


Cessationism and continuationism: Pentecostal trinitarianism balances the tension

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There are three streams of theological thoughts on charismata. The first thought is the *cessationists* who believe that all sign gifts were designed for canonical conclusion, and therefore ceased when canon was completed. This theological stance was endorsed by Reformers such as Calvin and some Catholics. Later, around the 17th century to date, this stance had been challenged by evidence of these spiritual gifts in operation. There are four mainstream cessationists. Firstly, full cessationists are totally anti-miracles. Secondly, concentric cessationists believe in the total cessation of *charismata* and miracles in mainline Christianity and evangelised territories. However, miracles may manifest in unevangelised areas as an aid to the missional endeavors. Thirdly, classical cessationists of whom the charismatic manifestations served as the launching pads for evangelisation and the affirmation of God's revelation. Finally, consistent cessationists go further to declare that although the miraculous gifts were for church establishment in the 1st century, the apostles and prophets also ceased. The second thought is *continuationism*, which stands in juxtaposition with the cessationists. They are convinced that charismata never ceased. If they cease, it will be at the return of Christ. Pentecostalism, through its trinitarianism, stands in the middle of the two thoughts and enhances the continuationist stance. It is a movement that accepts the holistic or trinitarian view of God. The God of the Old Testament continues to be the God of the New Testament up to current times. Its trinitarian emphasis puts it above the cessationist-continuationist tensions.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article's intradisciplinary implication was realised through the appeal to numerous theological disciplines such as biblical studies, church history, ecclesiology and pneumatology. These various disciplines and doctrines argue that although cessationism and continuationism are common in theological thoughts today, Pentecostal trinitarianism is growing and gaining more ground at the grassroots levels.

Keywords: cessationism; continuationism; Pentecostalism; trinitarianism; theology; charismata; canon.

Introduction

This article is a comparative study of the three tangents so popular in ecclesiastical studies. These are cessationism, continuationism and Pentecostal trinitarianism. These are theological concepts that continue to dominate theological discourses, especially in relation to Pentecostal studies. They are the schools of thoughts that divide Protestant evangelicalism into some informal conglomerates and some forms of theological ideologies. Between the two extremes of cessationism and continuationism, there is a Pentecostal trinitarianism that attempts to balance the two views although Pentecostalism leans heavily or totally towards continuationism and stands in juxtaposition to cessationism. The debate is cessationism versus continuationism. This debate centres on theological tensions as to whether the charismata continue to exist in the modern church or had ceased during the apostolic era of the church. Looking from another perspective, the tension is more like religious relativism versus religious fanaticism. Historically, cessationism arose as a reaction to the then evidence of miracles within the Catholic Church. At the centre of this debate is the plus a century-old Pentecostalism, together with its splintering Charismatic expressions, which, because of its emphasis on the continuation of apostolic miracles, occupies the centre stage of the debate.

Cessationism's theological stance

Basically, cessationism is a doctrinal conviction that charismata, especially glossolalia, prophecy and healing ceased to operate during the apostolic era of the church. For them, gifts

Note: Special Collection: Trinity.

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like prophecy are limited in their need and use 'for it was needed during the writing of the New Testament and its usefulness ceased when the books were completed' (Ryrie 1980:86). The cessationists 'hold that miracles or ordinary charismata were terminated at or near the end of the apostolic age' (Kärkkäinen 2002:42). The primary text for the cessationists is 1 Corinthians 13:8–13, where hermeneutically there is a conclusion that miracles and charismata happened because of imperfection, which was the foundational stage of the church. Cessationists such as Thomas (1999) lean towards this text to substantiate their stance on cessationism. The hermeneutical highlight is on the statement 'when perfection comes', leading to the conclusion that this is the event associated with the cessation of charismata. As the canon is now closed, Christ has appeared, and the church established on apostolic metanarratives, and there is now no need for miracles. This view is strong within evangelical dispensationalism.

Cessationism, according to Kärkkäinen (2016:373), is deeply embedded in some Christian traditions including some current Reformed theology, which broadly embraces cessationism, as developed by John Calvin. Since then, the doctrine evolved with leniency towards the date of the cessation of charismata. One school of thought is that cessation concluded with the death of the apostles, while another school of thought belabours the fact that cessation ceased gradually over the first few centuries of the church. One of the cessationists, Warfield (1918:23) argues that 'the gifts necessarily ended with the death of the last apostle'. Literature on this subject concludes that there are four mainstreams of cessationism:

- *Full cessationists*: They are totally anti-miracles. For them, miracles and charismata had ceased and cannot be associated with genuine ecclesiastical expression. In this camp, one encounters scholars such as B.B. Warfield, J. Gresham and F.N. Lee (Grady 2010).
- *Concentric cessationists*: There is a close link and, in fact, a narrow line between them and the full cessationists. They believe in the total cessation of charismata and miracles in the mainline Christianity and evangelised territories. However, miracles may manifest in unevangelised areas as an aid to missional endeavours. Strong in this camp is D.B. Wallace who describes himself as a concentric cessationist, while he views other cessationists as 'linear'. These cessationists state their leanings towards Luther and Calvin (Wallace 1999).
- *Classical cessationists*: They are very common within this dogmatic field. For them, charismata, prophecy, healing and glossolalia ceased with the apostles and the conclusion of the canon. The charismatic manifestations served as the launching pads for evangelisation and the affirmation of God's revelation. However:

God can and does heal apart from the exercise of the gift of healing. He does answer prayer, and He answers it regarding physical problems, but such answers to prayer are not the exercise of the gift of healing. (Ryrie 1980:87)

In other words, these scholars are of the conviction that miracles still happen, but they should not contradict, accredit or add to the canon or the established metanarratives (Grady 2010:228). In this camp, one encounters scholars such as Richard Gaffin, John F. MacArthur and many others.

- *Consistent cessationists*: They go further to declare that although the miraculous gifts were for church establishment in the first century, the apostles and prophets also ceased. The five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4 was a transitional institution. These offices are no more necessary.

Although fundamentally cessationists are convinced that the Spirit no longer distributes spiritual gifts as a normative experience, their general view is that miracles had ceased, but God had not stopped working. Natural birth is a miracle on its own. One of their dispensationalist systematic theologians, Henry C. Thiessen asserts that 'The introduction of life on this planet is, therefore, itself a testimony to the reality of miracles' (1979:12). They acknowledge revolutionary conversions and the healing of diseases as miracles that come through faith and prayer. 'All true Christians testify to the fact that God answers prayer' (p. 12). Natural birth and spiritual birth (conversion) are deemed as miracles. 'Suffice to say that answers to prayer and the experience of regeneration prove that miracles still do happen' (p. 13). Above all, Christ is himself a miracle, which 'served to prove that He was God manifest in the flesh' (Chafer 1978a:56). These miraculous events are solely dependent or governed by God's sovereignty. This approach keeps them safe from abusing the principle of *sola scriptura*. Miracles continue to happen and are not contrary even to present-day experience.

Continuationist's theological exposition

In juxtaposition, there is continuationism, which arose in opposition to cessationism. This is the dogmatic conviction that charismata and miracles, in general, are a Christian experiential and operational reality. Continuationism is significantly marked and observed among the Catholics, Methodists, Moravians and significantly the Pentecostals and Charismatics. For these traditions, charismata and miracles, in general, are disbursed not exclusively through the 1st-century apostolic era but also as promises that go beyond time in the historical development of the church (Dojcin 2015:53). According to St. Augustine (Book XXII, ch. 8), miracles were published in order to produce faith, and the faith they produced was brought into prominence. Miracles are wrought in the name of Christ, whether by sacraments or by the prayers or relics of his saints.

The continuationists are of the strong opinion that charismata, including miracles and prophecy, are still in operation and mostly working in some corollary relationships. For instance, *glossolalia* is accompanied by interpretation and discernment.

Ryrie (1980) in agreement with Pauline thought (1 Cor 14) points out that:

It was to be used only for edifying, only by two or three in a single meeting and then only in if an interpreter were present, and never in preference to prophecy. (p. 88)

Like prophecy, it is dictated as to how it should be exercised and limited by the number of practitioners in the gathered community. However, continuationists are convinced that there are canonical and non-canonical prophets. In other words, there are foundational and non-foundational prophets. The foundational prophetic ministries had ceased, although there is a possibility of prophecy that is not doctrinally bound and does not contradict the foundational principle of *sola scriptura*. Furthermore, these prophecies must be verified through scriptural judgements. As non-foundational prophecies are open to erroneous abuses, they are open to evaluation or judgement through discernment that is applied through the text. There should be an awareness that 'the cessation of signs and wonders after the first generation of the church has given occasion to counterfeit manifestations' (Chafer 1978b:170).

One evangelical thinker in the circle of continuationists is John Piper of Bethlehem Baptist Church. He is famous for his strong teachings on Christian Hedonism. He has consistently and insistently taught 'that all spiritual gifts are valid today' (Desiring God). He maintains that the so-called sign gifts of the Spirit were not unique to the apostolic ministry and, thus, did not cease with the apostles' death (Steinbach 2010:7). One other notable systematic theologian who is unashamedly continuationist is Wayne Grudem. In his miraculous gifts theology, he further adds the continuation of prophecy, casting out demons, and glossolalia. He is careful not to put prophecy above the revelation, but cautions that as a corollary gift, it needs to be tested (1994:363–365).

Pentecostal trinitarianism and doctrinal stance

Pentecostalism has challenged cessationist principles. They make some of their doctrinal conclusions regarding miracles as continuous phenomena based on St. Augustine's allusion that all the miracles that were done by the martyrs in the name of Christ testify that these martyrs had genuine faith in Christ (Book XXII, ch. 9). This challenge emanates from the strong trinitarian perspective encased in Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is an experience not based on dogma, but based on the Trinity. Castelo (in Thomas 2010:89) engrosses this that 'Pentecostals are convinced that through their doxological experience they encounter the holy triune God'. Their understanding of *koinonia* is based on trinitarian foundation. This is better expounded by Cecil M. Robeck, the Pentecostal co-chair during the first session of the seventh phase (1986) of the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, by exegeting 2 Corinthians 13:13 and similar passages that *koinonia* is 'a unique relationship to God mediated through

the Son and made effective by the Holy Spirit' (1986:7). From this citation, one can see the trinitarian reflection in the relationality of the church in its essence. Pneumatology, Christology and Ecclesiology from a Pentecostal perspective are all defined and discussed from the trinitarian view, making Pentecostalism an absolute trinitarian faith. This is confirmed by Shaull and Cesar (2000:150) that for Pentecostals, 'the saving action of God, centring on the resurrection of Jesus and the presence of the *Holy Spirit*' is a trinitarian experience on a daily life [*added emphasis*]. However, one needs to note that these three doctrines also accommodate Christological orientation, as Christ is a full member or participant of and within the Trinity. In agreement with McDonnell, Kärkkäinen (2002) makes a commentary that:

The Spirit exercises mutuality through a contact function. The Father touches history and the Church through Christ in the Spirit. The Spirit is also the point of entry into a movement back to the Father. In all this the Trinity is the control. (p. 104)

As per the citation above, one sees pneumatology intertwined with ecclesiology centring or revolving in and around Christology. The Spirit works to validate the church and position Christ to the centre of the church, so that the church could be aligned and reconciled to the Father. One of the contemporary Pentecostal scholars is Amos Yong (2014:74), and he cites that 'the charismata and other gifts of the Spirit, at least in light of the Pauline witness, are ecclesologically founded with both a Christological focus and eschatological horizon'.

Pentecostalism views theology synchronically. They have always identified themselves as Trinitarian. Their doctrinal base is on the precedence that creation, redemption and eschatology reflect the trinitarian movement of God within the cosmos. In other words, God the Creator through Christ the Redeemer works through the Spirit in bringing order out of the chaotic world. Hence, one of the modern Pentecostal scholars, Macchia (2006:116) points to the fact that 'from the Trinitarian fellowship of the Father and the Son, the Spirit is poured out to expand God's love and communion to creation'. This is further attested by Kärkkäinen (2014:359) that 'the Spirit cannot be set in opposition to the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, any more than the Son can be set in opposition to the Father'. The disorganised world occupied by dismembered humanity needs healing, restoration and reconciliation with God. It is this trinitarian foundational thought that leads Pentecostals to the conclusion that the Spirit and *charismata* continue to eschatologically order sense out of confusion, and hence, the Spirit through ecclesia becomes missional, that is, asserting Christ as Saviour to lost humanity. Macchia (2006) enhances this:

The Spirit in *koinonia* and empowered mission of the church seeks to draw humanity into communion with God and to inspire a sighing for the day when all of creation becomes the temple of God's presence to the glory of God. (p. 156)

Pentecostal ecclesiology is a Christocentric missional ecclesiology, pneumatically empowered for eschatological self-realisation. Pentecost (referring to the Holy Spirit) and mission are a hand in a glove. They are inseparable and are a *synergy* that is *symbiotically* active. Orobator (2008:83) correctly captures this that 'the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost empowered the community of the risen Christ for the mission of evangelisation'. Pentecostal ecclesia is 'a missionary fellowship living from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and anticipating the ultimate fulfilment of the divine goals for history' (Macchia in Thomas 2010:249). Pentecostal scholars and researchers delve deeper into this to capture their full theology of the Spirit. Pope (in Thomas 2010:278) highlights that 'the Church, as the Christocentric ecclesial community, empowered by the Spirit, is a sacramental sign of God's grace'.

As Pentecostal ecclesiology is a missional ecclesiology, no wonder the world witnesses Christian explosion in the developing countries, where the cosmic powers' operations are visible and evident. It is like what Kunhiyop (2012:53) alludes to that 'the world is permeated with divinities and spirits who can have positive or negative effects on every aspect of life'. Despite these cosmic powers' challenges upon the African biblical Christianity, Pentecostalism in its trinitarian potency 'represents the most poignant, powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal and influence in sub-Saharan Africa' (Asamoah-Gyadu 2002:4). Humanity seeks power and victory over demonic powers and therefore flocks to any ecclesial event that promises them this breakthrough. It is not surprising that developed world Christianity is losing ground because of cessationist dogma that seems to elevate rationality above faith, human opulence above miracles and self-sufficiency above 'poverty in spirit', which creates a thirst for the human to seek God. John Allen (2009:381) summarises the reasons for trinitarian Pentecostal explosions as:

- belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy or prayer for miraculous healing
- a literal reading of the Bible
- strong belief in divine healing of illness or injury
- belief in the possibility of direct divine revelation
- an emphasis on evil spirits
- belief that Jesus will return to earth during their lifetimes
- belief that miracles still occur as they did in biblical times
- commitment to evangelisation, meaning sharing the faith with non-believers
- emphasis on Christ as the lone path to salvation
- higher-than-average rates of attendance at church services.

Most, if not all, of these reasons above synchronise with continuationists' convictions about charismata. These are both ecclesiological and missional expressions of the trinitarian Pentecostals.

The eschatological role of the Spirit in Pentecostal theology embraces the fact that *charismata* continue in the church to validate the gospel they preach. In opposition with the

cessationists, Pentecostals are the continuationists. From the time of their inception at the turn of the 20th century, they have vehemently rejected 'any notion that spiritual gifts and other supernatural phenomena recorded in the NT were restricted to the early church era' (Warrington 2008:70). In response to the hermeneutical conclusion of 1 Corinthians 13:8–10, which is used by cessationists to justify their stance, Pentecostals claim that this is imposition into Paul's thinking. For Pentecostals, Paul was pointing to the supremacy of love within the operation of *charismata*. Above all, as Warrington (2008:71) claims, 'the timing of the demise of these gifts (1 Cor 13:10) is believed to be the return of Jesus, not the closing of the canon of Scripture'. The Spirit in Acts or apostolic era is still ecstatic. Fison (1950:121) says Paul's greatest contribution is 'to give priority to the ethical without the least abating one iota of the supernatural and eschatological character of His activity'. It can be understood why Pentecostals abandoned dead orthodoxy cushioned in the historical creeds and opted for new ecclesiality – a new order, in which it is still 'understood that the lame could walk, the blind could see, and daughters could prophesy' (Castelo 2012:91–92). Pentecostals do not waver from their 'conviction that the full range of spiritual gifts in the New Testament is meant for the contemporary church' (Moriarty 1992:100), whose purpose is to bring glory to God. One African theologian, Timothy Palmer (2015:118) emphasises that 'the purpose of the gifts is the building up of the church, not self-glorification' and to excite or enthuse faith in the believer. In line with St Augustine, miracles are wrought in order that an impulse may be given to the faith by which we believe (Book XXII, ch. 10).

The trinitarian God is operationally active in the cosmos and realised in and through *ecclesia*, which is the eschatological community of faith empowered by the Spirit in preparation for the return of Christ. Eschatological urgency has always been the heart of understanding the missionary fervour of Pentecostalism (Chetty 2006:8). Eschatological role of the Spirit by dispensing *charisms* to *koinonia* is not something that was designed for the apostolic or New Testament era, but a continuing imbue ment released by *perichoretic* trinity whereby faith in the trinitarian God is the pathway of love and fulfilment. Once the communion experiences the power and the presence of the Spirit by faith, missional enhancement gets released, and *koinonia* moves from fear, weakness and self-pity into the life of *dunamis*. It is true that 'communion implies participation by faith in God's love in the midst of weakness' (Macchia 2006:157).

Between the Ascension and Pentecost events, Jesus' disciples were cocooned in fear behind the closed doors. The message of hope was already delivered to them at Ascension, but they continued waiting for the power from on high. When that power came at Pentecost, the universal distribution of gifts of the Spirit was leashed, and as far as Pentecostalism is concerned, this universal release of *charismata* was never reversed, withdrawn or recalled. The world, especially the communion of saints, still enjoys the benefits of this. So, there is

no justification for cessationists' stance from this perspective. *Koinonia* continues to be implicitly a pneumatological reality of the New Testament, because the 'Spirit is the enabling future of the community so established' (Jenson 1997:45). The Pentecostal view of the *restored community* is therefore based on their 'vision of the unchangeable character of God which guarantees that the nature of the apostolic church is normative for all the time' (Nel 2014:296).

Pentecostals relate to and interpret both the Old and New Testament through the lens of a promise-fulfilment strategy that leads to the promises fulfilled in the present community (Nel 2014:295), enabling the community to participate in the past promises (Archer 2009:137). To illustrate this, one considers the healing power of God from the Old Testament narrative regarding the creative power and the name of God to heal the universe. God the Father is not just the creator of the universe. He is also the healer of the universe. In and through him, creation regains its original sanity as God reconciles and restores everything in the cosmos that has been marred by humanity's hamartiological and ponerological tendencies and activities. These activities conflict with the creation and therefore cause some diseases. The condition calls for the divine intervention, which is healing. One of the compound names of God in the Old Testament cherished by Pentecostals is *Jehovah-Rapha* (Ex 15:26; Jr 30:17; Ps 103:2-3), meaning the Lord our Healer. The root is from the Hebrew *râpâ*, meaning to heal or to restore.

The name came as God's first self-revelation to the nation out of slavery in Egypt. It is the name revealed during the exodus – an eschatological journey towards God's fulfilled promises. The discovered water in the desert of Shur was not drinkable (bitter) and was divinely cleansed by Moses under God's instruction. After the miracle of healing this water, God declared himself as *Jehovah Rapha* when he said: 'for I am the Lord, who heals you' (Ex 15:26). From this time onwards, God continued manifesting himself as *Jehovah Rapha* by and through healing power as asserted by numerous texts such as Psalm 41:3; 103:3; 147:3. Castelo (2012) captures this that:

Pentecostals have traditionally believed that the God who was at work in revealing Godself on Mount Sinai and on Calvary is the same God who is working in the context of Pentecostal worship. (p. 91)

So, the Old Testament believers called upon the name of the Lord in invocations pleading for his interventions, while the New Testament believers called upon the name of the Lord Jesus for the same reason (Jenson 1997:45). This continuity is very vital in Pentecostal hermeneutics where the God of the Old Testament is fully incarnated in the Jesus of the New Testament, and invocations are uttered in the power of the Spirit.

For Pentecostals, the name *Jehovah Rapha* is still applicable today. God is the healing Father who can be invoked to heal

physical ailments and emotional stresses. They see Jesus Christ as the great physician – the healer of the body, who does not only redeem humanity from sinfulness but can also restore their fallen nature where consequently they are placed in eternal *koinonia* with the trinitarian God. As Kärkkäinen (2002:142) declares, 'The presence of Christ, through his Spirit, has been seen as effecting renewal not only of our inner being but also of our bodies and emotions'.

In their trinitarian theology, Pentecostals insist that Jesus Christ is not just the redeemer or Spirit Baptizer. He remains the healer of their broken lives. Many, if not all, Pentecostal theologians centre their theology on Christological themes 'as a way of defining the basic gestalt of Pentecostal thought and *ethos*: Christ as Saviour, as Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, as Healer, and as Coming King' (Dayton 2004:173). Christ remains 'the material and concrete climax of revelation' (Yong 2014:74). These themes are intertwined in Pentecostal rhetoric. Pentecostal theology is very Christocentric, as gifts such as healing and miracles are ascribed to Christ's power more than Spirit's actions. Christ is at the centre of the miraculous, and he is the one who assured his followers that signs and wonders will follow those who believe. He has promised, and therefore, he fulfils. Pentecostals continue to celebrate the 'miracles of the divine healing as part of God's salvation and as evidence of the presence of divine power in the church' (Dayton 2004:115). Christ remains the healer, and the Holy Spirit continues to empower the people of the community with gifts in the same way as he did since the Day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit is at the centre of Pentecostal theological convictions. In fact, 'Pentecostalism has awakened the church to the reality of the Spirit's role in our salvation and in our Christian life' (Kunhiyop 2012:91). Although Jesus is seen as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit and the Coming King, he should be 'proclaimed in the fullness of the Spirit so that the kingdom will be manifested amid the world in words and deeds' (Land 2010:52). Since the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2), the Holy Spirit constituted the church as an eschatological community of universal mission in the power and demonstration of the Spirit (Boer 1961:52). The Spirit's role 'is to help us turn to Christ, and by doing so, to the Father' (Kärkkäinen 2014:359). The Spirit brings the Son and the Father to dwell in the believer (Jn 14:16). The Church is made a dwelling place of God through the Spirit (Eph 2:22). Land (2010:51) associates himself with Luke (11:20) and Matthew (11:4-6), the Gospel writers, that the Holy Spirit is 'a finger of God who drives out demons, cleanses lepers, and empowers gospel proclamation'. All these substantiations affirm the stance of the liberation theologian, Boff (in Sobrino & Ellacuria 1993:80) that it is conclusively accurate that the 'Spirit is the power (*dunamis*) and the authority (*exousia*) by which he performs wonders and deeds of liberation (Mk 3:20-30)'.

The trinitarian Pentecostals do not dissect the trinity when coming to worship. They express their trinitarian focus by embracing the perichoretic character of the Godhead.

Their trinitarian theology is Spirit-focused, and they accentuate the role of the Spirit in God-church and God-world relationships. Kärkkäinen (2006:91) points out that 'in the power of the Spirit, the focus is on Jesus Christ and God'. Pentecostals are pneumatologically robust and faithfully Christocentric and ecclesiological (Richie 2011:58), emphasising *missio Dei* in the chaotic cosmos. Pneumatological robustness capacitates them for an encounter with cosmic powers that are active in the world without Christ.

These cosmic powers are pneumatological realities operational in missional territories. Some scholars such as Peter Wagner (1988) who engaged missionally changed their anti-charismatic stances and started to embrace the manifestations of charismatic demonstrations of healing, miracles, glossolalia, and so on. He makes this confession:

When I began my work with McGavran I was anti-Pentecostal. While I might grudgingly have admitted that Pentecostals may be Christians, I suspected they were not the kind of Christians that pleased God very much. (pp. 13–14)

In parallel, cessationists like John MacArthur of Grace Community Church in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, California, are vocal in their convictions. His cessationist doctrine is reflected in his Church's Statement of Faith article under the Holy Spirit, saying:

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers. (n.p.)

With reference to *glossolalia* [speaking in tongues], MacArthur reverberates his cessationist theology in his book, *Charismatic Chaos* (1978). He became famous for his anti-charismatic stance when he published a book, *The Charismatics* (1978).

Conclusion

This article shows that there are many Protestants, especially among evangelicals, who are cessationists. They are of the opinion that most, if not all, of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit terminated with the conclusion of the canon – at the end of the New Testament in the 4th century. On the contrary, there are continuationists who are strongly convinced that spiritual gifts are still in operation. They find no biblical evidence for the cessationists' belief regarding this matter. The Bible and history bear witness to numerous supernatural encounters where these gifts are in operation to validate the gospel of power and holiness.

The world is undoubtedly pluralistic. Theology has evolved over centuries trying to answer or being relevant to a pluralistic world. Cessationists are still questioning the validity of charismatic gifts. On the contrary, the continuationists

are standing their grounds and apart from the metanarratives, use experiential miracles as a demonstration that charisms continue and are genuine.

In the middle, there are Pentecostals who because of their trinitarian convictions are the continuationists who still believe that the *charismata* were purposed for the present age and will continue until Jesus returns. Their 'non-cessationist or continuationist approach to the Bible means that they are committed to a Spirit-centred version of Christian faith' (Nel 2019:5). They demonstrate this through their missio-ecclesial expressions, Christo-pneumatic theological proclivities and eschatological expectations of the *apokalypsis* of the kingdom of Christ. In further enhancing their stance on continuity of *charisms*, they refer to pastoral edifications such as:

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. (1 Tm 4:12 NIV)

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (2 Tm 1:6)

The *charism* Paul refers to in texts such as the above is essentially pastoral. If the church was to continue beyond the apostolic era, the pastoral office in its diachronic dimension is to provide within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of unity (Jenson 1999:231). This means that the diversity of gifts should operate within the unity or communality of ecclesia. Pentecostal trinitarianism stands for continuing *charisms*, and if they will ever cease, it will be at the return of Christ. This is evidenced by the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in its various streams – all being anti-cessationism but pro-continuationism.

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