

“AUREL VLAICU” UNIVERSITY OF ARAD  
FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:  
FIELD OF THEOLOGY  
INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SCHOOL

**EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT:  
TOWARDS A PENTECOSTAL MISSIOLOGY IN  
MALAGASY CONTEXT**

ABSTRACT

Supervisors

Prof. Dr. CORNELIU CONSTANTINEANU †

Prof. Dr. MARCEL V. MĂCELARU

PhD Candidate :

ŞAITIŞ MARCEL

Arad

2022

# ***1.1. CONTENTS OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Thesis title, contribution to the scientific study of theology and research framework

Focus and delimitations of the thesis

Motivation for the topic of research

Definition of empowerment and specifically the empowerment of the Spirit

Evolution of the concept ‘Empowerment of the Spirit’ in holiness Protestantism and in Pentecostalism

Content of the thesis

Methodologies used in the research

## **CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW ON LITERATURE ON THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT**

1.1. Empowerment of the Spirit in missiological literature

1.2. Empowerment of the Spirit in Pentecostal writings

1.3. Empowerment in the mission collection ‘Regnum Books International’

1.4. Conclusions

## **CHAPTER 2 – MALAGASY CONTEXT: ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT**

- 2.1. The historico-political context of Madagascar
- 2.2. The social and cultural context of Madagascar
- 2.3. The religious context of Madagascar – The main Malagasy religions
- 2.4. Renewal movements of the Holy Spirit in Madagascar
- 2.5. Conclusions

## **CHAPTER 3 – EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT IN BIBLICAL TESTIMONY**

- 3.1. Empowerment of the Spirit in the Old Testament
- 3.2. Empowerment of the Spirit in the life and work of the Savior Jesus Christ
- 3.3. Empowerment of the Spirit at Pentecost
- 3.4. Empowerment of the Spirit in the life of the early Church
- 3.5. Empowerment of the Spirit in Paul's life and theology
- 3.6. Conclusions

## **CHAPTER 4 – THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT AND THE HOLISTIC MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

- 4.1. A statement that needs to be explained: “If everything is mission, nothing is mission”
- 4.2. Paradigms of holistic mission in missiology
- 4.3. Holistic mission and the development of a new paradigm
- 4.4. Conclusions: Towards a holistic Pentecostal mission

## **CHAPTER 5 – CONCRETE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

- 5.1. Empowerment of the Spirit in the general Pentecostal missionary context
- 5.2. Empowerment of the Spirit in the context of proclamation of the gospel
- 5.3. Empowerment of the Spirit in the micro-social context
- 5.4. Empowerment of the Spirit in the macro-social context
- 5.5. Conclusions on a holistic empowerment of the Spirit

## **CHAPTER 6 – CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSIOLOGY EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY**

## **SPIRIT: THE ‘CONSTELLATION’ OF THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT**

6.1. The Pentecostal phenomenon: Reason for pneumatological investigation in other Christian traditions

6.2. The Pentecostal phenomenon: Stages in consolidating missiology and theology empowered by the Spirit

6.3. The Pentecostal phenomenon: Characteristics of a missiology empowered by the Holy Spirit

6.4. Characteristics of a missiology empowered by the Holy Spirit

*6.4.1. The mission empowered by the Spirit is experiential and relational*

*6.4.2. The mission empowered by the Spirit is biblical, Christological, and trinitarian*

*6.4.3. The mission empowered by the Spirit is motivated by eschatological urgency*

*6.4.4. The mission empowered by the Spirit is dynamic: evangelistic and cross-cultural*

*6.4.5. The mission empowered by the Spirit is a holistic work*

*6.4.6. The mission empowered by the Spirit is miraculous*

*6.4.7. The mission empowered by the Spirit is contextual and indigenous*

*6.4.8. The mission empowered by the Spirit is ecumenical*

6.5. Conclusions and challenges of a mission empowered by the Spirit

## **CHAPTER 7 – TOWARDS A MISSIOLOGY EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT IN MALAGASY CONTEXT**

7.1. The ‘constellation’ of the empowerment of the Spirit on which we base the practical model

7.2. The Assemblies of God Church – a model empowered by the Holy Spirit in Madagascar

7.3. Methodology used in researching the empowerment of the Spirit in the Assemblies of God Church (AOG)

7.4. The research process

7.5. Assessing the mission of the AOG Church in Madagascar

7.6. Graphic representation of the mission of the AOG Church in Madagascar in the form of the Missiology ‘Circle of the empowerment of the Spirit’

*7.6.1. Strengths of the mission of the AOG Church*

*7.6.2. Weaknesses of the mission of the AOG Church*

7.7. Towards a Malagasy mission empowered by the Spirit which is balanced, relevant and vibrant

**GENERAL CONCLUSIONS ON THE THESIS  
'EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT: TOWARDS A  
PENTECOSTAL MISSIOLOGY IN THE  
MALAGASY CONTEXT'**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Books and collective volumes*

*Studies / Articles / Online Resources*

*Encyclopedias / Dictionaries*

**APPENDIX**

*Evaluation questionnaire of a Pentecostal mission  
empowered by the Spirit*

## ***1.2. Motivation for the topic of research***

I started working on this thesis under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Corneliu Constantineanu, who encouraged me to research a missiological topic that would be useful to me, that I would like to know more about and even develop, a topic which would represent me as a missionary in Madagascar for nine years, together with my family.

Since one of our missionary activities gave me the opportunity to reach the rainforests of South-East Madagascar quite often, at the meeting point of several Malagasy ethnic groups, I decided that the topic of the research should be the empowerment of the Spirit in the Malagasy context. I understood that in those places (Manakara, Vondrozo, Vohipeno, Mananjary, Ikongo, and Farafangana regions), an animistic context, it was not easy to proclaim the gospel, and the messengers were often met with curses of the witchdoctors, who were part of the leadership of those villages, governed by chiefs (*mpanjaka*). These kinds of pressures were felt on a



spiritual level by myself, my family and the team(s) with whom I visited people living in villages that were hard-to-reach. I also saw negative and unusual effects in everyday life after our mission trips, which confirmed that the spiritual world, unseen and unknown to me, manifests itself in personal attacks in the seen natural life. This made me want to know more about being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

I noticed the relationship between the spiritual and physical world in a positive way as well. In our evangelistic and social work, where we partner with Malagasy pastors, we would proclaim the gospel and pray for people. Sometimes they were instantly healed (even of blindness, deafness, muteness, or other diseases), or freed from the evil spiritual powers (demons) that kept them sick or drugged after receiving treatment from some of the traditional healers in the villages. There was a greater power than us in sharing the gospel, and we realized that the Spirit of God manifested in people's lives in the way they knew best, that of the spirit. The Holy Spirit healed people, transformed lives, made God real in their lives,

and made Jesus Christ the Savior and strong King of their hearts, stronger than the spirits that had dominated and bonded them in fear all their lives.

### ***1.3. In search of the ‘right\* path’ in a land of many roads***

Because the theology of the Person of the Holy Spirit is so vast, I have lost my way several times in my research, failing to remain focused on my topic. But my good supervisor, Prof. Corneliu Constantineanu, managed to guide me back on my path and topic, opening my eyes to how research is done properly and to how to be faithful to the topic until the end. For that I am enormously grateful. Then, after his unexpected death, painful for us all who were mentored in one way or another by him, I was accompanied in my studies by Prof. Dr. Marcel V. Măcelaru, who, through his clear advice, personal guidance and encouragement, helped me reach my destination.

As I began to do research, I realized that the specific subject of the empowerment of the Spirit

remained fairly unexplored, despite the fact that many theologians lingered on the general subject of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The study of the subject of the empowerment of the Spirit became more prevalent over the last decades, because it represents the heart of the missionary work of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. Pentecostal theology is based primarily on the book of Acts<sup>1</sup>, so the promise given to the disciples by Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, in Acts 1:8 is one that the Pentecostal Church considers very relevant today:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8, NIV)

#### ***1.4. Definition of empowerment and specifically the empowerment of the Spirit***

When we speak of empowerment, we usually mean two parts or two entities: one that has power over an object

---

<sup>1</sup> Bradley Truman Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodernism Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact*, Doctoral Thesis on Pentecostal theology, Pretoria, University of South Africa, November 2007, p. 38.

or a territory, and the other that receives authority from the strongest to do or accomplish something in that territory. In this thesis we look at definitions of empowerment in terms of administrative occurrences and work our way towards the spiritual topic, the empowerment of the Spirit.

Macmillan Dictionary defines the word ‘empower’ / ‘to empower’ as an act of giving someone more trust or control, making them feel stronger and more confident. The meaning also extends to the act of giving a person or an organization the authority to do something.<sup>2</sup> Nicola Denham Lincoln and other researchers who have studied the meaning of empowerment as part of new concepts in management define it as authorizing and / or licensing an idea or an institution by a much higher authority. They find the first record of this word in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in a book by Hamon L’Estrange, called *The Reign of King Charles*,

---

<sup>2</sup> The definition of the term ‘empower’ in the *Macmillan Dictionary Blog*, at <https://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/empower>. Accessed on 10 June 2020.

in which he is empowered (authorized, licensed) by the Pope, through a letter, to build a college.<sup>3</sup>

Theologically speaking, researchers who have studied God's empowerment define it in a number of ways. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, in the article "You Shall Receive Power: Empowerment in Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity" highlights the origin of empowerment in the word 'power', which refers to the ability to perform certain tasks and to achieve certain goals.<sup>4</sup> "Being empowered means having resources or the ability to achieve certain goals and / or do some things that others cannot do, or it is impossible for them to accomplish without access to these sources."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Nicola Denham Lincoln, Cheryl Travers, Peter Achers, and Adrian Wilkinson, "The Meaning of Empowerment: the interdisciplinary etymology of a new management concept", in *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia Blackwall Publishing, 2002, p. 3. Griffith Research Online: Griffith University, Queensland, Australia, at <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2370.00087>.

<sup>4</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "You Shall Receive Power: Empowerment in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity", in Wonsuk Ma *et al.* (editors), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, vol. 20, Regnum Books International, 2014, p. 46-47.

<sup>5</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, "You Shall Receive Power", p. 46-47.

For Frank D. Macchia, another Pentecostal theologian, the definition of the empowerment of the Spirit is connected to the power of testimony (Acts 1:8) which the Holy Spirit gives to believers. “The church is empowered to live its living testimony in the life of the community, in its inspired proclamation, and in its many ministries in the Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> Leon J. Wood, in his book *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, uses the concept ‘empowerment of the Spirit’ and defines it in the relationship between God’s commandment and the actions of certain Old Testament individuals who act on behalf of God’s people. The empowerment of the Spirit, in his vision, refers to a special action of the Holy Spirit to “accomplish certain tasks assigned to them.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the Christian life context, as we understand from the book of the Acts, it is not the apostles who are the main heroes, but the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal theologian Stanley M. Horton states, “The Holy Ghost

---

<sup>6</sup> Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2006, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, Eugene, Orange, Wipf and Stock, 1998, p. 53-55.

gives direction, not the apostles.”<sup>8</sup> The apostles are the main visible characters who continue Jesus Christ’s mission of redemption by their proclamations in Jerusalem and the other known continents of their time, but the main character in the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit, the unseen hero. The Holy Spirit empowers, heals, frees from demons, sanctifies converted people, unifies the Church of Christ, gives gifts (*karismata*), and prepares the Church for Christ’s return.

### ***1.5. The purpose of this thesis***

Considering the definitions of empowerment, and especially the way empowerment is seen in the book of Acts, this thesis is an invitation to theological reflection on this pioneering theme, the empowerment of the Spirit, but which, well explored, explained and understood, leads to viable solutions and practical applications for the current crises in churches and society. At the same time, it leads to a broader understanding and a more comprehensive

---

<sup>8</sup> Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*, Springfield, Missouri, Gospel Publishing House, 1976, p. 136.

application of empowerment of the Spirit in the missionary work.

In the Church of Jesus Christ, empowerment of the Spirit leads to saving souls. Throughout its history, the Pentecostal movement has seen itself as people called to save souls. Experiencing Pentecost through baptism in / with the Holy Spirit, the Church understood that God sent Jesus Christ to save the world from sin, giving them eternal life as a gift. So, the most important message they proclaimed was the message of Pentecost: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38, NIV). The Church saw that the most important thing for the human being is the salvation of the soul, forgiveness of sins, and freedom from guilt.

In community and society, empowerment also means the beneficial impact of people led by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ calls all Christians, empowered by the Spirit, to be witnesses (Acts 1:8), His ambassadors, the salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-



14), visible and giving flavor to the world, just as He was the Light of the world (John 8:12). From this position, Christians, because they are empowered by the Holy Spirit, not only preach the gospel to the poor but also bring about transformation to the world in which they live. If, in the beginning, the Pentecostal movement was largely made up of the world's poor populations, gradually the Pentecostals experienced upward social mobility, many of them reaching not only the middle class of society,<sup>9</sup> but even the political class, as it is happening in Latin American countries, like the example of the president of Brazil, Jair Messias Bosonaro.<sup>10</sup> But in Orthodox pneumatology, the emphasis is on the involvement of the Spirit of God in the creation of the world and in bringing order to chaos, in creating and maintaining life. The Spirit of God also sustains life. Do we not need leaders in whose lives God's values reign and who are empowered by the

---

<sup>9</sup> Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in Spirit: Toward a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology*, Oxford, Regnum Books International, 2010, p.10.

<sup>10</sup> 'Jair Bolsonaro', on *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, edited on 21 May 2022, at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jair\\_Bolsonaro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jair_Bolsonaro). Accessed on 23 May 2022.

Holy Spirit? What solutions would they offer to today's society and how beneficial it would be for all walks of life to seek the light from above, just as the Spirit of God was in Joseph! (See Gen. 41:38-44). They could manage the crises cities, districts, regions and countries are facing. They could look for answers that come from the wisdom of God.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is related to the understanding of this concept of the empowerment of the Spirit and applying it both within the Church and in society. People filled with the Spirit of God see deeper, farther, wider, and more visionary, for they have both the eyes of the Kingdom and the wisdom of the Kingdom. They must not only save people from sin, but transform societies, making them better places where God lives and where His values become fundamental values for the society.

### ***1.6. The 'thesis' of this thesis***

The Pentecostal Church, like the other Christian traditions, is involved in God's mission (*Missio Dei*).

God's mission begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation with "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will reign." This means that God is working to redeem people of all nations, all over the earth, and also to renew the creation. Although the Pentecostal view on this subject is generally premillennial, the Pentecostal movement is waiting for God to fulfill these promises. While waiting, the church is mission-oriented, and honored to be invited into God's mission and to join Him in the harvest (John 4:35-38).

The thesis of this work refers to the fact that both in the book of Acts, in the Apostolic Church, and in the Pentecostal Revival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which started in Los Angeles, Azusa Street, there were some characteristics (values) that made the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to transform societies and make a strong impact in the world, wherever the Pentecostal movement reached. The Church of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, has been strongly missionary, transforming the societies where they passed and settled.

That is why we searched both in the Holy Scriptures, especially in the book of Acts, and in the Pentecostal missiology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to see which those characteristics, values or ‘stars’ were that made the Pentecostal movement be such a dynamic, powerful and transformational organism. We found these values or bright ‘stars’ and placed them in a ‘constellation of the empowerment of the Spirit’, based on the experience of Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be counterfeited, because it is one where God is sovereign. However, God wants to reach every generation and renew it. Knowing these factors (characteristics, ‘stars’, values) that lead to this renewal, and knowing the perfect model, Pentecostal church leaders who believe in these values can lead their churches towards the ideal model by making strategic decisions for their communities.

We grouped the characteristics of the Pentecostal mission into eight fundamental elements, as can be seen in the image below.

Here are the eight characteristics of the Pentecostal missiology empowered by the Spirit:



1. *Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, which makes the Pentecostal mission an experiential and relational one; 2. *The Holy Bible*, which makes the Pentecostal mission a biblical, Christ-centric, and trinitarian mission; 3. *The return of Jesus Christ as King*, which makes the Pentecostal mission be motivated by the eschatological or apocalyptic urgency; 4. *Evangelism and cross-cultural missions*, which makes the Pentecostal mission a dynamic

one; 5. *Miracles, healings and deliverances of demons*, which make the Pentecostal mission a miraculous one; 6. *Micro-social and macro-social* involvement, along with evangelism, which make the Pentecostal mission a holistic one, that transforms societies; 7. *The Gospel in other cultures through cross-cultural missions*, which makes the Pentecostal mission contextual and indigenous; 8. *A space for dialogue with other Christian traditions*, which makes the Pentecostal mission an ecumenical one.

### ***1.7. Context of the thesis development***

Even from the title *Empowered by the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal Missiology in Malagasy Context*, the emerging fields of theology with which we interact to understand and outline this concept are pneumatology, referring to the work and the Person of the Holy Spirit and missiology, referring to the involvement of the Church in God's mission (*Missio Dei*) in general, but also in the missions that the Pentecostal churches undertake in different cultures (*Missio Ecclesiae*). These fields are framed both by the Holy Scriptures and by the important concepts of the Pentecostal Christian tradition, with which

we interact in shaping the subject of empowerment. The context in which we evaluate the thesis thus realized and in which we carry out the research itself is represented by the Malagasy culture, particularly by Malagasy Christianity reflected in the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church.

### ***1.8. Contributions to the theological scientific study***

Our involvement in this study on understanding the empowerment of the Spirit in a church that should be missionary has brought many benefits. It has helped us better understand our mission. It helped us be useful to the Assemblies of God Church where we, Marcel and Ioana Şaitiş family, are involved in missionary work. It could be beneficial to Pentecostal churches in Romania and the Diaspora if they take the time to seek what we have written and if they are willing to apply this information locally. The practical aspects of the empowerment of the Spirit can be applied in any Pentecostal context, anywhere in the world. We created a model that is applied at the national level of the Assemblies of God Church and the church

benefited strategically from this. We believe that this work is a contribution to the study of pneumatology and Church missiology.

*1.8.1. Empowerment of the Spirit – a fairly unresearched subject*

First, the subject of the empowerment of the Spirit is very little researched, although many Pentecostal authors and exegetes touch it in passing, trying to define it and then move on. Building on what others have laid down, such as Roland Allen, Melvin Hodges, Paul Pomerville, Robert P. Menzies, Gordon D. Fee, Stanley M. Horton, Amos Yong, Roger Stronstad, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Max Turner, John M. Penney, Wonsuk Ma, Julie C. Ma, we decided to develop this topic, even in the event of making mistakes due to the research and the enthusiasm to say more than necessary on this topic. However, the development of this topic in this thesis provides a foundation on which other researchers could build in the future.



### *1.8.2. Creating theological literature in the Malagasy context*

Secondly, we contribute to the specialized academic literature with this topic, in the African context, in Madagascar, where we live. We have been living as missionaries on the Red Island for about nine years, being involved in teaching at the Theological Seminary of the Assemblies of God Church in Antananarivo. The need for theological literature is much more acute here than in the Romanian context. On theology, the only sources that produce local and translated literature in Madagascar are the Roman-Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church and the Protestant Church, because they already had the vision of creating a nursery of educated scholars in theological schools in Europe. However, the Assemblies of God Church, although it is already 50 years old, has not had the vision to create its own nursery of theologians so far. One of the reasons could probably be the fact that the missionaries who led the AOG Theological Seminary were not people with a higher theological background, so they did not have the vision of something greater than their own experience. On the other hand, the Malagasy leaders

of the AOG Church did not believe they were capable of creating local theological literature because they were not encouraged to do so. There is a need for evangelical, especially Pentecostal, theological literature, but translations require knowledgeable staff and financial resources, which are scarce.

### *1.8.3. Creating theological literature in the Romanian context*

Another contribution on the subject of the empowerment of the Spirit is the one we bring to the Romanian theological context. We did not find books written exclusively on this topic in the Romanian theological literature. A review of the publishing houses, and of the Christian bookstores gives us interesting details. For example, on the evangelical books online store, *Casa Cărții* Bookstore, we found only 36 books about the Holy Spirit, of which only 20 contained organized theological teachings, and the rest were about the Holy Spirit from other perspectives: devotional, experiences with the Holy Spirit, various testimonies, or encouraging literature. The *Stephanus* Christian Bookstore in Bucharest is better stocked with books related to the work of the Holy Spirit,

with 48 titles available, most of which include devotional literature on the Holy Spirit and prayer, miracles, healings. The most prominent writings on the theology of the Holy Spirit which we found, were written by Trandafir Șandru and John F. Tipei. It would be good to raise a generation of young theologians who will acknowledge the theological literature on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Romanian context and add their own contribution.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Orthodox literature is a mystical one and it captures the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit, we have found few articles or books that address the subject from our point of view. A search for ‘Holy Spirit’ or ‘Spirit’ on the online Bookstores *Ortodoxia*<sup>12</sup> and *Sophia*<sup>13</sup> revealed that among the 244 books (*Sophia* Bookstore) there are few titles on the work of the Holy Spirit and a dozen more mission-related, focused

---

<sup>11</sup> Trandafir Șandru, *Lucrarea Duhului Sfânt: O analiză succintă a teologiei despre lucrarea Duhului Sfânt*, Oradea, Ed. Scriptum, 2016; John F. Tipei, *Duhul Sfânt. O teologie biblică din perspectivă pentecostală*, Oradea, Ed. Metanoia, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Ortodoxia Bookstore, at <https://www.librariaortodoxia.ro/>. Accessed on 1 April 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Sophia Bookstore, at <https://m.librariasophia.ro/>. Accessed on 1 April 2021.

especially on the mission of the Orthodox Church. We note among them the particularly fruitful activity of the Romanian Orthodox theologian and missiologist, Mihai Himcinschi, with several books treating the subjects of the work of the Holy Spirit and Missiology.<sup>14</sup>

#### *1.8.4. Empowerment of the Spirit – approached from a missiological perspective*

A fourth contribution is related to approaching the empowerment of the Spirit theme through a missiological lens. Here we can talk about two aspects of the empowerment of the Spirit. One of them has to do with the perspective of *Missio Dei*, which refers to God's mission of redeeming mankind in which the Church of Christ is invited to participate in any geographical, social, cultural or denominational context. From this point of view, the thesis includes aspects of the empowerment of the Spirit which could possibly be valid anywhere in the world,

---

<sup>14</sup> Mihai Himcinschi, *Misiune și Dialog – Ontologia misionară a Bisericii din perspectiva dialogului interreligios*, Alba Iulia, Ed. Reîntregirea, 2003; Mihai Himcinschi, *Biserica în societate. Aspecte misionare ale Bisericii în societatea actuală*, Alba Iulia, Ed. Reîntregirea, 2006; Mihai Himcinschi, *Misiunea Bisericii și etica socială*, Alba Iulia, University of Orthodox Theology Alba Iulia, 2011.

because it was built taking into account features of Christian cultures that know the work and baptism of the Holy Spirit, especially in the Pentecostal-Charismatic world. On the other hand, the applicative analysis of the empowerment of the Spirit is done in a missionary context, in Madagascar, offering an Asian-African perspective, considering the fact that the Red Island is close to Africa, but includes very accentuated Asian aspects, the population being mainly of Austronesian origin.

#### *1.8.5. Creating a holistic paradigm of the empowerment of the Spirit*

A particular contribution to international research is the ‘holistic paradigm of the empowerment of the Spirit’ created by us on the biblical basis of the Pentecost. This paradigm of the empowerment of the Spirit takes into account the passages from (1) the Father’s promise in Acts 1:8, (2) Joel’s prophecy in chapter 2:28-29, (3) the event of the Pentecost in Acts 2:1-41, and (4) the events that followed Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:42-47, which complete the image of the early Church walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Using these texts, we

demonstrate, starting from Pentecost, that seen in the light of the empowerment of the Spirit, the mission is holistic. We have not found such a paradigm in the specialized theological literature, so we hope that this can be considered a contribution to the Pentecostal-Charismatic theological literature.

#### *1.8.6. Creating a 'Pentecostal missiological constellation' of the empowerment of the Spirit*

The 'Pentecostal missiological constellation' is a further contribution we have created from researching Pentecostal missiologists, as well as note 15. It includes elements of the mission empowered by the Spirit, characteristics which are fundamental in Pentecostal missiology, such as: experiencing the baptism with the Holy Spirit, framing this experience in the Holy Bible, the important role of signs and wonders in Pentecostal missiology, evangelistic and missionary action, holistic vision of the mission, mission indigenization and contextualization, and ecumenism as the basis for Pentecostal missions. Although these indicators, which make particular reference to Pentecostal missions, could

very well form a ‘constellation’ of at least ten elements, we have framed them in a network of characteristics comprising only eight elements.

#### *1.8.7. Creating a ‘diagnostic questionnaire’ for a local or a national church*

Still within the innovative elements that we brought to Pentecostal missiology was creating a diagnostic questionnaire for a local or a national church, based on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We have created a diagnostic questionnaire that includes 87 statements divided into general statements and applicative questions that measure each indicator of the empowerment of the Spirit related to the church or to the community in general. This questionnaire can only be reduced to very specific statements concerning the characteristics. We later slightly expanded this questionnaire, because we also introduced additional elements to verify the statements and questions, in order to see whether there were contradictions in the thinking of those who filled in the questionnaires. This diagnostic questionnaire can be developed and improved, but it is a step forward in helping

Pentecostal or Pentecostal-Charismatic churches see their evolution towards an improved alternative that is biblically, socially, and culturally relevant.

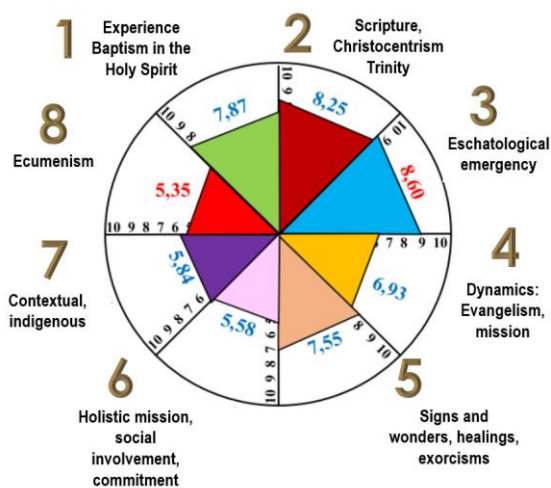
*1.8.8. Creating the ‘missiological circle of the empowerment of the Spirit’ as a visual diagram of diagnosing a church empowered by the Spirit*

The role of the diagnostic questionnaires was to create a graphic representation of the general situation of a church, or a community empowered by the Holy Spirit, its weaknesses and strengths, and at the same time to provide the opportunity to make adjustments in different areas, improving community work. The diagram resulting from the processing of the answers to the questionnaires is called the ‘missiological circle of the empowerment of the Spirit’. It can be a very powerful visual tool for church leaders, who could make decisions to adjust weaknesses, in order to guide the church into becoming more relevant, both from a biblical point of view, in line with early Church standards in the book of Acts, based on Acts 1:8 and Acts 2, and relevant to the society and culture



transformation in which the Pentecostal-Charismatic church finds itself.

The result of this research is a missiological model shown in a diagram, called the missiological circle of the empowerment of the Spirit, by which any Pentecostal-Charismatic church in another culture can be evaluated. Of course, the fact that we have framed the empowerment of the Spirit in an ‘equation’ of empowerment does not mean that the work of the Spirit can be shown as a mathematical result. However, the repetitive elements associated with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, particularly in various churches of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, might



**Creating  
The Missionary  
Circle of  
Empowerment  
as a Visual  
Means of  
Diagnosing a  
Church  
Empowered by  
the Holy Spirit**

give us insight into some features or indicators that can be largely measurable and framed in certain patterns.

#### *1.8.9. Creating a recommended strategy for the AOG Church in Madagascar*

As we applied and tested this questionnaire in the Assemblies of God Church in Madagascar, addressing nearly 800 pastors at the AOG annual national meeting, after processing the questionnaire responses, we were able to see a diagram of the empowerment of the Spirit circle relevant to this church. We presented the diagram in a meeting with some of the AOG Church leaders, helping them understand the strengths and those things that could be improved by making decisions. We also made some recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God Church in Madagascar. If they take these things into account, they could see positive results in their work in the years to come. We have thus introduced this complex analysis in the thesis as a practical way to assess the progress of a Pentecostal church or community

through the diagram called the missiological circle of the empowerment of the Spirit.

### ***1.9. The content of the thesis***

This thesis consists of an Introduction and seven chapters that develop the idea contained in the title, ‘Empowered by the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal mission in the Malagasy context’.

In the *Introduction* we explain not only the significance of the title, and the need for such a study, but also the context in which the research is done, i.e., the Republic of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean basin. Why right there? The answer is in the motivation. In addition to decades of mission work, we brought our nine years old Romanian contribution to this country under the Capricorn Tropic, in collaboration with members of the Assemblies of God Church, a church of Pentecostal origin, part of the large Assemblies of God World Mission family. We then define the meaning of empowerment, according to the dictionaries, according to the specialists who noticed different directions the term took, but also according to

theologians who approached the subject of empowerment to a greater or lesser extent. Once into the defining part, we considered it essential to build a history on the theology of the term, from its inception to the present, because this expression is of fairly recent use. So, we sketched an evolution of the empowerment starting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the term appeared in Wesley's Holiness Movement, through its transformation during the Keswick revivals, including the leaders of the Great Protestant Revivals in the United States (such as Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer). We followed its history as it was later seen in the Pentecostal revival in Azusa Street and defined by Fox Parham in *Apostolic Faith*, but also the way it is seen today by both Pentecostals and other theologians in the evangelical movement.

*Chapter 1* contains an analysis or a review of the literature on subject of the empowerment of the Spirit. We first mention the field of missiology believing that the subject of empowerment in mission is relevant to missiologists. They link mission to empowerment, whether it is the empowerment of the Gospels of Jesus Christ or the empowerment in Acts 1:8, later related to

Pentecostal dynamics. Subsequently, we look into Pentecostalism to try and understand how they view the subject of the empowerment of the Spirit and what they connect it to: the prophetic testimony of the early church, or signs and wonders, or both? In the end, we think that the most complete and complex collection about missions to date is the Regnum Books International series, so we studied it thoroughly, probing the subject of empowerment and how theologians see it in the 39 books of the collection.

In *Chapter 2, Malagasy context: analysis and empirical assessment of the empowerment of the Spirit*, we approach the subject in concentric circles, from the outside to the inside. We first read the history of this country. Madagascar has peoples from South Asia, the area called Austronesia, and some Africans who settled around the same time on a largely uninhabited island, a kind of paradise for both landforms and flora and fauna. The unrest and the struggles between these ethnic groups gave rise to kingdoms, then culminated in an imperial monarchy, went through the battles of a French colonial domination, and finally found its climax in an independent

republic that often navigates through stormy waves due to internal struggles between the various contenders for its leadership. A second circle is the socio-cultural context, in which we approach the specific elements of Malagasy culture, sometimes close to elements of African culture. We make a new approach to our topic in the Malagasy context by studying the renewal revivals and the churches that officially emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit among them. After an overview, we focus on the Assemblies of God Church, the place where we placed our hearth and direction in ministry.

In *Chapter 3, Empowerment of the Spirit in biblical testimony*, we analyze the Scriptures looking at the empowerment of the Spirit through the prism of exegetes, dogmatists, historians, both in the texts of the Old and the New Testament. The empowerment of the Spirit is different in the old covenant from that in the new covenant, although in some places the work of the Spirit is apparently similar. John records the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth [...] for he lives

with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17, NIV). In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God was with the people, and sometimes he would empower someone for a specific mission (to free the people from slavery, to organize Israel, to lead them into battle, to build the Tabernacle or the Temple as places of worship), descending over that person or in them, living temporarily, then leaving, while in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit dwells in the life of the believer permanently. We notice that, in the Old Testament, the empowerment of the Spirit was considered a specific work that led to the deliverance of the people from a difficult, sometimes conflicting situation (Joseph, Samson, Saul, Samuel), and, in the New Testament, the empowerment of the Spirit is clearly related to the life of Jesus Christ for the mission of saving humanity, redeeming and regenerating the human being and to *Missio Dei*. A thorough study of the event of Pentecost links the empowerment of the Spirit to the perspective of proclaiming the gospel and testifying in a universal geographical plan, but also in a universal social plan. We conclude the chapter by exploring the dimension of

empowerment in the Pauline letters, which complete the soteriological and charismatic dimension of this subject.

*Chapter 4, The empowerment of the Spirit, and the holistic mission of the Church*, is a descriptive analysis of the transformation of the Pentecostal movement from a mission focused almost exclusively on ‘winning souls’ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to a broader understanding of missions, which includes all aspects of human life and the realities of the surrounding world: soul, emotions and relationships, body, and their place in social and environmental contexts. This process of intentionally broadening the vision of the Pentecostal missions takes place due to paradigm shifts in the global missiological context, such as redefining missions as *Missio Dei* (God’s mission), instead of the old paradigm, *Missio Ecclesiae* (the Church’s mission). The inclusion in the Pentecostal movement of other movements empowered by the Spirit, from other Christian traditions – the charismatic movement, with a focus on activism, and the third wave, the neo-charismatics, who led to changes in thought concerning Pentecostal missions, the meeting of global Pentecostalism in the northern and southern hemispheres



in world Protestant ecumenical conferences, such as the 1974 Lausanne Congress, and the awareness of all their challenges at all levels of life and society, in the light of the Holy Scriptures, were also instrumental in the paradigm shift. Practically, the Pentecostal movement became more complete, more competent, and more adept at providing the vision of God empowered by the Holy Spirit in the context of the world.

*Chapter 5, Concrete manifestations of the empowerment of the Spirit in the context of the mission of the Church*, introduces us to the practical dimension in which the empowerment of the Spirit was manifested in Pentecostal missions over time. In terms of this chapter, missions cover at least three essential issues related to the contemporary missionary involvement. The first one is the heart of Pentecostal missions, that is, evangelism and church planting. It can also be called *kerigma* or the proclamation of the gospel. We also give examples from practical mission activities of proclamation done by the Romanian team Joy4MG (Joy for Madagascar), whose work takes place in the Malagasy context. The second practical issue of missionary work is helping people, also

called social mission or *diakonia*. Here, too, we give as examples the Romanian involvement of Joy4MG, seen in micro-social, medical and educational actions carried out in Antsirabe and elsewhere in Madagascar. The third practical answer to the mission empowered by the Spirit is missionary commitment or reconciliation, a macro-social approach that seeks to answer society's difficult questions and to bring the solutions of the Kingdom of God to them. Here the examples of Pentecostal involvement include various actions of social transformation, that are connected both to Romanian events, such as the 'Save the children of the Bodnariu family' action, and to events in which Pentecostal missions is actively involved in the social and political transformation of some countries, the most convincing example being President Bolsanaro and the 'Make Brazil great again' project.

In *Chapter 6*, we set out to find and put together the characteristics of a missiology empowered by the Spirit. Building on the features which certain missiologists and theologians of the Pentecostal mission have considered relevant to the exponential development of the movement in the last century, we have built a paradigm

that includes several characteristics that we consider essential for a theological and pragmatic missiology in the missionary context. First of all, the mission must be experiential and relational, both aspects being rooted in the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the essence of what Christ promised his disciples in Acts 1:8, when he told them to remain in Jerusalem and wait to receive power from above, experiencing the touch of the Spirit and a dynamic relationship with Him, the One who would guide the mission of the Church on earth. The mission must then be biblical, Christological and trinitarian. We mention all three of these elements, because for some, being biblical does not necessarily mean being trinitarian. But Pentecostals believe that the mission or *Missio Dei* has its heart precisely in the trinitarian relationship, in which the Father sends the Son (John 20:21), assisted by the Holy Spirit, and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit for the redemption of the world and of all creation. In the same way, the whole Church is called to God's mission, to participate in God's plan of redemption throughout the world. The mission empowered by the Spirit must be

dynamic, which is visible both in aggressive evangelism in the domestic context and in the cross-cultural missions that the Pentecostal mission initiates. The mission empowered by the Spirit is motivated by the eschatological urgency, which in turn finds its motivation in Christ's return and the urgency of the harvest. The mission is a holistic work that aims not only to save people, but also to restore them on all levels. Moreover, if we want to be more deeply involved in *Missio Dei*, we must also consider God's idea of redeeming creation. The mission empowered by the Spirit has always been a miraculous one, in which the gospel was accompanied by signs and wonders, healings and deliverances from demons. The Pentecostal mission is contextual and indigenous, which is revealed in the multitude of global contexts of different cultures in which Pentecostalism has integrated and transformed. The mission empowered by the Spirit is ecumenical, bringing people together to achieve the same goals of the Kingdom of God. If all these elements are accomplished, the Pentecostal mission in a particular context is relevant, vibrant, and balanced.

Finally, *Chapter 7, Towards a missiology empowered by the Spirit in Malagasy context*, provides an analysis of Malagasy Pentecostalism in the Assemblies of God Church, which considers all the elements mentioned in Chapter 6: experience, biblicalism, the Trinity, Christology, dynamism, eschatological urgency, holistic work, miraculous manifestations, contextualization and indigenization, and ecumenism. Each element is analyzed in depth, based on external observations, based on interviews with key people in the organization, or based on questionnaires that take into account an in-depth study of these key elements of the empowered mission. These elements are then placed in graphic form, building a missiological circle to suggest how ‘roundly’ things work and where improvements should be made. At the end of the chapter, we highlight several things which could be helpful to the leaders of the Assemblies of God Church in Madagascar. First, we highlight the strengths that make the Church a strong missionary force in the domestic context, because there is still no cross-cultural mission within it. Then we highlight the weaknesses, the ‘blind spots’ that the leaders of the AOG Church do not see,

because they do not see the situation from a bigger picture perspective. We make some recommendations to help Pentecostal leaders improve the Pentecostal mission so that it is balanced, strong, and vibrant.

### ***1.10. Methodologies used in approaching the thesis***

The thesis *Empowered by the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal Mission in Malagasy Context* required several methodologies depending on each chapter we approached. Some chapters are theological, some are historical and descriptive, and others are very pragmatic and even mathematical, which required an adaptation of the methodology.

In Chapter 1, where we study the literature, we review several titles and authors, not necessarily as a general review, but a specialized one about empowerment. Only if this subject was not very specifically delimited in the book, or if we use a deductive method, do we review an entire book, in order to give the reader an overview.

In the Chapter 2 we focus on Madagascar, one of the contexts we considered. Here we make both a geographical description, as well as historical and social analyses of the different periods during the history of Madagascar.

Chapter 3 is a foray into the biblical texts to understand the empowerment of the Spirit both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. That is why the approach we use here is especially the exegetical study, completed by the historical analysis of some authors for certain contexts, that would give us an understanding of the biblical concepts and contexts in which we approach the subject of empowerment. Basically, our approach of the biblical texts is a historical-exegetical one.

Chapter 4 is related to the definition and understanding of the holistic mission of the Church, which introduces us primarily to a descriptive and historical analysis of the evolution of the concept of *Missio Dei* in 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian thought, as well as a theological approach on the subject. Several theologians have supported the holistic mission of the Church by creating

paradigms based on various concepts in theology: the cross of Christ, the Kingdom of God, reconciliation, transformational development, and even the empowerment of the Spirit, a paradigm created by us in this chapter.

In Chapter 5 we exemplify the holistic mission of the Church empowered by the Spirit, for which we use case studies and various examples to strengthen our argument. The examples include both cases that other authors have described in their specialized works about the Holy Spirit, and cases that we have extracted from various journals that we analyzed in the light of the subject of the empowerment of the Spirit.

Chapter 6 is a synthesis of theological characteristics found in the theology of Pentecostal scholars, put together in an equation that we call ‘characteristics of a Pentecostal missiology’ or that we can give a more futuristic name, calling it the ‘constellation of a missiology empowered by the Spirit’.

In Chapter 7, we set out a practical approach to the subject, so we created a questionnaire with grid type



questions, which we used in the Assemblies of God Church in Madagascar. After collecting the questionnaires and checking their correctness and validity, we analyzed them, turning the answers into visual approaches in the form of simple graphs that compared different elements, but also in the form of a general conjugated diagram, which gives a general view that is easy to be interpreted by the subjects. In addition to interpretation, it provides an easy way to understand the changes that the AOG Church in Madagascar should make for the development of its work in the *Missio Dei*.

## ***Conclusions***

The contemporary church needs the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be salt and light in the community and society, a visible representation of the eschatological Kingdom of God that already exists, but which will manifest itself in all its glory at the coming of King Jesus Christ. A church is missionary in the world and in its context insofar as the Holy Spirit leads it and manifests his authority in its midst and through it in society. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is seen in the impact the

church has in the world. A church empowered by the Spirit does not run away from society, but instead seeks bridges to transform the society. Leaders empowered by the Spirit of God, with local churches behind them, can make decisions guided by the Holy Spirit to transform the society into a better place and each individual life into something truly valuable. If contemporary society desperately needs something in times of crisis, it is churches, organizations, or communities empowered by the Holy Spirit, who will bring the message of hope among people and who will produce leaders who care about people and who carry God's thoughts within themselves and in their decision making. This will bring balance, impact and transformation in the lives of all people and in the life of the society.