

TEACHING SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT: A SURVEY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

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Abstract

This survey is based on data which I collected through colleagues at various theological institutions in the Southern African region.¹ These institutions count amongst the most prominent theological institutions in the region. The data therefore provides a fairly reliable picture of how Systematic Theology is being taught at an undergraduate level at universities in the region.

Key Concepts: Systematic theology, South Africa, tuition

Introduction

A number of limitations to this survey have to be noted though:

- I corresponded only with institutions that offer undergraduate degrees in theology. This includes a number of theological colleges but excludes a number of others that offer diploma programmes. There are indeed numerous theological colleges that offer such diploma programmes in theology for ministerial training. This survey therefore does not offer the full picture of theological training.
- Some colleagues were not able to respond to my inquiries so that the data on various institutions is not incorporated here.
- There may well be institutions that offer degree programmes in theology which have escaped my attention.
- There are a number of institutions where theology is no longer taught at an undergraduate, university level (for various reasons). In South Africa alone, these include the Universities of Cape Town, Durban-Westville, the North, Port Elizabeth, Rhodes, Venda and Zululand.
- The Southern African region would include at least the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, I failed to establish contact with theological institutions in several of these countries. Data from four theological institutions outside South Africa is included in this survey, namely Africa University, Justo Mwale Theological College, the United Church of Zambia Theological College and the University of Namibia.

¹ I hereby wish to express my gratitude to the following colleagues who were willing to answer my questions diligently: Tony Balcomb (UN), Musonde Bwalya (UCZTC), James Kombo (Daystar University), Nico Koopman (SU), Piet Naude (UPE), Annes Nel (UNAM), Danie Veldsman (Unisa), Rian Venter (JM), Koos Vorster (NW), Conrad Wethmar (UP), David Williams (FH) and David Yemba (AU).

Degrees and their Target Groups

What degrees in theology are offered at an undergraduate degree level? For which client groups are these degrees offered? From which denominations do these client groups come from? In response to these questions, the following observations may be offered:

- Many institutions offer a three year undergraduate degree programme in theology. Some of these degrees include the possibility of taking modules in Biblical languages (e.g. Natal, Unisa) while others no longer offer such modules (e.g. UWC). The most important client group for such three year Bachelors degrees remain prospective ministers.
- Some institutions offer a three year undergraduate degree programme in theology (e.g. Justo Mwale, Namibia, Pretoria, Stellenbosch). The typical difference between a three year and a three year programme seems to be the inclusion of compulsory modules in Biblical languages. Although such a three year programme is usually deemed to be the equivalent of an Honours degree, relatively few typically Honours modules are offered at the fourth year level.
- Most theological institutions now offer programmes in theology on an ecumenical basis. In many cases students come from a wide variety of denominations. Some theological institutions nevertheless retain strong ties with specific denominations (e.g. Methodists at Africa University, RCZ at Justo Mwale, the Gereformeerde Kerk at North-West, DRC, Presbyterians and URC at Bloemfontein, Pretoria and Stellenbosch, UCZ at UCZTC). In other cases programmes are modified to address specific denominational needs (e.g. Lutherans at Natal, Baptists through Pretoria).
- Most theological programmes are aimed at the training of pastors for full-time ministry in congregations. There are some programmes for specialised ministries, for example at Cornerstone Christian College in Counselling and Community Development, at Huguenot College in Youth Ministry, Mission and Social Work, and at Unisa in Pastoral Counselling and Urban Ministry. Such specialised programmes continue to include modules in Systematic Theology but, quite understandably, to a lesser extent. Programmes in theological education aimed at the ministries of the laity inside *and* outside Christian communities tend to be offered in forms other than an undergraduate degree programmes.

Curriculum

There are clearly several ways in which the curriculum for the field of Systematic Theology can be structured. From the data collected here it seems that at least the following possible ways may be identified:

- One traditional structure follows the format of the theological encyclopaedia. Under Systematic Theology may be included dogmatics, ethics, apologetics (a defence of the Christian faith in conversation with other thought systems), symbolics (a discussion of the creeds and confessions of the church), and poimenics (a discussion of “deviant” Christian theologies). Ecumenics (or ecumenical theology) may be added to this list. Under dogmatics the various loci of Christian doctrine may be listed, inviting reflection on the content and significance of doctrinal themes such as revelation, Scripture, faith God, creation, humanity, providence, sin, Christ, the Spirit, salvation, the church, the sacraments and Christian hope. In such an approach it would be ideal to include independent courses or course components on each of these aspects. However, under the constraints of a three year bachelors programme this is usually not possible.

- In response to this problem, it may also be possible to integrate the various topics in Systematic Theology with one another. One way of doing this is to follow a trinitarian structure, with modules on the doctrines of God, Christ and the Spirit. An introductory module and one on the church and the sacraments may be added to these. The point of departure for such an approach would not be the divisions of the academy, but the confessions of the Christian tradition. The advantage would be a better sense of integration of the content of Christian doctrine but it would not be possible to give as much attention to each theme. Within this approach contextual challenges may be addressed (e.g. by discussing feminist contributions when dealing with God the Father or by discussing evolution when dealing with creation theology), but continuity with the Christian tradition would tend to be dominant.
- It may also be possible to emphasise the ecclesial and denominational context of Systematic Theology in a more obvious way. In such a case one may offer modules on, for example, the creeds and confessions, Luther's catechisms, Calvin's institutes, Methodist theology and contemporary ecumenical theology. Such an approach is followed in ecumenical institutions where there is nevertheless a need to cater for the training of pastors in specific denominations.
- It is also possible to move away from a discussion of various doctrinal themes. At some universities only one or two modules that offer a survey of Christian doctrine are included in the curriculum. Instead, a stronger focus on the contextual nature of theology may be reflected in the curriculum. In such a case it may be possible to focus on the implications for theology of issues such as human reason and science, culture, worldviews, other religious traditions, societal problems, etc. This would allow for topical modules, for example on African theology, feminist theology, liberation theology and theology and the sciences. This would often be supplemented by an introductory module on theological method or theological hermeneutics.
- A combination of the second and fourth options may also be possible. The clearest example here is the curriculum of Unisa which does include modules on the doctrines of God, Christ and the Spirit under the rubric of faith studies but correlate each of these (following Tillich's style) with specific societal issues.
- A final approach may be to relate themes in Systematic Theology more strongly with other theological disciplines. The most prominent way of doing this is, is to focus on the needs of professional training for Christian ministry (following Schleiermacher's rationale for theological education).² One may for example start with theological reflection on questions that emerge from the ministry. In pastoral care, for example, issues of human suffering and death call for further reflection in the field of Systematic Theology. Likewise, church projects on mission and evangelism require clarity on the content of salvation. And Biblical preaching requires hermeneutical competence to relate the Biblical texts, the teaching of the church and the contemporary society with one another. It should be noted that modules that develop such integration are usually offered only at a fourth year level or beyond.

It should be clear that each of these approaches may have some advantages and disadvantages. The history, structure and ethos of a particular theological institution and the theological convictions of the staff (or former staff) will determine the way in which the curriculum is structured. It is perhaps not wise to offer a judgement on more or less

² See, *inter alia*, my essay "An ABC in theological education?" *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* (1997), 38:4, 349-361.

appropriate ways of structuring the curriculum. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to articulate the options, to compare the various ways, and to recognise the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

The names of the modules offered in the field of Systematic Theology at the various theological institutions are provided in the table below. Modules in ethics are not included for the limited purposes of this contribution.

Name	Degree	Credit system	Code	Modules	NQF credits
Africa University	B.Div. 3	33 34 32 credit hours	TST 101	Introduction to contextual theological thinking	10.8
			TST 202	Introduction to Christian doctrine	10.8
			TST 305	Contemporary African theology	10.8
			THC 303	Various electives	>36
				Introduction to ecumenical theology	10.8
Cornerstone Christian College	B.A. Christian Ministries	126 128 120	CS 112	Doctrine survey	6
			CS 212	Doctrine of God	8
			CS 242	Doctrines of humanity and church	8
			CS 314	Contemporary theology and ethics	12
			CS 344	Doctrine of Christ & Doctrine of Spirit	12
Fort Hare	B.Th. 3	384 NQF credits	TST 111	Survey of Christian Beliefs	16
			TST 121	Developing an empowerment theology	16
			TST 211	The source of human empowerment	16
			TST 221	Empowerment by hope	16
			TST 311	The locus of empowerment	16
			TST 321	Modern expressions of empowerment	16
			TST 322	The authority of empowerment	16
Justo Mwale	Dip.Th. 3 B.Th. 4	31 31 31 +36 credits	ST 1	Systematic Theology	9
			ST 2	Systematic Theology	9
			ST 3	Systematic Theology	9
			ST 4	Systematic Theology	9
				African Theology	9
				Modern Theology	9
				Reformed Identity Creeds and Confessions	6 6
Namibia	B.Th. 4		TCS 3111	Christian Studies: Encyclopaedia & issues	
			TCS 3112	Christian Studies: Dogma and Mission	
			TCS3222	Christian Doctrines (God, Church, and Revelation)	
			TCS 3322	Christian Doctrines: selected loci	
			TCS 3410	Church History and Doctrine in Namibia and Southern Africa	
			TCS 3420 TCS 3420	Christian Spirituality Research paper on a selected Christian Studies topic	
Natal	B.Th. 3	128 128 128 NQF	ST110	History, Truth and Worldviews	16
			ST 120	Introduction to Theology	16
			ST 210	Christian doctrine	16
			ST310	Christian doctrine (advanced)	16
			ST 330	African Theology	16
			ST320	Theology and Society	16
			ST 340	Special Focus (optional)	16
			ST 370	Lutheran Theology (optional)	16

North-West	B.Th. 3	128	DOGM211	Scripture and the doctrine of sin	16
		128	DOGM221	Christology and Eschatology	16
		128	DOGM311	The value of modern theologians for practical ministry	16
		NQF	DOGM321	The institutes of Calvin	8
Pretoria	B.A. Th. 3 B.A. B.Th. 4		SET 151	Introduction to dogmatics	6
			SET 153	Theology and anthropology	6
			SET 211	ST (for Baptists) Scripture and doctrine on sin	16
			SET 221	ST (for Baptists): Christology and eschatology	16
			SET 251/61	Christology and soteriology	8/10
			SET 254/64	Ecclesiology and eschatology	8/10
			SET 311	ST (for Baptists): Modern theologians & practical ministry	24
			SET 321 SET 351 SET 353/63	ST: The institutes of Calvin The modern theologians Twentieth century movements	12 12 12/15
Stellenbosch	B.Th. 4 B.TS. 3 as exit point	480 credits 360 credits	ST 114/NT	Introduction to theological hermeneutics	12
			ST 122	Christian views on the human condition	6
			ST 143	Christian values and virtues	6
			ST 222/NT	The doctrines of creation and providence	8
			ST 242	Christology and reconciliation	8
			ST 314	Ecclesiology sacramentology and eschatology	12
			ST 344/NT	Dogmatic themes: Soteriology	12
			ST 354 ST 422	Economic ethics and apologetics Contemporary theology	12 6
Unisa	B.Th. 3 With specialisations		TIC111-6	Reflections on faith	12
			TIC304-E	Faith, church and culture	12
			TIC307-H	Faith, Jesus and social change	12
			TIC309-K	Faith, The Spirit and the future	12
			TIC310-C	Faith, philosophy and science	12
			CMM302-U	God, creation and environment	12
			SCR308-8	Faith, theory and hermeneutics	12
United Church of Zambia Theological College	B.Th. 3 & Dip. Th. 3	120	E111	Introduction to theological thinking	7.5
		120	E211	African Christian theologies I	10
		120	E321	African Christian theologies II	10
		NQF	TS 223	The doctrine of God	10
			TS 312	The doctrine of Christ	10
			TS 313	Contextual theologies	10
			TS 322	The doctrine of the Holy Spirit	10
Western Cape	B.Th. 3	120	TS121b	Christian identity	7.5
		120	TS 213	Doctrine of God	10
		120	TS 312	Doctrine of Christ	10
			TS 313	Doctrine of the Holy Spirit	10
			TS 323	Doctrine of the church in ecumenical perspective	10

Teaching Methods

In my correspondence with various colleagues who teach Systematic Theology at an undergraduate degree level, I raised the following question: "Could you offer some reflections on your best teaching practices? How do you, for example, bring the traditional sources of Christian theology (the Bible, the Christian tradition/ecclesial praxis, the contemporary context/culture, human reason/intellectual challenges) into play in your

teaching? Where do you typically start? What do you find best to elicit discussion and understanding in the classroom context?" In response to this question, the following observations may be offered on *teaching* practices with regard to Systematic Theology:

- The identification of the four traditional sources of theology remains controversial and calls for further reflection on the ways in which they are related to one another. It is also debatable whether a *de iure* or *de facto* theological method may be constructed from these sources. Nevertheless, the four sources seem to be helpful to reflect on teaching practices in terms of curriculum planning, the construction of particular modules and classroom activities.
- Teaching strategies are probably as diverse as contemporary theology itself. Nevertheless, it seems that those who teach Systematic Theology are predisposed to give a certain priority to the Christian tradition, albeit that what is meant by "the tradition" may vary considerably: Western theology in general, a particular denominational theology (often Catholic, Lutheran or reformed theology), a very particular theological school (e.g. the dominant one where the lecturer studied) or more recent traditions such as ecumenical theology, Pentecostal theology, African theology, liberation theology or feminist theologies. Some teachers may continue to imbibe the convictions of their own traditions to their students. Some may do so polemically to defend their own tradition against rival positions. Some would legitimise such convictions through exegetical references or "proof texts". Some may consciously opt to offer students a stronger sense of direction because of a perceived confusion and lack of identity that characterise some (postmodern?) ecclesial contexts. Those who understand themselves as being in a period of transition from one tradition to another may, for a period of time, emphasise the need for social analysis, cultural description, worldviews, intellectual challenges or contemporary science. However, it seems that new theological traditions develop rather quickly so that students are sooner rather than later again encouraged to follow the approach of the dominant tradition at a particular institution. African theology, for example, may be promoted with the same missionary zeal as reformed orthodoxy was in earlier decades.
- These comments do not necessarily translate into teaching strategies employed in the classroom context. A wide variety of teaching techniques may be employed to develop basic academic skills (of close reading, writing, formulating relatively abstract thoughts in a clear, logical and coherent manner, constructing arguments, critical analysis) to stimulate intellectual virtues (critical thinking, curiosity, creativity, thoroughness, dedication, hard work, tidiness), to help students to gain basic knowledge, to gather new insights, and to understand themselves by understanding others. The correspondence from the informants gives ample evidence of the creativity that is alive and well amongst teachers in the field of systematic theology.
- Where contemporary experience is brought into play into theological education, the selection of relevant experiences is influenced if not determined by the dominant conversation partners of theology. David Tracy's distinction between the various publics of theology, namely the academy, the church and society, remains instructive here.³ Some modules continue to focus on the intellectual challenges posed by the Enlightenment, the academy and, especially, by the insights emerging from the various

³ See David Tracy, *The analogical imagination* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 1-50. See also the following essay by David Bosch, making use of Tracy's distinction: "The nature of theological education" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 77 (1991), 3-17.

sciences. Others are more concerned with the relevance of debates in Systematic Theology for ecclesial ministries. They reflect on questions that are derived from the ministry. Many others focus on societal challenges – a participatory political dispensation, economic justice, a sustainable society or equality and reciprocity between gender groups. More recently, an assessment of culture has become prominent through the retrieval of African culture in African theology.

Prescribed Texts

The choice of an appropriate textbook would normally be determined by the curriculum and by the outcomes stipulated for each module. It would be imprudent to formulate the module outcomes according to the format of a particular textbook. There are several factors that complicate the choice of an appropriate textbook in Systematic Theology:

- The most important problem is probably that textbooks of European and North American origin cannot and do not take the Southern African context into account in terms of the choice of conversation partners, problems addressed, examples used, geographical references, etc.
- The level of difficulty, the vocabulary used and the level of abstraction of the argument render some textbooks unsuitable for undergraduate teaching (theology is taught at a postgraduate level in many other countries).
- Some textbooks are not suitable for use in theological institutions where the student body and the ethos are thoroughly ecumenical in orientation.
- A number of textbooks have been published for use in South Africa, but some of these are by now outdated or out of print, published in Afrikaans only (e.g. the series by Durand and Jonker, the works by Heyns, Nürnberger's *Sistematiese Teologie*), not ecumenical in orientation, too limited in scope (e.g. De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio) or perhaps too extensive to use in a truncated curriculum (e.g. König's contributions). Other books focus on particular themes only and do not offer material that can be used in different modules in the curriculum (e.g. Gaybba's *The Spirit of love*).
- The price and availability of many American and British textbooks remain inhibiting factors.
- The table below indicates which textbooks are used by more than one theological institution in the Southern African region. Please note that the data collected here may not be entirely reliable since colleagues did not always answer this question in the same way.

A few observations may follow from this:

Berkhof, L	1979	<i>Introduction to Systematic Theology</i>	JM, UNAM
De Gruchy, JW & Villa-Vicencio, C	1994	<i>Doing theology in context</i>	UNAM, UP, UWC
Ford, D	1997	<i>The modern theologians</i>	JM, US, UWC
Gunton, CE	1997	<i>Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine</i>	SU, UWC
König, A & Maimela, S	1998	<i>Initiation into theology</i>	Various
McGrath, A	1994/7	<i>Christian theology: An introduction</i>	JM, Natal, UCZTC, UNAM, UP, UWC
McKim, D	1988	<i>Theological turning points</i>	UNAM, UWC
Migliore, DL	1991	<i>Faith seeking understanding</i>	AU, JM, Natal, UP, UWC
Mugambi, JNK	1984	<i>African theology: An introduction</i>	JM,
Oduyoye, MA	1995	<i>Hearing and knowing</i>	Natal,
Parratt, J	1995	<i>Reinventing Christianity</i>	AU, JM, Natal
Parrat, J	1997	<i>A reader in African Christian theology</i>	AU, JM, Natal
Pobee, John	1979	<i>Toward an African theology</i>	UCZTC
WCC	1991	<i>Confessing the one faith</i>	AU, UCZTC, UWC

- The most widely used textbooks remain ones published outside the Southern African context. Each of these textbooks has advantages and disadvantages. Alister McGrath's *Christian theology: An introduction* (various editions) is widely used because it serves as a thorough basic introduction. It is evangelical in orientation and does not address African themes. Daniel Migliore's *Faith seeking understanding* is well argued and well written, reformed and irenic in orientation, and sensitive to theological discourse outside the North Atlantic world. One of its shortcomings is that it is not extensive enough to use if several modules on Christian doctrine are included in the curriculum. It seems that Hendrikus Berkhof's *Christian faith* (1985) is no longer widely used. The essays in two other volumes, namely *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine* (1997), edited by Colin Gunton, and *Christian theology: An introduction to its traditions and tasks* (1985), edited by Peter Hodgson and Robert King, are written by experts on the various themes, but their dominant conversation partners remain other Western theologians (only). The volume *Confessing the one faith* (1991), published through the Faith and Order commission of the World Council of Churches, is helpful because of its ecumenical orientation, but needs to be supplemented by other textbooks.
- Of the textbooks published in the South African context, the volume *Doing theology in context: South African perspectives* (1994), edited by John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio is used in several theological institutions. However, the various chapters are again not extensive enough if various modules on Christian doctrine are included in the curriculum. Not all the authors responded to the contextual nature of theology in the same way; some focused more on the Christian tradition while other responded to specific intellectual or societal challenges without giving an overview of the history of Christian doctrine. Given the nature of contextual theology it will become outdated at some time. Adrio König and Simon Maimela's *Initiation into theology* (1998) is perhaps used more extensively at a postgraduate level and it does not discuss specific aspects of Christian doctrine. The Afrikaans text books by Jaap Durand, Johan Heyns and Willie Jonker are not used by institutions where English is the (only) language of

instruction. Klaus Nürnberger has produced but has never published course material in the field of Systematic Theology.

- Several theological institutions include a module or two on African theology in the curriculum. Although John Parrat's *Reinventing Christianity: African theology today* (1995) is used quite often in this regard, and although there is now a wealth of publications, none of these publications are used as a standard textbook. John Pobee's *Toward an African theology* (1979) is still being used but is perhaps outdated by now in the sense that it does not (and cannot) refer to developments in African theology over the last two decades.

The Production of Teaching Material: A Proposal

One may gather from the previous section that there is a need for a new textbook or perhaps a series of textbooks in the field of Systematic Theology that may be used in the Southern Africa context. Some colleagues have indicated a strong need in this regard in their correspondence. However, it is not at all clear what the format of such textbooks should be. As a result, some colleagues were more hesitant in their response. The differences in the curriculum of the various theological institutions indicate that their needs in this regard may well be different.

Despite these difficulties I wish to propose that such a series of textbooks should indeed be developed. In the remainder of this essay I will make some rather bold suggestions on the format and structure of such textbooks. This proposal is intended to elicit further discussion on the matter and to serve as an invitation for any interested colleagues to initiate and to participate in such a project.

Intended Users

It would obviously be important to obtain clarity on the intended users of such textbooks. The primary users may be persons planning a career in the ordained ministry (also the existing lay leadership). Most of these would be working in Christian communities in urban areas within the Southern African regions. Most of the intended users would come from Protestant denomination or denominations influenced by the Protestant tradition. In order to understand their own contexts it would be important to take the roots and fruits of Christian mission and of colonialism into account. The student groups (and often the congregations in which they will serve) will reflect the pluralist society which now characterises the Southern African region – including people of African, European and Indian descent. The intended user will therefore not necessarily work in a traditionalist rural African village. They will have to be able to relate Africa's cultural and religious heritage with the history of the Christian tradition and with the socio-economic forces of globalisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and a consumer culture (the "American way of life").

Scope of the Textbooks

No series of textbooks would address the needs that follow from the curriculum of all the theological institutions covered in this survey. Following my comments above, I propose that the Christian tradition should serve as the starting point to plan the scope of the series. The Christian tradition is understood here in terms of the larger history of Christianity which spread from Jerusalem in all directions. This is a tradition in which the Nicene Creed has played a crucial role in structuring the content of Christian doctrine. If this tradition is taken into account, a series of textbooks may well follow a trinitarian structure. I would suggest that one may consider the following five or six volumes:

- An introduction to Christian theology (including methodological aspects);
- The doctrine of God;

- The doctrine of Christ;
- The doctrine of the Holy Spirit;
- The doctrine of the church (which could form part of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit but which may require a volume on its own);
- Christian hope (which, again, could form part of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit but which may require a volume on its own).

I propose that a number of themes be identified for each of these volumes. A chapter may be devoted to each of these themes. The volume on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit may, for example, include chapters of the following themes:

- God's Spirit in the Old Testament;
- The Spirit and Jesus Christ;
- The Holy Spirit as the third person of the triune God (including the filioque debate);
- The Spirit as the Giver of Life;
- The Spirit and salvation (justification, sanctification);
- The Spirit and God's Word;
- The Spirit and the church (could be a separate volume);
- The Spirit and Christian ministries;
- The Spirit and Christian hope (could be a separate volume);
- Pneumatological perspectives in, for example, reformed, Pentecostal, ecumenical, African, liberation, feminist and ecological theologies.

Format of Each Chapter

It may be difficult to develop a consistent and generally acceptable textbook if these themes are treated by individual authors in the normal format of a discursive discussion. Instead, I propose that each chapter may be structured in the format of a collage. The chapter may therefore read more like a newspaper than a sustained argument. Although each chapter may be different (following the particular theme of the chapter), the following possible sections may be incorporated in such a collage:

- Ecclesial reflection: How do questions on the particular ministry emerge from Christian ministries?
- Biblical roots: Which biblical texts are typically discussed in relation to the particular theme;
- Markers in the Christian tradition: What are the most important developments in the history of Christian doctrine on the particular theme? Who are the key figures?
- Cartoons, stories, examples, pictures, and other graphic material may be incorporated throughout the text in the format of a collage.
- Contemporary challenges: What contemporary debates have emerged on the particular theme, for example with reference to ethical issues, distortions in Christian theology, cultural concerns, intellectual problems, and scientific developments?
- Guidelines: Can we offer some guidelines to students without being too prescriptive? What are the extremes that have to be avoided?
- Ecclesial appropriations: What is the significance of this discussion for the Christian ministry?
- For further reading: A number of references to discussions of the theme in other sources that would be available and accessible to students at an undergraduate level.
- Questions for discussion and examination.

Strategies for implementation

The development of such a series of textbooks would be a major project with several logistical, financial and administrative obstacles. I propose that the project be launched at a workshop which may be held in 2006. Before this workshop a sponsor (for the workshop) and a potential publisher may have to be found. A team of potential collaborators will have to be identified too. I would suggest that the persons on the team should include persons with considerable teaching experience in the Southern African context. They should preferably have obtained doctoral qualifications. Considerations of gender, race and denominational background have to be taken into account for obvious reasons. The team should preferably not be smaller than 6 and not be much larger than 12 persons.

The purpose of the workshop will be to discuss the scope and format of the project in detail and to do planning for the project. At the workshop finality should be reached on the various volumes that will be produced and, as far as possible, also on the themes that will be addressed in each volume. An editor for each of the volumes should be identified.

After the workshop, the following procedure may be followed to make progress on each of the volumes:

- An editor (not an author) for each of the identified themes in a particular volume is appointed.
- The editor is responsible to prepare a very rough or skeleton draft of the chapter.
- This rough draft is circulated electronically to all the other members of the team.
- Each member of the team would then offer comments on the draft as well as additions based on the member's own teaching experience. The additions may come in the form of examples, stories, teaching aids, perspectives, references for further reading, etc. In principle, the additions should be of such a nature that it may become part of the collage in a particular chapter.
- The editor of the chapter will then incorporate these comments and suggestions into a pre-final draft that is distributed for a final round of comments.
- In this way all the chapters will be written by the whole team but with particular inputs from the specific editor.
- An agreement with the publishers will be necessary to deal with proofreading, formatting and page layout.
- Each chapter may eventually be published in the name of the editor with acknowledgement of the contributions of other members of the team.

Conclusion

The above comments on matters of curriculum, teaching strategies and teaching material relating to Systematic Theology will hopefully elicit further discussion and debate. It is simply necessary to reflect on our teaching practices from time to time. We need to draw on our collective wisdom in order to serve church and society in the Southern Africa region as well as we can. We dare not be complacent. Theological education, at least at university level, remains under considerable threat. We are faced with opportunities, challenges and obstacles that can only be addressed adequately together.