Spirited Things
The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions

Edited by
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The University of Chicago Press
Chicago and London
2014
SEVEN

Possessing the Land for Jesus

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Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it.

—Deuteronomy 11:8

For thirty seconds an enormous roar filled the air. The ground shook, and buildings split open and crumbled. Roofs fell onto floors and crushed thousands of people. Boulders and cars slid into ravines and buried thousands more alive. The palace roof fell in on itself, and the Grand National Cathedral collapsed. A great cloud of white dust rose over the city of Port-au-Prince. In less than one minute, hundreds of thousands of people were dead, buried alive, or injured badly. Millions were traumatized.

The worst natural disaster in the history of the Americas struck the capital city of Haiti and paralyzed the nation on January 12, 2010. There were few trained emergency workers to respond. The quake killed so many that bodies were dumped into mass graves outside the city, and two million people were left homeless.

One month later, it would have been, and should have been, Carnival. Instead, it was all the government could do to organize an official day of mourning. In an ecumenical national ceremony, the president, the prime minister, dignitaries, and surviving leaders of the three main religious groups in the country (Catholics, Protestants, and Vodouists) came together to mark the one-month anniversary of the quake.

A woman in the Haitian diaspora received a revelation from God about his plan for Haiti. Born in the slum of Cité Soleil, Sister Ginom had become a successful businesswoman in Orlando, Florida. God told her that for the three days starting on February 12, evangelicals were to organize a revival in the Champ de Mars park downtown next to the National Palace. A transnational network of Haitian, Haitian American, US, and Latin American evangelicals gathered for a massive three-day prayer and fast in downtown Port-au-Prince. People came in droves. The
Since the 1970s, a fully global evangelical movement of charismatic Christian renewalism has expanded, in which flows of information, capital, me-
Considering global evangelical renewalist networks, this imaginary is a variation on what Jean and John Comaroff describe as "a dialectic of law and dis/order" that is emerging as part of neoliberal deregulation, especially in postcolonial countries. In Haiti, even before the quake but certainly after, the state was weak and predatory, the legal system dysfunctional, and the overpopulated capital city known for its weak police capacity against high levels of crime, narco-traffic, kidnapping, rape, and general lawlessness. The Comaroffs stress that "both the anxiety about and the fascination with the law point to a very general preoccupation in the postcolonial world with 'the law' and the citizen as legal subject, a preoccupation growing in counterpart to, and deeply entailed in, the rise of the felonious state, private indirect government, and endemic cultures of illegality" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006: 20). They compare criminal institutions and communities that establish "simulacra of social order" complete with modes of governance and taxation in an appropriation of forms of law. Here I am similarly interested in a religious movement whose members live in conditions of uncertainty and economic decline in the United States and in profound lawlessness and dispossession in Haiti and establish a hyperlegalistic imaginary with corresponding discourse and ritual modes of engagement with an absolute cosmic sovereign. This transnational circuit shows how a focus on the postcolony may occlude our understanding of the ways religious actors in the modern nation-states of the developed world coproduce the dialectic of law and disorder, with intriguing results. In the case I consider here, it is North American evangelicals who advocate privileging of indigenous "spiritual legal authority" over ancestral homelands. This means that Haitian Christians have the legal right to possess Haitian land. Renewalists in the spiritual warfare movement in both the United States and in the postcolony, then, are elaborating the theological-legal standing of individuals as well as of ethnic, racial, and religious groups.

In the ethnographic sections framing the essay I show how this spatial and legal imaginary informs and inspires Haitian neo-Pentecostals to reconcile their faith in God with their displacement and dispossession after the earthquake. The pastors and prophets from various places in the Americas who assembled outside the Palais Nationale the month after the Haiti quake show us that spiritual warfare Christians are together engaged in a global production of religious thought and practice concerning space, law, and logics of ownership and possession that are animating new collective identities. While most scholars of the evangelical expansion have been interested in the movement's resonance with capitalism, the juridical logics and diplomatic rhetoric that underpin the New Apostolic movement that I discuss here have not yet been examined.

Key to understanding the juridical logic of this third-wave movement is that its members believe that, as prophets and apostles of a new age, they have been given a divine mandate to possess the land in the name of Jesus. They seek to heal, cleanse, and dispossess "ancestral spiritual forces" that are not godly and therefore must be demonic. The "spirit of Freemasonry" is an American ancestral demonic "stronghold." The "spirit of apartheid" in South Africa was discerned to be a demonic force driving apartheid's political injustice (Wagner 1992: 170). For Native Americans and their allies in the third wave, the broken covenants and treaties that characterize the US government's dealings with Native tribes—and a crisis of dispossession—are a deep source of iniquity that has created demonic strongholds. In Haiti, ancestral demons consist of the inherited spirits of its traditional Afro-Creole religion called Voudou.

Haitians who appropriate third-wave thought, like those engaged in the three-day revival calling for Jesus to possess the land, form new identities through a process of repudiating traditional culture and elaborating new subjectivities. Central to this process is cultivating obedient submission to a God who has promised his people land. "a spot on this earth." Through this double logic, prayer warriors seek discursively to "cast out territorial spirits" and "possess the land," even, and especially, in the face of the traumatic displacement and dispossession of the 2010 quake. Hence a dialectic of dispossession and possession unfolds in the Haitian circuits of the New Apostolic Reformation. The profound violence of the destruction of the capital city and the ensuing insecurity of life and desperation in the tent camps fueled a militaristic drive to "repossess" the country under the auspices of the ultimate sovereign, God himself.

Dispossession in Haiti

It is important to ground this discussion about the role of religion in the dialectics of law and disorder, possession and dispossession, in the contemporary context characterized by neocolonial and neoliberal economic conditions. These realities produced the racialized geography of poverty, and now disaster, so apparent in Haiti after the earthquake. The Inter-American Development Bank called the recent Haiti earthquake "the most destructive disaster in modern history." It is telling that the two indicators used to measure the destruction were the loss of more than 250,000 lives and the estimated $14 billion in damage. Under the present system of neoliberal-
ism, value is most often measured in economic terms. The rising charismatic renewalist movement in the Americas is successful partly because its social structures and thought processes mesh so smoothly with the neoliberal economic system, even as its theology places preeminent value on the intangible saving of souls and on the unseen world of "the eternals."

Neoliberal economic policies, which privilege national production in underdeveloped countries toward the export market and free trade within the domestic market, were implemented throughout the Americas beginning in the 1970s by the major international financial institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc.) together with USAID. As Alex Dupuy points out, "Their objectives have never been to promote meaningful and sustainable development of peripheral capitalist countries like Haiti. . . . Rather, their aim has always been to create outlets for the products of the core countries and sources of cheap labor for their manufacturers" (Dupuy 2010). Domestic structural adjustments made in response to pressures to keep wages low, discourage unions, and eliminate health and safety standards have all had a detrimental effect on farmers, the urban working class, and poor populations—or the majority in Haiti (Dupuy 1997: 22–23).

One of the corollaries of neoliberal structural adjustment coupled with large amounts of food aid entering Haiti in the 1990s was the virtual collapse of domestic agriculture, including rice farming. As a result, huge sections of the rural population moved to the cities, especially the capital, Port-au-Prince, which grew with virtually no city planning from a city of 150,000 in 1950 to one of 3 million in 2008 (Dupuy 2010: 17). Precariously situated and overpopulated shantytowns were ravaged by the quake. Millions who were already internal migrants were displaced for a second time from their homes in the city. At the time of this writing, some thirteen hundred tent encampments sheltered an estimated 2 million people, but land rights for tent camps were heavily disputed. Several camps have been subject to violent forced evictions by landowners seeking to reclaim their lands, citing legal rights to private property (Goodman 2010). Questions of legal ownership of land and rights to land possession came to the forefront as a national crisis.

Land tenure in general has long been a charged issue in Haiti, where elites and military officers frequently stole land from the majority nonliterate population. Multiple, often fraudulent land titles exist for the same property, and now many records have been destroyed in the quake, threatening further dispossession of lands. In Port-au-Prince, where up to 85 percent of residents do not own their own homes and where rents for undamaged houses after the quake went up 300 percent (Schuller 2010), tents, tarps, and bed sheets became the only option for the majority of the internally displaced population.

Analysts in the wake of the quake in Haiti pointed out that while many events are "natural disasters," they are sometimes preceded and followed by "second disasters" caused by inequality, vulnerability, and politicized responses (Schuller 2007). The quake in Haiti made visible a racialized geography of marginalization and structural violence similar to that revealed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Social geographers Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods write, "Hurricane Katrina was deemed a 'natural disaster,' but the language that propped up this supposed naturalness only served to naturalize poor and black agony, distress and death" (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 7). The same could be said of the quake in Haiti: "The storm also brought into clear focus, at least momentarily, a legacy of uneven geographies, of those locations long occupied by les damnés de la terre/the wretched of the earth: the geographies of the homeless, the jobless . . . the unescapable" (ibid., 2).

Disaster relief for those unable to flee and left vulnerable after the quake, as well as Haiti's social services in general, falls under the privatized auspices of charity and humanitarian assistance, as is becoming the case in the United States as social services shift to the purview of faith-based initiatives, including Katrina relief (Gunewardena 2008). Critics of the privatization of humanitarian recovery projects label the process "disaster capitalism" and point out the ways in which "assistance strategies rooted in neoliberal policy frameworks channel recovery through private corporate interests and entities (e.g., consulting firms, engineering companies, and developers) more interested in profiteering than a purely humanitarian motive" (Gunewardena 2008: 4) Some displaced persons living in tents who were members of the New Apostolic movement watched the unfolding of the profit-making process, which was often legal though sometimes not; this was not usually clear to them. As I have written elsewhere, they became disillusioned about the Haitian government, the UN peacekeeping mission to preserve law, order, and security, and even international humanitarian aid, and worked to cultivate a stance and practice of Christian self-sufficiency (McAlister 2013).

The American and Haitian religious actors I follow here are not part of the vast nongovernmental organization complex that has made Port-au-Prince a "Republic of NGOs." Rather, I am interested in independent missions and congregations that are also linked in global networks. North American evangelicals, including Haitian Americans in the diaspora, form
relationships with Haitian church congregations precisely in the sphere of privatized humanitarian assistance that neoliberal economic policies have created as the primary theater of operations for aid, relief, recovery, rebuilding, and development. After the quake in Haiti, biblical quotations about land resonated with conflicts over land occupied by tent encampments, competition for international relief monies, and discussions about the best way to rebuild the nation. It was in this context that dispossessed Pentecostals began to think, speak, and strategize about “God’s people possessing the land.” On the radio, in churches, and in outdoor crusades and revivals, Haitian pastors used the language of the spiritual warfare movement to cast the quake as a form of God’s divine love shaking the nation into obedience. During visits from pastors from the United States and elsewhere, Haitian evangelicals shaped a spiritual warfare interpretation that the quake was an invitation from the Holy Spirit to take dominion over the land.

**Spiritual Mapping and Its Cosmology**

The spiritual mapping theology and practice that informs the spiritual warfare movement is a fluid constellation of thought and ritual, with no single orthodoxy. In general, revelation from the Holy Spirit is understood to be the driving force of the movement. Difference and change in Holy Spirit revelation are embraced because, as part of the condition of the “last days,” God is said to be working in new ways toward the fulfillment of prophecy and the ultimate victory over evil. The one foundational, indispensable, authoritative, and sacred text, of course, is the Bible. Spiritual mappers, like other evangelicals, consider the Bible the inerrant word of God, the ultimate truth, and a text applicable to every dimension of human life. The most prominent theologian of spiritual warfare, C. Peter Wagner, held a faculty position at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and developed his teachings in courses on missiology and the special challenge of “reaching the unreached.” Missionaries to Haiti have brought New Apostolic thought and practices to Haiti, and Haitian pastors and seminarians have likewise traveled to the United States as well as to Argentina and as far as Korea to attend workshops on spiritual mapping and other movement techniques (McAlister 2012).

Spiritual warfare renewalists picture the whole of human history as a consequence and effect of the cosmic battle of Satan against God. Although God’s plan for humans is one of deliverance and salvation, Satan and his demons work to thwart that plan. This overarching Manichean battle between good and evil informs readings of history, current events, family life and personal life, law, and geography.

A story about the origin of law drawn from the Bible underlies and authorizes the cosmic order and all of reality for third-wave evangelicals. God created earthy dominion to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28, and great emphasis is placed on the idea of legal authority and the rights that accompany dominion. When Satan’s temptation of Eve in Genesis 3 leads to the Fall of Man, legal authority extends to Satan and explains why life on earth, even for Christians, is fraught with pain and suffering. Legally, Satan gained the right to be “prince of this world” (John 12:31) and to command an army of demons who maintain “strongholds”—geographic and spiritual bases of demonic power—throughout the world (Kraft 1994: 19). After Christ was crucified in payment for the sins of Adam and Eve and all of humankind, Satan was legally dispossessed of his dominion on earth. In this Christian legal economy, Christ paid for humanity’s sins and bought creation back. However, spiritual warfare adherents believe that Satan’s “strongholds” did not melt away. Instead, Satan and his demonic army hold on to what power they have cultivated through social vice and sin: sowing the seeds of war and violence, people’s worship of idols, poverty, addiction, etc. As in the Old Testament, “The purity of the land is determined by its people following all the laws, especially the law of fidelity to one deity. When Israel is not monotheistic, it is filthy and it pollutes the land” (Schwartz 1997: 63). War-torn countries, violence- and drug-plagued cities, farmlands suffering from drought, and certainly places where pagan gods are worshipped are potential material evidence of problems in the spiritual realm, with Satan’s possession of a stronghold at their root.

Sin operates legally as an active invitation to Satan to establish himself and grow, and as a result, Satan gains legal rights over particular domains in the cosmos. The central text informing these prayer warriors is Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” One of the most frequently discussed domains is “demonic territory,” spaces where Satan’s army has created aggressive outposts of “wickedness in high places” and where his unseen “dignitaries” have seized spiritual dominion and sow disorder.

The task of third-wave evangelicals is to act as intercessors and prayer warriors to stage a “power encounter” that will bring about territorial de-
liverance in what C. Peter Wagner terms "strategic-level warfare" (Wagner 1991). It is the prayer warrior's job to "stand in the gap" and actively roll back Satan's grip on people and their land. This phrase is taken from Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." The idea is that in this new age, Christian spiritual warriors will not disappoint God (who once could not find a man to stand in the gap) but rather can be key players in a cosmic battle in which they take orders directly from heaven and work according to God's legal principles to restore God's Kingdom.

Third-wave adherents interpret the Bible in a way that produces a spatial reorientation placing born-again Christians in a privileged relationship to the center of cosmic reality, truth, and power. They are consciously oriented toward the spatiotemporal notion of God's eternal Kingdom. God's Heavenly Kingdom is Christians' longed-for, true home and the subject of tremendous rhetorical focus. It is both a spiritual realm "out there"—a temporal condition of permanence—and a spiritual condition in which a believing Christian lives.

While the movement holds a common, if not orthodox, Christian understanding of God's Heavenly Kingdom, it refines and hyperlegalizes the concept. Members stress that those who are born again hold a "legal" status of belonging in heaven, pointing to the passage "We are citizens of the state which is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20-21). For some Haitian renewalists I have interviewed, the Haitian state is illegitimate by virtue of its history of corruption and exploitation of its people. Heavenly citizenship is far more important than national citizenship. Said one young woman to another researcher: "I am Christian. I am first and foremost a citizen of God the Father's kingdom, adopted into his family through Jesus Christ, whose ambassador I am to his honor and glory, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Harkins-Pierre 2005: 33).

The Heavenly Kingdom is accessible to the individual believer through a direct line to his or her body. This is because the "spiritual heart," which is superimposed upon the natural heart (just as the spiritual realm is superimposed on the natural realm), serves as "the hidden door of the kingdom of heaven" (Chosa and Chosa 2004: 9). Discourses of diplomacy provide the logic: once a believer invites Jesus into her heart, she is saved, eligible for citizenship in the Kingdom of God, and subject to God's rule and God's law. As a citizen of God's Kingdom, she is his "ambassador" and holds authority over Satan's "dignitaries." Spiritual warriors cite Luke 10:19, where Jesus says: "Behold, I give you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." However, spiritual warriors perceive their salvation to be always under attack by Satan, who seeks to tempt them away from God. Demons can possess humans "legally" when humans commit sin and thereby allow them in. Therefore, salvation is a state or condition that must be protected and guarded, similar to the seventeenth-century Quaker Richard Vickers's discussion of how to acquire and keep the "Heavenly Possession" (see Johnson, "Genealogy," this volume, n. 29).

This cosmic order that connects individuals to eternal time and space intersects seamlessly with a developing renewalist vision of the global order. Since the 1970s, South and North American third-wave evangelicals have produced what they term a global spiritual mapping of the "gaps" or territories that are ruled by "spiritual wickedness." In the 1990s, Argentine-born pastor Luis Bush further developed this discourse with the image of a "Resistance belt," an area of the globe presenting a challenge to spreading the gospel in the world. (Bush n.d.) He and others mapped the territories reached and unreached by Christianity around the globe and concluded that "successful church planting in the Pacific, Africa and Latin America has largely reduced the world's prime evangelistic real estate to a swath of territory from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north latitude, running through Northern Africa and Asia known as the 10/40 Window." Not coincidentally, the parameters of the 10/40 Window include the Middle East and encompass "the core of the Islamic religion." Because the Bible says that the gospel must be preached to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47) in order for Jesus to return, these unevangelized places of "demonic entrenchment" are particularly important to missionaries who see themselves as actors in the drama of God's plan for world redemption.

Spiritual warriors believe that Christianity cannot spread in the "resistance belt" because the ancient peoples there transacted pacts with un-Christian powers, usually territorial spirits and deities associated with rocks, trees, and rivers. These non-Christian religious practices resulted in, and were, effectively, covenants with demonic forces ceding territory for possession by Satan. According to biblical diplomatic law, these were "legal" although evil deals. In other parts of the world, like Haiti, which has received the word of Christ but has yet to realize Christ's blessings, pacts with ancestral demonic forces explain instability. In underdeveloped parts of the world, demonic territorial spirits may be holding "people groups" in a form of spiritual slavery.

Spiritual mapmakers are careful to study the spiritual legalities at work in these cases. In Haiti, for example, the long-standing traditional Afro-
Creole religion, which anthropologists call Vodou and that evangelicals usually misrecognize as “witchcraft,” is interpreted in terms of ongoing “diplomatic relationships” with demons. Explains one evangelist, “The devil and his principalities have been defeated by Jesus on the cross, and they would not be able to stay on unless they were relying on old invitations that have never been cancelled” (Sjöberg 1993: 109). Says another, “In return for a particular deity’s consent to resolve their immediate traumas, they have offered up their singular and ongoing allegiance. It is through the placement of these ancient welcome mats, then, that demonic territorial strongholds are established” (Otis 1993: 30). In such cases, the demon has a legal right to stay. American and Haitian evangelicals took up the question of demonic influence in Haiti in the 1980s, and a vocal minority became convinced that “a host of territorial demons was let loose in Haiti that . . . created for it the ecological, economic, moral and political disasters it is infamous for around the globe today” (McAlister 2012: 203).

Haitian theologians and pastors have since worked at spiritual mapping to fill in the details specific to their country. Pastor Gregory Touissant, for example, writes that a demonic Jezebel spirit possessed one of the founders of the nation at a crucial moment in its development. “At the ceremony of Bois Caiman, it was Erzulie Dantò (i.e., Jezebel), who got the pioneer of the nation to . . . make a blood covenant with that spirit” (Touissant 2009: 83). The “blood covenant,” elaborated below, is an example of a spatiotemporal “time gate” when the nation was “given” legally to Satan, who now controls it. The character of this chronotype serves to explain why Haiti is chronically impoverished and politically unstable; demons love sowing disorder, pain, and suffering throughout God’s creation.

New Apostolic theology, with its hyperlegalistic elaboration of demonology, frames a dialectic of law and disorder that responds to the crisis of evangelical Christianity in the underdeveloped world. Evangelicals must cope with the dilemma that Christianity does not always bring the promised abundance, healing, justice, and peace that the gospel foretells. The same crises that social scientists blame on colonialism, neoimperialism, and neoliberal capitalism is for spiritual warfare intercessors a matter of biblical legality, ancestral sin, and Satan’s work, which continues to affect present populations. The solution, they believe, is to cast out the demons from the space in the name of Jesus. In the legal diplomacy of spiritual warfare, Jesus gave all Christians authority over demons in Matthew 10:1: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness

and all manner of disease.” By dispossessing demonic forces, even problems that are national in scope can be resolved.

Militaristic imagery characterizes the theology of spiritual warfare, as a “prayer team” of “prayer warriors” come together for a given “prophetic prayer action” on the “spiritual battlefield.” But the warfare does not entail physical aggression. Spiritual warfare theologians teach that man’s dominion is over Satan’s forces, not over other people. The battling consists of round-the-clock intercessory prayer, as experienced prayer warriors prepare and fast. Drawing on Ephesians 6:11, they “put on the whole armour of God, that [they] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” They gird their loins with truth and don the breastplate of righteousness. They take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit and mount “Jericho marches,” walking around demonic spots in rebuking and prayer, just as the Haitian prayer warriors did on the one-month anniversary of the quake. Demons are cast out by name, and because they are cast out by a faithful, “blood-covered” Christian standing under the authority of Christ, the demon legally must flee. Christ’s spirit and healing grace can enter the space and transform it.

This legalistic narrative of demonic entrenchment in Haiti is currently unfolding on the ground and in the global Christian renewalist public sphere. It has intensified a dialectic of possession and dispossession in Haiti since the quake. The catastrophe that displaced millions was read by some evangelicals as a call from God to bring Haiti to revival and rebirth and by others as a punishment for the ancestral sin of worshipping demons through “witchcraft.” Of course, the demonic entrenchment that is figured as endemic to Haiti consists of the Afro-Creole spirits inherited through family lines by the majority of Haitians. Living in cemeteries, natural sites, and elsewhere in the unseen world, the spirits of Vodou are translated as demonic “welcome mats” that are legally holding Haiti back from development and prosperity.

The Spiritual Geography of Haiti

To be God’s rescue agents to a nation given to Satan.

―In God’s Heart Ministry

Haiti has long been figured by both Roman Catholic and Protestant thinkers as a land infused with sorcery and magic (see Ramsey 2011). Its majority religion of Vodou is a blend of various West and Central African religions.
healing, divination, and juridical traditions, creolized together under forced
Roman Catholic conversion during and after slavery. The Afro-Creole reli-
gious, political, legal, and familial complex assumes a remote-creator God,
under whom exist multiple branches of deities called “lwa,” or “spirits.”
Spirits are inherited through family lines, as Karen Richman elaborates in
this volume. Vodou practices are oral, not scripture based, and are trans-
mitted within an ethos of secrecy through initiation or family tradition. Only
since the 1990s has there been an attempt to form a centralized hierarchy
of officeholders or spokespeople. Although Vodou is very much creolized
with Roman Catholicism, the servants of the spirits do not hold a biblical,
millennial spatiotemporality. Rather, time is cyclical, and space is poten-
tially inhabited by spiritual energies and entities. Third-wave evangelism
shares with Vodou ontologies of spiritual reality and agency. But since the
ancestral spirits are not the Holy Spirit, this is taken as (biblical) proof that
the spirits are demons.

Most of the spirits are thought to rest in Ginen, a mythic Africa (some-
times said to be under the sea), and they can come to “ride” or “dance
in the head” of their “servants” during prayer ceremonies. Spirits can also
“own” and “live in” trees, lakes, and rivers, in cemeteries or in gates and
intersections of paths or streets. They are thought to both afflict and pro-
tect family members. Karen Richman (this volume) explains how people
inherit protection from their spirits, as well as corresponding obligations
to the spirits, from the ancestor who founded their extended family home-
stead, or eritaj (from French héritage). The extended-family members de-
scended from this ancestor by definition also make up the eritaj. They are
called through spiritual messages from time to time to gather on the land
and perform religious “work” requested by the family spirits. The spirit
might negatively affect a family member (with recurring dreams, sickness,
bad luck, or an accident), and then the work of “serving” and “feeding”
must be done to assuage the spirit and set the relationship back into a state
of balance and protection (Richman 2005).

Richman shows how the eritaj signifies both the land and the descent
group, or family. She reveals how spirit possession “is a corporeal perfor-
mance of interdependence between living members of a descent group,
deceased members, and their spirits. . . . connecting the living in a deeply
embodied way to their ancestors, their lineal history, and their family land
is an overlooked aspect of Haitians’ experience of possession” (Richman,
this volume). The religious life of long-standing families living in the eritaj
system is connected and rooted in the soil, in the trees, rocks, rivers, cem-
eteries, and mountains where they live. Ideally, religious work would take

place on the family land. Because family spirits “own” the land, ritual work
done on land founded by an ancestor can produce results that are not pos-
sible anywhere else. However, as a result of mass migration since the 1970s,
much religious work has been displaced from inherited land, and families
have had to adapt ritual practice considerably.

As Richman points out, the idea of a person experiencing individual,
“personal,” spiritual transformation through the instrumental use of spirit
possession is immoral in Afro-Creole tradition. Yet this is just how Jesus
is said to affect Christians when they are born again or sanctified through
indwelling by the Holy Spirit. Although each system contains elements
the other would proclaim immoral, it is the evangelicals who loudly judge
and condemn the Vodouists. Here we see in microcosm an example of the
large-scale conversion described by Johnson as constitutive of the European
modern, namely, the purification of spirits and possession by spirits in or-
der to produce the properly bounded, accountable, and contract-worthy
“individual” (Johnson, this volume).

Following the imperative of the Great Commission to spread Chris-
tianity to the nations and the New Apostolic mandate to exercise dominion
over their God-given “spot of land,” evangelicals proselytize, maintain they
hold the only truth, and seek to expand their territory as part of their holy
mission from God. Their goal is to convert the entire nation and “win Haiti
for Jesus.” Not incidentally, this also entails “winning Haiti” for a particu-
lar vision of economic development based on individual ownership and
proprietary law.

For spiritual warfare adherents, the Haitian nation fits perfectly into
the pattern they discern all over the globe. Haiti’s downward political and
economic spiral is evidence, proof, and result of deep demonic entrenchment.
As we learn from Richman, spirits and land are intimately related in Haiti’s
indigenous religion, and spirits do in some sense dwell in and “own” fam-
ily land. But third-wave evangelicals interpret the inherited spirits of ex-
tended families as demons in Satan’s army. Each time a family gathers on
its land to “serve” their spirits, they are renewing covenants with devilish
forces and strengthening demonic entrenchment. In the legal diplomacy
of the spirit world, the routine practices of Vodou allow the devil to stay,
grow, and hold Haiti hostage, thereby standing in the way of God’s plan for
world redemption.

In the 1990s, American evangelicals worked out the spiritual mapping
of Haiti and produced a new theological interpretation of Haitian national
origins. It began with a sin—the French enslavement of Africans in the
colonial. New Apostolic thought teaches emphatically that racism is a sin
against God and enslavement is its demonic fruit. It was only natural that
the African and creole enslaved population would rise up to fight for their
independence, which they did in 1791 in the world’s only successful slave
revolution. However, spiritual mappers stress a particular mythic event in
Haitian nationalist history: Several weeks before the slave uprising, a mili-
tary leader named Boukman Dutty held a political and religious rally on
the outskirts of the northern capital in a place called Bois Caïman. Bou-
man and an African priestess named Cécile Fatima sacrificed a wild boar
in order to propitiate and strengthen their ancestral spirits. In the ritual
logic of the Afro-Creole system, the life force contained in the animal’s
blood was given to spirits as a form of “feeding” in return for strength and
protection in battle. In many accounts, the revolutionaries also embraced
the African gods and rejected the Christian god.

The story of this foundational political and religious gathering has been
the subject of numerous tales, speeches, and writings by Haitian and other
intellectuals. Some embroider the slaves’ call for vengeance, while others
argue that the event was apocryphal or that there were many such religio-
political gatherings throughout the North, where the revolution began.
Spiritual warfare evangelicals, as we might imagine, interpreted the details
of the story in terms of their developing legal religious logic. In their view,
the slaves of San Domingue were the triple victims of sin and iniquity. Not
having had the benefit of the gospel, they were unsaved sinners by birth
and fell victim to French iniquity and enslavement. Slavery was so terrible
it created “welcome mats” for more sin and for demonic infestation. So in
their desperation, and without the benefit of Christ’s salvation, they had
very little choice than to turn to whatever force would aid them—namely,
their demonic ancestral spirits. For spiritual mappers, the sacrifice of
the boar at Bois Caïman was nothing less than a “blood pact” with demons,
legally sealing the fate of the new nation. Haitians freed themselves from
French slavery only to sell themselves as slaves to Satan (McAllister 2012).

This evangelical legal mythography (see Masquelier 2002) of demonic
possession has circulated throughout the Americas in media productions
and sermons, and many evangelicals began to read current events in Haiti
through the lens of this “blood pact.” Contemporary occasions were viewed
as “time gates” in spiritual diplomacy when the Haitian government—wit-
tingly or unwittingly—participated in renewing old demonic pacts under
the auspices of new bills and national commemorations. One such “time
gate” was the April 2003 decree by President Aristide that made Vodou an
official religion in Haiti for the first time in its two-hundred-year history.
This law enfranchised Vodou priests and priestesses with the legal author-
ity to officiate at baptisms and marriages and to operate in public with full
legal rights.

The president’s decree infuriated evangelicals throughout the Americas,
who considered it a spiritual ratification of the colonial covenant with Sa-
tan. A few months later, on the 2003 anniversary of the ceremony for
example, a Bahamian minister took out an ad in the Nassau Guardian for a
“prayer warrior alert.” Rife with territorial, legal, and military discourse, the
Bahamian ad read:

This bold stand taken by the Haitian President calls for action by the believ-
ers in the Body of Christ. It calls for us to fight against what is obviously a
plan of the enemy to control the inhabitants of that nation and to take it as
its own. . . . We must stand in the gap for the nation of Haiti. . . . As warriors
and watchmen of the city, we must protect our borders through spiritual
warfare. We must unite our efforts with the Christian Haitians whose earnest
prayers are that their homeland will become a true Christian nation. . . . We
must decree and declare salvation, deliverance, restoration and a new Godly
governmental order within the nation. . . . My fellow prayer warriors, Let us
war a good warfare! (Nassau Guardian 2003)²

When the earthquake hit Haiti in January of 2010, evangelicals in
churches and newspapers and on television, radio, and the Internet strained
to discern what the quake might have to do with God’s plan. Two days later,
Pat Robertson made a statement on the Christian Broadcasting Network
saying: “They were under the heel of the French, uh, you know, Napoleon
the third and whatever . . . and they got together and swore a pact to the
devil. They said, ‘We will serve you, if you get us free from the prince.’ True
story.” A media storm surrounded Robertson’s remarks because it seemed
so outrageous that he would be blaming a Haitian pact with the devil for
the quake. Very few media commentators were able to connect Robertson’s
statement with spiritual warfare theology. Yet for many evangelical and
Pentecostal viewers, the quake’s devastation made legal theological sense.
The principalities and powers of darkness that rule Haiti were doing their
devilish mischief to the extent that even God had lifted his protection from
Haiti.

While third-wave evangelicals discern specific spaces to be demonic
strongholds and declare certain cities, towns, and areas under attack from
“the enemy,” it seems that Haiti is the only nation in the Americas thought
to be “given to Satan.” Spiritual mapping is an enchantment of what Mi-
chael Shapiro calls “moral geography, a set of silent ethical assertions that
The Possession of God’s Possession

The New Apostolic Reformation lays claim to a set of rights understood to be biblical and founded on God’s spiritual laws by which he governs the universe. This means that true and real law at work in the cosmos derives from God’s pleasure, from sovereign will alone. However, since the biblical law believers invoke and long for is not in fact of the law of the land, spirit-filled Christians live in multiple relationships to legal regimes. They must imaginatively shift frames between God’s law, state law, international law, and, in the Haitian context, traditional law (of rural juridical “secret societies” such as the Bizango) and the de facto lawlessness and unpredictable insecurity that so often characterizes life.

After the earthquake in Haiti, when millions of people were displaced from their homes, the legalities of landownership became a more charged issue than ever and intensified the dialectic of possession and dispossession. New Apostolic disciples believe that Christians are the rightful owners, stewards, and tenants of the earth, the nations, and the land. For them, once Christians realize the extent of their legal, God-given authority, the battles over land in the spiritual realm will be easier to fight, and transformation can occur. “The land of planet Earth is forever legally included in the long-term plan of God for man,” writes third-wave apostle Jim Chosa. “Because Christ was the Father’s only begotten son, He inherited all that the Father owned, which included the copyright ownership of the entire planet called Earth.” (Chosa and Chosa 2004: 90). In the United States, the trespassers are the demons of neopagan communities, demons of addiction, and the spirit of Freemasonry. among other forces. In Haiti, these forces are exacerbated by the Vodou spirits, who are believed to be soldiers in Satan’s army.

An oft-reiterated theme for evangelicals is “possession of the land.” The word “possession” appears 244 times in the King James Bible, and in almost half, 111 of those instances, the word is used in connection with “the land.” All but one of these iterations are from the Old Testament, which is, among other things, the story of the people of Israel, their exile, and their return to possess their divinely promised homeland.

To possess is “to hold as property; to inhabit and take up a space; to dominate and take control of.” From the Latin potus, to be able, and sedere, to sit, etymologically possession has to do with an actualization, realization, or completing of two terms. The two parts of the term recall the situation of the Israelites, when for so much of their story, God has given (promised) them their land but they have yet to possess it. As Paul Johnson notes, “There seems to be something about ‘possession’ as at once the filling of but also the mediating and reconstituting of diasporic and other kinds of absence” (Johnson, this volume). Much of New Apostolic thought is concerned with the completing of these two terms, with Christians’ new, God-given agency to bring about the potential (“potus”) to control (“be seated”).

God has promised victory over evil and the salvation of the world, but the redemption has yet to materialize fully. God has instructed his people to possess the land, but the land is unclean and full of illegal encampments.

The Old Testament is full of legal agreements, covenants with God, and the people breaking the covenants. The story of the Israelites is, in a sense, a dialectic of law and lawbreaking. In the context of the lawlessness of Haiti, the tension of laws given and covenants broken holds special interest. (In the United States, Native Americans in the movement have focused on the government’s breaking of treaties as a sinful past that hurts the nation as a whole.) New Apostolics place emphasis on a diplomatic rhetoric about Christians’ true authority over demons, land, and all of earth’s creation. The only catch is the obligation of full obedience to the living spirit of God. Idolatry is the biblical sin most often responsible for the Israelites losing their land or failing to repossess it. It is also the sin thought by American and Haitian third-wave evangelicals to have been the root cause of Haiti’s problems and its compromised sovereignty. Schwartz (1997: 54) writes of how in the Old Testament, the property rights of humans is contingent upon their obedience: “A self-enclosed circular system is thereby instituted: to be ‘a people’ is to be God’s people is to inherit his land, and if they are not the people of God, they will not be a people, and they will
lose the land. . . . In this formulation, identity is wholly dependent upon the notion of possessing the land—whether in promise, in realization, or in memory.” Third-wave evangelicals are passionate in their belief that when Christians understand the legal authority they have been given by God, they then can work in the spiritual realm as intercessors to help bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on this earth by possessing the land. In 1 Peter 2:9, they read the (ostensible) Apostle Peter to be referencing this passage from Exodus: “Now therefore, if you will obey My voice in truth and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own peculiar possession and treasure from among and above all peoples: for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6, quoted in Chosa and Chosa 2004: 97; their emphasis). Chosa and Chosa argue that land belongs to Christians as the possession’s possession—the possession of the possession of God. They write: “If we are God’s possession as an offspring, we are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus, the Son of God (Rom 8:17). Since God owns the Earth, then the Earth is ours in joint-heirship with Christ . . . . Both elements of our identity link us to God as King and grant to us legal authority as kings in the Kingdom of God, to release the authority and power of the Kingdom of Heaven into our earthly spot or territory” (Chosa and Chosa 2004: 97).

Through these logics of legally inherited rights to land, New Apostolic Reformation thinkers create a geography of sovereignty, imagined to be at once specifically ethnic (our earthly spot of land) and Christian/universal (as joint heirs with Christ). This is especially important to third-wave evangelization and provides the principal spiritual-legal reasoning for a recent paradigm shift in new missions. According to many mission groups, evangelists will be most effective working legally under the authority of God in the territory where they and their ancestors have dwelled the longest. Those believers who are native and indigenous to a territory have a privileged legal authority to “possess” or “sit in” the land. Just as each individual person has biological DNA, so does DNA contain a spiritual dimension, encoding a person’s entire lineage with regard to his or her ancestors’ relationships with spiritual forces or salvific relationship to Christ. In Acts 17:26, God assigns some people to precisely earthly territory: he “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” This inspired Chosa to write: “All members of the current population of Earth have an earthly indigenous identity that connects them through their ancestors to the geographical land of some nation or nations on the Earth. This we call national identity, and it is a key part of God’s plan for man to exercise effective dominion on some spot of land in the Earth” (Chosa and Chosa 2004: 92).

Following this new trend in missionary thought, European American missionaries no longer envision long-term careers living in “the mission field.” Rather, this new paradigm takes into account anthropological scholarship, postcolonial critiques of imperialism, and New Apostolic understandings of God’s law. The proper way to evangelize is to “encourage, equip and empower” local pastors and missionaries, because they are more effective culturally and spiritually. Foreign aid for third-wave evangelism means supporting, equipping, and providing capital and entrepreneurial mentorship for local pastors and their business enterprises. Rev. J. L. Williams (who spoke at the revival one month after the quake), writes that, in much of the history of missions, “the local nationals never had ‘ownership’ of the mission or ministry from the very inception. At best they only had a ‘passive partnership.’ But true ownership was never theirs. . . . Therefore, when it comes to leadership in the Body of Christ—the best leaders are always ‘local leaders’—people who are the ‘native sons’—the ‘sons of the soil.’ In the final analysis, no foreign ex-patriot [sic] ever can lastingly take the place of the national” (J. Williams 2011; emphasis in original).

Following this philosophy, Reverend Williams frequently brings small teams of short-term missionaries to Haiti. In his view, church property and ministries rightfully belong to Haitians—provided they are Christian. Haitian prayer warriors enact this “right” when they deploy missions throughout Haiti. This complicates the accusation that this transnational evangelical form is neocolonial and American imposed. Still, while recent mission practice stresses the ownership of ministries by the “sons of the soil,” the dominant Western legal scheme of “possession” is still in place, where ownership of property includes the right to both use and alienate the property. But Richman (this volume) has shown that in the context of the complex system of rights to land that exists in traditional rural Haitian culture, the efitaj is collectively possessed, and according to Afro-Creole spiritual realities, or laws, the family compound cannot be alienated—at least not without retributive spiritual repercussion. Thus, the evangelical possession of the land amounts to a spiritual coup d’état against the inherited Afro-Creole spirits.

Images of freeing captives from bondage are rife. Satan is pictured as the ultimate usurper of land and enslaver and “possessor” of souls. C. Peter Wagner quotes biblical scholar Susan Garrett to argue the links between Satan and his possessions, which in this case refer both to his spatial realm and to the humans he enslaves: “The dark regions are the realm of Satan,
the ruler of this world, who for eons has set entrenched and well-guarded,
his many possessions gathered like trophies around him. The sick and pos-
sessed are held captive by his demons” (Garrett 1989: 101; quoted in Wagner 1992: 67). This language of (demonic) captivity and (salvific) freedom
for the nation is tremendously powerful in Haiti, a country whose national
pride is directly connected to winning its revolutionary war against France
and its subsequent abolition of slavery. It is also a resonant discourse for
a culture in which traditions include the practice of being possessed, or
"mounted by spirits.” For Haitian spiritual warriors, the first political revo-
lution can only be successful with the second, spiritual revolution, entail-
ing what they term “Christian revival.” Further, on the individual level,
possession by Vodou spirits will in turn be supplanted by the indwelling
of the Holy Spirit.13

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization emphasized the
privileged authority of local pastors in its 1993 statement on spiritual war-
fare in writing that “it was necessary for the encounter with the powers
of darkness to be undertaken by Christian people within the culture and in
a way that is sensitive in applying biblical truth to their context” (LCWE:
1993). Spiritual warfare images about releasing Haitian land from the
demons who “infest” it include, interestingly, ones that mirror techniques of
Vodou spiritual “work.” However, they are expressed in a Christian register.
Binding and tying in the Holy Spirit is one such spiritual warfare method.
In this imaginary, the godly “son of the soil” works "under the authority
of the Holy Spirit” to paralyze and dispossess the Vodou spirit, analogized
as “the strong man.” In the legal and military imagination, spiritual war-
fare proponents say that Jesus gave his disciples the authority to “bind
the strongman,” quoting Matthew 12:29: "Or how can one enter into a strong
man’s house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?”
and Matthew 16:19: “Whosoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound
in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in
heaven.” In intense prayer sessions, teams of prayer warriors work “in the
spirit” and “bind the strongman” and his dignitaries in speech acts of de-
liverance. It is words alone, uttered by a “possession of God’s possession,”
that activates the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this metaphysical
feat of restoring creation to its rightful owner.

Spiritual warfare is more powerful than Vodou because it beats Vodou at
its own game. For example, the image of tying and binding in spiritual war-
fare transposes seamlessly into the idiom of Afro-Creole traditions, since
images of “tying” and “wrapping” are central in Vodou spiritual work. Ritual
experts in Vodou commonly construct physical objects whose elements

semiotically instruct the spirits to address and direct a difficult situation
(Rey and Richman 2010; McAlister 1995). Tying and wrapping have a num-
er of effects: tying an adulterous husband spiritually to a chair in mini-
ature prevents him from visiting his mistress; wrapping an object in certain
colors calls and “heats up” the spirit being asked to bring about particular
changes or events. Tying colored rope around the waist of a pilgrim to a
shrine consolidates the power being engaged and directed. When preachers
and prophets announce that they will “mare demon” (tie up the demon) in
the name of Jesus, they exert their superior capacity to control the super-
natural world. While the Vodouisant operates within a scheme of ritual reci-
procity, where the spirits act because they are being “fed” (by energy such
as prayer, dance, flowers, food, or animal blood), the pastor’s efficacy stems
from his use of the diplomatic authority of the Holy Spirit, who, in turn, is
God acting in history.

What renewalist Christians long for is complete and total transforma-
tion. As Rafael Sanchez (2008) notes regarding Spiritism in Venezuela,
where, unlike in Haiti, squatters have begun to appropriate city spaces for
Jesus: “The Holy Ghost’s ongoing, active reclamation, for and on behalf
of God, of the spaces of His own creation may be characterized as limitless…
Spirit cannot but intervene in the world and, what comes to the same, in the
spatiotemporal manifold so as to constantly reclaim and return it to its
originating source and foundation” (272). When power is understood to
be transcendent, it is elusive, absolute, and inviolate (Schwartz 1997: 12).

Prayer warriors are convinced of their possession of the right, true, and
legal mission from God. They are not only at liberty to but mandated to
take possession of all earthly territory on behalf of God. Unlike the tradi-
tional system in Haiti, where, as Richman argues, family members in some
sense share a permeable identity, evangelicals focus on the individual saved
soul. Yet each individual draws on the strength of his or her church, always
mindful that he or she is part of the Body of Christ.

Dispossession and Possession in a Haitian Refugee Camp
I visited Haiti six months after the quake to spend time with a renewal-
list congregation that had “possessed the land” for its tent encampment in
Port-au-Prince. Under the authority of a powerful leader, through the lan-
guage of faith and practices of cooperation, and bolstered by transnational
circuits of evangelical support, this group was surviving horrific catastrophe
by fashioning themselves self-consciously as prophets and apostles living
as citizens in the Kingdom of God. I was introduced to the congregation
by Pastor John, an Anglo-American apostle from Illinois who preached a New Apostolic Reformation message of unifying the church to bring about the coming revival in Haiti. An unrelated medical team of four Americans from Chicago spent two weeks treating the camp’s sick. With a daughter married and studying in Venezuela, the church leader, Pastor Yvette, maintained numerous transnational connections throughout the Americas. Pastor Yvette’s house did not sustain damage, but she secured a tent from a relief organization and slept each night in the field with about five hundred members of her congregation. They were in tents close together and made up about half of an internally displaced persons encampment under the auspices of the Haitian Red Cross. (See also McAlister 2013.)

The camp seemed typical of Haiti’s internally displaced persons encampments, set out in rows consisting of different-sized tents, tarp-covered wooden structures, and bedsheets awnings broiling under the hot Caribbean sun. The site was shielded from the busy road beyond by a tall cement wall. Along the front wall was a huge water blader from which the camp residents pumped washing water. Along the side wall were two Red Cross latrines servicing the entire camp of fifteen hundred people.

Working according to New Apostolic theology, Pastor Yvette used spiritual warfare techniques to cleanse the soccer field of demonic forces. God told the church to walk the perimeter of the area where they had settled and to rebuke Satan in all his manifestations. With her team of twelve prophets, the pastor woke up each morning before sunrise for three days to perform a prayer walk on the modest patch of land. They spoke directly to the demonic spirits they discerned there and ordered them to flee to the bottom of the ocean. (This is where the spirits of ancestors are imagined to reside in the Vodou cosmology, although Pastor Yvette did not seem to think this significant.) The prophets declared the land their own “au nom de Jesus” (in the name of Jesus) and in this ritual way they netwaye (purified) the land and pran’l (took it). Pastor Yvette explained that God led them directly to that land and gave it to them for the time they were tenting there. She told me that the land was rightfully theirs as a gift from God and echoed Apostle Chosa’s belief that “the real trespassers are the forces of wickedness encamped as trespassers in the land” (Chosa and Chosa 2004: 90). In the midst of the citywide contest over land rights and the violent eviction of other tent encampments by their putative landowners, Pastor Yvette ritually enacted the dialectic of dispossession and possession in the legal terms of the New Apostolics.

As soon as God helped them repossess a patch of the soccer field, he found them a set of wooden posts and crossbeams that they used for a church, and they set the congregation’s tents in a square around this relatively large worship area. Gravel lined the ground, tarps formed a roof, and pews and chairs from the collapsed church building furnished the space. Next to the church area was a large tent serving as a clinic. A trained nurse, Sister Nadine, treated people, availing herself of a stockpile of medicine she rescued from the dispensary established by the church (but lost during the quake). With tents, church sanctuary, and clinic in place, they were planning to reopen their school for the children in the fall.

During my visits with the church, members insisted that despite living in tents they were fine and that God, who had not forsaken them, was leading them. They shared what resources they had, and they formed their own brigad de vijilans (vigilance brigade) to patrol the camp after dark. They related to me several accounts describing attacks they had endured at night in which someone or something had tried to steal children. Although they came in the guise of men, the church members believed the attackers to be lavgawou, female mystical spirits who typically steal or afflict children as a way to “feed” their spiritual strength. As spiritual warriors they expected demonic attacks by such trespassers, and they were fully confident in their own power over evil. All the attacks had been thwarted by the vigilance brigade and, ultimately, by the warfare prayer of the church. The congregation was a tight-knit group who considered themselves a spiritual family and clearly supported one another.

Pastor Yvette’s congregation, the “unesapped” and dispossessed, had carved out a space in which they lived not as God’s damned but as God’s blessed. They engendered certitude and deep strength through the language of faith. At the end of my conversations with every person in Pastor Yvette’s camp, we exchanged encouragement through a kind of discursive triangulation with God. “Thank you for coming to see us, and may God protect you and lead you.” “May God bless you and walk with you,” I would reply. Invoking God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit in every conversation was a powerful way to be centered and oriented toward sacred geography. Faith in the context of dispossession can be understood as an active mode of being and acting in the world. As Bornstein notes, “As a discourse, faith is much more than a mere description of an act. Faith is not a reflection of power relations; faith is itself a form of power” (2003: 59). The language and stance of faith made it possible for Pastor Yvette’s congregation to declare that God was judging Haiti through the earthquake, that he had spared them for his special purpose, had allowed them to possess the soccer field as their own, and was leading them to build a new Haiti.

Just after daybreak each Friday morning, it was time for a direct con-
nection to God. Pastor Yvette’s congregation included a circle of twelve prophets—eleven women and one man—who prayed and prophesied together for several meetings each week. One Friday morning in July, a young woman “in the spirit” spent more than an hour speaking prophetically to each person gathered there, including Pastor John from Illinois and myself. Making pronouncements in the first person, much as an Afro-Creole spirit might, the Holy Spirit spoke of the earthquake as God’s judgment on a disobedient nation. But the church here in the camp would be safe and protected. “I alone am keeping you alive and I am leading you,” said the Holy Spirit—prophet. Despite the collapse of their church and homes, despite devastating losses of life and limb in their city, they maintained the goal of total obedience to God. These Haitian believers fought the most profound and abject dispossession with the most direct form of possession, by the Holy Spirit itself (see also Sanchez 2008: 295).

During that Friday’s prayer session, Pastor John sat with a bowed head as a humble recipient of the prophetic word of the Holy Spirit. Although days before he had taken a leadership role in delivering a sermon to the church, now he submitted himself to the authority of this (financially) impoverished refugee woman, Pastor Yvette, to deliver the Word of God. Their mutually recognized “gifts of the spirit” made them brother and sister in the Kingdom, which for that moment was made spiritually manifest through the obedient holiness and chosen status of those gathered there. In praise songs, prayers, and prophecy, the Kingdom was dawning through the dust and stench of the camp. Not at all the displaced, unescaped victims of the devastating earthquake and a dysfunctional government, these brothers and sisters were God’s blessed warriors following his law and citizens of the Eternal Kingdom who would permanently join the King of Kings as his court of heaven.

Notwithstanding the humility of Pastor John in joining in fellowship with the “body of Christ” in the Haitian tent camp, it cannot be denied that the expansionist drive of this form of evangelicalism, whose practitioners seek ultimately to (re)take Christian possession of the entire earth, reproduces colonial geographies of advanced (most blessed) and primitive (most demonic) nations. These geo-geographies are articulated with racialized processes of political economy, such that the most demonic nations are also those with populations that are non-Christian and nonwhite. As part and parcel of the neoliberal economic conditions that structure Haiti’s relationship to international institutions, third-wave evangelicals are a passionate force within the privatized sphere of humanitarian aid. This movement superimposes a new legal imaginary and new theological geographies onto old moral geographies—but with a twist. It is the “sons of the soil,” the “native nationals” who must now “own” Christian ministries and do the hard work of spiritual warfare and church growth that will usher in the Kingdom.

Even as structural readjustment policies and then the earthquake have resulted in the displacement of huge numbers of Haitians from family land and urban housing alike, the New Apostolic discourse of Christian dominion and “possession of the land” has circulated through transnational communication and partnership. Americans and Haitians—and Haitian Americans—together have worked out the legal logics of spiritual mapping for Haiti. Haitian pastors and prophets “on the ground” reached with a special urgency for this logic in the aftermath of the quake. The movement combines an Old Testament ethos about land with a neo-Pentecostal emphasis on intercession through the Holy Spirit. Like the biblical narratives from which this imaginary is drawn, congregations appropriate the message that a defining feature of God’s chosen people is their divinely ordained right to (specific) land. It makes sense that in their most profound condition of traumatic displacement, insecurity, and lawlessness, Haitian believers would find special significance in biblical narratives about rights to land. After all, the Bible “records the wish of a people in exile to be landed, of a homeless people to have a home, and it depicts their aspiration as synonymous with the very will of God” (Schwartz 1997: 42). When God himself as the Holy Spirit lets the Body of Christ know that a particular section of a soccer field is given to them specifically, their certitude and collective identity are both strengthened. In turn, it is in these enclosed spaces that brothers and sisters in Christ draw on Christian structures of thought to create holiness, form alliances, minister to one another, speak against traditional religion, and imagine new spaces and the new legal order and forms of governance that they expect will be formed when God creates the new heaven and the new earth. As the state continues to dissolve under the weight of NGOs, UN peacekeeping mandates, and dysfunction, New Apostolic legal imaginary provides a rich field of images and rituals with which to create an attentive (if punitive) sovereign and theory of justice. Through ritual practices (that often use the same vocabularies, logics, and techniques as those of Vodou) renewalists create a legal order and a moral community that functions as an alternative structure of governance even in the context of unlawfulness in post-quake Haiti.

I have shown how, based on Old Testament tropes, and projected by the third wave into the present, the Holy Spirit’s possession of the people and the people’s possession of the land are related in a legal logic that can
be extrapolated by spiritual warriors to fit their own circumstances. God and the church belong to one another and to the land. But the price for disobedience is the punishment of dispossession. “If you go and serve the other gods and bow down before them, then Yahweh’s anger will be roused against you and you will quickly vanish from the good land that he has given you” (Joshua 23:16; quoted in Schwartz 1997: 48). The nation of Haiti displeased God, and the result was the earthquake and its massive displacement. So the soccer field that God gives Pastor Yvette’s church—like the land Yahweh gives to Israel—is always threatened by the same God’s displeasure.

For countries such as Haiti with strong “territorial spirits,” the existence of the “pagan” Afro-Creole gods still “served” by their families on their lands (and elsewhere) is thought to pose a serious threat to the whole nation. Evangelicals see the threat Vodou poses to the monotheistic imperative as equivalent to the threat of divine dispossession. Possession of humans by the wrong spirits can only be remedied by possession by the legitimate authority over creation, the Holy Spirit. For third-wave prayer warriors the only possible “legal” solution lies in submitting one’s identity to the violent and absolute transformation in which one is open to the ongoing possession by Holy Spirit, to the reality that one is “the possession of God’s possession,” to become subject and captive of divine will.

In early winter of 2011 as I was finishing this essay, I used Skype to reach Pastor Yvette. I wanted to send my greetings as I sometimes did and to let her know that I had not forgotten her. She answered her cell phone from her home near the soccer field. “Tout moun tre byen,” she assured me cheerfully. She said God had found housing for most of the congregation and that he had told the rest of the families to move to tents in the courtyard of their collapsed church building, which they were now repairing. “You are like Moses,” I told the pastor. “You led your people back home.” She chuckled and agreed that God was leading them forward, and that “nou viv nan men Jezi.” We live in Jesus’ hands. Sister Nadine, the nurse, took the phone and said that she was still running their small tent clinic each week but also had a new assignment from God: to remove to the Central Plateau in the countryside to bring medicine and nursing there. My goodness, I thought, a displaced tent-camp refugee going to help somebody else in need. Incredible. The end of our call, as good-byes do among Haitian Pentecostals, took several minutes. Pastor Yvette and Sister Nadine spoke words of encouragement and blessing “over me”: “May God help you write your paper; may he walk with you and inspire you to say everything he wants you to say. May God bless you and keep you close, protect you from evil, hide you from anybody seeking to harm you and render you invisible from evildoers. May God put his hands on you for protection and health and give you success, abundance, and strength.” “I accept,” I said, in the ritual

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answer I learned from them. Now I wanted to reciprocate. I stuttered a similar benediction: “May God bless you and walk with you and hold you in his hands. May he, um, help the sister go to the Central Plateau and succeed in, eh, bringing medicine there. May he, ummm, strengthen your gifts and protect you from anything that might harm you.” Sister Nadine’s calm and strong voice replied, “M’alsepte.” “Tell everybody I said hello,” I said. “Thank you for not forgetting us,” said Pastor Yvette, returning to the line. “Go with God,” I said. “May God bless you,” she said, and we hung up.
essay possible: Madrina, te felicito y te agradezco con todo mi corazón. I also thank her cabildo and all of its spiritual commissions for permitting me to create these material traces. On the no less important mundane plane, I thank the researchers of the Casa de Caribe as well as Sarah Hill, Diana Espírito Santo, Jalane Schmidt, Stephan Paliwé, two anonymous reviewers, and especially Paul Christopher Johnson for their insights and intellectual support. My 2006–11 fieldwork was supported by generous internal grants from Western Michigan University.

1. Original in Spanish; translation is mine, although the film also has English subtitles.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Salt peter (potassium nitrate) is a main ingredient in black gunpowder.
2. I use Santa as a general term for all the spirits and deities of Afro-Brazilian religion and Brazilian popular Catholicism in accordance with local usage in the setão.
3. One hundred reais were worth about fifty-five dollars that day.
4. One US dollar bought 1.82 Brazilian reais on August 6, 2009. Therefore $2850 = R$528,000 would be USD15,385. A carat is equal to 0.2 grams.
5. G and VS1 are measurements of the color and clarity of diamonds.
6. Nicolau’s story was told to me by one of his backland disciples. Whether or not it is true, it functions as a potent morality tale.

This information is available from the Instituto Brasileiro Geográfica e Estadística at http://www.ibge.gov.br/cidadesat/.

This research has been sponsored by a Fulbright-Hays fellowship and the California State University, Chico, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Among neo-Pentecostals in general, the emphasis on exorcism or “deliverance” does not always go hand in hand with an emphasis on property; some neo-Pentecostals disdain the prosperity teachings (see for example Annaconda 2008; Bottari 2000; D. Prince 1998).
2. In contrast to Brazil and Africa, there is little emphasis on deliverance from demons among North American prosperity preachers. In addition, some who stress the material dimension of salvation do so from a leftist perspective (e.g., Volf 2011; Boff 1978) that is opposed both to consumerism and the idea that they are the primary cause of society’s ills.
3. Oro (2006) refers to the IUJD as “neopentecostalismo macumbeiro” and calls its tendency to absorb other religious “religiofagia.”
4. An older Pentecostal denomination that was founded in the United States and reached Brazil via missionaries in the early twentieth century.
5. Various versions of this testimony are available on the Internet as well. For example, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpS8j1NFgEU.
6. Interestingly, luxury vehicles also figure prominently in the Comaroffs’ discussion of the IUJD in South Africa. They mention advertisements for BMWs adorning the altar of an IUJD church, for instance, and they cite an informant who claims that Satanists love to speed around in fast cars (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000).

CHAPTER SEVEN

The names of small organizations and people have been changed to protect their privacy and security. I am grateful to Pastor Yvette and her congregation for welcoming me into their space, to Pastor John for bringing me there, and to Jim and Faith.

Notes to Pages 178–181

Chosa, Pastor Joel Jeune, Pastor Matrice, Peter Wagner, and Rev. J. L. Williams for interviews. I am grateful to Paul C. Johnson and the members of the Atlantic Studies Initiative at the University of Michigan for their comments, and I also thank Atiya Ahmad, Maxwell E. Bevilacqua, Ron Cameron, Annalise Glauz-Todrank, Henry Goldschmidt, Peter Gottschalk, Laura Harrington, Jason Craig Harris, Jeffrey Kahn, Justine Quijada, and Mary-Jane Rubenstein.

1. Romans 8.

2. The term “evangelicalism” can describe many broad branches of Christianity and has recently come to include leftist ideologies as well as the more commonly known politically conservative ones. In general, evangelicism of all stripes is characterized by four features: (1) biblicalism, or the ultimate authority of the Bible; (2) the born-again experience, or the sense of having been reborn through a direct experience of the presence of Jesus Christ; (3) activism, or the duty to witness and spread the gospel; and (4) crucicentrism, or the focus on Christ’s crucifixion as the sole path to salvation. This definition is drawn from D. W. Bebbington, Evangelism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–17, and endorsed by Mark A. Noll, America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5. While there is great debate about terms and definitions, I use the term “renewalism” to refer to a broad category containing branches of evangelical, fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and charismatics that are expanding rapidly on a global scale. (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals” [Washington: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2006]).

3. This popular train of thought emerge from evangelical seminars such as the Fuller Theological Seminary, the Dallas Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and the Wagner Leadership Institute, and its rhetorical style focusing on transformation and restoration has been taken up by a wide range of groups and public speakers, including, in the United States, Rick Warren of Saddleback Church and Glen Beck on Fox News. Journalists have written about the movement since discovering Sarah Palin’s involvement, yet social scientists have not yet researched its thought and lived dimensions to the extent that it merits. Other prominent Americans affiliated with the movement include Ted Haggerty, former head of the National Association of Evangelicals; Mike Bickle’s International House of Prayer; Rick Joyner; and the loose network calling themselves Joel’s Army.

4. Many quotations here are from Jim Chosa’s work because I attended a spiritual warfare training seminar with him at the Wagner Leadership Institute in Colorado Springs. However, he shares this theology with other major thinkers whose writings are variations on a common theme. For focused attention on legalism, see Larson (1993).

5. Following Charles Taylor’s notion of the “social imaginary,” I am interested in analyzing the way “ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings,” often in ways that are not theorized but rather conveyed in images and through storytelling and the like. When shared widely, a social imaginary can form the basis of practices and identities and give rise to new social forms (Taylor 2002: 106).

6. It is undeniable true that third-wave evangelicals seek to eradicate Afro-Creole traditional religions, which they see as anti-Christian, demonic, and responsible in large measure for Haiti’s problems. As a researcher with multiple investments in Vodou, I forcefully reject this position and its project, even as I respect and admire the evangelicals I have met. Their anti-Vodou stance is all the more reason to work to under-
stand their structures of thought, for they seem to be gaining converts among the
Haitian majority and middle classes at a rapid rate and to be influencing renewalist
thought worldwide.
7. I have heard a difference of opinion on Satan’s legal standing in the Christian era.
Some maintain his activity on earth is illegal, while others insist that as long as hu-
mans continue to commit sin, Satan derives legal rights on earth as a result.
8. The quotation is from a woman in the US Virgin Islands rather than Haiti, but it is
such a fine and wonderfully illustrative example of the rhetorical flair and certainty
of members of renewalist movements that I cite it here.
9. Wagner (1992: 143) also points out that this area is the center of other “demonic
religions” such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Shintoism, and Taoism.
10. “For so hath the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of
the Gentiles, that thou shouldst: be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” (Acts
13:47).
11. It is worth noting that demon possession and exorcism is a central Christian theme
and has come in and out of practice in various forms of Christianity in different
periods.
12. The ad probably addresses domestic Bahamian anxieties about Haitian migrants,
known as “the Haitian problem” in the local media, as much as it does support
for spiritual warfare in Haiti itself. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for the
University of Chicago Press who pointed this out.

CHAPTER EIGHT
1. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the panel “The Work of Posses-
sion” at the Moments of Crisis: Decision, Transformation, Catharsis, Critique con-
ference of the Society for the Anthropology of Religion and the Society for Psychol-
ogical Anthropology, Pacific Grove, California. I wish to express my gratitude to
panel organizer Paul Johnson and discussant Michael Lambeck for their comments.
2. In addition to Mauss’s concept of “the gift,” Marx’s idea of “appropriation” is an-
other well-know example of this approach. See also Carrier (1999); Taussig (1993):
3. Unlike Mama Lola and others in the Haitian immigrant community in Brook-
lyn described by Karen McCarthy Brown (1991), many in South Florida have not
deavored to serve or feed their spirits in the host society. Rather, those in Palm
Beach County practice long-distance worship, anchored in the sacred landscape
of the family land back home. The earlier movement to New York involved many
migrants from the city of Port-au-Prince who were already a generation (or more)
removed from their “inheritance” and may have already been affiliated with urban
temple congregations based on voluntary association rather than descent. Yet as
Brown (1991) explains, people who serve their spirits in New York are nonetheless
occasionally enjoined through spiritual affiliation to return home to worship.
4. Migration of a spirit’s “chosen” similarly prevents the spirit from appearing in his or
her “person” until that person returns. Nor can the iwa claim another member as long
as the migrant is alive. See Richman and Rey (2009) for a discussion of this issue.

CHAPTER NINE
1. Following the agonistic notion of play and opposition developed by Richard Bur-
ton (1997), I am thinking about the mimetic dances that slaves used to perform in