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ART I.—*Die Kirchengeschichte des 18 und 19 Jahrhunderts, aus dem Standpunkte des evangelischen Protestantismus betrachtet, in einer Reihe von Vorlesungen, von Dr. K. R. Hagenbach.* Leipzig. 8vo. Vol. I. 1848. pp. 511. Vol. II. 1849. pp. 467.

OTHER works of Dr. Hagenbach have made him sufficiently known as a writer of comprehensive views and unusual sprightliness. This, rather than what the Germans love to call depth, is at the bottom of his popularity. Yet he is decidedly a German; looking on the world's history and the world's geography as finding their central region in central Europe; but with a kindly, liberal, and even all-embracing welcome to the rest of the earth. Without being a Hegelian, or even in all details a follower of Schleiermacher, he shows both in nomenclature and opinion the influence of the modern philosophy. Without being one of the churchly orthodox, or anything like a Puritan, he has a warm side towards pietism, and even goes to insular Great Britain, to seek and applaud what is good in Methodists. So far as sentiment, feeling and philanthropy are extant in evangelical religion, he gives it his hand, and is

ART. V.—*The Life of Luther; with Special Reference to its Earlier Periods, and the Opening Scenes of the Reformation.*  
By Barnas Sears, D. D. Philadelphia. American Sunday School Union. 1850. 12mo. & 18mo. pp. 528.

THERE is certainly not in our language, if indeed in any other, a compendious Life of Luther, which is so truly founded on original authorities as this. For certain purposes, and for a certain class of readers, Michelet's sprightly book is serviceable, and it is made up in a good degree of materials drawn from the Reformer's own times, and generally from his own words. But how is it possible for the great champion of gracious justification to be portrayed by one, however gifted or faithful, who has not the slightest love for his chief truths? The English biographies were in the first instance made out of the Latin annals; and for two centuries they have copied one another. Presbyterian scholars of the older sort are familiar with the names of the venerable works we mean; Spalatin, Myconius, Sleidan, Scultetus and Seckendorf, among historians; and Melanthon, Cochlaeus, Selncecer, and Melchior Adam, among biographers, strictly so called. We purposely omit those who wrote in German, from the excellent Mathe-sius downwards. To these our popular compilers have had small recourse, which may account for the loss of interest which has befallen every paragraph or utterance of Luther, which they introduce. Translations of translations have in some instances reduced the knotty, savoury sayings of Luther to the tamest platitudes, if not to sheer nonsense. What is worse, errors of fact have been propagated, in book after book, deviating more and more from the truth as the stream became more remote from the original sources. Large tracts of time, including momentous portions of experience, have been passed over in silence. External transactions of comparative insignificance, or apocryphal anecdotes, have filled the place which ought to have been occupied by the struggles of Luther out of the monkish cell into gospel liberty.

The case has indeed been different in Germany, especially since the celebration of the third centennary of the Reforma-

tion, which gave rise to a surprising number of works relating to that period. Within a few years many new biographies of Luther have appeared, and the indefatigable German scholars and antiquaries have exemplified their herculean power of rummaging libraries, deciphering manuscripts and verifying dates. Shorter and livelier books have been issued, with and without illustrations, in profusion, with every diversity of tendency and predilection. To the proper biographies we must add all those church histories, general and special, which include the Reformation period; and the very literature of this one subject, as is well known, would fill a whole number of our work. Marheineke's History of the Reformation, a work without rival or parallel among modern objective histories, is in reality a life of Luther; and Merle d' Aubigné's excellent volumes give more space to the topic than to any other. Yet, with the exception of the last, English literature has sustained little modification from all these streams of continental discovery, and presents nothing better than the honest but cumbrous accumulations of the Milners and their continuator. We have intimated, moreover, that, with scarcely an exception, the English memoirs, even when most elaborate, derive all their material in the way of extract and correspondence from writings in the Latin language. How well soever this might do, in cases where Luther and his coevals wrote in Latin, it plainly left untouched that greater and richer magazine of works and letters in his incomparable and untranslatable German. Even after the appearance of the entire correspondence of Luther, as edited by De Wette with singular care and skill of critical collation,\* and after repeated editions of his works, including that of the late lamented and pious Otto von Gerlach, the English press, teeming with reprints and epitomes, brought to light no single biography drawn from direct and thorough research. England, it may safely be said, has no such work; and for the nearest approach to it she, as well as America, must be indebted to the American Sunday School Union.

The author of this memoir is an eminent minister of the Baptist Church in Massachusetts, well known both as a pro-

\* See Review in our volume for 1830, p. 504.

fessor and editor, and also by numerous publications connected with literary subjects. For any work relating to the Evangelical Churches of the Continent he may claim a fitness possessed by few in America; for he enjoyed remarkable advantages in some of the German capitals of learning and theology, and has added to the stores thus acquired by assiduous study, directed particularly to the numerous works connected with the German Reformation. We ought to add that he has one qualification which has been wanting in most who have previously undertaken to deal with the life of the Reformers, to wit, a thorough acquaintance with the structure and development of the German language, founded on the examination of its more ancient form. How necessary this is will be apparent to those who reflect that by far the larger part of the documents to be consulted for such a work as this are not only in this tongue, but in that transition-form of it which marks the passage to the newer German, to which Luther above all men gave the forming hand. In every part of Dr. Sears's labours, we have occasion to verify this statement, in observing the exactness of his apprehension, his discrimination of words, his recognition of idioms no longer prevalent, and his adroit exactness in giving the corresponding English phrases. If he sometimes fails, it is in the attempt to achieve what we regard as an impossibility, the reproduction of old German diction by similar archaisms in English, the consequence being a mingling of the style of two or even three different periods.

This is, so far as we remember, the most elegant typographical product of the Sunday School press, being adorned with steel engravings, besides more than twenty vignettes and other illustrations in the letter-press. The portrait of Luther is the most agreeable we have ever seen. Those of his wife and of Melancthon are little less so; both appear to be from plates executed in Germany. The interior of Luther's chamber is worthy of being purchased separately. Then we have, from an authentic source, views of the Augusteum or University showing Melancthon's house; Luther's old monastery; the parochial church of Wittenberg; the castle of Wartburg, and the Reformer's famous seal.

It is pleasing to observe how fully and zealously Dr. Sears takes the side of orthodox Christianity in his narrative. Even where there is no heresy, nor even error, a biographer may betray the cause by artful selection, disproportionate amplification, in a word by the *suppressio veri*. In these respects the author gives the chief place to religion, to saving truth, and to those parts of truth which are the object of faith, and which, as he shows, were the germinating principles of the Lutheran Reformation. Hence his account of the young Reformer's experience, on all those points which tended to make him a reformer, is searching and complete beyond what we have anywhere read. And the friends of old-time theology will be rejoiced to know that a book for the youth of America (perhaps of other countries) gives no uncertain sound on the vital subjects of original sin, atonement and justification. It is surprising to find that after several centuries of research so many errors should be still copied from book to book, respecting the early life and conversion of the reformer. These are corrected in numerous instances by the author, and in such a way as to remove all doubt. In much of this service he has been aided by the indefatigable research of Jürgens, whose work on Luther has extended to three octavo volumes. Among points of interest, thus cleared by Dr. Sears, may be specified the worldly condition of Luther's father, misapprehended by Michelet; the relations of the young monk to Staupitz; and the dates and stages of his gradual illumination.

The only dissatisfaction which any reader will be likely to feel, is that there is a certain disproportion in the parts of the work, the last twenty years being despatched in less than sixty pages, out of five hundred, as the law of the composition. This is fairly avowed in the title page, where we are told it is "with special reference to its earlier periods and the opening scenes of the reformation." There are also several obvious reasons why this course should have been pursued, among which is the fact that the whole of Luther's later life presents him in a new character, in consequence of the polemics induced by the sacramentarian differences. As a whole, the work is one which takes a high rank among the biographies of Luther, and promises to be the instrument of incalculable good, in the promotion of evangelical orthodoxy.