

## **The Place of Biblical Research in Pastoral Ministry**

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### **Abstract**

The bible is read in the surface value but also read with science of interpretation. While the writers of the Bible were spiritually inspired by God, it is physically designed in human cultural milieus. Biblical scholars interpret the bible with various approaches with a view to making it acceptable to the contemporary man. Therefore, using the expository model as a method, the aim of this paper is to examine the place of biblical research in pastoral ministry. The paper showed that historical critical methods, literary analysis method, tradition based approach, human sciences approach and contextual approach are being adopted by modern scholars in biblical research. The work also showed that biblical researchers can source for materials from field work, secondary sources and electronic materials. The paper argued that pastoral ministry goes beyond spirituality and cuts across critical study of the bible with the aim to doing correct biblical interpretation for the church of God and to correct false teachings and wrong application of biblical texts. The paper was concluded on the presupposition that the pastor competence in the science of biblical interpretation will be more deepened through serious pastoral training and retraining in biblical language and literatures. The work also recommended that the study of biblical languages and literatures be made compulsory in all institutions of pastoral training.

**Key Words:** Biblical Research, Pastoral Ministry.

### **Introduction**

Today's society is characterized by extraordinary dynamics, information systems which have revolutionized society and the pressure of change from all fields is increasingly pregnant upon individuals (Sorin-loan, Dan and Dana, 2012). Biblical research is not an exemption in this modern academic trends. The bible was written in Hebrew and Greek languages. Few portions were written in Aramaic. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew Language while the New Testament was written in Greek respectively (Adeney, 1937:97). This is why it becomes pertinent for a pastor in pastoral training or in church to study biblical languages and literatures. Moreover, the books in the bible were also written within historical and literary contexts of the time. Many people outside pastoral ministry feel that pastoral job is

all about preaching from the bible, memorizing and quoting scriptures at random. Such people with this type of understanding do not know that biblical interpretation in itself is done systematically and scientifically. The scientific study of the bible is being referred to as biblical hermeneutics (Hartin, 1947). This shows clearly that the bible is also subject to critical analysis in its context in order to dig out obscured meanings of text and relevant messages to the contemporary world. This is as a result of the fact that the Bible was written within time and space in the community of humans including the first century church communities. Determining the historicity and interpretation behind a bible text is not an easy task for the pastor in a contemporary world.

In the context of this paper therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the place of biblical research in pastoral ministry. The method exploited in this paper is expository paradigm. The expository model involves explanation, the modes of discourse and systematic presentation of writing manner in reflection of all that is entailed in the research (Udo, 2011). Also, Muehlhauser (2014) say that the expository method of research aims to consolidate and clarify already-completed strategic research. Therefore, this paper will explore scholarly works to explain and clarify biblical research and its relevance to pastoral ministry.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The words biblical research are two compound words, that is, biblical and research. The word biblical itself is derived from the word “Bible” which in turn is the Anglicized form of the Greek word *biblia*-books (Schoville,1978:16-17). The Greek form is traceable to Byblos, the name of a Phoenician port city famed in antiquity for its commercial name Gebal. Since papyrus was derived from the earlier materials used by ancients, it was adopted for the Greek word for book. The use of the word Bible to signify a collection of sacred books is traceable to approximately A.D. 400; the adjective biblical developed later from the noun (Schoville). In the field of Biblical research, it is also called biblical studies. The word “study” is the application of the mental faculties to the acquisition of Knowledge (Gove, 1965:529). Therefore, Biblical studies are the application of the mental faculties to the acquisition of the knowledge of the Bible and its original languages. Biblical languages were the languages in which the Christian bible texts were originally written. The Old Testament in Hebrew while the New Testament in Greek (Moulton, 1937:529). Few parts in the Old Testament were written in Aramaic which include; Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezr. 4:8-6:18, 17:12-26 (Cathcart, 2012).

On the other hand, research refers to the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defined research as studious inquiry or examination; *especially*: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws.

### **Exegesis and Hermeneutics in Biblical Research**

Exegesis and hermeneutics are interrelated in biblical studies but with slight variation. Thus, while exegesis draws out the meaning of a text within a

context, hermeneutics on the other hand deals with the contextual methods, theory and art of interpretation of any text (Patzia and Petrotta, 2002). The word hermeneutics according to Hartin (1947) is a science and termination which was derived from a Greek god called Hermes, who was the messenger and herald of the gods, and the interpreter of Jupiter. From a biblical point of view, hermeneutics is a science of interpreting the Bible (Hartin, 1947). The term hermeneutics also, refers to the principles and methods used to interpret scriptures as well as the science and art of biblical interpretation (Youngblood, Bruce and Harrison, 1995). A German philosopher called Hans-Georg Gadamer who published a book on Truth and Method, a work of literary theory that distinguishes him as a leading thinker in 20th-century, also sees hermeneutics as the science of interpretation. Gadamer focuses on the dynamic relationship between text and interpreter, arguing that reading is a creative act that necessarily places the text in new and different interpretive contexts (Paul, 2007). The Encarta Dictionary (2008) defines hermeneutics as the branch of theology that is concerned with explaining or interpreting religious concepts, theories, and the science and methodology of interpreting texts, especially the books of the Bible.

In Biblical Studies, Paul (2008) postulates that the theologian's quest of how the original meaning of a text has been developed in the course of doctrinal history, and what it might be taken to mean in the theologian's own time and cultural situation involves hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) and that some hold the view that interpretation is itself a creative, innovative act, not just the transposition of meaning from an ancient to a modern context. It could be seen here that even a transposition intended to reproduce the exact meaning of the original text may result in substantial changes. Scholars believe a biblical text must be interpreted according to the language in which it was written, its historical context, the identity and purpose of the author, its literary nature, and the situation to which it was originally addressed. In this sense exegesis and hermeneutics can be seen as interwoven.

### **Biblical Research Methods**

There are several methods in the approach of biblical research. The methods vary from the first world to the third world. While the west started it all, some others like Africa (third world) have also formed their own method of biblical research. Some of them are mentioned bellow.

#### ***Historical Critical Method***

The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts. Holy Scripture, inasmuch as it is the "word of God in human language," has been composed by human authors in all its various parts and in all the sources that lie behind them. Because of this, its proper understanding not only admits the use of this method but actually requires it. Certain elements of this method of interpretation are very ancient. They were used in antiquity by Greek commentators of classical literature and, much later, in the course of the patristic period by authors such as Origen, Jerome and Augustine. The method at that time was much less developed. Its modern forms are the result of

refinements brought about especially since the time of the Renaissance humanists and their *recursus ad fontes*—return to the sources (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993).

The textual criticism of the New Testament was able to be developed as a scientific discipline only from about 1800 onward, after its link with the *textus receptus* was severed. But the beginnings of literary criticism go back to the 17th century, to the work of Richard Simon, who drew attention to the doublets, discrepancies in content and differences of style observable in the Pentateuch—discoveries not easy to reconcile with the attribution of the entire text to Moses as single author. In the 18th century, Jean Astruc was still satisfied that the matter could be explained on the basis that Moses had made use of various sources (especially two principal ones) to compose the Book of Genesis. But as time passed biblical critics contested the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch with ever growing confidence (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993).

In this same line of thought, Ukpong (1999) states that the historical critical method, which came into use in biblical studies about the 17th century, constituted the only methodological paradigm for academic biblical studies up to the middle of the 20th century and about the 1940s, another approach, the literary approach, which was then called "new criticism", also came into use. While historical criticism focuses on the history behind the biblical text and uses historical tools of research, literary criticism focuses on the biblical text itself and uses the tools of literary criticism of classical literature. The two main paradigms today make up the grapevine of western academic biblical studies.

It was Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) a German scholar who brought the method out of the ghetto of literary criticism understood in this way. Although he continued to regard the books of the Pentateuch as compilations, he attended to the particular texture of the different elements of the text. He sought to define the genre of each piece (e.g., whether "legend" or "hymn") and its original setting in the life of the community or *Sitz im Leben* (e.g., a legal setting or a liturgical one, etc.). Gunkel took all of the results of the historical-critical scholarship of his day and forged them into a method of research that went beyond the literary analysis of the text itself to the creative work of the authors of the individual units which were supposed to have anteceded the work of the editors of the final product (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993; McCarthy, 2003).

The Pontifical Biblical Commission further gives the following fundamental principles of the historical-critical method in its classic form: (1) It is a historical method, not only because it is applied to ancient texts—in this case, those of the Bible—and studies their significance from a historical point of view, but also and above all because it seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which gave rise to biblical texts, diachronic processes that were often complex and involved a long period of time. At the different stages of their production, the texts of the Bible were addressed to various categories of hearers or readers living in different places and different times. (2) It is a critical method, because in each of its steps (from textual criticism to redaction criticism) it operates with the help of scientific criteria that seek to be as objective as possible. In this way it aims to make accessible to the modern reader the meaning of biblical texts, often very difficult to comprehend. (3)

As an analytical method, it studies the biblical text in the same fashion as it would study any other ancient text and comments upon it as an expression of human discourse. However, above all in the area of redaction criticism, it does allow the exegete to gain a better grasp of the content of divine revelation.

The historical critical method also uses description and evaluation in approaching the bible text. In summary, the goal of the historical-critical method is to determine, particularly in a diachronic manner, the meaning expressed by the biblical authors and editors. Along with other methods and approaches, the historical-critical method opens up to the modern reader a path to the meaning of the biblical text such as we have it today.

### ***Literary Analysis Method***

No scientific method for the study of the Bible is fully adequate to comprehend the biblical texts in all their richness. For all its overall validity, the historical-critical method cannot claim to be totally sufficient in this respect. It necessarily has to leave aside many aspects of the writings which it studies. It is not surprising, then, that at the present time other methods and approaches are proposed which serve to explore more profoundly other aspects worthy of attention. Consequently, the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993), also presents certain methods of literary analysis which have been developed recently as follows: (1) Rhetorical Analysis which we cannot completely referred to as a new method. What is new is the use of it in a systematic way for the interpretation of the Bible and also the start and development of a "new rhetoric." Rhetoric is the art of composing discourse aimed at persuasion. The fact that all biblical texts are in some measure persuasive in character means that some knowledge of rhetoric should be part of the normal scholarly equipment of all exegetes. Rhetorical analysis must be carried out in a critical way, since scientific exegesis is an undertaking which necessarily submits itself to the demands of the critical mind. A considerable number of recent studies in the biblical area have devoted considerable attention to the presence of rhetorical features in Scripture. Three different approaches can be distinguished. The first is based upon classical Greco-Roman rhetoric; the second devotes itself to Semitic procedures of composition; the third takes its inspiration from more recent studies—namely, from what is called the "new rhetoric." Every situation of discourse involves the presence of three elements: the speaker (or author), the discourse (or text) and the audience (or the addressees). Classical rhetoric distinguished accordingly three factors which contribute to the quality of a discourse as an instrument of persuasion: the authority of the speaker, the force of the argument and the feelings aroused in the audience. The diversity of situation and of audience largely determines the way of speaking adopted. Classical rhetoric since Aristotle distinguishes three modes of public speaking: the judicial mode (adopted in a court of law); the deliberative mode (for the political assembly) and the demonstrative mode (for celebratory occasions). Recognizing the immense influence of rhetoric in Hellenistic culture, a growing number of exegetes make use of treatises on classical rhetoric as an aid toward analyzing certain aspects of biblical texts, especially those of the New Testament. (2) Narrative Analysis (exegesis). Narrative exegesis offers a method of understanding and communicating

the biblical message which corresponds to the form of story and personal testimony, something characteristic of holy Scripture and, of course, a fundamental modality of communication between human persons. The Old Testament in fact presents a story of salvation, the powerful recital of which provides the substance of the profession of faith, liturgy and catechesis (cf. Ps. 78:3-4; Ex. 12:24-27; Dt. 6:20-25; 26:5-11). For its own part, the proclamation of the Christian *kerygma* amounts in essentials to a sequence telling the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, events of which the Gospels offer us a detailed account. Catechesis itself also appears in narrative form (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-25). With respect to the narrative approach, it helps to distinguish methods of analysis, on the one hand, and theological reflection, on the other. Narrative analysis involves a new way of understanding how a text works. While the historical-critical method considers the text as a "window" giving access to one or other period (not only to the situation which the story relates but also to that of the community for whom the story is told), narrative analysis insists that the text also functions as a "mirror" in the sense that it projects a certain image—a "narrative world"—which exercises an influence upon readers' perceptions in such a way as to bring them to adopt certain values rather than others. (3) Semiotic Analysis which ranged among the methods identified as synchronic, those namely which concentrate on the study of the biblical text as it comes before the reader in its final state, is semiotic analysis. This has experienced a notable development in certain quarters over the last 20 years. Originally known by the more general term structuralism.

### ***Tradition Based Approach***

The literary methods which we have just reviewed, although they differ from the historical-critical method in that they pay greater attention to the internal unity of the texts studied, remain nonetheless insufficient for the interpretation of the Bible because they consider each of its writings in isolation. But the Bible is not a compilation of texts unrelated to each other; rather, it is a gathering together of a whole array of witnesses from one great tradition. To be fully adequate to the object of its study, biblical exegesis must keep this truth firmly in mind. Such in fact is the perspective adopted by a number of approaches which are being developed at present (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993). This approach also entails the canonical approach, approach through recourse to Jewish Traditions of interpretation and approach by the History of the Influence of the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).

### ***Human Sciences Approach***

In order to communicate itself, the word of God has taken root in the life of human communities (cf. Sirach. 24:12), and it has been through the psychological dispositions of the various persons who composed the biblical writings that it has pursued its path. It follows, then, that the human sciences—in particular sociology, anthropology and psychology—can contribute toward a better understanding of certain aspects of biblical texts. It should be noted, however, that in this area there are several schools of thought, with notable disagreement among them on the very nature of these sciences. That said, a good number of exegetes have drawn

considerable profit in recent years from research of this kind (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993). This approach also include: sociological approach (the recognition that biblical traditions bore the mark of the socio-cultural milieu- *Sitz im Leben* which transmitted them); cultural anthropology approach (which seeks to define the characteristics of different kinds of human beings in their social context; and psychological and psychoanalytical approaches (which feature experience of life, norms of behavior, and decoding of the human language of revelation in biblical text).

Ottuh (2014) also added examples western scholarship in this dimension of which some scholars have discussed the relevance of the many models now in vogue such as: Role Analysis Model (Theissen, 1998), Sociology of Knowledge Model (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), Millenarian Sect Model (Gager, 1975) and Cognitive Dissonance Model (Manus, 1990; Festinger, 1957; Gager, 1975).

### **Contextual Approach**

The interpretation of a text is always dependent on the mindset and concerns of its readers. Readers give privileged attention to certain aspects and, without even being aware of it, neglect others. Thus it is inevitable that some exegetes bring to their work points of view that are new and responsive to contemporary currents of thought which have not up till now been taken sufficiently into consideration. It is important that they do so with critical discernment. From a western point of view, the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993) reduced it to liberation theology and feminism. But some scholars from the third world elaborated it to cover other areas. In African Biblical Studies, for instance, Ukpong (2006:7, 37,59,102,130,152,190,228,260) gave nine contemporary Models as follow: Comparative Model (Kibicho,1968; Dickson,1979; Akao,1987; Goba,1993), Africa in the Bible Model (Adamo,1998; Habtu,2001; Ntre,2001), Evaluative Model (Pobee,1979; Manus,1985; Abongurin, 2000; Mbiti,1992; Ukpong,1995), Inculturation Hermeneutics Model (Onwu,1985; Ukpong,2001;), Liberation Theology Model (Ela,1986; Nolan,1988; Banana,1990), Feminist Hermeneutics Model (Okure,1988; Nasimiyu-Wasike,1992; Oduyoye,1994; Akoto,2000), Black Theology Model (Tutu,1986; Maimela,1986; Mofokeng,1987; Mosala,1989; Balia,1994), the Narrative Reading Model (Avotri,1999; Masoga,1995; Dube,2000) and the Popular Reading Model (Mwaura,2001; Otieno,2001; West,2000).

In African Biblical hermeneutics as enumerated above, the Comparative Analysis model is interested in comparing the Bible and African life and culture. This type of study was very common up to the 1980s. Their analyses of the biblical text are based on insights from the historical critical method. The approach referred to as Evaluative Model, is the most popular approach in use today in studies that relate the biblical text to the African context. It involves the study of the local situation in the light of biblical witness, and the historical critical method is used in analyzing the biblical text. Moreover, the Africa in the Bible Model seeks to identify references to Africa in the Bible. It is an approach that seeks to show the importance of Africa in the world of the Bible. Furthermore, the Inculturation hermeneutics Model is a recent development which attempted to evolve a holistic approach to inculturation that would, among other things, be interested not only in

the religious aspect of culture, but also in its secular aspects. As applied to biblical interpretation it is heavily dependent on the historical critical method for the analysis of the context of the biblical text. While the Liberation Hermeneutics Model seeks to use the bible as a resource for socio-economic and political critique injustice and oppression and uses the bible to struggle for a change of the status-quo, Black Theology Models, emanated from South Africa and seeks to use the bible to fight against apartheid or racial discrimination. The Feminist Hermeneutics Model seeks to use the bible to fight against the oppression of women. It also uses the historical critical method when necessary, but does not always depend on it directly, for often the literary approaches serve its purpose better. The Narrative Reading Model focuses on the application of African genre such as proverb and story to read the Bible. It cuts across inculturation and liberation paradigms. The Popular Reading Model, intends to present biblical scholarship in Africa in such a way that the bible is made available to the ordinary people in such a way that is congenial to the ordinary people's way of reading the Bible. This model is also cuts across inculturation and liberation paradigms.

### **Sources of Biblical Research**

Doing research requires the use of expert sources that give substance and authority to a paper. "Sources" are works written by scholars credentialed in the field of study. There is a minimum number of sources required for biblical exegesis. A biblical research can include other sources as well, but the minimum number must come from scholars and must relate directly to the material under study. The better a biblical research sources are, the better the research will be.

The sources of biblical research can be sub-divided into three: field sources, secondary sources (library) and electronic sources.

#### **1. Field Sources**

**Archaeological Remains:** Biblical researchers can get information from archaeological remains. This archaeological remains can be interpreted through a scientific means called carbon 14 and 20 dating and information system to give insight into what is being researched for in the bible. For example, the dead sea scroll found near the Qumran community gave a lot of insight as the people who lived in the area and what their religion and culture were.

#### ***Visit to Israel for interview and sight seeing of the scenes of Biblical events***

Another of biblical research is to conduct interviews in Israel. Moreover, a visit to the scene of biblical events can also give some one some clues to biblical research. This will enable the researcher to get first hand information on the biblical events.

#### **2. Secondary Sources (Library)**

These are sources from books written by scholars in the field of biblical studies. They can be found in the library. Such sources are presented bellow.

**Biblos (Bible) Atlas:** Bible atlas helps to understand the terrain of the bible times. The Oriental Institute Map Series University of Oregon's Mapping History Project helps in Virtual World Project. Other scholars such as Lawrence (2006) has also done a work on ancient and modern Israel map and it is titled: "the Lion Atlas of

Bible History.” A biblical student will find this useful in his research because the bible atlas gives a pictorial depiction of the Israel’s biblical and geographical history.

**Bibles:** The original bible is written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) as earlier mentioned above. There are many bibles through a biblical researcher can source for materials. They include: Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, English Bible, Hebrew- English Interlinear Bible, Greek- English Interlinear Bible, Parallel Bible, etc. Although the Bible itself can be seen as not counting as a source biblical research, since that is actually the subject of the paper, reference to the text is equally necessary. Hence the bible cannot be removed as source of biblical research because the research itself begins from the bible.

**Concordances:** Concordances help for quick references to biblical texts. One example of such concordance is the Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the bible. Although, concordances and other books that merely list information about the Bible likewise do not count, because they are simply reporting what is contained in the Bible, it cannot be avoided since it helps the scholar into the text search.

**Bible Commentaries:** Classic Bible Commentaries, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries, African Bible Commentary, Broadman’s Bible Commentaries, New Bible Commentary, Matthew Henry Bible Commentary, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, International Critical Commentary; New International Commentary on the New Testament; The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Baker Commentary on the Old Testament; Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Cambridge Bible Commentary; The Daily Study Bible (Craigie and Barclay); Eerdman’s Critical Commentary; Expositor’s Bible Commentary (EBC); International Critical Commentary Interpretation; Interpreter’s Bible Commentary (IB); New International Commentary on the Old Testament; New International Commentary on the New Testament; New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary; Tyndale Old and New Testament Commentaries; The Wesleyan Bible Commentary; Word Biblical Commentary; etc. .

**Bible Dictionaries:** There are many dictionaries that can be consulted in biblical research. Some examples include: Easton’s Bible Dictionary; Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament; Theological Dictionary of the New Testament; Wycliffe Bible Dictionary; Anchor Bible Dictionary; Ancient Christian Doctrine; Dictionary of Historical Theology; The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible; The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology; The Vine’s Expository Dictionary; Word Meanings in the New Testament; Word Studies in the New Testament; etc.

**Encyclopedias:** There are biblical studies related encyclopedias such as: Catholic Encyclopedia; Crosswalk Condensed Biblical Encyclopedia; Jewish Encyclopedia; New Catholic Encyclopedia; Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia (Index).

**Lexicons:** They include Greek New Testament and Old Testament Hebrew. Here the meaning of biblical words can be found for onward interpretation.

**Journals:** Biblical researchers can source materials from biblical research Journals such as: International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies; IRB-Irish Biblical Studies; Journal Asiatique; JBL-Journal of Biblical Literature; JJS-Journal

of Jewish Studies; JQR- Jewish Quarterly Review; JR-Journal of Religion; JRH- Journal of Religious History; JRS- Journal of Religious Studies; JSAI -Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam; JSJS- Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism; JSNT- Journal for the Study of the New Testament; Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series; JSOT- Journal for the Study of the Old Testament; JSOTSup-Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series; JSS- Journal of Semitic Studies; JTS- Journal of Theological Studies; JTTL- Journal of Translation and Text-Linguistics; Harvard Theological Review; etc (Hauser, Mcknight and Klawans (2004).

**3. Electronic Sources:** There are electronic media in biblical studies. They include Bible 6,7,8,9,10 etc. Some the materials are found in electronic liberalities and the internet.

### **Biblical Research and Pastoral Ministry**

Hauser, Mcknight and Klawans (2004) observed that contemporary biblical scholarship is changing at a rapid pace and as such the variety of methods for interpreting the Bible has increased dramatically in recent years, as shown, for example, by the growing interest in literary approaches such as narrative criticism, and in approaches focused on areas outside both literary and biblical research, for instance, the recent articles on biblical themes as interpreted in the cinema and that the past twenty-five years have seen a growing interest by biblical scholars in structuralist criticism, reader response criticism, rhetorical criticism, social-scientific criticism, feminist interpretation, ideological criticism and deconstructive criticism, in addition to major advances in the work being done on the broader world within which ancient Israel and early Christianity developed. They postulate further that long-standing methods of research have undergone substantial reappraisal, as, for instance, in the areas of 'biblical' archaeology and the history of early Israel. The field now reaches well beyond the encompassing historical-critical consensus that had dominated biblical scholarship throughout most of the twentieth century. This increasing variety and flexibility in method has added richness and depth to our understanding of the Bible and its contextual world.

Pastor ministry on the other hand is the vocation of a clergy. It is the religious work of a pastor in which he delivers sermons, as well as caring for his client (church members). The pastoral work cannot be separated from biblical studies because the pastor has a major duty of preaching and teaching from the Bible. The word pastor simply means a shepherd or one who tend herd or flocks (Vine, 1994:167). In the Christians sense it means a person called by God to take care and lead the Christians under his or her care. A contemporary pastor refers to the today and future pastor.

### **The Place of Biblical Research in Pastoral Ministry**

- i. Biblical research helps a pastor to be exegetically competent with either the Old Testament or the New Testament (Fuller, 1993:i). Being able to deal with the biblical originals opens exegetical possibilities that dealing with translations alone cannot. The pastor in his ministry needs to at least be

- competent with originals of the scripture if he is to understand aright in the contemporary context. The pastor should be able to tell the congregation of today what the bible meant then and what it means now. This is why the pastor must not avoid the study of Biblical languages.
- ii. Biblical research is useful to the contemporary pastor because it enables the pastor to read and understand the Old Testament as well as the New Testament in their original tongue (Mansoor,1980:3). This implies that the pastor is able to read the original text of the Bible and interpret same to the congregation thereby making them to know the original implied meaning of biblical text.
  - iii. Biblical research enable the pastor to teach the bible or use it professionally (Mansoor,1980). The pastor in this level becomes an authority in biblical interpretation like any other literary professionals in other discipline. A deeper and regular study of the original bible texts will make the pastor a professional in the field of biblical hermeneutics.
  - iv. Biblical research can act as a tool for the study of Hebrew and Greek literatures respectively (Mansoor,1980). Being that biblical research involves both the study and interpretation of the original text of the Bible, the practitioner cannot escape Biblical Hebrew and Greek. When a pastor is proficient in Hebrew and Greek languages he finds it easier to understand their literatures and interpret them appropriately.
  - v. Biblical research helps the pastor in mastering Bible exposition. According to Thomas (2011), the importance and centrality of thorough exegesis in preparing the expositor for this service cannot be overstated and that exegesis must itself be on a solid footing and must lead to development in supplementary fields that, in turn, provide important data for expository preaching, too. With the raw material of sermon preparation thus obtained, common-sense principles must be applied in putting the material into a form that the congregation can receive with ease and learn from.
  - vi. Biblical research enables the pastor to translate the original bible to modern language. One of such outstanding languages in which the original bible has been translated is English language. Other major languages include; Latin, German, Dutch, etc. In contemporary Africa, the Bible is being translated into African language such as Zulu in South Africa, Urhobo, Ibo, Yoruba, etc in Nigeria just to mention a few. The pastor who is well versed in biblical studies will be able to translate the Bible into the local language of the people to whom he preaches the Gospel.
  - vii. Biblical research can avail the pastor the technique of biblical contextualization. Bible passages are not read and hanged in the air, they are contextualized to bridge cultural gaps (Ijezie, 2007). This is so because the culture from where the biblical text is transmitted is not exactly the same with the contemporary context of interpretation. Although, there may be some cultural similarities, some nuances do exist between the biblical and contemporary cultural milieus. The pastor's or priest's ability to master biblical studies will help in a more systematic centralization of biblical theology (Odoemene, 2007). For example, contextualization of biblical

interpretation has gained ground in the soil of Africa more than ever before because many African pastors and scholars are well read in biblical studies. Some exponents of African Biblical hermeneutics include: Ukpong (1984; 1995; 1999; 2001), Abogurin (2000), Adamo (1998), Kibicho (1968), Dickson (1979), Akao (1987), Goba (1993), Habtu (2001), Ntre (2001), Pobe (1979), Manus (1985), Mbiti (1992), Ukpong (1995), Onwu (1985), Ela (1986), Nolan (1988), Banana (1990), Okure (1988), Nasimiyu-Wasike (1992), Oduyoye (1994), Akoto (2000), Tutu (1986), Maimela (1986), Mofokeng (1987), Mosala (1989), Balia (1994), Avotri (1999), Masoga (1995), Dube (2000), Mwaura (2001), Otieno (2001), West (2000), Ukachukwu (1985), and others too numerous to mention here. All these scholars mentioned above and other scholars not mentioned here have become a model for African Biblical contextualization (Ottuh, 2014).

### **Application of Biblical Research in Pastoral Scholasticism**

#### ***Doctrinal Formulation***

Speaking from the angle of the Adventist church, Canale (2005) observed that doctrinal illiteracy and a weakened sense of identity is one of the problems being faced by the church and as such lost of identity is inevitable. In the same vein Wilson (1988:12) affirms that doctrinal illiteracy in the church can result to un-firm convictions or commitment to biblical understanding. Doctrinal illiteracy is the same thing as biblical illiteracy. To this end, charismatic worship experience and Evangelical meetings on Sunday mornings are not enough to build the contemporary church. Hence, the pastor or priest need to engage in rigorous biblical study and biblical interpretation to formulate doctrines in line with contextualization. This does not mean that the word of God be bent to suit a situation but the emphasis here is the need to allow the word to speak to our situation in such a way that captures the people heart. This is probably why Canale argued that doctrinal illiteracy springs from various causes, among them pastors who do not feed the sheep in the deep things God reveals in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy and that as the Word of God does not nurture the mind of the believer, the patterns of the world and other religious communities with which they interact begin to shape their thinking patterns and contents. The contemporary pastor therefore, needs to fire up biblical doctrines not necessarily rigid church traditions formulated by men but sound doctrines from the bible.

#### ***Avoiding Destructive Philosophy***

Canale (2005) also observed that the displacement of biblical thinking by secular and evangelical thinking produces a destructive dichotomy in the life of the church. For instance, on one hand, the church continues to profess to believe in Scripture and to base all its doctrines and practices on it of which the church does not change her clearly biblical fundamental beliefs and on the other hand, as these statements generally remain external to the process of personal thinking, members and leaders in the church continue to think according to the patterns of the surrounding culture they had espoused before becoming members of their denominations. They “download” various philosophies and cultural preferences from what they study,

read, or watch on television. As a result, the church is biblical in its external form and doctrines, but secular and charismatic in her way of thinking and lived experience. By implication, destructive philosophy emanates from worldly and environmental emendations of scriptures. Today many people who dress indecently to church are found of saying that God looks at the heart and the outward appearing. This looks correct but it was used in the scripture to correct error of human judgment as was done in 1 Samuel 16. The pastor has a serious duty to development the right philosophy on the church members through sound biblical teaching.

### ***A Balance between the Dichotomy of Scholasticism and Charismaticism***

In as much as it is important for the pastor to scholarly inclined, the need to maintain high level charismatic operation in the ministry is equally very important. According to Ukpong (2001), African scholarship is to build Christian faith not the other way round. While the pastor teachers the world of God with the competence it deserves, signs and wonders should also follow. This will attract the world to the church. Although, the people should not be made to worship God's miracle but the pastor should properly direct them to the God of the miracle.

### ***Memorization and Practice of biblical texts***

Canale (2005) also postulates that as the thinking of certain sectors of the church is changing from biblical to secular and ecumenical, there is the urgent need return to biblical patterns and by going back to the Bible--not only to study it, meditate on it, sing from it, memorize it, but primarily to understand it. Moreover, thinking and understanding does not end in unproductive theories, but bears fruits in practice. We do what we understand. What the church must make sure is that all theological thinking leading to reforms in worship rituals, life style, missionary work, and in our fundamental beliefs come from a process of thinking biblically, from a process of understanding reality based on Scripture only. Both the pastor and the church should be seen as mere quoters of biblical texts but as doers of them. The pastor should learn to learn to memorize Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible and encourage the church to memorize the translated version so as to be familiar with scriptures. When the church is familiar with the scripture with all its proper understanding it will be difficult for false teachers to derail them.

### ***Christian Reconstruction***

In the view of Parsons (2008) Christian Reconstruction is a call to the Church to awaken to its biblical responsibility to revival and the reformation of society and while holding to the priority of individual salvation, Christian Reconstruction also holds that cultural renewal is to be the necessary and expected outworking of the gospel as it progressively finds success in the lives and hearts of men. Christian Reconstruction therefore looks for and works for the rebuilding of the institutions of society according to a biblical blueprint. Parsons revealed further that Christian Reconstruction is also an attempt to answer the unprecedented threat facing the Church of Jesus Christ in the 20th century resurgence of secular humanism and parallel rise of statism. Here the pastor is faced with the challenge of reforming the church with the word of God.

### ***Study of Biblical Language in Pastoral Training***

Due to the proliferation of churches and pastoral training schools there are half baked theological school and pastors. One of the ways to help the church pastor in sound biblical research is to include the study of biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek) in the school's curriculum. This will enable the trainee pastor to have the knowledge of biblical languages and literatures.

### **Conclusion**

The paper has shown that pastoral ministry is the ministry of interpreting, preaching and teaching the Bible and as such, the study of biblical languages is very important to the contemporary pastor because it helps the pastor: to be exegetically competent, to read and understand the biblical languages, to teach it professionally and act as a tool for the study of biblical literatures.

Moreover, the science of biblical interpretation and application cuts across all life's spectrums in the sense that the pastor is not only seen around the four walls of church but also seen speaking to other aspects of life. With this in mind the pastor is expected to be an expert in biblical research so as to be able to address every audience that need some forms of biblical interpretation and application. Therefore, the science of biblical interpretation should be taken seriously in pastoral training. This calls for the study of biblical languages during such training.

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