



INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE
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Newsletter

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*"...and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.
And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!"*
(Genesis 28:12 ESV)

The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ: Theology and Evangelism

Pastor Ricardo Cesar Toniolo

This year we commemorate the 500th year of the Protestant Reformation. One of the points the Reformation highlighted was *solus Christus*, that is, salvation only through Christ. This does not mean, however, that we commemorate 500 years of *solus Christus*. In reality, we celebrate even many more than 2000 years of this truth. The Reformation was not a movement of innovation, but of restoration, restoration of the truth contained in the Holy Scriptures: the Old and New Testaments. How old is *solus Christus*? Older than Christianity; older than Judaism; as old as sin; as old as grace; almost as old as humanity.

As soon as humans committed the first sin, God graciously revealed himself, telling the serpent that the offspring of the woman would bruise its head. On that same day God made the first of the sacrifices that point to Christ by making clothes for Adam and Eve out of animal skins. Throughout the history of humanity God progressively revealed this truth by means of promises, symbols, and ceremonies, so that it became ever more clear, until the reality was displayed before human eyes from a humble manger to a rugged cross. The Man who was the fulfillment of all the promises, the reality of all the shadows, arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, from where he is to come to judge the living and the dead.

He himself said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). Peter witnesses to him, saying,

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). Paul affirms about him that *"there is one mediator between God and men"* (1 Timothy 2:5). The New Testament affirms this truth in many other clear ways, but let us also show a way in which the Old Testament speaks about it: *"...and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!"* (Genesis 28:12)



This verse introduces a dream that Jacob had after having been blessed and directed by Isaac to take a wife in Paddan-Aram. The patriarch set out on his journey and when he fell asleep, God repeated to him the promises he had made to Abraham, that he would give him many offspring and to them, this land and that these descendants would be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 28:13-14).

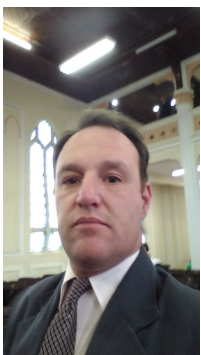
It is relevant that the top of the ladder reached to heaven because in Genesis this had already been said about a tower which men wanted to build with its top in the heavens (Genesis 11:1-9). The ancient ziggurats were constructions that

had the purpose of entering into contact with the gods. These men failed, however, because God himself came down and judged them.

In Jacob's dream it was God himself who established contact between heaven and earth: a ladder by which angels ascended and descended. This traffic of angels reveals the access between heaven and earth, between God and man. Man cannot attain heaven by his own efforts, but God comes to man by his grace. The Lord Jesus identifies himself with that ladder when he says, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"* (John 1:51).

The Bible has always taught, from the first book to the last, that man's salvation is only possible through God's own action in mercy and grace. The Old and New Testaments together proclaim that redemption is found only in Jesus Christ. Today every idea of absolute truth is generally rejected, but shall we give up the exclusivity of Christ in order to preach a "gospel" that is palatable to sinners, so that they may come to church without true faith in the true Christ? Evangelism is genuinely Christian only if it points to Christ as the only way. Herein lies the importance of theological education that is committed to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments more than to the culture of the day, and herein lies its relevance for the Kingdom of God. We thank God that this is a characteristic of the IRTC and the interest of all those who come to her to seek knowledge.

Author Description and Testimony



Rev. Ricardo Cesar Toniolo has a Masters degree in Theology with a concentration in Exegesis of the Old Testament from the Andrew Jumper Presbyterian Center for Graduate Studies (São Paulo, SP, Brazil); he works as senior pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Botucatu, SP, Brazil, and as a teacher of the Rev. George Anderson Landes Presbyterian Bible Institute in courses such as Biblical Theology of OT and Exegesis; he is also a visiting professor of Distance Education at CPAJ (Andrew Jumper Presbyterian Center for Graduate Studies), in the courses of Poetic Books and Wisdom Literature and Studies in Historical and Prophetic Books; he is a commentator on the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and 1 and 2 Chronicles in the Contemporary Bible Commentary. In the IRTC, Prof. Ricardo teaches the courses of Covenant Theology.

Testimony: *"It is very satisfying to me to be part of the faculty of an institution that is so committed to the Scriptures. To be able to share what I most enjoy with persons as interested as the students of the IRTC is a privilege. I give thanks for this assignment that God has entrusted to me and pray that his name may be glorified through it."*

Thanksgiving and Testimony



In this article we bring you the testimony of an IRTC student, brother Fernando Sulate, who is enrolled in the Bachelor of Religious Education program. He is a Mozambican, living in Qatar, in the city of Doha, because of his employment. He is married and the father of three boys.

"I am a shift worker in an aluminum foundry. For this reason, I was attracted to studying at the IRTC precisely because it is online and permits flexibility for my study times.

I would like to express thanks to God for the benefits, both intellectual (academic) and spiritual, that I have received because of my studies at the IRTC.

I discovered that studying theology does not cool one's faith, but warms the heart and gives faith a stronger foundation. Theology is a task for every Christian and not just for a small group of intellectuals. Theology is not just for pastors, but for believers of a broad variety of occupations in society.

I have perceived that to do theology is to dialog with the truths of Scripture and, therefore, in a way, every Christian is a theologian. Besides, more than this, to study the Bible and seek to understand it, is the desire of everyone who aims to gain a deeper knowledge of God.

After entering the IRTC and deepening my knowledge of the word of God, opportunities have come up for me to share this knowledge. Recently I was a speaker at a youth conference in Mafambisse in the part of Mozambique where I spent my childhood. My theme was, "How to be a strong youth." My goal was to promote Christian awareness, a subject I learned about in IRTC courses: Christian Education, Christian Worldview, and Christian Ethics. Further, I spoke about Christian leadership, using the examples of biblical persons such as Jethro, Moses, Joshua, Paul, and Timothy.

I ask you to pray that the Lord may equip me to communicate the gospel to people that I live with and that hold other beliefs such as Islamism and Hinduism. I thank the Lord for the knowledge I gained from the World Religions course, which will help me in the task of contextualization of the message.

In conclusion, I praise God for the IRTC and its able and pious instructors, who patiently encourage us and facilitate our preparation for Kingdom service. If you are seeking to become a more capable servant of God, do not fail to learn about this serious and trustworthy institution."

Financial Status – May 2017 Update

Daniel Portela, Executive Vice President

We are thankful to the Lord for all the brothers and sisters who contributed financially to the IRTC in the last few months.

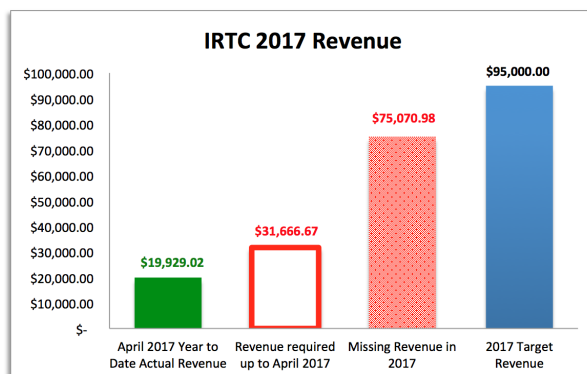
In the first three months of this year we have received approximately **63%** of what was budgeted for our operation until April 2017. Combining tuition income and donations from individuals and organizations the IRTC received \$19.9 thousand against the budgeted \$31.6 thousand. Our organization is still in need of your generosity to make up the missing amount of the first months so we can continue to offer accessible and competitive prices for reformed theological training in the Portuguese language.

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.

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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