

Ministry Lima Jari sebagai Kerja Institusional: Analisis Neo-Institusional tentang Otoritas, Legitimasi, dan Dinamika Organisasi dalam Eklesiologi Pentakosta Kontemporer

The Fivefold Ministry as Institutional Work: A Neo-Institutional Analysis of Authority, Legitimacy, and Organizational Dynamics in Contemporary Pentecostal Ecclesiology

Jusuf Hutapea

Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries, Makati, Philippines

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: jusufhutapea@yahoo.com

Received: 29 September 2022 / Accepted: 24 November 2023 / Published: 30 December 2023

How to cite this article:

Hutapea, Jusuf. "The Fivefold Ministry as Institutional Work: A Neo-Institutional Analysis of Authority, Legitimacy, and Organizational Dynamics in Contemporary Pentecostal Ecclesiology." *Kinaa: Jurnal Teologi*, 8, no.2 (2023): 163-181. <https://doi.org/10.47178/9w9aqx02>.

Abstrak

Ministry lima jari dari Efesus 4:11-16 telah menghasilkan banyak kajian eksegetis, historis, dan missiologis, namun studi yang ada sebagian besar berfokus pada interpretasi doktrinal atau aplikasi praktis tanpa memeriksa mekanisme institusional yang membentuk ekspresi kontemporer. Artikel ini mengusulkan kerangka teoretis neo-institusional untuk menganalisis bagaimana ministry lima jari berfungsi sebagai kerja institusional yang menciptakan, mempertahankan, dan mengganggu struktur otoritas dalam eklesiologi Pentakosta. Dengan menggunakan etnografi institusional kritis, studi ini mensintesis literatur yang ada melalui lensa teori neo-institusional, logika institusional, dan kerangka kerja institusional untuk mengungkap mekanisme generatif yang mendasari praktik ministry lima jari. Analisis mengidentifikasi tiga temuan utama: pertama, ministry lima jari beroperasi sebagai mitos institusional yang melegitimasi otoritas apostolik melalui klaim restorasi ilahi; kedua, para rasul dan nabi terlibat dalam kerja institusional strategis untuk mempertahankan legitimasi di tengah logika yang bersaing; ketiga, konflik antara logika karismatik, organisasi, dan pasar menghasilkan ketegangan yang memungkinkan inovasi institusional dan penyalahgunaan. Memahami ministry lima jari sebagai kerja institusional memberikan daya penjas mengapa pola struktural tertentu bertahan meskipun ada kritik teologis dan kegagalan praktis. Studi ini memajukan studi eklesiologi dengan memperkenalkan teori organisasi sebagai kerangka analitis komplementer, menawarkan wawasan baru untuk pendidikan teologi, pembentukan ministerial, dan reformasi tata kelola gereja.

Kata Kunci: teori kerja institusional; eklesiologi ministry lima jari; dinamika organisasi Pentakosta; legitimasi Otoritas apostolik; analisis Neo-Institusional.

Abstract

The fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11-16 has generated extensive exegetical, historical, and missiological scholarship, yet existing studies predominantly focus on doctrinal interpretation or practical application without examining the institutional mechanisms that shape its contemporary expressions. This article proposes a neo-institutional theoretical framework to analyze how the fivefold ministry functions as institutional work that creates, maintains, and disrupts authority structures within Pentecostal ecclesiology. Employing critical realist institutional ethnography, this study synthesizes existing literature through the lens of neo-institutional theory, institutional logics, and institutional work frameworks to reveal generative mechanisms underlying fivefold ministry practices. The analysis identifies three key findings: first, the fivefold ministry operates as an institutional myth legitimizing apostolic authority through claims of divine restoration; second, apostles and prophets engage in strategic institutional work to maintain legitimacy amid competing logics; third, conflicts between

charismatic, organizational, and market logics produce tensions that enable both institutional innovation and abuse. Understanding the fivefold ministry as institutional work provides explanatory power for why certain structural patterns persist despite theological critiques and practical failures. This study advances ecclesiological scholarship by introducing organizational theory as a complementary analytical framework, offering new insights for theological education, ministerial formation, and church governance reform.

Keywords: institutional work theory; fivefold ministry ecclesiology; Pentecostal organizational dynamics; apostolic authority legitimation; Neo-Institutional analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11-16 has occupied a central position in Pentecostal and Charismatic ecclesiology for over a century, generating extensive theological reflection on the nature and function of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. From the Latter Rain movement of 1948 through the New Apostolic Reformation of the 1990s and contemporary neo-prophetic churches in Africa, claims regarding the restoration of apostolic and prophetic offices have fundamentally shaped how countless Christian communities organize their leadership structures and understand spiritual authority.¹ Yet despite this proliferation of fivefold ministry expressions, scholarly analysis has predominantly remained within the confines of biblical exegesis, historical theology, or practical missiology, leaving unexamined the institutional mechanisms that shape how these ministries actually function within organizational contexts. This analytical gap is particularly significant given the recurring patterns of both vitality and pathology associated with fivefold ministry structures across diverse cultural and denominational settings.

The existing body of scholarship on the fivefold ministry demonstrates considerable methodological diversity but shares a common limitation in addressing institutional dynamics. Exegetical studies such as those by Harold Hoehner and Clinton Arnold provide rigorous analysis of the Greek text of Ephesians 4:11-16, establishing that these gifts represent persons given by Christ to the church rather than mere functions or offices.² Historical-theological investigations by Godfrey Harold and Luke Worsfold trace the development of apostolic and prophetic restoration doctrines through movements such as the Apostolic Church and the New Apostolic Reformation, documenting how prophetic revelation shaped church governance

¹ Sherrelle B. Wright, "The Authority of Scripture: A Biblical Exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-16," *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1-2.

² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 501-80.

structures.³ Missiological contributions from Jerry Lafferty and Barry van Wyk explore how fivefold ministry functions in church planting movements and missional contexts, emphasizing the need for all five gifts to be operational for healthy ecclesial development.⁴ These approaches, while valuable, treat fivefold ministry primarily as a theological position to be affirmed or denied rather than as an institutional phenomenon to be explained.

Sociological and practical theological approaches have examined the contemporary manifestations of fivefold ministry, particularly in African Pentecostal contexts where neo-prophetic churches have experienced explosive growth. Mookgo Kgatle analyzes how the fivefold ministry has been used for title acquisition without proper training or accountability, while Frederick Kakwata's practical theological inquiry into the neo-prophetic movement identifies significant challenges including theological ambiguity, spiritual manipulation, and economic exploitation.⁵ Hulisani Ramantswana examines how neo-prophetic churches tap into people's longing for direct divine communication while potentially preying on vulnerable faith, and Sello Letswalo and Marilyn Naidoo investigate ministerial accountability structures, finding that prophetic leaders often operate autonomously without traditional governance mechanisms.⁶ These studies provide rich empirical documentation of fivefold ministry practices but rarely explain the underlying institutional dynamics that generate these patterns.

This article addresses this gap by introducing neo-institutional theory as a novel analytical framework for understanding the fivefold ministry as institutional work. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell regarding institutional isomorphism, Thomas Lawrence and Roy Suddaby's conceptualization of institutional work, and Patricia Thornton's institutional logics framework, this study argues that the fivefold ministry functions as an institutional myth that legitimizes particular authority structures while concealing the strategic work of actors who benefit from these arrangements.⁷ The purpose is

³ Godfrey Harold, *The Apostolic and Prophetic Reformation: A Critical Study* (Beau Bassin: Lambert Academic, 2017), 67-82.

⁴ Jerry Todd Lafferty, "Developing Pastors and Teachers Within the Fivefold Framework of Ephesians 4:11 to Sustain Church Planting Movements" (D.Miss. diss., Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 117-35.

⁵ Mookgo S. Kgatle, "The Fivefold Ministry in African Neo-Pentecostalism: Constructing a Pentecostal Theology of Edification," *In die Skriflig* 58, no. 1 (2024): a3034, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v58i1.3034>; Frederick Kakwata, "A Practical Theological Inquiry into the Neo-Prophetic Movement Within African Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 32, no. 1 (2023): 1-25.

⁶ Hulisani Ramantswana, "Prophets Praying For, or Preying On People's Faith: A Reflection on Prophetic Ministry in the South African Context," *In die Skriflig* 53, no. 4 (2019): a2495, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2495>; Sello E. Letswalo and Marilyn Naidoo, "Understanding Ministerial Accountability in the New Pentecostal Prophetic Churches," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): a10161, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.10161>.

⁷ Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147-60; Thomas B.

not to dismiss or defend fivefold ministry theology but rather to explain the institutional mechanisms that shape its contemporary expressions and generate both its innovative potential and its recurring pathologies. This analytical approach complements existing theological and missiological scholarship by providing explanatory resources for understanding why certain patterns persist despite criticism and reform efforts.

The contribution of this study is threefold. Theoretically, it introduces organizational theory as a complementary framework to existing theological and missiological approaches, enabling analysis of fivefold ministry as a social phenomenon shaped by institutional pressures rather than merely a doctrinal position to be affirmed or denied. Methodologically, it demonstrates how critical realist institutional ethnography can be applied to ecclesiological questions, tracing how texts, discourses, and practices organize social relations within religious communities.⁸ Practically, it provides church leaders, theological educators, and denominational administrators with analytical tools for evaluating fivefold ministry structures and developing more accountable and effective governance models. These contributions address not only academic gaps in the literature but also pressing practical challenges facing contemporary Pentecostal churches.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing critical realist institutional ethnography as its methodological framework. Critical realism, as developed by Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer, provides an ontological foundation that distinguishes between the empirical (observable events), the actual (events that occur regardless of observation), and the real (generative mechanisms that produce events).⁹ This stratified ontology enables analysis of the underlying institutional mechanisms that generate observable fivefold ministry practices without reducing explanation to either theological doctrine or social construction. Institutional ethnography, following Dorothy Smith's approach, extends this framework by examining how texts and documents coordinate social relations, revealing how normative texts such as

Lawrence and Roy Suddaby, "Institutions and Institutional Work," in *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies*, ed. Stewart R. Clegg et al. (London: SAGE, 2006), 215-54; Patricia H. Thornton, William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1-20.

⁸ W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 89-95.

⁹ Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), 25-41.

Ephesians 4:11-16 and church constitutions organize the activities of apostles, prophets, and congregations.

The application of this methodology proceeds through three analytical phases corresponding to the institutional work framework. First, the study performs textual analysis of primary sources including biblical commentaries, theological treatises on fivefold ministry, and denominational constitutions to identify how institutional myths are constructed and maintained through discourse. Second, it examines documented practices of fivefold ministry in contemporary contexts through analysis of case studies, news reports, and scholarly investigations, attending to how these practices reproduce or transform institutional arrangements. Third, it identifies points of institutional tension and conflict where competing logics clash, revealing the strategic work actors perform to maintain or disrupt existing arrangements. Throughout these phases, the analysis remains attentive to generative mechanisms at multiple levels: individual actors pursuing interests, organizations responding to legitimacy pressures, and broader institutional fields shaped by cultural, economic, and political forces.

RESULT

The Fivefold Ministry as Institutional Myth

The analysis reveals that the fivefold ministry functions as an institutional myth in the technical sense articulated by organization theorists, providing a legitimating narrative that explains and justifies particular authority structures within Pentecostal communities.¹⁰ This myth operates through a restoration narrative claiming that the offices of apostle and prophet, allegedly lost during the early church's institutionalization, have been divinely restored in these last days to prepare the church for Christ's return. The narrative's power lies not in its historical verifiability but in its capacity to make contingent organizational arrangements appear as divinely ordained necessities, thereby removing them from the realm of human negotiation and debate. This mythological function explains why fivefold ministry structures persist despite recurring critiques and documented failures, as questioning the structures becomes tantamount to questioning divine revelation itself. The institutional myth thus provides a form of legitimacy that is resistant to empirical disconfirmation because its claims operate at the level of divine purpose rather than human effectiveness.

¹⁰ John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977): 343-44.

The institutional myth of fivefold ministry restoration draws its authority from multiple sources that reinforce each other in a self-legitimizing system. Biblical texts, particularly Ephesians 4:11-16 and Ephesians 2:20, provide the foundational scriptural warrant, interpreted through a hermeneutic that emphasizes continuity between apostolic-era practices and contemporary church life.¹¹ Prophetic utterances, often delivered in highly charged worship contexts, provide ongoing divine confirmation of the restoration's authenticity and specificity, identifying particular individuals as called to apostolic or prophetic office. Historical narratives of revival and restoration, such as accounts of the Latter Rain movement or the Welsh Revival, provide temporal legitimacy by situating contemporary practices within a broader narrative of God's progressive restoration of the church. These multiple sources of legitimacy create a densely woven web of justification that makes the institutional myth resistant to challenge from any single angle of critique.

The myth's institutional function becomes evident in how it shapes organizational structures, decision-making processes, and authority relations within churches that embrace fivefold ministry. Apostolic networks organized around recognized apostles create hierarchical structures where authority flows downward from the apostle through regional overseers to local pastors and congregations.¹² Prophetic ministry provides a means of divine guidance that operates alongside or above traditional governance mechanisms such as elder boards or congregational votes, as seen in the Apostolic Church's practice of using prophecy to nominate ministers and determine relocations. These arrangements are presented not as human organizational choices but as divinely revealed patterns that must be obeyed for the church to fulfill its destiny. The institutional myth thus accomplishes the crucial organizational task of legitimating authority structures that might otherwise appear arbitrary or self-serving.

The analysis also reveals how the institutional myth conceals the strategic work of actors who benefit from fivefold ministry structures. Claims of divine calling and prophetic confirmation function to authenticate authority that might otherwise require demonstration through education, experience, or character. The myth of restoration provides a narrative resource for leaders to assert independence from denominational oversight, as when prophets and apostles establish autonomous ministries claiming direct divine mandate. As Kgatle observes regarding African neo-Pentecostalism, the fivefold ministry framework has enabled

¹¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 248-53.

¹² Volker Kruger, "An Examination of New Apostolic Movement Terminology: Correlating the Five-Fold Ministry and the Bureaucratic Management Model," *Spiritus* 7, no. 1 (2022): 79.

individuals to claim titles such as apostle and prophet without formal training, ordination, or recognition, using the myth of restoration to bypass established pathways to ministerial authority.¹³ This concealment of strategic work is not necessarily conscious deception but rather reflects how institutional myths shape the frameworks through which actors understand their own motivations and actions.

Institutional Work of Apostles and Prophets

The analysis identifies three modes of institutional work performed by apostles and prophets to create, maintain, and potentially disrupt fivefold ministry structures within Pentecostal contexts.¹⁴ Creating work involves the discursive and practical activities through which actors establish new institutional arrangements, including the articulation of apostolic and prophetic identity, the formation of networks and organizations, and the development of practices that embody fivefold ministry principles. Maintaining work involves activities that sustain these arrangements against challenges and ensure their reproduction across generations, including the development of training programs, the codification of practices in constitutions and manuals, and the cultivation of legitimacy through successful outcomes. Disrupting work involves activities that challenge or transform existing arrangements, including contestation of traditional denominational authority, critique of inadequate fivefold ministry expressions, and innovation in response to changing circumstances. These three modes of institutional work are not mutually exclusive but often occur simultaneously as actors navigate complex institutional environments.

The creating work of apostles and prophets becomes particularly visible in the formation of New Apostolic networks and the establishment of neo-prophetic churches. C. Peter Wagner's articulation of the New Apostolic Reformation provided a discursive framework that defined apostles as foundational leaders with authority to establish and govern churches, legitimating the formation of networks organized around recognized apostles rather than denominational structures.¹⁵ In African contexts, prophets such as Shepherd Bushiri and Uebert Angel have created new ecclesial forms that combine traditional Pentecostal elements with prophetic ministry centered on individual prophet figures, developing distinctive practices such as one-

¹³ Kgatele, "The Fivefold Ministry in African Neo-Pentecostalism," 3-4.

¹⁴ Lawrence and Suddaby, "Institutions and Institutional Work," 218.

¹⁵ C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking Up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 103-8.

on-one prophetic consultations and the use of anointed products.¹⁶ These creating activities involve not merely theological innovation but also organizational entrepreneurship, as leaders mobilize resources, recruit followers, and establish structures that embody their vision of restored apostolic and prophetic ministry. The success of such creating work depends on the ability of actors to articulate compelling visions that resonate with potential followers while also securing the material and relational resources necessary for organizational survival.

Maintaining work becomes evident in the development of mechanisms that ensure the reproduction of fivefold ministry structures across time and space. The establishment of apostolic networks such as the International Coalition of Apostles, with membership requirements, dues structures, and relational connections, creates institutional infrastructure that sustains apostolic identity and practice beyond individual leaders.¹⁷ The development of training programs and ministerial formation processes, whether formal Bible colleges or informal mentorship relationships with spiritual fathers, ensures that new generations of leaders embody fivefold ministry principles and perpetuate existing structures. The codification of practices in church constitutions and governance documents, as seen in the Apostolic Church's detailed provisions for prophetic ministry and apostolic oversight, provides stability and continuity that survives leadership transitions and organizational growth.¹⁸ These maintaining activities are essential for institutional persistence but can also become rigid and resistant to necessary change when they outlive their original purposes.

Disrupting work emerges when actors challenge existing arrangements and seek to establish alternative institutional forms. The initial Pentecostal movement's rejection of denominational structures and its insistence on the direct authority of the Holy Spirit represented disruptive work against established Protestant ecclesiology. The later emergence of the New Apostolic Reformation involved disrupting work against traditional Pentecostal denominations, as apostles and prophets claimed authority that bypassed denominational hierarchies and established new networks and affiliations.¹⁹ In contemporary contexts, some neo-prophetic leaders engage in disrupting work against classical Pentecostalism, introducing practices such as charging fees for prophetic consultation and using sacred products that traditional Pentecostals reject as syncretistic. This disrupting work is legitimated through

¹⁶ Kgatele, "The Fivefold Ministry in African Neo-Pentecostalism," 2-3.

¹⁷ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 152-155.

¹⁸ W. Luke Worsfold, "Subsequence, Prophecy and Church Order in the Apostolic Church, New Zealand" (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004), 221.

¹⁹ Harold, *The Apostolic and Prophetic Reformation*, 67-72.

appeals to divine revelation and restoration, framing innovation as obedience to the Holy Spirit rather than departure from established patterns. The tension between maintaining and disrupting work creates ongoing dynamism within Pentecostal ecclesiology as actors negotiate the boundaries of acceptable innovation.

Competing Institutional Logics and Tensions

The analysis reveals three distinct institutional logics operating within fivefold ministry contexts, each with its own organizing principles, sources of authority, and criteria for legitimacy.²⁰ The charismatic-prophetic logic prioritizes direct divine revelation, spiritual power manifestations, and personal anointing as the basis for authority and decision-making. This logic is evident in the emphasis on prophetic utterances as divine guidance, the expectation of miraculous signs confirming ministry, and the authority granted to individuals based on perceived spiritual gifting rather than formal qualification. The organizational-rational logic emphasizes formal structures, documented procedures, and accountable governance as necessary for institutional stability and effectiveness. This logic appears in the development of constitutions, the establishment of boards and committees, and the implementation of financial controls and reporting mechanisms. The market-entrepreneurial logic treats religious services as products to be marketed, spiritual gifts as resources to be monetized, and followers as consumers to be satisfied.

The market-entrepreneurial logic manifests in the branding of prophetic ministries, the use of social media and digital platforms to reach wider audiences, and the development of revenue streams through product sales, consultation fees, and partnership programs. Ramantswana observes that neo-prophetic churches operate within a culture of consumption where people view religion as a commodity and are willing to pay for perceived quality, leading prophets to function as spiritual entrepreneurs who prey on people's faith while building personal wealth.²¹ The tension between this logic and the charismatic-prophetic logic becomes acute when spiritual authority is used to extract financial resources from vulnerable followers, as documented in multiple cases of prophetic exploitation across African contexts. The market logic's emphasis on growth, innovation, and customer satisfaction can also drive beneficial developments such as improved communication, professional presentation, and responsiveness to felt needs.

²⁰ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective*, 1-20.

²¹ Ramantswana, "Prophets Praying For, or Preying On People's Faith," 7-8.

The interaction of these competing logics produces tensions that create both opportunities for innovation and risks of abuse. When charismatic-prophetic logic dominates without organizational-rational constraints, the result is often authoritarian leadership, financial exploitation, and spiritual manipulation, as documented in Kgatle's analysis of consultation fees and sacred products in neo-prophetic churches.²² When organizational-rational logic dominates without charismatic-prophetic vitality, the result is institutional stagnation, loss of spiritual dynamism, and disconnection from the experiential dimensions that attract adherents to Pentecostal churches. When market-entrepreneurial logic dominates, spiritual ministry becomes commodified, followers become consumers, and the church's prophetic witness against economic injustice is compromised. The most sustainable arrangements appear to involve ongoing negotiation between these logics, with structural safeguards preventing any single logic from completely overwhelming the others.

These tensions also create space for institutional critique and reform, as actors within fivefold ministry contexts identify problems generated by logic conflicts and propose solutions. Letswalo and Naidoo's study of ministerial accountability reveals that some leaders recognize the need for accountability structures while resisting traditional governance models, preferring to remain accountable only to spiritual fathers within their networks.²³ This selective accountability reflects an attempt to preserve charismatic-prophetic authority while addressing the most egregious abuses that threaten legitimacy. Similarly, van Wyk's analysis of the missional debate shows how some Reformed churches selectively adopt fivefold ministry elements that serve missional purposes while retaining presbyterian governance structures, creating hybrid arrangements that draw on multiple logics.²⁴ These creative negotiations suggest that the institutional dynamics of fivefold ministry are not deterministic but involve ongoing strategic action by multiple actors seeking to shape ecclesial arrangements according to their interests and convictions.

²² Mookgo S. Kgatle, "Consultations in New Prophetic Churches and African Traditional Religions: A Case Study of Divine Healing in Assessing Syncretistic Practices in the South African Context," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 400

²³ Letswalo and Naidoo, "Understanding Ministerial Accountability," 4-5.

²⁴ Barry van Wyk, "The Application of Ephesians 4:11 in the Recent Missional Debate with Reference to Scripture," *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 3 (2018): a2305

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications for Ecclesiological Analysis

The application of neo-institutional theory to fivefold ministry reveals significant theoretical implications for how ecclesiological phenomena are analyzed and understood. Traditional theological approaches treat church structures as either divinely mandated patterns to be implemented or human traditions to be critiqued, focusing attention on the scriptural warrant for particular arrangements.²⁵ Institutional analysis shifts attention to the mechanisms through which structural arrangements are created, legitimated, and maintained, revealing that even divinely claimed structures operate within social processes that can be analyzed without denying their theological significance. This analytical shift does not require adopting a reductionist posture that treats theological claims as mere ideology but rather acknowledges that divine purposes are mediated through human institutional processes that shape how those purposes are understood and implemented. The complementarity of theological and institutional analysis opens new possibilities for ecclesiological reflection that takes both divine revelation and human social dynamics seriously.

The concept of institutional myth proves particularly productive for ecclesiological analysis, explaining how contested organizational arrangements achieve stability and legitimacy. The fivefold ministry restoration narrative functions as what Meyer and Rowan term a "rationalized myth," a widely held belief that certain organizational forms are appropriate and necessary without empirical demonstration of their effectiveness.²⁶ This mythological function explains the persistence of apostolic governance structures despite evidence of their vulnerability to authoritarianism and abuse, as the myth removes these structures from the realm of pragmatic evaluation. Recognizing the mythological dimension does not necessarily invalidate the underlying theological claims but rather exposes how those claims function institutionally to authorize particular arrangements and delegitimize alternatives. This recognition creates space for more honest evaluation of whether particular structural arrangements actually serve the purposes they claim to serve.

The institutional logics framework provides analytical tools for understanding the tensions and conflicts that pervade contemporary Pentecostal ecclesiology, particularly the recurring controversies surrounding prophetic ministry and apostolic authority. Rather than treating these tensions as merely theological disagreements or personality conflicts,

²⁵ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 164-70.

²⁶ Meyer and Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations," 343.

institutional analysis reveals them as manifestations of deeper structural contradictions between logics that cannot be fully reconciled.²⁷ The charismatic-prophetic logic's emphasis on spontaneity and direct divine guidance conflicts fundamentally with the organizational-rational logic's requirement for predictability and documented procedures. The market-entrepreneurial logic's orientation toward consumer satisfaction conflicts with the prophetic logic's demand for uncompromising proclamation of divine truth. These contradictions generate ongoing tensions that no amount of theological clarification or structural reform can entirely eliminate, requiring instead ongoing negotiation and provisional accommodations.

The institutional work framework offers a corrective to approaches that treat organizational structures as either determined by external forces or freely chosen by autonomous actors. Analysis reveals that fivefold ministry leaders actively engage in strategic work to create, maintain, and disrupt institutional arrangements, but they do so within constraints imposed by existing structures, available resources, and broader institutional fields.²⁸ Wagner's ability to establish the New Apostolic Reformation depended on his accumulated cultural capital as a professor at Fuller Seminary, his relational networks within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, and the broader cultural currents that made his vision compelling to many. Similarly, African neo-prophetic leaders operate within contexts shaped by traditional religious practices, economic hardship, and political instability that both constrain their options and create opportunities for particular institutional innovations. This perspective avoids both structural determinism and voluntaristic individualism, revealing fivefold ministry as the product of strategic action within institutional contexts.

Dialogue with Cessationist and Continuationist Perspectives

The neo-institutional analysis offered here engages with but reframes the ongoing debate between cessationist and continuationist positions regarding the fivefold ministry. Cessationists such as Richard Gaffin argue that apostles and prophets were foundational offices limited to the apostolic era, with their function completed once the New Testament canon was established.²⁹ This position grounds its argument in Ephesians 2:20, which describes the church as built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, reasoning that a foundation is laid once and does not require repetition. Continuationists such as Wayne Grudem respond that New

²⁷ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective*, 50-55.

²⁸ Lawrence and Suddaby, "Institutions and Institutional Work," 220-25.

²⁹ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 93-95.

Testament prophecy differs qualitatively from Old Testament prophecy in authority and function, allowing for its continuation in a form that does not threaten scriptural sufficiency.³⁰ From an institutional perspective, both positions can be understood as competing institutional myths that authorize different organizational arrangements and distribute authority differently among church actors.

The cessationist position functions institutionally to legitimate governance structures based on formal training, ordination, and denominational accountability while delegitimizing claims to direct divine revelation that bypass these structures. By arguing that apostolic and prophetic offices ceased with the apostolic era, cessationism creates institutional space for theological education, ordination processes, and denominational hierarchies as the legitimate means of authorizing ministry. This institutional function explains why cessationist arguments resonate particularly strongly among denominations with established educational institutions and governance structures, such as Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The cessationist myth provides theological warrant for the authority of trained clergy and denominational officials while protecting against the disruption that charismatic claims to direct revelation might produce. However, this myth can also function to marginalize genuine spiritual gifts and to preserve institutional arrangements that may themselves be resistant to necessary reform.

The continuationist position, particularly as articulated by Grudem and others, functions institutionally to legitimate more flexible and Spirit-led governance arrangements while maintaining some degree of accountability through the testing of prophetic utterances. By distinguishing New Testament prophecy from Old Testament prophecy, continuationism creates institutional space for prophetic ministry that does not threaten scriptural authority while authorizing structures that respond to divine guidance in real time.³¹ This institutional function explains why continuationist arguments resonate particularly strongly among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups where prophetic ministry is central to church life. However, as the analysis of African neo-Pentecostalism reveals, the continuationist myth can also legitimate structures that lack adequate accountability, allowing prophets to claim divine authority for teachings and practices that may be harmful. The same theological position can generate very different institutional arrangements depending on how it is implemented and what other logics are present.

³⁰ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 45-63.

³¹ Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 45-63.

The neo-institutional analysis suggests that the cessationist-continuationist debate cannot be resolved purely through exegetical argument because it involves competing institutional myths that serve different organizational functions. This observation does not render the debate meaningless but rather suggests that theological argument alone is insufficient to address the underlying institutional dynamics.³² What matters institutionally is not merely whether prophecy continues but how prophetic claims are tested, how prophetic authority is constrained, and how prophetic ministry is integrated with other governance structures. The contrast between classical Pentecostal denominations with developed accountability structures and neo-prophetic churches where prophets operate autonomously illustrates that the same theological position can generate very different institutional arrangements depending on how it is implemented and what other logics are present. This insight suggests that practical ecclesial reform requires attention to institutional design as well as theological clarification.

Toward a Critical-Institutional Ecclesiology

The synthesis emerging from this analysis is a critical-institutional ecclesiology that integrates theological, organizational, and critical perspectives on fivefold ministry. This approach affirms that the fivefold ministry represents a genuine theological insight regarding the diversity of gifts Christ gives to the church while recognizing that claims to divine restoration of apostles and prophets function institutionally to legitimate particular authority arrangements that require critical examination. It maintains that the Holy Spirit continues to call and gift individuals for ministry while acknowledging that human institutional processes shape how spiritual gifts are recognized, authorized, and deployed. This critical-institutional perspective offers resources for both appreciating the vitality and innovation that fivefold ministry has brought to contemporary Christianity and addressing the recurring pathologies that have emerged in contexts where it has been implemented without adequate structural safeguards.

The critical-institutional approach suggests several implications for church governance and ministerial formation. First, churches should recognize that structures are never merely theological but always involve institutional work that distributes power and shapes relationships. This recognition does not require abandoning theological convictions about the church's nature but rather invites ongoing reflection on how those convictions are institutionalized and what effects those institutionalizations produce. Second, accountability

³² Harold, *The Apostolic and Prophetic Reformation*, 174-80.

structures must be adequate to the power they are meant to constrain. As Letswalo and Naidoo's research reveals, leaders who are accountable only to spiritual fathers within their networks lack the external accountability necessary to prevent abuse.³³ Third, theological education and ministerial formation should include critical reflection on institutional dynamics, preparing leaders to understand how organizations function and to develop structures that embody theological values while protecting against predictable failures.

The critical-institutional approach also suggests that the diversity of fivefold ministry expressions across contexts should be understood not as corruption of a pure original pattern but as the product of institutional work responding to different environmental pressures and resource conditions. The emergence of neo-prophetic churches in African contexts where traditional religious practices remain influential, economic hardship creates receptivity to prosperity teaching, and weak regulatory structures allow exploitation reflects institutional innovation responding to specific contextual factors.³⁴ Understanding these contextual dynamics does not excuse exploitation but rather enables more effective intervention by revealing the mechanisms that enable it and suggesting where regulatory or educational efforts might be most productive. The path toward healthier fivefold ministry expressions likely involves not the elimination of institutional arrangements but their transformation through better design, more robust accountability, and more critical awareness of institutional dynamics.

This synthesis contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about spiritual authenticity, ecclesial discernment, and the ethical imperatives of contemporary Christian ministry. By bringing institutional theory into dialogue with ecclesiology, it opens new avenues for research that take seriously both the theological claims and the social dynamics of Pentecostal Christianity. The critical-institutional approach does not resolve all tensions inherent in fivefold ministry but provides analytical resources for navigating those tensions more thoughtfully and constructively. It invites scholars, church leaders, and theological educators to attend to the institutional dimensions of ecclesial life without losing sight of the theological convictions that animate Christian communities.

³³ Letswalo and Naidoo, "Understanding Ministerial Accountability," 6-7.

³⁴ Kakwata, "A Practical Theological Inquiry," 15-18.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that understanding the fivefold ministry as institutional work provides significant explanatory power for contemporary Pentecostal ecclesiology, revealing the mechanisms through which apostolic and prophetic authority is created, maintained, and challenged. The analysis identifies the fivefold ministry restoration narrative as an institutional myth that legitimizes particular authority structures by framing them as divinely ordained rather than humanly constructed. It traces the institutional work of apostles and prophets as they establish networks, codify practices, and maintain legitimacy amid competing logics. It reveals the tensions between charismatic-prophetic, organizational-rational, and market-entrepreneurial logics that generate both innovative vitality and recurring pathologies. These findings do not invalidate fivefold ministry theology but rather reveal how theological claims function institutionally to authorize particular arrangements that require critical and ongoing examination.

The implications of this study extend to theological education, church governance, and ecclesiological scholarship. Theological educators should prepare leaders to understand institutional dynamics and to recognize how structures shape ministry outcomes. Church leaders should develop accountability mechanisms adequate to the power they seek to constrain. Scholars should recognize that theological and institutional analysis are complementary rather than competing approaches to understanding ecclesial phenomena. The limitations of this study include its reliance on secondary sources rather than original fieldwork and its focus on Pentecostal contexts without comparative analysis of fivefold ministry in other traditions. Future research should include ethnographic fieldwork examining how institutional work is performed in specific fivefold ministry contexts, comparative analysis of different cultural and denominational settings, and longitudinal studies tracking how institutional arrangements evolve over time.

REFERENCES

- Ames, Joy. "Teaching as Formation: The Vision of Ephesians 4:11-16 and Pedagogical Implications for Routine Teaching Tasks." *The Asbury Journal* 69, no. 2 (2014): 8-22.
<https://doi.org/10.7252/Journal.02.2014F.02>
- Aune, David. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

- Barth, Markus. *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.
- Bayes, Jimmy D. "Five-Fold Ministry: A Social and Cultural Texture Analysis of Ephesians 4:11-16." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 1 (2010): 113-22.
- Breed, G. "Ministry to the Congregation according to the Letter to the Ephesians." *Acta Theologica* 35, no. 1 (2015): 37-58. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i1.3>.
- Cannistraci, David. *The Gift of Apostle*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996.
- Carson, D. A. *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987.
- DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147-60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- Gaffin, Richard B., Jr. *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979.
- Gromacki, Gary. "Paul's Ecclesiology of Ephesians." *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 19, no. 1 (2015): 81-115.
- Grudem, Wayne. *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000.
- Harold, Godfrey. *The Apostolic and Prophetic Reformation: A Critical Study*. Beau Bassin: Lambert Academic, 2017.
- Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Kakwata, Frederick. "A Practical Theological Inquiry into the Neo-Prophetic Movement Within African Pentecostalism." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 32, no. 1 (2023): 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-20230001>
- Kgatle, Mookgo S. "The Fivefold Ministry in African Neo-Pentecostalism: Constructing a Pentecostal Theology of Edification." *In die Skriflig* 58, no. 1 (2024): a3034. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v58i1.3034>.
- Kgatle, Mookgo S. "Consultations in New Prophetic Churches and African Traditional Religions: A Case Study of Divine Healing in Assessing Syncretistic Practices in the South African Context." *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 400. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030400>.

- Kgatle, Mookgo S. "New Prophetic Churches and the Abuse of Ministry Titles." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): a6879.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6879>
- Kruger, Volker. "An Examination of New Apostolic Movement Terminology: Correlating the Five-Fold Ministry and the Bureaucratic Management Model." *Spiritus* 7, no. 1 (2022): 73-95. <https://doi.org/10.31380/2573-6345.12>
- Lafferty, Jerry Todd. "Developing Pastors and Teachers Within the Fivefold Framework of Ephesians 4:11 to Sustain Church Planting Movements." D.Miss. diss., Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020.
- Lawrence, Thomas B., and Roy Suddaby. "Institutions and Institutional Work." In *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies*, edited by Stewart R. Clegg, Cynthia Hardy, Thomas B. Lawrence, and Walter R. Nord, 215-54. London: SAGE, 2006.
- Letswalo, Sello E., and Marilyn Naidoo. "Understanding Ministerial Accountability in the New Pentecostal Prophetic Churches." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): a10161. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.10161>
- Lincoln, Andrew T. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*. Dallas: Word Books, 1990.
- Mbennah, E. D. "The Goal of Maturity in Ephesians 4:13-16." *Acta Theologica* 36, no. 1 (2016): 110-32. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v36i1.7>.
- Meyer, John W., and Brian Rowan. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977): 340-63.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/226550>
- Osmer, Richard Robert. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Ramantswana, Hulisani. "Prophets Praying For, or Preying On People's Faith: A Reflection on Prophetic Ministry in the South African Context." *In die Skriflig* 53, no. 4 (2019): a2495. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2495>
- Resane, Kelebogile Thomas. "A Critical Analysis of the Ecclesiology of the Emerging Apostolic Churches with Special Reference to the Notion of the Fivefold Ministry." PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2008.
- Scott, W. Richard. *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*. 4th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014.
- Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Ephesians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.
- Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.

- Thornton, Patricia H., William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury. *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Van Wyk, Barry. "The Application of Ephesians 4:11 in the Recent Missional Debate with Reference to Scripture." *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 3 (2018): a2305.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v52i3.2305>.
- Wagner, C. Peter. *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000.
- Wagner, C. Peter. *Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking Up the Church as We Know It*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999.
- Worsfold, W. Luke. "Subsequence, Prophecy and Church Order in the Apostolic Church, New Zealand." PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004.
- Wright, Sherrelle B. "The Authority of Scripture: A Biblical Exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-16." *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1-12.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.