

Original Paper

Farmer-Pastor Affinity in the Old Testament: Lessons for Pastoral Ministry Today

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Abstract

In most real life situations, everything produces its kind. In the same vein, most things also generate their nature. This is also Biblically founded as God even had to create man in His own image. Biblical history confirms the existence of different classes of people, by nature, functions and role for example the priests, kings, and prophets of the Old Testament. Most of these roles were prerogative of certain groups. Most priests came from the priestly family of Levi. Most kings came from the house of David. Most prophets were drawn from among the sons of prophet. One situation that is glaringly different and calls for study, is the few instances where the appointment of some people into pastoral office tends to depart from that pattern. It is of note that many Old Testament pastoral agents were originally farmers. The correlation between farming and pastoral care calls for examination. This research, Farmer-Pastor affinity in the Old Testament, is a response to the need to examine and explore the meaning, nature, implications and import of the 'farmer to pastor graduation.' Using exegetical and expository methods to study selected Biblical personages reflecting this affinity, Descriptive and Analytical methods will also be employed to fully uncover and critically situate the import of this farmer-pastor affinity. By analyzing the Farmer-pastor affinity in some passages of the Old Testament, it will be possible to determine and comprehend the theological direction of this affinity towards some objective application. The findings, conclusions and recommendations will not only add to scholarship but they definitely promise to benefit pastoral care attitude today.

1. Introduction

Pastoral care, as service for the spiritual benefit of others, is one of the most sensitive and most demanding responsibilities there are in the religious circle. (Note 1) In the Old Testament, this type of service was carried out by certain people, beginning from the Patriarchs, to the “Pater families”, to the

Priests, Judges, Prophets, Kings and Sages, etc. These took charge of directing the affairs of the Israelites from time to time and regulated their relationship with their God, *Yahweh*. Today, taking the Scriptures as a point of departure, (Note 2) from the Old Testament, through the New Testament, present day pastoral agents still have some important role to play in the life of the faithful.

However, the demands of present time tend to pose even more challenges to the apostolate of Pastors today. The circumstances are different. Secularism and modernity tend to constitute a peculiar challenge. The Pastoral Ministry, now, for both positive and negative reasons, either suffers from negligence and disrepute, or attracts too much attention and prominence that makes it depart from its character, thereby distracting its course. While the apostolate would demand more responsibility from the agents, the experience is that most pastoral agents fall short of the demands of this apostolate. (Note 3) Pastoral care is in need of some renewal. This constitutes a problem that yearns for solution. It is the background thesis of this research that such solution should be sought from the root and from the source. It is at this point that it becomes meaningful to make recourse to the Old Testament as a tradition source of Revelation and official deposit of pastoral ministry account. One recurrent Old Testament situation catches attention. A situation where many of the eventual pastoral agents were either ex-farmers or still serving-farmers came to mind as a starting point of enquiry for the true identity of pastoral care givers.

In an attempt to respond to the need for better understanding of the demands of pastoral care; in order to reclaim the desired true spirit of pastoral care, this research, motivated by the ‘farmer to pastor graduation’ in selected Old Testament passages, desires to study the affinity that is evident in these passages. The aim is to examine, analyze and consequently discover if and why there is such affinity between farming and pastoral life. This analysis will help us to uncover the nature, reason, implication of, and lessons from such affinity before exploring how the interpretation of such affinity should be applied to reshape and redeem pastoral care today.

There is need to limit this research within realizable focus. Therefore, while the Old Testament Farmer – Pastor graduation will be captured generally, this research would delimit the scope to selected key personages whose circumstances of pastoral engagement reflect this affinity. It is hoped that the progression of this research report from this introduction to the explication of key terms will help situate the focus of the work before the exposition of the nature of pastoral ministry today. After an objective appreciation of the pastoral situation today, it would be a meaningful strategy to analyze the farmer-pastor affinity in selected Old Testament personages like Jethro, Moses, some Levitical priests, David, Amos, Elisha and Solomon. The findings of this analysis will form the bases for recommendations and applications for the benefit of present day pastoral care.

2. Explication of Terms

There are some Terms that are used in this Essay which need to be explained within the context of usage. These include: Farmer, Pastor, Affinity, and Old Testament.

2.1 Farmer

The usage of the word Farmer in this Essay is contextual. Ordinarily, the word “farmer” was originally used to describe “a tenant paying a leasehold rent (a farm). The use of the word was eventually extended to mean any tenant or owner of a large holding” (Note 4). The usage continued to gain other nuances as can be referred to today. But in the context of this work, ‘Farmer’ is used in the broad and inclusive way to connote a person who “cultivates land or crops or raises animals such as livestock or fish.” (Note 5) It also includes people who perform different preliminary and terminal roles towards the production of crops and preservation of livestock. In a simple way, a farmer promotes or improves the growth of rearing plants and livestock and herdsmanship for increased sustenance of livelihood.

2.2 Pastor

Ordinarily, a pastor is a minister in charge of a believing congregation. It is drawn from the Latin word *pastores* connoting shepherd. But again, the word ‘Pastor’ is used here in the broad sense to include all who perform acts of shepherding, for example priests, prophets and even kings. Pastors are like shepherds because of the desired attitude of care for the flock. It is not only used to refer to spiritual shepherds of souls, it is broadened to include the shepherds of the temporal needs of man. Its usage here accommodates all those entrusted with the responsibility of guiding the life and conduct of people. While care for the spiritual wellbeing of the individual stands out as the main responsibility of a pastor, one who cares for the temporal wellbeing without neglecting the spiritual wellbeing is also accommodated here in the reference to pastor. (Note 6)

2.3 Affinity

Affinity is used in this context to emphasize primarily the aspect of the link and correlation between the two roles of a farmer and that of a pastor. Other synonyms of affinity are: relationship, closeness, alliance and connection. By Farmer – Pastor affinity, we mean the link and connection that exists between the two roles and what the firm progression and graduation from farmer role to pastor role would mean.

2.4 Old Testament

The 46 books of the Old Testament present a concerted picture of the apostolate of many pastoral care givers whose roles have a link from farming. By Old Testament in this work is meant any part and every part of this first section of Christian Scripture which presents a pastoral agent with a link from farming roles. Referring to the phrase Old Testament as used in this work, we do not necessarily mean the passages as text but pertaining to personages related to outlined roles. These personages, selected from passages in the four Old Testament sections – Pentateuch, Historical Books, Prophetic Books and Wisdom Books – constitute our focus. The passages will be selected according to relevant roles of Priests, kings, prophets and Sages to justify the mention of the Old Testament in this work.

Even though the four sections of Pentateuch, Historical Books, Prophetic Books and the Wisdom Books are included generally, there will, however, be a narrowing down to specific personages in these sections of the Old Testament, which have some clear link and affinity between their earlier roles as

farmers and later roles as pastors.

3. Pastor Ministry in Focus

By Pastoral Ministry, we mean roles that relate to the safeguarding of the integrity of the human person as a religious and responsibly secular entity. In this broad sense, all whose role in the community is saddled with the responsibility of overseeing and directing the conduct of others are considered, in this context, to be pastoral agents and their role of shepherding constitutes part of the pastoral ministry. The categories of agents in the pastoral ministry would then extend beyond religious guides to other shepherds of temporal needs.

In this context of study, pastoral ministry would include the shepherding roles of priests, prophets and even kings and Sages who serve their related need. By nature, pastoral ministry is demanding of direction, accompaniment and care. Every man needs pastoral care. Every man needs direction in life. But, there is the need to examine the responsible exercise or otherwise of these roles by pastoral agents. In order to arrive at an objective evaluation of this apostolate, this work will highlight, generally, the demands of pastoral care today before reaching back to the Old Testament to x-ray the nature of pastoral care in it. (Note 7)

3.1 The Demands of Pastoral Ministry

By nature, pastoral ministry demands certain values that necessarily facilitate the pastoral care and the accompaniment needed to be given by a ‘shepherd’ to any supposed beneficiary of pastoral attention. These values include, but are not limited to: Care, Availability, Concern, Direction, Safeguard, Patience, Sacrifice, Defense, Selflessness, etc. Whether one is a priest, a prophet a king or a sage, these values are necessary for a successful pastoral ministry.

3.2 Care

Generally described as watchful or protective attention towards another. “Care” becomes the most encompassing value in pastoral care. A shepherd cares for his flock. This value demands attention and accompaniment spiced up by compassion and concern. Like compassion, care is not only the feeling of emotions of concern. Care includes also the sharing in the emotions of the care receiver. A caring pastor is called to be affectionate, helpful and sympathetic.

3.3 Availability

A pastoral agent is called to be available to the flock. Availability is the disposition and the actual physical realization of the needed presence, closeness and companionship to the people under one’s care. The key word here is accessibility. The care receiver needs to have access to the care giver. The pastor needs to make himself accessible to the flock. This is measured by one’s readiness to attend to his or her responsibility.

3.4 Concern

Though closely related to the idea of care, “concern” as an independent value in pastoral ministry. This is the attitude that confirms interest in someone and in his or her affairs. It is a matter of showing

importance to some one or to his plight. By seeing concern as a value in pastoral ministry, it is meant that the plight of the care beneficiary must be a matter that engages the pastor's attention, interest and time. Concern has an aspect of worrying. A concerned pastor worries about the welfare of the flock. Concern is close to a feeling of sympathy and it is generally the foundation of pastoral care.

3.5 Direction

Pastoral Agents are supposed to be Guides. They must give direction and leadership out of danger and unto safety. They are to point to the right path on which something is supposed to go or be done. If pastoral ministry does not give direction, then its apostolate is not complete. But the direction given by pastoral ministry must be with consistent oversight to ensure it is sustained.

3.6 Safeguard

Following from the responsibility of Direction, another value that is expected of Pastoral Agents is that of safeguard. It is the responsibility of the pastor to keep secure from danger or against attack. Safeguard is a type of defense which wards off actual or threatened attack. The attitude here in safeguard is more of preventive than actual defense. Safeguard can be administrative, physical, technical, spiritual and emotional.

3.7 Patience

The quality of patience is very important in pastoral Ministry. The capacity and ability to await the materialization of one's hopes and desires for a care receiver is paramount towards the success of the pastoral ministry. A Pastor must anticipate possible challenges from the point of view of the care receiver. It is important that he learn to tolerate such delay and challenges without easily getting angry or upset. A pastor must always maintain his cool.

3.8 Sacrifice

Just as a shepherd must sacrifice for the sheep, a Pastor must make some sacrifice for the benefit of the care receivers. This has to do with the ability and readiness to suffer loss or discomfort for the benefit of the care receivers. Every relationship requires sacrifice but it is much more required in Pastoral Ministry. In sacrificing, the Pastor needs to give up some things for the benefit of some anticipated goals. In this case, sacrifice in pastoral ministry yields benefits for pastoral care and its receivers.

3.9 Defense

There is a serious implication here that, by nature, Pastoral Ministry would guarantee, among other things, uncompromising defense for the beneficiaries. This is the act of protecting by shielding from danger or extinction. The pastoral care receiver should grow in the confidence and assurance that the Pastoral agent would take responsibility about his safety and protection

3.10 Selflessness

It is not enough for the Pastoral agent to make sacrifices for the care receivers but the sacrifices need to be selfless. A Pastor must think less of himself and more of his flock. His concern must be more for the flock and less for himself. It is this attitude that will enable him to care more about what other people need than about what benefits him.

3.11 Pastoral Ministry in the Old Testament

With the general appreciation of the demands of pastoral ministry as we see above, it is note worthy that much still needs to be done to have the pastoral ministry that merits the name by word and deed. It is at this point that a recourse to the Bible, specifically to the Old Testament has become necessary, at least to examine the nature and determine what this ministry meant in the Biblical times.

In the Old Testament, it is evident that God would not leave His people without pastoral care. In the entire salvation history of the Old Testament, pastoral ministry was all encompassing. It is interesting to see that in almost every section of the Old Testament, there is a group of people saddled with the responsibility guiding, nurturing and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the chosen people. (Note 8) In the Pentateuch, among others, we have the priests. In the historical section, among others, we have the kings. In the prophetic section, among others, we have the prophets and in the Wisdom section, among others, we have the sages. All these had some responsibility that can be likened to pastoral care. All these representatives of God were pastoral agents in one way or the other. In the Old Testament, a priest, king, prophet or sage is doing the work of a ‘pastor’ and consequently is a shepherd. As a shepherd, he guides, teaches, cares for and watches over the flock. They included even the patriarchs, cultic and non-priests, writing and non-writing prophets, judges, kings, sages etc. (Note 9) The Old Testament presents them as guardians of the flock. (Note 10) At this point, it is very clear to see one important aspect of pastoral care in any situation and that has to do with accompaniment. Before this work proceeds to analyze the circumstances of the emergence of this ministry in the Old Testament, it is important to first examine the import of this value of ‘accompaniment.’

4. The Place if Accompaniment in Pastoral Ministry

Ordinarily, accompaniment in this context means supporting or complementary service given out of love and concern to a person or thing that is in need of care and help. It means availability to assist. It means disposition to journey with. It means readiness to follow through the demands of guiding and guarding someone to safety. Accompaniment is one word in which all the demands of pastoral service - Care, Availability, Concern, Direction, Safeguard, Patience, Sacrifice, Defense, Selflessness, etc.,- can be found.

In recent times, this word has attracted so much relevance in pastoral theology. Pope Francis has often advised priests and care givers to handle the sensitive areas of their apostolate with great sense of pastoral accompaniment. According to the Pope, the best means to successful evangelization is through pastoral accompaniment.

The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life (Note 11)

A Pastoral agent is called to be a companion. It is in seeing oneself as a companion that one would live out the other values in pastoral ministry. Accompaniment is very relevant in pastoral ministry. It was the basis of the Old Testament ministry and it is the main demand of today’s pastoral care.

5. Analyzing the Farmer-Pastor Affinity in the Old Testament

A close look at the beginnings of most pastoral agents of the Old Testament reveals that most of them either worked as farmers or were part of a culture which understood and appreciated the demands of farming. That God decided to bring in these farmers into the pastoral ministry of the Old Testament is a case for study. There is no doubt that God is not bound by human standards. It is also true that Divine providence overrides human coincidence. The query is that this Farmer – Pastor connection is a divine provision meant to communicate a deep message that needs to be analyzed for objective appreciation.

5.1 *The Bible and Farmer-Pastors*

In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, graduation from farming to pastoral care has been a noticeable situation. Querying this affinity promises to give some more insight into the nature and appreciation of pastoral ministry today. From the priests in the Pentateuch, to the Kings in the Historical section, to the Prophets in the prophetic Books and eventually to the sages in the Wisdom section of the books, the graduation from farming to pastoral care is present and calls for this study.

Farmer-Priests

In the Old Testament, the first mentioned priest is Melchizedek who was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. (Note 12) His association with Abraham who was of an agrarian culture, and his offering bread and wine which were fruits of the farm, confirm that even Melchizedek, who, as a priest could be called a pastoral agent, was not unaware and may be, was not uninfluenced by the culture of farming to which he belonged. Both Abraham and Melchizedek, demonstrated one of the important values common among farmers: Generosity, selflessness and sacrifice. These farming-related values are also needed and could constitute the saving grace in pastoral ministry, even today.

But even more than Melchizedek, the farmer-pastor affinity among Old Testament priests can be seen in the case of Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro. The Old Testament tells us that Jethro was the Priest of Median. (Note 13) Biblical history also confirms that Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. This means that Jethro was a farmer. He was the owner of the flock that Moses tended. He was a shepherd. He was a tender of livestock. Ordinarily, there are basic qualities associated with rearing livestock or tending animals. Values like patience, availability, defence, protection, provision, sacrifice etc are very much associated with tending flock. Jethro must have been a veteran in this before he recruited his son-in-law into the profession. But Jethro was also a priest. Was he a farmer because he was going to be a priest? Or did the Bible present him a priest because he was a farmer. Whatever the case, by Biblical history, nobody would dispute the fact that Jethro was both a farmer and a priest. As a pastoral agent, he had the background of farming, rearing animals, and as a priest he must have brought those qualities to bear in pastoring his people.

It is also important to notice the background of farming that Moses also had here. He did not only belong to the agrarian culture of his people but Moses learnt to tend the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. In a broad sense, Moses, in Israel, was not only a lawgiver, he was also considered a priest. But before taking those prominent roles, Moses was a farmer. It must not be forgotten that Moses was a

farmer at the time he was called to the other roles of priest and lawgiver. Exodus 3: 1ff records that it was while he was exercising his duty as a farmer – while he was tending the flock of his father-in-law – that Yahweh appeared to him in the burning bush and called him to ‘pastoral ministry’ of leading his people out of bondage. Was this a coincidence? What qualities learnt as a farmer did Moses use as a pastor? The obvious answers to those questions further reveal the import of the farmer-pastor affinity that we see in the Old Testament.

In addition to individual instances of priests graduating from farming to pastoral care, it is also recorded in Neh. 13: 1-13 that some Levites served as farmers before they assumed full responsibility as ministerial priests. The graduation from farming to pastoral care or the combination of farming and pastoral service is too predominant to be overlooked.

Farmer-Kings

The idea of kings being considered as pastoral agents, stems from the fact that in Old Testament Israel, every leader was supposed to be a custodian of the monotheistic faith of the people. A king was supposed to work with the priests and prophets and sustain the faith heritage of the people. From that point of view, kings were pastoral agents. The Historical section of the Old Testament presents this history clearly. It is interesting that even kings, considered as pastors, were not outside the culture of farming under review.

While virtually all the kings of Israel, by virtue of belonging to an agrarian culture, were aware of the demands of farming, one example that stood out as a practicing farmer called to ministry was king David. King David comes across in Biblical history as a farmer-pastor. (Note 14) David was taking care of the sheep in the field when God called him to pastoral care as a king. The young, innocent, caring, patient, self-sacrificing farmer, remained available to the flock in the fields until he was called-out and made king. These same farming-related values would come to play in his eventual exercise of pastoral care as a king. Again, one needs to identify the graduation from farming to pastoral care.

Farmer-Prophet

Another group of pastoral agents who display noticeable affinity between farming and pastoral service is the group of prophets. While most of the prophets, like other Israelite leaders, belonged to the agrarian culture of the time, some of them were actively involved in farming either before their call or concomitantly with their call to pastoral service.

Prophet Amos is a glaring example of a farmer-prophet. Before he was called to preach to Northern Israel, Amos declared that he was a farmer in the south. (Note 15) He was a breeder of different livestock (*noqed*) suggesting sheep in Amos 1:1 and (*boqer*) suggesting cattle in Amos 7: 14. (Note 16) One can only imagine the patience, sacrifice, accompaniment and hardwork needed in breeding livestock. Amos was conversant with all these values of his original duty. As if this aspect of farming was not rich enough, Biblical history also confirms that Amos was equally a ‘tender of mulberry figs.’ (Note 17) Tendering mulberry figs was a very significant responsibility. This entailed puncturing the

immature fruit to make it turn sweet. Amos was therefore involved in pruning and bringing out the best from the fruit tree. His work was not only to make the fruit available to end users, he made effort to ensure that the fruits were available in their sweetest of flavours and therefore he would tender by puncturing earlier to bring out the best of it. This quality of concern for the end users; the value of patience, hardwork and selflessness, stayed with Amos and followed him into the pastoral ministry such that when Amaziah and the Northern elders rejected him, his already learnt values of calm disposition and patience helped to handle the situation. There is no doubt, that the values from his experience as a farmer played out extensively in his service as a prophet. (Note 18)

Another farmer who turned prophet was Elisha. When Elijah was told to go and anoint Elisha, the latter was still in the field tending the flock when Elijah threw his mantle over him and drafted him into the pastoral ministry. Elisha even celebrated by sharing a meal from his farm before leaving to become Elijah's attendant. (Note 19) Again, the qualities of a good and committed farmer would no doubt reflect in his new role as a prophet of God

Farmer – Sage

In the wisdom section of the Bible, we see another group of leaders in Israel. These wise men instructed the people on wise living and their counsel helped in driving home the teaching of the law by priests, instructions of the kings and admonition by the prophets. These sages were mature men of sound judgment whose teaching office soon became a standing for pastoral service.

Wisdom literature was there before the exile but it flourished more after the exile. There were sages in Egypt, cf. Gen 41: 8. There were sages in Pharaoh's court, cf. Exod 7: 11. Also, 1 Kings 4: 30 tells us that Solomon was wiser than all the sages in Egypt. There were wise men in different historical times of the Bible. But those of them who were prominently called into leadership roles demonstrated clear understanding of the farmer-related values of direction, patience and accompaniment.

The experience of the exile motivated the wise men to compile the wise sayings as counsel and instruction for the benefit of the future generation. Before the exile, the personality of Solomon represented "sageism". Solomon was the wise man par excellence. As a wise king, one must not exclude him from the agrarian culture of the people he governed. In his wisdom, he must have learnt the farming related values of patience and tolerance.

The same thing can be gleaned from what must have happened in exile and after exile – the background of renewed blossoming of wisdom literature. It must be noted that after the loss of the temple, the king and the land, Israel went into exile as non-skilled professionals and the only profession that would have been available in exile was farming either working on the farmland or tending livestock. Again, the sages who came from this background must also have learnt the cultural values associated with farming. On return from exile, it is not difficult to see how many farming-related values helped the sages in their service of giving counsel to the Israelites. (Note 20)

5.3 The Centrality of “Patient Accompaniment” in Farming and Pastoral Care

From the above analysis of the affinity between farming and pastoral service in the Old Testament, it is clear that many, if not all of the farming-related values are evident in the pastoral lives of the priests, kings, prophets and sages of the Old Testament. A close attention to the import of these values would reveal that, among other values, the value of patience and that of accompaniment have come out very central in both farming and pastoral care.

In farming, whether it is cultivating the land or rearing livestock, one cannot under-estimate the importance of patience and accompaniment. The farmer has to put in adequate time in the cultivation of the land and he has to wait patiently for the time of harvest. During the waiting time, he has to visit the farm, weed, control pest and check on maturity. It is even more demanding if it is rearing livestock. Taking them out to pasture demands patience and accompaniment. The shepherd has to wait on the sheep or cattle. These same qualities are expected in pastoral care. A pastor has to patiently accompany his faithful – sometimes conceding rights and privileges. The centrality of patience and accompaniment is a motivation for adopting the farming-generated value of patient accompaniment as a paradigm in pastoral care.

6. Lessons from Farmer-Pastor Affinity

It is true that there is some noticeable affinity between farming and pastoral care in the Old Testament. (Note 21) The analysis of this affinity has revealed some providential arrangement that must not be overlooked especially because they constitute veritable lessons for pastoral care today.

It is important to learn that nothing is accidental in God’s design. God definitely had a purpose in farmer-pastor affinity in the Old Testament. One must be disposed to study and learn from every situation presented by God in the Scripture.

It is important to know that every beginning is a preparation for greater heights. It is possible to look down on humble beginnings. Being a farmer, by all standard could be seen as a humble beginning but it is only by the advantage of hindsight that one would come to realize that only such farmer-related values could prepare the agent for greater and more sensitive responsibilities in pastoral care.

It is important to note that Farming may be simple but very important in responsible building. This situation prefigures the New Testament revelation in 1Cor 1: 27 that God chooses the weak to shame the strong. It is important to learn that God chooses the simple to teach the value of humility.

The values of Farming have proven to be very relevant values in pastoral care. Pastors are therefore called to be patient nurturers of the faith. They, like farmers are to watch the faith grow.

The value of patient accompaniment must be appreciated and developed as God’s designed demand for a meaningful pastoral care. A pastor must be a producer of some sort of nourishment for his flock. Farming could be a very viable preparation for pastoral excellence

7. Evolution

The need to give pastoral care the greatest of attention is premised by the fact that God Himself, from past Biblical times, had never wanted his children to be without proper care. Findings from this research have confirmed that the noticeable affinity between farming and pastoral ministry in the Old Testament was not accidental or coincidental but providential. Starting off from the thesis that pastoral care is important, this research first x-rayed the nature and demands of present day pastoral care and found out that, in the midst of basic demands, a lot still needs to be done to arrive at the desired level of pastoral care. It was noted that today's pastoral agents are either not very aware of the expectations of the ministry or they are reluctant or unwilling to bring the needed values to bear in their service delivery. The resultant experience was a decline in the quality of pastoral care giving. It was against this background that this research work made recourse to the Old Testament as a starting point of the Christian history of salvation. The noticeable affinity between farming and pastoral care and the graduation from the former to the latter in the Old Testament presented a case study that has revealed a lot about the true nature and demand of pastoral care. From findings from this analysis, it is not only that many lessons are available to learn about the right course of pastoral care, it is safe to see and say that there is wisdom in, and gains of the farmer-pastor graduation in the Old Testament. It is against the background of the synthesis of these findings that this work will draw its conclusions and make bold to recommend some renewed attitude and conduct in pastoral care.

7.1 The Wisdom of Farmer-Pastor Graduation in the Old Testament

Evaluating the aforementioned, truly confirms that the Old Testament recurrent graduation of pastoral agents from farming to pastoral care – giving room to the 'farmer-pastor affinity' that is the subject of study of this research – has some wealth of wisdom especially considering the implications for today's pastoral care. (Note 22)

There is wisdom in this self-humbling experience. It is natural to be humbled by one's lowly beginning. Given that pastoral service, with all its importance, can be considered an exalted position by some people, the Old Testament experience of many of those agents graduating from a lowly status of a farmer to the prominence of pastoral care, must have helped to keep them humble, as pride can be very disastrous in pastoral care. That lesson of humility is still a wise option today.

Another wise aspect of this graduation is that it gives meaning to the fact of the call to service. It is meaningful that one has to leave one role to another. For that to happen, some vocation is implied. Pastoral agents must be called and must feel called to service. The different instances of the Old Testament constitute a wise testimony to this true nature of pastoral service.

Another wisdom in the farmer-pastor graduation is to be seen in the facility in learning and applying the basic skills of service and the needed values of pastoral care learnt in the farming roles. The affinity between the two roles makes it easy for one to cope in the later role.

7.2 The Gains of Farmer-Pastor Consciousness in Ministry Today

It is important that this research would drive home, not just the fact of affinity between farming and

pastoral care but also and more so the need for some renewed consciousness by today's pastoral agents. There is need to be conscious of the values and how much the values in farming roles can help improve pastoral care. There is need to be conscious of the fact that pastoral ministry is in turn called to promote farming and its values. The gain of all this consciousness is the desired improvement of pastoral care.

8. Recommendations

In order to achieve the desired goal of revitalizing and improving pastoral care, and, against the background of the helpful values uncovered from the farmer-pastor affinity being projected in the analysis above, this research makes the following recommendations.

- 1) Pastors need to be humble in the exercise of their ministry by seeing themselves not as Lords but always at the service of their flock
- 2) Pastors must promote farming and help to correct the inimical and wrong impression about farming as a menial job. The dignity of farming as a call to service must be projected and promoted by the Pastor's active involvement.
- 3) Pastoral care must be redefined to also accommodate attending to the temporal needs of the faithful. In this way, pastors will be more proactive in order to have the means for such sustenance.
- 4) The value of 'patient accompaniment' of the vulnerable must be taught as moral instruction in schools and Seminaries as a necessary identity of the pastoral care giver
- 5) Pastoral Ministry must be supervised by committed and responsible care givers who must devise a means of harmonizing the gains of the two roles of farmer and pastor in present day pastoral care.
- 6) Pastors must learn to be more of shepherds than administrators.

9. Conclusion

The noticeable graduation from a culture of farming to that of pastoral care in the Old Testament, and the evident affinity between the farmer and pastor roles as analyzed and evaluated above, is not accidental nor coincidental but providential. Seen as God's providence, this research makes bold to conclude that pastoral care has a lot to learn and benefit from farming. A pastor who wants to succeed would need to pay attention especially to the value of patient accompaniment, which is better learnt in the context of farming. There is need to pay attention to the primary goal of farming which is to provide food and sustenance to the people. Where the values associated with farming become a starting point for the appreciation of pastoral care, then the aspect of providing sustenance to the people must not be overlooked in pastoral care. Even in the New Testament, Jesus, as an example of ideal pastoral care would feed his disciples and followers physically and spiritually. The sustenance and feeding was holistic. This research also makes bold to conclude, drawing inspiration from the results of the analysis, that pastors must equally be involved, work hard to revive, encourage and sustain farming basically as a source of livelihood, provision and sustenance for the flock. A renewed values-centered consciousness must be created and a new attitude of service must be learnt about pastoral care. The

affinity of farming to pastoral care must also uncover and encourage the desired responsibility of pastor towards farming. The promotion of farming is an aspect of pastoral care and must not be overlooked. If and when the example of graduation from farming to pastoral care in the Old Testament is learnt as a matter of utility, then the appreciation will move beyond mere affinity to full time mutual complementarity of the values learnt. This renewed appreciation of the farmer-pastor affinity promises to provoke and enrich scholarship; and, the application of the farming values to pastoral care, would be a great boost to today's pastoral ministry, which has been in need of serious revitalization and renewal.

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Notes

Note 1. Man is a religious being and cannot be disassociated from that. His relationship with the Divine becomes a very sensitive aspect of his existence. It is against this background that the regulation of that relationship must not only be taken seriously but it is only right that it be entrusted to capable and responsible hands.

Note 2. The Scriptures have become an important reference point for many life-defining enquiry. See R. L. Walten, "Using the Bible and Christian Tradition in Theological Reflection". *British Journal of Theological Education* 13(2) (2003), pp. 133-52.

Note 3. See more on how today's pastors have departed from the demands of the Ministry. Gerald Emem Umoren, "Exegetic Preaching: The Urgent Need of the 21st Century Church" in *KOINONIA* (Published by St. Joseph Major Seminary Ikot Ekpene) Vol. 6 No. 4 December 2014.

Note 4. See Christopher Dyer "A suffolk farmer in the fifteenth century". *Agricultural History Review*. 55(1): 2007, pp. 1-22

Note 5. The ordinary understanding of farming stops at cultivation of the land for planting. But this broad connotation accommodates, in addition to engagement in agriculture, the aspect of raising crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry or other livestock.

Note 6. See Tim Dowly, ed. *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, NY: Fortress Press, 2013. pp.

16ff.

Note 7. Today, even more than before, there is the great need to x-ray the nature and demands of pastoral care. See Pattison, S., *A Critique of Pastoral Care*. London: SCM Press, 1990, pp. 1ff.

Note 8. See John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as paradigm for Pastoral Identity" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April – June 1995): 182-200

Note 9. For more on how the different offices of the Old Testament constituted a platform for pastoral care, see John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as paradigm for Pastoral Identity" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April – June 1995): 182-200

Note 10. See John F. MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005, pp. 3-27

Note 11. Pope Francis, *Evangeli Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), no 169, Image, 1st edition, 2014

Note 12. Genesis 14: 18ff records how Melchizedek the priest blessed Abraham who also offered him a tenth of his goods. Abraham belonged to an Agrarian culture and was conversant with the demands of farming and rearing livestock. That Melchizedek met with him means that Melchizedek could also be identified with an appreciation of a culture of farming. His offering of bread and wine is not far from the culture of farming.

Note 13. The story of Jethro is in Exodus 3: 1ff. He is also called Reuel, or Hobab, in the Old Testament. He was priest of Median of the Kenite clan but evidently, a farmer and shepherd, a duty he eventually passed on to Moses.

Note 14. 1Sam 16: 11ff records the life of David as a farmer before he was identified and brought for anointing as king by Samuel. Again, this could not have been a mere coincidence. But even if one were to see it as a coincidence, there is no way the values of farming would not play out in the leadership and pastoral responsibilities of the new King.

Note 15. Donald E Gowan, "The Book of Amos: Introduction, Commentary and Reflection" in *New Interpreters Bible Commentary*, VII, NY: Abingdon, 1996, pp. 399ff.

Note 16. Michael L. Barre, "Amos" in *Jerome's Biblical Commentary*, Edited by Raymond Brown et al, PA: Prentice Hall, 1968, p. 210.

Note 17. Cf. Amos 7: 14b

Note 18. For more on Amos, see William Rainey Harper. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*. ICC, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905; James L. Mays *Amos: A Commentary*, OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969; and A. G. Auld, "Amos" in *Old Testament Guides*, Sheffield: JSOT, 1986.

Note 19. Cf. I kings 19: 19-21

Note 20. Hilary Kapfer says more on the service of sages to the post exilic Isarel in his doctoral dissertation. See Hilary Claire Kapfer, *Collective Accountability among the Sages of Ancient Israel*. Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard Univeristy, 2013 assessed on 5th July 2022 from <http://nrs.harvard.edu>

Note 21. Cf. P., Ballard and J. Pritchard. *Practical Theology in Action*. SPCK: London, 1996, pp. 3ff; G.

Georgiou, "The Use of Scripture." London: Bible Society Internal Report, June 2000, pp. 6ff.

Note 22. S., Pattison, and J. Woodward. "An introduction to Evaluation in Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care." In J. Woodward and S. Pattison, eds. *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, pp. 300-10. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, pp. 41-62.