

# Pentecostalising the Voice in Zambian Charismatic Church History: Men of God’s Expression of Spiritual Identities, 1990 to Present

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## Abstract

The strides to historicise Pentecostalism in Zambia have attempted to account for the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches without delving into the prominent features of Pentecostalism that have been popularised over time. One such characteristic is the “spiritual voice” that has been associated with the Pentecostal “Men of God” (clergy) in contemporary Zambia. Hence, this article explores the use of the voice as the power of articulation, understood as a spiritual vocal gift, as an expression of spiritual identity among the “Men of God” using the identity theory as a lens in Zambian Pentecostal church history. This is deemed significant not only for contributing to the body of knowledge but also to underscore the neglected attribute of Pentecostal influence on Zambia’s religious landscape. An interpretivist case study was employed in which raw data (video of sermons and pastoral ministries) and documents were analysed and interpreted. It was established that these “Men of God” perceived “broken vocal cords” as spiritual vocal gifts. As such, the voice not only evoked the power of articulation to communicate the spiritual emotions, but was also used to appeal, attract, and satisfy congregants (religious marketing) through assuming a ministerial “identity.” The article argues that the history of Pentecostalism in Zambia could not be detached from the romanticisation of the voice as a symbol of spirituality, and an imprint of identity on the “Men of God.”

**Keywords:** Men of God; spiritual identity; church history; voice; broken vocal cords; Pentecostalism; emotions



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## **Introduction**

This article is based on an inquiry on the bodily expressions of spirituality, in particular broken vocal cords or spiritual vocal gifts as a form of emotional expression and spiritual identity among selected Pentecostal pastors in Zambia. It seeks to contribute to Zambian church history by documenting how the voice was essentialised in the charismatic churches after the 1990s. Though the roots of charismatic churches in Zambia stretch to the time before Zambia's independence in 1964 (Lumbe 2008, 27), Pentecostalism's influence on Zambia's religious landscape was more pronounced after the 1990s. Its impact manifested in the growth of new churches, fellowships and ministries, televised deliverance services, evangelisation in public spaces, and engagement of Pentecostal pastors in politics. Most importantly, Pentecostalism introduced new expressions of spiritualities.

One such phenomenon is the voice and associated sounds, which came to be associated with Pentecostal spirituality, hence deserving an in-depth understanding, which can contribute towards a comprehensive history of Pentecostalism in Zambia. This is deemed significant given that, despite the observable use of emotions in religion, which is widely acknowledged and linked to the "Men of God" with "broken vocal cords" in Pentecostalism, little scholarly attention in African and Zambian studies in particular had engaged with Pentecostal understanding of the voice as a symbol of spiritual identity in their history. This is because the focus of Zambian church history has been on historicising the mainline churches while Pentecostal-based studies dwelt on the rise and linkages of Pentecostalism to different spheres such as politics, economics, health (healing), and mainline Christianity, among others. Lumbe (2008, 6–7) not only acknowledged but bemoaned the lack of formal documentation on the comprehensive history of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement in Zambia.

In addition, studies on Pentecostal expressions of spirituality have also concentrated on spiritual gifts (speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, signs, and wonders in general) and in particular speaking in tongues, prophecies and healing (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). Therefore, in conversation with the identity theory, this article explored the growing use of the voice as an avenue for expressing emotions, which in turn arouses intense feelings of not only the pastor but the adherents as well, thereby imprinting a personal, social role and religious cultural identity on the "Men of God" believers, and becoming a part of Pentecostal church history too. The identity theory was used to explain the multiple identities "Men of God" carry and how they express themselves during worship services; which helped us relate to the appropriation and essentialising of the voice and patterns of religious rite praxis in the church and society.

This article, therefore, seeks to contribute to Zambian charismatic church history by providing an in-depth understanding of the Pentecostal legacy within Zambia's religious landscape; by uncovering how the voice was pentecostalised and essentialised as a symbol of spiritual identity in post-1990 Zambia. This article might, therefore, be beneficial to not only scholars of religion and emotions, but also to students and scholars of church history by

arguing that Pentecostalism had remodelled the voice as a symbol of spiritual identity on Zambia's religious landscape—as demonstrated among the “Men of God.”

## **Method**

The study was informed by interpretivism and an interpretivist case study. This is because the study sought to understand (Ponelis 2015, 537) how the selected Pentecostal pastors were using their voices (broken vocal cords) as an avenue for expressing their emotions and spiritual identities as part of the Pentecostal history in Zambia. The “Men of God” and Pentecostal churches were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). In this regard, three Pentecostal churches (pastors and congregants) were selected for inclusion in the study. Most importantly, this was because the study was interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing and generalisations (Merriam 1998, 28–29). Following Merriam (1998, 29) and Yin (2003, 13) who advance that case studies present numerous evidentiary sources—such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts—the article was informed by insights from interviews (with pastors and congregants of selected Pentecostal churches in Zambia), documents, and video of sermons and pastoral ministries.

Data were inductively analysed through the description of the case and themes of the case (Creswell 2007, 75). As such, the analysis of the data followed the guidelines advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006, 77–101) in thematic analysis. This involved generating and applying codes to the data, and then identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes). Consistent with the interpretivist tradition, the insights from the study were not for purposes of generalisation, but providing in-depth understanding on how the selected Pentecostal pastors were using the broken vocal cords to express their spiritual emotions and emotionalise their congregants in selected Pentecostal churches in Zambia. As a Pentecostal phenomenon (Pentecostalised voice) that had transformed the religious landscape, it deserved scholarly attention since it formed part of Pentecostal history in Zambian Christianity.

The names of the selected pastors, their churches and congregants have been withheld, thus pseudo names have been used to safeguard the interests and privacy of individuals and their institutions.

Theoretically, the article was informed by the identity theory so as to make meaning of how the “Men of God” used their voices during worship services to express their spiritual identities. As Burke (1980) opines, identity is a complex and sometimes ambiguous concept, which can be loosely understood as the set of different meanings that define a person in his or her society. An attempt to understand identity has resulted in an agreement by scholars of the subject that people possess multiple identities and the three widely accepted bases of identity are social (group), role, and personal (Burke and Stets 2012).

Personal identities relate to the self-meanings that allow an actor to realise a sense of individuality. Often times, personal identities are activated because they are not generally unique to any specific circumstance; they rather apply across many situations. Role identities are defined by the meanings one attributes to the self, while performing a role such as a student, worker, and in our case a preacher or pastor or “Man of God.” These meanings emerge from socialisation and through culture, as well as by the unique, individual assessment of what a role means for an actor.

Social identities describe identity meanings actors have or assume when they identify with groups or categories (Pentecostal in this case) and allow actors to create a sense of unity with others and share common bonds. Social identities also allow actors to feel good about themselves. All three types of identities can operate simultaneously, and thus in many situations actors have multiple identities activated (social, role, and personal identities).

By using the identity theory, the article sought to explore how the voice was a source of personal (by defining the “Man of God”), role (preacher, pastor) and group (Pentecostal “Men of God”) identity for the “Men of God,” as it was an avenue for expressing spirituality, an aid to performing the role of preacher or pastor and imprinting a group identity as a Pentecostal congregation. Identity theory was, therefore, used to describe how identities emerged in religious circles (Carter 2014, 247).

### **Religious Landscape of Zambia**

Zambia’s religious demographics have been extensively described (Cheyeka et al. 2014). Suffice to note that Zambia is a multi-faith society whose dominant religion is Christianity. Christianity in Zambia has also been described in terms of representation through umbrella bodies, such as the Zambian Episcopal Conference (ZEC), now Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), and recently the Independent Churches Organisation of Zambia (ICOZ). According to the history of Christianity in Zambia, the CCZ was established in 1945 to take care of the mainline Protestant churches’ interest. But over time, EFZ came on board in 1964 to oversee Evangelical churches and the ICOZ took care of charismatic churches, ministries, fellowships and “other centres.”

The idea of umbrella bodies came about to help organise and foster ecumenism among different religions in the country. Other non-Christian groups have formed and registered their own umbrella bodies such as the Muslims Association of Zambia, the Council for Zambia Jewry, Hindu Association of Zambia, and the Bahai Community in Zambia, among others. Of interest to this article was the place of Pentecostalism represented by “Men of God” in the religious landscape of the country.

### **Pentecostalism in the Zambian Context**

The description by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005, 388) and Cox (1996) of Pentecostalism as the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world today, was true in the Zambian context.

The movement's reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century manifested not only in the growing numbers of Pentecostal churches, but Pentecostal presence and influence in the public sphere too.

The birth of Pentecostalism is traced to the work of the Pentecostal mission churches such as the work of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAoG) around the 1950s, when the Pentecostal missionary arrived in Eastern Zambia—then Northern Rhodesia—to evangelise the local population and later expanding to the Copperbelt (Lumbe 2008, 27–28). The other highlights of the 1960s were the change of name from Pentecostal Assemblies of God to Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Zambia (PAoGZ) in response to the country's new name at independence and the formation of the Bible School in 1965.

After 1965 to the 1970s, Pentecostal growth was slow until the 1980s when Zambia began to record the Pentecostal boom. This boom was attributed to crusades, the opening of the Pentecostal Bible College in Kitwe, televised crusades and numerous other factors. Suffice to note that the reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in Zambia have already been theorised (Cheyeka et al. 2014; Lumbe 2008; Phiri 2003). Others like Udelhoven (2010), Kroesbergen (2013), Zulu (2013), Cheyeka (2008) and Haynes (2012) have studied the development of Pentecostalism and prosperity gospel in Zambia. The impact of Pentecostalism in politics has also been explored (M'fundisi 2014). For example, the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and the resultant formation of the Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (MNGRA), which was mandated to actualise the declaration among other tasks, have been associated with Pentecostal presence in politics (Kaunda and Mulenga 2018, 4–5).

The history of Pentecostalism is also not devoid of the typologies. For example, Lumbe (2008) categorises Pentecostalism in two forms, namely, Pentecostals and charismatics. While Pentecostal churches entered Zambia as a result of Western missionary enterprises (such as the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God [Canada and USA], the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Church of God, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Full Gospel Church), the charismatic churches are or were initiated by Zambians and evolved around individuals. Included in this category are charismatic churches which have found their base in Zambia but are products of mission efforts of charismatic churches established in other countries. The latter propound a strong mission outlook, with popular charismatic leaders. They include churches like Winner's Chapel, Deeper Life Church, and Zambia Assemblies of God (ZAOGA), among others.

Munshya (2015) also acknowledges the theological diversity of Zambian Pentecostalism, and categorises various streams of Pentecostalism. These include the classical Pentecostals, which have a centralised leadership structure and are spread throughout the nation. They include denominations such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Zambia (PAOGZ) and the Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC). The second stream is what Munshya (2015) refers to as “Word of Faith” movements, which have some sentiments of classical Pentecostals but also emphasise some form of “prosperity gospel,” the likes of Dr Nevers Mumba's Victory Ministries. The other streams are the newer, independent churches with strong emphasis on

“prophetism” and the charismatic groups. While the prophetic churches are more close to Zambian Traditional Religions and worldviews, the charismatic Pentecostal groups essentially broke away from mainline denominations such as the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) and the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ); examples would include the Grace Ministries Mission International (GMMI) and the Bible Gospel Church in Africa (BIGOCA).

While these streams can be identified in Zambian Pentecostalism, the categories are by no means exhaustive and in many cases intersect and overlap with each other very frequently. These categories are also not explicit, in that Pentecostals are more defined by their beliefs and practices. Udelhoven (2010, 1) actually stresses that the terms (categories above) are not used by the churches themselves, for instance most churches born and bred in Zambia regard themselves simply as “Pentecostal” and see themselves very much in continuity with the older traditions of the same name. Lumbe (2008, 19) also confirms that most Zambians do not distinguish Pentecostals from charismatics as they are simply referred to as *Ba Pente* (Pentecostals). Thus, Asamoah-Gyadu’s (2005, 389) understanding of Pentecostalism as that stream of Christianity that emphasises personal salvation in Christ, as a transformative experience brought about by the Holy Spirit; and in which such pneumatic phenomena as “speaking in tongues,” prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, and signs and wonders in general, are sought, accepted, valued, and consciously encouraged among members, informed our analysis and location of selected “Men of God” and their congregants in post-1990 Pentecostal Christianity in Zambia.

The referent “Men of God” is a catchy phrase used to address church leaders (pastors, ministers or clergy) of the mushrooming Pentecostal churches in Zambia. Borrowed from the biblical usage of the title, it is applied to respected “prophets and loved religious leaders, a holy man or saint” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2014). Pentecostal scholars have also identified these “Men of God” as the “Big Men of God” (Kalu et al. 2018). For example, Kalu’s analysis of the media technology in the creation of Pentecostal cultural values and systems of meaning highlighted how the media facilitated the making of the “Big Men of God” culture (Kalu 2008, 115). Zambia has seen the growing “Men of God” culture and the consequent increase in the number of “Men of God” ordained, and self-professed.

Unlike in the past when the clergy underwent formation (seminaries), ordained, and appointed to serve the church by their established church hierarchy, the twenty-first century has witnessed an increase in the number of clergymen (Lauterbach 2010) called to service through personal religious experiences with the numinous. Suffice to note that the interest of this study was not about “genuine *Men of God* or not” but rather the essence of this inquiry was to learn from the participants about their bodily expression of spiritual identities as experienced through their use of the voice; and in turn capture the voice as a defining form of spirituality and influence of Pentecostal Christianity in post 1990 Zambian church history.

Existing studies have already linked vocal complaints to religious activities or practices, hence it was deemed significant to explore how the “broken vocal cords” imprinted a “Pentecostal culture” (Pentecostalsised voice) while being appropriated for religious praxis

both in church and society. For example, in a study by Neto et al. (2009, 410) in their analysis of the vocal health of preachers, they observed a high prevalence of vocal complaints in the preachers studied. Among the pastors that reported hoarseness, 13 per cent indicated a constant symptom, while in the majority (87%) were episodic and always linked to vocal use or abuse. The vocal complaints were associated with lack of vocal health knowledge on how to use, care and mind the voice in their religious act.

### **Description of the Men of God and their New Churches in Zambia's Religious Landscape in Post 1990**

The “Men of God” who participated in the study were all above 40 (the oldest being 54 and the youngest 41 years old). They were all Zambian by birth and attested to having grown up in Christian families. With the exception of one who did not complete his secondary school education owing to financial constraints, they were all graduates from the Zambian education system. The “Men of God” had also established their own churches, which were dubbed ministries. They all related the formation of their ministries to the religious experiences through visions in which they claimed to have received a mandate to set up churches. These ministries were established after leaving the mainline and classical Pentecostal churches. For example, in 1994, Bishop A left the Catholic Church and joined the Pentecostal Holiness (a classical Pentecostal church) and soon took up leadership positions in the church. While still serving as a church elder in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, he had a vision in which a man appeared and instructed him to open up a new church in 2010. Upon receiving this vision, Bishop A left the Pentecostal Holiness Church in order to start a new church, which had grown with members amounting to over one thousand across the country (Bishop A, personal communication, January 2018).

The other “Men of God” also recounted their religious encounters through visions, which became the basis for the establishment of their own ministries, thus pointing to the continued reawakening of the Pentecostal churches in the post-1990 religious scene. These accounts further reflected the Pentecostal trajectory in which new churches or ministries were linked to mainline churches and classical Pentecostal churches. Thus, seen through Lumbe's (2008) categories of Pentecostal and charismatic churches and in a context where the adherents did not make these distinctions, it is clear that all the three selected churches could well be described as charismatic churches. This is because they did not only evolve around individuals, but had linkages with mainline churches and classical Pentecostal churches. This also, therefore, confirmed the conclusions that have been drawn in existing studies on the birth of Pentecostal churches in Zambia (Haynes 2012; Udelhoven 2010; Cheyeka 2008). Worth noting, though, is the discourse of “ministries” attached to their establishment, which the founders and congregants simply referred to as churches. Again, this is backed by Udelhoven (2010) who attested that there was a tendency to use the terms “church” and “ministries” interchangeably and conveniently.

## **Essentialising the Voice in the Selected Zambian Charismatic Churches**

In order to show how the voice had become popularised on Zambia's religious landscape, descriptions of the experiences of selected "Men of God" and their congregants were used as a window through which the voice, as representation or symbol of spiritual identity, could be understood. To begin with, all the observed "Men of God" in the selected Pentecostal churches in the study manifested voices associated with broken vocal cords, in other words their religious praxis were characterised with loud hoarse voices, which could sometimes be quickened and suddenly slowed while preaching and praying. The voices were also laden with emotions and had a somewhat dramatic effect on the congregants.

### **Source of the Voice**

The voice was understood as a spiritual vocal gift. Its manifestation during the observed church services was attributed and appropriated to either God as a given gift or as a learnt practice (essentialised). For example, all the "Men of God" linked their voices to the nature of their vocations (as "Men of God"). Bishop A noted that it was not his intention to use such a unique and appealing voice, but rather it was the work of the Holy Spirit at play during religious rites.

Accordingly, the work of "Men of God" were invariably imbued with the encounter with God which translated into spiritual baptism, thus the "Men of God" attributed their hoarse voices to a spiritual vocal gift, a voice which Neto et al. (2009) refer to as a "broken vocal cord." The former perspective can be explained by using the Pentecostal teaching on spiritual gifts. According to Coats (2012), the interpretation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is also taken to include other spiritual gifts such as ability to prophesy, to heal and to interpret speaking in tongues, sharing words of wisdom and knowledge. It is for this reason that the use of this kind of voice was not only restricted to pastors and prophets but also to everyone and anyone, as long as he or she had undergone spiritual baptism (Bishop A, Personal communication, 17 April 2017).

Other than the voice being seen as a gift after spiritual baptism, some respondents attributed it to an acquisition (learnt).

Before becoming a member of Pentecostal holiness, I had an idea of how Pentecostals conducted their services because I frequently attended their services even though I was still Catholic by then. Attending Pentecostal church services helped me to learn more about Pentecostalism. So when I joined, I easily adapted and was later appointed as church elder. (Pastor A, personal communication, 17 April 2017)

Besides learning from the praxis from models—senior pastors within the congregation—the media had an influence too. For example, the founder of one ministry hinted that he had adopted or appropriated his voice (use of a louder spiritual voice) after watching worship services on television channels: "As I watched my fellow Men of God preaching on television, I could take note of their skills ... then I began to imitate the use of a louder voice" (Pastor B, interview 2017).



As such, socialisation could not be detached from the prominence and use of the spiritual vocal gift among “Men of God” in Pentecostalism, in that they learnt from one another. The adoption of the unique voice was learnt by listening and it was perfected through practising, given that this was seen by members of the church as the accepted vocal cord for “Men of God” (essentialise). As such, everyone assigned the task of preaching was expected to use the unique identity. For Hollenweger (2004), unique speech codes for Pentecostals may well be tied to their unique experiences since they are a group of experiences. As postulated by the identity theory, spiritual identities were ascribed in these churches through ascription, alongside identification and the discovery of resemblance of the spiritual gift between oneself and fellow congregants (Carter 2014, 246).

Although the spiritual vocal gift was learnt, the learning was not associated with theological training.

Theological training has nothing to do with the change of the vocal cord ... in many cases, Pentecostal preachers or Men of God rarely go for theological training but they learn through experience. So the change of the voice is spiritual, it is something that one finds himself [herself] in. For example, sometimes I may not know that I have deviated from my normal vocal code. (Bishop A, personal communication, 17 February 2018)

This pointed to “Men of God” in charismatic churches having little theological training, given that most of these churches lacked organised structures and relied on the charisma of the individuals (Lumbe 2008). Although the Pentecostal voice has been attributed to the spiritual gifts and an acquisition (learning from fellow pastors), the “Men of God” were aware of the dangers of “faking” the voices (to uphold vocal expectations associated with their status):

The voice is due to the influence of the Holy Spirit, but some voices are initiated by the devil in order to attract followers, for them to make huge sums of money. Others are just imitating the voices of known [famous] pastors in order for them to be known as well ... This is also because some pastors have taken a church as a business platform. (Pastor C, interview 2018)

The understanding of the Pentecostal voice, which was either learnt or a gift from spiritual baptism, demonstrated how the “Men of God” culture had been created within the selected charismatic churches. All this complements the description of Pentecostal churches as such institutions that focus more on pneumatic phenomena such as speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing, miracles, and signs and wonders (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). Seen as evidence of the active presence of God’s Spirit, the spiritual vocal gift had also become part of the selected charismatic churches’ religious cultural identity. Thus, consistent with the identity theory that meaning was derived from socialisation and culture (Burke 1980), the meaning of the spiritual vocal gifts among the selected “Men of God” emerged from socialisation and religious culture, including the unique, individual assessment of what a role meant for an actor (“Man of God”) and the entire institutions where they are affiliated.

### **Place of the Spiritual Vocal Gift in the Selected Charismatic Churches**

The vocal spiritual gift was regarded important in the selected charismatic churches by not only the “Men of God” but the congregants too. The spiritual vocal gift was an expression of

the spirituality of the preacher; it also fulfilled the congregants' expectations of who a "Man of God" is, what the "Man of God" does, how and why he does what he does. The broken vocal cord was largely perceived as a symbol of spiritual baptism. One congregant said: "When the Man of God preaches, sings or encourages, it means he or she is trying to express the spiritual gift that is in him or her through spiritual baptism" (Mwalu, interview 2017). This was as if to suggest that a "Man of God" needed to have a unique voice to carry out their religious duties (essentialise). As such, the spiritual vocal gift appropriated the "Men of God's" role identity, "the work of the 'Man of God' is to make the word of God known to the world and so this kind of voice helps to convey the message to the people" (Bishop A, interview 2017). One of the church members also mentioned that when a "Man of God" is filled with the spirit, he is no longer speaking his own words but the Holy Spirit begins to speak through him (representation).

The spiritual vocal gift also facilitated the capturing of attention of the congregants: "Each member or individual [within the church] will be quiet, following the sermon whenever the preacher is using the spiritual vocal gift" (Mwansa, interview 2017). By this, the voice also emotionalised the adherents by arousing people's interest and attention in the homily. As a preacher you don't have to be boring in the way you present your sermons to the congregants ... if you are called to be a preacher by God, you ought to use the voice effectively (Pastor Banda, interview 2018). The use of a spiritual vocal gift was also backed by reference to accounts in Scripture—such as an example of Pentecostal day, when Jesus' disciples started to speak in tongues at the top of their voices, "Pentecostal 'Men of God' and congregants emulate that" (Pastor B, interview 2018).

In addition, the spiritual vocal gift was considered to be a prerequisite in ministering in some churches, thus giving the Pentecostal group identity (the "Men of God" and congregations). For example, in one ministry, for one to preach, sing praise or pray he or she has to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Bishop A, personal communication, 17 April 2018). This understanding resulted in many congregants spending much time in prayers to seek God's presence. The vocal gift, therefore, expressed emotions and spirituality as the goal of prophetic mission was not to entertain or merely speak to the hearers but to transform the affections of the people in the same way that the prophet has been transformed. As Leoh (2006, 45) notes, there has been a heavy emphasis on emotional involvement in Pentecostal sermons.

### **Reflecting on the Essentialisation of the Spiritual Vocal Gift in Selected Zambian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in Post-1990**

The selected "Men of God" and their congregants had essentialised the spiritual voice in post-1990 through the understanding that it was a gift of spiritual baptism. With Pentecostalism becoming popular after 1990, there was a growing popularity of the phenomenon (most people had experiences of spiritual baptism). It is probable that the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches was synonymous with the popularisation of the (broken vocal cords) spiritual vocal cords. By being a symbol of spiritual baptism, it prompted the "Men of God" and congregants to do anything possible to be able to speak according to the dictates of their

religious cultural heritage (understanding the spiritual vocal gift). This is what made Pastor B lament that some voices are even initiated by the devil in order to attract followers, for them to make huge sums of money, while some Pentecostal pastors simply imitated the voices of prominent pastors in order to be recognised and associated with Pentecostalism.

The phenomenon also grew after the 1990s owing to the influence of the “born again” President (Frederick Chiluba) who has been associated with liberalisation of the economy in Zambia, which paved the way to the growing influence of the media in religious circles. This saw the classical Pentecostal mission churches take advantage of the new religious landscape to televise their services and hold public crusades across the country. The influx of popular evangelists in the country and their popularity in the media appealed to individuals in the country who ended up establishing own churches but also emulated certain attributes such as use of the voice in religious praxis.

Furthermore, testimonies of “born again” Christians narrating their conversion and encounter with God had become part of a genre in Zambia. The recounts signified the importance that had been attached to the spiritual voice, and in turn popularising it. The Scripture unions also had their own share in essentialising the “voice” as they were spaces for spiritual baptism and places, which groomed future Pentecostal leaders (Cheyeka 2008). Ultimately, the spiritual vocal gift was made popular by virtue of the functions it played in shaping the individual, role and group identity of the Pentecostal “Men of God” and their congregants. The ability to speak in a loud, hoarse voice or with the spiritual vocal gift was stimulated during the church services as the “Men of God” encountered the Holy Spirit, thus giving them an identity. When all this is put together, the voice not only communicated the spiritual emotions of the “Men of God,” but also emotionalised the adherents through attracting and satisfying congregants’ spiritual expectations. Therefore, the article argues that Pentecostal and charismatic church history in Zambia should encompass the outstanding influences of the Pentecostal churches in transforming church services to essentialising the place of the Pentecostal voice during the religious praxis.

## **Conclusion**

The article explored the experiences of three selected Pentecostal “Men of God” (who had founded their own churches), and their congregants in order to understand how they had essentialised the Pentecostal voice to express varying spiritual identities. The article has related the essentialised Pentecostal voice as part of the broader history of charismatic churches in Zambia. Its popularity was closely tied to the growing influence of Pentecostalism in the public sphere in post-1990 Zambia. As a spiritual gift, the “Men of God” and their congregants were using the voice to express their spirituality and emotionalise their congregants. Thus, seen through identity theory, the voice became a vehicle for personal, role and group identities of the “Men of God.” Based on this, the article has advocated the need for Zambian church history to tap into the ways in which Pentecostal Christianity has shaped the representation of the spiritual gift and its appropriation in the religious practices.

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