

A Strategic Declaration by the Evangelical Reformed Baptist Churches in Italy (CERBI)

The Company of Elders of CERBI in Italy, at the end of its gathering in Bologna that took place October 23-24, 2015, approved an important programmatic declaration coinciding with the 10th anniversary of their constitution since 2006.

This important document is the outcome of two years of serious discussions in order to establish four areas that will serve to qualify the life and activity of the CERBI churches: the memory, the network, the holistic vision and the dream for seeing the impact of God's reign. There were workshops to facilitate the verbalizing of each area in a useful way, followed by a time of ironing out each one, which then culminated in the final approval of the strategic declaration as follows:

The Evangelical Reformed Baptist Churches in Italy are:

- rooted in Scripture as the Word of God in accordance to the classic reformed faith;
- allied in an ecclesiastical network for reciprocal support and growth;
- engaged in assimilating, proclaiming and applying the Gospel of Jesus in every area of life;
- projected towards the extension of God's reign through the conversion of sinners, the discipleship of Christians, and spiritual, social and cultural renewal until the Lord's coming.

Every declaration of this type has a double implication: on the one side it's a description of what already exists, while on the other side, it's a long term proposal. The CERBI churches are already living according to such a declaration, but are also conscious of the rigorous walk that lay ahead in order to strengthen their confessional profile and radiate such a heritage inside the Italian evangelical world and the general situation of our country.

While this was the main challenge before the Company of Elders during their reflection, they also addressed issues concerning their churches' life in the spirit of the Congregationalism that characterizes their fellowship.

The spiritual legacy of Girolamo Zanchi (1516-1590) in the 5th centenary of his birth.

The 21st of March 2016 in Bergamo, a public meeting took place to remember this very important Italian reformer. After a brief biography, professor Pietro Bolognesi focused the attention of the audience on the thought and life of this almost forgotten Italian reformer. In fact, he was considered significant enough to be included in Duysend's engraving, located in the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam, of the most significant Reformed thinkers.

First of all, Professor Bolognesi spoke about the irenic character of this man in defending his faith while showing a profound commitment for the growth of the people of God and an authentic desire to promote a real spirit of fellowship. His irenism was seen also in his pastoral work. Secondly, Zanchi proved himself to be a reformed scholar with a firm faith in solus and tota Scripture in order to overcome every doubt. And last but not least, prof. Bolognesi spoke about the christology of Zanchi,

specifically noting the reality of the union of the believer with Christ moving from John 15 to Ephesians 5, and showing the triplex dimension of this union - incarnational, mystical and eschatological.

It was a very important opportunity for the city of Bergamo, near which Girolamo Zanchi was born. Unfortunately it was an opportunity not fully met by the evangelicals who are not always conscious and proud of the rich legacy of man such as Zanchi.