

(57) Abstract: A method of converting particulate lignocellulosic material to produce volatile organic compounds and char, comprising, forming a mixture of the particulate lignocellulosic material with a catalyst composition containing polar organic liquid and an acid in the presence or absence of added water, heating the mixture to a temperature sufficiently high and for a period sufficiently long as to convert a major portion of any remaining solid phase of the mixture to char whilst agitating the mixture, and separating volatile organic compounds and the catalyst composition as a gaseous phase from the solid phase.