ because of our common faith in Christ regardless of charismatic experiences, for which the author would not want to be misunderstood as wanting to label one another. The author only thinks that non-charismatics choose not to have charismatic experiences in order not to contradict their own conviction that everything must have ceased with the end of the first apostles, while a charismatic believes that he proves with his own experience that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to those who seek them, starting with glossolalia which is the first evident sign of it.

evangelising, because they also tend to draw members who become part of their communities from those already belonging to other churches. Furthermore, non-charismatics believe that charismatics are not biblical because they elevate the experience of the glossolalia above the truth and give it a fundamental theological and spiritual importance. Non-charismatics, finally, attribute the strong growth of the charismatic movement to the exaggerated triumphalism and consequent populism that is fed by their declarations of promises of easy growth towards holiness and easy access to Divine power.

On the other hand, charismatics judge the non-charismatics to be conditioned by overwhelming traditionalism, a lack of true faith in the Bible, a lack of zeal for the Lord, and being more concerned about ritual than reality in which one experiences the power of the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:11-12).<sup>19</sup>

Instead, as Keener (2016:chap.Intr.) states, "with sufficient humility, Pentecostals (continuationists) and other evangelicals (cessationists) can learn much from each other". Cessationists should learn not to fear the excesses of charismatics, and the latter should have more patience waiting for cessationists to learn charismatic biblical experiences. Unfortunately, fear of one and pride in the other does not allow both to recognise that they need each other to share their own peculiar perspectives of the biblical message, both different but genuine. Grudem (2015:541) also states that while cessationists could learn from the practical experience of Pentecostals to use spiritual gifts and be more vital in worship, Pentecostals could learn from cessationists rigor in understanding Christian doctrines and have a deeper understanding of Scripture.

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<sup>19</sup> The author agrees with much of Carson's thinking about the criticisms that non-charismatics and charismatics exchange with each other. However, the author believes that these are mostly unfounded prejudices on both sides, and that one should not generalize too much by including everyone, for example.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Arguments of Italian Pentecostal and Charismatic Theologians re *glossolalia***

Having said, as at the beginning of the previous chapter, that the term "continuationists" refers to Pentecostal and Charismatic theologians, here too it is not a question of putting a label on someone, as the cessationist Waldron (2019:14) also states, but, simply, the term continuationist is intended to indicate the point of view of those who believe and teach that the miraculous gifts, of which the New Testament writings also speak (Kendall, 2016:19), have always been present in the church of every age and are also present in today's church, and are always available to all believers, to whom the Holy Spirit gives the ability to speak in other tongues, to prophesy and to work miracles. This doctrine is shared by all the Pentecostals of the world and by the Italian Pentecostals.

#### ***4.1 The Pentecostal-charismatics take the report of the New Testament very seriously***

It is not at all true that the Pentecostal-Charismatic Church, therefore also the Italian one, wanted to replace the foundation of the unshakable and eternal Word of God with the "fragile foundation of the continuity of miraculous gifts" (Waldron, 2019:10,20), in particular with the continuity of the *glossolalia*. Rather, it is true that Italian Pentecostal Charismatics honour Scripture and take the New Testament report very seriously. They read it with a strongly supernaturalistic conception of their own and without any embarrassment in believing that God performs all sorts of miracles; despite the fact that in this post-enlightenment age rationality has prevented the most conservative evangelicals and liberals from accepting the validity of miracles, or in any case induced them to feel a little embarrassed when confronted with their reality (Waldron, 2019:25-26). Pentecostals consider the supernatural experiences, recounted in the New Testament, to be absolutely experienceable throughout the history of the church, and take it very seriously that the church today can be like the

New Testament church, because expectations about God have never disappointed believers (Keener, 2016:chap.1).

As Keener (2016:Intr., chap.1,2) states, all Christians should read Scripture as an experience to be lived today, and the promises it contains should be legitimately considered applicable not only to the people who were present on the occasions narrated in Scripture itself, but also to all believers of every age led by the same Spirit who guided God's people of Scripture. Therefore, it is necessary to read Scripture not only with the aim of studying an ancient culture, but mainly with the expectation of "sharing the kind of spiritual experiences and relationship with God" that are discovered in it; that is, it is necessary to read Scripture with the aim of having the same experiences as "people who listen to God, prophesy and experience miracles".

This type of approach to Scripture, which presupposes a reading of faith, in no way excludes careful exegetical study that highlights biblical models that are contextual in history but at the same time current (Keener, 2016:chap.13). On the contrary, Pentecostals want to honour Scripture by committing themselves to study it more carefully and faithfully, aware that Scripture is accompanied by experiences. Kendall, speaking of his reformed theological conviction (Kendall, 2016:150), tries to give a response, not at all controversial, to the cessationists, to refute their peculiar vision, and paradoxically exposes a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that reconciles his personal charismatic experience and the charismatic experiences of other believers with Scripture (Kendall, 2016:142-146) He thus affirms that the exercise of charisms is reconciled with Scripture, even to demonstrate its compatibility with the Reformed systematic theology (Kendall, 2016:18-19,150).

#### *4.1.1 Receiving the Holy Spirit is a biblical model for all believers*

Pentecostal experiences are experiences that follow the model of the Book of Acts. This model is for all Christian communities of all times, until the return of Jesus (Horton *et al.*, 2016:1961). This means that these are real experiences that are made with God. Beginning with the experience of Acts 2, the experience of Pentecost

in its true substance does not identify a religious denomination or organisation, but first of all it is a force for the renewal of Christianity (Keener, 2016:Intr.).

Jesus promised that all who would believe would receive the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:39), so when in John 20:22 it is written, "And, saying this, He blew upon them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit,'" that implies that Jesus blew the Holy Spirit not only upon the disciples present on that occasion but upon all disciples of every age (Bible, 1991/'93). This principle of continuity also applies to the biblical model of supernatural works, which Jesus promised to make all believers do: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works I do; indeed, he will do greater works than these, [...]" (Jn 14:12), (Bible, 1991/'93). According to Keener (2016:Intr.) these are current biblical models, for which one must expect God to continue to give the same strength to extraordinary activities such as those recounted in Scripture.

In addition, Keener (2016:chap.6) says that in Scripture one can see how God works to help people meet their needs; in fact, one only has to look at "Scripture through the lens of God's heart" to perceive his concern for people and their needs. Therefore, contrary to what Waldron (2019:37,39,114-115) states, the miraculous signs did not serve solely to attest to the authority of the message that God had entrusted to Jesus and the New Testament apostles, as this would be another reason why they would cease, but in the New Testament it is very clear that both Jesus and the apostles worked miracles because they were moved by the feelings of compassion they felt for people (Ac 3:4), and thus to respond to their needs (Ac, 9:38-42), and not only to confirm the new redemptive revelation they communicated. Peter testified (Ac 10:38) that Jesus of Nazareth had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power to go "about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (Bible, 1991/'93). The evangelist Matthew 14:14 speaks of Jesus' compassion for the crowds: "And Jesus, dismounted from the boat, saw a great crowd and took pity on them, and healed the sick." (Bible, 1991/'93). Today people have the same needs as then, and only the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit can satisfy many of these needs, which are hard to find a solution to in natural resources (Maldonado, 2014:14-15). Indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit reveals

how merciful God is to the weak, the dispossessed, the marginalised, and the fragile, and manifests his glory to them with help and support (Welker, 1995:13). There is a serious risk that many people of this generation take, and if they do not find answers to their needs through the spiritual power of the Church, they go in search of alternative forms of power, turning away from God and turning to magic, sorcery, satanic sects, and false religions (Maldonado, 2014:30-31).

#### *4.1.2 Christ: example of the human being filled with the Spirit*

The testimonies told in the New Testament present the model of the Christian experience of God. In particular, the model for the Church is the history of Jesus Christ. In fact, this model represents the story of "the Spirit with Christ" and "Christ with the Spirit", that is, the model of the human being who is filled with the Spirit, who comes from the Spirit, who is led by the Spirit, who works in the Spirit and who through the Spirit sacrifices himself on death on a cross (Moltmann, 1994:75).

The theologian Tillich (2003:158) spoke of a Christology of the Spirit, as a primitive Christian tradition exposed by the Synoptic Gospels, in which it is told how Jesus Christ was seized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of his baptism. The theologian states that the divine Spirit was present in Jesus as Christ, so that his human spirit was totally grasped and possessed by the divine Spirit. Therefore, the Spiritual Presence, the divine Spirit that Tillich calls the "New Being", in Christ represents "the decisive incorporation of the New Being" for historical humanity" and, therefore, the Spiritual Presence in Christ represents the method for all experiences of the Holy Spirit in the past and the future.

As was said before, Jesus promised to make all believers do his own works; therefore, like the other biblical models, the model of the history of Jesus Christ is relevant to every believer, who, like Christ, receives the Holy Spirit, to follow in the same footsteps during this earthly life, and to continue to spread his message and to do his own works, "indeed he will do greater works" (Jn 14:12), (Bible, 1991/'93), with the same power.

Taking these biblical models into consideration means practically nurturing one's own interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that those who combine interest in the gifts with their faith may benefit from them. Indeed, combining interest and faith in the testimonies of Scripture is a biblical principle (Heb 4:2), which is beneficial to spiritual experiences.

#### ***4.2 The growing interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit by scholars and interpreters of Scripture is recent***

The Holy Spirit has always been there, all the time of eternity is "the time of the Holy Spirit," and all human history is the "theater of the action of the Triune God," so it is also the theater of the action of the Holy Spirit. However, thanks to "the eruption of the pentecostal movement into contemporary history", the 20th century has been identified as the "century of the Holy Spirit, because He has been placed at the centre of attention and his work has been re-evaluated (Cymbala, 2012:7).

In fact, the twentieth century has seen a significant increase in interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit by believers, theologians and various academics, compared to previous centuries, thanks to the considerable growth of the pentecostal and charismatic influence within Christian churches (Grudem, 2015:527), but this interest is quite recent.

Because, although the pentecostal movement has assumed, as seen in the light of historical facts, a considerable relevance in the contemporary Christian experience, due to its impetuous expansion, which made it a movement of planetary scope for its rapid worldwide development during the twentieth century beginning with that famous revival of Azusa Street in 1906-1909 (Ferrario, 2011:274), and although the movement has given a new and explosive force to the renewal of the church, the academic world has struggled to show a real interest in a more in-depth study of the movement itself and its peculiar theology, which is equally relevant (Grudem, 2015:527).

The attention of theologians in particular, but also of historians and scholars from various demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines, to the pentecostal world is, instead,

a duty and an objective necessity because, as Welker (1995:11) states, no one can doubt that today many people, specifically hundreds of millions, who belong to the pentecostal-charismatic movement have experienced the Holy Spirit in their lives, with clear demonstrations of the "power of God", which acts through and for people.

One should simply put aside prejudices and skepticism and trust the experiences of these people who refer to the Spirit of God and invite familiarity with his reality. In this way, so many doubts, especially those of many theologians, about the Holy Spirit and the present experiences of the Holy Spirit, which call to reality, even today, the many testimonies of the Spirit's action, as they come from biblical traditions, could disappear (Welker, 1995:12).

Observe the historian of Christianity Rinaldi (2017:18) that the history of the pentecostal movement and its peculiar theology was "for too many decades the Cinderella of the studies of the history of Christianity", at least until the 1970s, when the first substantial contributions on the subject were seen, despite that pentecostalism represents "the most relevant sector of Christianity".

In fact, especially the texts of systematic theology, produced before, did not contain chapters on spiritual gifts (Grudem, 2015:527); and not even in Italy has the pentecostal movement produced texts of systematic theology that deal extensively with the theme of spiritual gifts. In more recent times, however, the themes associated with the charismatic movement, generally understood as the movement that experiments with charisms, have become very relevant in the vast panorama of theology, as well as personal Christian experience (Carson, 2017:11).

In Italy, too, efforts are being made to fill the gap due to the scarcity of texts on the study of the Pentecostal movement, and despite the limited means, as Rinaldi (2017:18) states, considerable progress is being made. The historian of Christianity himself, Rinaldi, has begun to devote himself in particular to the history of the Italian pentecostal movement, and to its characteristics of birth and dynamic development, which are such that particularly draw the interest in the study of it. The interest of the historian Rinaldi manifested itself after he had taught Christianity's history in Italian universities for several years, but without dealing with contemporary history

(Rinaldi, 2019:3). However, more recently he has found that the Italian pentecostal movement is particularly worthy of attention, since it occupies an important place in the contemporary history of Christianity because it began to develop from the first decade of the twentieth century expanding rapidly throughout Italy. Among other things with a unique characteristic in the Protestant evangelical world, in fact, unlike the other evangelical, non-pentecostal churches, which were born in Italy thanks to the work of foreign missions, those of the pentecostal movement were born thanks to Italians emigrants who returned from abroad (Rinaldi, 2019:3).

#### *4.2.1 Interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit has been conditioned by the balance between Christocentric and pneumatological theology*

As Moltmann (1994:179) states, theology should not be afraid at all to describe the experiences of the Holy Spirit, encouraged by the narratives contained in the New Testament, in which believers and apostles speak widely of their charismatic experiences.

Therefore, it is necessary to fill, as has been said and reiterated, the gap due to the scarcity of theological literary production that deals more extensively with the theme of the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts.

##### 4.2.1.1 The "forgetfulness of the Spirit" in the theological literary sphere

Indeed, with regard to the interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it has been found that in the theological literary sphere, while the world is full of books about God the Father, the creator of the universe, and the Son of God, many fewer books have been written about the Holy Spirit throughout the centuries of Christianity's history (Cymbala, 2012:29). Even systematic theological texts only now begin to contain chapters that answer questions about the nature and use of spiritual gifts in the church (Grudem, 2015:527).

Theologian Tillich in the third volume of his "Systematic Theology", the first edition of which dates back to 1963, also deals very extensively with the relationship between the human spirit and the divine Spirit; he spoke of the Spiritual Presence within the life of the creature (Tillich, 2002:119,130). The theologian speaks of the ecstatic

experiences of believers due to the presence of the Spirit of God in them, who seizes their spirit, and he also speaks of the difficulty of Protestantism in accepting the term "infusion" of the Spirit, because this term refers to the experience with the Spirit accompanied by the self-awareness of the person. However, this stance of Protestantism, in truth, contradicts the correct interpretation of the report of Pentecost and other similar episodes of the New Testament, especially the Acts and Pauline letters (Tillich, 3002:128). Moreover, the theologian criticises what happened in proto-Catholicism when the charism was replaced by the institution, which Tillich calls "institutional desecration of the Spirit" (Tillich, 3002:130). It is relevant that Tillich exposes in his "Systematic Theology" the interest in the Holy Spirit and his gifts exercised in the Church, as well as his action in history.

#### 4.2.1.2 Christocentric thought has caused the "forgetfulness of the Spirit"

Moltmann (1994:11) states that in the 1970s the writings on the Holy Spirit showed that there was a real "forgetfulness of the Spirit", and in particular such neglect was found in evangelical theology. The cause of the lack of interest in the Holy Spirit on the part of theologians and, consequently, of the relative lack of literary production, was mainly due to a theology influenced by the "neo-orthodoxy" present in the evangelical church, and especially by the Christocentric thought of Karl Barth, as well as by the 1934 declaration of the Barmen Synod of the confessing Church. Today, however, a countertrend is beginning to register, noting that there has been a notable growth in the quantity of writings on the Holy Spirit and his activity.

However, these writings still leave a number of questions unresolved, because they are deliberately not treated as thoroughly as they should be. One of the questions still unresolved in the theological field is that of pneumatology for which a dispute arises between the pentecostal vision, on the one hand, which places at the centre the experiences that can be made with the Holy Spirit, and, on the other hand, the evangelical conservative vision of "Word and Spirit" and the Catholic vision of grace. In fact, while in the vision of the conservative evangelical church the Holy Spirit is linked only to the preaching of the ministers (Kendall, 2016:84), and in the Catholic Church is linked only to the ecclesiastical institution that mediates grace, the unjust

criticism is made of the Pentecostal vision that personal charismatic experiences are rather the result of fanaticism and not the action of the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1994:12), whose presence, however, is linked to the exercise of charismatic gifts, which is the basis of pentecostal theological doctrine.<sup>20</sup>

The fact is that, according to Moltmann (1994:19), theology opposed to pentecostal theology sees the Holy Spirit only as the Spirit of redemption, who "has his place in the church" and serves to "certify men of the eternal bliss of their souls".

This theological vision, since the experience of redemption has to do with Christ's sacrifice, places Christ at the centre of Christian theology, while it places the Holy Spirit only at the service of the purpose of redemption.

Therefore, according to this theology, the Holy Spirit is at work to make the believer only experience the redemption, while remaining well detached from both the bodily life and the natural life of the believer. The Holy Spirit therefore limits Himself only to inducing human beings to turn away from "this world" and to hope for a better world in the afterlife (Moltmann, 1994:19). The pentecostal point of view, on the other hand, also looks to a better life in the present reality and not only in the future and therefore believes that because of this anti-charismatic theology, the church today shows that it no longer has the same capacity that belonged to the primitive church to be able to communicate to "this world" the bursting experience of the Holy Spirit Moltmann (1994:20).

One of the reasons for this anti-charismatic theology lies in that "spirituality" which leads one to orient oneself exclusively towards the inner experiences of the soul, causing a relative aversion to sensitive experiences, which are instead useful because they are lived in communion with the natural world and to counteract the aversion to the body and the detachment from the reality of the present life, to which the Pentecostal pays great attention. The reason for this type of spirituality, which leads

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<sup>20</sup> The author shares both Kendall's critique of the conservative evangelical church's view that sees the Holy Spirit manifested in action only when ministers of worship preach, and Moltmann's critique of the Catholic Church's view that sees the Holy Spirit in action only in church authorities; whereas for Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit is manifested when He acts through His gifts in church members.

to aversion to the body and detachment from the reality of present life, is rooted in the persistent influence of Platonic thought on Christianity (Moltmann, 1994:20).

Another reason that supports the anti-charismatic theology is that of the gnostic conception, which is not correct from the Christian point of view, of understanding redemption. According to this conception, the Holy Spirit is seen limitedly as the Spirit of Christ who has the power only to redeem the soul and to beautify it only for heaven. And again, the Holy Spirit is also recognised as the Spirit of the Father, the *rûḥ Jahweh* revealed in the Old Testament, who has always been in action with the power to create. So it is necessary to go back to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed to recognise also in the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1994:20), "who has spoken through the prophets",<sup>21</sup> his personality, distinct from the Father and the Son, present and in action, and at the same time life-giving in a real and sensitive experience (Moltmann, 1994:21).

Moreover, Western churches, as Moltmann (1994:76) states, traditionally tend to have a certain aversion to the theme of a "pneumatological Christology", because they want to consider a "Christological pneumatology" to be valid, thus giving less importance to the person of the Holy Spirit and considering Him fundamentally as "the Spirit of the Lord", who represents only the risen Christ. Consequently, according to the conception of the Western churches, Christ is the only one who must rule over the church.

Whereas in the vision of the Pentecostal churches, Christ is the head of the Church (Col, 1:18) and the Holy Spirit is the one who dwells in it, leads it and works independently of Christ (1 Cor 3:16; Rm 8:14), acting individually in each believer, from within him, because he is a child of God (Bosio, 1997:93,210).

In reality, the Holy Spirit possesses a peculiar personality that relates to the Father, to the Son and also to believers who experience Him directly, and this is the point of view of the Pentecostals. From this truth, in fact, practically springs for believers the

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<sup>21</sup> Vaticano. 2005

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium\\_ccc/documents/archive\\_2005\\_compendium-ccc\\_it.html#LA%20PROFESSIONE%20%20DELLA%20FEDE%20CRISTIANA](http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_it.html#LA%20PROFESSIONE%20%20DELLA%20FEDE%20CRISTIANA). Date of access 13/07/2020.

way of praying, invoking and worshipping the Holy Spirit,<sup>22</sup> as an identity that is distinct from the Father and the Son, and which is equal to both (Moltmann 1994:23,25). This is what is exercised in Pentecostal churches in general, including Italian churches. While, it should be noted that unlike the Western churches, the Orthodox churches have traditionally considered Christ and the Spirit on an equal footing in a mutual relationship (Moltmann, 1994:76).

Therefore, one has reason to say that among the issues neglected by theological reflection there is the treatment of pneumatology as the founding basis of the Western churches and, at the same time, there is still a lack of serious and careful reflection on the pentecostal and charismatic movements that represent a real world religious phenomenon of great importance, which can serve as a guide for the development of a valid and fruitful pneumatology. Therefore, theologians should pay more attention to the corroborating experiences of the Holy Spirit, which unfortunately find opposition from the mentality typical of European modernity.

Moltmann affirms that it was precisely the awakening movements of the 17th and 18th centuries that brought about the discovery of the personal dimension of the freedom of faith, and that they prepared for the intimate and personal experience with the Holy Spirit, promoting pneumatological integration into the Christocentrism of the Reformation (Moltmann, 1994:139-140).

#### ***4.3 The pentecostal movement has a theological and doctrinal basis based on Scripture***

Theology is an integral part of the life of faith of the Christian community (Introvigne, 1996:149), so that every community always, inevitably, has its own theological doctrine, this is indispensable.

The pentecostal movement has always had one of its own from its origins, beginning with the reading and interpretation of Scripture according to its own particular orientations, and on these approaches to reading and hermeneutics it has based its charismatic experiences.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

#### *4.3.1 Scripture readings, pentecostal guidelines and hermeneutical approaches*

Keener (2016:For.) states that if world Christianity is exploding, at least in part, because of the growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in most of the world, then pentecostal Scripture readings in particular and pentecostal hermeneutical orientations and approaches in general cannot be overlooked in biblical interpretation and in the broader field of theological research.

This type of pentecostal approach characterised above all the birth and initial development phase of the pentecostal movement, during which the movement did not commit itself at all to producing its own systematic theology, like the other historical evangelical, Protestant and Reformed churches.

In fact, classical pentecostalism, especially the early pentecostalism, did not care much for theology and many non-pentecostal scholars, while sympathising with Pentecostals, stressed this aspect of pentecostalism as one of its weaknesses (Introvigne, 1996:148).

The reason for this initial disinterest of Pentecostals in the theology, the systematic theology, was due to their stance against an aging Christian world that had become cold and without effectiveness in evangelisation. Thus, the theology based on a fixed and rigid doctrine was opposed by the conviction that the Christian community should be guided only by the Holy Spirit with its characteristic of surprising, metaphorically, like the wind blowing where it will. For this reason, the first Pentecostals paid little attention to the elaboration of systematic theological thought and insisted, rather, on experience, charisms and phenomena. Consequently, it must also be admitted that this attitude on the one hand exposed the Pentecostals to the serious dangers of excesses and counterfeits, but on the other hand it characterised their typical aspect of "spontaneity and freshness", as a reaction to the coldness of a Christianity that was too theoretical and not very animated (Introvigne, 1996:149).

But then, indeed, already from a second phase of the development of the pentecostal movement, a pentecostal theological reflection necessarily began to develop, because of the contact that pentecostal communities began to have with

churches and Christian communities of older origin (Introvigne, 1996:149-150), and therefore because of the comparison that pentecostal communities had with the well established theological traditions of historical churches.

#### *4.3.2 The "theological backbone" of the pentecostal movement*

The lack of attention on the part of theologians to the Holy Spirit and, consequently, the scarce production of theological-pneumatological literature, has led a large part of the non-pentecostal Christian world to think that the basis of Italian pentecostalism, as well as that of the rest of the world, lacked a theological-doctrinal basis based on Scripture (Kendall, 2016:19).

In fact, some Protestants, particularly among the Reformed, have "prejudices" against the pentecostal movement. The heaviest of these prejudices, (and perhaps more harmful to non-Pentecostals because it keeps them away from the charismatic experience), is to believe that the pentecostal movement does not have "its own theological backbone" (Rinaldi, 2019:18).<sup>23</sup> According to this conviction, certainly unfounded, the pentecostal movement is rather accused of having as its basis only the emotionally emphasised, and sometimes spectacular, experience (Kendall, 2016:19). That is, the pentecostal movement, instead of taking care of theology and the formulation of a systematised doctrine, has meant that Pentecostals have preferred to insist exclusively on the experience of the Holy Spirit, placing the experience itself as a founding aspect, and emphasising primarily the manifestations of spontaneity, "charismatic" and "enthusiastic", which, among other things, according to Protestants, are what have basically made the pentecostal movement very strong and attractive to popular piety (Introvigne, 1996:104), promoting its growth. It must be said, however, that this last consideration was true especially during the initial development of pentecostalism, and that it also represented the development of pentecostalism in Italy.

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<sup>23</sup> The author shares the opinion of the historian Rinaldi about the prejudice of some Protestants, certainly not all, who claim that the Pentecostal movement does not have its own "theological backbone". This is a serious prejudice, among other things unfounded, which precludes any opportunity for dialogue between the Reformed who think in this way and the Pentecostals, who instead have their own theology.

In reality, as has been said and is reiterated here, it should be pointed out that the popularity of the pentecostal movement does not cancel out what Pentecostals and charismatics can rightly sustain; that is, that they live their experiences "under the dynamic impact of the Spirit", and that these experiences are supported first of all on a basis of reading the Scriptures, which is certainly a well established theological basis. The founding characteristic of this theological basis is "the expectation that the Holy Spirit will work through the text", even if such a reading contrasts with non-pentecostal theological traditions and credentials (Keener, 2016:For.). A dynamic reading of the biblical text presupposes that which is read speaks of God's continual action in the world and in the present time (Keener, 2016:chap.13). Just as God did in the past, He now does for a church that lives on experience, to truly be a biblical church (Keener, 2016:Intr.), a church that studies the text not only to know its historical and cultural context, but also to faithfully obey it and make supernatural experiences of it, which cannot remain relegated only to the past, but can be determined by current divine actions.

#### 4.3.2.1 Pentecostal theology arises from the feeling of supernatural action of "simple" believers

As testified by the professor and pentecostal pastor Napolitano (2015:54-60), exposing the thought of one of the most illustrious pioneers of Italian pentecostalism, Giuseppe Petrelli, who had a prominent role in the elaboration of Italian pentecostal theology, and was among the few who produced pentecostal literature (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007:126,128), the pentecostal movement was considered of certain Divine origin, and the Pentecostals were based on a dynamic experience characterised by a strong feeling of supernatural action that acted as a guide in everything; only that this experience was lived uncritically and without the Pentecostals bothering to formulate a truly significant theological proposal. This was due to the fact that the movement initially spread among "simple" people, who naively boasted of the simplicity of their thought for not having been contaminated by doctrines learned in the "schools of men", and therefore had no doctrine other than that of the simple "elementary and literalist knowledge of the Scriptures". Fortunately, at least the group of pioneers, who led the nascent Italian pentecostal

movement, knew how to read and write; in fact, these pioneers had acquired a level of education, albeit modest, often self-taught, and were often only able to read the Bible. However, at the same time, these Pentecostal pioneers had formed themselves doctrinally in the contexts of the churches of evangelical faith where they had converted, before joining the pentecostal movement. The churches, of the nascent Italian pentecostal movement, propagated the awakening by preaching the proclamation of salvation, the call to repentance and the proposal of the newness of the experience of "baptism with the Holy Spirit", with the sign of *glossolalia*, as the exclusive foundation (Rinaldi, 2019:53-54).

#### ***4.4 Comparison with the traditional systematic theology of the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church***

The title of this section may be misleading. In fact, the intention is not to compare theologies in order to establish the validity of one over the other; nor is it intended to be disrespectful or to create a caricature of Protestant and Catholic theologies, which are, in fact, quite respectable. Indeed, it can be argued that Pentecostals have much to learn from the aforementioned theologies. However, the purpose of this section is not to delve into the study of such theologies, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, there is no recourse here to truly Reformed or Protestant literature to reflect upon, but rather the purpose of this section is to point out that these albeit valid theologies do not promote, and even hinder, the Pentecostal experience based particularly on the sign of glossolalia and other charismatic manifestations, which Pentecostals consider to be subsequent to the initial sign of speaking in other tongues.

Therefore, we do not want to build Pentecostal theology on a distorted or imperfect representation of other theologies, but only to draw the attention of all theologians to the relevance of the Pentecostal movement as a worldwide experience of millions of people. The result is an invitation to Reformed and Catholic theologians to study the Pentecostal movement from the relevance of its experience in order to revise and renew their theology.

On the other hand, in fact, the Reformed churches have always boasted their own traditional systematic theology, and some Catholic observers also agree with them. But all of them actually make a big historical mistake, from the pentecostal point of view. In fact, it is evident, as has been said, that until today there has been a lack of serious interest on the part of the academic world in general in a more careful and in-depth study of the pentecostal movement, despite the fact that it has in fact and undeniably taken on considerable importance in contemporary Christian theology and experience because of its rapid development during the 20th century.<sup>24</sup> In reality it is possible to say reasonably that the pentecostal movement, despite its recent constitution in the history of Christianity, as has been said, has its own "theological backbone", its own precise theological identity (Rinaldi, 2017:15), which is based on the doctrine that sustains the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit as an intervention of God's grace, which follows the experience of the conversion of the believer (Rinaldi, 2017:21-22). This follows the experience of the new birth, and literally immerses the believer in the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:20), giving him that fullness which is initially manifested by the outward sign of "speaking in other tongues" (Rinaldi, 2017:22). This theological doctrine has its historical basis in Wesley's vision and experience (Rinaldi, 2017:21,24), whose preaching touched on two fundamental points: conversion as "new birth," and sanctification as "Christian perfection" and the second work of grace through immersion in the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:15,18). Wesley's doctrine was arranged theologically, and terminologically (Rinaldi, 2017:26), by his close collaborator John Fletcher (Kendall, 2016:20), who was the first to speak of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Rinaldi, 2017:16). From what has been said, one can reasonably conclude that pentecostalism is an awakening movement of historical Protestantism, to which, therefore, it belongs in all respects (Rinaldi, 2017:21-22).

#### *4.4.1 The theology of "baptism in the Holy Spirit"*

The same theology concerning "baptism in the Holy Spirit", which immerses in a new dimension of power for both personal piety and ministry, as well as in Wesley's

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<sup>24</sup> The author's concern is that if not enough importance, and proper attention, is given to the witness of the Pentecostal movement, given its worldwide significance, reformers may deprive themselves of studying what the Holy Spirit can do in the church through charismatic gifts.

Methodism, can be found in the Churches of Holiness (Kendall, 2016:19), which insist on the action of the Holy Spirit, through his baptism, to purify believers from sin by "eradicating the nature of sin" (Kendall, 2016:20). The peculiar theology of the Pentecostals, on the other hand, differs from the previous ones just mentioned, because it, even if it does not neglect the action of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of the believer (Rinaldi, 2017:21), adds to it the gift of tongues, or *glossolalia*, insisting on considering it as the initial sign of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Rinaldi, 2019:36-37). An experience that because of its "personal, profound and radical character" instils in the believer a strong enthusiastic spirituality, which is expressed in the exercise of charismatic gifts, prayer and healing, as well as sin and physical illnesses, which Christ made possible through his work of atonement (Rinaldi, 2017:22).

Therefore, the historian Rinaldi (2017:271) affirms that in the "historical and experiential DNA" of the pentecostal movement there is already a healthy and settled theology, which goes beyond the "kaleidoscope of signs and flashy phenomena", but it is simply necessary that the Pentecostals know how to become aware of it so that they can study it more thoroughly, arrange it and spread it (Rinaldi, 2017:270). However, the systematic doctrine, which should be elaborated as a result of the study, must take into account the fact that it cannot confine and block spontaneity within rigid schemes and paradigms. In fact, spontaneity is a peculiar characteristic of the pentecostal experience and the free movement of the Holy Spirit, which is represented by the "wind blowing where it will". (Jn 3:8), and therefore He always surprises because He does unexpected things by distributing "his gifts to each one in particular as he wishes" (1 Cor 12:11), (Bible, 1991/'93).

Pentecostal theology therefore places emphasis on the "communion of the Holy Spirit" with each individual believer, who is therefore able to live personally a sensitive experience of the vital and divine power of the Spirit himself, "now", in this earthly and natural life. For example, according to the pentecostal theological vision, the body of the human being should not be separated from the spirit (Moltmann, 1994:19), because the entire human being is under the action of the Holy Spirit, so

that the sensitive experience also becomes important and real as physical healing, for which God has promised to listen to prayer and grant it (Ferrario, 2011:277).

#### *4.4.2 The immediate and direct witness of the Holy Spirit*

Many conservative evangelicals cannot, or certainly do not want to, conceive any immediate and direct witness of the Holy Spirit, because they believe that the Holy Spirit speaks only through the Word (Kendall, 2016:84), and only at the time of preaching (Kendall, 2016:88). But the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word preached is a viewpoint that is certainly true for all Christian believers (Kendall, 2016:88), and is shared by all, even Pentecostals.

Instead, the fact that the Pentecostals do not share with the conservative evangelicals is that the latter want to dwell only on a doctrine of salvation and do not want to believe that the Holy Spirit today can also speak immediately and directly to the person (Kendall, 2016:88), as was the case in the New Testament era. For example, referring to the story, narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, of Ananias, who, although not a prophet or an apostle but a simple believer,<sup>25</sup> felt a direct message from God that did not concern the specific communication of any doctrine but that concerned the communication of simple instructions (Cymbala, 2012:139-140), that Ananias should go into the house of a certain Judas to find the newly converted Saul to lay his hands on him and restore his sight (Ac, 9:10-17). Therefore, believers have the example of a miraculous action performed by an ordinary believer (Kendall, 2016:84), which should have been, according to Waldron, primarily the prerogative of the apostles (Waldron, 2019:22-23). Likewise the example of Philip can also be cited, who was a deacon, who received personal direction from God, from whom he felt, immediately and directly from the Spirit (Kendall, 2016:84,88) a message telling him to approach and reach a certain chariot in the desert (Ac, 8:29). Here Philip not only does not contradict Scripture, but acts to bring the Ethiopian eunuch to salvation (Kendall, 2016:84). The day of Pentecost can again be mentioned when Peter preached after being anointed directly and immediately by the Holy Spirit (Ac

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<sup>25</sup> The reference to Ananias reinforces the concept that the Holy Spirit did not equip only apostles and prophets with charismatic gifts in order to accredit them, but also believers whom we could define as simple or ordinary, that is, not counted among the apostles.

2:37). Thus, the direct communication of the Holy Spirit concerned all kinds of believers and not just the apostles.

Acts 4:31 tells how the Holy Spirit worked upon the disciples who prayed, because all were filled with Him. Acts 10:44 tells how the Holy Spirit suddenly descended upon Cornelius and those who were listening to Peter (Kendall, 2016:89). Cornelius was the first European, not a Jew, converted who, along with those who were listening to the gospel, were baptised with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues (Bonnke, 2008:93). This fact denotes that Pentecost is for all, so it is repeated so that all believers, as they join their predecessors, receive the power for the mission (Keener, 2016:chap.3).

Why, then, would the Holy Spirit no longer wish to lead directly the Christian believers of today? (Cymbala, 2012:140) Instead, it can undoubtedly be said that, as from the beginning, the church still needs the Holy Spirit in direct and immediate action, and to receive from Him the power for mission (Keener, 2016:chap.3). Otherwise, if the real presence of the Holy Spirit in action is to be excluded, the Trinity is reduced to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Bible (Kendall, 2016:88). Instead, it must also be reiterated that the divine word, directed by the Holy Spirit, which is pronounced "in due time and in the right place," inwardly nourishes faith, hope, and charity, as an effect of what is called "*testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*," so that it is a peculiarity of the Holy Spirit to act in the believer to make the objective word of God subjectively effective (Moltmann, 1994:124-125).

#### *4.4.3 The Holy Spirit is the divine person who continues the work of Christ on earth*

Often the Holy Spirit has been indicated with impersonal expressions, by analogy with the experiences that can be made of Him. So He has been defined as a divine force, as the wind, as fire, as light and space, as inner certainty and as love. This type of approach has conditioned the type of relationship of the believer with the Holy Spirit. For example, believers have hardly ever been in relationship with the Holy Spirit through a direct invocation in prayer, just as they have with the Father and the Son, to ask Him for help and to thank Him (Moltmann, 1994:22).

The Holy Spirit cannot be understood as a divine quality, or rather it cannot be understood as an ontological quality of God, nor even simply a gift that God has given (Moltmann, 1994:63), but He is "person", and it is God who manifests Himself through the real presence, as in the *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh*, in which He is "the event of the working presence of God" (Moltmann, 1994:23). He is the active presence of God in person (Moltmann, 1994:67-68), He is the executive agent of God operating today on earth (Cymbala, 2012:18), to continue the work that Jesus began in the days when He was on earth (Cho, 2012:3); He is God Himself, who as a person stands autonomously and distinctly with respect to the Son and the Father. Whereas, the ancient church already faced a very difficult question, which is still not completely resolved today, namely that the Holy Spirit was considered subordinate to the Son, to be, therefore, the Spirit of the Son who works in the manner of the Son and without any personal autonomy (Moltmann, 1994:22-23).

Therefore, it has been found that the Holy Spirit is the least understood, least preached and least discussed member of the Trinity, while it is necessary to give Him special attention for a prosperous and dynamic spiritual life (Cymbala, 2012:18-19). But, the Holy Spirit must not be identified with one of his gifts, for He is the giver of his gifts and is the giver of Himself (Moltmann, 1994:63). This theology agrees with the doctrine of the *shekinah*, that is to say, with that doctrine concerning the way as in the Old Testament the *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh* is described as an "event of the working presence of God", in which God "descends to dwell in space and time, in a certain place and time, among earthly creatures and within their history" (Moltmann, 1994:63). The Holy Spirit with his sensitivity expresses God's empathy for humans, God's love scattered in their hearts (Rm 5:5), and allows them to make the concept of theopathy a reality, not as anthropomorphism but as a real indwelling of the Spirit in the believers (Moltmann, 1994:68). In the *shekinah* the Spirit is ready to renounce his own inviolability and also expose Himself to suffering, because by coming to dwell with people and in them, to indwell in them, He rejoices or is even grieved (Eph 4:30), but at the same time He gives believers strength until the moment of the fulfilment of the new creation, when He Himself will "appease Himself". (Moltmann, 1994:68).

#### *4.4.4 The Catholic Church's point of view on the Holy Spirit and charisms*

Professor and theologian Aldo Moda (2012:88-92), examining the way in which Catholic theology has treated the theme of the Holy Spirit since Vatican Council II, "as a fundamental moment of a turning point and renewal of Trinitarian doctrine", developed the theme of the relationship between pneumatology and ecclesiology. It is interesting to note that the theological treatment of this important theme was made necessary and urgent by the development of charismatic renewal, which forced the church to review ecclesiology also from the charismatic point of view and at the same time it made it urgent to review the relationship between the liturgy, the sacraments and the action of the Holy Spirit, naturally from the Catholic point of view. Moda in this regard takes up again the question dealt with by the theologian Karl Barth about the interconnection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and water baptism, and goes so far as to believe that there is a close connection between pneumatology and Christian life precisely in the sphere of experience, as well as in the sphere of spiritual theology and mysticism.

The historical lack of consideration of theologians for the Holy Spirit has produced in Christians a vague notion of who He is (Cymbala, 2012:21). In fact, all Christian believers have heard of Him but never understood his actual role, who He is and what He does, even finding it difficult to relate to Him (Cymbala, 2012:27). Nor, against this theological, vague position, could the doctrine of the Trinity help to make people understand that the Holy Spirit is a true person who is equal to the Father and the Son (Cymbala, 2012:21). The theologian Moda (2012:9), reporting a consideration of Karl Rahner in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, that "despite their exact profession of the Trinity, one cannot overlook the fact that many Christians are almost only monotheists in the practice of their religious life. One could almost risk the assertion that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be suppressed as false, even after such an intervention, much of the religious literature could remain unchanged [...]". Heribert Mühlen also spoke of "pre-Trinitarian monotheism" in Christian practice, as well as of a "marginalisation of Trinitarian doctrine". Moda (2012:10-12) again states that systematic Catholic theology, while not neglecting to mention all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, has made the

latter a false image of the "poor relative". Therefore, this has produced a disorientation and a considerable difficulty for Christian believers to relate to the Holy Spirit as they do with the Father and the Son. Philip Pare, Mühlen and Congar agree that Catholics in their life of faith have supplanted the place of the Holy Spirit with other realities, producing a Christianity with a more intellectual aspect and lacking the power that the Church of the first century experienced daily (Cymbala, 2012:27). It is urgent at this point to renew pneumatological reflection within Trinitarian theology by speaking with greater emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Moda, 2012:16).

#### ***4.5 The age of the Holy Spirit inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ***

Pentecostal theology speaks of a new creation, a new era inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ, the era of the new covenant in the history of redemption (Grudem, 2015:528) in which Pentecost represents an important turning point (Carson, 2017:208), because the outpouring of the Spirit of God in the last days (Jl 2:28-29) prophetically strengthens God's people for ministry (Keener, 2016:chap.2). In this new age the Father and the Son would continue to manifest themselves to believers through the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:208; Jn 14:23), which is "present," not only to usher in the dawn of the new age, but throughout the time between Pentecost and the return of the Lord (Carson, 2017:209). This new age includes the so-called period of the reign of the "already" and the "not yet" (Carson, 2017:208), which is characteristic of New Testament eschatology (Keener, 2016:chap.2). An eschatology which starts from the point of view of Pentecost and believes that this has continuity until "the last days" (Keener, 2016:chap.2). An eschatology, however, which is not in conformity with the thought of Karl Barth, who, as already mentioned before, affirms the total otherness of God by defining Him as the "Totally Other", so the thought of the theologian intends to exclude that there can be "any continuity in being between the world and humanity on one side and God on the other", thus also excluding that the Holy Spirit can indwell in the human being and can therefore manifest in him in a supernatural and sensitive way (Lorizio, 2005:60). Karl Barth (2002:6) affirms in fact that the new world of the Holy Spirit, inaugurated with the resurrection of Christ,

comes into contact with the old world of the flesh only by touching it as little as the tangent touches the circle.

On the other hand, Carson (2017:210-211) affirms that cessationists insist on declaring the cessation of miracles precisely because they fail to recognise the eschatological aspect of the New Testament, according to which miracles do not have meaning only as instruments of attestation of Jesus and the apostles, to cease, and therefore to disappear, from the moment of the disappearance of these at least from the earth, but also have the theological meaning of attestation, as testimony, of the new era in the history of redemption (Grudem, 2015:528) as inaugurated by Jesus and which also lasts for the present (Graham, 2000:29). The new era is characterised by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, on the people, "in the fullness and power of the new covenant", which took place on the day of Pentecost (Grudem, 2015:528), and was announced by the Apostle Peter (Ac 2:16-18), when he quoted the prophecy of Joel (Jl 2:28-29). On that day the Apostle Peter testified that the outpouring of the Spirit was already taking place (Ac 2:33), for all who were listening (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and the time had begun when the gifts of the Holy Spirit, along with its power, would be distributed widely to all who would enter into the covenant (Grudem, 2015:528-529).

#### *4.5.1 The Holy Spirit is the substitute for Christ*

During this new age, the risen Christ, no longer physically present (Graham, 2000:29), manifests Himself to believers only through His Spirit, that is, through the distinct person of the Holy Spirit, who replaces the personal contacts the apostles had with Jesus (Carson, 2017:210). In fact, in all four Gospels the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, prophesied that the Messiah would baptise the disciples with the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:208). In John 7:39 and 16:7 it is clearly written that the Holy Spirit would be sent after the Messiah's ascent into heaven, and would be the other Comforter who would "personally" replace the Messiah himself as "equal" to Him (Carson, 2017:208). In the verse of John 14:16 the Greek word used in the biblical text in the original language of the Gospel to indicate "other", which is referred to the Comforter, is "*ἄλλοι*" which means "another equal". In this same

verse, just quoted, Jesus Christ promises that the Holy Spirit will "always" remain with believers and again, the Greek word translated with "always" is "*αἰῶν*", preceded by the definite article "*τὸν*", to indicate an "unending age" and therefore necessarily goes beyond the time of the first disciples' lives.

#### *4.5.2 Glossolalia did not cease during the current era of the Holy Spirit*

There is nothing to suggest, nor is there a basic exegesis on the subject, that the evangelist Luke expected that after the inauguration of the new era the gifts, and in particular the gift of tongues, would cease (Carson, 2017:210), because they are linked only to the event of the inauguration and not also to the new era that is underway (Carson, 2017:209). Indeed, Luke wants to attest the association of the descent of the Holy Spirit with the action of the same Spirit among believers, which is something more important than the miracle performed by the Holy Spirit before unbelievers (Carson, 2017:186-187). Luke therefore understands the prophecy of Joel as a planning event (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and not as an event limited to a historical moment. Thus, Luke understands an event that lasts until the return of the Lord throughout the time of the Church (Grudem, 2015:538) and during this event the Church must continue to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and concomitant prophecy (Keener, 2016:chap.2). In fact, such manifestations are closely connected with the continuing indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy throughout the period of salvation history.

Luke's narrative, in his Gospel and especially in the Acts of the Apostles, is paradigmatic for Pentecostals in presenting the work of the Holy Spirit (Ferrario, 2011:275).

#### *4.5.3 The Holy Spirit was sent to empower believers for the mission*

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles it is evident that Luke presents the experience of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the fulfilment of the prophecy of John the Baptist (Ac 11:16), according to which after the Baptist came the one "who baptises with the Holy Spirit", as also attested to by the following verses of the gospels: Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; and Jn 1:33. The same promise Christ takes up in

Acts 1:5,8 when He commands his disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they have received the gift of the Spirit (Carson, 2017:188), to be "strengthened" for the mission of evangelisation. In fact, in the report of the evangelist Luke there is also an aspect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is to strengthen the disciples for an intercultural mission by giving them the ability to communicate the message of Christ to all peoples of different tongues, represented by those who were present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Keener, 2016:chap.2,3,11). But, Waldron, as a convinced cessationist, believes that Acts 1:5,8 refers only to the witnesses to whom the promise was addressed, namely, the eleven apostles although he necessarily admits that there is also a general application in the text (Waldron, 2019:38).

But after these considerations it is clear that the New Testament does not contain any explicit or implied statement that the Holy Spirit would withdraw or change after his first manifestations (Bonnke, 2008:16) so that the promise made by Jesus Christ directly to the apostles, which must also be extended to the disciples who were with them, cannot but have a general application for all witnesses who would have been part of the universal church. Indeed, the main aspect that Luke highlights in the Acts is the empowerment of Jesus' disciples for the mission of communicating Christ's message everywhere and in the centuries to come, and this mission is the principal activity of the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2016:chap.2). It should be pointed out that the purposes of the Holy Spirit are Christocentric (Carson, 2017:209; Jn 16:14), and that only through Him does every believer personally know and experience an intimate communion with the Lord (Carson, 2017:210). A spiritually mature Pentecostal knows very well that the Holy Spirit is not given for personal exaltation, but to glorify Jesus Christ.

#### ***4.6 The migration of the Holy Spirit from institutionalised and secularised churches into charismatic churches***

The constant claim that "the Spirit of God is linked to the church (Spurgeon, 2011:21), to its word and sacraments, to its authority, its institutions and ministries" has practically caused the impoverishment of communities (Moltmann, 1994:13), due to the emptying of churches (Rinaldi, 2017:22), and "to the emigration of the Spirit"

in groups where more freedom is given to spontaneity and personal experiences.<sup>26</sup> The paradoxical aspect is that well organised churches, with well "orchestrated" cults, with doctrinally correct sermons, do not notice the lack of the Holy Spirit whose presence, instead "produces astonishment, conviction of sin, overflowing joy and a ministry that transforms lives". This was when it happened in the primitive church, where it happened that non-believers who visited cults, amazed by declaring that among believers there the presence of God was felt (1 Cor 14:25). In short, without the Holy Spirit one risks living a Christianity made of traditions and with a "social club" mentality (Cymbala, 2012:198-200).

Certainly, the stance of the non-charismatic churches towards the Holy Spirit has been very unfavourable for them. In fact, the Catholic Church has declared "holy" the Spirit bound only to the ecclesiastical institution, which therefore acted as mediator of grace. The Protestant Church has declared "holy" the Spirit bound only to the preaching of "spiritual" ministers and both churches have declared "not holy" and "fruit of fanaticism" the Spirit manifested in the personal experiences of charismatics, which are lived, in reality, in the full freedom of a faith choice of believers (Moltmann, 1994:13). Despite this, strong in their experiences and theological convictions, which attest that experiences are not trivial enthusiastic explosions, and strong in their rapid growth, Pentecostals have maintained and defended their theological identity and refused to passively accept the theological identity of churches compromised by secularisation, and which have become, practically speaking, numerically small (Rinaldi, 2017:22). These non-charismatic churches have justified their negative and prejudicial considerations against charismatics with the application of the "criterion for the discernment of spirits" (Moltmann, 1994:13).

Although today most theologians recognise that cessationism has no strong biblical foundation, the biblical interpretation in favour of continuationism is hampered by Western culture (Keener, 2016:Intr.). There are Western scholars who read the biblical reports of miracles with indifference or embarrassment (Keener,

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<sup>26</sup> "to the emigration of the Spirit" is a statement used by Rinaldi to metaphorically represent how the Holy Spirit in fact "absents himself" in those churches where spontaneity and personal experiences of a charismatic nature are not given freedom.

2016:chap.6). There are many Western Christians who do not call themselves cessationists, but in practice they are. Paradoxically, even some classical Pentecostal denominations have become almost cessationist in practice (Keener, 2016:Intr.). It is enough to observe those denominations, which in Italy for example, have slowed down their growth in recent years, unlike other denominations that were formed between the 1980s and 1990s and that are growing rapidly.

According to Welker (1995:11), the Western secular culture has a considerable weight in preventing the "normal" rational mind from understanding, even partially, what the Spirit of God is, perhaps mistaken for an ordinary kind of spirit. This conception has certainly influenced the faith of non-charismatic people, while in contrast to this culture is found the reality of a living experience, to which all charismatics bear witness, because they take the Person of the Holy Spirit very seriously. They also enter into a dimension of freedom from ecclesiastical norms and practices, enslaved to the secular mentality, to make "intense and joyful" experiences of communion lived "in the worship, preaching and glorification of God", experiencing the gifts of the Spirit individually and collectively (Welker, 1995:17).

#### *4.6.1 The charismatic church is a community of "priests"*

Pentecostals believe, as the historian of Christianity Rinaldi (2008:275) observes, that throughout the New Testament no distinction is made between clergy and laity. From the Gospels to Revelation believers are saved because of their faith in Jesus and form a community of "priests" who have direct access to the reality of the Holy Spirit. God Himself gives directly to the saved the charisms and ministries, giving them functions and authority, not institutional positions, for service in the community. Historical research shows that it was not until about the second century, when the Christian community began to develop considerably, that the ecclesiastical institutional positions that were distinguished from the laity began to assert themselves. In truth this happened for practical reasons, that is, for the need to equip the growing community with an organisation, and for theological reasons, that is, to defend sound doctrine from widespread heresies. But this transformation has determined, in the history of the Church to the present day that many Christian

denominations have taken on a "plastered" institutional aspect in comparison with the "dynamic and charismatic aspect of the first church of the first century" (Rinaldi, 2008:269). The early church in fact rejoiced in the fact that the Holy Spirit had been given and was manifested in their midst, resulting in an increased sense of the living presence of the Lord, a greater awareness that caused enthusiasm, amazement, more intense adoration (Grudem, 2013:187), and also the amazement of non-believers who visited these cults and could declare: "God is truly among you". (1 Cor 14:24-25), (Bible, 1991/'93). Instead, later, "lifeless routine procedures", which constitute very formal liturgies and rigid schemes (Rinaldi, 2008:280), have become characteristics of an "anemic" church that cannot give space to the living Spirit of God sent to be always available to believers (Cymbala, 2012:199).

#### *4.6.2 The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Word*

The lack of consideration for the Holy Spirit has not only been a stance on the part of the Catholic world, but has also turned out to be a somewhat general issue that also concerns many evangelical denominations. In fact, Cymbala (2012:30), pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York City, says that many Christians consider themselves devoted to the Word alone and believe they do not want to learn more about the Holy Spirit and its manifestations in their life of faith, while criticising Pentecostal Charismatics as mere fanatics. In reality it is possible to countercriticise them by pointing out to them that in fact they do not take due account of the fact that the Word was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it itself contains numerous promises concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, sent to glorify Christ. Pentecostals who are faithful and obedient to the Word are well aware that the purpose of the Holy Spirit is only to glorify Christ (Jn 16:14), and to give frankness to proclaim the Word (Graham, 2000:105-107; Ac 4:31), and not to glorify believers, or a denomination, or a systematic theology, as Spurgeon (2011:65) also stated. Kendall (2016:83) states that while a 21st century cessationist declares that "we have no other revelation than the Bible", as early as the beginning of the 17th century the English theologian John Cotton, speaking as if he wanted to anticipate the response to the cessationist, declared that God still speaks directly through the Holy Spirit and not only through Holy Scripture, believing, of course, that such supernatural communications do not

serve to reveal new truths (Kendall, 2016:84). These are not already contained in Scripture itself (Cymbala, 2012:139), but serve to reveal God's presence at work while interacting with his people, and serve to reveal the full activity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as described in 1 Corinthians. This pentecostal position is in fact faithful to Scripture, and is proposed to all Christians who want to follow Jesus, who was an excellent example of a man anointed by the Spirit and who became the risen Christ by the power of the Spirit (Keener, 2016:For.).

A Pentecostal can only agree with what Introvigne (1996:167-168) says, that the biblical foundation is important, so there is an absolute guarantee that every action of the Holy Spirit never contradicts Scripture, even when "in his sovereignty and depending on the situation He can reveal and do things in a form not found in Scripture. Every action of the Holy Spirit always corresponds to the testimony of Scripture, even when it seems that the relative biblical references are not found. An example of this is what is happening, because of its current collective eruption which is manifesting itself throughout the world, through the growing pentecostal movement.

#### *4.6.3 Glossolalia and prophecy suppressed by institutionalisation*

It is indisputable that from a historical point of view communities were born with *glossolalia*, as Moltmann (1994:215) states, and that *glossolalia* marked all Christian awakening movements after the initial event of Pentecost. Moltmann himself states that although he has not personally had a charismatic experience, he believes he cannot explain or contradict the charismatic phenomena that are manifesting in the pentecostal movement throughout the world. From these considerations can only arise the opportunity and the need to seek a continuous experience with the Holy Spirit, believing, praying, and having a strong expectation of Him (Cymbala, 2012:35). This is inspired by the testimony of the first believers, and which responds to the exhortation, or rather command (Eph, 5:18), more timely than ever, of the Apostle Paul to always be filled with the Holy Spirit for there is a danger of being "emptied of it," while it is necessary to be effective and frank in preaching the Gospel

(Carson, 2017:215-216). In fact, to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by Him who is "person".

Unfortunately, during the second century, as has already been said, a gradual transformation of Christian communities in an increasingly institutional sense took place in the Church at the expense of the charismatic dimension, as the generation following the apostolic one was disappearing (Rinaldi, 2008:392), and as the definition of the New Testament canon was being completed. From charismatic assemblies the communities were transformed into bodies under the supervision of a bishop, both for organisational needs and to defend sound doctrine from heresies, as mentioned earlier (Rinaldi, 2008:340-341). This process of transformation caused the decline of prophecy and thus put into crisis the function of the itinerant prophet, who became a figure to be wary of (Rinaldi, 2008:341). In this context of transformation even the long-awaited return of the Lord, the "*Parousia*", began to take second place (Rinaldi, 2008:392-393). But there was a charismatic reaction thanks to Montanism (Rinaldi, 2008:341), which was a clear stance against the hierarchy of communities. That of the Montanism was a circumscribed reaction, because it was suppressed around the middle of the second century because of its excesses in the frequent manifestations of prophecy, *glossolalia* and other charismatic manifestations (Rinaldi, 2019:17-18), which led the church to completely reject the exercise of the gift of prophecy (Grudem, 2013:138).

#### *4.6.4 The Holy Spirit dwells in the church to act*

To conclude this chapter, it is repeated that while Apostle Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans (15:18-19) that God led the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, instead, in the course of Christian history a greater role has been attributed to the church as a means by which the multitudes are led to Christ, and at the same time less attention has been given to the truth, shared by the Pentecostals, that it is actually the Holy Spirit, with his power in action, that enables the church to fulfil such a role (Spurgeon, 2011:21). It is not justifiable to find that the church today lacks power and effectiveness because the Holy Spirit is no longer thought to act in the same way

(Cho, 2012:20). As South Korean pastor Yonggi Cho (2012:6) says, the Holy Spirit, sent to stay with believers forever (Jn 14:16), remains the same forever and is with believers at all times, so it is their responsibility to allow Him to act, because many believers betray Him, deny Him, do not listen to Him and are not dependent on Him at all, thus reducing the powerful gospel "to an old news item as a museum piece" (Cho, 2012:21). According to Spurgeon (2011:33), the "indescribable gift of the Son of God" was followed by the "equally priceless gift of the Holy Spirit, even though the Holy Spirit is often overlooked, giving little importance to the doctrine that concerns Him and especially to his person. It is good for believers to behave toward the Holy Spirit as they would behave toward Christ if He were still among us (Spurgeon, 2011:35). In fact, "everything that was Jesus, the Spirit of God is now for the Church. He is another *parakletos* to remain with the Church forever. If the Church today can work any spiritual miracle, it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit (Spurgeon, 2011:35), who dwells in the Church, because since He has descended upon it He has never returned, nor is it necessary to try to make Him come, but rather it is only necessary to make Him act (Spurgeon, 2011:36).

## CHAPTER 5

### **Evaluation of contemporary Italian experiences of *glossolalia*: authentic or suggested?**

Faced with a movement that has now grown to over six hundred million people in the world, of whom about 400,000 are in Italy (Ribet, 2019), it is difficult to deny the direct involvement of the working presence of the Spirit of God (Introvigne, 1996:151).

The researcher's personal experience in the pentecostal movement began in August 1978, and has allowed him to witness, over the past decades, various manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In particular, the gift of the *glossolalia* is the one that regularly manifests itself on all those who grasp the Christian faith from the pentecostal point of view. When asked whether these are authentic or forced experiences, the researcher can answer that they are in conformity with Scripture, according to the pentecostal way of reading and interpreting it, not of the most varied emotional reactions, peculiar to each different personality, which can sometimes lead one to suspect that these are unspontaneous and counterfeit experiences, mostly because of naivety and excessive emotionality. What the researcher was taught, from the beginning, was to believe the promises of God revealed in Scripture, and to put his faith in them in order to realise them in life. And in doing so, he too was able to personally, first of all, experience the *glossolalia*, which was followed by other supernatural experiences.

The researcher's pentecostal experience began in Gela, the Sicilian city where he was born and still lives. Here there is the highest concentration of Pentecostals in Europe (Staglianò, 2014), according to CESNUR statistics dating back to the first decade of 2000, when the population residing in Gela was about 77 thousand,<sup>27</sup> and Pentecostals were about 7% of the population (Staglianò, 2014). Currently the

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<sup>27</sup> tuttitalia.it. 2020. <https://www.tuttitalia.it/sicilia/93-gela/statistiche/popolazione-andamento-demografico/>. Date of access 24/07/2020.

resident population has slightly decreased,<sup>28</sup> but the number of Pentecostals has continued to grow. In fact, the researcher has seen the pentecostal movement in his city grow, with its characteristic rapidity, from a few hundred members to over 5 thousand members, currently distributed in about 20 pentecostal communities. At the beginning there were two pentecostal communities in Gela: one belonging to the ADI (Assemblee di Dio in Italy) and the other belonging to the Congregazioni Cristiane Pentecostali (CCP). Over the years, in addition to the many free communities that have sprung up spontaneously and are characterised by maintaining their autonomy, there have also been communities belonging to the Chiesa Apostolica in Italia, the Chiesa Elim in Italia, the Chiesa della Riconciliazione, the Chiesa Parola della Grazia, the Chiesa Sabaoth and the Chiesa Missione Paradiso. The historic church belonging to the Congregazioni Cristiane Pentecostali, in 1998 joined the Chiesa Cristiana Pentecostale Italiana (CCPI), which is an association of Congregationalist Pentecostal churches, founded on September 19, 1997, and which consists of 42 autonomous communities, scattered in four regions of Italy (Introvigne & Zoccatelli, 2018). Among these communities, the church of Gela currently has about 1500 members (Loggia, 2016:127,129), and is the largest of all the pentecostal communities in Gela.

### ***5.1 The experiences of the Pentecostals start from biblical bases that nourish faith***

Since his first pentecostal experiences the researcher has been convinced that today the Holy Spirit is more active than ever. This is a theological truth in which the Pentecostals believe, just as it is true that the Holy Scriptures are infallible because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. And it is precisely the Scriptures that testify to the believers, and it is difficult to prove otherwise, that the power of God manifested in the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:42), which are distributed to each one for the common good, as God promised (Cymbala, 2012:35), which were not limited only to the period of the early church (Kendall, 2016:42). This, in fact, is what Pentecostals still experience today, so the pentecostal-charismatic experience is what makes these churches alive and active today, thanks to the Holy

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Spirit, as the primitive church was (Cymbala, 2012:35). In fact, these believers feel strongly urged to evangelise and propose to people to experience God also through spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in so many ways, and one of these is to build up and strengthen his Body, which is to all intents and purposes a spiritual organism, which is strengthened through the ministry that the Holy Spirit exercises through human beings (Cymbala, 2012:35). For this reason, in addition to experiencing the *glossolalia*, these believers experience the exercise of the gift of prophecy and the gifts of healing.

Even today, the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as healings, miracles, and tongues are considered to be clear signs of God's presence and action (Graham, 20002:165). This is not to be feared, but it is only good to make sure that miraculous gifts are used according to Scripture in order to detect and avoid any abuse (Grudem, 2015:540). Thanks to the experiences that are from the Holy Spirit are experiences of God and are experiences of freedom, liberation from sickness, from diabolical possessions, from the "unholy powers of this world", from the constraints of sin and the power of death. Through these experiences, the experiences of the Holy Spirit, one becomes acquainted with God the Father, just as Jesus also made Him known through his experiences during his ministry on earth. These believers believe that no one could speak of God without experiencing Him; therefore, as Pentecostals they bear strong witness to their personal experience of God based on their relationship with Him. The "revelation" of God to others and the letting oneself be experienced of God by others are closely connected in the context of the believer's relationship with God Himself. In this relationship there is no other mediation than the experience of the Holy Spirit through the active charisms that enliven the life of every member of the "body of Christ," which represents the "temple of the Holy Spirit," that is, the beginning of the recreation of all things until their completion, which will take place with the event of the *παρουσία*, so long awaited by the Church (Moltmann, 1994:17,87,122).

It can be seen, through direct experience, that in practice in Pentecostal churches excellent results are obtained in the effectiveness of evangelisation, in offering with

sacrifice for the support of the communities, in giving much emphasis to personal sanctification, in showing great love for the Lord and the Word (Grudem, 2015:540).

Keener (2016:Intr.) states that the Body of Christ deprived even of some of the gifts, which the Holy Spirit confers on the members to strengthen them, would, according to the Apostle Paul, be a disabled or malformed body because it is unable to mature. A church that traditionally believes that "members" have atrophied and lost their function, in vain, commit themselves to building a "new body" with all the "amputated" members.

The healing of the sick, through prayer and the laying on of hands, is a gift much exercised in the pentecostal sphere for evangelistic and pastoral care purposes (Ferrario, 2011:277). For Pentecostals, miraculous healings are the most important testimony of Jesus in view of the kingdom of God (Moltmann, 1994:220), who came in a tangible way to mankind (Mt 10:7; Lk 10:9). Thus the task of healing, together with the equally important task of driving out demons, was transferred from Jesus to his disciples (Mt 10:8) from generation to generation (Moltmann, 1994:219). Pentecostals believe that the church does not coincide with the kingdom of God, but bears witness to the presence of the kingdom by fulfilling this task, for by experiencing God the church now anticipates the future fulfilment of the kingdom (Moltmann, 1994:134). Now, this commission given by Jesus to his disciples presupposes that they experience it through charismatic gifts. Moreover, the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit are not only the equipment given to the Church for this time until the *παρουσία* (Grudem, 2015:529), but they also represent the anticipation of "the most complete action of the Holy Spirit that we will enjoy in the age to come" (Grudem, 2015:529). Similarly, the Holy Spirit Himself is in fact in anticipation of the work that will be completed in believers in the age to come, upon which God has placed his "seal" and guaranteed "our inheritance with a view to full redemption". As the Apostle Paul states, in his eschatological vision of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the "earnest" of what is still lacking and believers will surely have (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). The experiences of liberation here and now, and the hope of full redemption that is to come, are in practice closely connected in a relationship of continuity (Moltmann, 1994:134). Thus, the gifts of

healing are an anticipation of the perfect health believers will achieve with their resurrected bodies (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and of eternal life (Moltmann, 1994:219,221), just as the gift of knowledge is an anticipation of the complete knowledge they will have in the age to come (1 Cor 13:12; Grudem, 2015:529). Thus today the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, as Moltmann (1994:190) affirms, are "the forces of the future world," and as Keener (2016:chap.2) affirms, the incomparable riches of the promised future are now anticipated through the Spirit. Quoting also Hebrews 6:5, it can be said that already today believers are tasting "the powers of the world to come" (Keener, 2016: chap.2) and the very signs of Jesus are an anticipation of the fullness of the kingdom, which He came to proclaim (Keener, 2016: chap.2).

## ***5.2 Experiences of glossolalia, healing and liberation from demons are frequent in Pentecostal churches***

Based on these biblical truths, in the Pentecostal communities are taught and believers are encouraged to believe in order to experience healing and liberation from demons, as well as *glossolalia*, which can be witnessed in local churches on a regular basis. In churches belonging to the denominations of "Parola della Grazia", "Ministero Sabaoth" and "Missione Paradiso", with which the researcher has more direct contact, these miraculous signs are sought with a frequency that coincides with the frequency of assembly meetings. In these meetings the participants are encouraged, not "pushed" forcefully, because it is believed in the reality and authenticity of the work of the Holy Spirit, to seek these supernatural experiences with personal spontaneity and freedom, through the preaching, teachings and direct testimonies of other believers who have already had a personal experience of *glossolalia*, healing or liberation.

The atmosphere that is created in churches, in fact, corroborates with great emphasis the attention to the supernatural, i.e. the desire for baptism in the Holy Spirit, as an "experience" of *glossolalia* for all saved, and healing of body and soul, because people feel a strong need for it. But because the emotional involvement that is generated in people is strong, many of them sometimes allow themselves to be

influenced to the point that they are convinced that they have experienced something they have not yet received. Other people, instead, fall into the frustration of not knowing how to receive. However, correct scripture-based teachings correct these anomalies and guide people to receive through the work of the Holy Spirit.

### ***5.3. Faith in Scripture is the antidote against suggestion***

The solution against suggestion, and for authentic supernatural experiences, is the biblical faith that is taught in these churches. Faith that is based on God's promises in Scripture, produces a sincere trust in God and his powerful work through the Holy Spirit. This type of faith goes beyond natural rationality, which often leads to disbelief and skepticism, and replaces it with a biblical "rationality" that can control emotional exaltation, foster awareness and mental balance, and, above all, control that emotional state that can generate the anxiety that is determined before the supernatural experience.

At the beginning of the researcher's Pentecostal path he had not grasped this teaching well; in fact, three years passed before he had the experience of the *glossolalia*. He remembers, during a Tuesday prayer meeting, he was thinking that it was "impossible" for him to receive "baptism in the Holy Spirit". He was too rational and controlling himself in everything he thought and did, but at the same time, had a strong desire to receive the gift. Then, he remembers that suddenly, while he was absorbed in his reasoning, he felt his body as if it were crossed by "strong electric shocks". At that moment no one was beside him to incite him to do something, but while he was kneeling, he felt his knees jump, and he found himself under the bench in front of him. He tried to pull himself together, regain his composure, and regain control of himself, but three times the same thing happened, until he "burst out" speaking in other tongues and let himself go into a supernatural peace. The Holy Spirit surprised him in a way unthinkable, but he was conscious and aware of what was happening. Now every day when he prays, he always devotes time to prayer in other tongues.

Today in the exercise of his pastoral ministry he exposes all the points where Scripture speaks of the gift of baptism in the Holy Spirit, and he sees that most

people spontaneously begin to speak in other tongues without someone to force them to do so, using some particular method. the researcher has witnessed the baptism in the Holy Spirit of dozens of people simultaneously, people from different social and cultural backgrounds, after they have heard simple biblical instructions. A few weeks ago a girl, who is a criminal lawyer, began to speak in other tongues while she was praying alone. A few years ago, a person, who had been treated by a psychologist for depression for some time, asked for pastoral counselling. During the prayer, she felt a strong feeling of inner liberation and began to speak in other tongues, without yet having spoken of baptism in the Holy Spirit. This person is now married, has children and lives a normal life.

One of the verses that is often remembered in the assembly to encourage that faith that she receives from God is: "Faith therefore comes from hearing, and hearing comes from the word of God (Rm 10:17), (Bible, 1991/'93), and another verse that is often remembered for having that faith for physical or soul healing is: "[...] and for your bruises you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24), (Bible, 1991/'93). Personally, in addition to having had the experience of the glossolalia, the researcher has also had the experience of physical healing, and has assisted people who, in addition to having had the experience of the *glossolalia*, have had the experience of physical and soul healing. During the prayer for healings, a girl was cured of Crohn's disease after this girl had undergone several years of medical treatment, documented by the doctors who treated her.

But the researcher has also seen people become influenced, manifest special emotional emphasis, without having any authentic spiritual experience at that time; people to be corrected by the teaching of faith, to guide them later on to a true supernatural experience. The term "healed" in 1 Peter 2:24 translates the Greek term *ἰάομαι*, which in the New Testament is expressly used both to indicate spiritual healing (Mt 13:15; Jn 12:40) and to indicate the healing of diseases of the body (Lk 5:17; Jn 4:47), so it is believed that just as Jesus continues to save, He also continues to heal through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

#### ***5.4 Correct biblical knowledge is an antidote against the counterfeiting of supernatural manifestations***

In the initial phase of the development of the pentecostal movement, to a certain extent, the fact that a real theological deepening has been lacking (Introvigne, 1996: 104) has led many believers without adequate biblical knowledge into error. In fact, abuses and extremisms have manifested themselves presented as charismatic models, which in reality are absolutely not to be shared, because they have been characterised by too much zeal without wisdom, above all by arrogance in believing that they can make the Holy Spirit do anything, and by the invention of "schemes" and "secrets" proposed and adopted to make believers obtain immediate fillings of the Spirit (Bonnke, 2008:8-9). In fact, behind these patterns there has sometimes been a desire to pursue rapid church growth and personal success among leaders. In other cases, there has sometimes been a lack of the necessary examination to verify that behind phenomena considered "extraordinary," or "supernatural," there were no natural causes (Introvigne, 1996:104). However, as the writer and pastor Cymbala (2012:34-35) states, "counterfeiting shows that there must be a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit". Whether it is human error or genuine spiritual forgeries, which seek to gain credibility by claiming that they are genuine experiences of the Holy Spirit, it is clear that any claim to inspiration must be tested on the irremovable basis that the message of Scripture remains normative and must be interpreted and applied again to the present (Keener, 2016: chap.7). Considering and examining the human factors that can influence spiritual experiences is correct, and does not make the believer fall back into "rationalism" (Introvigne, 1996:105). According to Grudem (2015:539), there is a right use of every spiritual gift, but there is also a bad use due to errors and abuses, or real forgeries. However, errors and abuses, or forgeries, should not induce one to prohibit the use of any gift, because if one applied this criterion one would end up prohibiting even ministries, which throughout history have sometimes led believers to error. For example, similarly, one could speak of the forgery of the Gospel, of which not only the authentic one exists, but also "different" non-authentic ones (Gl 1:8-9), just as there are also false Jesus, while Christians are certain that there is only one who is the authentic Saviour. It

should also be noted that the Apostle Paul himself invites all believers to exercise a certain discernment to examine and hold only what is good (1 Th 5:19-21). In the churches believers do not want to miss the examination of all phenomena in order to verify their authentic supernatural character, because they want to ensure that on the one hand they do not extinguish the Spirit (Grudem, 2013:144), while on the other hand they do not follow a rationalistic and immanentist mentality, which interprets all phenomena as natural (Introvigne, 1996:106). Many times people hear the testimony of believers who have been healed through effective medical care, and for this they thank God.

Kendall (2016:156-159) says that it also happens that many miracles are merely statements without substance, and that famous evangelical healers are aware that they cannot heal the most obvious patients, such as wheelchair users, at all. However, he states that there is evidence of such healings, particularly at certain times, such as in the 1950s.

### ***5.5 The authenticity of the gift of glossolalia***

The gift of tongues is the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, who expresses himself in a language he has never learned and does not understand (Carson, 2017:103-104). The question of authenticity or not, of all spiritual gifts, may concern above all the gift of tongues, also known as the gift of *glossolalia*, which is the most common. In fact, in the Pentecostal churches that have today revived the emphasis on this gift, everyone is exhorted to receive the gift of the *glossolalia*, and personal experience teaches that all those who receive it make it a truly authentic experience, because tongues are so different from person to person as to exclude imitation, and the people who receive the gift are so different, both in culture and social background, that it is difficult to think that it could be an experience induced by suggestion or "brainwashing". Anyone who would make an effort to speak in other tongues through imitation or forgery of the gift would simply make a fool of themselves for the unnecessary effort it would require.

As for the lexical and communicative value of the gift of *glossolalia*, some scholars have deduced from studies on linguistic expressions that, apart from the few cases

of *xenoglossia*, which consists in expressing oneself in one of the human languages known but never studied by the speaker (Introvigne, 1996:28), the tongues spoken by those baptised in the Holy Spirit would not be lexically communicative; that is, they would not be "true languages", but simply expressions of feelings and thoughts inexpressible through sounds that communicate nothing rational, but which can simply intensify the worship of the believer (Carson, 2017:104-106). This consideration has led many non-charismatic people to believe easily that speaking in other tongues has no biblical basis, nor can it be compared to the languages of Pentecost and the church of Corinth at the time of the Apostle Paul (Carson, 2017:111-112). Others, on the other hand, claim that these are not real languages at all but mere "babblings" (Carson, 2017:102).

Certainly the phenomenon requires careful reflection, but such reflection could certainly not exclude the possibility that in any case one may find oneself studying "complex expressive patterns" and capable of conveying logical and meaningful information (Carson, 2017:112,114). Indeed, it is not inappropriate or beyond all reason to believe that one is confronted with languages other than known human languages, which, while remaining human languages unknown to those who listen (Waldron, 2019:96), can nevertheless be decoded by the Holy Spirit itself through the gift of language interpretation (Carson, 2017:114-115).

In the researchers churches they have witnessed the manifestation of the gift of language interpretation, because there has been the communication of messages that have been useful to the community or to some of the members in some particular circumstance of life. While it is also true that many times the messages interpreted can be stereotypical, vague and lacking in useful information, this does not invalidate the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation (Carson, 2017:116).

The researcher personally has had some experience of *xenoglossia* and he also remembers the testimony of a personal uncle, who was not a Pentecostal, who, while he was attending one of the cults, understood that a person was expressing Arabic words while praying in other tongues because this uncle had been working for

several years in Arabic-speaking countries, so he could understand the meaning of those words he had heard.

Moreover, the gift of speaking in other tongues is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit that has nothing to do with a state of ecstasy of the believer, that is, of momentary loss of self-awareness and rational thought (Carson, 2017:101-102). The Pentecostals know this very well from direct experience, and the researcher personally knows it. This explanation is certainly in line with biblical requirements and the charismatic experiences of the church in Corinth. Moreover, it is real that the effect of the gift of tongues is practically positive in the life of faith and consecration of believers, with intense and joyful experiences of communion during cults (Welker, 1995:17), which are accompanied by enthusiasm in exercising charisms and praying for physical healing (Rinaldi, 2017:22).

*Glossolalia* has also been a form of expression that has enabled a large number of people, men and women, to express themselves publicly in the church, even without necessarily having a high cultural background. In this way the "dictatorship of the caste of intellectuals in the church" lost its exclusive power (Ferrario, 2011:276-277). Many people, starting with the experience of speaking in other tongues, have managed to overcome the handicap of shyness.<sup>29</sup>

### ***5.6 The partiality of spiritual gifts does not compromise their authenticity***

Regardless of counterfeits and biblically inauthentic phenomena, however, Introvigne (1996:165-166) states that "Everything authentically spiritual that happens in man possesses a divine and a human component. If God gives 'attention' (grace) to man, it is always received 'in the manner of the one who receives it'. [...] Rather, a mature spiritual event is always totally divine and at the same time totally human, because the divine penetrates the human". It therefore happens that until the "perfection" is reached of which Apostle Paul speaks of in 1Corinthians 13:10, that is, until we reach the full saving effect of God's actions (Introvigne, 1996:166), which will be completed with the return of the Lord, when we will finally "see Him face-to-face"

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<sup>29</sup> Here by "shyness handicap" is meant the little to no frankness in witnessing to the Gospel without any fear or embarrassment.

(Grudem, 2015:537; 1 Cor 13:12) The charismatic gifts will be "partial and imperfect" because they will always be characterised by what man will add to them through his personal reactions and opinions (Grudem, 2013:140-141). Then the practical solution is not to know how to distinguish clearly what is natural from what is supernatural, trying to establish precise boundaries between nature and grace and between God's action and human reaction, but to know how to discern what conforms to God's will according to Holy Scripture and what force determines "the fundamental impulse" that generates "surprising" effects of which God alone can be the author (Introvigne, 1996:166-167). The work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious and real at the same time, because it is accompanied by many external signs, because of which the emotional and physical manifestations of believers cannot be banished (Bonnke, 2008:61).

### ***5.7 The manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit also take place in groups of non-pentecostal believers***

That the Holy Spirit still manifests itself today with surprising miracles is reinforced by testimonies from believers who attest that such manifestations also occur in other groups of non-pentecostal believers. Carson (2017:228-229), a New Testament professor at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, says that he personally has had some experience of the "gift of faith," and that he also knows the wife of a non-charismatic Baptist minister who has prayed in tongues since her adolescence, without having any contact with Pentecostals.

Keener (2016:Intr.) also claims to be a charismatic because he has daily experiences of praying in tongues. Moreover, when he was ordained Baptist minister, another minister prayed in tongues and prophesied about him. Keener (2016:Intr.) considers himself a scripture scholar with the calling to teach God's people to read the scriptures as God has given them to us, with the expectation of fulfilling the promise of divine activity and the promise that the Holy Spirit is present to be active in the formation of believers.

The famous evangelist Graham (20002:169) state that through the power expressed by the Holy Spirit's gift of healing it is possible for a sick person to be healed

immediately and permanently, however, he recounted of his sister-in-law who was cured of mortal tuberculosis through faith and without the intervention of someone with the gift of healing. A testimony that attests to the powerful and supernatural action of the Holy Spirit.

When Kendall tells of his conversion to Calvinism, hence to Reformed theology, he not only speaks of theological and scriptural aspects but also of his supernatural visions and his baptism in the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues, which occurred while driving his car in February 1956. His wife Louise, on the other hand, experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues in the late 1980s, during a trip to Hong Kong on her way to a Chinese drug rehabilitation centre. One day some of these Chinese believers, who used to pray a lot in tongues every day in order to detoxify themselves from heroin, asked permission to pray for Louise who immediately began to speak in tongues (Kendall, 2016:18,142-144,146,189-190).

The Protestant minister David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), who was one of the greatest exponents of the evangelical movement of the 20th century, also believed in today's immediate and direct witness of the Holy Spirit because his gifts are available to all who are willing to experience them (Kendall, 2016:87,89). He said that because demonic possession exists, God has necessarily given believers the ability to deal with it (Kendall, 2016:169). This is one of the principles by which the church believes that the Holy Spirit is in action at present, because it has been seen by several people who came to ask for help, because they are harassed by demons with various strange ailments during the day and at night while they sleep. People who have claimed to be touched and beaten during the night, who have heard strange voices or witnessed strange phenomena at home; people who have experienced physical ailments without doctors being able to diagnose the cause; all of these people have been freed and now live normal lives, and have become part of the pentecostal communities. The researcher too has personally helped a number of people to be freed from demonic possessions, who are now living their lives in peace and without disturbance. One girl, in particular, was so disturbed that she had even attempted suicide a couple of times. Today she joyfully recounts her liberation, which took place in a single evening, after she had lived through years of disturbances, which had

destroyed the family serenity. Another girl was heard speaking in other languages in a distorted voice as the meeting prayed for her liberation; she was writhing around crawling on the floor and banging her head repeatedly on the floor until she was freed. Then she was baptised in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, while expressing great joy in her face.

Pastor David Yonggi Cho says that he prayed for the fullness of the Spirit every day until, he says, "As I worshipped the Lord, I felt a sense of warmth touching my face; then my tongue and whole body received the same feeling. Without realizing it, I was beginning to utter new words that came to my mind and tongue. The more I spoke, the more frankly I could say those words that came so quickly [...]. I was filled with joy and the awareness of a new power of God I had never known before." It was for David Yonggi Cho a real encounter with the Holy Spirit that made him witness powerful miracles and various supernatural manifestations in the time that followed (Cho, 2012:4-5,9).

In addition to personal experience, the researcher has seen many people start speaking in other tongues without even realising it at first, even though they were perfectly conscious and aware that they were praying. During the event of baptism in the Holy Spirit, the researcher also had conversations with these people to experience the awareness of their experience.

At the conclusion of this chapter it can be said that all Pentecostal-Charismatic believers are seriously convinced that an experience with the Holy Spirit can and does indeed take place; although this conviction contrasts with the "normal and healthy" mind of the secular man of the West who unfortunately proves to be incapable of understanding what the Holy Spirit is, without the risk of confusing it with various other types of "spirits" (Welker, 1995:11).

## CHAPTER 6

### ***Glossolalia in the light of the scriptures***

#### ***6.1 The expectation of meeting God in Scripture***

Keener (2016:chap.13) states that reading Scripture is "shaped" by the expectations of the reader. If the reader reads without any expectation, from Scripture he will be able to derive only information, more or less useful, but if he reads with the expectation of meeting God, then from reading he will be led to experience God.

A reading with the expectation of experiencing the Holy Spirit in action (Cymbala, 2012:27), will experience the action of Him who is a person and not an object that one can possess and it is the Person who does not place Himself at the mercy of people, but places Himself in a relationship of fellowship and activity that leads to action, because those who allow themselves to be filled by the Holy Spirit lend Him their hands, their feet, their voice and all the rest. This is the pentecostal experience. The Holy Spirit, in the Old Testament, is metaphorically compared to the wind and is described above all in action in people, and through people, in the New Testament, where the metaphor of the "blowing wind" is not missing (Moltmann, 1994:316; Jn 3:8).

Pentecostal Bible reading is very different from the methods of historical criticism, because this method tends to confine biblical narratives to the past, while Pentecostals want to relive the charismatic experiences of the first church, effectively transferring the pentecostal community within the same narratives and symbolisms of the Bible (Ferrario, 2011:275).

#### ***6.2 The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament***

The Holy Spirit was certainly at work in the Old Testament (Grudem, 2015:528). He manifested Himself remarkably only in some individuals, even with miraculous manifestations, such as the prophets, for example Moses, Samuel, Elijah, or kings, for example David, while in most other believers of the people of Israel He

manifested Himself much less (Grudem, 2015:528). The *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh* in the Old Testament corresponded with the event of God's personal and active presence. "Every presence of God's activity is qualified by the *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh* and is to be understood - as Calvin also maintained - in pneumatological terms". Therefore, in the Old Testament the *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh* connoted God's work by means of singular interventions of his power and especially in the writings of the period of exile and post-exile these divine interventions were declaredly identified as actions of the Holy Spirit, who was, therefore, always present and active (Moltmann, 1994:55-58,71).

### *6.2.1 The anointing of the Holy Spirit on judges and kings*

So it was God working in his people Israel. However, under the ancient covenant the Spirit of God was not spread over all believers, but was spread only over the leaders of the people who were invested with the power of the Spirit and acted as mediators, through whom the people knew God and entered into a relationship with him (Carson, 2017:204). In fact, the Holy Spirit was practically the true mediator between God and his people through these leaders, who were his instruments (Cho, 2012:90); these leaders were the charismatic judges, ecstatic prophets, scriptural prophets, priests, and consecrated kings (Carson, 2017:205). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit worked greatly in individuals such as Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and Elisha. In these people He worked much more or even almost exclusively than in most believers of the people of God (Grudem, 2015:528). Through these consecrated leaders, in fact, powerful miraculous works were manifested in addition to prophecy. The book of Judges tells the story of the early days of Israel when the *ru<sup>a</sup>h Jahweh* descended on "judges" such as Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and it was the Holy Spirit who invested and guided these charismatic leaders to work in the name and on behalf of God to bring the people to freedom, because they were threatened and oppressed by the nations around them (Moltmann, 1994:59).

In fact, the gifts which the Holy Spirit dispensed only to certain individuals were intended for the benefit of the entire people. They were gifts which were manifested by means of visions, or demonstrations of wisdom, or words of prophecy and guidance for the people, and were therefore gifts of a charismatic nature,

spontaneous and, at the same time, for limited periods. With the establishment of the monarchy, however, the divine Spirit gave his gifts to the king permanently and no longer through sudden raids and irruption, so that "the anointed of God," that is, the designated king, could exercise his power permanently after being consecrated by God's prophet (Moltmann, 1994:59-60). For example, Saul's anointing can be cited first and then David's, both of which occurred through the prophet Samuel (1 Sm 10:10; 16:13) and Samuel represents one of the Old Testament prophets who was "seized by the Holy Spirit" to be a seer and a preacher (Moltmann, 1994:60).

### *6.2.2 The anointing of the Holy Spirit on the prophets*

In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan confession of faith, of 381 AD, explicit confession concerning the Holy Spirit "who spoke through the prophets" is found. The prophets of Israel, in fact, were also itinerant preachers who were grasped by the Spirit of God and consequently manifested above-average wisdom and the ability to judge righteously, and they were accompanied by extraordinary, supernatural phenomena (Moltmann, 1994:60). In Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, which were among the prophets who lived at the time of exile, there are references to visions and predictions due to the manifestation of the *ru<sup>ah</sup> Jahweh* (Moltmann, 1994:60). All these Old Testament prophets were messengers of God, proclaiming messages from God with absolute divine authority, that is, proclaiming the exact words of God (Grudem, 2013:25-26,28).

### *6.2.3 The anointing of the Holy Spirit on members of the people*

It is interesting to note, as Moltmann (1994:61) states, that the Psalms also refer to a possible inner experience of the Holy Spirit lived individually and directly by the members of the people, as well as the experience of the gifts that the Holy Spirit normally gave for all the people of Israel as a whole through the judges, prophets and kings. For example, in verse 11 of Psalm 51 the psalmist prays that he is not personally deprived of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is seen as the face of God

turned towards the individual, towards whom God, in turn, shows his condescension through the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1994:55,59-60).

### ***6.3 The Holy Spirit in the New Testament***

In the New Testament, on the other hand, at Pentecost the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the apostles and other disciples of Jesus, gathered in the number of 120 people, takes place. The book of the Acts of the Apostles in verses 2:2-4 describes the event of Pentecost with the metaphor of the impetuous wind and fire, which brings the reader once again to the original meaning of the Old Testament *ru<sup>ah</sup> Jahweh* (Moltmann, 1994:316). As Moltmann (1994:318) states, when Jesus in Luke's gospel 12:49 says that He came to "bring fire to the earth" He wants to refer precisely to the intrusion of the kingdom of God, which occurs through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. Pentecost is an extraordinary event that inaugurates, with the new covenant in Christ (Keener, 2016:Intr.), a new era in the history of redemption; on the body of believers comes the power of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 2015:528), as had already been foretold by the Old Testament prophets (Carson, 2017:207), as for example the prophet Joel did (Jl 2:28-29).

#### ***6.3.1 Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost***

In his first preaching on the day of Pentecost, referring "to the last days," Peter interpreted the prophecy of Joel as if Joel had referred to the time of the apostles and the first church, when he foretold the promise of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Keener, 2016:chap.2). This interpretation of Peter can be accepted as correct, thanks in part to the fact that Peter speaks inspired by the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and being an apostle, he has the canonical authority to interpret the scriptures correctly, and to place this interpretation as a biblical foundation. Furthermore, Peter interpreted the prophecy of Joel in light of the experience he was living (Keener, 2016:chap.2), namely Pentecost, and at the same time explained Pentecost in light of the prophecy of Joel (Keener, 2016:chap.2). However, since after the time when Peter lived, the end of time did not come, but the story has continued to this day. It can be inferred that Peter prophesied that the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the new era of the Holy Spirit therefore, the promise

of the descent of the Holy Spirit remains as valid from the beginning, and Pentecost is therefore for all peoples, since the "upon all flesh" (Ac 2:17) concerns everyone (Keener, 2016:chap.2). God did not want to operate only for a time, but He operated in the past, He operates in the present, and He will operate in the future, in an interweaving of relationships determined by the Holy Spirit, in which God works in all through sensitive experiences (Welker, 1995:13). Therefore, the promise is "for all those who are afar off" (Ac 2:39), (Bible, 1991/'93), where the Greek word *μακρόσ*, translated "afar off", refers both to all Peter's contemporaries from all parts of the earth, therefore to those who are "afar off" with reference to the place, and to future generations, therefore to those who are "afar off" with reference to time (Keener, 2016:chap.3). Indeed, Pentecost, as an event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is repeated first among the Samaritans (Ac 8:14-17) and then among the Gentiles (Ac 10:44-48; Keener, 2016:chap.3). In practice, Peter prophesied about the continuity of the Pentecost event (Rinaldi, 2019:36), with identical manifestation of the sign of speaking in other tongues, because that is how this event was later recognised by the apostles, when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred among the Samaritans and among the Gentiles (Bonke, 2008:45).

Moreover, analysing Luke's account in Acts, there is nothing that suggests, and it seems that there is no basic exegesis on the subject (Carson, 2017:210), that the evangelist Luke believed that after the inauguration of the new age of the Spirit, the gifts, and in particular that of tongues, would cease (Keener, 2016:chap.2). Indeed, it seems that Luke wanted to attest to the association of the descent of the Holy Spirit with the action of the Spirit itself among believers, beginning with the manifestation of the gift of tongues. For Luke, in fact, speaking in tongues cannot have passed forever after the initial appearance at Pentecost, because it has historical-salvific functions, including that of distinguishing the new era of the Holy Spirit after its inauguration (Carson, 2017:204).

### *6.3.2 Pentecost marks the beginning of the eschatological era of the Church*

This activity of the Spirit begins at Pentecost (Keener, 2016:chap.2), and characterises the eschatological era of the church (Carson, 2017:206); that is, the

era of the Messiah, the Spirit, and a prophetic people (Keener, 2016:Intr.). In fact, the whole New Testament emphasises in a preponderant way the new era of the Spirit of Christ, which can be seen from a very careful interpretation of the text. In fact, a search for concordance of the Pauline texts is enough to understand "the life, gifts, fruits and power of the Spirit", as Keener (2016:Intr.) says.

It is the Holy Spirit who distinguishes the new era (Graham, 2000:29), and in fact reveals the power that God puts into action on behalf of men and through men. The Holy Spirit reveals God's creative power that establishes new, richer relationships in created reality, with the human beings (Welker, 1995:12-13). Now the novelty of the law written in hearts determines a spontaneous and natural obedience in believers, who no longer need "stone tablets" or "some Torah master to make God known to them", because now they can know God directly and without mediation. God in the new age assures his definitive presence in every believer and in his redeemed people through the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1994:73). This new era is characterised by the dispensation, distribution, and manifestation of spiritual gifts spread to all who enter into this new covenant (Grudem, 2015:528). It is a new era characterised in essence by a new kind of relationship and communion between God and his people, which on the experiential level is made concrete precisely in the gift of the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:206-207), and in "a lived, transforming, charismatic and vital experience", which is made concrete through sensitive experiences.

When Jeremiah foretold that days would come when the Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, he meant that the "specific role of mediation" that the leaders of the ancient covenant played would be removed, and that every member of God's people would be given to know God more directly and personally (Carson, 2017:205). For Jeremiah says, "'Behold, the days will come,' says the LORD, 'in which I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; [...] I will put my law in their minds and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they will be my people.'" (Jr 31:31-33), (Bible, 1991/'93). The prophet Ezekiel, who foresaw the same hope for the people (Carson, 2017:205-206), says: "'I will put my Spirit within you and make you walk in my statutes, and you will observe and put into practice my decrees.'" (Ezk 36:27), (Bible,

1991/'93); while the prophet Isaiah (Carson, 2017:206), speaking of the promise of the Spirit, also says: "For I will pour water upon the thirsty and streams upon the barren earth; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your descendants. They shall grow in the grass, like willows along waterways." (Is 44:3-4), (Bible, 1991/'93). This is the messianic era (Carson, 2017:206), and it is the era of the Spirit, inaugurated at Pentecost, and it is the era of a prophetic and eschatological people, according to the eschatological vision foretold by many texts of the Old Testament. In Numbers 11:27-29 is read that Moses himself, responding to the request made by Joshua, envisaged a universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Carson, 2017:206), in fact, "But Moses answered him: '[...] O, let them all be prophets in the people of the LORD, and let the LORD put his Spirit upon them!'" (Nm 11:29), (Bible, 1991/'93). And in the account of Acts 2, the Apostle Peter declares, *de facto*, quoting the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, that on the day of Pentecost God's proposal, foretold by Moses, to spread his Spirit upon all flesh, was fulfilled. Moltmann (1994:71) affirms that only by recalling the continuity that the Spirit proves to have maintained in history can one hope for his future intervention.

### *6.3.3 References to baptism in the Holy Spirit in the New Testament*

In addition to the predictions of the Old Testament, in the New Testament are also found predictions concerning baptism in the Holy Spirit. The first reference to baptism in the Holy Spirit is when John the Baptist foretells that it is imminent from Jesus (Moltmann, 1994:318), as opposed to his own baptism in water (Kendall, 2016:175): "I baptize you in water, [...]; but he who comes after me is stronger than I, [...]; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Mt 3:11), (Bible, 1991/'93).<sup>30</sup> The same reference is also found in the gospel of Mark (Mk 1:8) and the gospel of John (Jn 1:33). The second reference to baptism in the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 1:5 "For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days henceforth." (Bible, 1991/'93) These were the words Jesus said before his ascension to his disciples (Kendall, 2016:175). To these Jesus appeared resurrected for forty days, during which time He gave them other instructions, through the Holy Spirit, concerning the kingdom of God (Ac 1:3).

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lk 3:16.

### 6.3.3.1 Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the attestation of tongues

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles is found, in at least five points, the accounts of the experiences of people baptised with the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:176-177), with the attestation through the sensitive manifestations, and in particular through the tangible sign of speaking in other tongues: 1) on the day of Pentecost on the 120 people gathered to pray it happened that "So they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, according to the Spirit giving them to express themselves". (Ac 2:4), (Bible, 1991/'93); 2) On the Samaritans the apostles Peter and John "Laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Ac 8:17), (Bible, 1991/'93); 3) When the Holy Spirit sent Ananias to Saul, "So Ananias went and entered into that house, and laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the way that you came, sent me that you might recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'" (Ac, 9:17-18), (Bible, 1991/'93); 4) When the Holy Spirit sent Peter to the house of the centurion Cornelius, "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit descended upon all who heard the word. And all circumcised believers (*the evangelist Luke's reference is to Jewish believers*)<sup>31</sup>, who had come with Peter, were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been shed upon the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in other tongues and magnifying God." (Ac 10:44-46), (Bible, 1991/'93). Hearing the Gentiles speaking in other tongues constituted for Jewish believers the attestation of baptism in the Spirit (Carson, 2017:197-198), which, in fact, authorised other groups of people (Carson, 2017:195), outside of Jewish believers, to carry out the mission to spread the Good News (Keener, 2016:chap.3). Later, regarding this fourth account of the Gentiles' experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, Peter further attested to its authenticity by reminding the other Jewish disciples of the event (Carson, 2017:197-198), and by saying to them, "I remembered then the word of the Lord which said, 'John has baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Ac 11:16), (Bible, 1991/'93). Thus Peter also confirmed the interpretation of Scripture that extends the baptism of the Holy Spirit outside the circle of the apostles and disciples of Pentecost; 5) then, when Paul met some

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<sup>31</sup> Emphasis added by the author.

disciples, believers, of Ephesus, to whom he asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they had believed, and they answered that they did not know the Holy Spirit at all, it happened that: "And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and spoke in other tongues and prophesied." (Ac, 19:6), (Bible, 1991/'93) Here again, it is emphasised that tongues are a clear proof of baptism in the Spirit (Carson, 2017:202), which also introduces the group of Ephesian believers into the new age inaugurated by Jesus.

Now, further reference to points 2) and 3), was the fact that there is no explicit reference to "speaking in other tongues" but this undoubtedly does not exclude that this happened without such a manifestation. In fact, both in the case of the Holy Spirit received by the Samaritans, and in Paul's filling of the Holy Spirit. In the first place the sign of speaking in other tongues is not explicitly excluded, and in the second place it is not explicitly confirmed so one can easily be inclined to accept the hypothesis that they spoke in other tongues, since in Luke's description of the other accounts of the Acts the sign of speaking in other tongues is the sensitive evidence to see when baptism in the Holy Spirit took place.<sup>32</sup> In paragraph 6.3.5 more detail on these points will be discussed.

#### *6.3.4 The Holy Spirit is the other "Comforter" who has been sent to replace Jesus*

It is quite evident that the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit takes place at the moment when Jesus, after ascending to heaven, sat at the right hand of the Father and it is a different experience and subsequent to that of conversion with its new birth, because it happens on those who had already believed and were spiritually regenerated (Kendall, 2016:180) as has been seen in the experience of the Samaritans and the Ephesians in particular, while in Cornelius, and the others who were with him, the experience took place almost simultaneously.

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<sup>32</sup> The author is inclined to believe, in agreement with the Pentecostal view, that if Luke did not explicitly refer to "speaking in other tongues" it is because he assumed that they had done so. This is important because it implies that in all of Luke's accounts, consistently, the receiving of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the sign of "speaking in other tongues" as sensitive evidence. Thus, the testimony of the manner of receiving the Holy Spirit applies to all circumstances.

In fact, while Jesus was on earth he did not actually baptise anyone with the Holy Spirit (Bonnke, 2008:111). In the Gospel of John in verse 16:7 Jesus says to his disciples: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is good for you that I am going away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go away, I will send him to you." (Bible, 1991/'93). In this text, and in John 14:16, Jesus, speaking of "another Comforter" (Bonnke, 2008:74-75), *parakletos* is the Greek term used in the original text, clearly refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit who is sent to substantially replace the physical presence of Jesus at the side of every disciple (Graham, 2000:29), for his support and to guide him. However the presence of the Holy Spirit, in relation to the purpose for which He is sent, is conditioned precisely by the departure of Jesus himself (Moltmann, 1994:87).

Jesus Christ makes his disciples understand that this presence of the Holy Spirit will be even more necessary and useful than the physical presence of Jesus (Spurgeon, 2011:71), with whom the disciples lived during the three years of his ministry on earth. As already mentioned in Chapter 4, the Greek word "*ἄλλου*", translated "another," used in John 14:16, refers to the Holy Spirit as "another" Comforter "equal" to Jesus. Therefore, now the Holy Spirit is God's only agent on earth (Cymbala, 2012:29), since Jesus ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, and is the only experience believers can have of God (Rm 8:34; Col 3:1; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3).

#### *6.3.5 The experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience subsequent to that of salvation*

The experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience that is lived after receiving faith for salvation, and serves to provide believers with the power (Kendall, 2016:73) that comes from God to preach the gospel of Christ (Grudem, 2015:529). It is therefore a separate and distinct experience from believing for salvation (Rinaldi, 2019:19,36).

The experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit does not inevitably and unconsciously occur in all believers, but only in those who experience it consciously and sensibly (Kendall, 2016:91,182). The certainty of receiving baptism in the Holy Spirit can only

be attested to by experience, and in this case it can be attested to by the outward manifestation of the *glossolalia* (Rinaldi, 2019:21,25).

However, it should be noted that in 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul states that all believers at the time of initial conversion are "baptized in the same Spirit" (Bible, 1991/'93); but this event is "unconscious" and is what objectively happens to all believers, and should therefore not be confused with the subsequent subjective and conscious experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Kendall, 2016:179), which recalls the event of the day of Pentecost and other similar events described in the Book of Acts (Kendall, 2016:180). For example, in Acts 8:14-17, the Apostles Peter and John go to Samaria where many had already believed the words of Philip and the converted, and many of them had also been healed and freed from demons. The account shows that surely the Holy Spirit had already worked in them, but verse 15 states that the Apostles prayed when they came to Samaria that those believers would receive the Holy Spirit (Cho, 2012:88). But it is certain that the Holy Spirit must have already been with them (Kendall, 2016:179,181), as it is attested in the verses of Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3, and 1 Corinthians 12:13, because their belonging to Christ the Lord, for having believed him, was already guaranteed according to the confession of their faith. Therefore, from the context of Luke's account it is legitimate to draw the conclusion that Samaritan believers still lacked the conscious experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit following the experience of their conversion.

In Acts 19:2 Apostle Paul addresses the question to some of the Ephesian disciples: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Bible, 1991/'93). Here, too, it is clear that the Apostle is not questioning whether the disciples have already believed and obtained salvation by grace through faith, but is explicitly asking them whether they have also experienced the Holy Spirit after they had believed (Spurgeon, 2011:79-80). Now, if believers regularly received the Holy Spirit when they believed for their salvation they would surely remember it, and Apostle Paul would then deliberately ask a superfluous question (Cho, 2012:89). Instead, after the disciples answered no, Apostle Paul performed the laying on of hands on them, and that group of Ephesian believers received the Holy Spirit, because it is written that they began to speak in other tongues and prophesy. It is deducible that the

Samaritans also realised that they had received the Holy Spirit because they spoke in other tongues.

In Ephesians 1:13 the Apostle Paul writes: "In him you too, after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believing, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Bible, 1991/'93) In this text, once again, the Apostle states that the Ephesians received the seal of the Holy Spirit at a stage that comes "after" hearing the word of truth and "after" believing (Kendall, 2016:91), thus confirming that the seal of the Holy Spirit is received through an experience that comes after faith for salvation (Kendall, 2016:85-86,89).

### *6.3.6 "Speaking in other tongues" and other gifts, a consequence of baptism in the Holy Spirit*

The pentecostal-charismatic movement insists that "speaking in other tongues" is the criterion for attesting whether a believer has been baptised with the Holy Spirit (Rinaldi, 2019:37); what has been stated above seems sufficient and valid to confirm this hypothesis. The evangelist Bonnke (2008:46) states that "telling people that they can be baptized without tongues does not fit the New Testament much". However, Professor Carson (2017:214) calls for an exegetical study of Scripture, certainly always useful and stimulating, for a greater understanding of biblical teaching about "speaking in other tongues", and to ask whether this manifestation is always and necessarily the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that is, whether it is "a proof" of the baptism of the Spirit, or whether it is the "only proof" or the "definitive proof". With regard to this it can be reflected again, on the account reported in Acts 8:17, where it is written that the Samaritans after having believed the announcement of the "good news" by Philip and after that "men and women were baptized." (Ac 8:12), (Bible, 1991/'93), they received the Holy Spirit (Cho, 2012:88) for the laying on of hands by the apostles Peter and John (Carson, 2017:193), who came from Jerusalem when they learned that many Samaritans had converted to Christianity (Carson, 2017:196). But in this account Luke does not specify, as in other similar accounts, whether the Samaritans spoke in other tongues when they received the Holy Spirit. However, it is very likely that there was some sensitive and evident

attestation of baptism in the Spirit, because Simon the magician, present in those circumstances, had to "see with his eyes" a manifestation of such power that he asked the apostles, in exchange for offering his money, the power to impose his hands on people, too, to provoke in them the same manifestation he had seen provoked in those Samaritans at the hands of the apostles (Carson, 2017: 193-194). So referring to the questions that Professor Carson asks himself (2017:194), one could at least answer that "speaking in other tongues" is always and necessarily the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as it was for the Samaritans.

However, on the one hand, first of all care must be taken that by discussing and dwelling too much on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit one must not risk losing sight of "the centrality of the Spirit, which dwells in us, as a guarantee of the full inheritance that is yet to come" (Carson, 2017: 212), while, on the other hand, the sensitive manifestations through the exercise of spiritual gifts must not be prevented, which is a supernatural reality experienced by the people of God, especially because such gifts are "sought after" and "desired" by Pentecostal charismatics, and which attest, being its effect, the real presence of the Holy Spirit who is permanently at work.

At this point it is necessary to recall what Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:7: "so that you do not lack any gifts while you wait for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Bible, 1991/'93), putting the spiritual gifts in connection with the expectation of the return of the Lord, and presenting these gifts, therefore, as equipment for believers temporary but lasting throughout the era of the church until the return of the Lord (Grudem, 2015:529,538).

The spiritual gifts are listed by the Apostle Paul in the following verses of his Epistles: Rm 12:6-8; 1 Cor 7:7,12:8-10,28; and Eph, 4:11. Theologian Grudem (2015:528) defines a spiritual gift as "any capacity strengthened by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry in the church. All spiritual gifts, including prophecy, speaking in other tongues, healing, and discerning of spirits, are supernatural because they are conferred by "that one and the selfsame Spirit" (1 Cor 12:11) and are distributed "for the common benefit" (1 Cor 12:7) and "for the edification" (1 Cor 14:26) (Bible,

1991/'93) of the church (Grudem, 2015:528), which is identified as the Body of Christ. All gifts belong to the whole Body of Christ and, by definition, each member of the Body has at least one gift to contribute with its function to the functioning and edification of the whole Body (Rm 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12:12-30). Therefore, "all Christians should be considered charismatic by definition" (Keener, 2016:Intr.), and adequately equipped for this purpose (Grudem, 2015:529), that is, for ministry, to continue to validate the message of the gospel today as in the time of the early church, to help those in need and to give glory to God (Grudem, 2015:539).

The benefit of spiritual gifts for the building up of the church (Grudem, 2015:528) certainly cannot exclude, or prevent those who exercise such gifts from receiving personal edification themselves, contrary to what Waldron claims (2019:98-99). Although the gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit to the individual members of the church, the church is in turn the place of the "revelation of the Spirit", and the witness of God's kingdom on earth which is manifested through the charisms which the Holy Spirit gives both to men and women in and for the Christian community, for the performance of the various ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, pastor, as well as for the healing of the sick and the liberation of the obsessed (Moltmann, 1994:213-214).

In concluding this chapter, it is reiterated that there is no evidence of exegetical or theological attestation that is against the reality of the enduring existence of miraculous gifts (Carson, 2017:210,247), including therefore the gift of tongues (Carson, 2017:248). Graham (2000:182) states that there is no biblical reason to believe that the gift of tongues was reserved only for New Testament believers, and that it is no coincidence that the Apostle Paul devoted more space to it than other spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts still manifest themselves in a sensitive way today and have never really ceased in the course of history after the apostolic period, as some would argue from their point of view. On the contrary, the pentecostal-charismatic movement has stimulated the church to return to reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to study the relevant biblical passages with renewed interest (Carson, 2017:248).

## CHAPTER 7

### **Summary, conclusion and possible future research**

The whole world's Christianity today should become fully aware that according to the promises contained in John's Gospel, the purpose of Christ's work and the fruit of his death were the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Moltmann, 1994:265). From the moment every Christian comes to realise that he or she should try to live the pentecostal experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, after the initial experience of his conversion for salvation. He or she should also learn to structure his or her own life in the Spirit of God in order to increase his or her participation in the life of the church with equal awareness and responsibility. The church in turn would be transformed from a "pastoral care church", where only those who carry out teaching activities predominate (Grudem, 2013:186), to a "Christian communal church" (Moltmann, 1994:269). In this type of church all members should participate actively and should no longer limit themselves to being merely "spectators" (Grudem, 2013:186). Being spectators, almost completely passive, is one of the most common problems in contemporary churches, where members tend to limit themselves only to passively saying "Amen" during church celebrations (Moltmann, 1994:269), while instead they should learn to live spontaneously and actively the life of the kingdom of God, precisely through the life lived in the Spirit of God, until the fulfilment of the kingdom itself (Moltmann, 1994:134).

Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the Pentecostals have made a strong historical contribution to making much of today's church recognise the importance of spiritual gifts, and thus the importance of depending on the action of the Holy Spirit (Keener, 2016:Intr.).

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that for centuries it was erroneously thought that being filled with God was no longer available to the believers of the generations following that of the New Testament apostles. But in more recent times the pentecostal experience has led to a change in this erroneous belief, for much more than half a billion Christians have realised that it is a "birthright of all believers" to be

filled by God through the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Bonnke, 2008:42).<sup>33</sup> The experience of so many Christians in a relatively short time, from a historical point of view, has shown precisely that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a real experience.

### ***7.1 According to faith***

Now, since one of the fundamental principles that Jesus taught is that it is made to each of us according to each one's faith (Mt 9:29; Cymbala, 2012:35). It can be deduced that if people do not want to believe in the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Cymbala, 2012:115), and therefore in the possibility of God revealing Himself to us directly, they will in practice prevent themselves from being receptive to the influences of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 2013:168).<sup>34</sup> They will therefore deprive themselves of the supernatural manifestations and the power that would enable them to evangelise the world with the effectiveness promised by Jesus Christ (Ac 1:8; Jn 15:26-27; Cymbala, 2012:114-116).

### ***7.2 Cessationists vs Continuationists***

At present it can actually be seen that on the one hand there are the cessationists, and on the other hand there are the pentecostal charismatic continuationists, and in between there are also those who are neither on the one hand nor on the other, because they have no deep-rooted convictions about the use of spiritual gifts (Grudem, 2013:22). However, it is clear that the relative points of view of cessationists and continuationists, analysed without prejudice, are fundamentally not wrong; on the contrary, they are correct in their essential points. First of all, in fact, at the basis of both points of view remains the sufficiency of Scripture as a unique and absolute truth (Grudem, 2013:23:84) for Scripture was "revealed" first to the Old Testament prophets and then to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, and therefore it is, for all authentic Christian believers, the infallible Word of God,

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<sup>33</sup> The gifts of the Holy Spirit are always available, because the Holy Spirit never changes, however from a Pentecostal perspective, and this perspective should be shared by all believers, it is the lack of faith that makes the gifts of the Holy Spirit unavailable to those who do not want to believe.

<sup>34</sup> The author believes that not wanting to believe in the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit is an impediment, as was mentioned in the previous note, to being receptive to the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul urges in his letter to the Corinthians to earnestly seek spiritual gifts, including especially prophecy.

living and powerful, to which nothing more can be added, that it has the same supreme founding authority, nor on the other hand can anything be taken away from it without running the risk of losing some of God's blessings (Rv 22:19). But it is equally evident that Scripture reveals that nothing can stop the powerful, spontaneous and surprising action of the Holy Spirit, who acts according to the needs of the moment to bring edification, encouragement and consolation to the church. Therefore, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the living and real presence of God in the midst of believers (1 Cor 14:25), who become more aware of this presence through sensitive experience (Grudem, 2013:187).

Unfortunately, on the other hand, when cessationists want to discredit continuationists, they generally tend to present their own peculiar teaching which ultimately proves to be purely speculative. In fact, this teaching finds practically no valid biblical foundation, it does nothing more than deny a good part of the Bible that speaks of the supernatural manifestations of God's glory (Kendall, 2016:166). Forcibly, the cessationists want to demonstrate that the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the miraculous signs, have long since ceased, indeed since the first century of the church's history. Thus for them the gift of prophecy has already ceased because of the completeness of the revelation of canonical Scripture, while perhaps they want to ignore the fact that most pentecostal charismatics are aware that according to the New Testament conception, they do not claim to communicate through prophecy a new or unpublished message or revelation which would be added to the complete and exact Word of the Lord. Moreover, pentecostal charismatics are also aware that prophecy can be contaminated by the human mind (Grudem, 2013:142-144), so it needs proper evaluation. Reformed-oriented cessationists, in fact, fear that the Bible's unique and absolute authority is called into question and that too much importance is placed on subjective and unreliable guidance when the charismatic gift of prophecy is used, such that prophecy must necessarily have had its end when the New Testament was completed (Grudem, 2013:21). Pentecostal charismatics, on the other hand, tend to demonstrate practically exactly the opposite of what cessationists teach, because they believe that

the experiences of the gifts of the Spirit are ultimately real and alive and faithful to Scripture.

### ***7.3 The value of experience***

The "sword of experience", as evangelist Bonnke (2008:33) states, is the weapon that succeeds in solving those difficult questions that people cannot solve differently. Experience, for example, can give an answer to the cessationist Waldron who wonders whether there are still believers in the church today who speak in other tongues; in fact, there are hundreds of millions of believers in the world who can answer that there are still some. Yet, one could argue to Waldron that he himself seems to contradict himself; in fact, while on the one hand he supports the canonicity of everything that has been inserted in Scripture, on the other hand he doubts, for example, the authenticity of Mark 16:17, which is a verse referring to "new tongues" (Waldron, 2019:91-92). John Wesley himself is among the theologians who have emphasised the importance of experience (Rinaldi, 2017:16).

#### ***7.3.1 Biblical testimony should not be replaced by experience***

Certainly, one must be careful that one does not fall into the grave error of believing that experience can in fact replace biblical testimony (Benecchi, 2005:27); instead, as Carson (2017:234) also states, one must strongly reiterate that the credibility of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement must depend first of all on its very faithful alignment with biblical teaching. But on the other hand it is also necessary that the churches do not find themselves in the condition that Wesley feared, that is, that of a "stagnant Orthodox spirituality" that suffocates the vitality and strength that are generated by the personal relationship with the Lord (Benecchi, 2005:27).

### ***7.4 The Holy Spirit is the sensitive demonstration of the presence of God's kingdom among his people***

To be invested by the power of God is to be invested by the power of the resurrection and to experience "the vital energy" that God has made available to believers: for the healing of the sick, for the redemption of the poor, for the salvation of sinners and for the resurrection of the dying. All this is possible only thanks to the

Holy Spirit who made Jesus the "kingdom of God in person", by demonstrating actions carried out by driving out demons, healing the sick and bringing the kingdom of God to the poor (Moltmann, 1994:79). After Jesus, the Holy Spirit also made believers capable of representing the "kingdom of God", continuing to make them do the same works as Jesus.

It is clear that all this cannot correspond to a religiosity that tends to have only an outward form, which is mainly limited to "meditation on a righteous doctrine," and which requires believers simply to limit their participation in worship and the sacraments, and that they do good works.

The enabling of the Holy Spirit given to believers, of the first church and to those of today (Bonnke, 2008:42), must correspond with a spirituality that cannot and must not disregard the sensitive experiences of God's presence, which can be done through the present and active Holy Spirit. The church of Christ must, therefore, try to avoid finding itself with a spirituality that is not vital and not very strong, which wants to project believers totally into the interior of man, and therefore, which is "hostile to the body and detached from the world" (Moltmann, 1994:21). Instead, from the pentecostal point of view, natural reality can be changed by supernatural and sensitive experiences at the same time.

### ***7.5 The Pentecostal-Charismatic Proposal for a Universal Awakening of Christianity***

The proposal of a true awakening of a faith experienced on a personal level is today the pentecostal-charismatic experience, without any other alternative,<sup>35</sup> which is realised only when the Holy Spirit is given full freedom of action both in the individual, who personally realises that he is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19), (Bible, 1991/'93), and in the liturgy and in the life of the community of

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<sup>35</sup> It is true that the Holy Spirit influences world history and acts invisibly, and always supernaturally, to establish justice and peace. And believers experience faith in this. But it is also true from the Pentecostal perspective that the Holy Spirit was sent to equip the Church, all believers, to witness and draw people to the Lord Christ Jesus through signs and wonders. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians speaks of charismatic gifts as signs for unbelievers (1 Co 14:22-24). The author believes that Welker, for example, sees in the Pentecostal movement a clear sign of the action of the Holy Spirit.

believers (Moltmann, 1994:217), which in turn becomes the living and dynamic "Body of Christ", representing Christ Himself and his powerful works.

### *7.5.1 Aversion to pentecostalism*

Unfortunately, this proposal was not always accepted, indeed the pentecostal experience was immediately opposed as heretical, in an attempt to suffocate it, by the ecclesiastical authorities of the conservative churches. The conviction of the conservative churches, which countred the Pentecostal experience, derives from that doctrine which teaches that the whole church was already baptised in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost once and for all (Bonke, 2008:33). In fact, it can be shown that this doctrine from the very beginning of the New Testament Church has never had any real confirmation, because already the disciples of the narratives of the Acts of the Apostles continued to be baptised in the Holy Spirit in different regions, around Jerusalem, and in times after the day of Pentecost.

### *7.5.2 Aversion to pentecostalism in Italy*

The pentecostal proposal in Italy was immediately opposed by persecution, first by the Catholic clergy and later also by the fascist authorities (Ferrario & Gajewski, 2007:127). The political authorities labeled pentecostalism as a practice detrimental to people's psycho-physical health, and opposed it at least until 1955, the year in which the Buffarini Guidi Circular was repealed. The Buffarini Guidi Circular, in fact, promulgated in Italy in 1935, during the fascist regime, initially established that the pentecostal cult was harmful to the "race" (Rinaldi, 2017:11), probably referred to the Italian "race"; and when the same Circular was later updated, even, it was declared that the pentecostal cult was harmful not only to the Italian "race", but to the mental "health" of anyone who practised it (Rinaldi, 2019:45). The paradoxical fact is, as history teaches us, that this political persecution contributed, in reality, to strengthening the identity of the pentecostal movement (Rinaldi, 2019:50) and later, thanks to the strenuous resistance against persecution, the pentecostal movement achieved a historic victory that contributed to the acquisition of full religious freedom not only for the movement itself but for all religious denominations (Rinaldi, 2017:13).

## ***7.6 The pentecostal-charismatic movement is the "marching wing of Christianity"***

It is evident that today, thanks to the signs, spiritual gifts and blessings of the Holy Spirit, the pentecostal-charismatic movement constitutes "the marching wing of Christianity", due to its continuous and dizzying growth worldwide (Rinaldi, 2017:9), while the historical Protestant churches are tending towards an evident decrease in numbers (Kendall, 2016:23).

This real observation confirms that God's promise is in truth for all generations (Keener, 2016:chap.2), "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off, for as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Ac 2:39), (Bible, 1991/'93), where the term "afar off" refers to believers from different regions of the earth and different ages (Keener, 2016:chap.3). Just as the early church was active and alive thanks to the Holy Spirit, so it is clear that the pentecostal-charismatic movement has the same vitality to continue to be of great blessing to the whole Christian church, spurring it to expect more from God through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and not to be content with mere professing, "fossilized and asleep" Christianity (Carson, 2017:216).

Rather, the church must be capable of breaking the paradigms of tradition and theology which, while based on a valid exegetical foundation, does not want to open itself to the possibility that God (Carson, 2017:246), living and present in life, will manifest his supernatural interventions in a sensitive and continuous way over time. The church must therefore change the paradigms of that theology that does not want to accept the possibility that one continues to experience miracles beyond that of spiritual regeneration and salvation (Carson, 2017:244).

### *7.6.1 Today's church must satisfy many people's hunger for the supernatural*

On the other hand, it is also necessary to face the hunger for the supernatural, which today many people show that they have, who in their insistent search for answers to their personal needs, often come to turn to magicians or make pilgrimages to the

places of the apparitions of saints and madonnas (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:80), because the "natural" does not give them any satisfactory answer.

There is a growing need for spiritual energies, there is a need for engaging experiences that revive faith and there is a growing desire for the Holy Spirit to manifest his power in individuals, to strengthen and enrich community life through the exchange of gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes to each one as He wishes (Welker, 1995:21). The obstacle to these desires and needs comes from forms of piety that are based on rationality, a typical attitude of the Western world, particularly in Europe.<sup>36</sup> This rational attitude rejects the experiences of the Spirit and the *glossolalia*, which, instead, have a very attractive power over those who want to join to the pentecostal-charismatic movement (Welker, 1995:21-22).

### ***7.7 Need for reflection and self-critical study on modern forms of Christian religiosity***

Today it is necessary to reflect seriously and critically on the forms of Christian religiosity that are traditionally considered to be guarantors of the faith both theologically and institutionally, while it is noted that these forms of "official" religiosity paradoxically end up being sources that unintentionally generate ambiguities in believers, such that the latter need to be evangelised again so that they are open to the gift of the Spirit and the culture of the work of the Spirit (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:74,83-85). In fact, these forms of official religiosity are unable to cope with the "popular religiosity" that is growing today, even in the Western world which is predominantly rational, and which is with the aforementioned official forms of religiosity both in opposition and in compromise (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:72,76). For its part, in fact, popular religiosity is growing in such a way that it tends to assume characteristics that can be assimilated to forms of superstition and/or syncretism, or to "irrational" fashions and behaviors that are sometimes even close to magic practices (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:75-76). These pseudo-religious

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<sup>36</sup> Here the author refers to that rationality which tends to deny everything that cannot be predicted by science and experimentation by natural means. In fact, the term "supernatural" means everything that is out of the ordinary and out of human control, and that can be accepted only by a "rationality" exercised through faith, which is based on the promises of God revealed in Scripture, even though for the mind influenced by Western culture they may be considered impossible.

behaviours manifest themselves, for example, in people who desperately need the healing of diseases considered incurable by official medicine. This form of popular religiosity has been studied by many sociologists and theologians, who have been able to observe that it arises and develops spontaneously as a response of people, even those belonging to medium-high social strata (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:75), to the official religion, because the official religion is "perceived by them as too formal or cold" and, therefore, incapable of satisfying its many needs. Above all, the need for affectivity, which one wants to experience precisely in an intimate and direct relationship with God (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:77). At the same time, it is noted that the growth of this popular religiosity is current and is so relevant that it contradicts those who believe that, instead, today there should be a tendency for modern people to move away from religion, because they tend more towards an attitude of secularisation (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:78-79). In fact, sociologists of religion find that in modern people there is a growing need to establish a relationship with God that is characterised by simplicity, immediacy and usefulness (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:77-78).

People, in essence, seek a relationship with God that is "affective", that is direct and without mediation, and that is, they expect to receive concrete answers from God to their many existential and daily problems and needs (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:77). If the pentecostal-charismatic movement does not give an immediate, adequate and satisfying response to this desire for relationship, union and communion with God, which can only be realised through the Holy Spirit in action, then people will turn to other forms of religiosity and beliefs that are outside of Christianity and are spreading in the world rapidly.

Thank God, instead, for the explosion of the pentecostal movement, which is characterised by a dynamic and "effervescent" religious proposal, which can counteract, in order to contain the advancement, these other forms of religiosity in continuous growth, formed by groups of an oriental matrix with an esoteric background, such as the New Age (Naso & Salvarani, 2009:80).

### 7.7.1 Pentecostal reflection

The Pentecostal reflection believes it presents its own proposal of faith, which is that of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in hearts, not as truth expressed in words, but as an experience that involves the sensitive reality of people, and at the same time makes them more autonomous with respect to the ecclesiastical actions to which they have always been subjected; because the experience of the Spirit as well as the communitarian experience is personal and interior, in fact, "[...] the love of God has been spread in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rm 5:5), (Bible, 1991/'93), that is, in the hearts of individual believers (Moltmann, 1994:13-14). Spurgeon (2011:39), who, although he could not be considered a Pentecostal but a moderate cessationist, seems to have expressed himself as a Pentecostal, said that "if there is no miraculous spiritual power in God's Church today, the Church is a fraud. At the moment, the only claim to our existence is the presence of the *Parakletos* among us. Is He still working and bearing witness to Christ?"

#### 7.7.1.1 Need for power for the mission

There is also the question of evangelisation, which is the mission entrusted to all Christians, who in fulfilling this mandate are obliged to confront a growing variety of emerging spiritual paths. These new emerging spiritual paths on the one hand represent a real challenge, while on the other they stimulate the churches to question their own linguistic, liturgical and institutional forms "to make shine", as Professor Gajewski (2003:81) states, "ever more strongly the fulcrum of the Gospel": "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16), (Bible, 1991/'93).

To this mandate the Church must not only be faithful, but at the same time must be effective, having the power to fulfil it that is why Jesus said to his disciples: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Ac 1:8), (Bible, 1991/'93).

### ***7.8 There is a theology of prejudice that hinders the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit***

It is therefore necessary to eradicate "the vanity generated by incomplete visions and a theology of prejudice against the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through the church" (Kendall, 2016:241-242).

The evangelist Graham (2000:134), who did not call himself pentecostal, yet his words are very close to pentecostal thought, stated that very often it happens that when a new movement of the Holy Spirit is born, fresh and genuine, that movement is criticised and despised because it is seen outside of traditional methods and forms, so there are always some Christians who are opposed to God's action following "new paths".

This attitude unfortunately tends to stifle the "fire" of the Holy Spirit. But it is important, only, to overcome the fear of the risk, always possible, of falling into the falsification of charismatic manifestations, or simply to find oneself in the context of healing meetings where, above all, a strong hysterical emotionality is manifested instead of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (Graham, 2000:171,173).

Fear, in fact, is another factor that denotes a lack of faith and tends to extinguish the Holy Spirit, not allowing Him to work freely and manifestly (Kendall, 2016:91).<sup>37</sup> Fear is that human emotion that also limits all expectations of Christian believers of a God who can work powerfully in their lives (Kendall, 2016:163-164), and who is at work throughout the period between the first and second coming of the Messiah (Carson, 2017:211). Moreover, remember that "For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of strength, love, and discipline." (2Tt 1:7), (Bible, 1991/'93), or as other translations report "and of a sound mind" (2Tt 1:7), (Bible, King James Version). The mind that allows the Holy Spirit to act freely is, therefore, a healthy mind because it conforms to the teaching of Scripture, and therefore pentecostalism cannot be harmful to the mental "health" of anyone who practises it, as the Buffarini Guidi Circular said.

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<sup>37</sup> The author believes that there is a widespread "fear" of the "new" that challenges "tradition," so he believes that Christianity that wants to remain entrenched in its tradition is afraid to let glossolalia in, and therefore will not even allow the other supernatural charisms to enter.

Therefore, by accepting the Holy Spirit in the ministry of congregations and in the lives of believers without any restrictions, the Church will finally also realise unity in the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 2013:15), and will have at her disposal the same power that characterised Jesus' ministry on earth.

### *7.8.1 Prejudice against the pentecostal movement*

As for the prejudice that the pentecostal movement does not have its own theological backbone, but is characterised only by enthusiastic and excited emotional manifestations (Rinaldi, 2017:22), and often simply spectacular (Kendall, 2016:19), it can be said that the historical churches, learned and accredited by so many centuries of history, would do well to reconsider their theological identity and explain why they have become numerically small, and with a tendency to give in to the risk of submitting to the process of secularisation, rather than consider the theological identity of the pentecostal movement, which instead shows vitality, fervour and unstoppable growth.

### *7.8.2 The prejudice against pentecostal experiences*

The charismatic experiences that believers make of the Holy Spirit in different parts of the world should not be a problem, but a very serious holy provocation and an edifying stimulus for all historical and institutional churches (Moltmann, 1994:15-16). Charismatic experiences, for all believers, are a stimulus to move from a "habitual and conventional" religiosity to an experience in which the believer takes possession of a personal faith characterised by an intense spiritual experience that recalls the primitive church, a strong moral commitment and a great passion for evangelisation (Ferrario, 2011:274).

### *7.8.3 Prejudice against biblical reading of the Pentecostals*

Biblical reading, for Pentecostals, occupies a central position in their theology. Because biblical reading is revealed as a reality to be experienced through the immediate action of the Holy Spirit. And it was precisely the biblical reading of the pentecostal type that constituted the theological foundation of the movement from the moment of its birth. In fact, initially the newborn pentecostal movement did not

give priority to the elaboration of its own systematic theology, because the movement arose with a character of spontaneity, on the basis of charismatic experience and evangelistic commitment, and because it was able above all to reach sections of the population with little schooling, at least in the first decades of its development.

But during the 20th century, however, theological reflection was produced in conjunction with the consolidation of organisations within the pentecostal movement (Ferrario, 2011:274-275). Therefore, a theology has been developed that reflects the experience of faith, typical of the Pentecostals, on which they reflect in order to be able to tell it as their own testimony (Ferrario, 2011:275).

The theology of the pentecostal-charismatic movement is the theology of the Holy Spirit, which opens all believers, personally and together, to the reality of God (Welker, 1995:12), declaring not only that God exists, but that He is alive and close in daily life experiences (Welker, 1995:14). For the Holy Spirit is God who can be invoked, and therefore one can enter into harmony with his way of acting, having direct experience with Him. The diversity of his gifts, moreover, distributed to the members of the Body of Christ as He pleases, leads believers to unity and interdependence, which is the anticipation of the unity they will live in heaven.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, one can practically say, simply, that the Holy Spirit has not ceased his work for which He was sent to earth.

To be saved a Christian does not need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit with the evident sign of speaking in other tongues, because every believer is saved and has the Holy Spirit, but baptism in the Holy Spirit, with the gift of tongues, is a further blessing which introduces the believer into the world of the experience of charisms, and imparts to him that power which is necessary for him to be an effective witness of Christ.

Indeed, the gifts of the Holy Spirit for this time, which is the Messianic era and the era of the Holy Spirit, have not ceased; that is, the tongues have not ceased, the

prophecy has not ceased and the miracles have not ceased. The continuationists can agree with the cessationists that one day they will cease, because they will lose their present function in the church. That will be the day of reaching the perfection of which the Apostle Paul speaks, when believers will see "face-to-face" and their knowledge will be full, at the second coming of the Lord.

However, it is simply necessary to study the Bible in depth in order to have more discernment and discretion as to how to seek spiritual gifts, receive them and make use of them for the building up of the Body of Christ, and for the common good, taking care not to fall, at the same time, into fruitless or harmful abuses and excesses in the use of the same gifts.

At the same time, it is not necessary to try to keep supernatural phenomena under control, subjecting them to forms of institutionalised religiosity nor on the other hand, can such phenomena be placed at the focus of theology, since attention must always be fixed and maintained on the one focus which is Christ, in obedience to which every Christian believer must devote himself completely to discipleship and service selflessly and, in the end, it is practically necessary to cultivate the attitude of expecting "a little more" of divine intervention than ordinary common sense admits.

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