

# Martin Luther VS. John Calvin

## LUTHER:

- I. **Martin Luther:**
  - a. He's a Catholic Friar
  - b. Received Ph.D in Religion
  - c. His 95 Theses (document) causes him to fall out of favor with the Catholic Church
- II. **Disliked the INCONSISTENCIES in Catholicism:**
  - a. Lack of enforced celibacy for the clergy
  - b. Pluralism allowed in office holdings = A Catholic official could have more than one position within the Catholic church AND / OR hold public office and religious office => too much control
  - c. Squandering of church funds by the Pope / Vatican
  - d. Absenteeism = officials not present to do their job
  - e. **INDULGENCES:** Payment to church to clear your "spiritual permanent record" (to achieve salvation)
- III. **Theology / Beliefs:**
  - a. Faith alone can save humans
  - b. Religious authority is ONLY found in the Bible and NOT through its interpretation
  - c. The church actually consists of the entire community of believers and NOT JUST those who attend church
  - d. All persons should serve God to the best of their ability regardless of financial status
  - e. Everyone has the ability to strive for the highest form of Christian life
- IV. **Significance of Martin Luther:**
  - a. He NEVER wanted to separate from Church, but instead wanted to fix problems/reform the Catholic Church
  - b. Use of the printing press and vernacular (common) language allow

him to spread ideas to a wider audience

- c. **STRESSED LITERACY:** believes that the Bible should be available to everyone so that they can interpret the meaning for themselves (leads to vernacular translation of the Bible)
- d. Establishes Protestant, Christian religions (those who "protested" the Catholic corruption)
- e. First Protestant reformer of Christianity / Catholicism

## CALVIN:

- I. **John Calvin:**
  - a. Establishes his version of a "perfect" society in Geneva, Switzerland
  - b. He is an off-shoot, or a different version, of Luther's belief system
- II. **Theology:**
  - a. God has absolute sovereignty - no one can interpret or dictate what God means or says
  - b. Men and Women are as significant as grains of sand in the big picture of life
  - c. There is no freewill - you are predestined to be the person you are
  - d. Predestination / Election: You place in life (regardless of good or bad) is already determined when you are born. Your success on Earth mirrors your place in the afterlife. This idea is favorable with the wealthy and not so much with the poor.
- III. **Significance of John Calvin:**
  - a. Believes in hard work and good actions
  - b. His beliefs are socially divisive = Upper classes feel wonderful about their place in life but lower classes feel terrible and left out

## **SIMILARITIES BETWEEN LUTHER AND CALVIN:**

1. Protestant-based theology
2. Denied autonomy of the Pope
3. Required and encouraged independent knowledge of scripture = no longer taking the word of the church but instead are encouraging a "do it yourself" attitude towards understanding religion for yourself
4. Requirement of hard work and the serving of God to the best of your ability (being a good person)

**THINK:** *How could you discuss and compare the theology (major beliefs) of Martin Luther and John Calvin AND assess their significance?*