

In recent years propaganda in favour of the German Reformation has been investigated particularly in respect of how oral and pictorial propaganda drove the common people to join the Reformation movement. In looking at printed materials from the period 1518–25, Mark U. Edwards in *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: U. of California P., 1994; pp. xiii + 225. N.p.) opts for a more traditional approach, but focuses exclusively on tracts published in the vernacular in order to assess the topics which reached a wide range of readers and had considerable appeal during the first years of the Reformation. He does so by concentrating on *Flugschriften* for and against the Reformation published at Strasbourg between 1518 and 1525. He is able to shed new light on early Catholic printed propaganda, notably that of Thomas Murner, but is led at the same time, on quantitative grounds, to stress its limited scope during the years in question. Owing to the sheer bulk of Luther's writings, Edwards's work, in dealing with pro-Reformation tracts, assumes the additional shape of an investigation into the early spread of Martin Luther's message. The author points out that 'over eighteen hundred printings of works by Luther had flowed from the empire's presses by the end of 1525', half of the life-time printings of the reformer's works, and that 'eighty-five percent of these publications were in German' (p. 27). With a total of 1,465 printings and reprintings of German editions during the years considered here, Luther ranks well above and beyond the reach of other German and Swiss reformers, whose output between 1518 and 1525 in respect of German texts did not pass the mark of 125 printings and reprintings reached by Karlstadt. With these figures Edwards is able to show that the Strasbourg output in those years provides a relatively reliable picture of the distribution of vernacular printing between 1518 and 1525 in Germany as a whole. One of the striking conclusions the author draws from his close examination of this material is that the *sola scriptura*-principle ('Scripture alone') dominates its message rather than what we today consider as the key theme of early Reformation theology, namely justification by faith alone. Another general point made by Edwards is most interesting, considering so much research has concentrated on the urban and collective aspects of the Reformation: he contends that the message of the tracts in question was overwhelmingly pastoral rather than communal. Edwards is acutely aware of the fact that sixteenth-century printed texts were received fairly regularly in ways unintended by their respective authors. He claims, however, that urban literacy in Germany during the early Reformation period may have been considerably higher than we have hitherto assumed, which would in turn, as he seems to believe, increase the range of socio-cultural authenticity of the texts he analyses. However, in view of further research on this question, we should read Edwards's thorough and path-breaking study on the first great media campaign of modern history against the background of recent work investigating other (oral and pictorial) channels of Reformation propaganda.

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The early 1520s form a curious episode in Austrian history: an apparent hiatus between the last efforts, under Maximilian I, to construct some kind of coherent German-based Habsburg empire, and the first moves, under Ferdinand I, towards an essentially Danubian one. Whereas we know a good deal about