



**A Spirit-Driven Ecclesiological Tenacity:  
Tested and Proven Response to Hostility and Afflictions**

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## INTRODUCTION

The church is the spiritual community of the seeing ones. It has been described as being called “out of darkness into his (God’s) wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Furthermore, this community consists of “children of the light and children of the day” who “do not belong to the night or the darkness” (1 Thess. 5:5) but have the obligation to “live as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). The one who creates this environment of light, enabling the church to see and move forward, is the person of the Holy Spirit and his work.

In contrast to the believers’ previous state of blindness, the Spirit guides, speaks, teaches all things, reminds them of what was said, and reveals what is yet to come (John 14, 15, 16). Therefore, the scriptural contrast between darkness and light does not merely indicate the transition from unbelief to belief. Rather, the broader perspective reveals a development of empowerment through Spirit-given sight.

This ability to walk with insight, discernment, and confidence is a pneumatological quality that the church should possess. Scripturally and in practice, we find this truth especially important for times when this “light-and-day” defined community goes through adversity and persecution. Ecclesiological seeing is made possible through a pneumatological mindset. From its conception until modern times, this Spirit-oriented mindset has helped the church survive afflictions and thrive spiritually. Drawing from the perception that the birth and early stages of church life occurred in an oppressive environment and using scriptural teaching and the example of the recent East-European church history, this lecture will discuss how the three painful effects of persecution, “the split consciousness,” “the split faithfulness,” and “the split leadership,” have been and could be overcome.

## CONTEXT AND EFFECTS OF IDEOLOGICAL RELIGIOUS HOSTILITY

The ideological strategies staged against the church and the life of the individual believer comprise an important aspect of the fight of any atheistic totalitarian system against religion. Recent East-European church history showed how secular humanistic ideology was used as political, social, and spiritual opposition against the very existence of the Christian faith and the survival of the churches. The Russian philosopher and theologian Nikolai Berdyaev, a disillusioned Marxist who later embraced Orthodox Christianity, viewed communism in his writings as a “pseudo-religion”:<sup>1</sup>

Communism in actual fact is the foe of every form of religion and especially of Christianity, not as a social system, but as itself a religion. It wants to be a religion itself, to take the place of Christianity. It professes to answer the religious questions of the human soul and to give a meaning to life. Communism is integrated; it embraces the whole of life; its relations are with no special section of it. On this account its conflict with other religious faiths is inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

After Europe's division following the Second World War, the practice of promoting scientific atheism and numerous repressive policies was initially tested in the former Soviet Union and later adopted by all the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

### *False Consciousness, Split Consciousness, and Split Faithfulness*

Atheistic ideology represents a clear form of secularism. The primary target of ideological indoctrination has been the emerging new generation. In this segment of society, faith in God is seen as being in its developmental stage and is particularly susceptible. The most effective approach for argumentative confrontation involved establishing institutions or activities that promote a scientific ideology to challenge both the minds and hearts of individuals influenced by religion. All efforts were deliberately focused on a process where

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1960), 158, quoted in Kent R. Hill, “Christian Mission, Proselytism and Religious Liberty: A Protestant Appeal for Christian Tolerance and Unity,” *Religion, State & Society* 25/4, (1997): 310.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

an established form of secular intellectualism gradually replaces the life of faith. The assumption was that religious belief and science are incompatible. School teachers and university professors were encouraged to adopt the stance of militant atheists, driven by the conviction that there can be no compromise in ideology.<sup>3</sup>

The children and youth living in countries dominated by atheistic and totalitarian regimes spent their time between family, school, and social or sports organizations created for them. One of the primary objectives was to alienate the younger generation not only from religion in general but also from the concept of faith in God. Intellectuals were tasked to carry out this faith-destructive assignment through various training programs in local schools and the national youth communist league (*Komsomol*), which included young men and women aged fourteen to twenty-eight. These young people already had seven years of experience in the *National Children's Pioneer Organization*, which was “a formative childhood experience, like an initiation.”<sup>4</sup> This experience offered children access to instructions on how to understand the world around them. This internalization of the world's image as good or bad—namely, a distinction “between the evil bourgeoisie and the good proletariat—helped children construct ethical principles that would guide them to their future political activism.”<sup>5</sup> The textbooks used in schools and universities, along with other media, served as one of the main tools for communicating ideological thoughts largely based on attacks against Western society and analyses of the causes of suffering in the world. The conclusions deemed “the *status quo* of suffering as morally intolerable.”<sup>6</sup> The statistics and various reports provided the atheistic activists with both the “opportunity to force the topic on

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<sup>3</sup> This was Lenin's fundamental formulation.

<sup>4</sup> Barrington Moore, *The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, (London: MacMillan, 1978), 88, quoted in Bohumil Melichar et Jakub Rákosník, “The Communist Organization of Children and its Discourse in Czechoslovakia between Two Wars,” *Histoire et Politique*, no. 33, (2017), <https://journals.openedition.org/histoirepolitique/9991#ftn26>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

an ever wider group of people and incorporate it into everyday conversations” and “the power to assert their interpretation of the causes and thus the right to interpret reality—to seize the discourse as a weapon in the struggle for the power to create reality.”<sup>7</sup>

Some of the strongest forms of ideological persecution happened in the context of totalitarianism. It was rightly noted that “religious totalitarianism ultimately aims to control the entire person, even down to one’s thoughts.”<sup>8</sup>

Among the definitions of false consciousness, the atheistic ideology listed religion and did not hesitate to use force, persecution, persuasion, and propaganda. The youth leagues patiently explained to the young people “the harm done by superstitions and religious prejudices” and organised “special circles and lectures for antireligious propaganda.”<sup>9</sup> Christian youth experienced difficulties in affiliating themselves with these organizations and suffered social stigmatization. There was an ongoing battle for the mind of each young person. The growing new generation of Christians was labelled as “withdrawn, uncommunicative, and unsociable.”<sup>10</sup> For the atheistic authorities, this was a sign of “the destruction of a healthy mind”<sup>11</sup> caused by the religious education and influence of the Christian family. Since the task of winning a Christian youth through atheistic education generally turned out to be challenging, the main objective was to shake the established religious feelings and move the person to an unstable condition of “split consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> The task of the school and youth organizations was to prevent tender religious feelings from evolving into religious convictions.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Mark, “Religious Totalitarianism, Secular Totalitarianism, and Other Threats to International Religious Freedom,” *Public Discourse*, (April 1, 2018), <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/04/21172/>.

<sup>9</sup> Program of the Komsomol, *Pravda*, 23 April 1936, <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1936-2/childhood-under-stalin/childhood-under-stalin-texts/program-of-the-komsomol/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Children and Atheism in the Soviet Union,” *Documents*, 47, [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/rc1/04-2\\_46.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/rc1/04-2_46.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Though it is one of the primary causes, it would be very simplistic to consider fear as the only reason why split consciousness leads to split faithfulness. For the early church, “dealing with the lapsed was predominantly a spiritual matter.”<sup>13</sup> The unbelief in God’s promises and Jesus’ warning that “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt 10:22) was thought to have more significance than just the fear factor. It was the unbelief that opened the door to fear.

Early judicial or courtroom records of Christians being arraigned before governors or magistrates witness the devastating effects of the split-consciousness challenge. For Governor Pliny, the mere “admission of being Christian” made the person guilty. Consequently, according to him, an unknown number of Christians “said that they had never been Christian or that they were not anymore.” They even accepted the imposed worship of the emperor’s images and a curse of Christ. The battle in the mind and the heart that ended with denying Christian confession deprived the Christian faith of vindication.<sup>14</sup>

### **PNEUMATOLOGICAL MINDSET**

To withstand such dangers, many persecuted churches in the past and today have built their doctrine and practices on a well-established foundation of Pentecostal charismatic spirituality.

When we seek to retrieve biblical, ancient, and historical Christianity for contemporary spiritual renewal, we discover that the willingness to face the consequences of belonging to a spiritual body perceived as incompatible with the broader society—and even targeted for destruction—stems from and is maintained by the understanding of the church as a prophetic body. This understanding, in turn, leads to actions that align with it.

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<sup>13</sup> D.H. Williams, “The Tradition of Christian Persecution,” *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 28/4 (2019): 412.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, 410-413.

Sustaining passion for God in an environment of persecution is a spiritual matter. Therefore, “churches cannot be worshipping communities alone: only prophetic communities can truly worship, and only worshipping communities can be truly prophetic.”<sup>15</sup> In light of the hostile scientific ideological encounter, the church embraced this holistic understanding. The focus was on the promised hope-empowering Spirit that inhabits the church and makes this prophetic community a sign of hope.<sup>16</sup>

Early in the history of the church, persecution was understood as a test of the believer’s relationship with the Holy Spirit. This is how, for example, Tertullian exhorted the imprisoned Christians: “O blessed, grieve not the Holy Spirit, who entered prison with you.”<sup>17</sup> He then reminded them that they were anointed with and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which is sufficient to drive all fear away.<sup>18</sup>

The starting point is that the persecuted church is led by a pneumatological interpretation and understanding of its adverse circumstances and experiences. Biblical support for this theological position is the final discourse of Jesus with his disciples, in which he revealed the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in their immediate and future sufferings. The literary context of John 15 shows that the field of work of the Paraclete would be the antagonistic environment between the world and Jesus’ disciples. The world would hate them and persecute them because they do not belong to the world. The same had already happened to Jesus (John 15:18-21). Additionally, Jesus’ words and works made the world guilty of sin and provoked this context of unilateral hatred (John 15:22-25). This was the expected setting in which the Paraclete would come. The perspective of the Spirit mission that Jesus had in mind was made clear when he said, “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you

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<sup>15</sup> Miroslav Volf, “The Church as a Prophetic Community and a Sign of Hope,” *European Journal of Theology*, 2/1 (1993): 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 26. Rom. 15:13 declares that the Spirit enables the church with hope: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, “Ad Martyras,” *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, 693, quoted in Williams, 413.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, 413.

from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27). The final discourse of Jesus “is a call for the Johannine community and disciples to foresee and to be prepared for their troubles with the world.”<sup>19</sup>

In John 16:1, “Jesus reveals that the reason for this discourse is to prevent the disciples from stumbling.”<sup>20</sup> Certainly,

when Jesus exhorts the disciples to remember and know the reason why they are being hated by the world, his statements are an attempt to prevent the disciples and the Johannine community from falling away from the faith in the same manner that other disciples abandoned him when they were scandalized about his teaching on eating and drinking his flesh and blood... According to the Fourth Gospel, we notice that knowledge or remembrance of Jesus’ words does not occur without the aid of the Paraclete. When Jesus exhorts the disciples to know, remember, and recognize that his life will help them understand the coming persecution in 15.18-16.4, the Paraclete is the testifier that enables the disciple to perceive the significance of the coming or past events.<sup>21</sup>

The resilience of the church demonstrated during times of trouble comes from the very presence and ministry of the Paraclete promised and sent by Jesus. The verbs attributed to his activities define what he does in and through the church or the individual believer.

One of the aims of persecution is to create a crisis of faith. There is a good reason to believe that “by the time the Fourth Gospel was in its final form, persecution and the expulsion of Jewish Christians from synagogues had moved far beyond the realm of gloomy predictions into the realm of an ever-present living reality for the Johannine community.”<sup>22</sup> Whether the original audience of disciples became readers of the Fourth Gospel is not known. However, the language used by the author implies text validity and application for both the disciples and the would-be readers. What is important is that the Johannine community of

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<sup>19</sup> Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, “The Spirit as an Inner Witness in John 15.26,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013): 81.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away” (John 16:1).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John 13-21*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 695, quoted in Estrada, 82.



chapters 14, 15, and 16 could be identified not only with the primitive Christian community threatened by imminent persecution but all the successive ill-treated Christ-believing communities could be or rather should be related to it theologically. The common distinctive aspect between them should have been the fact that they all should have experienced the Holy Spirit as their “inner testifier.”<sup>23</sup> Out of the biblical text, we could conclude that “the Paraclete will testify to the disciples”<sup>24</sup> and to all the readers of the text who belong to “the difficult future.”<sup>25</sup>

Being the inner witness, the Holy Spirit “speaks to the conscience of the believer and is one who testifies ... within the believer and through the believer.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit serves as an internal and external voice. Through teaching, reminding, and witnessing the truth, the Holy Spirit provides a revelation (illumination) intended not only to be a gospel proclamation to the world but also a message of guidance for the Christian community itself. This was the role that the totalitarian atheistic ideology tried to appropriate from the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led youth and adult Christians, using various forms of rigorous indoctrination and strategies.

A lot has been written on the forensic role of the Holy Spirit focusing on the prosecutorial function of the Spirit towards the world (John 16:8-11).<sup>27</sup> Equally, strong arguments give the Spirit the role of “supporter or sponsor,”<sup>28</sup> a “prophetic teacher,”<sup>29</sup> and a “guarantor of continuity.”<sup>30</sup> This interpretation aligns with the functions attributed to the

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<sup>23</sup> Estrada, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>27</sup> This comes from multiple word studies of the Spirit’s designation as παράκλητος or the corresponding verb παρακληῖν.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Grayston, “The Meaning of Parakletos,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1981): 67, quoted in Estrada, 92.

<sup>29</sup> George Johnston, *The Spirit Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 80-81, quoted in Estrada, 92.

<sup>30</sup> Eskil Franck, *Revelation Taught: The Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, (Philadelphia: Coronet Books, 1985), 17-29, quoted in Estrada, 92.

Spirit in the farewell discourse, which include "comforting, encouraging, reproving, exhorting, teaching, and preaching" while He dwells within and among the disciples.<sup>31</sup> This is how believers have been assisted in facing a crisis of faith brought on by persecution.

Living a genuine Christian life without the Person and work of the Paraclete, while being mistreated and oppressed, is impossible, not to say that this should be normative for all times. Persecuted Christians have taken this truth a step further by emphasizing the Charismatic aspect of the Spirit's work. Manifestations of spiritual gifts, visions, dreams, and other phenomena originating from the Spirit became the essence of the Paraclete's guidance, comfort, defence, exhortation, encouragement, and preservation of the church. These, along with the ministry of teaching and preaching, constituted the prophetic voice of the Spirit that enabled the church to discern the present and see the future. This interpretation regarding suffering necessitated the emergence of a mindset that "gave due attention to the Spirit, anticipating that he would accompany and empower them."<sup>32</sup> Consequently, persecution and the Paraclete-given *charismata* have proven to be quite compatible biblical concepts.

### **PNEUMATOLOGICAL CONDUCT AND LEADERSHIP DILEMMA**

This pneumatological understanding of persecution led to a pneumatological conduct of the church. For example, during the period of the hostile totalitarian regime, this aspect, among others, gave the East-European churches an image of "communities of living hope"<sup>33</sup> among the oppressed societies of these countries. The task of their leaders was to help the church discern the voice of God's Spirit amid circumstances that aimed to make the church voiceless. There was an ongoing fresh discovery of God's nearness and presence, and such a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>32</sup> Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theology*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1985), 63-78, quoted in Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 251.

<sup>33</sup> Volf, 13.

dynamic relationship with God presupposed “prophetic existence.”<sup>34</sup> Seeking deeper spirituality, the persecuted church understood that,

the prophetic model of the relation between the church and the world assumes that the mission of the church in the world can be sustained only by the same Spirit of the new creation whose presence makes the church to be the church. To be a prophetic community the church needs the Spirit, who will make its sons and daughters prophesy, its young men see visions, and its old men dream dreams (cf. Acts 2:17ff.). To be a sign of hope the church needs the Spirit who will cause flesh to come upon its dry bones, put breath into it, and make it live (cf. Ezek. 37:6).<sup>35</sup>

History has shown that the persecuted church is quite focused on and anticipates eschatological salvation. Such a church testifies to this eschatological salvation not only by the proclamation of the word but also by its prayer life and worship. The recurring waves and periods of religious hostility often bring back the biblical understanding that in this world, the church lives in a state of homelessness, which in turn results in an eschatological mode of life. We agree that “being a stranger is not simply a posture which the church takes concerning the world; it is rooted in the very being of the church as anticipation of the new creation.”<sup>36</sup> The New Testament accounts undeniably witness that “the church was born into a tradition of persecution and suffering that formed its earliest identity.”<sup>37</sup> The church and the world exist under different spiritual statuses and this will always presuppose a spiritual tension and struggle. Martyrdom is the expression of this reality. The biblical perspective suggests that “there can be no church without martyrdom.”<sup>38</sup>

Churches that avoid afflictions and persecution by compromising and exchanging their eschatological identity for organizational identity according to the models of this world “will at best be able to give the world lessons about ideological and institutional survival,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, 403.

<sup>38</sup> Volf, 20.

possibly even about success.”<sup>39</sup> Such churches, however, miss the opportunity to be a “sign of living hope” and “hope is born where the Spirit of the new creation is seen at work in the conflicts of the church with the spirits of this world.”<sup>40</sup>

The centuries-long Eastern Orthodox Church’s conservative doctrine and tradition embraced superstition and multiple miracle stories. The national identity and cultures of many of these East-European persecuted Pentecostal churches were shaped by this strong influence. Therefore, in addition to their Pentecostal and charismatic doctrinal foundation, the believers of these churches were quite open to the supernatural. The Orthodox churches affirmed that “genuine miracles took place not only in the first century but at the hands of many of the saints, martyrs, and confessors of the faith from the first century up to today.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, unaffected by any ongoing developments in the free world that integrated Christian theology into secular philosophy, Pentecostal Christians in these countries viewed the prophetic and charismatic mode of church life as essential.

Deprived of any form of dignified status in society, pressured by educational state organizations and activities whose goal was to eliminate their faith, forbidden to possess any Christian literature or offer formal or informal theological training, and forced to hold a vulnerable organizational system with untrained leaders, many Pentecostal communities in most of the former communist countries focused on the spiritual dimension of Church life and leadership. Due place and time were given to prayer both in the churches under government supervision or in the multiple underground house churches and groups. The outside oppression and the inside spiritual circumstances increased the expectancy for and invited the Spiritual move and manifestations. This spiritual force coming from below, from

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Michael J. McClymond, “Charismatic Gifts: Healing, Tongue-Speaking, Prophecy, and Exorcism,” *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, edited by Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, John Wiley & Sons, (2016): 402.

the lay members of the congregation, put enormous pressure upon the leaders of the government-recognised churches who would either join the Spirit-filled life of the congregation or remain isolated in their ministry because of concessions and compromises made with the authorities.

This aspect of Pentecostal spirituality and the examples of faithful spiritual leaders spoke strongly to the growing generation of young Pentecostal men and women. In many cases, local church revivals sprang out of their youth meetings. Individual or group baptisms in the Holy Spirit became the catalyst for witnessing manifestations of spiritual gifts, mainly interpretation of tongues, prophecies, or words of knowledge and wisdom. Adult Pentecostal believers considered this unique move of the Spirit a vindication of their prayers and remaining firm for the gospel.

While fully recognizing the guidance and authority of the Spirit-given message, counsel, and word of the pastor and leader of the congregation, for the persecuted Pentecostals, the revelatory spiritual gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and wisdom in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were intended to be part of the worship services, and particularly, the prayer meetings. This group of *charismata* was subject to congregational judgment. Aligned with the gospel and the fundamental tenets of theology, these gifts were also meant “to give direction in situations where neither scripture, nor gospel, nor tradition could do so.”<sup>42</sup> They also indicated “how the risen Lord perceived the church’s condition”<sup>43</sup> and often provided spiritual direction. Tongue-interpretations, prophetic utterances, or words of knowledge and wisdom would either reinforce already existing thoughts, plans, and ideas, or the individual and the group of believers would receive illumination over what to do in their particular circumstances. In essence, *charismata* manifestations were words of encouragement,

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<sup>42</sup> Max Turner, “Spiritual Gifts Then and Now,” *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 55.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

prophetic promises of approaching victory, divine warnings of impending dangers, or appeals to stand firm amid some fiery trial. Under the close supervision of the pastor or the elder in charge, these revelatory gifts enabled “the Christian church to function as a community of healing.”<sup>44</sup> In summary, while determined to remain theologically sound, the persecuted church dared to “earnestly desire spiritual gifts” and they received what they prayed for.

It proved difficult for the communist authorities to devise an effective strategy against Pentecostal charismatic spirituality. This particular form of spirituality appeared to be remarkably effective at keeping Pentecostals steadfast during times of persecution. In an effort to oppose and deny Spirit baptism and the manifestations of spiritual gifts, communist ideologists even referenced critical voices from other Evangelical, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches, which they were also persecuting. For them, this Pentecostal distinctiveness represented a source of fanaticism and rigidity. The Pentecostal churches were labeled as belonging to a “Holy Spirit cult,” with followers characterized by an intensely fervent form of religiousness. In seeking to explain the confidence of the Pentecostals’ defence against atheistic ideology, communist analysts viewed Pentecostal spirituality as a form of spiritual microclimate and microenvironment that provided religious fulfillment for the entire community, unlike Catholic and Orthodox traditions that promised it to only a select few. Unable to understand the true meaning of *glossolalia*, they interpreted this phenomenon as a “psychophysical charge that transforms human energy into mental experiences,”<sup>45</sup> leading to a sense of optimism. This perception led the persecutors to conclude that “Pentecostalism is one of the most resistant religions”<sup>46</sup> within atheistic societies.

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<sup>44</sup> McClymond, 415.

<sup>45</sup> Nikolai Mizov and Jordan Nikolov, *Protestant Sects in Bulgaria*, (Sofia: Partizdat, 1972), 194, 198.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

## CONCLUSION

Years ago, a Chinese house church leader observed, “When Chinese believers read the book of Acts, we see in it our *own experience*; when foreign Christians read the book of Acts, they see in it *inspiring stories*.”<sup>47</sup> This reflection captures how the persecuted church interprets and applies the New Testament pneumatology. Many scholars and church historians agree that “searching before God for personalized spiritual experiences, including the more spectacular gifts, is characteristically a phenomenon of the church in periods of insecurity, introspection, and historical instability, rather than in those of consolidation and self-confidence.”<sup>48</sup> The second half of twentieth-century East-European church history confirmed the significance of this observation. This period demonstrated that through the dark times of persecution, the church became less sociologically integrated with its environment and more attuned to its connection with its Guide, the Paraclete, who, among other roles, provides spiritual insight and direction. As a result, large segments of the church in these areas of spiritual oppression and hostility experienced the “charismatisation” of their believers’ theological perception and behaviour. This entire process prevented the formation of a mentality of helplessness and assisted the members of the persecuted Pentecostal communities in developing a more self-confident identity.

At the fall of communism in 1989, after 45 years of severe persecution and aggressive atheistic ideological indoctrination, the East-European Pentecostal churches emerged from this dark period full of and energized with young people, the segment of the church that was the main target of the organised systematic ideological work. They were supposed to believe the narrative created and intensely promoted by the state atheistic ideologists. Instead, they turned to the narrative of the Paraclete, revealed and re-told in the prophetic community of

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Menzies, “Luke’s Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective,” *PentecoStudies* 6/2, (2007): 108.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, 43.

hope. A discussion on ecclesiological endurance would be lacking if we did not recall that “the promise of supernatural power, as reflected in Acts 1:8,<sup>49</sup> is a fundamental consequence of the presence of the Spirit.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly to the apostle Paul, the persecuted church “trusted in the gifts the Spirit gave for the common good (1 Cor. 12).”<sup>51</sup> The *parakletos* Being provided the *dunamis* enablement through spiritual *charismata* for *ecclesial* tenacity. The dark did not hinder the church from seeing!

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<sup>49</sup> “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

<sup>50</sup> Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*, (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 250.

<sup>51</sup> Andy Lord, “Incarnational Partnership in Mission: A Response to Questionable Assumptions,” *JEPTA* 26/2, (2006): 117.



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