

# **Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches adhering to the Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy ( UCEBI )**

## **Preamble**

The Churches which originated in Italy thanks to the preaching of Baptist preachers shortly after the unification of Italy and those that in the course of time have established bonds of fraternity with them now acknowledge that they are one in the fellowship of the Christian Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy (UCEBI).

Historically they belong to the tradition that goes back to the Apostles and that in the course of time has stressed the primitive faith as it is expressed in the Scriptures, in terms of the renewal of the Spirit (Middle Ages), of the Reformation (XVI and XVII centuries) and the missionary effort (XVIII and XIX centuries).

Today they declare their commitment to Christ's discipleship, in the clear conviction of their identity of faith and in the quest of an avowed ethics of responsibility, and they therefore affirm their willingness to express this bond in practical cooperation and in the following declarations of faith.

### **Art. 1 (Sola Gratia)**

God accomplishes the work of creation, of judgement and of salvation of the world and every single person only by His grace.

### **Art. 2 (Solus Christus)**

God the Father accomplishes his work through His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, Word made man who died on the cross for the sin of mankind, who rose for the justification of every believer, and who is Lord and Saviour of the world.

### **Art. 3 (Sola Scriptura)**

The Bible is the unique authentic witness of the work of God through Jesus Christ. In so far as the Holy Spirit makes it the Word of God, it must be studied, honoured and obeyed.

### **Art. 4 (Human nature)**

Humanity, alienated from God and divided within itself can not work or even hope for its own salvation: only God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit accomplishes by grace the salvation of humanity and of the world.

### **Art. 5 (Sola Fide)**

The word of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, witnessed in the Bible and proclaimed through the preaching of the Gospel can be accepted only by faith. Men and women, being sinners obtain justification and reconciliation through faith and repentance.

### **Art. 6 (The Holy Spirit)**

The Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets and who witnesses the truth and sanctifies, gives believers the assurance of God's faithfulness and is manifested in various gifts and in vocations in the service of the Lord, in the Church and in the whole world.

#### **Art. 7 (Christian Discipleship)**

Whoever hears and accepts the word of Christ is called to follow the Lord as a disciple. For the sake of love this discipleship means accepting serious responsibilities, which are never free from contradictions or the dangers of compromise, but are always animated by the hope of the kingdom of God.

#### **Art. 8 (The Church)**

The Church of Christ is wherever believers are gathered together by the word of the Gospel to listen to it anew, to share in the Lord's Supper, to strengthen the ties of love, to make disciples through teaching and baptism, because Christ is in their midst.

Each Church so gathered, is organised in a particular place and time according to the word of the Gospel and under the authority of Christ alone. All Churches have equal dignity before the Lord, all receive from the Spirit ministries able to respond to their vocation and all of them are required to further the unity of the Spirit with the bond of peace.

We believe that the Church of the Lord, thus established in history, is one in Christ, holy in the Spirit, apostolic in origin and in its universal mission, in virtue of the Gospel that gives it life and which the Church proclaims.

#### **Art. 9 (Baptism)**

Baptism in water of those who confess their faith is the first act of obedience of all Christians. It is administered by the Church in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

By virtue of the baptism in the Spirit, which makes baptism in water effective, believers are born to new life and are united in the body of Christ.

#### **Art. 10 (Lord's Supper)**

The Lord's Supper which we, united in the unique body of Christ, celebrate sharing bread and wine, is in memory of the work accomplished by the Lord for our salvation and proclaims that He died for us until the day in which the risen Lord comes again.

The Lord invites us to partake of bread and drink to reaffirm here and now the commitment that unites us and the promise of the time when He will gather his own in the banquet of a new Heaven and new Earth.

#### **Art. 11 (Universal priesthood of all believers)**

Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humankind. Every disciple has access to God only through Christ.

The mandate, entrusted to them by the Lord, to share the Gospel with their fellow men and women, constitutes them authoritative messengers of the word under the exclusive authority of Christ and by the effective action of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Art. 12 (The ministries)**

In order to equip the Church with the essential gifts to make it the living body of Christ, the Holy Spirit calls different believers to fulfil different ministries. We recognise that today these are primarily ministries for the proclamation of the word, for Bible and theological teaching, for the governance of the Church and for the service of the Church in the world: we are also ready to recognise any other gift that the Spirit arouses in the Church.

The relationship among the ministries is not hierarchical, but structural; everyone, and each for his or her part, cooperates in the life of the Church.

#### **Art. 13 (The mission of the Church)**

The Church is called to fulfil the mandate of Christ. Therefore, it has to preach the Gospel of the kingdom to come, to engage in the healing of the sick and in the emancipation of the oppressed.

The witness that the Church as a body will offer to the love of God for all the world becomes credible when it puts love into practice, shown in mutual help, in reconciliation and in peace.

#### **Art. 14 (Ethics)**

Ethical decisions that qualify Christian discipleship have to be taken by virtue of the strength of the love shown in Christ and with a sense of responsibility towards God, towards every person and towards creation. Such decisions are inspired and oriented by the word of God and become practical actions that may be in line with commonly recognised values, but may also become disturbing or innovative actions.

#### **Art. 15 (Reconciliation)**

Baptist Churches engage in promoting reconciliation with God and among human beings. We feel called to engage in promoting justice, peace, freedom and respect for the rights of humankind and the entire creation.

#### **Art. 16 (Church and State)**

We believe that the authority established by God is ordained to enable the peaceful, free and just co-existence of every single person and all peoples. We acknowledge that the modern democratic State, even with all the contradictions typical of any human institution, shows unequivocal signs of the redeeming work of God in history. The role of the Church of Christ, distinct from that of the State, consists in realising its own mission sometimes in coordination with State policies, but sometimes in denouncing any degeneracy that restricts freedom and corrupts justice.

#### **Art. 17 (Ecumenism)**

The Church is one in Christ. The Lord calls us to realise this unity in a visible way. We are, therefore, called to work in order to abolish, in a spirit of prayer, in the common listening to the word of the Lord and in brotherly dialogue, the divisions that exist among the Churches. We trust that the ecumenical commitment achieved among like-minded Protestant Churches, far from excluding more problematic relationships with other Churches, leads the way to full reciprocal recognition among Churches in a way which

both safeguards each Church's specificity and is a step towards the day when God will be all in all.

**Art. 18 (Religion and religions)**

Religion is a universal and manifold human activity, its goal is to cultivate the relationship with that which we believe transcends worldly reality in all its dimensions. Religion, as a human activity, is under God's judgement.

Therefore, while we realise our calling in proclaiming the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ, it is not our duty to judge, rather we are called to respect each person's right to freedom.

**Art. 19 (Christian hope)**

The Lord Jesus Christ, according to his promise, will return to gather his Church, to judge the world, to defeat death through the resurrection of the dead and to establish his kingdom. A new Heaven and a new Earth await the redeemed.