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## **Religion and Political Discourse in Ghana's 2008 and 2012 General Elections**

Religion permeates all aspects of the life and thoughts of Africans (Idowu, 1973; Parrinder, 1974; Mbiti, 1989). In Ghana, religion and politics have largely remained inseparable (Pobee, 1991; Dovlo, 2006); hence, oftentimes, political discourse has been conducted or undertaken with religious underpinnings. Political discourse concerns the texts and speeches of professional politicians such as presidents, prime ministers, parliamentarians, government ministers and political institutions like the presidency, parliament and political parties (Teun van Dijk, n.d.). Johnson and Johnson (2000) also explain that political discourse is intended to in-

volve all citizens in decision making through persuasion on the course of action to be employed in solving a particular problem affecting society. Since the inception of Ghana's Fourth Republic in 1993, political discourse with religious undertones has become increasingly manifest in the country's body politic. Pobee (1991), Yirenkyi (2000), Dovlo (2006), Okyerefo, Fiaveh and Asante (2011) have written about the relationship between religion and politics in Ghana from different perspectives. However, these discussions do not either cover the period of the Fourth Republic; or do not assess how religion has influenced political discourse during the period. Therefore, this lacuna does not present the full picture of how religion has been exploited by politicians and political in-

stitutions in political discourse, and whether the trend is likely to continue or intensify in the future or otherwise. This study is carried out in the field of Religious Studies; hence the paper aims to examine the role of religion in political discourse in Ghana, especially in the 2008 and the 2012 general elections. The paper also proposes to examine how actors and institutions in Ghanaian politics have applied religion in major political discourses such as campaigns, debates and official addresses during the period under consideration. Qualitative methodology is employed in this study and thus, content analyses of documents, media reports, political speeches and observation are the main instruments or tools used in this paper. The paper posits that political actors in Ghana are aware of the pervasiveness of religion in the country (Ghana Statistical Service 2002, 2012); hence they have employed a lot of religious rhetoric in their political discourse during the period under review.