



## A comparative study of priesthood in a religio-pluralistic society: Implications for a decolonised religious and moral education in Ghana

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### ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the notion of priesthood in a religio-pluralistic society and its implications for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana. The fundamental theoretical framework that underpinned the study is provided by the phenomenological approach to the study of religion. Using the qualitative comparative case study design, the study included an examination of authorised textbooks, a thorough literature review, and semi-structured interviews with five religious leaders (one Catholic priest, one Presbyterian ordained minister, one priest from Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) and two traditional priests from Asante and Fante backgrounds) who were purposively sampled. The data analysis was conducted by thematic and cross-case synthesis. The results point to a basic ontological difference in the idea of religious leadership. The priesthood is viewed as a sacerdotal or ministerial reality that involves mediation, sacrifice, and a unique ceremonial status in African Traditional Religions (ATR), Catholicism, and the African Initiated/Independent/Indigenous Church (AIC), specifically Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) as a case study. On the other hand, ordained ministry is specifically rejected as having a sacerdotal nature in the mainline Protestant traditions of Methodism and Presbyterianism, where it is understood as a representative and functional role within the universal priesthood of all believers. The study revealed that these models are frequently referred to by the general term "priest" in educational contexts, which causes conceptual uncertainty and distorts religious traditions. In accordance with the study's findings, this misunderstanding presents a serious educational difficulty. It makes the case that interactive pedagogy, comparative modules, and improved teacher preparation are necessary for a decolonised RME curriculum to actively teach these differences. In Ghana's multicultural community, RME can more effectively advance social cohesiveness, respect for one another, and true religious literacy by cultivating a precise understanding of religious leadership. Such curriculum transformation is essential for fostering authentic religious literacy, mutual respect, and social cohesion in Ghana's multicultural society.

**Keywords:** African Traditional Religions, Clergy, Priesthood, Religio-Pluralistic, Religious and Moral Education, Sacerdotal

### I. INTRODUCTION

In almost, if not all, religions, there may be a distinct person chosen to lead worship. In a religiously pluralistic society like Ghana, there is a need to know and understand the specific roles of such people in their various religious traditions to avoid confusion and know the appropriate terms to use for them. In this paper, we seek to elucidate the notion of priesthood and the distinctiveness based on the religious traditions in the midst of Ghana's religious pluralism and their implications for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME).

Religious pluralism is acknowledging, accepting, and respecting the existence and uniqueness of other religions without sharing in their faith (Korsah & Ampem, 2026; Mensah et al, 2024; Ampem, 2023; Korsah, 2020). Ghana is religiously pluralistic; made up of three main religions, and these are African Traditional religions, Christianity, and Islam (Mensah & Ampem, 2023). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) report on the 2020 Housing and Population Census, a greater number of Ghanaians profess Christianity (71.2%), followed by Islam (17.6%), a minority but significant portion of the population adhere to African Traditional religions (5.2%), while another minority (5.3%) are not affiliated to any religion. In terms of those who profess religion, adherents of the African traditional religions are in the minority, although both Christianity and Islam are not indigenous to Ghanaians.

The Microsoft Encyclopaedia affirms that there are over one hundred (100) ethnic groups in Ghana, and these groups have not only maintained their ethnic identity but also their religious identity. The various ethnic groups have



something distinct about their traditional religion, which makes it particular to that ethnic group. The distinctions and particularities of what is practised by the various ethnic groups make it possible to argue for African Traditional Religions, as some African scholars have espoused. The existence of the distinctions in African primal religions further emphasises the assertion of Mbiti (1969:4) that “Traditional religions are not universal: they are tribal or national. Each religion is bound and limited to the people among whom it has evolved”.

The Christian notion of priesthood is a particular reference to the clergy who are set apart by virtue of ordination or commissioning in the various Christian traditions to preach the gospel, administer sacraments and perform other pastoral functions. For the Catholic Church, the priesthood is reserved for males, and it is a divine call to service through which the individual participates in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Church. However, in the Protestant tradition, both males and females are referred to as pastors or ministers, and in some African Initiated/Independent/Indigenous Churches within the same Protestant tradition, they are referred to as priests or prophets/prophetesses. Whenever the notion of priesthood is used for the traditional Protestant clergy, it is not in the realistic sense but as a metaphor.

This study argues that an investigation into the notion of priesthood in such a religio-pluralistic society is not only necessary to preserve this specific knowledge but is also valuable for informing a truly pluralistic and decolonised RME curriculum in Ghana. This paper, in the literature review, explores the African traditional priesthood and the Christian priesthood from the perspectives of Catholicism, Protestantism (Methodist and Presbyterian Churches), and African Initiated/Independent/Indigenous Churches (Musama Disco Christo Church), and discusses the implications for religious and moral education and concludes the discussion.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Religious pluralism naturally implies the existence of a plurality of religious leaders due to the perceived religious functions and roles they perform in both private and public worship. Such religious pluralism has directly and indirectly occasioned the emergence of multiform pastors, seers, evangelists, apostles, priests, and diverse men of God in Africa, especially Anglophone West Africa. This phenomenon appears to pose a significant challenge and raise a central question regarding the nature and distinctiveness of the priesthood in such a religio-pluralistic society, as well as its implications for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME).

### 1.2 Research Objective(s)

The main objective of the study was to determine the concept of priesthood in terms of its nature, identity, and the functions from the perspective of diverse religious traditions in Ghana and its implications for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Phenomenology of Religion

The fundamental theoretical framework for this investigation is provided by the phenomenological approach to the study of religion, which was created by academics like Ninian Smart (1996) and Mircea Eliade (1958). The necessity to comprehend religious occurrences on their own terms, putting aside outside assumptions and honouring the insider's viewpoint, is emphasised by phenomenology of religion. Because it requires that each tradition's vision of religious leadership be defined in accordance with its own self-understanding rather than being judged against an external standard, this approach is especially useful for researching the priesthood across traditions.

Priests serve as intermediaries between the holy and profane domains across traditions, as demonstrated by Eliade's (1958) idea of hierophany, the appearance of the sacred. According to phenomenology, a priest facilitates hierophanic interactions for the community by working at the nexus of the sacred and profane. A thorough framework for examining priesthood is provided by Smart's (1996) multidimensional model of religion, which incorporates doctrinal, mythical, ethical, ceremonial, experiential, and social dimensions. Each component provides a unique perspective: the doctrinal dimension looks at theological explanations for priestly power; the ritual dimension considers the priest's role in sacrifice and ceremony; and the social dimension considers the priest's place within communal institutions.

By opposing the universalisation of any one model of priesthood, the phenomenological commitment to epoché, suspending judgment, aligns with the study's decolonial goals. According to Cox (2010), phenomenology allows scholars to recognise the uniqueness of every religious tradition and "bracket out" culturally particular presumptions. Phenomenology directs the comparative analysis in this study by making sure that before any comparisons are made, the ATR priesthood, Catholic sacerdotalism, Protestant ministerial models, and MDCC's hybrid priesthood are all understood within their own conceptual frameworks.

### 2.1.1 Priesthood in African Traditional Religions (ATR)

In African Traditional Religions (ATR), the priesthood is a multifaceted, intricate organisation that defies easy Western classification. Its embeddedness in ritual practice, social life, and cosmological order is emphasised by contemporary scholarship. The priest is positioned as the primary mediator in the fundamental understanding, which was posited by Mbiti (1969) and is still frequently cited. Current research, however, clarifies this perspective. As a “ritual technician” (Ekem, 2009), the priest’s main job is to carry out the exact rituals, invocations, libations, and sacrifices that uphold the community’s harmony with its ancestors (*nananom nsamanfo*) and the gods (*abosom*). In times of crisis, such as famine, epidemics, or conflicts, when ritual error is thought to have real, catastrophic repercussions, this role is crucial. One of the fundamental themes is still the ontology of the priestly call and training. The two pathways, hereditary ancestry and divine/spirit possession, identified by previous researchers are confirmed by scholarship (Ekwunife, 1999). However, it emphasises how deeply embodied and psycho-spiritual the training is. This process alters the individual’s identity, identifying them as permanently set apart (*tweade*) for sacred service.

The ATR priesthood is often a special, non-transferable destiny associated with a single shrine or deity, in contrast to the Christian concept of a universal calling (Atiemo, 2013). The priest’s socio-political function is also heavily emphasised in contemporary writing. Although the chief holds political authority, the priest possesses ritual authority and often acts as a check on the chief’s power by ensuring that actions align with moral law and ancestral tradition (Wardi et al., 2024). ATR priesthood stands out for its integrated perspective on social and spiritual governance, which subverts the contemporary secular/religious divide.

## 2.2 Christian Priesthood

The collective role of the Christian community involves “the common task of helping to effect *Missio Dei* on earth by contributing to the material and spiritual well-being of their fellow creatures” (Ekem, 2009:101). The Catholic Church teaches that because of their baptism, all Christians assume a sacerdotal function and dignity; with Christ as their High Priest, “offer worship, sacrifice and glory to God” (Stravinskias, 1991). The role of the baptised in the celebration of divine worship clearly reflects the sacerdotal functions they assume in their baptism. The baptised laity shares in the common priesthood of all believers. It is therefore in the light of fulfilling “the common task of helping to effect *Missio Dei* on earth” and participating in the “[offering of] worship, sacrifice and glory to God” that we can then speak of a common Christian priesthood.

Christian priesthood is also a particular reference to the clergy who are set apart by virtue of ordination or commissioning in the various Christian traditions to preach the gospel, administer sacraments and perform other pastoral functions (Ekem, 2009). The various Christian denominations have different titles for the ordained or the commissioned representatives who perform clerical functions. In the Catholic tradition, such persons are solely males referred to as priests in the essence of the term. However, in the Protestant tradition, both males and females are referred to as pastors or ministers, and in some African Independent Churches within the same Protestant tradition, they are referred to as priests or prophets/prophetesses.

### 2.2.1 Etymology of the term “Priest”

From various sources, the word “priest” is derived from the French *prêtre* and the Greek *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbyteros*). The word in Greek was, however, translated into English as “elder”. The term was mostly used in late antiquity to refer to the elders of the Jewish and Christian communities. Eliade (1987:529) suggests that in the course of Christian application of the term, “the semantics of the term shifted from the ordained person’s place in ecclesiastical polity to his role as a cultic celebrant”. The Latin and Greek word for priest as a “cultic celebrant” is *sacerdos* and *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) respectively. These words emphasise religious connotation in the sense that the *sacerdos* or *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) plays religious functions such as interpreting the meaning of events, performing the rituals of the religion, and offering sacrifices. The term “priest” in English has assumed the meaning of the Latin *sacerdos* or Greek *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) rather than *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbyteros*).

According to Barnes (2023), the etymological issues are not coincidental but rather represent a major theological controversy. While the *sacerdos/hiereus* paradigm accentuates special cultic function, the *presbyteros* model places more focus on community leadership, teaching, and pastoral care. A disagreement over which etymological root is theologically definitive for the Christian minister can be used to partially explain the Protestant-Catholic divide over the priesthood. Scholars like O’Malley (2019) have suggested that the New Testament itself retains these models in a creative, unresolved tension, with Christ playing the *hiereus* role (Hebrews) and the community embodying the *presbyteros* structure (Pastoral Epistles).

### 2.2.2 The Catholic Priesthood

According to the Catholic Catechism, a Catholic priest shares in the unique, everlasting priesthood of Jesus Christ, which was established sacramentally at the Last Supper and passed down through apostolic succession through

the Sacrament of Holy Orders (CCC, 1544-1545). The goal of recent theological research has been to strengthen the ecclesiological and Christological underpinnings of this comprehension. Theologians like Sarah and Diat (2017) and Barron (2024) highlight the priest's identity in *persona Christi Capitis*, or in the person of Christ the Head, building on the work of Ratzinger in 1986 and others. The priest can act with the authority of Christ, thanks to this sacramental configuration, which goes beyond simple depiction. This is especially true when it comes to administering the sacrament of reconciliation and presiding over the Eucharist, which is the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice. Korsah and Appiah-Kubi (2015:318) reiterate this position that "the Second Vatican Council affirms that by the sacred power of Orders, priests are empowered to offer sacrifice and forgive sins and the ordained are to attend to their priestly duties in the name of Christ".

The catholic ministerial priesthood is different from the royal/baptismal priesthood or universal priesthood of all believers. The difference rests in the fact that ministerial priesthood is different in degree from the baptismal/universal priesthood of all believers, although both are derived from the same priesthood of Jesus Christ. Ministerial priests are *alter Christus* and act *in persona Christi* when offering priestly duties such as administering the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation (Korsah & Appiah-Kubi, 2015).

The priesthood in a pluralistic and secularising environment is another topic that is addressed in contemporary literature. As envisioned by Vatican II's *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, scholars like Gaillardetz and Hahnenberg (2015) study the changing pastoral identity of the priest, shifting from a model of clerical supremacy to one of "servant leadership" and "collaborative ministry" with the laity. Without compromising the doctrinal foundation of the sacrament, authors like Faggioli and O'Reilly-Gindhart (2021) and Phan (2017) call for an immediate "reform of the priesthood" that tackles clericalism, promotes transparency, and re-centres the priest's duty as a humble servant of the Gospel and the People of God. Scholars like Barron (2024) investigate the inculturation of the Catholic priesthood in the African environment, looking at how African ideas of ritual, community, and elderhood might influence priestly spirituality while upholding doctrinal purity.

## 2.3 The Protestant Ministry

Through the ideas of *sola fide* (faith alone) and the priesthood of all believers, the Protestant Reformation radically rethought religious leadership (1 Peter 2:9). The medieval sacramental and mediatorial conception of priesthood was challenged by this new theological thought. In addition to administering the sacraments, which were reinterpreted as outward declarations of promise rather than sacrifices, the minister also became a preacher of the Word (*praedicatio Verbi Dei*) (Luther, 1520 & Calvin, 1536). This "ministerial" (as opposed to "priestly") model evolved into different polities, episcopal, presbyterian, and congregational, across the Protestant world, according to recent research by Gifford (2004) and Noll (2024). It is important to note that almost all Protestant churches hold similar or even the same view on the priesthood or the ordained ministry, except the Anglican Church, which shares the position of the Catholic Church.

### 2.3.1 The Presbyterian Ministry and the Methodist Ministry

The system of elder-led government, or presbytery, is the foundation of Presbyterian ministry. A college of lay Ruling Elders surrounds the ordained minister, who is frequently referred to as a Teaching Elder. The minister's authority is derived from the summons of a local congregation and the ratification of the presbytery (regional council), according to historical-theological work by Gaillardetz and Hahnenberg (2015). The minister's ordination is a public acknowledgement of their abilities and a setting apart for the practical duties of Word, Sacrament, and orderliness; they do not possess inherent priestly authority. This Reformed system of government was passed down from the Basel Mission to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) in Ghana. Despite the theology's stated denial of it, the great level of communal esteem accorded to leaders in Akan culture, together with the pastoral care demands of congregants, can generate an informal 'priest-like' aura around the minister. Additionally, prophetic and healing ministries have been incorporated by the charismatic renewal movement within worldwide Presbyterianism, which further complicates the traditional Reformed ministerial identity (Fumanti, 2022).

The Methodist Church, Ghana, while it has transformed into a form of episcopal structure with ordained "ministers in full connexion", vigorously affirms the priesthood of all believers as the only form of priesthood within the church (The Methodist Church, Ghana, Standing Orders, 2000). With an emphasis on giftedness for mission, Wesley's practical use of lay preachers created a tradition where the distinction between ordained and lay ministry might be blurred. Although the ministers are shepherds and stewards, their ordination does not grant them ontological change. However, current sociological research indicates a changing reality which is not in accordance with their theology.

### 2.3.2 General introduction to the African Indigenous Churches (AICs)

African Indigenous Churches (AICs) are a dynamic and varied movement of Christian expression that emerged from the interaction of African religio-cultural worlds and missionary Christianity. Beyond previous categorisations as

“syncretic” or “proto-nationalist”, contemporary study increasingly highlights their agency as theological inculturation labs and reactions to existential African realities (Kaku, 2009; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2021). The African Indigenous Churches refer to churches founded in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans. The “indigenous” can be substituted with initiated, independent, or instituted. The implication is that such churches could be referred to as African Initiated/Indigenous/Independent/Instituted Churches (Atuahene, 2010:19, 20). The purpose of the AICs is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and interpret the Gospel to suit the African situation and worldview. Scholars such as Arnold Turner have used the term African Indigenous Churches in describing churches that contextualise the Gospel to suit the African conception of God through their beliefs and practices. Examples of the AICs are the Church of the Twelve Apostles, founded by Grace Tani, John Nackabah and John Hackman; Apostles Revelation Society, which was founded by Mr Charles Kobla Nutonuti Wovenu, who was generally known as Prophet Wovenu; and Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church), also founded by Joseph William Egyanka Appiah, who became Prophet Jemisemiham Jehu-Appiah.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2021), they are characterised by a holistic worldview that does not distinguish between the sacred and the secular (or the spiritual and the physical); a strong emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit as seen in prophecy, healing, and dreams; the ceremonial use of symbols like water, staffs, and candles; and the re-centering of African cultural idioms in worship, leadership, and communal life. According to Lamak (2023), they aimed to “de-foreignise” the gospel and provide answers to issues that the mission churches frequently disregarded, especially those about fertility, protection from demonic spirits, and overall well-being (shalom). In the attempt to discuss the notion of priesthood in the AICs, we would focus on the Musama Disco Christo Church, as it is one of the few, if not the only, African Indigenous Churches that recognises ministerial priesthood. The priests of the Musama Church function in the essence of the term. The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) offers a comprehensive case study of a completely functional sacerdotal structure within an AIC. It is a clear departure from the Protestant “ministerial” model and a strong “priestly” one that is intentionally based on Old Testament themes.

The MDCC has a sacerdotal and hierarchical leadership structure. The position of *Akaboha* (Spiritual Head), which is considered a “High Priest”. To carry out yearly atonement ceremonies involving the blood of a ram, a clear appropriation of Levitical ritual (Exodus 30:10) for a Christian community, only the *Akaboha* is permitted entry to the *Mazano* (Holy City) and its inner sanctuary, the “Holy of Holies” (Ekem, 2009; Baeta, 1962). Ordained pastors and prophets/prophetesses, who are viewed as priests administering God’s grace through word, sacrament (Holy Communion, baptism), and healing, are beneath the *Akaboha*.

### III. METHODOLOGY

To investigate the complex and context-specific concept of priesthood throughout Ghana’s religious traditions, this study used a qualitative research design within an interpretivist paradigm. Understanding the nature, identity, and roles of the priesthood from various religious viewpoints and concluding their relevance for (RME) instruction was the main goal. Qualitative approaches were found to be the most suitable for capturing the depth and complexity of the subject matter due to the conceptual and experiential aspects of the inquiry. In order to examine the concept of priesthood within Ghana’s religio-pluralistic environment, this study used a qualitative comparative case study design (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). The choice of this architecture was deliberate and logically supported by the nature of the study, which aimed to systematically analyse and compare the notion across different, constrained religious systems in addition to describing it. The case study is the best approach when “the main research questions are 'how' or 'why' questions; when the investigator has little control over events; and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin, 2018:15). The question of how the priesthood is understood, why it varies, and how these variances occur within the actual contexts of Ghana’s living faith traditions falls under all of these criteria.

A key component of the design is the comparative dimension. The study views Ghana’s religious landscape as consisting of several coexisting “cases” (Stake, 2006), each having its own internal coherence and integrity, rather than as a single entity. African Traditional Religions (ATR), the Catholic Church, Mainline Protestant Churches (including Methodist and Presbyterian traditions), and an African Indigenous Church (AIC), the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC), were identified as the four main cases for focused comparison. To shed light on the various forms of the core phenomenon of interest (priesthood) and the circumstances that give rise to them, the logic of comparison employs what Ragin (2014) refers to as a “diverse cases” method, in which cases are chosen to maximise variation on the phenomenon.

The study’s decolonial and instructional goals are especially well-suited for the comparative case study methodology. By requiring an organised, side-by-side analysis of other models on their own terms, it opposes the propensity to universalise a particular (often Western Christian) model of religious leadership. A comparative case study approach can be used to track how social phenomena, in this case, the idea of priesthood, are interpreted and performed differently in various sociocultural and historical contexts (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). This enables the research to go beyond simple description to produce a cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018), identifying both critical divergences (such as



realistic priesthood versus metaphorical priesthood) and invariant themes (such as the leader as moral guide) that are necessary for a complex and accurate Religious and Moral Education curriculum.

To guarantee validity and richness, data were gathered using three primary approaches. First, as stated in the literature review, a thorough and critical analysis of the body of existing literature was carried out, with an emphasis on scholarly articles and foundational works on African Traditional Religions (ATR), Catholicism, Protestantism (particularly Methodist and Presbyterian traditions), and African Initiated Churches (AICs). Second, to ground the study in contemporary lived experience and practitioner viewpoint, five (5) carefully selected key informants took part in semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was chosen to provide cases with a wealth of data (Patton, 2015). Three (3) Christian religious leaders (one Catholic priest, one Presbyterian minister, and one priest from an AIC, the Musama Disco Christo Church) and two (2) traditional priests from distinct Akan ethnic groupings, specifically Fante and Asante. Interview instructions were tailored to each group and addressed topics such as vocational calling, training, perceived functions, self-identity (e.g., "priest," "minister," or "*Okomfo*"), and challenges in a pluralistic society.

The fundamental stratum of scholarship was established by document analysis. A comprehensive examination of important literature was conducted for every case. This includes historical narratives of church creation (e.g., Baeta, 1962 on AICs), official ecclesial documents (e.g., *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Methodist Standing Orders), and theological and historical literature (e.g., Mbiti, 1969 for ATR; Ekem, 2009 for the Christian context). This gave each tradition's understanding of priesthood its doctrinal, historical, and normative foundation.

Additionally, a thorough content study of existing junior and senior high school RME textbooks recognised by the Ghana Education Service was carried out to directly address the consequences for RME. The presentation of religious leadership and priesthood language, the degree of tradition-to-tradition comparability, and any discernible biases or connotations were the main topics of this investigation. A detailed examination of how religious leadership and priesthood are portrayed in the official curriculum was conducted by looking at current RME textbooks for junior and senior high schools that have been approved by the Ghana Education Service.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018) served as the guiding concepts for the iterative, two-phase data analysis approach. Analysis within a case. Each religious tradition's (case's) data was gathered and examined separately. Case-specific themes were established by repeatedly reading and coding relevant textbook portions, documents, and interview transcripts. Themes like "call through lineage or possession," "training as ritual seclusion," and "role as custodian-judge," for instance, surfaced in the ATR case. In order to respect each tradition's unique internal logic, this stage made sure that each was grasped in its own depth and complexity before comparison. After the within-case study, the researchers continuously compared the four examples (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To find patterns, the themes from each case were compared in a matrix. The results were transformed from a collection of distinct descriptions to an integrated, theoretical knowledge of Ghana's varying "notion of priesthood" by a methodical comparison. The topic of distinctiveness was directly influenced by the synthesis, which also served as the supporting evidence for the implications and suggestions for curriculum creation and RME pedagogy. This methodological strategy ensured that the research produced findings that are both highly contextual and broadly relevant for the problem of teaching in a multicultural society by upholding the integrity of each instance while systematically seeking points of connection and contrast.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Findings

The results are generated by analysing the interview responses in addition to analysing literature documents on priesthood from various religious traditions, specifically African traditional religions, Catholic tradition, mainline Protestant tradition (Presbyterianism and Methodism) and an AIC church (Musama Disco Christo Church) by generating an interwoven discussion of results with the literature.

#### 4.1.1 African Traditional Priesthood

In African traditional religions, the priest can be a man or a woman called by the gods, trained, and dedicated to a particular public or family shrine or sacred grove for ritual purposes in the interests of the community they serve. Two different traditional priests interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025 respectively explained that they were called by specific deities to become priests and serve their community as priests after their training and initiation. In a direct translation they expressed: "*the spirit called me by possessing me to serve the spirit and the community*". Ekwunife (1999:26) seems to affirm this by describing a traditional priest as "someone summoned either by the divinity or by his community or by some form of religious impulse to fulfil a religious function for the salvation of the community or for self-devotion".

The two traditional priests in the interview identified themselves not only as presiding officiants of sacrifice but also as intermediaries between the people in the community and the deity. One traditional priest from the Fante community explained:

*During a three-year illness, the divine contacted me. I saw visions telling me to answer the phone during this time. I now act as a conduit between our people and the divine following my training and initiation at the sacred grove. People come to me when they need to make sacrifices or converse with the god.* (Interview, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

An Asante traditional priest similarly described his role:

*I inherited my priesthood from my mother's family. During my two years of training, I learnt about our people's history, taboos, ceremonies, and plants. It is now my responsibility to pour alcohol during celebrations, make sacrifices in times of need, and counsel the chief on issues pertaining to the ancestors' spirits* (Interview, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025).

Their position is in accordance with African scholars such as Mbiti (1969), Opoku (1978) and Quarcoopome (1987) who posit that priests in traditional African societies are essentially the chief intermediaries; they stand between man, God and or other divinities associated with the African worldview, especially in sacrificial matters.

The priest's essential role in African society is quite different from the roles of other specialists of African Traditional Religion, like kings, queens, diviners, mediums, prophets, and rain makers, to mention but a few. The essential role of the priest in sacrificial affairs does not mean that the other specialists noted above do not offer ritual sacrifice on behalf of the community or on their clients. In offering ritual sacrifices, they perform priestly functions although they are not recognised as priests. In support of this, Mbiti (1969) notes that the Baganda king used to make an offering and sacrifice of nine men, nine women, nine cattle, nine goats, nine fowls, and nine loads of bark cloths and cowry shells. Ekwunife (1999) also observes that the *Asantehene* who occupies the golden stool is, by virtue of his position, the main presider of ritual offerings and sacrifices during the *Adae* festival.

There are two types of priesthood in the African traditional society; Quarcoopome (1987) categorises them into lay and professional priesthood. Those who make up the lay priesthood are the family or clan heads who officiate at the domestic and ancestral shrines where they lead the household in making offerings and prayers. Those who belong to the professional priesthood are those connected to the cult of the divinities. The Yoruba of Nigeria refer to them as *Olorisha*, while they are known as *Akomfo* among the Akans of Ghana. These professional priests are set aside from birth to dedicate their lives to the priesthood by virtue of inheritance from any of their parents or a relative. The candidates for the professional priesthood may also be chosen through the medium of spirit possession. In the latter, the spirit of a divinity may possess a person of his choice, and the one chosen may be secluded from the public for training for a period, depending on the divinity. The period ranges from three weeks to three years or more. The choice of a divinity for the priesthood is formally trained in the art of the priesthood at the traditional centres for training priests and priestesses. At the end of the training, the candidate for the sacred office goes through the rite of initiation into the priesthood (Quarcoopome, 1987).

The African traditional priest is a significant religious and social figure due to the essential roles he or she plays in the community. Mbiti (1969) posits that as an intermediary, the priest is also the religious symbol of God and the divinities among the people. He speaks and understands the language of the divine, so he is expected to translate and interpret this language to the people whenever the need arises. The priest also performs ritual sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the community. For instance, when there are national disasters such as plagues, death, famine, and drought, to mention a few, the priest offers the required sacrifice to God, the ancestors and the other divinities concerned.

The traditional priest is also an important social figure because, after his priestly training, he becomes the custodian of societal or communal customs, knowledge and wisdom, taboos, and the history of the society. In support of this view, Opoku (1978:74) affirms, "priests are [...] repositories of communal knowledge and traditions". The privileged position of the priest makes him an advisor to the chief or king and a ritual expert. The traditional priest, together with the chief, is the custodian of the traditions and culture of the community. He sees to it that the inhabitants of the community adhere to the traditional norms and culture of the land. The priest also assumes the position of a judge in some instances, such as managing and resolving conflicts that involve witchcraft accusations and curses. He administers an oath for restoring confidence in a community or adjudicating justice on the offended party. He is also recognised as an opinion leader. He is primarily a presider over rituals, and this earns him the position of an elder in the traditional community. We have seen the analysis of the concept of priesthood from an African indigenous perspective; we now analyse the concept from Christian religious traditions.

#### **4.1.2 Catholicism and the Ministerial Priesthood**

Among all the various ministries within the early Church, one cannot identify a particular priestly ministry as found in the context of Catholicism. Priesthood at that time was "identified with ritual offering of animal and other sacrifices to God, and there was no one in the community designated to do this" (Martos, 1982:464). In addition, there

was the fact that “the first generation of Christians, who were almost all Jews, accepted the legitimacy of the Jewish priesthood, and showed this by continuing to worship at the temple” until its destruction in 70 CE by Roman soldiers. The Jewish cultic priesthood also ceased to exist because of the destruction of the temple. The Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah were troubled and wondered how the destruction of the temple could be part of God’s plan for Israel.

According to Martos (1982), a Jewish Christian who lived in Rome composed a response to the troubling questions that were raised after the destruction of the Temple by Jews who believed in the messiahship of Jesus. (The name of the author of this work is unknown, but the work itself became known as the “letter to the Hebrews”). In his “letter to the Hebrews”, the unknown author developed the thought that the crucifixion of Jesus was a perfect sacrifice to God, which replaced the temple offerings. The priest and victim of the sacrifice was Jesus himself, and his priesthood superseded that of the Jewish religion because he is not a priest by ancestry but “a high priest of a new and eternal covenant between God and his people, a high priest of the same order as Melchizedek, whose priesthood had no beginning and no end”. The Church was then seen as the replacement of the old Israel with “a new priesthood and a new high priest who by his perfect life and sacrificial death had become the perfect mediator.

“The Gospel does not establish a religion which mankind set up for the worship of God, but a religion which God himself came down to reveal” (Perrin, 1964:19). The priest in this religion is not an ordinary man chosen by the community just to lead and organise worship, but Jesus Christ, who is the sole mediator between God and man. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not a mere human invention; it is divinely revealed. The Catholic priesthood is therefore derived from this divine revelation, and the Catholic priest and his functions can only be comprehended through the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Catholic priest then derives his source of power from Jesus Christ. An older catholic priest who has been in practice for over thirty-five years shared with the researchers through an interview on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025 that his priesthood is not “*man-made*” because it is *God who calls men to have a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ*. An older catholic priest who has been in practice for over thirty-five years shared with the researchers through an interview:

*My priesthood is not "man-made" because it is God who calls men to have a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. At my ordination, I was configured to Christ the Head, and I now act in the person of Christ when I celebrate the sacraments. This is not a mere function; it is an ontological change that remains with me forever. (Interview, 15 March 2025)*

His assertion on the priesthood seems to agree with that of Perrin (1964:19) as seen above. It is well stated in the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that the Lord Jesus Christ “has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which ‘not all the members have the same function’ (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of Orders to [...] perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ” (PO 2). The afore-mentioned text affirms and elucidates that Christ instituted the sacramental priesthood and differentiates it from the common or universal priesthood that is attained by baptism. The difference is known by virtue of the former functioning publicly as a priest in the name of Christ.

Kloppenborg (1974) explains that the Council of Trent affirmed: “*Christ at the Last Supper, wishing to leave his Church a visible sacrifice, gave his body and blood to the Apostles, ‘making them priests of the New Testament at that time’*” in support of the view that the Catholic priesthood was instituted by Christ during the Last Supper. Christ made the Apostles priests while instituting the Eucharist or the Last Supper for them to fulfil the command he gave for the continuation of the Supper in his memorial (Lk 22:19). The Apostles also transmitted the power to preside over the Eucharist to their disciples, and the same power is transmitted to Catholic priests at Ordination.

Hahn (2010:33) affirms this position: In time, those men [the apostles] passed on their priestly ministry through a sacramental rite: the laying of hands (see Acts 6:6). The apostles ritually placed their hands upon the men who would be their co-workers and successors. By this rite of ordination, the apostles conferred the gift of priesthood on a new generation (see 2 Tim 1:6). And so, it has passed through the millennia, to the priests who serve us today. Through this action, those who are ordained receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and so they receive power to perform actions that are properly divine. The imposition of hands is a symbol of the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon those men who became co-workers and successors of the apostles. It also signified the new office or order that those men were to assume. Granting that the same power given to the Apostles had been transmitted to them, then all Catholic priests are partakers in the office of the Apostles, implying that they are obligated to continue the celebration of the Eucharist and also continue the mission of the twelve as mandated by Jesus Christ. In this mission the priests are called to the proclamation of the Gospel to the entire human race (Mk 16: 14-15).

Barron (2024) outlines four general functions of the Catholic priest, and in the first function, he asserts that “the priest is ordained to proclaim the word of God”. Secondly, the priest is expected to build the Christian community. In this function lies the leadership responsibility of the ordained priest. In his position as a leader, he must not command the lay around and lord it over them but appeal to their hearts and minds to “coordinate the charisms of the community as found in individual members”. Furthermore, as an ordained priest, he must render service to humanity, and finally, the priest is ordained to preside over the Eucharist, which is the fulcrum of the Catholic faith. The priest in the interview

suggested that his main function is to celebrate the Mass or Eucharist for himself and the people of God and also serve the people of God. During the interview, the priest proposed:

*My primary role is to serve the people of God through the sacraments, especially confession and anointing of the sick, and to celebrate the Mass or Eucharist for myself and the people of God. Everything else stems from this core identity (Interview, March 15, 2025)*

This is also in line with the functions outlined by Barron (2024). Those who become priests in the Catholic Church are those whom the Lord graciously grants the gift of priestly vocation.

#### 4.2 The Ordained Ministry in Protestantism

Ekem (2009) affirms that the concept of ordained ministry in mainline Protestant traditions such as the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ghana reflects the comprehension of ministry that was upheld during the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformers emphasised the common priesthood of all believers that is attained by the individual in the reception of baptism. They were also quick to admit the existence of “representative priesthood”, which is not superior to the common priesthood of all believers and does not require any sacerdotal function.

The concept of the ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has its roots in the concept of ministry introduced by the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society. Ekem (2009) again posits that those who are called into the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana are representative priests who stand as “servants or ministers of God in relation to the *ecclesia Dei*, ministers of the Word and Sacraments rather than priestly mediators in the Roman Catholic sense of the word”. The Presbyterian ordained ministry falls within the category of presbyters who have it as their duty to preach the Word and also to administer the Sacraments.

In an interview on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025 with a Presbyterian ordained minister in an attempt to understand his ministry, he identified himself as a “*priest*” but was quick to add that

*I can only call myself a "priest" in the sense that I am a Christian and a member of the universal priesthood of all believers. However, unlike my Catholic counterpart, as an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church, I do not oversee any sacrifices or assume any exclusively priestly duty. Despite being called and set apart for order and proclamation as a minister of the Word and Sacraments, I have not changed ontologically (Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025).*

He explained that as an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church, he does not preside over any sacrifice or play any sole priestly role like his counterpart in Catholicism.

The concept of ministry embraced by the Presbyterian Church is not different from that of the Methodist Church; both churches hold the same foundational beliefs concerning the ministry. The constitution of the Methodist Church states:

Christ’s Ministers in the church are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of his flock. Some are called and ordained to this sole occupation and have a principal and directing part in these duties, but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord’s people, and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of the souls. Others, to whom also the Spirit divides His gifts as he wills, share these ministries with them. (S.O. 4 (1)) [...]

[Furthermore] the Methodist Church holds the doctrine of priesthood of all believers, and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons; but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required, and thus the principle of representative selection is recognized (S.O. 4 (4)).

The Methodist Church recognises some people as “called of God”, gives them a theological formation in a seminary and ordains such people into her ministry. The ordination symbolises the church’s recognition of the “minister’s personal call”. The ordination also sets the minister apart to proclaim the Word and to administer the Sacraments. It is well enshrined in S.O. 4 (5) of the Methodist constitution that, “[...] for the sake of Church Order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office [of the ordained minister], the Ministers of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination”. The ordained ministry is not priestly, and for that matter, the minister does not perform any exclusive priestly function. The only recognised priesthood is that of all believers, which includes both the minister and the laity. The ministers and lay people in the Methodist Church share the same common priesthood.

##### 4.2.1 Priesthood/Ministry in Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC)

The ordained ministry in the MDCC consists of pastors and prophets/prophetesses who are headed by the Akaboha, who is regarded as a high priest. In essence, both the pastors and prophets/prophetesses function as priests who mediate between the lay people and the spiritual realm. The pastors and prophets/prophetesses offer priestly mediation for the entire congregation. In support of this view, Ekem (2009:129) asserts that “both ministries are in their own respects, committed to the task of representing the laity before God, and of being channels of divine revelation, whether through preaching, teaching, counselling, administration of the sacraments, or acts of effecting divine healing



in the physically and spiritually afflicted”. For instance, the prophets/prophetesses are healers who mediate through prayer and fasting to bring healing to the lay who struggle with health. They are also involved in spiritual warfare against evil spirits on behalf of the members of the church and seek direction and guidance from the spiritual realm. Ekem (2009) posits that the pastors are in charge of preaching, administering baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and managing the local church.

In a personal interview on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025 with a priest of the MDCC at their Elders Council Office in Mazano, he explained that God might call people into the MDCC ministry through various means such as dreams, visions and even sicknesses. According to him, those who are called through sicknesses are mostly “*struck by unknown illnesses and are healed on their visit to the church. After healing, it is then revealed to them that they are being called to be priests of the MDCC; and until they opt for the priesthood, the illness would be revisited on them*”. In the interview, the priest of the MDCC explained:

*God uses a variety of channels, including illnesses, dreams, and visions, to call people into the MDCC ministry. The majority of people who are called via illnesses are afflicted with ailments and are cured while attending church. Following their recovery, they are informed that they are being summoned to serve as MDCC priests; unless they choose to become priests, the illness will recur. The church's elderly members help others who feel called to discern their calling. The sincerity of the call is assessed by looking at the moral qualities of those who feel called. (Interview, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025)*

In the same interview, the priest explained that elderly persons in the church guide those who feel called to discern properly into their call. The moral characters of those who feel called are taken into consideration to determine how genuine the call may be. Candidates for the ministry are offered priestly training and practices of the church at Mazano and afterwards taken to Good News Theological College in Accra for theological studies.

Ekem (2009) affirms that candidates for both the offices of the pastor and prophet/prophetess undergo training at Mazano, which may last for six months to two years or more, depending on the candidate’s previous qualifications. Ordination into the pastoral and prophetic offices is in two stages in the sense that candidates who passed out from training are put on probation for a period, and depending on their performance, they are finally ordained into their respective offices by the *Akaboha* at Mazano. It is also the sole prerogative of the *Akaboha* to promote them to higher ranks in the ministry when he deems it fit. According to the priest in the same interview:

*Candidates for the ministry are taken to Good News Theological College in Accra for theological study after receiving priestly training and church practices in Mazano. Depending on the candidate's prior credentials, the training at Mazano may span anywhere from six months to two years or longer. Following training, they are placed on probation for a while until being ordained by the Akaboha at Mazano based on their performance. When he sees fit, the Akaboha alone has the authority to elevate them to higher positions within the ministry. (Interview, 5 April 2025)*

Baeta (1962) acknowledges the existence of a “Holy Place” in which there is the “Holy of Holies” at Mazano and the *Akaboha* as the “High Priest” enters into the sacred place during the consecration and ordination of prophets/prophetesses and pastors/priests to pray on their behalf (ordinands for the ministry). Baeta again espouses that the *Akaboha* is also the only minister of the church who is bestowed with the mandate to enter into the “Holy of Holies” to pray on behalf of the whole church at any time of his choice. Ekem (2009:128) also explicates that as the “Highest Spiritual Head of the Church”, the *Akaboha* enters the “Holy Place” and performs the annual rite of marking their holy objects “with the blood of an unblemished ram”. He also anoints “the foreheads of participants as well as the doors of the representative houses in a way similar to ancient Israel’s Passover ritual in Egypt”.

It seems that the activities of the *Akaboha* at the “Holy of Holies”, such as offering prayers on behalf of the church is an allusion to a Jewish practice in which the priest on duty goes into the Holy of Holies in the Temple to pray on behalf of the people (Lk 1:5-8). It also supports the view that the *Akaboha* is not just a priest in word but in essence and is endowed with all sacerdotal functions within the Musama Disco Christo ecclesial context.

#### 4.3 Discussion

The basic difference in the ontology of the priestly office is one of the main conclusions. The priesthood is seen as a unique sacerdotal or ministerial reality in both Catholicism and African traditional religions. It is believed that the Catholic priest and the ATR priest (*Okomfo*) are designated by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the rite of initiation, respectively, to mediate sacred power and preside over sacrifice. This is consistent with the literature’s description of them as primary mediators (Ekem, 2009; Mbiti, 1969). The Methodist and Presbyterian Protestant traditions, in sharp contrast, expressly deny a sacerdotal interpretation of their ordained ministry. Ministers are viewed as representative functionaries, called, trained, and set apart for orderliness, but they do not possess a priesthood that is distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers, as their constitutional papers demonstrate. Their ordination does not bring any ontological change, and their function is emphasised in the proclamation of the Word and church administration.

Interestingly, a model is presented by the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC). The *Akaboha* is a real High Priest who enters a "Holy of Holies," conducts yearly blood rites, and ordains other priests and prophets, according to findings that support a strong sense of ministerial priesthood. According to Baeta (1962) and Ekem (2009), this structure intentionally appropriates Old Testament Jewish sacerdotal iconography while grounding its purposes in an African spiritual worldview centred on covenant community, healing, and protection. This places the MDCC within a Christian theological context, essentially closer to the ATR and Catholic approaches.

One important discovery concerns terminological misunderstanding and its instructional consequences. The general use of the term "priest" in classes frequently results in conceptual uncertainty, according to interviews with RME lecturers (Lewin, 2018). All Christian ordained ministers, from both Catholic and Protestant traditions, such as Presbyterians and Methodists, are often thought of as priests by students without knowing their distinctiveness and attributing sacramental and mediatorial roles to all. This is a gross misapplication and misunderstanding of the term priest (Matemba & Addai-Mununkum, 2019). Again, students understood the *Okomfo* in ATR as a priest whose priesthood was inferior to that of his/her counterpart in Christianity. This is a misconception and a bias that must be dealt with because they are all priests in their own context and must be appreciated.

In addition to the misconception and misrepresentation of the customs, this quietly upholds a dominant, frequently Christian-centric view of religious leadership (Arthur, 2024). Arthur observed an "imbalance in the representation of various religions" since "dominant faiths often overshadow minority beliefs, particularly Indigenous Religions." Importantly, the study points out that "teachers' religious affiliations sometimes influence classroom discourse, resulting in an inaccurate portrayal of 'religious others' and a simplified understanding of diversity. This was supported by the textbook study, which demonstrated a propensity to divide religions into distinct groups without adequately contrasting their internal hierarchies and leadership styles. Despite theological differences, the social function of the priest became a major area of convergence. The religious leader was consistently described as a moral guide, community leader, and custodian of sacred knowledge in all traditions (ATR, Catholic, Protestant, and AIC). The function goes beyond ceremonial into the community's overall well-being, whether it be as a prophet engaged in spiritual battle, a preacher of ethical living, a Christian community builder, or an advisor to a chief. In an RME classroom, this functional similarity offers a possible basis for comparison comprehension.

#### 4.3.1 Implications for Religious and Moral Education

The current RME curriculum needs to interact with the core structures of other religions critically and comparatively, going beyond merely presenting them as facts. In particular, teaching manuals and textbooks ought to clearly outline the many perspectives on religious leadership. The sacerdotal (ATR, Catholic, some AICs), representative (Mainline Protestant), and non-clerical (Islamic Imamate as spiritual advisers, not priests) approaches could be contrasted in a module on "Leadership and Authority in Religious Traditions." This decolonises the syllabus from unintentional Christian terminological imperialism, guarantees accuracy, and respects self-understanding.

Instructors need to use pedagogies that actively clear up misunderstandings and misapplications of terms. Teachers can assign students to make visual maps that compare the vocabulary, fundamental functions, training, and sources of authority for leaders from other religions. Students can gain first-hand knowledge of the variations in vocation, dress, language, and ritual through facilitated interactions with religious leaders from other traditions, analysing particular situations (such as a community crisis) and investigating the responses of a Methodist minister, a Catholic priest, and a traditional priest in light of their different duties.

A comprehensive view of the priesthood is essential to interreligious concord and is not merely an academic endeavour. When students discover that an ATR *Okomfo* is not just a "witch doctor" but a trained steward of cosmic order and communal history, or that a Methodist Minister is not a priest in the realistic sense, stereotypes are replaced with knowledge. Therefore, rather than framing this diversity as a problem to be solved, RME should frame it as a richness to be studied. This fosters the multicultural mindset and respect required for national unity. Well-trained teachers are essential to the above's efficiency. In-service training programs and colleges of education must provide RME lecturers with the pedagogical know-how to teach delicate religious concepts as well as in-depth comparative religious knowledge. To close the gap between academic research and classroom practice, subject matter workshops involving theologians, traditional religious leaders, and sociologists of religion are crucial.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

The discussion so far focused on the notion of priesthood as found in the African Traditional Religions and Christianity (Catholic and Protestant traditions with references to the Presbyterian and Methodist ordained ministries). The concept was also discussed from the perspective of the Musama Disco Christo Church as an African Indigenous Church. The priests within the African Traditional Religion, Catholicism, and the Musama Disco Christo Church

function as ministerial priests in essence, while the ministers within the Presbyterian and Methodist churches are only representative priests and do not function in the essence of the term.

With a focus on its implications for the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME), this study has conducted a comparative investigation of the concept of priesthood within Ghana's religio-pluralistic landscape. The research has clarified the unique and frequently disparate conceptions of priesthood throughout different religious traditions through a qualitative analysis based on theological, anthropological, and educational literature, enhanced by inputs from practitioners.

The study demonstrates that the idea of priesthood is strongly ingrained in particular theological systems and cultural contexts rather than being a homogeneous concept. The role of a priest in African traditional religions is that of an intermediary, ritual expert, and keeper of collective wisdom. The priesthood is a holy and mediatorial office that is frequently inherited or spiritually bestowed. The priesthood in Catholicism is a sacramentally constituted participation in the priesthood of Christ, distinguished by the sole right to celebrate the Eucharist, which is seen as the bloody sacrifice made on the cross at Calvary, an ontological context designated for sacerdotal ministry.

On the contrary, ordained ministry is viewed in the Protestant traditions of Methodism and Presbyterianism as a representative and functional position within the universal priesthood of all believers, without any ontological or sacrificial distinction. The African Initiated Churches, such as the Musama Disco Christo Church, offer a hybrid model that combines African ceremonial sensibilities and Christian iconography to form an organised, sacerdotal priesthood with a high priest, a holy space, and mediatorial roles.

One of the main conclusions of this study is that there are substantial educational and conceptual difficulties when these different models are combined under the general English term "priest." The objectives of a pluralistic and decolonised RME curriculum could be undermined by such terminological imprecision, which also runs the risk of distorting religious traditions and supporting hegemonic narratives. The study does, however, also point out a crucial area of functional convergence: religious leaders, whether they are referred to as priests, ministers, *Okomfo*, or *Akaboha*, are viewed as moral leaders, community builders, and defenders of ethical and spiritual order in all traditions. This similarity provides a positive foundation for interfaith discussion and instruction.

## 5.2 Recommendations

A specialised, comparative module on "Religious Leadership and Authority" should be added to the RME curriculum and authorised texts by the Ghana Education Service and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA). This lesson ought to make a clear distinction between the prophetic, representational, and sacerdotal leadership philosophies found in Islam, Christianity (in all of its branches), and ATR. In order to prevent Christian-centric defaults, terminology must be utilised accurately, and traditions should be portrayed in accordance with their own self-understanding.

Pre-service RME teachers should get more comparative religion instruction from colleges of education, with an emphasis on the sociology and theology of religious leadership. Practising instructors should routinely attend in-service training programs, conferences, and seminars with resource people from other religious traditions (such as traditional priests and AIC leaders) to offer first-hand knowledge. This will lessen reliance on stereotypes and improve educational content knowledge.

To investigate the idea of priesthood, RME teachers should use participatory, dialogical teaching techniques. Students can make abstract distinctions concrete and memorable by using techniques like structured role-plays, guest speakers from various religious communities, case study examinations of religious functions, and the use of visual comparison charts. Moving from descriptive information to conceptual clarity and appreciating understanding should be the aim. To direct the ongoing decolonisation and contextualisation of the RME curriculum, the Ministry of Education ought to think about forming a permanent advisory group on interreligious education made up of academics and religious leaders. Additionally, financing should be promoted for additional studies on the changing character of religious leadership in Ghana, especially in the quickly expanding Pentecostal/Charismatic and Neo-Prophetic groups, and their consequences for moral and civic education.

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