9. Theological School

9.1 Historical background

9.1.1 The early years

In May 1869, the fourth General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa gathered in a small church building in Potchefstroom and took a decision with the help of the Lord to erect a Theological School. This "little old church" stands next to the current church building of the Reformed Church Potchefstroom in Church Street.

This was 10 years after the founding of the first Reformed Church in Rustenburg in 1859. Only 14 churches with four reverends made the decision during this Synod. It was a decision that was taken in faith. They had no hope of financial support from the authorities, there were few churches and no infrastructure existed. On the other hand they were convinced that the churches themselves had the responsibility to take care of the training of reverends, independent of the authorities.

The decision taken, is witness of exceptional vision seeing as the meeting was not only thinking of the training of ministers for the new church community. The decision states that prospective teachers and students with their eye on other professions could also be trained there.

Historians agree that the year 1869 should be viewed as the year of the birth of both the Theological School as well as the PU for CHE. Out of the Theological School, the University over time grew to self-reliance. From the founding of the Reformed Churches in South Africa on 11 February 1859 it was clear that provision should be made for the need for reverends. In his proposed church order, which he had already designed and prepared before the founding of the churches at Rustenburg, rev. Dirk Postma made a provision that the issue of the training of reverends needed to be addressed. He ensured that the issue was put on the agenda of the first church meetings of 1862.

Initially, various ministers of the “Christelike Afgeskeie Gereformeerde Kerk” in the Netherlands were called, but only rev. J. Beijer accepted. The only option was to start with their own training. Thus the issue of the training of reverends was given serious attention at the Synod of Reddersburg in 1862.

At the first two Synods in 1862 and in 1863 it was decided that the two reverends, namely rev. D. Postma and rev. J. Beijer would undertake the training privately.

The need for the establishment of a theological school grew over the years and the churches started supporting the idea all the more until finally, in 1869, the courageous decision was taken in faith that a theological school must be erected in Burgersdorp. The Theological School was finally festively opened in Burgersdorp over the weekend of 26-29 November 1869.

9.1.2 Theological School in Burgersdorp

The churches and the Curators of the young school placed a high premium on the science/scientific nature of the teaching and, for example, decided that the theological course must correspond with that of the Theological School of the “Christelike Afgeskeie Gereformeerde Kerk” in the Netherlands.

According to the decisions of the Synod of 1869, in addition to their ministry in the town of Burgersdorp, rev. Postma and rev. Jan Lion-Cachet also conducted the training of the students in the early years.

The years 1873 and 1876 are known as a time of reorganization of the School. In this period the need for pre-training for the purposes of theological studies and the ideal of a preparatory institution at the School became prominent. Therefore, in 1873, it was decided that an entrance exam must be imported. In 1876 it was decided to start their own literary department. Prof. Dirk Postma was formally appointed professor of the School, but he did not have the boldness to accept. His son, P. Postma, was appointed as first literary professor. The Synod connected the School, which at that time was particularly connected to the Reformed Church Burgersdorp, to all the churches.

In the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century matric was set as an admission requirement. Thereafter the students had to complete the literary study in one or two years before they were allowed to the theological studies. In 1885 it was decided that the theological study as a rule would last three years.

In 1879, after the Synod called him again, rev. Dirk Postma finally decided to accept his appointment as professor. It was his privilege to consecutively work together with three of his sons who were responsible for the literary study, namely P. Postma, M. Postma and S. Postma. When Prof. Dirk Postma died in 1890, it was the end of a specific period.

After the death of prof. Postma, rev. Jan Lion-Cachet was named as professor of theology in 1984. This was in an era when the Afrikaners in Burgersdorp actively became involved in the struggle for the preservation of the Dutch language and culture as opposed to the tendency to anglicise.

Prof. Lion-Cachet, in addition to his theological and ecclesiastical responsibilities, also became well known as a fierce advocate for Afrikaans. Through his close cooperation with the rev. SJ du Toit of Paarl and the resulting special relationship with the "Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging" in Paarl, the young JD du Toit was introduced to Prof. Lion-Cachet. Through his doing, JD du Toit became a member of the Reformed Church Burgersdorp.

The Second Boer War (1899-1902) severely disrupted the church life, as well as the Theological School. The students of the Transvaal and Free State were called to the commandos and during the war the school was closed for long periods at a time. The first Synod after the war gathered in 1904 and important decisions about the future of the School would have to be taken.

During the period of 1869 to 1904, about 120 students studied here for shorter or longer periods, but only 30 students completed the study and became reverends.

During the years of war, JD du Toit and Ferdinand Postma studied at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam. They were imbued with new courage, and convinced that the school should be moved to a different place with a different environment. With the advent of the Synod of 1904 the young Dr. JD du Toit was the new reverend of Potchefstroom and he was ready to make suggestions about the school's future.

9.1.3 The Theological School in Potchefstroom

9.1.3.1 The period 1905-1919

At the Synod of Middelburg (Cape) in April 1904 the surprising decision was taken, on a proposal by Dr. JD du Toit, to move the Theological School to Potchefstroom. Other places such as Pretoria, Middelburg (Cape), and especially Steynsburg were considered, but Dr. JD du Toit, in collaboration with his brother-in-law, Rev. P. Postma of Pretoria, had already been negotiating with the congregations in the Transvaal and the city council of Potchefstroom and his proposal included an offer of 3010 pounds cash and enough land for a building complex - so the proposal was gratefully accepted.

The Theological School was opened in Potchefstroom in February 1905 where a boarding house and school building had already been erected. During his opening speech, Rev. P. Postma, as Chairman of the Curatorium, among others said that the reformed principle should not only govern the theology but all of science.

Ferdinand Postma, who was confirmed as professor in 1904, would from then on devote his life to the Literary Department. He made sure that the preparatory education towards theology, started with a preparation for the matriculation. Under his leadership, the Curatorium in 1905 decided to make the preparatory phase part of the Theological School, and set up a separate preparatory school for the juniors (std. 4-7). The school, with the motto *fac et spera*, opened in 1907 with seven pupils. This “CNO” school was taken over by the Transvaal Provincial Administration in 1915 as the Potchefstroom Gymnasium.
Ferdinand Postma, who was head of the Literary Department, interrupted his lecturing for about two years (1912-1914) to complete his doctorate at the Vrije Universiteit and resumes his work in 1914.

In 1911 JD du Toit succeeded Cachet as professor of theology, and in 1914 Dr. SO Los from the Netherlands was called as second professor of theology. Thus, in 1914 there were three doctors working at the Theological School with its Literary Department. This indeed ushered in a new phase. The science could henceforth be served all the better.

During the years 1916-1919, the educational situation in the country developed in such a way that the Literary Department was severed from the Theological School and its ties to the church in 1919, to exist as the Potchefstroom University College, legally without the Christian character. This was mainly due to the conscience clause of the University Act of 1916.

The ideal of J. D. du Toit and F. Postma of a free university based on a Christian foundation for South Africa following in the footsteps of the *Vrije Universiteit* of Amsterdam would not be reached so soon.

9.1.3.2 The period 1919-1951

From 1919 the Theological School and the University College (later the PU for CHE) exists independently alongside each other. The Curators, however, fought with the Board of the College for a full-fledged Christian University.

In 1921 the institution is recognized by the state as a constituent college of the University of South Africa and incorporated into it. In 1933, the state gives legal recognition to the Christian character of the PUK, and only in 1950 is the university legally recognized as a full-fledged and autonomous university, namely as the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

A unique bond and relationship exists between the Theological School and PU for CHE as two independent institutions. Already in 1920 the Council of the PUK and the Curatorium decided on mutual representation on the Board of the PUK and the Senate of the Theological School.

Agreement between the University and the Theological School

In 1945 a contractual agreement was signed between the Curatorium of the Theological School and the University. This agreement has since often been amended according to the demand of circumstances.

From 1922 there was a Department of Theology at the PUK, and since 1930 a Faculty of Theology that practices the theology as science exists.

9.1.3.3 The period 1951-1994

The period from 1951-1994 can be seen as a time of growth and consolidation. The Theological School and the Faculty of Theology had grown, reached a proper place in national and international context, had more professors and had developed an own Reformed theology.

In 1969 the PU for CHE and the Theological School celebrated their centenary as sister institutions, and in 1994 the 125th anniversary was festively celebrated. The year 1994 again saw the end of a particular phase after the Synod of 1994 had taken important decisions about the future of theological training.

9.1.3.4 The period after 1994: unification of theological training

In 1994, the National Synods of Potchefstroom, Midlands and Soutpansberg agreed that the theological training at the schools in Potchefstroom, Hammanskraal and at the Theological School Heidelberg in Vendaland would be unit into one theological school in Potchefstroom.

The theological training of students speaking African languages for the ministry has its own history. It began in 1956 when theological training was offered in Dube (now Soweto). In 1962 this training was moved to Hammanskraal and expanded in such a way that in 1987 an agreement was made with the PU for CHE for the recognition of the academic training and for which the degrees BA and Th.B. were awarded by the PU for CHE.

Since 1995 the training takes place at the Theological School at Potchefstroom, and the composition of the Curatorium is amended so that all churches who have an interested in this training is represented.

9.1.3.5 The building complex

The Theological School currently uses a third building in Potchefstroom; the first (in Molen Street) was erected in 1905, the second (in Borcherd Street, known as the Old Theological School) in 1922 and the third (between Van der Hoff Road and Molen Street and right across from the second building) in 1951. The current building complex forms part of the church building of the Reformed Church Potchefstroom North, and on the east side it has the motif of the wall of the reformation in Geneva. The well-stocked library, with its own church archives, was appropriately named after prof. Jan Lion-Cachet, and is linked to the Ferdinand Postma Library of the PU for CHE.

To the south-east of the grounds currently stands the monument commemorating the theological students who died in the Second Boer War (1899-1902).
After the unification of the different theological schools the student numbers increased so much that the facilities of the "Old Theological School" was used again.

9.1.3.6 Perspective

With the unification of theological training a sound foundation was laid for future church communion across cultural and language barriers. Furthermore, the process of unity in theological training has not been completed, since planning is currently being done and discussions are being waged with other theological in-service training centres regarding a way in which the training and supervision can be structured at these centres. These discussions are still ongoing.

The Faculty of Theology of the NWU and the Theological School have on the one hand distinct goals and respective ties with two different institutions, namely with the NWU and the Curatorium, and on the other hand they are intertwined and dependent on each other in respect of the courses and activities.

The agreement between the Faculty of Theology and the Theological School is to not practice different types of theology, but to support each other and serve the science and the churches together.

By means of telematic training and other opportunities that are being unlocked through the development of technology, the Faculty of Theology has been for some time been positioning itself to also be of service to other institutions in South Africa, Africa, Europe and the rest of the world.

The Theological School, independently of the Faculty, also used the opportunity to make an agreement with the theological training school in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the *Andrew Jumper Post Graduate Centre* (AJPGC).

9.2 Prospectus

The revised prospectus is available electronically from the registrar of the TSP. The prospectus provides all information about the Theological School, curatorium, senate, professors and students.

9.3 Agreement with the NWU – available on request – registrar TSP

9.4 Curators

9.4.1 Management of the Theological School

The Theological School was established by the Reformed Church in South Africa and is managed, maintained and cared for by the same churches.
The churches assigns the management and supervision over the service of training that is done by professors at the school to a curatorium.

9.4.2 Essence of the curatorium

The curatorium is a meeting of elected and proxy rulers or caretakers of the churches with regard to minister training and that which is directly related thereto. This assembly rests on the principle of a combination of churches that meet for the specific and limited purpose of training of ministers of the Word. As such, the curatorium functions as a synodus contracta and it performs a particular church government task with the purpose of the provision for, the care of and supervision of the service of minister training.

9.4.3 Composition of the curatorium

The curatorium is composed in the following way:

9.4.3.1 In the year prior to a General Synod, the churches each elect a number of ministers with their secundi (as determined by the General Synod) for a period of three years, by means of the various Regional Synods or authorised church meetings.

9.4.3.2 Each such church meeting provides the elected curators of a credential letter in terms of CO, art 33 in which the limited governing orders as members of the curatorium are defined.

9.5 Church Order, art 19

It is of utmost importance for the churches in the denomination that there are sufficient ministers for the ministry of God's Word. A shortage of ministers is understandably detrimental to the spiritual growth of the members, while it puts an additional burden on the serving ministers.

The churches also have a responsibility to financially support theological students. Therefore the churches established bursary funds of which the "Fund for Theological Students" is the most important; local churches contributed to this Bursary Fund through collections during worship services. Help from this Fund is handled by a commission for financial support (CFS) according to a fixed set of rules. Bursaries are given to students who apply for it only for registration fees, tuition fees, and if funds allow, for a book allowance.

9.6 Admission to theological study

Before a prospective student is admitted to the preparatory and theological studies, he must meet certain requirements.

9.6.1 Requirements for admission to theological study

9.6.1.1 A student who intends to study theology with the purpose of serving as a reverend in a Reformed Church must give notice of their intention to the Curatorium during the preceding year and report to the Curatorium by appointment. This rule is applicable to all students - those who wish to complete Candidates 1-4 at the TSP or at another institution.

9.6.1.2 The student submits a prescribed application form and a prescribed medical certificate as well as a confidential report from the reverend of the congregation where he is a member, in respect of the background of the student's life. The necessary forms are available from the Registrar.

9.6.1.3 In respect of the academic requirements the student must meet the requirements determined by the University and applied in consultation with the curatorium.

9.6.1.4 Students who report to the Curators are evaluated by means of psychometric tests at the NWU, pastoral discussion and other requirements as may be determined by the curatorium from time to time.

9.6.1.5 The first four years of the Candidate Study is a trial period for the competence and suitability of the student to act as pastor and teacher, and he is closely monitored.

10.1.6.6 The curatorium has the right to manage the admission of students to the Theological School in accordance with the Church Order and relevant provisions of the GKSA.

10.1.6.7 Students who complete the candidate 1-4 at other institutions, with the permission of the curators, report to the TSP upon completion of the study for a *colloquium doctum*. This *colloquium* is an assessment of an applicant's knowledge and insight with a view to determine whether the applicant can continue with the candidates 5-7. The senate makes a recommendation on (i) whether the applicant can enrol for candidates 5-7; (ii) what the applicant can do to improve his knowledge and insight with a view to enrol for the candidates 5-7.

10.1.6.8 For students who have finished their complete studies at another institution, the following applies:

1. Students who report to the curators are evaluated by means of psychometric tests, interviews and other requirements that apply at present.
2. An assessment is based on the documents to be submitted, including an evaluation from the institution(s) where the documents were obtained.
3. The applicants report to the TSP for a *colloquium doctum*. The purpose of this *colloquium* is to determine whether the person's knowledge is up to standard for obtaining the candidate certificate. Following the outcome of the *colloquium* the senate finds that the student can acquire the candidate certificate or makes further recommendations regarding the person to the curators.

Throughout the entire study period the curatorium and the lecturers oversee the student's progress, his lifestyle and his competence and suitability to later be admitted as minister.

9.7 Bequests / Donations

Form for bequests to the Theological Student Fund

Everyone who has the interests of the Theological School at heart are kindly asked to keep the Theological Student Fund of the Theological School in mind in their testamentary disposition. The larger the fund grows, the more interest it produces and in the same proportions the Theological School becomes more independent where its finances are concerned.

If the will still has to be drawn up, consider bequeathing the legacy to The Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Theological Student Fund of the Theological School.

If an already established will provides for the subsequent addition of codicils, the bequest can be done as follows:

"By power of the clause reservator contained in my (our) said will, I (we) now hereby bequeath to: The Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Theological Student Fund of the Theological School the sum of ....; my farm .....; my erf at .....;

If an already established will does not allow for later codicils, it is better to draw up a new will where the bequest to the Theological Student Fund is stated directly.

Financial contributions can be made at any time and are handled and managed by the Administration Bureau.

9.8 Jan Lion-Cachet Library

The Jan Lion-Cachet Library, or simply the Theological Library, occupies most of the southern wing of the Theological School Building. Prof Jan Lion-Cachet was the first librarian. The library serves as a branch of the Ferdinand Postma Library of the NWU.

This is a subject-library and library materials mainly cover the subjects offered at the School of Theology, such as, inter alia, Ethics, Dogmatics, Missiology, Church History, Practical Theology, Greek and Hebrew. Books are recommended by subject lecturers and ordered through the Ferdinand Postma Library. Funds for this comes partly from the GKSA and partly from the Ferdinand Postma Library. Sometimes the book supply is supplemented by donations from e.g. old professors, retired ministers or church members. The library also has a good reference collection such as, inter alia, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, commentaries, Bibles, Acta of the Synod, yearbooks, etc.

For those who want to keep abreast of the news, there are daily newspapers in English, Afrikaans and Dutch.

To unlock all this information, there is a computerized catalogue called Ferdikat. In here every book and magazine as well as all other library materials has its own record. Search criteria such as author, title and subject make it easy to get to a specific source. Other databases that are regularly used here by users are:
Repertory/Register/Catalogue/Index of South African journal articles (RSAT), "In u Lig", Publications of the GKSA ("Die Kerkblad", "Vroueblad", and the "Almanak"), "In die Skriflig", Acta of the Synod).

To find a magazine article in a foreign magazine, there is the database for theology from Religious and Theological Abstracts (R&TA) and ATLA (American Theological Library Association). Furthermore, users can also obtain information on the Ferdinand Postma Library's website for theology, such as, inter alia, electronic magazines, local databases which includes the Joint Catalogue of Theses and Dissertations (GKPV), a list of accredited journals, SABINET etc. Through the www addresses the user also gets access to international websites, such as AlphaSearch.

Who uses the Jan Lion-Cachet Library? The majority of users are lecturers and students of the Theological School. Reformed ministers, ministers from other churches in the area, and lecturers of the accredited theological institutions also use the library.

9.8.1 Ownership of Jan Lion-Cachet Library

Synod 2009 (Acta 2009:289, 2.6) approved the following recommendation: The Synod decided that the ownership of the Jan Lion-Cachet Library is again explicitly included in the Rules of the Administrative Bureau.