A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY STUDY OF CONTEXTUALISED PREACHING IN AUSTRALIA

by

DAVID GRAEME MICHITE

Submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTOR: DR H PIETERSE

OCTOBER 2004
SUMMARY

This thesis studies current preaching praxis in Australia through a practical theology perspective. It is argued that Evangelical churches in Australia operate predominantly with a narrow applicational hermeneutical model in regard to preaching and hence communicate the gospel ineffectually to ordinary Australians. A need for contextualised and dialogical preaching is presented. Using Zerfass’s model a situational analysis of the Australian context and the effects of modernism and postmodernism are explored. Theological tradition in regard to preaching is then analyzed with a focus on incarnational, Trinitarian and covenantal theology, scripture as public text and dialogue as scriptural pattern. Preaching is then analyzed using the communication theories of Gadamer, Searle, Ricoeur, and Habermas. The need for contextualised preaching is critiqued in light of the concerns of Barth regarding preaching and the concerns of Strom in regards to the nature of church in Australia. A new evangelical practical theological/ preaching model is then offered. Zerfass’s model emphasises dialectic tension as the basis for moving from praxis to praxis. While movement from praxis to praxis does occur via dialectic tension there are also elements of change that are based on processes of continuity and evolution. A model that reflects this dynamic is forwarded. Finally an ideal praxis for dialogical preaching is presented with possibilities for further research. Throughout the thesis five interviews are used to illustrate the research, concepts and recommendations presented.

Key Words: Preaching, homiletics, hermeneutics, Zerfass, practical theology, contextualization, communication theories, church, ideal praxis, dialogical, incarnational, Australia.
DECLARATION

I declare that *A Practical Theology Study Of Contextualised Preaching In Australia* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

........................................
David Michie

.........................
Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks go first to Dr Hendrik Pieterse who provided great support and encouragement at both a personal and academic level over the course of this thesis. His support was more than I had expected and has made a lasting impact on me.

I would also like to thank Dr Andre van Oudsthoorn who provided great assistance in the development of the structure of this thesis and spent much time reading and giving valuable feedback on draft chapters.

My gratitude also to the faculty and Board at Perth Bible College for their encouragement and support as well as critical contributions to the content of the thesis. My thanks also to Lois Sandow for the long and difficult job of transcribing a number of the interviews.

Any contribution to knowledge and understanding is always built on the hard work and support of others. Thank you to family, friends, colleagues, mentors and teachers who have all been foundational in shaping the thinking and concerns that led to this thesis.

Thank you to the interviewees whose concern for the Gospel and for people is reflected in their interviews. Your contributions have enlivened the thesis.

Most deeply my thanks go to my wife and children, who continue to teach me the value of dialogue and understanding. Thank you for your patience over the course of this study and inviting me to walk in worlds that are unknown and unfamiliar to me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title Page</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY 2

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM 17

2.1 General area of concern. 17

2.2 Evangelical 18

2.3 Applicational hermeneutical model 20

2.4 Effectiveness and Authority. 22

2.5 Theoretical presuppositions 23

2.6 Personal Presuppositions 29

2.7 Research Problem 31

3. CHAPTER OUTLINES 32

3.1 Introduction 32

3.2 Situational Analysis 32

3.3 Theological Traditions 33

3.4 Praxis Theory 34

3.5 Praxis Model 35

3.6 Conclusion 35
CHAPTER 7 - AN EVANGELICAL PRACTICAL THEOLOGY/ PREACHING MODEL

1. BASIS FOR THE MODEL 291

2. A NEW MODEL 305
   2.1 Background 307
   2.2 The situational, indicative and imperative 314
      2.2.1 Situational 314
      2.2.2 Indicative 315
      2.2.3 Imperative 318
   2.3 Support for new model 319

2. NEW PRACTICAL THEOLOGY MODEL AS PREACHING PRAXIS 325
   3.1 Ideal praxis 328
      3.1.1 Ideal Praxis for Topical Preaching 329
      3.1.2 Ideal Praxis for Exegetical Preaching 330

4. CONCLUSION 337

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION 340

1. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH 340
   1.1 Preaching 341
   1.2 Practical Theology Model 344

2. FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES 345
   2.1 Testing of Original Thesis 345
1. Introduction
2. Praxis in terms of hermeneutical approach
   2.1 Hermeneutical approach
   2.2 Praxis in terms of hermeneutical approach
   2.3 The communication acts of Jesus
   2.4 Preaching and developmental stages
   2.5 Dialogical learning processes and methodology
   2.6 Research on new model
   2.7 The nature of being church in Australia
3. Conclusion

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

A An Illustrative Study
B Letter to Interviewees
C Interviews
   Minister ‘A’
   Minister ‘B’
   Minister ‘C’
   Interviewee ‘D’
   Minister ‘E’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Practical Theology Model (Zerfass 1974: 166)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Dialogical – Authoritarian Communicative Acts (Pieterse 1999: 420)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The dynamics of Paul’s thought in relation to Graeco-Roman popular intellectualism (Strom 2000:104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Practical Theology Model (Zerfass 1974: 166)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Existential, indicative, imperative model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Existential, indicative, imperative model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Existential, indicative, imperative model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Existential, indicative, imperative model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Types of Conflict on the Evangelical Scene (Hiebert 1994: 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>New Practical Theology Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Paul recreated the coherence of the message for himself and his ekklesiai in each new contingency (Strom 2000: 183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Poulter’s model (2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>