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Martin Luther's Toilet Flushed Out  
By *Rossella Lorenzi, Discovery News*

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**Oct. 25, 2004** — German archaeologists have discovered the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation — a stone toilet on which the constipated Martin Luther wrote the Ninety-Five Theses that launched the creation of Europe's Protestant churches.

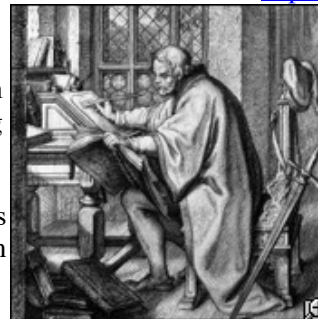


Martin Luther: Toilet Writer

Scholars had always known that the 16th-century religious leader suffered from acute constipation and spent hours in contemplation on the toilet seat.

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"Luther refers to a secretus locus monachorum hypocaustum or cloaca; that is the monk's secret place, the sweat chamber or the toilet," the late American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson wrote in his best selling book "Young Man Luther."



Another Possible Writing Spot?

Despite Luther's candid account of his daily battle, nobody knew the location of his "cloaca" (Latin for sewer) where he made his reformatory discovery.

"We just had no idea where this sewer was," Stefan Rhein, the director of the Luther Memorial Foundation, told reporters.

"Luther refers to a secretus locus monachorum hypocaustum or cloaca; that is the monk's secret place, the sweat chamber or the toilet."

The "secret place" of constipation and revelation remained unknown until excavation work to plant a garden in the grounds of Luther's house in Wittenberg, south-west of Berlin, brought to light an annex of his house.

Among the remains, the archaeologists found a nine-by-nine meter (about 30 by 30 feet) room, a vaulted ceiling, and a niche with the

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(about 50-by-50 foot) room, a vaulted ceiling, and a niche with the 450-year-old toilet.

Though it was made of stone blocks, the toilet was very advanced for its time, featuring a 30-centimeter-square (about 12 inches) seat with a hole and a cesspit attached to a drain.

According to Rhein, the finding represents an important human side of Luther, on whose texts scholars concentrated for centuries.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), a priest who taught biblical theology at Wittenberg University, is credited with starting the Reformation when he nailed his 95 Theses to the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517.

Among other things, the Theses attacked papal abuses and the selling of indulgences by church officials, saying that salvation is granted because of faith, not money.

Under the religious leader, and with the support of German princes, a large number of Christians split from the Roman Catholic Church.

Along with the toilet, the archaeologists also found the remains of a floor heating system — an advanced feature that might have made Luther's time in the lavatory a bit more comfortable.

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