

LutherFacts #16

The impact of Martin Luther on his time has been noted over and over again. In 1521, one of his opponents, for example, exclaimed that "Every day it rains Luther books," a reference to the enormous out-pouring of writing on his part. Alec Ryrie of Cambridge University, author of *Protestants: The Faith That Made the Modern World* (2017), makes an even more sweeping statement: "Luther's literary achievement has no parallels in the whole of human history." Ryrie offers some astonishing statistics to support that claim. In all, Luther produced 544 separate books, pamphlets, and articles, an average of about one every three weeks. In 1523, Luther authored 55 publications and during that year, throughout Europe, 390 separate editions of all his books appeared in print. During the 1550s, Martin Luther alone was responsible for about a fifth of all German language pamphlets. "No revolutionary leader in modern history," Ryrie writes, "towered over a mass movement" to the same degree. The result of all this, along with his teaching and preaching, was to prevent the Pope and church leaders from co-opting his efforts to reform the medieval church. He proved that a determined reformer, affirming faith rather than works as the key to belief, could use the written word effectively to advance his cause.