



INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE
TO PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS WORLDWIDE

Newsletter

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"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15 ESV)

The Divine High Priest

Prof. Breno Macedo

How good it is to have confidence in the abilities of someone who offers you professional services.

Have you thought, for example, of being in a hospital, getting ready for a major surgery, and finding out moments before the procedure that the person who will do it is a resident? No way would we go into the surgery room. It is our life that is at stake and we need to have confidence that those responsible for it are capable of fulfilling the difficult and dangerous task at hand. Or, imagine a man who was converted last month now wanting to be the pastor of your church.

If we are concerned about preserving our physical life, then there is nothing more natural than having concern for the care of our soul. For this, we need not only a good pastor for our church, but we need a Person who can save us from our sins. We want to feel confident that Someone who is absolutely competent will take care of things. This need is absolutely legitimate and needs to be met. Who can take care of it? Who is qualified for this? In Hebrews 5:1-10, the inspired writer seeks to confirm to his readers that their souls are secure only in Christ. To exchange Him for anything else, for any other priest, is to exchange the divine for the human, the superior for the inferior, is to put their existence and salvation at risk. The teaching of this Biblical passage is very simple and urgent: Christ is our divine High Priest, who offered a perfect sacrifice for us and helps us in the hour of need.

Christian Jews were in turmoil in the first century. Herod the Great had finished temple renovations, and installed a

new priesthood. There were Christians who were tempted to abandon the infinitely superior and spiritual priesthood of Christ. The writer seeks to dissuade them from this mortal leap by demonstrating that no one can be a priest as Christ is. We have the same problem, don't we? It is enough that when complicated situations arise we think that Christ is not enough. With temptations, sins, family, health problems, or when everything goes wrong at work, we are led to think that Christ is not enough and we seek another "priest". Let us see why such an attitude is great foolishness.

First, to be a high priest, it was necessary that he would be one of the people (v.1). In the ancient covenant the priests were chosen from among the Hebrew people who had come out of the Egyptian captivity. The reason for this was simple: the priest represented his own people before God. None of the Hebrews could directly access the presence of the Most High. They all needed a priest who had the same nature as they did. Further on in the text, the writer reminds his readers that, in His incarnation, Christ, the wonderful God, took upon Himself a human nature just like theirs, thus becoming the divine High Priest superior to any other (v.7a).

After demonstrating that, by divine provision, Christ perfectly represents the human race before the Almighty, the writer recalls that in the old covenant the priest needed to sympathize with the ones he represented (v.2). He needed to experience the same difficulties and weaknesses so that he could sympathize with those who sought his

mediation. Therefore, Christ is the perfect High Priest that we need, having experienced physical and spiritual suffering similar to ours. Christ knows what it is like to suffer and therefore knows how to comfort and care for His own (vv.7b and 8).

Finally, the writer reminds us that the high priest was the one who offered the sacrifice for the men he had been divinely called to serve (verses 3-4, 5-6). This is an aspect of special importance since, instead of the flesh of animals, Christ offered His own flesh, becoming the "author of salvation" to those who come to Him (v.9). And far from receiving a human commission like that of Herod, it was God Himself who commissioned Him for His mission (v.10). Christ, indeed, can take us to the presence of the Most High, because it is only He who has this designation.

Do you see how foolish it is to leave our trust in Christ and seek our spiritual security in other things? Career, marriage, friendships, fame, wealth, health and well-being are human securities that may even take care of our bodies but do not satisfy our souls. They are but "new priests" appointed by the "modern Herods". Let us not lose our focus of the Lord Jesus, only He can satisfy us and take care of our souls. He is fully able to do this.

To always point us to the only real Security of the soul, our churches need pastors and leaders who live in the safety of Christ and who know how to faithfully offer the living Word that leads us to the Savior. Pray that the IRTC will persevere as a faithful and effective instrument to train such faithful servants!

Author Description and Testimony



Prof. Breno Lucena Macedo, Th. M., is a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, and currently lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., where he is doing doctoral studies in historical theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He was a teacher and coordinator of historical and homiletic theology at the Northeast Theological Seminary (STNe) in Teresina, PI, Brazil, from 2014 to 2015, and is currently an associate professor of homiletics at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina, U.S.A. At the IRTC, Rev. Breno is an instructor of preaching.

Testimony: "Theological education of excellent quality was one of the main concerns of the Reformers. They knew that it would be impossible to transform the Church without well-prepared theologians and preachers. This is how I feel about being part of the IRTC. An institution committed to confessional academic training without compromising pastoral sensitivity, supplying the Church with qualified men for ministry."

4th Term of 2017



The last 10-week academic term for the year started on October 16th and is scheduled to finish on December 22nd.

By God's grace we have begun the last period of our school year. Certainly, a new block of studies arouses expectations for both new students and old. They understand and believe that, despite the

hard work ahead, they will reap spiritual fruit for both their personal life and their service in the Kingdom. What a blessing it is for both the local churches and for the broader expansion of the Kingdom, to have a college committed to convey biblical and theological knowledge that pierces deep into the heart, resulting in actions that glorify God. The IRTC fulfills what is written in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, *"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."* It believes, however, that this sublime task is too large, and therefore encourages others to join in this very challenging mission.

The courses offered in this 4th Term along with their teachers are:

- 1) Three Forms of Unity – Prof. Pedro Meijer
- 2) Eschatology and the Revelation – Prof. Jorge Barros
- 3) Christian Worldview – Prof. Charles Oliveira
- 4) Oral Biblical Exposition – Prof. Breno Macedo
- 5) Spiritual Formation – Prof. Douglas Leaman
- 6) Contemporary Theology – Prof. Leandro Lima

Financial Status – September 2017 Update

Daniel Portela, Executive Vice President

We thank the Lord for all who contributed generously to the IRTC up to the end of September. The graciousness of our Lord and of our supporters has been evident in the donations received so far. As we approach the end of the year we are only **\$11,726** away from reaching our goal for the IRTC to fund its operation in 2017. There is little time left but you still have the unique opportunity to be a supporter of our ministry!

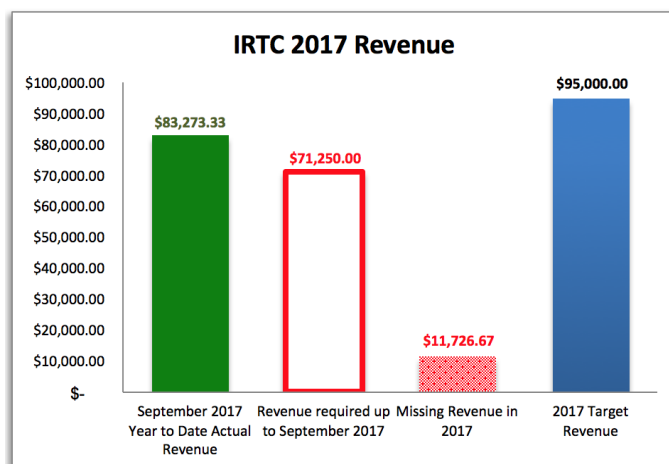
If the Lord has moved you to contribute financially with any amount, please visit the "Donations" page on our website (www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm), and there you will find all the information necessary for making your contribution in the USA. Canadian donors, please make your donations at www.irtcsociety.ca.

The following are other ways in which you can help 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.

We are thankful to the Lord for all the brothers and sisters who so generously contribute financially to the IRTC.

In Him who provides for us all.



Clovis Alexandre Oliveira
clovisalexandre@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor