The Spirit's Role in Mission: Narrative Pentecostal Theology in West Africa

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Introduction

Pentecostal mission theology stresses that Spirit-baptism empowers bold witness to Christ (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:17-18). Evangelistic fervor follows empowerment as believers confidently proclaim Christ in word and deed with accompanying miraculous signs and wonders (Menzies 1995). Pentecostals embrace an urgent eschatology, believing empowered proclamation would allow the unreached to hear the Gospel before the end (McGee 1997). Wherever people encounter God, new churches emerge as products of Spirit-empowered evangelism. J. Philip Hogan, the executive director of Assemblies of God World Missions from 1960 to 1990, stated summarily the Assemblies of God's great contribution to the command of Christ was to be led of the Spirit to "present the claims of Jesus Christ … then seek to gather converts into a local church for the discipling and maturing process" (Hogan 1965, 5). Multiplication of Assemblies of God (AG) churches in the Global South attests to the effectiveness of this Spirit-led strategy.

In this article, I investigate the role of the Spirit in mission theology as perceived through the story of West African church planters. These individuals include second and third generation recipients of mission efforts who localized Pentecostalism to their context and planted churches through Spirit-empowerment. I describe the investigation as a qualitative research study that examined the perceptions and activities of leaders and church planters from the countries of Nigeria and Togo.[1] I collected a total of 62 interviews using an interview guide to narrow the research questions in order to obtain information on the participants' perceptions of mission theology. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to produce texts. Afterward, I analyzed these narratives using a qualitative data analytic approach leading to multiple coding sessions and descriptive labels, which allowed important theoretical concepts to emerge (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 2008, Glaser and Strauss 1967).

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This article discusses one of the major themes that developed from the study: the Spirit's role in Pentecostal missions. Elements of the major theme of the Spirit's role in mission include localizing Pentecostal value systems, identity formation, pneumatological power, a passionate compulsion to evangelize, and localized ecclesiastical belonging. These elements reflect the Spirit's infusion of a missional DNA within Pentecostal mission practitioners. Their activities reflect the values inherent in Spirit-empowered missions while their narratives allow their voices to emerge as a comprehension of the Spirit's role in these mission activities.

Leader and Church Planter Interview Demographics

In 2011, I spent six months on the campus of the West Africa Advanced School of Theology (WAAST) in Lomé, Togo researching church multiplication. The central research focus set out to determine the factors influencing the growth of the African Assemblies of God (AAG) in Nigeria and Togo since 1990. The first phase of research focused on leaders, involving 11 participants holding positions of leadership in national, regional, and institutional contexts (Table 1).

Table 1. Leader Interview Demographics.

Organization	Position	Age	Ed.	Gender
AAG-Nigeria	General Secretary	60	DMin	M
AG US World Missions	Former West Africa Area Director	63	MA	M
AAG-Burkina Faso	Former General Superintendent	65	MA	M
AAG-Burkina Faso	General Secretary	55	DMin	M
AAG-Nigeria	District Missions Director	50	PhD	M
AG US World Missions	Area Director - West Africa	48	MA	M
AG US World Missions	President West Africa Advanced School of Theology	70	DMin	F
AAG-Nigeria	District Superintendent	55	PhD	M
AAG-Togo	General Superintendent	68	MA	M
AG US World Missions	Former Regional Director-Africa	77	MA	M
AAG-Togo	Assistant General Secretary	50	MA	M

Table 1 lists 4 Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) leaders and 7 African Assemblies of God (AAG) leaders as participants for a total of ten males and one female. All participants have graduate degrees, and five possess terminal degrees. The median age of the group is sixty years. Five of the AAG leaders hold additional leadership responsibilities as educators, continental leaders for the AAG, or as leaders in the World AG fellowship.

The second phase concentrated on a convenience sampling of church planters; 28 Nigerian church planters (CPA), and 23 Togolese church planters (CPF). The church planters interviewed represent multiple church planting experiences. The youngest church planter was 28 years of age while the oldest was 65 years of age. They reported a total of 1,687 churches planted in the course of their ministry. As part of the interview process, each church planter gave a description of themselves, their conversion experience, and their most current ministry.

Table 2. Self-Descriptive Titles

Self-Description of Church Planters						
Layman	Pastor	Evangelist or Missionary	District Superintendent	District Leader	National Church Superintendent	National Church Leader
1	19	18	4	3	2	4

Table 2 shows that thirty-seven percent of the church planters described their ministry as local church pastors who give birth to new churches. Thirty-five percent labeled their ministry as evangelists or missionaries with a priority focus on the unreached. Twenty percent listed functions as district and national church (NC) leaders with a primary ministry focused on leading and influencing others toward mission and church planting. The lone layperson was the president of a national AAG lay evangelistic association. Evangelists and missionaries, however, plant the majority of churches (Table 3).

Table 3. Church Planting by Ministry Position

Church Planting by Ministry Position

Lay Leader	Pastor	Evangelist Missionary	District Leader	NC Leader	Academic
330	230	569	256	198	104

Individuals in the study self-designated as evangelists and missionaries plant the majority of churches, accounting for approximately 38 percent of the total. In addition, the lay leader and district leaders account for a large number of churches planted. This denotes the importance of laity in church planting processes and the engagement of leadership in active field ministry.
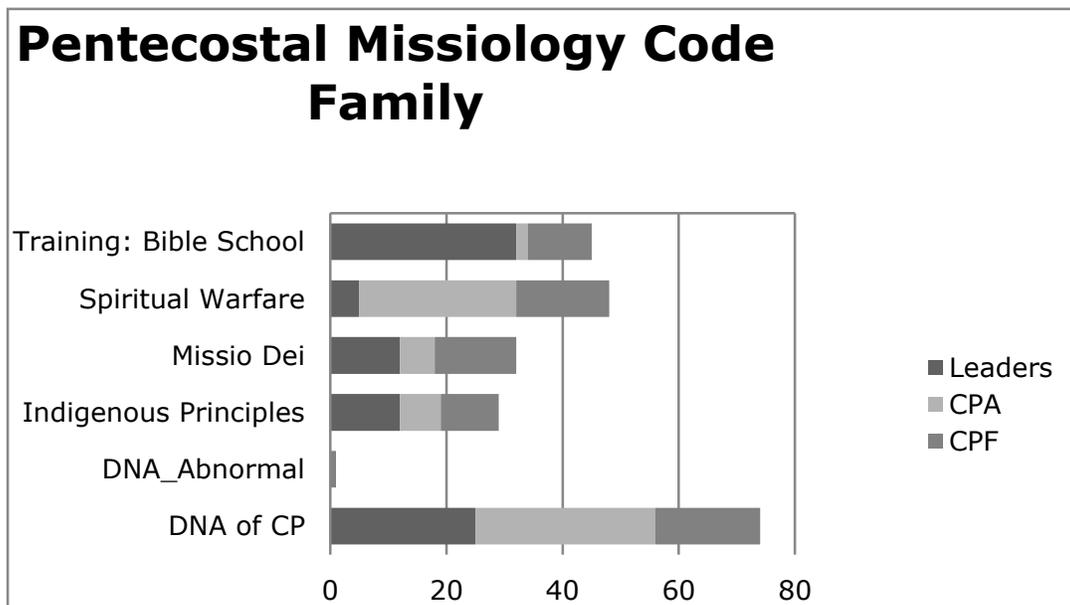
Narratives of The Spirit's Role in Mission

God's purposes find expression in people's stories reflective of their relationship to God, living out spiritual beliefs through the shared events of human existence. Pentecostalism is a shared experience through which people express their own beliefs within its narratives. Robert Menzies reminds Pentecostals that reading the story of Pentecost is to recognize it as one's own story (Menzies 2013). In the metanarrative of Scripture, the AG in West Africa identify themselves as people expressing belief through micronarratives, where they attribute meaning to their story in relation to the biblical story (Goldingay 1993, Thomas 1999). For the Christian, "God is a storytelling God … the creator of story, and it is in the context of story that God calls" (Thomas 1999, 225). A shared story becomes "implied theology" and "involves the possibility of there happening to us that which the story had the power to make happen to its audience" (Goldingay 1993, 6-7). Shared experiential narratives cohere with the history of the early apostles and New Testament church recorded in the Book of Acts (Menzies 2013). The biblical story, personal history, and tradition provide a consistent narrative expressing belief in missional praxis (Adeney 2009). A West African Pentecostal narrative of the Spirit's role in mission features missional lifestyles and theological emphasis best framed within the perceptions and activities of African leaders and church planters.

Implied theological value permeates CPA and CPF narratives of conversion, evangelism, and church planting. While interview narratives did not directly question issues of missional

theology, beliefs are extrapolated from the interview material. An interpretative analysis reconstructs local understanding of the Spirit's role in Pentecostal mission, developing further into theoretical dimensions. As interviewees related their experiences, codes received labels relative to a specific aspect of mission theology. Table 4 displays code frequency in the category family by leaders (LD), CPA, and the CPF. Each element demonstrates some level of attributive value to that particular code.

Table 4. Coding Frequency of Pentecostal Missiology

Pentecostal Missiology Code Family

Category	Leaders	CPA	CPF
Training: Bible School			
Spiritual Warfare			
Missio Dei			
Indigenous Principles			
DNA_Abnormal			
DNA of CP			

Several themes emerge from the category "Pentecostal Missiology" (Table 4). This view enables an interpretive understanding of the Spirit's role in Pentecostal mission perceived in the narratives of AAG church planters. Developed theoretically, dimensions materialize that include the implantation of a missional DNA.

The Spirit's Role: Implanting a Missional DNA

An essential role of the Spirit in mission emerging in this research revolves around the implantation of a missional DNA as an impetus for witness (Allen 1913). Spirit-empowered practitioners describe church planting as the basic nature of the African church to reproduce. This is a normative mode of being coalescing around the idea of an pneumatic ecclesial

ontology, that the church naturally reproduces because its organic existence, infused by the Spirit, is procreative (Schwarz 1996), and that "churches are by nature and by definition reproductive" (Murray 2001, 60). Similarly, the Early Church grew in the context of the Roman world through what Roland Allen calls a "certain natural instinct" to witness, which the "Spirit converts … into a longing for the conversion of others which is indeed divine in its source and character" (Allen 1962, 9). Among the interviewees, transformation produces elements of a pneumatic disposition to witness and plant churches. The Spirit's role in their mission activity surfaces with a profound inner transformation in the convert's life, which compels a passion for others toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. A missional DNA, pneumatically originated, compels a passionate evangelism in order to gather converts into Christ's community. The Spirit's initial role in Pentecostal mission commences a Christocentric alteration within a new convert's life that translates into evangelistic activity.

<div style="text-align:center">The Spirit's Role: Identity Formation</div>

The Spirit's role in mission among interviewees begins with individual conversion and new forms of identity. West African identity is a multi-faceted social construct with several dimensions. Born-again Christians undergo an identity reconstruction that brings about "radical conversion, a transformative experience in which a person gives his or her life to Jesus Christ" (Van Klinken 2012, 216). Being born-again "is seen as a spiritual status as well as a form of social identity … that demands radically new patterns of behavior" (Akrong 2011, 31). According to Nicolette Manglos, the Pentecostal conversion experience entails a new moral identity. In her qualitative study in central Africa among AG and Catholic youth, she describes this new identity as the result of both "personal decision-making as well as divine intervention" (Manglos 2010, 412). Further, "it is understood as a moment of transformation in moral practice rather than in belief primarily, which begins a relationship of reciprocal, interweaving agency between the convert and God" (Manglos 2010, 417). The sociological understanding of the born-again experience as a transformative moral lifestyle fails, however, to consider the experiential and pneumatological that translates into missional activism of Spirit-filled converts.

The interviewees in this research demonstrate a profound sense of dissonance with the previous social affiliations and a new sense of resonance with the immanent God through the Spirit's presence. Conversion, therefore, instills a "discontinuity" with a world alienated from

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Christ (Smith 2010, 35). The believer's new identity recognizes "to be a Pentecostal is to incorporate all past identities in the construction of a new identity that is both local and global" (Marshall-Fratani 1998, 284-85). "The social grounds for creating bonds—blood, common pasts, neighbourhood ties, language—are forsworn for the new bond of the brother or sister in Christ" (Marshall-Frantani 1998, 286).

The severing of former consanguineous networks is a normal traumatic event of conversion in the West African context. Leaders and church planters in this study report conversion experiences that created new modes of belonging. A leader reports

> When I was converted … my own brothers, my father and my mother, they deserted me. They told me I was no longer their son and brother. I was literally chased from the home … when I converted to Christ, they didn't want to hear anything from me and they chased me away. As far as our ancestral land, they've refused to let me have any or to even come around it (LD-11).[2]

One individual describes a chance encounter with an Assemblies of God church that led to both his conversion and ostracization from family. As he passed by the church, he decided to enter. He states, "In that evening service I gave my life to Christ and started with the Lord … when I got converted my father drove me away from the house because of my conversion. So after, I used the church premises as my house" (CPA-31). Many share a similar story of persecution (CPF-19, CPA-30, CPA-32, CPA-41) and severed relationships (CPA-48, CPF-21) that leads to a new sense of community belonging in the Pentecostal church.

This study demonstrates that conversion involves a separation from past affiliations within a tradition providing no means of truth, and no assurance of protection for this world or the next (Tippett 1977). One scholar suggests this conversionary process is where the convert "makes a complete break with the past" as a repudiation of personal sinful history, behavior, and traditional allegiances (Meyer 1998, 323-25). These individuals find a more efficacious solution through the conversion experience and make an individual decision to follow God, leaving all they know to become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).[3] One Spirit-filled church planter aptly illustrates this. This person cares for children abandoned by their parents after conversion. He notes, "To me that is the difference with Pentecostals. When you come to know Christ, you have a father, you have a mother, in that place where you worship. If nobody cares for you, you run to the church and they will care for you" (CPA-48).

The Holy Spirit, through conversion, enables a new sense of belonging and community within the Pentecostal family. "Pentecostalism provides new networks, both spiritual and material, which extend beyond local, ethnic, regional, and even class considerations. At the local or national level, these networks … provide an overarching sense of belonging and common purpose" (Marshall-Fratani 1998, 284). This results in experiential belonging through the Spirit's power that transcends the old order's incapacity to effect change.

Through conversion, the believer develops new modes of being as a reordering and reorienting the self (Austin-Broos 2003). This reorientation involves a "new identity, a newly inscribed communal self, defined through the gaze of others" (Austin-Broos 2003, 2). This is conversion as a passage that entails a "quest for human belonging," "new forms of relatedness," and a "quest to be at home" (Austin-Broos 2003, 2).

Pentecostal conversion is more than just a moral transformation, as Manglos postulated (Manglos 2010). Rather, the efficacy of Christ and the pneumatological-experiential supersedes former allegiances and beliefs systems. One respondent states this in concrete terms.

> Back in my younger days … when the community had a juju festival people would come from far and near, but today nobody is interested in juju in my village because the gospel has taken root in the hearts of men. The reason they are all repenting is because they have seen darkness before. Now they have seen light and they are turning to the light … and their lives are transformed…Juju priests are turning to Christ and putting aside their fetishes. They put it down and say, "I'm ready to follow Jesus" (CPA-44).

This description of conversion signifies the essence of the Spirit's work as an essential aspect of pneumatological empowerment in mission theology through missional witness.

The Spirit's primary role in mission theology accentuates Christ as the solution for every human dilemma. In many instances, traditional Christianity answered African questions with abstract propositions, proving powerless to provide solutions, leading converts to revert to traditional beliefs (Meyer 1999, Okorocha 1992, Togarasei 2007, Werbner 2011). For AAG church planters, "salvation … involves not just repentance through the confession of personal sins but also the renunciation of … participation in 'demonic' cultural practices" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004, 391). Pentecostalism in general and the AG in particular address African worldview issues concretely and experientially. One church planter states,

> People are weary with animism, weary with propositions of truth … they want something concrete … People love mysticism and … want to know these mysteries for themselves … When one is always trapped by a gri-gri, and he believes that this gri-gri is more powerful, stronger than the other gri-gri, then there is always one sorcerer's power tested against

another. It becomes tiring. When that person sees power, the work of the Holy Spirit in working miracles, miraculous healings, this changes their lives and people give themselves to that. People will come, thirsty for this power which heals, which keeps, protects, and fills their lives with those things to which they aspire. So, that is why people are attracted to Pentecostalism (CPF-21).[4]

This coheres with Cyril Okorocha's description of Nigerian Igbo culture as thoroughly communal, pragmatic in religious choices, and dynamically power-centered in religious convictions (Okorocha 1992). Pentecostalism answers the African and Igbo worldview questions through experiences of the Spirit that bring God near and provide healing, protection, and answers to prayer. Manifestations of spiritual power, healings, and deliverances serve to demonstrate the preference for Pentecostal answers over other solutions. Pneumatological demonstrations of power serve to authenticate the role of Spirit in missions through training in the Word.

The Spirit's Role: Localizing Pentecostal Value Systems

The Spirit's role in Pentecostal missions relates directly to the localization of Pentecostal value systems accomplished through training toward empowered ministry. Training inculcates a distinct pneumocentric mission theology through the Bible schools and other institutions. Training provides the functional foundation for church planters to be validated in their belief systems in ministry practice. It legitimizes proclamation of the gospel and localizes AAG value systems into an African Pentecostal worldview. Training institutions within the ecclesial contexts reflect this localization process. Early pioneer missionaries committed their efforts to training with the aim of producing self-governing leaders with Pentecostal value systems (Lingenfelter 1992).

Respondents believe that training comprises an important component of AAG mission theology. The educational environment emphasizes *missio Dei* with a Spirit-empowered focus on evangelism and church planting (Bosch 1980, 1991, Guynes and Guynes 1986).[5] Leaders declare an AAG mission theology when they remember that missionaries instructed them, "teach new believers how to read the Bible" (LD-3). Further, the declaration follows that "The Assemblies of God is three things; The Word of God, water baptism, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit" (LD-3). The AAG church focuses on the Word and Spirit empowerment, which unites believers as the people of God, the community of the King, and Spirit-filled agents of the Kingdom in

Africa. Water baptism is a public testimony of belonging to a charismatic fraternity, which is related to the African context of collective community (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, Idowu 1975, Lingenfelter and Mayers 1986, Mbiti 1969). New converts receive extensive discipleship training before taking this important step as a missional event and sign. Subsequently, the Spirit empowers believers as missional community in its "christopraxis" (Anderson 1993). Training localizes the people as word-witness-pneumatological community.

A mission leader explained that *missio Dei* started as a training strategy during the 1990s to strengthen the self-propagating function of the AAG in Africa. He notes, "I would say the emergence a of new focus to bring Africa into full awareness of the concept of *missio Dei* and the great commission, as a sending agency rather than a receiving one, really had its genesis during that period of time" (LD-2). A leader at the West Africa Advanced School of Theology (WAAST) stated that the school's entire curriculum focuses on *missio Dei* and it is not just a mission statement, but all classes and chapel services center activities on it (LD-8). One respondent recalls the import of this training on him personally. Training so impacted his life so from that "same year I started planting churches" (CPF-1). Another respondent says, "For me, my training at the Bible institute and at WAAST contributed many things. And, if you could verify this with pastors … and the influence of this training in the life of pastors, they did not just simply become pastors, but pastors with a missionary vision" (CPF-9). Spirit-empowered evangelism and church planting indoctrinated at WAAST and the Bible institutes reflects a serious experiential learning outcome. Spirit-anointed training serves to mold perceptions that personal-identity reflects a focus and call to church planting. Empowerment follows this calling.

The Spirit's Role: Pneumatological Power

African traditional religions are power-centered. Pentecostals respond to African religious settings by proclaiming Christ and demonstrating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who satisfies a person's inner hunger and provides power for living (Aigbe 1991). Pentecostals accomplish this by emphasizing power encounter, miracles, healings, and exorcisms (Aigbe 1991). They quote biblical texts that underscore Spirit-empowerment (e.g., Joel 2:28-30, Mark 16:15-18, and Acts 1:8). Church planters read God's word literally and claim His promises as authentic responses to African religious aspirations (Jenkins 2006). They expect that power,

signs and wonders, and the miraculous will follow gospel proclamation. One minister declares a strong conviction that,

> The power and strength of occult forces is undeniable … demons exist, sorcery exists … it is a reality. But now Pentecostal churches and the rise of the Assemblies of God has recognized the work of the Holy Spirit … and … became a channel in which ran the power of the Holy Spirit … In that moment, you have supernatural manifestations like healings, miracles, signs and wonders. And when people see that, there are times of evangelization and church planting accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles (CPF-20).

The scriptural promise serves as a reminder of God's power in missional witness.

African church planters share the eschatological convictions of early Pentecostals that God promised to pour out his Spirit in preparation for an end-time urgent mission. One minister speaks of Joel 2:26-28, declaring "truly this is the last day and God is pouring out his Spirit upon all flesh" (CPA-30). Moreover, "The Word of God in Joel 2 says that God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. So the manifestation of the Spirit of God is everywhere today. You see the witchdoctors and what have you … now coming to church" (CPA-38).

Some relate their conversion to a supernatural event. One individual relates how a demonstration of the Spirit brought him into Pentecostalism. He relates how sickness incapacitated his stepsister for months, but "Through the prayer of a missionary and a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, she became well. I was amazed that God did this. So I came to the Pentecostal church and gave my life to Christ. And I developed a quest and thirst for the supernatural" (CPA-43).

Pneumatological power is demonstrated in confrontation with the spiritual forces inherent in the traditional religions. "The deities of African traditional religions have survived in Pentecostal hermeneutics as 'principalities and powers', that is, agents of the devil in the world whose influence on believers must be subdued" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004, 391). When "the Pentecostal comes, there is power encounter … we drive the demons away. Those who are enslaved are now liberated. And you see souls are being saved" (CPA-18). These encounters receive impetus from a pneumatic compulsion with the church planter to see unconverted people saved and gathered into communities.

The Spirit's Role: Passionate Compulsion to Evangelize

Interview transcripts reveal a Spirit-infused passion for the lost. Passion drives the typical church planter to win lost people at any cost and to plant churches in order to gather them into communities. Love and passion follows conversion and Spirit baptism, embedding Pentecostal missiology with Spirit-driven characteristics. Church planters become like first-century believers who "sought to interpenetrate society with the gospel which had had so profound an effect upon them. Christianity for them … affected everything they did and everyone they met" (Green 2004, 17).

From transformational conversion and Spirit empowerment, the church planter seeks reciprocity: to share with others what was received and reproduce the seed from their own experience.

> I was from a family … that was animist. Animists live in darkness. They live in slavery, in sorcery … when you see people dying without Christ, when you see villages blanketed in darkness and all that, you ask yourself if those who have not heard the gospel, if Jesus returns, what will be their fate? That is what will push and motivate you (CPF-24).

Passionate love for people estranged from a living relationship with God comes from a compulsion of the Spirit, propelling church planters toward evangelism. It is a spiritual phenomenon born within a believer that declares, "I have the thirst, I have the hunger … There is an open door for evangelism to those who have given themselves to God. Those of us who have sold ourselves to Him, we are no more our own, He uses us" (CPA-34). They reciprocate, because God "has so blessed me, and my gift is to bless Him by planting a church" (CPF-8). This tenacity to pursue people without Christ compels the church planter. As they start new churches, empowerment facilitates efforts to make Christ accessible and localize the church as belonging to its context.

The Spirit's Role: Localized Ecclesiastical Belonging

The Spirit's role in Pentecostal mission positions the local faith community as a vivid portrait of abundant life within the sociocultural environment. In Togo and Nigeria the Spirit empowers the local church to belong. Pneumatological empowerment enables victory in a confrontational encounter, meets the African need for concrete answers to spiritual questions, and tangibly demonstrates Christ as the immanent representation of the transcendent God who is

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experientially near, empathetic, and accessible. This is most clearly represented in the process of planting churches, represented especially in rural unreached contexts. Analysis of church planting narratives demonstrates a straightforward process that normally involves two steps. First, land must be secured for a church as a primary step toward Spirit-empowered belonging.

Land as localized belonging

In many interviews, church planters state that prior to starting a church, land is either purchased or negotiated. This is a common theme in the church planting process among respondents (LD-3, LD-7, LD-9, LD-11, CPF-13, CPF-14, CPF-15, CPF-20, CPF-22, CPF-24, CPF-25, CPA-30, CPA-32, CPA-35, CPA-36). Land acquisition is a pragmatic necessity as it prevents antagonists from expelling the property inhabitants and insures the permanent occupation of the location. In rural areas, land is also much cheaper, and the ability to plant one or more churches is much higher in these contexts compared to more expensive urban environments.

Land acquisition in the Nigerian and Togolese contexts designates that the church will become appropriate to the community and localized as belonging to that place and community. When the chief or elders grant property rights, they give recognition to the group that it belongs. Property acquisition denotes local citizenship, a "recognition of political identity as belonging" (Lund 2011, 71-72). Land involves both political and social identity centered on collective community relationship and localized citizenship (Lund 2011, 73). When land is secured, the church gains a social identity as belonging to a specific place. The church cannot be unlawfully persecuted because it possesses a political identity recognized by the legitimate village authority. This signifies a Pentecostal mission theology of church as belonging, local, related, and situated. The second step, securing a place of belonging, follows close behind.

***Apatam* as proximity and accessibility**

Francophone missional workers often use a local Togolese word *apatam* describing their efforts to secure a gathering place. This word relates to the structure erected at the site of a new church plant and means a shelter or meeting place (Lafage 1985). The *apatam* is the second element after land that a church planter must secure. Obtaining a place to meet is a necessity and

integral for gathering new converts into charismatic community. A CPF states that when he visited a place, "I negotiate with the village chief and say, 'chief, help me and give us a piece of land.' And he gives it to us. Then the first thing … we make a provisional place to meet … we immediately construct an *apatam*" (CPF-5). The implication of the *apatam* leads to the relevance of structure to Spirit-empowered belonging (Figure 1).

Figure 1. An example of an *apatam* on the campus of WAAST

Ubiquity best describes *Apatams* in Lomé, Togo. Almost every modern home displays one prominently, while neighborhoods and markets share *apatams*. Informants depict this structure as a "meeting place" or a place to "welcome guests." In this space, families "come together" to "relax and be with friends." While land signifies belonging to a particular place, the *apatam* represents proximity and accessibility to the pneumatic community. Land and *apatam* represents two distinct elements of Pentecostal mission theology as localized belonging in the Nigerian and Togolese sociocultural context.

(1) Proximal church planting is one aspect of the Spirit's role in Pentecostal mission theology. Proximity brings the message of Jesus near in the African awareness of community. The land accentuates belonging to a place while the *apatam* speaks to a cultural issue of being a place of belonging. There is a circle of connectivity to the village, the tribe, the local community, and in turn, giving that community a place to connect in fellowship, worship, and relationship. Bosch spoke of this when he noted that the church in mission needs "to retrieve togetherness,

interdependence, 'symbiosis'" (Bosch 1991, 362). He advocated an "epistemology of participation" and "intersubjective existence … and of the Christian mission as building a community of those who share a common destiny" (Bosch 1991, 362). This mirrors African community and collectivism.

(2) Connectivity through land and *apatam* speaks of accessible church planting. The church, through the Spirit, is near people. Ecclesiastically, God draws near in the neighborhoods, the villages, and the apartment complexes. No matter one's geographical space, the local church remains easily accessible. The image of the *apatam* relates to nearness, togetherness, and the bond of family and faith through the kinship of Pentecostal community. One church planter explains, "I would like the churches to be near people. So, when I walk a kilometer or two and there is not a local church, then I have the conviction that I should plant a local church there" (CPF-14). "Church planting … is the saturation of new churches in order to win souls, and that is to plant churches in proximity to people" (CPF-27). This suggests that "It's a matter of making the church accessible" (CPA-31). For the church planter and the believer, this ecclesiastic proximity communicates that "God is closer than the village. He's closer to people. He's closer to us" (CPA-32). Further, "when we plant a church we try to create a sense of belonging so that the bond with the church is strengthened in a community. So we do this to plant a church that is part of the community" (CPA-39). Accessible churches bring God near and enable a sense of belonging so the people can assimilate as part of the community.

Conclusion

The interview narratives suggest that the Spirit's role in mission theology constitutes multiple elements that include a missional DNA, localizing Pentecostal value systems, identity transformation, pneumatological power, passionate compulsion to evangelize, and localized belonging. Pentecostalism enables belonging through the power of the Spirit, which meets the aspirations of the African for answers to life's supernatural dilemmas and the daily need for power to overcome. Answers are concrete rather than abstract. Healings, signs and wonders, and miraculous answers to prayer, are all aspects of the Spirit's role in Pentecostal missions. Church planters experience a God who is close to them, can be accessed, and demonstrates concern with people trapped in dark religious traditions. Churches planted are near, accessible, and relevant to the context because the Spirit gives the new church the power to belong locally. It empowers the

local church to become a part of the community by belonging to a place and being a place of belonging.

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Notes

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[1] A thorough examination of the interview and other qualitative data can be found at Stephen Jester, "Empowered Belonging through Identity Transformation." Ph.D. diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2014.

[2] LD, CPF and CPA with numbers refer to the author's interviews and their respective classification retained by the author.

[3] Tippett refers to the born-again conversion experience as "innovation" (Tippett 1977, 207).

[4] Gri-gri and juju are synonymous terms that have to deal with amulets or charms.

[5] The preponderance of CPF and LD responses to the importance of training, as opposed to the CPA group, is possibly a result of the influence of context. The majority of interviews with all groups were conducted on the campus of WAAST and the majority of CPF interviewees were graduates of WAAST. The sub-code "*missio Dei*" may also reflect the influence of context.