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Unit Two LEQ Outline #1

Many historians argue Gutenberg’s printing press was the main vehicle for the spread of Protestantism in the German states, while other historians argue there were more important factors responsible for the widespread dissemination of Protestant views and beliefs. Compare and contrast the role of the printing press with the other factors that contributed to the spread of Luther’s teachings, and provide argumentation for which was most important. (Students should refer to the “Printing Press and Reformation” handout and lecture/discussion to understand how literacy rates in German states pre-Reformation required most people to depend on the literate to read aloud the writings of Luther, etc.)

1. Introduction

The movable-type printing press was a handy invention created by Johannes Gutenberg during the Northern Renaissance in the mid 15th century. It had been one of the first breakthroughs in Europe, utilized extensively for printing works by notable authors at an unstoppable rate. Because of its function, the printing press had played an important role in the diffusion of Protestant doctrines and practices all across Germany during the Reformation (Contextualization). Along with the printing press, scholars believed that there were several other key factors such as literates reading to the illiterate and the decentralization of Germany at the time, that helped spread the basic ideas of famous reformer, Luther, across the divided Holy Roman Empire as well. These factors seen by scholars were both similar and different to the important role of the printing press in adding to the expansion of Protestant views and beliefs throughout Germany (Restatement). Similarities between the role of the printing press and these factors were that they all were effective against the Church’s authority and power by checking and even reducing its power (X). The differences between them were the requirements in which each key factor helped create the awareness or Lutheranism around Germany over Catholic thoughts (Y). As a whole, the printing press is shown to have effectively spread Luther’s ideas around Germany the most through its use in the Reformation (Z).

1. First Body Paragraph
2. Similarities in role of printing press and other factors
3. Evidence: Opposed Church authority in ways that they couldn’t prevent

Analysis:

* Printing Press: Produced mass copies of Church reformers and Luther’s work at an incredible rate; so many printing presses were established in Germany to the point that it couldn’t be stopped

1. Almost 50 printing presses were committed to solely print Luther’s works in 12 different areas (mostly in cities within Germany); 70 more dedicated to printing Reformation tracts in general; 391 printers, 894 authors, and 125 cities in total!

* Literates reading to Illiterate: Allowed those who couldn’t read to learn and study the words and ideas of books and tracts; during the Reformation, Luther’s works and vernacular translation of the Bible (into German) were often read to by these illiterates since there were little vernacular prints made at the time, spreading the ideas of Protestant views and beliefs to the common people in another unforeseen way; couldn’t be stopped by Church since this took place mostly during suppers or community gatherings
* Decentralization: Since the decentralized state was put under harsh control of the Church, secular princes supported and spread the ideas of Lutheranism in hopes of reducing the power and control the Church had on the states and kings politically and religiously

III. Second Body Paragraph

1. Difference between the printing press and other factors
2. Evidence: Each factor had specific requirements in order to keep functioning

Analysis:

* Printing press: Even though it made books cost less, sums of money were still needed to purchase a book, making the reformers often have to buy cheaper papers like pamphlets, which gave reformers less content to red about or work with
* Literates to read to Illiterates: Required constant flow of literate people to be wanting to read to the illiterate so in order for the spread of Luther’s ideas to be possible
* Decentralization: Needed to stay decentralized so the many princes could be of service and aid in encouraging and supporting the Protestant beliefs, otherwise princes wouldn’t have the power or need to so if centralized

IV. Third Body Paragraph

1. Printing press was the most influential factor in the spread of Protestant views and beliefs across Germany.
2. Evidence: Enabled reformers and Luther to spread their ideas the fastest of them all

Analysis:

* Before in the past, ideas typically spread slowly by means of literacy due to its expensive costs (like as in the Renaissance). However the printing press spread Protestant ideals incredibly due to its mass production and usage all across Germany.

1. “From 1521 to 1545, a total of 5,651 works were produced with 30.2% published by reformers, 34.1% were non-religious titles, and 17.6% were by Catholics. In the first half of the same period, the reformers' works constituted an even greater proportion of the output with the reformers producing 46% of the works” (**The Importance of the Printing Press for the Protestant Reformation by Dr. Barry Waugh)**. Tells people that the printing press clearly was the main factor in spreading reformers’ works all across the HRE and Northern Europe

V. Conclusion

All in all, the printing press, literates reading to the illiterates, and the HRE being decentralized played similar and different roles in the spread of Protestant views and beliefs all across Germany and even parts of Northern Europe. Out of all these factors, the printing press is arguably the most important factor in spreading Protestant ideas since it enabled the copies of reformer’s works such as Luther accessible to many (Restatement). In today’s world, the spread of ideas and beliefs are generally made by writings and informative speeches made by the believers, which is similar to how the Protestant beliefs were spread during the Reformation by reformative writings and the literate (followers in today’s world) teaching the illiterate (common people; religion seekers) (Synthesis). Better if the synthesis referred to the Internet How and Why it is similar. This example doesn’t work