

# CANADIAN *Communiqué*

FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc. Vol. 15.3 Summer 2017



# A NOTE FROM STEVE

I am privileged to speak in congregations across North America. When it comes to Martin Luther, I often tell people I'm schizoid. As a Jewish man, I wish Martin Luther had never been born. But as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank God for him. How can I feel both happy and sad about Luther? Because of the positives and negatives of the Protestant Reformation.

It has been 500 years since Martin Luther published his 95 theses—his complaints against the Roman Catholic Church—and launched the world-changing movement that affirms

the biblical teaching that people are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That is the good side of the Reformation. Unfortunately, there is a bad side and even an ugly side, particularly with regard to the Jewish community.

This issue of the *Communiqué* tackles the positives and negatives of the Reformation and examines its ongoing effects: Larry Mitchell addresses five positive teachings from the Reformation. John McKim provides the Jewish perspective from interviews he conducted with three Jewish friends, including



a rabbi. John Plantz discusses the negative aspects of Luther's teaching. And Richard Toviah writes about the Reformation's negative effect on congregations today.

Although not everything about the Reformation was positive, the movement did prompt people to read, respect, and believe the Scriptures, "which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). In September, FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc. will focus on the Scriptures as we host the Winnipeg Prophecy

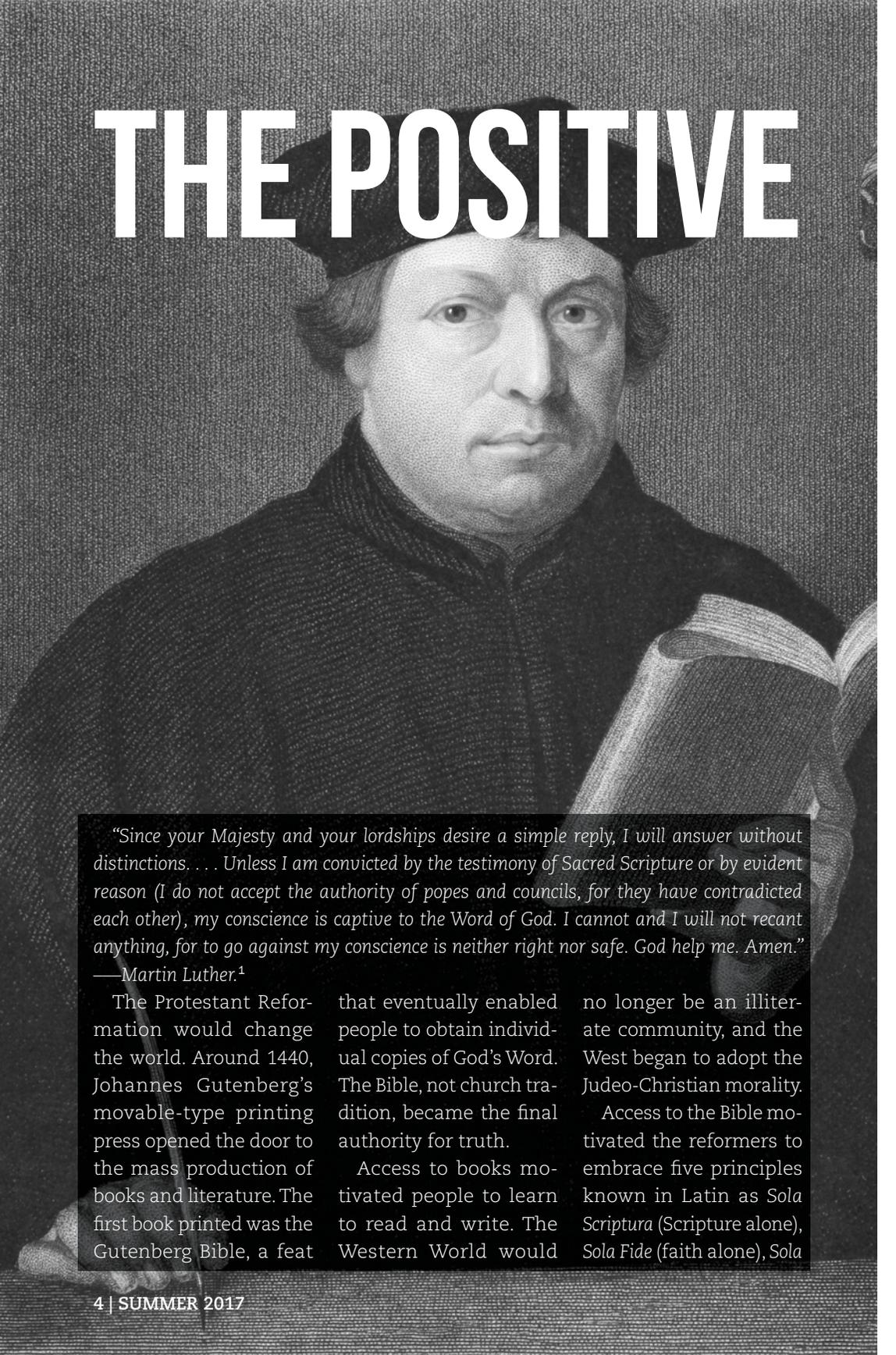
Conference. Outstanding Bible teachers will shepherd us through the fascinating book of Daniel in only three days. I know the conference will be a great blessing to everyone who attends. I hope you're able to be there.

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*Steve Herzig is the director of FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.*



# THE POSITIVE



*“Since your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without distinctions. . . . Unless I am convicted by the testimony of Sacred Scripture or by evident reason (I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other), my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”*  
—Martin Luther.<sup>1</sup>

The Protestant Reformation would change the world. Around 1440, Johannes Gutenberg’s movable-type printing press opened the door to the mass production of books and literature. The first book printed was the Gutenberg Bible, a feat

that eventually enabled people to obtain individual copies of God’s Word. The Bible, not church tradition, became the final authority for truth.

Access to books motivated people to learn to read and write. The Western World would

no longer be an illiterate community, and the West began to adopt the Judeo-Christian morality.

Access to the Bible motivated the reformers to embrace five principles known in Latin as *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Sola Fide* (faith alone), *Sola*

*Gratia* (grace alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone). These principles developed as the saints, guided by the Holy Spirit, earnestly sought God by reading the Bible.

- 1. Sola Scriptura:** “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5–6).
- 2. Sola Fide:** “By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:20, 28).
- 3. Sola Gratia:** “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (Rom. 11:6). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”

(Eph. 2:8–9).

- 4. Solus Christus:** “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).
- 5. Soli Deo Gloria:** “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Francis Schaeffer, an evangelical theologian, philosopher, and pastor, understood the significance of the Reformation:

*First of all, there was nothing autonomous in the area of final authority. For the Reformation, final and sufficient knowledge rested in the Bible—that is, Scripture alone, in contrast to Scripture plus anything else parallel to the Scriptures, whether it be the Church or a natural theology. Second, there was no idea of man being autonomous in the area of salvation. In the Roman Catholic position there was a divided work of*

*salvation—Christ died for our salvation, but man had to merit the merit of Christ. Thus there was a humanistic element involved. The reformers said that there is nothing man can do; no autonomous or humanistic religious or moral effort of man can help. One is saved only on the basis of the finished work of Christ as He died in space and time in history, and the only way to be saved is to raise the empty hands of faith and, by God’s grace, to accept God’s free gift—faith alone. It was Scripture alone and faith alone.<sup>2</sup>*

The reformers were not perfect. But we need to thank God for their work in bringing the church back to the Bible.

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#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Cited in Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* vol. 6, *The Reformation* (Simon & Schuster), <<https://google.com/wpcg11>>.
- 2 Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (InterVarsity Press), 218.

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Larry Mitchell is the Calgary, Alberta, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



Although many of us admire Martin Luther for helping Christianity refocus on the authority of Scripture, most Jewish people associate him with rabid anti-Semitism. I recently asked three Jewish friends, one of them a rabbi, how the Reformation affected the Jewish community. Here are their answers:

- 1. Religiously.** The center of any Jewish community is the synagogue, where Jewish people read, pray, and worship. Martin Luther turned on the Jewish people with anti-Semitic hatred when they would not convert. In his book *On the Jews and Their Lies*, he advised people to “burn their synagogues, don’t let the Rabbis teach, confiscate their Torah, Talmud, and Sacred literature.” What he wrote, Hitler eventually carried out on Kristallnacht, a savage pogrom against the Jewish people that swept through Germany on November 9 and 10, 1938, initiating the Holocaust.
- 2. Economically.** Everything the Jewish people had worked for was suddenly stripped from them. Businesses were seized and homes were destroyed. They were refused entrance into marketplaces. They were forbidden to make loans, and their property

was confiscated.

- 3. Theologically.** Luther’s emphasis on justification by grace alone no doubt caused a major problem between Protestantism and Judaism that continues today. To say that a person is saved without any meritorious works on his part completely contradicts Jewish thinking.
- 4. Personally.** These dear people were humiliated, spat on, cursed, raped, and thrown in ghettos. They were forced to wear yellow Jewish stars on their clothing to identify them and thus target them for abuse. Eventually, 6 million Jewish people were murdered as part of Hitler’s “final solution to the Jewish problem.”

Although the Nazis were not Christians, the unbelievable devastation they caused can be traced in part to Martin Luther’s scathing rhetoric, which inflamed anti-Semitic hatred. According to my Jewish friends, the Reformation had a catastrophic effect on the Jewish people.

John McKim is the Saint John, New Brunswick, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



# HOW DID THE REFORMATION AFFECT THE JEWISH PEOPLE?

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Words make a difference:

Daniel 10:12 “Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (KJV). Context: Daniel was given a vision that disturbed him—a vision of what would befall the Jewish people in the latter days.

Many early Christian theologians erroneously claimed the Jewish people brought on their own destruction by rejecting Jesus as their Messiah.

In the fourth to sixth centuries, the “Christianized” Roman Empire discriminated against the Jewish people and attacked them as “Christ killers.” From 1096 to the 13th century, the Roman Catholic Church conducted Crusades that involved massacring Jewish people. From the 11th to 15th century, the defamation of Jewish people spurred more massacres, followed in the 1500s by the Protestant Reformation. Here Martin Luther enters the scene.

Many people believe

Luther had a heart for the Jews at the beginning of his ministry (1513–1523). He had seen the awful accusations and atrocities they had suffered at the hands of so-called Christians in Europe, and he often expressed compassion and sympathy for them.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, “Luther often condemned the persecution of the Jews and recommended a more tolerant policy toward them based on the spirit of true Christian brotherhood.”

In 1526, Luther’s attitude changed when Jewish people refused to convert to Christianity. Soon he, too, began to

condemn them, calling them stubborn for clinging to their traditional interpretation of Scripture.

In 1542, he wrote a treatise titled *On the Jews*

# THE



# UGLY



3. Burn down their homes.
4. Confiscate their money and property.
5. Show them no mercy or kindness.
6. Give them no legal protection.

7. Draft into forced labor or expel for all time “these poisonous envenomed worms.”

8. He even seemed to recommend they be murdered.

In 1546, days before his death, Luther preached the message “Admonition against

and Their Lies, which ruthlessly attacked them and advocated the following:

1. Destroy their prayer books.
2. Forbid their rabbis to preach.

the Jews.” It is these words that inspired Hitler, and he put them into action.

In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler called Luther a great reformer and echoed his words when he wrote, “The personification of the devil as

the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew.”

Hitler also wrote, “I believe today that I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator by warding off the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord’s work.”

Luther’s influence permeates Hitler’s plan from burning Jewish books to Kristallnacht, where the Germans burned down 250 synagogues, trashed 7,000 businesses, and killed or deported many Jewish people.

Words are powerful. They can have long-lasting effects that either build up or destroy. Remember Genesis 12:3: “I will bless them that bless thee and curse him who curseth thee.”

It behooves us to obey God when He tells us, “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32).

John Plantz is the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Church Ministries representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



# THE NEGATIVE IN THE CHURCH

As much as I can appreciate the historical strides of the Reformation, I also have experienced its negative effects. Let me share two experiences.

A few years ago I lived in Calgary, Alberta, where I attended a weekly Bible study led by FOI Gospel Ministry representative Larry Mitchell. During that time, Larry and I knew three young men, two of whom attended the study. The other gentleman frequently visited our flea-market ministry.

We had a great relationship with these young men. However, all three eventually got caught up in a Reformation movement that was sweeping across Canada. They stopped attending our studies, and when they would come, it was to make converts of our attendees.

They would challenge us by stating Israel no longer occupies any place in God's plan—present or future—because the church has replaced Israel. It was sad to see the effect Reformation teaching had, robbing these men of sound doctrine and of blessing because they turned their backs on Israel and its people. (See Genesis 12:3; Psalm 122:6.)

A different incident occurred at a mini prophecy conference. Four men

I did not know attended. They were all Reformation believers. Three were students of the fourth, a pastor. During the conference, the pastor heckled the speaker. Then the pastor began to attack me verbally. "Are we to bow down to all Jewish people because of our doctrine on supporting the Jewish people?" he asked. "There is not one verse in the New Testament that states God will restore them."

I replied, "You are completely in error about that." I took him to Romans 11:25–27:

*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

I told him, "There it is in black and white." He turned around and left the other three, not saying a word.

Reformation teaching is robbing believers of a blessing when they fail to bless the Jewish people and Israel. They have hardened their hearts to an imperfect people, yet a people from which God chose to bring the Messiah. Without the Jewish people, they themselves would not be saved. There would be no Saviour!

Richard Toviah is the Winnipeg, Manitoba, field representative for FOI Gospel Ministry, Inc.



# A MINUTE WITH MENO

Dear Friends, Shalom.

The last two weeks have been full of events that may sound like science fiction or wishful thinking. Yet they all may be summed up in two words: Only God!

The first event took place in a Christian center in Karlsruhe, Germany. A godly German friend had been working for several years to develop a unity paper for believing Jews and Arabs and invited 13 of us (pastors, mainly) to sit three days in one room in order to achieve more unity among us—for the glory of Christ.

No microphones, no cameras, no guests. The environment gave all of us an opportunity to share our heartfelt ideas and emotions. We had deep theological differences, revolving mainly around Replacement Theology.

Though we did not agree on every point, we did agree that we must work hard to develop unity among us and our churches, our children, and our youth activities.

After three days, we learned more about each other. We learned to love and appreciate one another more. I can say that the Word of God has power! Sovereign power.

We knew that long-standing peace, love, and unity could only be achieved when based on the truth in the Word of God. Together we wrote a 20-point paper, listing the changes we all are committed to make in our lives and ministries so that the name of Christ and the testimony of the gospel will advance.

The first change will be within our youth groups. We plan to bring our youth together to worship and study the Word. Please pray for us.

On Sunday May 21, my wife flew to Germany and met me at the Christian center. Anat holds dual Israeli-German citizenship. She drove me to a Bible center in the north where I was scheduled to teach in a Bible school and lecture at a prophecy conference. Then she left for Amsterdam, Holland, to meet with our

daughter Michal who is serving the Lord there.

On May 29, I was back in Israel to prepare for a unique event at our church the next day. We hosted a few former Shia Iranian Muslims who are now faithful, born-again believers in Jesus. One of them was a former Mujahideen, trained to be a suicide bomber. He now loves Jewish people and Israel much more than many Israelis. We sang together, prayed, heard their testimonies, and gave God all the glory. Later we enjoyed a delicious dinner.

We are praying many ex-Muslims who are now born-again believers in Jesus will visit Israel and the churches to share what God has done in their lives and study about God's plan in Israel.

The seed was planted. God will do the rest.

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