



# INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE  
TO PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS WORLDWIDE

Newsletter

[www.pro-rege.net](http://www.pro-rege.net)

Bristol, VA – December/2016

*"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."*

(1 Timothy 3:16 ESV)

## Confessions of Faith and Christian Liberty

*Pastor Pieter K. Meijer*

**Is there tension between adopting a Confession of Faith and enjoying Christian liberty?** I have perceived such tension among certain groups of Evangelicals. The most radical position among them holds that Christ's church doesn't even need written confessions of faith. Others do not attribute much value to confessional documents, arguing that they can threaten Christian liberty.

### *Liberty*

The sense of freedom is strong among us human beings. This sense can be considered to be a gift of God. This was evident in the former Soviet Union. In spite of decades of atheistic communist propaganda and severe repression of the Christian faith, the flame of this faith, including its longing for liberty, remained alive.

Without a doubt, the longing for freedom also has a perverted side to it. Genesis 3 demonstrates that the gift of true liberty was rejected and exchanged for rebellion against God.

Many philosophies have reinforced this rebellion, but thanks be to God, this evil false sense of freedom has not been able to eradicate true freedom.

### *Christian Freedom and the Reformation*

How precious this true liberty is for the soul and man's whole life! The Apostle Paul is an able messenger of this biblical truth, especially in his letter to the Galatians.

It is through Christ the Redeemer and Liberator that we can live as freed beings, enjoying true liberty. It is this freedom that we call Christian liberty.

The 16th century Reformers fought for it, fighting for a free church and a free conscience. It was a struggle against every form of domination, whether by the Pope or absolute princes, by humanistic or libertine thought or by revolutionary movements (among which were the Anabaptists of the day).

Our Reformed brothers of that time, dedicated as they were to Christian liberty, produced many confessions of faith. For them, there was no tension at all between confessional documents and Christian liberty.

### *Tension?*

Let's return to the beginning of this article, where we noted that there are believers who consider written confessions of faith to be a threat to Christian liberty. They think that freedom of expression in the church and especially the freedom of preachers and professors of theology, is restricted when churches adopt confessions of faith as their pattern for instruction.

It is interesting to observe that our Reformed forefathers of the 16th and 17th centuries did not hesitate to adopt confessions of faith, even though they had just left the papal house of slavery with its many documents, codes, and regulations.

It is relevant for us today to raise the question, "Why did the Presbyterian and Reformed churches of that time not feel a tension between Christian liberty (in the Pauline sense) and maintaining confessional standards by means of confessions of faith?"

### *Biblical Basis for Adopting and Maintaining Confessions of Faith*

As I see it, part of the answer to the question raised above is as follows. Orthodox Reformed churches always

confessed that the Bible is sufficient for all salvific purposes. We do not need confessions in order to add to the Bible and much less in order to be a substitute for it.

Confessions of faith are summaries of the biblical message and the Christian faith, nothing more and nothing less. Summaries do not replace their complete and original source, the Bible itself.

Consider, for example, what the Belgic Confession affirms in Article 7, "We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it." The Reformed conviction, then, is that confessions of faith do not intend to, nor can they, ever restrict or substitute the Scriptures. This conviction also directs the teaching of the IRTC.

a) There is a second part to the answer to the question, namely, that precisely the Bible itself stimulates and invites us to confess our faith in the midst of the world. Read Matthew 10:32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 3:1, 4:14 and 10:23; 1 Peter 3:15, etc.

We can go further and affirm that the Bible itself contains passages of confessional character! The following are some strong examples: 1 Corinthians 8:6 and 15:3-8; 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 3:16.

It was precisely biblical teaching that led our Reformed fathers to formulate and write confessions of faith. Having and maintaining written confessions does not hurt Christian liberty. It is this liberty that permits churches today to also write confessions of faith, if necessary and useful.



### **Author Description and Testimony**

**Rev. Pieter Koenraad Meijer**, aged 69 years, lives in the Netherlands. He is an emeritus minister of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), having entered the ministry of the Word in 1973. He also served the Canadian Reformed Churches from 1978 to 1995 as a missionary in the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco, Brazil.

*Rev. Meijer: "I have been involved with the cause of the IRTC for years as a member of the Board of Directors and since the beginning of this year I serve as the chairman of this board. I am also an instructor and in this capacity I interact with students from a variety of countries, dedicated brothers and sisters who are committed to Christ and his church. For me it has been a joy to be part of this community. It is my prayer that the IRTC may continue to be a capable and effective instrument for forming workers for the church of the Lord."*

## Ministerial Activities of the Faculty

In this article, we bring a short report of the ministerial activities of one of our newest instructors, Pastor Douglas Edward Leaman. He works as the instructor of the Biblical Counseling course.



This semester there was a Biblical Counseling Conference in Recife, Brazil, on “Family, Sex and Society”. It was a setting that provided a great opportunity to share a Biblical view of sexuality. His lecture was on parents teaching their children what the Word of God has to say on both the blessings and the warnings of sexuality. He encouraged parents to pray for the purity of their children and to protect their children from sexual sin as they are enabled.

Please pray for Pastor Douglas as he has been traveling with his family in the United States visiting family and churches. Please pray that he may be able to continue his Doctor of Ministry program through RTS and Andrew Jumper, since he fell a bit behind because of this busy semester. Also, that he can make wise ministry decisions for the near future and that he will be in the place where God will be pleased to most use him for His glory.

## Looking Forward to 2017 with A Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer

*Ralph Boersema, President*

Under the gracious care of our Lord, this year has been a very busy one for the IRTC. We have made great progress in improving our student management system and e-learning environment, supported by a variety of complementary services. Twenty-nine courses were taught, with a total of 62 students enrolled in at least one of them. Of these, 50 were from Brazil, 7 from Mozambique and 1 each from Japan, Canada, Italy, Albania, and the Cape Verde Islands. Of these students 27 were new in 2016. We have also had some three more applications by students who hope to begin studies in 2017. Compared to recent years, the size of the student body has remained about the same, while the number of courses taught was significantly higher.

We thank the Lord for leading us to important daily accomplishments for the Kingdom. Especially, we thank him for providing dedicated personnel for our administrative and teaching teams. We currently have three vice presidents, a registrar, a treasurer, an IT, and an editor for our newsletters, along with 25 instructors. All provide their services on a part-time basis, in addition to already busy schedules. Among the instructors, a number teach only one course for us, while some teach even four a year. All their contributions are very precious! Speaking of part-time, all of our students also study part-time and they, too, already have very busy lives. Our studies are by no means intended only for part-time students, but they are certainly designed for such students, who otherwise might have no good option.

We are inviting the IRTC community to unite in thanksgiving for these many mercies and in prayer to God for blessings over the College in 2017 and our preparations for the new academic year. We are designating December 15, 2016 as a day on which we would particularly seek to give ourselves to such prayer. Would you join us? Our online infrastructure has greatly expanded in 2016 along with the necessary administrative staff and we are now so much better equipped to offer a greater number of courses annually and to receive more students. Please pray that the Lord would bless these expansions and grant that he would raise up many more students among those who otherwise do not have options available for post-secondary Christian studies.

As part of our preparations for continuing our educational and missionary ministry in 2017, it is important that our financial basis be strengthened. We particularly pray that the Lord may grant that our fund raising goal for 2016 may be attained by December 31. Daniel Portela describes our current financial situation in the article below. We were greatly blessed this year by very expressive donations from some current supporters and give much praise and thanks for them. Please pray that our God may also raise up new supporters. It would be a great blessing if the Almighty Provider would broaden the base of financial supporters for the IRTC, as well as grow the number of spiritual and prayer supporters.

## Financial Status - November 2016

*Daniel Portela, Executive Vice President*

**IMPORTANT NOTICE** – We need your help!

We are **\$23,195,18 short** of donations in our 2016 target and this is our last chance to try and reach the IRTC’s fundraising goal!

This year we have invested significantly in our new online educational platform, we have offered a greater number of courses, and recruited several qualified individuals to assist in our endeavours. As a result we have increased expenses aiming at improving our students’ educational experience as well as setting up the IRTC for long term success.

Throughout the year we have indeed tasted of the Lord’s faithfulness and also been amazed at the generosity of some of our brothers and sisters who have donated. We are certain that God will raise others to help support this ministry.

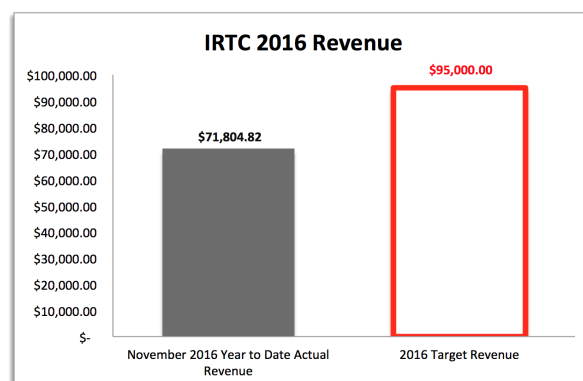
This is your chance to be a part of the group who supports the IRTC!

Please visit the “Donations” page on our website ([www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm](http://www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm)), and there you will find all the information necessary for making your contribution in the USA. Canadian donors, please make your donations at [www.irtcsociety.ca](http://www.irtcsociety.ca).

In addition, here are other ways you can support the IRTC:

1. Pray for the IRTC, its teachers, leadership, students, and financial situation
2. Refer prospective students to the IRTC
3. Share this newsletter to disseminate the work and the needs of the IRTC

In Him who provides for us all.



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