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From Fivefold to Five-in-One Ministry: Mega-Ecclesiological Leadership (Dis)Continuities in Southern Africa

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Abstract: In Southern Africa in recent years, the governance and ecclesiologies of mega-Pentecostal churches have been drifting away from upholding collective and complementary fivefold ministries to individualistic and selfish five-in-one ministries. Studies indicate that a fivefold ministry advances inclusive ecclesiological leadership, edification, and transformational integral mission. At present, mega and related forms of emerging neo-Pentecostalism have developed exclusive, prophetic, apostolic, and executive ecclesial leadership, which are characterized mainly by authoritarian governance, celebrity leadership, leader-centered ecclesiology, and congregational manipulation and exploitation. Such church governance and ecclesiologies enable leaders to indoctrinate their subordinates and congregants to submit to and depend on them for everything. The effect is that followers are rendered dormant, under what this submission describes as five-in-one ministry, which leaves one person claiming to possess all ministerial gifts and leadership capabilities and relegating everyone else to being idle followers. Although much has been published about African Pentecostal leadership and ecclesiologies, studies on African megachurch governance, leadership styles and ministries are few. Through a literature review and participant observation, this paper uncovers and troubleshoots the effects of five-in-one megachurch governance and ecclesiologies in Africa. It discerns and addresses drivers of the five-in-one ministry and makes recommendations, such as reforming megachurch governance, leadership styles, and ecclesiologies; integrating ecumenism with leadership development; and developing inclusive economic sustainability.

Keywords: fivefold ministry; five-in-one ministry; mega; church; governance; leadership; transformation



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1. Introduction

Unlike classical Pentecostal church leadership styles, which value collective leadership and ministry, the majority of emerging Pentecostal churches tend to uphold individualistic governance and ministry. Tagwirei (2023c, p. 5) reports that “the majority of African neo-Pentecostal churches lack leadership accountability, stewardship of resources as well as accommodate autonomy and the abuse of authority”. It is clear that most neo-Pentecostal leaders are gifted and charismatic but untrained and unaccountable (White and Pondani 2022). As observed by Orogun (2023), many African neo-Pentecostal leaders have developed family dynasties and monarchical systems by which denominational ownership, trusteeship, and royalty are retained within the founder’s family. Emerging Pentecostal ecclesiologies suggest that most megachurch founders and leaders occupy all five ministry duties—as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—and they appoint their spouses, trusted family members, relatives, friends, and most loyal followers into pivotal key leadership and ministerial positions, which exacerbates the leaders’ authoritarianism. Examples of such five-in-one ministries include the Enlightened Christian Gathering of Malawian prophet Shepherd Bushiri, the Good News Church of the British and Zimbabwean prophet Eubert Angel, Christ Embassy of the Nigerian pastor Chris Oyakhilome, and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa, of the late apostle Ezekiel Handinawangu Gutu, whose governance and ecclesiologies are centered on their founders and their families.

According to [Tagwirei \(2023c\)](#), immediate family members, close relatives, and friends of the leaders of several other emerging African independent neo-Pentecostal churches, such as Power Chapel Worldwide (in Ghana), Alleluia Ministries (in South Africa), and Be Free Church (in Botswana), are title holders and the signatories of all their denominational ministries, accounts, and assets.

Much has been published about African Pentecostal leadership and ecclesiology. [Kga-tle \(2024b\)](#) critiques the fivefold ministry in African neo-Pentecostalism; [Biri \(2016\)](#) reports on neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa; [McCauley \(2012\)](#) discusses new big-man rule in Ghanaian Pentecostalism; [Biri \(2020\)](#) studied Pentecostalism, authority, and accountability in Zimbabwe; [Matisi \(2020\)](#) investigated the effects of African Pentecostal leadership styles on growth and development; [Mwenje \(2016\)](#) reviewed Zimbabwean Pentecostal leadership styles; and [Orogun \(2023\)](#) problematizes the hybridization of African Pentecostal leadership. While appreciating the coverage of these issues, this paper fills a gap in the knowledge related to biblical ecclesiological leadership and the contextual effects of discontinuing the fivefold ministry and developing a five-in-one ministry in Africa. The paper starts by conceptualizing the fivefold and five-in-one ministries, then troubleshoots the five-in-one ministry, and ends with conclusions and recommendations.

2. Conceptualizing the Church

Various developments in evangelical, classical, and neo-Pentecostal ecclesiologies have confused the identity of the Church in Southern Africa. This is why [Tagwirei's \(2024b, pp. 3–5\)](#) argues that the Church is currently a mixed and confusing entity because

“the Church is interchangeably equated to a workshop, marketplace, theatre, Salvationist embassy, and burial society. With such depictions, churches conduct themselves as Salvationist entities by being overly concerned with the soul. As workshops, they publicise their ability to fix people’s lives, much like cars can be fixed; as marketplaces, they trade miscellaneous ideas and goods for payment in cash and kind. As theatres, they accommodate entanglements with comical and controversial theatrics; and as burial societies, they provide financial aid, moral security, and presence to members in times of illness or bereavement”.

In addition, this study reveals leader-centered ecclesiologies which further complicate the identity of the Church in the Global South. Generally, the Church refers to believers who follow Jesus Christ and gather (as Hebrews 10:25 instructs) to worship God with others in their different denominations. While the Church must be identified as the body of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:22–23; Col 1:24) under His leadership, mega-Pentecostal church members also submit to their leaders generally because leaders teach their followers what Paul said—‘follow me as I follow Christ’ (1 Cor 11:1). In order to explore the mega-ecclesiological leadership (dis)continuities from the fivefold to five-in-one ministries, this paper uses the term Church with reference to those who follow their leaders out of faith that their leaders follow Jesus Christ.

3. Conceptualizing the Fivefold Ministry

The fivefold ministry is a church government concept that is based on Ephesians 4:11, and which refers to the leadership of apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. [Stephens \(2018\)](#) reports that biblical scholars disagree about the intentions and interpretation of Ephesians 4:11–12; some scholars take the fivefold ministry to be a model for the priesthood of all believers, who should be trained to carry out the work of the ministry, instead of reserving ministry for pastors only. The fivefold ministry has been upheld in various classical evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Africa. Evangelicals like the Evangelical, Baptist, and Brethren in Christ churches employ episcopal, Presbyterian, congregational, and mixed polities and change their leadership through elections. Although their ecclesiologies and governance structures differ, they all uphold the priesthood and value of all believers as well as inclusivity, diversity, and complementarity. African classical Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God (AOG) and Apostolic Faith Mission

(AFM) similarly apply mixed polities. According to [Tagwirei \(2023b\)](#), the AFM and AOG churches combine attributes of both episcopal, Presbyterian, and some congregational structures. They champion the priesthood of all believers and accommodate and promote all gifts for the edification of their churches.

[Kgatile \(2024b\)](#) explains that the fivefold ministry fosters the functioning of the five offices of ecclesial leadership of apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists. [Wintoch \(2003\)](#) explains that the fivefold ministry refers to offices that God gifted to mature His Church into Christlikeness. Wintoch explains that the fivefold ministry has been misinterpreted and abused, because

many Christian leaders have taken this verse out of context and elevated these five roles above their rightful place. They emphasize the importance of these offices in a local church—which is certainly true—but often serve their own interests, need for power and recognition, denying others—the ‘laity’—any kind of involvement in church government ([Wintoch 2003](#), p. 2).

She adds that other scholars discard the verse altogether, and that Paul spoke in the apostolic age, which has long passed, so that his words are not relevant to us at all any longer. For [Hartwell \(2004, p. 18\)](#), “many think of the office of the apostle and the office of the pastor as something to elevate instead of truly seeing how these are ministries that serve the body of Jesus Christ”.

According to [Resane \(2008, p. 80\)](#), “generally, the fivefold ministry is a concept of church leadership based upon the ministry of men and women who have been supposedly divinely called and anointed with one of five ministry gifts listed in Eph 4:11”. It is seen as a provision of divinely appointed leadership for the body of Christ. Leaders of the fivefold ministry are raised up by God’s express will and are seen as Christ’s gifts (*domata*) to the Church. The Church is expected to heed them and follow these leaders; they are leaders with special offices and ministries for guiding and governing the Christian Church and who draw on the leadership gifts present in believers other than the traditional Pentecostal leadership roles of pastors, elders, and deacons. For [Resane \(2008\)](#), the fivefold ministry is not ideal for the contemporary Church, because it was meant for an ecclesiology on its journey towards maturity. Accordingly, the purpose of the fivefold ministry is the building up of the Church. [Harris \(2022, p. 30\)](#) concurs: “For as long as humans are in these corruptible bodies, they will never measure up to the complete standard of Christ; therefore, the ministry must continue”. Since the Church is both an organization and organism that requires leadership to govern its affairs and to steer it towards God’s purposes, contextual administration, such as episcopal, Presbyterian, or congregational, can achieve its purpose, while the fivefold gifts continue to edify the Church instead of governing it. [Resane \(2008, p. 214\)](#) argues that “there is a need for a balance between democracy and hierarchy in church polity”. Although contextualizing ecclesiologies and governance matter for institutional relevance and sustainability, the Church remains a movement that never matures as evangelization and discipleship continues under the overall leadership of Jesus Christ. Yet, problematically, emerging Southern African neo-Pentecostal leadership is becoming excessively individualistic, patrimonial, and authoritarian. I agree with [Resane \(2008, p. 214\)](#) that “the Ephesians 4:11–16 passage was not intended to give a guideline on church government or leadership, but to encourage and inspire the local community to be self-developing and self-building”. The fivefold ministry portrays values of diversity and complementarity and inspires servant leadership. This is why the common Presbyterian, Episcopalian, congregational and mixed church polities carry some influences of the fivefold ministry; they value the complementary roles of apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. While the fivefold ministry does not inform ecclesial governance squarely, especially in view of changing times and contexts, Christ-like, other-centered servant leadership and complementarity cannot be divorced from Church leadership. The problem is that the majority of emerging self-styled mega-Pentecostal, charismatic, and related neo-Pentecostal governance and ecclesiologies exhibit leader-centered showmanship that promotes the idea that founders and leaders are supreme authorities who do not report to or

consult anyone. While these leaders sometimes claim to be accountable to God, participant observations reveal that most of them only engage with others when it is required to secure their personal interests. Some authoritarian leaders claim to be accountable to their subordinates. As Tagwirei (2023c, p. 6) confirms, most emerging African neo-Pentecostal leaders are patrimonial and nepotistic. They appoint their closest relatives, family members, friends, and most loyal followers to be their subordinate leaders. These appointees are all compromised and cannot question the leader as long as their personal interests are being protected. Consequently, emerging Pentecostal leaders developed five-in-one ministries, ecclesiology, and governance, which will be discussed in the following section.

4. Overviewing the Five-in-One Ministry

The five-in-one ministry hereby refers to leader-centered ecclesiology that is characterized by dominating, controlling, manipulating, hierarchical, authoritarian, and patrimonial governance for personal gain and private kingdom-building. The five-in-one ministry is common in neo-Pentecostal megachurches which were “born from classical Pentecostal denominations” (Tagwirei 2024c, p. 3). According to Tagwirei (2023b) and Chitando et al. (2013, p. 154), most contemporary megachurch leaders are modern protestants who moved out of classical Pentecostals and evangelicals accusing them of bureaucratic governance and ‘cold’ ecclesiologies that restrict gifts of the Holy Spirit. While claiming to be liberating themselves and likeminded believers from dying spiritualities, they developed individualized, leader-centered governance and manipulative ecclesiologies. The evolution of Pentecostal governance and ecclesiologies has been ongoing for the past few decades across and beyond Africa (Amanze 2008) due to various factors which are overviewed in the next subsection titled Troubleshooting the Five-in-One Ministry.

In agreement with Kaunda (2020, p. 222), African neo-Pentecostal pastors derive their sacred authority from and abuse their claim to be called and set apart by God to exercise all fivefold ministry duties—as apostle, pastor, prophet, evangelist, and teachers of their respective denominations. While a few of them retain some tenets of the fivefold ministry, most neo-Pentecostal leaders believe they are comprehensively powerful in view of their nature. Neo-Pentecostalism is a new phase; it is contemporary and an exceptionally dynamic manifestation of independent and charismatic Christianity that arose during the 1950s and 1960s with the aim of seeking more profound and miraculous experiences (Oro-gun and Pillay 2021, p. 2). Tagwirei (2024c) clarifies that neo-Pentecostalism is exemplified by megachurches. Presently, neo-Pentecostalism boasts of massive numbers of adherents, strategic urban locations, massive edifices, glittering decorations, energetic preaching, and worship- and leader-centric leadership. Denominations such as the Zimbabwean Prophetic, Healing, and Deliverance (PhD) Ministries of the prophet Walter Magaya, the Nigeria-based Synagogue of All Nations, founded by the late prophet TB Joshua, now led by his wife Evelyn Joshua, and others are good examples of mega-neo-Pentecostal churches. According to Kaunda (2020), neo-Pentecostal leaders reserve sacred authority, individualism, fragmentation, and fundamentalism.

First, individualisation refers to the situation where sacred authority is individualised by specific pastors. In this approach, sacred authority no longer rests with the institutionalised church and indigenous communities; rather, the individual pastors claim to have exclusive access to the divine realms. This also means that they have the ability to autonomously and exclusively decide on specific Christian norms and values that function as an obligatory control mechanism imposed on their members. . . Secondly, a result of the individualisation of sacred authority is religious fragmentation. The more sacred authority is individualised, the less Neo-Pentecostal pastors want to interact and enter into dialogue with other Christian denominations, not to mention other religions. The result is a mushrooming of Neo-Pentecostalism, as each pastor seeks to completely break free from the influence of other religious authorities. . . Thirdly, the combination of individuation and fragmentation of sacred authority has engendered fundamentalist religious rivalry and destructive competition, which have contributed to the demographic

explosion of Neo-Pentecostal churches... a reaction to the threat of any change that includes secularisation (Kaunda 2020, pp. 222–23).

This explanation is reminiscent of what Magezi and Banda (2017) observed in Zimbabwe, namely that neo-Pentecostal prophetic leaders are overzealously domineering and overplaying their mediatory to an extent of competing with and usurping Jesus Christ's role over the Church. "Instead of being channels that lead people to depend only on Christ for their spiritual security, prosperity Pentecostal prophets present themselves as super spiritual authorities who must be relied upon by the believers in addition to Christ" (Magezi and Banda 2017, p. 1). As "super spiritual authorities", Pentecostal prophets project themselves as uniquely anointed by God. This places them closer to God than other people, and they receive spiritual power and authority over other believers. These prophets mediate their presence in the lives of their followers through anointed objects, such as pictures of themselves, anointed oil, and armbands. Ramantswana and Sebetseli (2021) claim that neo-Pentecostal leaders have shifted ecclesiology and church governance from institutional to personal brands. "The shift from church name brands to brand pastors implies that it is no longer so much the name of the church that draws the crowds, but the name of the pastor" (Ramantswana and Sebetseli 2021, p. 6). While that may be true, it is also discernible that rebranding the ecclesial to a personal brand reserves authority for the leader and disregards any forms of accountability and transparency. Although some church leaders work with certain subordinates and committees, the fact that the brand of their churches remains personal indicates possession. According to Ramantswana and Sebetseli (2021), such neo-Pentecostal leaders have become personality cults and celebrities, and their followers submit to them unquestionably. With the rise of brand prophets or pastors,

there is a shift from a place-centred pilgrimage to a person-centred pilgrimage. With some brand prophets comes emphasis on the divine power that resides in the person, which in turn is manifested through the person's ability to prophesy, heal, cast out demons and pronounce blessings (Ramantswana and Sebetseli 2021, p. 6).

Neo-Pentecostal leaders shun questionability and secure their position further by literal interpretation of scriptures, such as 1 Chronicles 16:22, which states, "Do not touch my anointed ones", and by indoctrination of blind followership; nevertheless, everyone remains fallible. Thus, leaders have commercialized and commodified the gospel by trading in miracles, healing, deliverance, and blessings (Adedibu and Igboin 2019; Adamo 2021; Kwateng-Yeboah 2017). They have masculinized and sexualized the gospel by abusing their positional reverence and congregational gullibility and engaging in sexual molestation (Dube 2018; Kgatle 2024a; Ndlovu et al. 2024). When leaders err, they continue to go astray, receive no advice, and may only be subject to public criticism in print and electronic media. Some African neo-Pentecostal leaders misread Philippians 4:13, where Paul says that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" as to mean, literally, that they should undertake all five works of ministry; they claim it refers to all-in-one gospel ministers who can do the work of apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. By doing so, they disregard and close up the space for any other gifts in their churches.

Participant observations throughout this study revealed that neo-Pentecostal leaders execute both pulpit and administrative duties. For example, the author attended four conferences and five main Sunday services of two different megachurches in Zimbabwe and South Africa and made the following observations. Founders and leaders of mega-Pentecostal churches reserve their pulpits for themselves, their spouses, and their most trusted subordinates. They disregard ordinary congregants who are gifted and trained in various specializations and could be resourceful in edifying their churches. For example, some of such leaders taught about COVID-19, HIV, and AIDS and related killer diseases even though they lack adequate knowledge of medicine or epidemiology, instead of assigning specialist doctors in their congregations to teach from informed positions. Similarly, some of these leaders have been micromanaging their ecclesial financial administration and building projects instead of utilizing the specialized services of technocrats in their ecclesial pews. One such leader in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, recently employed two young girls as

secretaries of his church high school without taking them through proper employment procedures. In an interview with a megachurch and its school administrator conducted after one of the church's conferences held at their high school in August, he said that

"Our founder operates as he likes. We just found two young girls in office as secretaries without our knowledge. Yet procedurally, the headmaster and administrator (myself) should have been engaged to interview them if we had vacancies. But our founder is just all powerful and self-centred. In this case we suspect that such girls are his mistresses".

This is what this submission refers to as a five-in-one ministry that upholds individualism, leader-centrism, authoritarianism, patrimonialism, and self-centeredness. In contrast to the fivefold ministry, which could build up the Church through collective and complementary ministration and servant leadership, the five-in-one ministry is destroying the Church through self-serving ministry and authoritarian leadership.

5. Troubleshooting the Five-in-One Ministry

Considering that the problems of the five-in-one ministry have been ballooning over time, they are difficult to resolve, because incumbent leaders who benefit from authoritarian church governance and leader-centered ecclesiologies refuse to accept advice or corrections from anyone and cannot reform themselves out of power. However, certain external and internal measures can be taken to mitigate identified and possible problems. It is recommendable to identify the drivers of the five-in-one ministry and to review and improve church governance and leadership styles. Additionally, ecumenical *koinonia* should be integrated with leadership development. Also, identifying and developing successors while they are still young, teachable, and redeemable is important.

It is very hard, if not impossible, to find remedies for problems without first diagnosing the causes. Therefore, it is imperative to determine what led some neo-Pentecostal church founders and senior leaders to adopt authoritarian five-in-one ministries. After that, ways to redeem them and their followers can be proposed. Although this single submission cannot exhaust all the causes, it determines that the five-in-one ministry is driven by a variety of factors, ranging from the demerits of their former churches' collective governance and ecclesiologies; hard contextual questions relating to poverty, disease, witchcraft, and related issues; a dire need for answers; educational, hermeneutical, and theological ignorance; greed; and arrogance. The factors behind the development of a five-in-one ministry differ from one context to another, but research and participative observation indicate that the listed factors are common denominators of neo-Pentecostal developments. Therefore, the following subsections unpack the determinations of and recommendations for troubleshooting the five-in-one ministry.

5.1. Church Governance Gaps: Reforming to Curb Authoritarianism

Democratic and collective church governance, such as Presbyterian and congregational polities, are complementary, because power is shared democratically by leaders and church members, who participate fully in the life and administration of their churches under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the highest authority. Nevertheless, like all other ecclesial polities, there are gaps. Tagwirei (2023b, p. 6) argues that

Presbyterian governance provides an equilibrium between the denomination and the congregation by enhancing authority to flow from the congregation up and from the denomination down. The congregation elects the leaders in the denomination in order to prevent the emergence and development of dominant hierarchies under the command of one person, which is toxic to the growth of the church.

Tagwirei (2023b) explains that Presbyterian and congregational pastors or parish ministers are not fully empowered to make decisions, because they tend to be subject to the will of the elders. When pastors disagree with the will of their elders and committees, insubordination can occur and cripple pastoral leadership and *missio ecclesiae*. Similarly,

congregationalism “denies ministers freedom to exercise some authority, thereupon risking to pursue the will of the people at the expense of *Opus Dei* (the work of God)” (Tagwirei 2023b, p. 7). Feeling restricted by shared leadership could lead some neo-Pentecostal leaders to seek to secure maximum freedom to advance their calling and ministries without limitation. Unfortunately, absolute power corrupts absolutely, hence claiming supreme power develops authoritarianism and reduces accountability and transparency. So, although all church polities exhibit certain weaknesses, leaders maximize their strengths by incorporating philosophies from different polities. If a church borrows Presbyterian principles of consultation with subordinate leaders, congregational appreciation and engagement, and Episcopalian decisiveness, leadership could eventually achieve Christ-like servanthood, consultation, accountability, transparency, and theocratic decisiveness in relevant contexts. When servant leadership replaces authoritarianism, the Church will be in a position to meet the needs of its membership and surrounding communities, as Zgambo (2021) suggests.

5.2. Syncretic Contextualization: Winnowing Leadership with Scripture

Drawing from Tagwirei’s (2024c) re-factorization of the growth of neo-Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, it is observable that neo-Pentecostal churches from different African nations have strategically adapted their ecclesiologies, messages, methods, and approaches to address problems that people face in their lives to attract new believers, foster growth, and secure their establishments. This contextualization has “facilitated the emancipation of indigenous ecclesiological principles, leading to the pursuit of adaptable, self-administrative, self-sustaining, and self-determining structures” (Tagwirei 2024c, p. 11). However, some neo-Pentecostal churches go to extremes in pursuing great works that John 14:12 promises believers. In doing so, some of them have shelved ministering the gospel of eternal salvation by over-exaggerating prosperity gospels that promise wealth and health. Although it is needful to demonstrate that the gospel addresses people’s problems, Magezi and Banda (2017) contend that it tends to verge on syncretism and self-glorification when leaders assume the mediating role of Jesus Christ and incorporate authoritarian leadership and ritualistic elements of African traditional religions. Countless African neo-Pentecostal leaders have adopted traditional African monarchical, gerontocratic, and unquestioned authoritarianism and hegemonic patriarchal leadership cultures for their leadership (Biri 2016; Dube 2018; Orogun 2023). It is important to contextualize leadership and ecclesiology, in order to identify with and meet recipients’ needs. Nonetheless, it is prudent to winnow leadership with scripture. By winnowing leadership, mentors, ecumenical leaders, and anyone who has access to ecclesial leaders can acclimatize governance and ecclesiology with scripture. Church leaders and followers can and should be nurtured, appointed, and mentored, so that they are informed to live out scriptures and are able to withstand cultural worldviews that inspire authoritarianism.

5.3. Ignorance: De-Secularizing Knowledge and De-Spiritualizing Ignorance

It is also discernible that the five-in-one ministry is affected by educational, hermeneutical, and theological ignorance, as well as greed and arrogance. It is assumed that, if leaders know God, scriptures, sound hermeneutics, and Christian theology, they can apply the five-fold ministry correctly for the edification of the Church, and not for personal gain. In that way, leaders can withstand temptations that accompany greed and arrogance. According to Tagwirei (2023c, p. 4), “it is observed that most African neo-Pentecostal leaders take the Bible literally, misinterpret it and ultimately develop wrong theologies”. Tagwirei (2023b) mentions legalizing tithing, on the basis of the Old Testament, Malachi 3:6–12, and trading of blessings through wrong theologies of seeding, whereby ecclesial leaders manipulate their congregants into sacrificially giving monetary and materialistic gifts and expecting corresponding blessings. In relation to church governance, Resane and Buitendag (2008) assert that neo-Pentecostal church leaders misinterpret Ephesians 4:11 as a verse that refers

to government, yet the fivefold ministry was never designed for ecclesiastic governance, but for edification.

To treat Ephesians 4:11 in isolation without connecting it with the subsequent verses, especially verses 12–13 is to do the hermeneutical injustice to the text. . . the purpose of these fivefold ministers is threefold: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. . . The ultimate purpose of all these offices and divisions of labour in the Church is the perfecting of the saints, and the way in which the saints are to be perfected is through the gift of the ministry, the function of which is to edify the body of Christ. . . The purpose of the passage was never to build a fivefold edifice or to endow five offices with rare powers for the sake of the restoration of the church before the Parousia (Resane and Buitendag 2008, p. 1533).

Resane and Buitendag (2008) further explain that misinterpreting scripture and reserving all powers and ministry for a few people threaten to ruin the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which is one of the distinctive traits of evangelical faith. “It seems all powers, revelation, knowledge etc. is centered on the fivefold ministers” (Resane and Buitendag 2008, p. 1533). Furthermore, Tagwirei (2023c) asserts that most emerging Pentecostal ecclesial leaders are self-serving, mainly because they lack sound theological training. “Very few of them hold diplomas and degrees in theological education”. As also alluded to by Hadebe (2017) and Brunson and Knoetze (2021, p. 278), theological education and training is important to prepare and enhance African gospel ministers, so that they are competent. Of course, education does not guarantee ministerial and leadership effectiveness, because theological training is also problematized by an exodus of lecturers from Southern Africa to Europe and the West in search of greener pastures, leading to brain drain, worsening economic recession, and a decline in financial and material resources. Nevertheless, even minimum theological certificate training can improve hermeneutical skills, leadership knowhow, and communication and other essential skills. Those who undergo biblical and theological training are enlightened and empowered enough to research, interpret, teach, preach, and apply scripture properly. Ephesians 4:11–16 and 2 Timothy 2:2 teach that training and education augments the work of ministry. While factors behind authoritarianism vary, lack of training is arguably one of the major causes of wrong hermeneutics and theologies and selfish leadership. This is possibly why some of the incumbent leaders of mega-Pentecostal churches have been developing authoritarian five-in-one ministries, manipulating and exploiting congregants by trading in anointing oils, wristbands, stickers, and handkerchiefs, and charging for one-on-one counselling, prophetic meetings, and related schemes to enrich themselves. Theological education can correct their hermeneutics and theology of mission, so that they work beyond *kerygma* to *diakonia*. Applying Tagwirei’s (2023b) conclusion about African leadership succession, cleaning today’s mess may be difficult, as most of the problematic leaders are arrogant and may refuse to submit to ecumenical or theological voices. Nevertheless, the remnants of sound leaders, para-church organizations, and theological colleges can still save tomorrow’s Church from authoritarianism by doubling their efforts to develop young leaders. Reviewing the current state of affairs, revising and exposing young and upcoming leaders to transformational and other-centered governance, and undertaking leadership development and succession in line with Jesus Christ’s model can change mega-Pentecostal church governance trajectories in Southern Africa.

5.4. Authoritarian Precedence: Reforming Church Leadership Styles

Southern African neo-Pentecostalism is problematized by traditional poor governance. While neo-mega-Pentecostalism arose from classical Pentecostalism, it should be remembered that Africans were born in the context of African traditional religions (ATRs). ATR leadership is characterized by patriarchy, hegemonic fatherhood, and instructional authoritarianism (Dube 2018). Although Christianity brought biblical principles of servanthood and complementarity, the influences of ATR leadership culture foster authoritarianism in contemporary mega-Pentecostalism. This is evidenced by various research studies that

expose power struggles in the Pentecostal church government in South Africa (Matshobane and Masango 2018; White and Pondani 2022) and confirm that most neo-Pentecostal leadership hierarchies operate under the exclusive power of the top leaders. The founders and top leaders of neo-Pentecostal churches centralize preaching, teachings, administration, liturgy, operations, and human, financial, and material resources of their churches on themselves.

The majority of the rogue leaders within Neo-Pentecostalism and Neo-Prophetic Churches have labelled themselves as “prophets”, insinuating the idea of “being led by spirit”; hence, “all” is under the leader’s divine instruction and supervision. This position denotes elements of hegemony, and it shuns the idea of accountability to recognizable apostolic or ecumenical councils. Instead, up and coming prophets has chosen to submit to other wealthier prophets, who are considered as “spiritual fathers” . . . This pattern shows that the majority of these churches are primarily built on the personhood of the “prophet” rather than doctrine or strong organizational structures (White and Pondani 2022).

This explanation echoes the findings of Nhumburudzi and Kurebwa (2018) in Zimbabwe that neo-Pentecostal governance is individualized, pastor-centered, and vulnerable to leadership manipulation. Neo-Pentecostal founders and leaders widely claim to be liberating themselves from dying spiritualities and restrictive governance. As reflected before, Chitando et al. (2013) explain that African neo-Pentecostal founders and leaders often assert that they are breaking away from regressive bureaucracy and supposedly ‘cold’ spiritual practices to embrace a more dynamic approach that advances the *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae* through expressive and demonstrative ministries. However, Tagwirei (2023a) reports that they, paradoxically, end up becoming similarly, if not more, regressive. Instead of being focused on serving others (being other-centered), they became self-centered in their actions and priorities. Considering that mainline and evangelical churches are not really experiencing problems related to authoritarianism, unaccountability, and institutional and congregational resources, Pentecostals could learn from these churches. It should be noted that mainline and evangelical churches employ either episcopal, Presbyterian, or congregational polities. Although every church polity has certain weaknesses and strengths, Tagwirei (2023a, p. 10) proposes that it is best to adopt a mixed church polity that

enhances the efficiency of the church, thereby bolstering its missionality. . .the Church can, and should, consider transfiguring and missionizing her governance by blending her polities, integrating principles from different systems towards empowering leaders to enhance missio Dei while, at the same time, protecting them from falling into power-abuse by incorporating accountability, transparency, and congregational involvement.

Accordingly, through all the polities, ecclesiological transfiguration can be realized if governance is blended with ideologies that accommodate contextually relevant and constructive leadership styles that enable leaders to promote *Opus Dei* bindingly.

5.5. Arrogance: Integrating Ecumenism with Leadership Development

Considering that some church leaders are deaf to internal advice from their subordinates and associates about reforming their governance and ecclesiology, it is recommended that ecumenical bodies deliberately develop and facilitate leadership development discussions and lessons in their fellowships. The Bible says iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17); in the same way, ecclesiastical bodies can initiate governmental reflections for denominational leaders to review them in their own fellowships in the absence of their subordinates. According to Hove (2022), ecumenical fellowship is a good opportunity for pastors and leaders to learn from one another and share material and spiritual resources. Leaders can eventually appreciate, enlighten, and empower each other towards improving their church governance, ecclesiology, and ministries. This is why Tagwirei (2024a) recommends that

it is expedient for Church leaders to sit down, alone, and sometimes in consultation with leaders of their respective ecumenical bodies, and Christian theologians of their choice, in seminars or conferences and revise their hermeneutics, theologies, ecclesiologies and governance regularly, to improve how they serve in their various capacities.

Just as the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum facilitates “capacity building of Church leaders through training sessions and workshops to be able to teach and influence peace building processes in Zimbabwe” (Peace Insight 2018), the Council for Churches in Africa grooms and empowers clergy, bishops, apostles, prophets, and other spiritual leaders with knowledge, skills, and resources to fulfill their divine calling. It would be wise for all of them to integrate their programs with reflections on church governance. In view of the development of authoritarian five-in-one ministries in emerging mega-Pentecostal churches, ecumenical bodies can help ecclesial leaders who attend their programs. I am well aware that some mega-denominational leaders may be too arrogant and feel too big to attend ecumenical fellowships. However, those who do attend can be helped to improve their denominational politics and ecclesiologies and influence their successors to continue refining the same. Meanwhile, ecumenical bodies, para-church organizations, and theological colleges can encourage and enroll young people to raise transformed leaders. I agree with Kgatle (2022) that ecumenical bodies are in the best position to facilitate reformation and transformation of church leadership in Africa. Reflecting on considerations of the South African government to regulate churches, as it was done in Rwanda, Kgatle (2022, p. 5) argues that

the best way for the church is not regulation by the government, but self-regulation through ecumenical bodies. The role of government is, therefore, to assist churches to formalise the councils and to create for these councils an environment conducive to pastors and churches being accountable to one another. When the church is self-regulating, it will be able to manage its internal affairs.

Even in the context of church governance, ecumenical bodies are best placed to engage in reflective teachings and discussions with denominational leaders through conferences, seminars, or general fellowship meetings. In cases where some members of ecumenical bodies may have conflicts of interest with particular denominations or denominational leaders, they can strategically deploy neutral leaders to facilitate teachings and discussions towards improving church governance, leadership styles, ministerial practices, and ecclesiologies. Self-serving leaders have rooted themselves in authoritarianism, and they are unlikely to reform themselves out of power. Alternatively, para-church organizations, theological colleges, and related institutions can and should fill the gap of leadership development and succession and work on training, discipleship, development, exposure, enlightenment, and empowerment of young leaders who will value and apply more consultative and participative approaches. Unlike self-centered leaders who work only with their spouses, children, close relatives, and friends, independent para-church organizations and theological colleges can facilitate enlightening and empowering discipleship programs to develop leaders who can serve the Church under Jesus Christ’s model. While Jesus Christ served with 12 disciples, he deliberately developed, authorized, and sent them out on missions (i.e., Mt 10:1–2; Lk 9: 1–27) to gain exposure and eventually released them to advance *missio Dei*. Instead of raising dynastic teams which advance self-enrichment and security, new leaders can be developed to foster inclusive *missio Ecclesiae*.

5.6. Poverty: Developing Inclusive Economic Sustainability

It is interesting to note that the establishment and growth of most neo-Pentecostal churches of which leaders have become proponents of the prosperity gospel of wealth and health coincided with economic crises in Africa (Tagwirei 2023c; Yong and Knoetze 2024). While we would ordinarily argue that founders of neo-Pentecostal churches contextualized their gospel and lived out integral mission to meet the needs of Africans, it should also be noted that these founders and leaders used the same gospel to generate personal wealth and meet their own and their families’ needs. This is evidenced by their accumulation of massive wealth, which has occurred at the expense of poor congregants (Golo 2013; Guyson 2016; Orogun and Pillay 2021; Toulemonde 2024). It is challenging that conventional sources of ecclesial income (such as tithes and freewill offerings) and local and foreign donations are unsustainable in the context of political and economic volatility and global economic

recession, while the cost of living and operating a church keep increasing. Economic unsustainability continues to haunt millions of Africans and tempt some church leaders to manipulate and exploit their followers in order to survive.

The adoption of authoritarianism, self-enrichment and selfishness, and the exploitation of congregants by certain ecclesial leaders is driven by various factors, including greed, bad hermeneutics and theologies, and, ultimately, poverty. Thus, it is recommended that people who have access to incumbent and upcoming ecclesial leaders, such as staff at ecumenical, theological, and seminary colleges, contribute their knowledge to develop leaders and promote congregational economic sustainability. African economies, which are rich in natural, human, and material resources, are impoverished by self-serving and violent politics. Therefore, the collective voices of diaconal advocacy for responsible citizenship, environmental stewardship, and integral missionary application of the gospel must transform our politics and economics in Africa.

Thus, this submission calls everyone who has a voice to acclimatize others to remain conscious—beyond being mere citizens of their respective nations—of their inclusive positions as regional, continental, and global citizens. By doing so, everyone will be sensitive to doing whatever they can, individually and collectively, by partnering with others, and engaging their ecclesial and political leaders to develop their governance to achieve inclusive economic sustainability.

6. Concluding Remarks

When church governance, leadership styles, and ecclesiologies are influenced by one person, or few top leaders, authoritarianism, leadership showmanship, congregational manipulation, and exploitation are likely to develop. While the effects may vary from one denomination, congregation, location, and time to another, absolute power is absolutely corrupting the governance and ecclesiologies of most mega-Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa. Instead of serving the mission of God and the Church and transforming society, centralizing leadership and ecclesiologies bind gullible believers to secure leaders' political and economic interests. In view of this trend, the remnants of sound ecclesial leaders, ecumenical bodies, and theological colleges can save present and future generations from the perils of mega five-in-one ministries by engaging involved leaders, subordinates, and their young followers. Proposed helpers can facilitate conferences and seminars for reflection, discussion, and suggestions for contextually developmental hermeneutics, theologies, church governance, transformative ecclesiologies, and sustainable economics. It is believable that such initiatives will inform the edifying continuation of the collective and complementary tenets of the fivefold ministry and discontinue the destructive authoritarian influences of the five-in-one ministry in Southern Africa.

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