

The Birthday of Martin Luther  
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**THE BIRTHDAY OF LUTHER  
OBSERVED WITH IMPRESSIVE  
CEREMONIES EVERYWHERE**

***SERVICES IN HONOR OF THE  
MEMORY OF THE REFORMER IN  
THIS CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD –  
CELEBRATION ELSEWHERE***

November 11, 1883  
*New York Times*, p. 2

Five thousand Lutherans and members of other evangelical churches crowded Steinway Hall until there was absolutely neither sitting or standing room left last evening. Several hundred more failed to obtain admission at all. The occasion of this vast gathering was the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. The celebration was under the management of the Martin Luther Society of New York, and was a successful introduction to the more strictly religious celebration of today. There were no special decorations in the crowded hall – simply a plaster bust of Martin Luther crowned with a laurel wreath, standing on a pedestal in the rear of the speaker's desk. Terraced seats in the rear of the stage were occupied by a brass band, who in conjunction with the large organ furnished an accompaniment for two of Luther's hymns, "Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy word," and "A Mighty Fortress is our God," which were sung by the entire audience.

Assemblyman Jacob F. Miller presided, and seated on the stage about him were about 100 invited guests, principally clergymen. Among these were Judges Noab Davis, Van Hoosen, Van Vorst, Van Brunt, and Shea, the Hon. John Jay, ex-surrogate Delano C. Calvin, F. R. Thurber, H. K. Thurber, W. E. Dodge, Luther R. Marsh, the Rev. Drs. Boswell D. Hitchcock, Chas. F. Deems, Philipp

Scharff, J. P. Newman, A. C. Weddekind, J. R. Tresidder, Brown, Scudder, Armitage, MacArthur, Tuttle R. S. Storrs, J. H. Oerter, and nearly all the pastors of the Lutheran churches in this City.

The exercises were opened by the organ and orchestra uniting in a prelude composed of themes from Luther's chorales. Prayer was offered by the Rev. J. M. Reimensnyder of the Church of St. James. The Rev. F. F. Buermeier of the Church of the Epiphany, read the forty-sixth Psalm and the audience joined in singing "Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word." Assemblyman Miller then introduced the orator of the evening, the Rev. Dr. Joseph S. Seiss of Philadelphia. He spoke for two hours so entertainingly of Luther's life, character, and work as to hold the attention of the vast audience from his first utterance to the close of his memorial. Un-commanded, he said, nations today unite in commemorating the birth of a mere man in a little Saxon town 400 years ago. It is no ordinary spectacle. All meet to celebrate the birth of one whose worth and services the celebrations combined have scarce the capacity to tell. This is because he was one of the men whom other man can scarcely get high enough to measure. Because of Luther, human history took a new departure. He was the leader of one of the two greatest epochs in the world's history. Attila and his warriors wrought bloody desolation and won success in overthrowing the Caesars; Luther wrought a blessed renovation, and gave to the world human happiness and blessedness. Luther found the power of papacy beyond the reach of all law and power, with the Pope its centre – the alleged vicar of God, defying Kings,

Emperors, theologians, and nations, who in the name of right, virtue, and religion were trying to reform the Roman Court and rid the world of its terrible oppression. The hierarchy overwhelmed all remedial attempts, and held by the throat the struggling world. Half the world today celebrates the birth of the humble Thuringian, who, single-handed, set suffering nations free, conquered the ignorance and imposture of thousands of years, and enabled men to throw off the shackles of religious slavery and acknowledge their allegiance to the supreme authority of the clear and unadulterated Word of God rather than to the hierarchy of Rome first and to God next. The depth and magnitude of the great Reformation, the speaker said, was not easy to comprehend. Its seat was in the conscience of man its spring was in the soul. It was not a mere negative to a hierarchy, save in giving to man the right to acknowledge the obligations of his soul to his Maker instead of to human authority. Luther was a devout and earnest Papist, but until he found a personal God and Saviour outside the pale of Rome he was dissatisfied. There found, the Reformation was born in Luther's soul, the foundation rock of a new world was reached, and religious liberty was attained. When Luther on Oct. 31, 1517, nailed to the cathedral door at Wittenberg his 95 theses, the hammer-strokes which affixed the parchment were the power which started the Alpinelike avalanche which overthrew Rome and struck down an apparently invincible power. Had Luther been a smaller man he would have been ruined by the attention given him, by the trust imposed in him. He was equal to the occasion, a power in the hands of God, whose acts turned the tide

in the sea of human thinking. Truth had through him once more raised its head in Europe, and Rome could not crush it down. Civil as well as religious liberty were the fruits of his battle – the greatest single-handed fight the world had ever known except that of Christ.

The speaker then reviewed the life and methods of Luther, graphically describing his heroic deeds when he defied Rome and its power, which he characterized as the application of the brakes to the Juggernaut of usurpation, as the deeds which once more started the pulsations of liberty, civil and religious, in the arteries of man, and gave to the world a church without a Pope and a State without an inquisition. He fought as few men had ever fought, but the only sword he ever used was the sword of the spirit the Word of God. He was the most potently living of all men who ever lived, the man who left a greater impression on the German nation than any other, as Papists, a theists, Liberalists, and religionists all admit. To begin a minority of one and conquer a church, a power almost super-human, with only the sword in his mouth, was a sublimity of achievement deserving of all the homage which could be paid to his memory.

A large portrait of Martin Luther, draped with German and American flags, hung against the wall above the pulpit in St. Matthew's English Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, last night. Over the portrait in blazing gas-jets were the numerals and the words, "1483 – Eizleben – 1883," and on either side of the portrait glistened in golden letters the words, "Wittenberg" and "Worms." A profusion of tropical plants and freshly

cut flowers added to the attractiveness of the pulpit, and in various parts of the auditorium were displayed in many bright colored Sunday-school banners and red, white, black, and blue bunting. The assembly that had come together in this church to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther was much larger than the building could comfortably accommodate. Not only was the body of the church crowded, but the doorways and hallways were completely blocked with people.

The large congregation was made up principally of elderly people, many well-known German citizens of Brooklyn being present. The Rev. J. O. Zimmerman, Pastor of the church, directed the exercises, and with him on the platform were the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, the Rev. Dr. Henry J. Van Dykem, the Rev. Dr. A. J. F. Behrends, the Rev. Dr. G. F. Behringer, the Rev. Dr. J. O. Peck, the Rev. J. B. Thomas, the Rev. J. K. Funk, and the Rev. Dr. Justin D. Fulton. An opening prayer was made by Dr. Behrends, and the Pastor spoke very briefly of Martin Luther's life and character. Dr. Behringer delivered a graceful address on "Luther at Wittenberg," and the Rev. Dr. Funk read letters from the Rev. S. Irenaeus Prime, Edward Everett Hale, Edward P. Roe, the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, and the Rev. J. M. Buckley. Music by the church choir followed, and during the evening the efforts of the choir were enhanced by the Brooklyn Saengerbund, under the leadership of William Groeschel.

Dr. Van Dyke spoke of "Luther at Worms," and described in language of impressive fervor his noble and

courageous hearing before the imposing Diet. The issue was between an infallible Book and the infallible church, and Luther believed in the infallible Book. Dr. Peck then spoke of "Martin Luther and the Open Bible." He said that God raised up Martin Luther to undo the work of half-heathen and godless men who had almost extinguished the light of God's Book. Luther insisted that the Bible was God's message to humanity, and that the people of every nationality had a right to read it in their mother tongue. An ancient Lutheran hymn was then sung by the Brooklyn Saengerbund, who were warmly applauded. The Rev. J. B. Thomas, in speaking of "Luther's Genius," said that the great German reformer came into the world to meet an emergency. He shocked the delicate sensibilities of some, but he left an imprint upon the world's history that the ages could never erase.

A vigorous round of applause greeted the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher as he stood up to begin his address on "Luther and Our Civil Liberty." Mr. Beecher opened the large Bible which rested on the stand in front of him, saying he did so: "I am not going to take a text. I scorn a man who would take advantage of his fellow-creatures because he happens to be in the pulpit. I open the Bible because I shall have occasion to refer to the fourteenth chapter of Romans, which I regard as embodying the spirit of all true, organized, free, Government." From the standpoint of political economy a man's reputation must be measured by what he does, said Mr. Beecher. We cannot give a person his or her proper place in history until we ascertain correctly what he or she has

done. Some persons work hard all their lives, but they give nothing to their fellow-creatures. More than half of the human family eat up more than they give out, and part of the time they have to gnaw on somebody else's loaf.

[Laughter.] Ten thousand times ten thousand men live on what other people produce. What Luther gave out for the benefit of mankind helped all classes of people, both the producers and the non-producers. He gave the Bible to his fellow-creatures, and by so doing he taught the gospel of love to all the world. Nobody could be sensible of God's love for him without trying to live a worthier life. Mr. Beecher believed that there were a great many people on earth who had no chance of getting into the better world. They were indifferent to the Word of God. They had no Sundays, no churches, no Sunday-schools, and no Bible. Before the Reformation the leaders of the Church of Rome lived up to the theory that men as individuals had no value. It was only as component parts of the organization that men had any value. They were good to make great churches of but taken singly they had no standing whatever before God. It was Martin Luther's glorious task to correct this erroneous theory. He taught mankind the truth of the Scriptures that each man should give an account of himself to God. The value of man's individuality in his relations to God was in reality the foundation of Protestantism. That was the difference between the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The first named church said to every one of its members, "You have an individual responsibility to God," but the Romish Church said to its members, "You should have no individual conscience;

the church has a corporate conscience and a corporate responsibility to God; put your conscience in with the corporate conscience of your church."

It was the doctrine of the individuality and dignity of each citizen, Mr. Beecher said, that formed the fundamental principles of a free civil government. Each man had his own individuality, and, of course, some men were of much greater importance than others. For instance, anybody could write on a slip of paper: "Thirty days after date I promise to pay \$500," but let William H. Vanderbilt sign his name to such a paper and it would acquire an indisputable value. Mr. Beecher concluded his brief remarks by a eulogy of Luther.

The Young Men's Christian Association of Brooklyn last evening listened to a lecture in Association Hall on the "Life and Character of the Great Reformer" by the Rev. J. C. Stockbridge, of Providence, R.I. A large audience assembled in the hall, and before the lecture sang hymns, being led by the Young Men's Christian Association orchestra and choir, under the direction of E. P. Ide. After a prayer by the Rev. Dr. Stoddard, Mr. Francis H. Stuart spoke a few words concerning the celebration, and then introduced the speaker of the evening. Dr. Stockbridge gave a short history of Luther's early life, and then took up his struggles in the convent, the time of his life which was most important, as upon the struggle then depended the Reformation. The more Luther struggled by works to effect his peace with God, the speaker said, the harder that struggle was, and it was only when he began to view God as merciful that his mind obtained rest and peace.

The Independent Catholics of Brooklyn celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of the birthday of Martin Luther last evening in Music Hall, at Flatbush and Fulton avenues. There was no programme (sic), but the exercises consisted of singing of hymns and short addresses. The principal speakers were Bishop McNamara and Father Gaegan.

A celebration was also held at Lyric Hall last evening, under the auspices of the Orangemen of this City. About 400 persons were present. The Rev. William Lloyd delivered an interesting address upon the life work of Luther, who he characterized as one of God's noblest sons and most faithful servant. "His life," added the speaker, "closed with the glow of the sunset of finished work. Though he has been dead 400 years he is still speaking to us to-night." Remarks were also made by Oliver Tims and Stephen Munn.

The German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Emanuel, of Eighty-seventh Street, Yorkville, began a celebration last evening with a sermon by the Rev. A.E. Frey, and was followed by confession and communion. There will be a similar service this morning with solo and choir singing. In the evening a meeting will be held in Parepa Hall, Eighty-sixth Street and Third Avenue, where addresses will be made by the Rev. L. Halfmann and J. Miller, and there will be solo, duet, choir, and congregational singing. To-morrow the parish school will have a festival, and on Tuesday Mr. Halfmann will lecture on Luther's life. Wednesday will be the Sunday-school festival, on Thursday a meeting of the confirmed and young

members will be held, and on Friday the celebration will close with divine service and a sermon by the Rev. J. P. Beyer, of the Missouri Synod.

The Rev. Alfred H. Moment will preach on "Luther and the Reformation" at the Spring Street Presbyterian Church this morning. At 2:30 in the afternoon there will be a Sabbath-school jubilee, at which an address will be delivered on the boyhood of Luther.

The German Evangelical Lutheran churches of New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City and suburbs will have a festival service in German in Steinway Hall, in this City at 7 o'clock this evening. The Rev. W. J. Mann, of Philadelphia, will be present to speak.