

of men, no one century and no dozen of centuries would suffice for such a task. The Reformers got back to Paul or to some part of him. In some respects they even passed beyond him, namely, in their hearty recognition of the common human life, the family, the State, and the daily business by which we make our bread. But in some other respects they did not even touch the fringe of his garment. They were conservative, like all deeply religious natures, pious towards the past, for all their innovations. Their horizon was very limited in some ways. They were all of them, for instance, quite convinced of the impiety of Galileo's views: they thought a belief in the Ptolemaic astronomy indispensable to salvation. They knew a good deal of rough Latin, but very little Greek or Hebrew. No wonder; they could not possibly sow the seed and reap the harvest. They laid the foundation which made possible that superstructure of our knowledge, which could not possibly be theirs, and but for them would never have been ours. "That they without us should not be made perfect." Or rather, a certain life and spirit came to birth in them which has grown to supersede much of what in them it produced. We may be dwarfs, but we stand on the broad backs of the giants, and can see further than they could. Besides, they were timid. They shrank back from the tremendously revolutionary consequences of their own liberation of the individual. Slaves who have still the blue mark of their chains on their wrists and ankles will always make a wild use of their new liberty. The Peasants' War and John of Leyden were too much for Luther. He thought the world must be coming to an end, that he had before his eyes the last diabolic flaring up of the nether fires. He half-recoiled after boldly stepping forward, and left an external authority standing in place of the bondage he had overthrown, the letter of the Bible. The fiery serpents of the wilderness made him face backwards towards the land of Egypt. But this was a very different thing all the same—a living book which he at least read in an intensely living, if somewhat one-sided, way—a book which contained the winnowed literature of a whole great and unique people,