

seemed important that human wisdom and philosophy should have a fair opportunity to see how much they could do to reform and elevate society without Christianity. Hence God laid the foundation of the Grecian states, and gave to Solon and Lycurgus a fair field for trying the experiment. It was tried most thoroughly ; and if severe discipline, elegant literature, sagacious philosophy, and refinement of manners could have secured freedom and virtue in connection with polytheism, the work would have been accomplished in Greece. But her vaunted liberty was, after all, only the freedom of an aristocratic few, while the majority were the most abject slaves. And so it was with her literature and her arts. Though she has left many monuments of refinement and learning, yet the great mass of her inhabitants were brutalized, trampled under foot by the few, degraded by immorality and superstition, and ignorant of the true God. And even the wisest of her philosophers has left us a fine comment on his theoretical theism, by directing, in his dying moments, a sacrifice to be made to Æsculapius. He has left us, too, his despairing and impressive conviction, that if God did not vouchsafe to give a revelation, vain would be every effort to reform and elevate the mass of men. In short, so well had God's providence adapted the agents and the circumstances, that the experiment never need be repeated, to show how utterly impossible it is for man to rise to an elevated condition of true liberty or virtue under the dominion of polytheism and of philosophy alone.

We may not be able to understand all the reasons why God permitted so disastrous an eclipse to come over the world in what are called the dark ages ; but we can often see how wonderfully adapted were the agencies which he employed to relieve religion of its incubus, and open a new career for