

**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the Reformed Alliance in Germany
April 25th, 2015 in Villigst**

„We believe and confess the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men. For God himself spoke to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures.

And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God; and in this respect it is expressly commanded by God that nothing be either added to or taken from the same.” (Second Helvetic Confession 1566, chapter 1)

The General Assembly of the Reformed Alliance rejects the recent assertion that once again depreciates the Old Testament with regard to the identity and practice of our Christian faith. The Reformers in the Reformed tradition such as Zwingli, Bullinger, Bucer and Calvin have adhered to the substantial unity of the Old and the New Covenant and thus of God himself and have fought against an arbitrary selection and interpretation of the Old Testament. At the beginning of the 20th century when the Old Testament became the target of numerous attacks, Reformed theologians and synods emphasized the permanent value of the Old Testament as an essential part of the Christian Canon. The First Thesis of the Confession of the First Free Reformed Synod of January 1934 states, for example:

„The Church hears the Word of God spoken once and for all through the free grace of the Holy Spirit in the double, yet consistent witness of the Old and New Testaments in which both parts , i.e. Moses’ and the Prophets’ witness of the coming of Jesus Christ and the Evangelists’ and Apostles’ witness of Jesus Christ, are mutually dependent.”

25 years ago the General Assembly of the Reformed Alliance itself stated in its guidelines entitled “We and the Jews – Israel and the Church”:

„As Christians we believe in the one God, the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ. Like the Jews we praise and honor the God of Israel, the Creator of the world and Lord of history using the common ground of the Hebrew Bible, the “Old Testament”. [...] In the Old Testament the one God who liberates his creation from gods and myths reveals himself. Therefore, we Christians have to turn away from all ideologies and philosophies, in which ‘other events and powers, figures and truths’ again seek to gain power over us through self-invented images of God.”
(Guidelines III)

This understanding is also expressed in other 20th and 21st century confessional documents in the worldwide Reformed tradition that confess with great emphasis that the one God is witnessed in two Testaments. Furthermore, for centuries, it has been the Reformed churches’ characteristic heritage, that the entire source tradition of the Old Testament be used as the basis of preaching and that the Psalms of Israel, whenever possible, be prayed and sung in their unabridged version. This resulted in a high degree of familiarity with the texts of the Old Testament, even with the more unwieldy ones.

To subordinate those texts of our biblical Canon (and in last consequence also the New Testament) to a “Christian self-consciousness” (*christliches Selbstbewusstsein*) is in contradiction not only with the scriptural principle of the Reformation, but also with the centuries old spiritual practice in Reformed churches. Conversely, such a “Christian self-consciousness” would always have to be seen critically in the light of the whole scripture.

We expressly welcome last year's proposal by the EKD, VELKD and UEK* Joint Working Group on a revision of the periscopes that the number of liturgical readings and biblical texts for sermons taken from the Old Testament should be increased. We also agree with the Working Group's conclusion that this does not correspond in any way to the richness of the Old Testament and that the diversity of the first part of the Christian Bible is still not adequately reflected.

We therefore exhort ourselves and other churches to integrate the Old Testament more comprehensively in our teaching and our preaching in the presence of Israel. Because the Old Testament is "space of truth" (*Wahrheitsraum*) for the New, the New Testament itself inviting us to discover the witness of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ (John 5:39.46). As much as the Hebrew Bible is, until this day, a Jewish document of faith and does not point directly to Jesus as the Christ, it is imperative for us that Jesus Christ cannot be understood without these scriptures. It is necessary to endure this tension and to always describe it anew. This is the lasting purpose of the dialogue between Christians and Jews.

The Reformed Alliance (Reformierte Bund e.V.) functions as a confessional umbrella organization for about 1, 5 million Reformed Christians in Germany. Its main members are the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany, the regional church of Lippe, the Christian Reformed Church in Lower Saxony. United churches, Reformed congregations, associations and individuals also belong to the Reformed Alliance which has its headquarter in Hannover since 2005. Its moderator (honorary chairperson) is Rev. Martin Engels from Wuppertal. The Reformed Alliance was created in 1884 for the purpose of serving the communion of Reformed Christians and the theological heritage in the tradition of Calvin and Zwingli.

**Abbreviations:*

EKD – Evangelical Church in Germany

VELKD – United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany

UEK – Union of Evangelical churches within the EKD