

Original Article

# Apostolic Priesthood and The Church's Mission: A Study of the Legacy and Its Implications

**Samuel Ola Ogunjobi, Ph.D.**

*Cokwills College of Education, Ifako-Ijaye, Lagos, Affiliated to the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko*

<b>Abstract</b>	Article
<i>Apostolic priesthood refers to the spiritual authority and leadership originating from the apostles, whom Jesus commissioned to preach, teach, and guide the early Christian community (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49). In Christian theology, this authority continues through bishops and priests, who preserve the church's unity and fidelity to its apostolic foundations. This study examines the biblical and historical roots of apostolic priesthood, exploring its theological significance and practical functions in church governance, sacramental ministry, and evangelism. By critically engaging Scripture, early church writings, and contemporary theological perspectives, it investigates how apostolic leadership shapes the mission and witness of the church. Using a multidisciplinary approach encompassing biblical studies, history, theology, ecclesiology, and sociology, the research highlights the enduring relevance of apostolic priesthood while identifying areas for renewal. Ultimately, the study seeks to deepen understanding of apostolic priesthood as a vital framework for sustaining the church's mission, guiding its ministry, and strengthening its engagement with the world.</i>	History
	Received: 07.11.2025
	Accepted: 28.11.2025
	Published: 02.12.2025
<b>Keywords</b>	
<i>Apostolic Priesthood, Church Mission, Historical Development, Theological Implications, Legacy.</i>	

## 1. Introduction

Etymologically, the concept of apostolic priesthood has been a cornerstone of Christian tradition, shaping the Church's identity, governance, and mission. From the earliest days of Christianity, the apostles played a crucial role in establishing and guiding the community of believers (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The apostolic priesthood, understood as the continuation of the apostolic ministry, has been regarded as a central component of the church's structure and mission (Congar, 1962, p.23).

Over the centuries, the concept has been shaped by various theologians and Church Fathers. Figures such as Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons emphasized the importance of apostolic succession in maintaining continuity of teaching and ministry [Ignatius, *Epistle of the Smyrnaean*, 8:1-2; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:3:1-4]. During the medieval period, a hierarchical understanding of the church emerged, with the papacy and episcopacy central to governance (Ullmann, 1955, p.123).

The 16th-century Reformation challenged traditional views, with Martin Luther and John Calvin advocating for a more biblical and decentralized approach to church governance (Luther, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:3:1-15). In response, the Catholic Church reaffirmed the significance of apostolic priesthood and sacramental ministry (Council of Trent, Session 7, Canon 9).

In recent decades, apostolic priesthood has continued to evolve. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) emphasized the priesthood of all believers and collegiality in decision-making, shaping contemporary Catholic ecclesiology (*Lumen Gentium*, 10). Similarly, the Anglican Communion's ordination of women has raised questions

regarding the nature of apostolic priesthood and its relation to church mission (General Synod of the Church of England, 1992).

### **A. Etymology of Key Terms**

#### **(a) Priest**

From Middle English *prêst*, a cleric ranking below a bishop and above a deacon, derived from Old English *preost*, likely shortened from Germanic forms (*presta*, *prestere*), from Vulgar Latin *prester* and Late Latin *presbyter* (“elder”), from Greek *presbyteros* [of law]. In Old English, it translates Hebrew *Kohen*, Greek *hiereus*, and Latin *sacerdos*.

#### **(b) Hood**

Denotes state, condition, quality, or position (e.g., *childhood*, *preosthood*, *manhood*), cognate with German *heit-keit*, Dutch *held*, Old Frisian and Old Saxon *held*, from PIE root *Kai* (“bright, shining”) (Cognates: Sanskrit *Ketu*).

#### **(c) Apostolic**

Middle English from French *apostolique* or Latin *apostolicus*, from Greek *apostolikos*, from *apostolos* (“one who is sent off”). It refers to something related to the apostles or the succession of spiritual authority perpetuated through ordinations in Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox traditions.

#### **(d) Apostle**

From classical Greek *apostolos*, meaning “one who is sent off” (*apo* “off/away from,” *stellen* “to send”), literally “emissary” (Latin *mittere* “to send,” *ex* “from, out, off”).

#### **(e) Apostolic Fathers**

Early Christian writers and apologists, primarily from the 1st and 2nd centuries, whose works provide principal information about Christianity after the apostles. The term *apostolici* reflected their association with the apostles; it became widely used only by the 17th century.

#### **(f) Tradition**

By the late 14th century, it referred to statements, beliefs, or practices handed down through generations, especially from Mosaic Law, from Old French *tradition* and Latin *traditionem* (“a delivery, surrender, or handing down”), verb form *tradere* (“to deliver, hand over”) (Vatican II, 1964). Tradition encompasses habitual actions, rites, and customs, which retain significance even as they risk falling into desuetude (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997; “Church, Doctrine of the,” Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology).

#### **(g) Church**

Etymologically, Old English *circe*, Old Saxon *kirka*, originally referring to a “circle” rather than a building. While some trace it to Greek *kuriakon* (“house of the Lord”), evidence suggests it predates Greek influence. The New Testament *ekklesia*, Hebrew *qahal*, and Tyndale’s translations emphasize the congregation or assembly rather than a physical structure (George, Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry, S. Jones & Roderick McKenzie, 1843).

### **B. Statement of the Problem**

The concept of apostolic priesthood has long been a cornerstone of Christian tradition, shaping the church’s identity, governance, and mission. However, its understanding and practice have evolved over time, influenced by theological, historical, and cultural factors. This evolution has led to significant debates within and across Christian traditions regarding the nature, role, and implications of apostolic priesthood. Despite its importance, the concept remains poorly understood, and its relationship to the church’s mission is often unclear.

Consequently, several problem areas emerge: (1) lack of clarity on the nature of apostolic priesthood; (2) disagreements regarding its role within the church; (3) uncertainty about its implications for the church’s mission; (4) tension between tradition and innovation; and (5) limited dialogue and understanding across different Christian

missions. This study seeks to address these issues by exploring the concept of apostolic priesthood and its implications for the church's mission.

### ***C. Objectives of the Study***

- To investigate the scriptural and historical roots of apostolic priesthood, including the role of the apostles in the early Christian church.
- To evaluate its influence on the development of church doctrine, practice, and mission throughout history.
- To examine how apostolic priesthood shapes the church's understanding of its mission, including evangelism, discipleship, and community engagement.
- To discuss implications for church governance, including the roles of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.
- To reflect on its ongoing significance for contemporary ministry.
- To utilize ecclesiological theories concerning the nature of the church, sacraments, and apostolic succession.
- To explore connections with other theological disciplines, such as Christology, pneumatology, and missiology.
- To provide practical guidance for church leaders applying apostolic principles in ministry.
- To contribute to strategies for church renewal, focusing on apostolic priesthood's role in mission and ministry.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in ecclesiology, particularly the work of Yves Congar (1953), which emphasizes the theological study of the church. Congar highlights the importance of apostolic succession while stressing the Holy Spirit's role in empowering church leaders and guiding the church's mission. He views the church's mission as rooted in its apostolic nature, with the apostles forming the church's foundation.

### ***A. Research Questions***

- What is the biblical and theological basis for apostolic priesthood?
- How has the understanding of apostolic priesthood evolved over time?
- What is the relationship between apostolic priesthood and church governance?
- How does apostolic priesthood relate to other forms of ministry within the church?
- What are its practical implications for evangelism, discipleship, and social justice?

### ***B. Significance of the Study***

This research provides insights into critical aspects of Christian tradition and practice. It explores how different Christian traditions engage in dialogue, learning from one another's understanding and practice of apostolic priesthood. Additionally, it highlights how the church can balance adherence to apostolic tradition with the need for innovation in a rapidly changing world.

## **3. Methodology**

The study employs desk research, analyzing existing literature and academic sources on apostolic priesthood and its relationship to the church's mission. By synthesizing prior research, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the apostolic priesthood and its implications without conducting fieldwork or surveys.

The apostolic priesthood ensures continuity with the apostles, commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach, teach, and govern the early church. It emphasizes sacramental ministry, particularly the Eucharist, as essential for sustaining the Christian community. Moreover, it provides a framework for governance, with bishops and priests exercising leadership and oversight. Apostolic priesthood also underscores the importance of mission and evangelism, calling the church to proclaim the gospel to all nations. By examining these dynamics, the study enhances understanding of the legacy and implications of apostolic priesthood for the church's mission.

## **4. Review of Literature**

The concept of apostolic priesthood has long been a subject of interest and debate among scholars, theologians, and church leaders. This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the major themes, debates, and

perspectives on apostolic priesthood and its implications for the church's mission. The biblical foundations of apostolic priesthood are found in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul (Acts 1:21–26, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11). Apostolic priesthood refers to the spiritual leadership and authority derived from the apostles, the original followers of Jesus Christ (Haight, R, 2005). The apostles were commissioned by Jesus to preach, teach, and govern the early Christian community (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49). In Christian theology, apostolic priesthood is understood as a continuation of this ministry, with bishops and priests exercising spiritual leadership and authority within the church. This leadership ensures continuity of the church's teaching and ministry, preserving fidelity to its apostolic roots (Grillo, A, 2012).

The understanding and practice of apostolic priesthood have evolved over time, influenced by historical, cultural, and theological developments. In the early church, it was closely tied to the concept of apostolic succession, with bishops regarded as successors of the apostles (Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 8:1–2). During the Middle Ages, apostolic priesthood became closely associated with the papacy and the hierarchical structure of the church (Uimann, 1955).

The Reformation of the 16th century brought significant changes to traditional understandings of apostolic priesthood. Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin advocated a more biblical and decentralized approach to church governance, rejecting papal authority and hierarchical structures (Luther, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:3:1–15). In response, the Catholic Church reaffirmed the importance of apostolic priesthood and sacramental ministry in the life of the church (Council of Trent, Session 7, Canon 9).

In recent decades, the concept of apostolic priesthood has continued to evolve. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) emphasized the priesthood of all believers and collegiality in church decision-making, significantly influencing Catholic ecclesiology (*Lumen Gentium*, 10–12). Similarly, the Anglican Communion's ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopacy has raised important questions about the nature of apostolic priesthood and its relationship to the church's mission (General Synod of Church of England, 1992).

### ***A. Church's Mission***

The church's mission refers to its purpose and role in the world. According to Christian theology, the church exists to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. This mission encompasses the church's responsibility to make disciples of all people and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18–20).

### ***B. Components of Church's Mission***

#### ***(a) Proclamation of the Gospel***

The church's mission involves proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people, regardless of their background, culture or socioeconomic status.

#### ***(b) Discipleship***

The church's mission involves making disciple of all nations, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20).

#### ***(c) Service and witness***

The church's mission involves serving and witnessing to the love of God in the world. This includes caring for the poor, the sick and the marginalized, as well as advocating for justice and compassion. (St, Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology, 2024)

#### ***(d) Community and Fellowship***

The church's mission involves building and nurturing community and fellowship among believers. This includes worship, prayer and mutual support and encouragement. Evangelism and Outreach: The church's mission involves

reaching out to those who do not know Jesus Christ, sharing the Gospel with them, and inviting them to become part of the church community. (Hirsch, A, 2006)

### ***C. Theological Perspectives on Church's Mission***

#### ***(a) Church's Mission***

- **Missio Dei:** This refers to the mission of God, emphasizing God's initiative and action in the world, and the church's role in participating in that mission.
- **Incarnational Mission:** This concept emphasizes that the church's mission involves incarnating the love and presence of God in the world through service, witness, and proclamation.
- **Participatory Mission:** This approach highlights that the church's mission involves engaging with the life and struggles of the world and seeking to transform it through the power of the Gospel.

### ***D. Disagreements on the Role of Apostolic Priesthood in the Church***

Several key areas of disagreement exist regarding the apostolic priesthood:

- **Ordination of Women:** A major point of contention is whether women can be ordained as priests. Some argue that the apostolic priesthood is reserved for men, citing biblical and traditional sources (Martin Luther, 1520). Others contend that this view reflects outdated cultural norms and that women should be eligible for ordination.
- **Celibacy and Marriage:** Another area of dispute concerns whether priests should be allowed to marry. Some maintain that celibacy is an essential aspect of the apostolic priesthood, while others argue that priests should be permitted to marry and have families (David Bosch, 1991).
- **Hierarchy and Authority:** The role of bishops and priests in church hierarchy is also debated. Some assert that apostolic priesthood is central to the church's authority and tradition, while others believe that hierarchical structures are unnecessary and potentially harmful (Karl Rahner, 1963).
- **Sacramental Authority:** There is disagreement over who may perform sacraments such as the Eucharist. Some hold that only ordained priests have this authority, while others maintain that sacraments can be administered by other church members (Schillebeeckx, 1963).
- **Tradition and Innovation:** Finally, debate exists over how the apostolic priesthood should be understood and practiced in the modern era. Some argue for strict adherence to tradition, while others advocate for openness to innovation and reform.

### ***E. Factors Responsible for the Lacks of Clarity on the Nature of Apostolic Priesthood***

#### ***(a) Church's Mission: Challenges and Tensions in Apostolic Priesthood***

- **Terminological Ambiguity:** The early Church often used profane rather than sacred terminology to describe its ministries, creating confusion about the nature of apostolic priesthood (Congar, Y, 1953).
- **Sacramental Authority:** There is ongoing debate regarding who holds the authority to perform sacraments, such as the Eucharist, and whether this authority is exclusive to ordained priests (Congar, Y, 1953).
- **Celibacy and Marriage:** The question of whether priests should be permitted to marry remains contentious, with some arguing that celibacy is an essential aspect of apostolic priesthood (Congar, Y, 1954).
- **Apostolic Succession:** The concept of apostolic succession the transmission of apostolic authority through generations of bishops and priests is not clearly defined in the New Testament, leading to differing interpretations and practices.

### ***F. Tensions Between Tradition and Innovation in Apostolic Priesthood***

While apostolic priesthood is rooted in tradition, it must also adapt to changing circumstances and cultures:

#### ***(a) Tradition***

- **Maintenance of Sacramental Practices:** Preserving sacraments and rituals is essential to the Church's identity and continuity (Congar, Y, 1963).

- Defense of Doctrine: Upholding Church doctrine based on Scripture, tradition, and the teachings of the early Church Fathers is a core responsibility (Congar, Y, 1953).
- Preservation of Liturgical Traditions: Maintaining liturgical practices, including the Eucharist and other sacraments, is vital (Newbigin, L, 1995).

*(b) Innovation*

- Inculturation: The priesthood must adapt to local cultures, incorporating customs and traditions into worship (Dulles, A, 1974).
- New Forms of Ministry: Priests should develop innovative ministries to address contemporary social and economic realities (Dulles, A, 1974).
- Use of Technology: Technology should be harnessed to spread the Gospel, communicate with the faithful, and foster community (Newbigin, L, 1995).

*(c) Tensions*

- Balancing Continuity and Change: Priests must maintain tradition while embracing necessary innovations (Congar, Y, 1953).
- Resisting Relativism: The Church must uphold doctrine and tradition despite societal pressures (Bosch, D.J, 1991).
- Embracing Contextualization: Ministry should be contextualized to reach new audiences and cultures effectively (Dulles, A, 1974).

*(d) Legacies of Apostolic Priesthood*

- Continuity with the Apostles: Apostolic priesthood maintains a direct connection with the apostles' mission to preach, teach, and govern the early Christian community.
- Sacramental Ministry: Emphasis on sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, sustains and nourishes the Christian community (Schillebeeckx, E, 1963).
- Church Governance: Bishops and priests exercise leadership and oversight within the Church.
- Mission and Evangelism: Apostolic priesthood underscores the Church's call to proclaim the Gospel to all nations.

***G. Implications of Apostolic Priesthood for the Church's Mission***

- Authenticity and Legitimacy: Apostolic priesthood provides a basis for the church's authenticity and legitimacy, demonstrating continuity with the apostolic era
- Unity and Communion: Apostolic priesthood emphasizes the importance of unity in communion within the Church, with bishops and priests playing a key role in maintaining these bonds.
- Missionary Outreach: Apostolic priesthood encourages missionary outreach, with the church called to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to establish new communities of faith.
- Spiritual Leadership: Apostolic priesthood provides a framework for spiritual leadership within the church, with bishops and priests exercising oversight and guidance.
- Accountability and Responsibility: Apostolic priesthood accentuates the significance of accountability within the church, with people of Holy Orders answerable to God and to Christian community.
- Prioritizing Mission: The church must prioritize its mission, and recognizing that it is obliged to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world
- Embracing Diversity: The church must embrace diversity, recognizing that it is called to minister to people of all backgrounds, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses
- Fostering Community: The church must foster community, acknowledge the role of building and nurture a relationship among believers and provide a sense of belonging and support.
- Engaging in Social Justice: The church should engage in a social justice, recognizing that it's obligated to advocate for the oppressed, and seek for the transformation of the world through the power of the Gospel.

## **5. Challenges and Opportunities of Apostolic Priesthood**

The apostolic priesthood, as the spiritual leadership derived from the apostles, faces both challenges and opportunities in contemporary church life. One key challenge is balancing clericalism and collegiality. While clerical leadership is necessary for guidance and decision-making, the church must also encourage shared responsibility among clergy and laity to maintain a healthy, participatory community.

Similarly, the tension between unity and diversity requires careful navigation. Apostolic tradition emphasizes both communal cohesion and the recognition of diverse gifts and ministries within the church.

Missionary outreach represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The church is called to prioritize the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations, responding to modern secularization and globalized cultural contexts. Additionally, spiritual renewal remains critical. Apostolic priesthood plays a central role in sustaining the Christian community, providing the spiritual nourishment necessary for believers to remain faithful to the Gospel in a rapidly changing world.

## **6. Significance of Apostolic Priesthood for the Church's Mission and Ministry in the Modern Era**

Apostolic priesthood continues to hold vital significance for the church's mission and ministry today, particularly in preserving the Gospel, guiding churches, equipping believers, and fostering unity and collaboration.

### *(a) Preserving the Gospel*

Apostolic ministry ensures the faithful transmission of Christian teachings across generations. In the modern era, where the church faces theological controversies, moral challenges, and cultural shifts, maintaining fidelity to the apostolic message is essential (Congar, Y. 1953).

### *(b) Establishing and Guiding Churches*

Apostolic leaders provide spiritual oversight, discern God's will, and make decisions that shape the growth, structure, and mission of the church. Such leadership ensures that contemporary congregations remain aligned with their foundational mission and sustain vitality in both local and global contexts (Dulles, A. 1974).

### *(c) Equipping Believers*

Apostolic ministry empowers the laity through teaching, mentoring, and delegation of authority. By equipping believers for service, apostles ensure that the wider community can participate meaningfully in the church's mission, fulfilling roles in ministry, social outreach, and evangelism (Dulles, A. 1975).

### *(d) Maintaining Unity*

Apostolic leadership fosters cohesion among believers by emphasizing humility, love, and submission to spiritual authority. In a divided world, promoting unity and solidarity within the church is particularly important, enabling the community to witness effectively to the Gospel (Vatican II, 1964).

### *(e) Encouraging Collaboration*

Apostolic leaders also facilitate cooperation across churches and denominations, creating shared purpose and promoting ecumenical engagement. Such collaboration enhances the church's capacity to respond to social, cultural, and global challenges collectively (World Council of Churches, 2013).

### *(f) Church Planting and Missionary Work*

Apostolic ministry is actively involved in establishing new faith communities and extending the church's reach into new contexts. Planting churches, spreading the Gospel, and forming ministries in emerging regions reflect the ongoing vitality and adaptability of apostolic leadership (Dulles, A. 1974; Bosch, D.J. 1991).

*(g) Apostolic Leadership in the Modern Era*

Apostolic leaders provide vision and strategic direction, helping congregations navigate the complexities of contemporary ministry. This leadership is essential for sustaining the church's mission, guiding the faithful, and fostering resilience amid societal and cultural changes.

## **7. Connection between Apostolic Priesthood, Christology, Pneumatology, and Missiology**

The apostolic priesthood is deeply intertwined with Christology, pneumatology, and missiology, which collectively provide the theological framework for understanding its nature, authority, and mission.

### ***A. Connection with Christology***

The apostolic priesthood derives its authority directly from Christ, who commissioned the apostles to continue his mission of preaching, teaching, and establishing communities of faith (Matt. 28:18–20; John 20:21–23). Apostolic ministry participates in Christ's own priesthood, exercising reconciliation and forgiveness within the community of believers (1 Corinthians 5:18–20; Congar, Y. 1953). Moreover, Christ's presence continues to guide and empower apostles and their successors, ensuring the effectiveness and authenticity of their ministry (Matt. 28:20; John 14:18; Congar, Y. 1953). This Christological grounding underscores that apostolic authority is not merely institutional but deeply spiritual, rooted in participation in the life and mission of Christ.

### ***B. Connection with Pneumatology***

The Holy Spirit plays a central role in the exercise of apostolic ministry. The Spirit empowers apostles for mission, guides their decisions, and ensures alignment with God's will (Acts 1:8; 2:1–4; Dulles, A. 1974; Acts 13:1–3; 15:28; Newbiggin, L. 1974). In worship and communal life, the Spirit inspires praise, thanksgiving, and intercession, sustaining the spiritual vitality of the apostolic community (Ephesians 5:18–20; Dulles, A. 1974). By emphasizing Pneumatological involvement, apostolic priesthood is shown to be dynamic and Spirit-led rather than purely hierarchical, reinforcing both mission and pastoral care.

### ***C. Connection with Missiology***

Apostolic ministry functions as a direct continuation of Christ's mission: to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and establish communities of faith (Matt. 28:18–20; Newbiggin, L. 1995). The apostolic priesthood represents a missional community, sent to embody the Gospel in word and deed (John 20:21; Newbiggin, L. 1995). Moreover, it serves as a model for missional ministry, demonstrating principles of incarnation, contextualization, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 9:19–23; Newbiggin, L. 1995). This integration of mission theology into apostolic leadership highlights the priesthood's enduring relevance in shaping the church's evangelistic and pastoral strategies in diverse cultural and social contexts.

The apostolic priesthood continues to play an indispensable role in the life and mission of the modern church. Its significance spans the preservation of the Gospel, guidance and oversight of church communities, equipping of believers, promotion of unity, encouragement of collaboration, and leadership in church planting and missionary work. Rooted in Christology, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and oriented toward missional engagement, apostolic leadership integrates spiritual authority with practical ministry.

By navigating the challenges of clericalism, diversity, and secular pressures, while seizing opportunities for ecumenical collaboration, spiritual renewal, and missionary outreach, the apostolic priesthood remains central to the vitality and witness of the church. This research underscores the theological and practical relevance of apostolic ministry, emphasizing its enduring role in sustaining faith communities, shaping mission strategies, and guiding the church in a complex and changing world.

#### ***D. How the Concept of Apostolic Priesthood Shapes the Church's Perception of Its Mission, Including Evangelism, Discipleship, and Community Engagement***

The apostolic priesthood plays a vital role in shaping the church's understanding of its mission. Several key aspects illustrate how it influences the church's approach to evangelism, discipleship, and community engagement.

- **Emphasis on Continuity with the Apostles:** The apostolic priesthood underscores the importance of continuity with the apostles, who were commissioned by Christ to proclaim the Gospel and establish churches. This continuity ensures that the church remains faithful to its apostolic roots (Congar, 1953).
- **Focus on Proclamation and Evangelization:** Apostolic priesthood highlights proclamation and evangelization as central to the church's mission, reflecting the apostles' ministry of preaching and founding new communities (Dulles, 1974).
- **Importance of Sacraments and Worship:** It also emphasizes the role of sacraments and worship. The apostles celebrated the Eucharist and other sacraments, practices that have continued throughout the church's history (Kung, 1967).
- **Role of Leadership and Authority:** Apostolic priesthood stresses leadership and authority. The apostles exercised leadership in the early church, a role now continued by bishops and other church leaders (Newbiggin, 1995).
- **Emphasis on Unity and Communion:** Finally, it underlines the importance of unity and communion among believers, reflecting the apostles' commitment to fostering community, which remains central to the church's mission (Newbiggin, 1995).

### **8. Conclusion**

In summary, the apostolic priesthood is a complex and multifaceted concept with profound implications for the church's mission. The literature highlights its biblical and historical development and its ongoing relevance for evangelism, discipleship, and community engagement.

### **Recommendations**

- Reaffirm the church's commitment to the biblical and theological foundations of apostolic priesthood, emphasizing apostolic succession and the role of bishops in maintaining continuity.
- Strengthen the importance of sacramental ministry through the active roles of bishops and priests.
- Promote the priesthood of all believers, encouraging lay participation in the church's life and mission.
- Foster collaboration between Christian traditions to deepen understanding of apostolic priesthood.
- Encourage innovation in ministry and church governance, while remaining rooted in apostolic foundations.
- Enhance mission and evangelism by highlighting the apostolic priesthood's role in supporting the church's outreach.
- Provide ongoing education and training for bishops and priests in sacramental ministry, pastoral care, and leadership development.

### **9. References**

- [1] Abel Richards, 1986. Alfred the Great & Culture in Anglo-Saxon, England: Longman.
- [2] Andrew, Walls (1996) The Missionary Movement in Christian History, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
- [3] Anglican Communion (1992). The Virginia Report
- [4] Barna, G. (2011). Future Cast: What Today's Trends Mean for Tomorrow's World, Ventura CA: Barna Group
- [5] Bosworth, Joseph. 1823. The Element of Anglo-Saxon Grammar, London: Harding Mavor & Lepard.
- [6] Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997) Part 2, Section 1
- [7] Christiana Sue, (2015). Ethnic & Racial Studies, New York: Oxford University Press.

- [8] Congar, Y. (1953), *The Mystery of the Church*, Helicon Press
- [9] Congar, Y. (1963). *The Mystery of the Church*
- [10] Cyprian of Carthage (c 250) *On the Unity of the Church*
- [11] David Bosch (1991). *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
- [12] Dorothy Kelly P & et al, 1995, *The Women Study Bible*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- [13] Dulles, A. (1974) *Models of the Church*, Doubleday
- [14] Dulles, S, J (1987). *The Resilience of the Church*, New York: Crossroad
- [15] Fatokun, S.A. (1999). *History & Doctrine of Early Church*, Ibadan: Enicrown Fit Publishers.
- [16] Gadsby, A. (1995). *Longman of Contemporary English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Ltd.
- [17] George, Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry, S. Jones & Roderick Mckenzie, (1843) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [18] Grillo, A. (2012) *Apostolicity: The Primacy of the Apostolic Age in the Ecclesiology of the Augsburg Confession*, Peter Lang Publishers
- [19] Guder, D.L (1998). *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapid MI: Eerdmans
- [20] Haight, R. (2005), *"The Church as Sacrament"*. *Theological Studies*, Sage Publications
- [21] Hans Kung (1967). *The Church*, New York: Sheed & Ward Publishers
- [22] Hirsch, A (2006) *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans <https://www.quora.com>
- [23] Ignatius of Antioch (c110). *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*
- [24] Irenaeus of Lyons (c 180) *Against Heresies*
- [25] John Calvin (1559) *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- [26] Karl Rahner (1963). *The Church & the Sacraments*, New York: Herder & Herder
- [27] Kinnaman, D (2011). *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church & Rethinking Faith*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books
- [28] Kung, H, (1967) *The Church* Sheed & Ward
- [29] Leslie, Newbigin (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans
- [30] Martin Luther (1520) *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
- [31] Merriam Webster, 1828. *Webster Dictionary*, Massachusetts: G & C Merriam Co.
- [32] Myles Munroe, 1992. *Pursuit of Purpose*, Washington: Destiny Image Publishers.
- [33] N/A, [www.goodreads.com/quotes](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes), Accessed 29/06/2018
- [34] N/A, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, Accessed 24/02/2022
- [35] N/A, <https://urthotheway.com> Accessed 24/02/2022
- [36] N/A, <https://www.etymonline.com>
- [37] N/A, <https://www.etymonline.com> accessed 22/2/2022
- [38] Newbigin, L, (1995) *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Eerdmans
- [39] Pope John Paul 11, (1990), *Redemptoris Missio* {Encyclical Letter}
- [40] Putnam. R.D & Campbell, D.E (2010). *American Grace: How Religion Divides & Unites Us*, New York: Simon & Schuster

- [41] Roger, W.N (2017) *General Principles of Sacramental Theology*, Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press
- [42] Schillebeeckx, E. (1963). *Christ the Sacrament of the encounter with God*
- [43] St, Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology, 2024
- [44] Taylor, J. (2012). *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel & Restore the World*, New York: Doubleday
- [45] Thomas Aquinas (1265-1274) *Summa Theological*
- [46] Ullmann, W. (1955) *The growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*
- [47] Ullmann, W. (1961) *The Principle of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages*
- [48] Vatican 11, (1964) *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)*
- [49] Vatican 11. (1964). *Lumen Gentica*
- [50] World Council of Churches, (2013), *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*
- [51] Wright, C.J.H (2006). *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press.