

Prior to 1517, the Church had drifted away from its moorings and introduced many errors. Earlier John Wycliff and John Huss had attempted to correct many errors in the Church, but it was for Martin Luther to start a movement to lead the Church back to the Bible for its sole source of authority.

It was the last straw when Rome began raising funds by selling “indulgences.” Indulgences were guaranteed to release the souls of those who had died and presumably lived in a place called “purgatory.” Luther said that forgiveness cannot be bought or sold by the church. And he disagreed that a place called purgatory actually exists.

On October 31st, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg church. He wanted to debate this list of 95 errors with the leading theologians of the time, but the Pope in Rome would have no part in honest debate. This led to the division of the church between Protestants and Catholics.

Theologians from many denominations regarded Luther as their Spiritual father, because he led them back to the Bible and explained many principles which are our common heritage as Protestant Christians. John Calvin regarded Luther as his spiritual father. John Wesley credits Luther’s Preface to the Book of Romans as the time that he became a saved Christian. John Knox of Scotland and John Cox of England were avid readers of Luther’s writings.