



Union of Grace Brethren Churches (UEEF)

Chateau of Saint Albain - 71260 Saint Albain

Member of the French Evangelical Federation (FEF)

Charter of collaboration of the French Union of Grace Brethren Churches (UEEF)

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Preamble

Our Union of Churches was born in 1708 in Germany, with the desire to combine personal piety and life of the church in conformity to Scripture. Throughout the centuries, it has known glorious times of expansion and sad times of division concerning notorious secondary issues (styles of worship, color of clothes, etc.). At the beginning of the 20th century, the statement of faith was the "New Testament". Conscious of the fact that the faith in face of liberalism had to be more defined, the brethren thus wanted to synthesize the principle elements. In the United States of America two confessions of faith were written in a span of 30 years.

The "faith delivered once for all to the saints" (Jude 3) was permanent. But each generation must appropriate it and defend it when faced with particular threats which seek to snuff it out or to counter it. Each culture offers its specific challenges that force the Church to reexamine its central teachings (i.e. the notion of riches / poverty in Latin America; the role of demons in African and Asian animists; the role of the body in hedonistic and immoral societies, etc.)

With this in mind, the French churches of the Union of Grace Brethren Churches are proposing a slightly different approach. Rather than a confession of faith which would place the essential doctrines of Christianity (ex. the divinity of Christ) on the same level as the strong convictions of our union (ex. the timing of the rapture) or church practices (ex. the mode of the Lord's Supper), we propose that our Union clearly express itself concerning the following points:

- ☐ A sensitivity to the spiritual heritage of the German Christians of 1708, who gave birth, via Tom Julien and the ministry of the Château of Saint Albain, to the French churches. In spite of this sensitivity, we remain attentive not to develop such exclusive relationships and fellowship that would cause us to live in a "vacuum" hence forgetting our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ whom we need to serve and from whom we can also receive;
- An adherence to essential and fundamental doctrines of evangelical Christianity;
- An adherence to the convictions and recognized practices of the elders of our churches, knowing that (1) autonomy in the local church will allow a measure of latitude in the application and teaching of these points and (2) the positions on these questions could evolve in accordance with light granted by the Holy Spirit to his servants, and moreover, will be gradually complemented as the Church is confronted with new challenges.

Foundations of Evangelical Christianity

— “We believe”

Introduction: We consider the Bible to be the necessary and sufficient foundation for our beliefs and practices. This confession of faith does not claim therefore to have any particular authority distinct from the Holy Scriptures, which remain the unique and ultimate reference. It indicates the purpose and the direction of our preaching and our teaching.

Article 1 – The Bible: The Bible is the Word of God. It is composed of sixty-six books that form the Old and New Testaments. In its original form, the entire Bible is inspired, word for word, by God, and is thus infallible and without error (2Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). God gave the Early Church the supernatural discernment needed to recognize the apostolic writings and to dismiss all others. Today, the Canon of Scripture is complete, the faith having been revealed once for all (Jude 3). The Bible declares that nothing can be added or taken away (Revelation 22:18-19).

Article 2 - God: We affirm that there is only one God (1 Corinthians 8 :4, 6), creator of all things (Genesis 1 :1 ; Psalm 146 :6), of one and unique essence (Genesis 1 :3 ; Exodus 3 :14) spiritual (John 4 :24 ; 2 Corinthians 3:17), eternal (Romans 1:20), invisible (1 Timothy 1:17), unchangeable (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19), beyond all representation (Romans 11:33; Acts 7:48; 17:23), all-powerful (Jeremiah 10:7, 10; Luke 1:37), all-wise (Romans 16:27), all-goodness (Matthew 19:17), righteous (Jeremiah 12:1; Psalm 119:137), and merciful (Exodus 34:6-7), existing from all eternity in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13).

The Lord Jesus Christ is God himself, existing from eternity (John 1:1-3). Everything was created by Him and for Him (Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:16). His incarnation took place in the womb of a virgin (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23); He lived a life without sin (Hebrews 4:15); He died to atone for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21); He was bodily resurrected (Luke 24:36-43); He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9); He continues to minister to the saints (Hebrews 4:14-16); He will come again (Acts 1:11).

The Holy Spirit is a person (John 16:7-15); He is God (Acts 5:3-4); He works in the life of every believer. The baptism of the Spirit takes place at the moment of regeneration and integrates the believer into the body of Christ (1Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit abides in the believer (Romans 8:9), is at his disposal to fill (Ephesians 5:18) and empower him to serve God (Ephesians 3:16; Acts 1:8) and lead a holy and fruitful life (Galatians 5:22-23).

Article 3 - Man: Man is the object of a direct and complete creation in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). At the devil's instigation, the Man deliberately disobeyed God (Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 11:3), losing his initial state. By this act of disobedience, the man became separated from God and deprived of his fellowship. By this separation, resulting in his own spiritual death, he led all humanity into the corruption of sin (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 5:12). Man must therefore be born again spiritually (new birth) for salvation (John 3:3-5).

Article 4 - Salvation: By His grace alone, God offers complete and eternal salvation (Hebrews 9:12; 10:14) to whoever repents (Acts 3:19; 17:30; 20:21) and places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the work he accomplished (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Salvation instantaneously brings about an irreversible change of identity of the person (Romans 10:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17; Ephesians 2:10) transforming the inner life of the believer, and when the time is ripe, producing visible fruits in his life on earth (Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Titus 3:8; James 2:17).

Article 5 – The Church: There exists one true church, which is the Body and Bride of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-21). It is composed of all born again believers, from the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, until the return of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:39; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The tangible expression of the body (the Universal Church) is manifested through local churches (Revelation 2 – 3). Local churches are formed by members who, guided by their leaders, gather for worship, edification and the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world (Ephesians 4:11-16). Each local church is autonomous but cooperates with other churches that share the essentials of its convictions (Acts 15:1–16:5).

Article 6 – Christian Life: The Christian life must be a life of righteousness consecrated to God, full of good works (Titus 3:14), separated from the evil ways of the world (Romans 12:1-2). This life is manifested by the progressive development of: the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), faith in God and His promises (Hebrews 11:6), regular and confident prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6), maintaining the sacred character of the home (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Hebrews 13:4), integrity (James 5:12), refusing carnal clashes (Romans 12:17-21), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), behavior that promotes sharing the good news of salvation (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 2:14), and a Christlike attitude toward all men (Philippians 2:1-5).

Article 7 – Angels: God created a multitude of spiritual beings called “angels” (Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22). They serve God and work both in the heavenly sphere as well as on earth (Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10). By his disobedience, a fallen angel, Satan, became the adversary of God, carrying with him a procession of demons (Revelation 12:1-10); Ephesians 6:12). They will be judged (John 12:31) and finally condemned (Revelation 20:10).

Article 8 – Future Life: The dead will have a conscious existence in eternity (Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31) and their bodies will be resurrected (John 5:28-29). Believers will be granted eternal life (John 3:16); they will be judged and rewarded according to their works (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Unbelievers will be condemned and will suffer eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15).

Article 9 – Return of Jesus Christ: Christ will return suddenly, in person, to take His Church (John 14:3; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16-17, 5:9). Jesus will then descend to the earth, with his redeemed ones, to establish his earthly Kingdom (Revelation 19:11-20:6) before creating new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:9-22).

Convictions of the UEEF

— “we teach and practice”

Pedagogical positions pertinent to our history, our practices and / or contemporary challenges of our churches.

Article 1 – Symbolic acts:

We teach that the Bible prescribes the practice of several symbolic acts. An act represents or teaches practically a spiritual reality. It does not bestow a particular grace but gives a concrete illustration. Under the New Covenant, the Bible institutes:

1. Baptism (immersion) of new converts (Matthew 28 :19 ; Acts 2 :38) ; it illustrates connection to the Triune God, purification of sins, new birth thanks to Christ, integration into His Church and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; 12:12-13; Titus 3:5).
2. The meal — the “Lords’ table” or agape (1 Corinthians 11:20-33; Jude 12); it illustrates brotherly fellowship and the hope of future fellowship at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
3. The bread and cup – “Eucharist” that refers to the cup and the bread for which Jesus “gave thanks” (Matthew 26:26-30; Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-33); they illustrate the body and blood of Christ, source of our salvation.
4. Foot washing (John 13:1-18; 1 Timothy 5:10); it illustrates daily and reciprocal forgiveness, as well as the humility needed in our lives.
5. Anointing the sick with oil (James 5:14-15); it illustrates the healing action of the Lord.
6. Laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:2) for consecration to ministry (1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6); it illustrates identification (between the sender and the sent) and compassion.

Article 2 – Extraordinary spiritual gifts:

We think that God can and still performs miracles today but that this usually requires the prayer of faith (Matthew 21:22; James 5:15 ; John 14 :12-14 ; 1 John 5 :14-15). However, to confirm in an indisputable manner the identity of the true Apostles of Jesus Christ, God gave them miraculous spiritual gifts (Acts 5:12-2 Corinthians 12:12) that they bestowed on others by the laying on of hands (Acts 6:5-8), because they were instrumental in founding the church (Ephesians 2:20) and were the spokesmen of divine, infallible revelation (John 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:3-5). Today, divine power is still at work in the church but the authentication of this power manifests itself more by the fruit of the Spirit than by spectacular works (Hebrews 2:3-4; Galatians 5:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Matthew 7:21-23).

Article 3 – Pastoral ministries:

We teach that the ministry of elder is uniquely reserved to spiritually qualified men. These men must exercise the duties of official teachers of the local church and the spiritual leaders of the people of God in a locality (1 Timothy 2:9-3:7; Titus 1:5-9).

What we should some day discuss

If we accept the philosophy proposed by this document, we must work to better understand the following issues, which are strongly pertinent and sensitive in our churches. We propose that there be continued follow-up discussions to formalize our convictions concerning these contemporary issues that affect our churches:

- Hermeneutic and heritage
- Ecclesiology, structure and authority in the local church
- Missiology and mission of the local church
- Family ethics (divorce, remarriage, homosexuality, PACS*, etc.)
- Medical ethics (abortion, assisted conception, euthanasia, etc.)

* PACS ("civil pact of solidarity") is a form of civil union between two adults (same-sex or opposite-sex) for organizing their joint life.