

elucidates obscurities, and enables him to affix to particular passages a meaning which a detached view of them did not seem to authorize.

In many cases, indeed, the word of God is the only interpreter of itself. Being gradually communicated to the church, during a course of ages, and containing the instructions of the Deity, interwoven with the history of his peculiar people, its various parts allude so frequently to those past and future events which are the subject of scriptural statement, that, without a knowledge of these, many particular passages cannot be understood. Besides, you will recollect that the path of the church has been the path of progressive illumination. Those views of the divine will which were communicated to the church under former dispensations of grace, were, both in plainness in statement and extent of knowledge, inferior to the means of instruction which we enjoy; and, on this account, the light of the latter days of the church, may be profitably employed to elucidate the obscurities of early scriptures. Nor are the first parts of revelation of less utility for explaining the last. A variety of the forms of expression contained in the New Testament, are derived from the preceding history of the church. In many instances, also, the phraseology of the old dispensation has been still retained. Many passages, therefore, require a reference to the more ancient records of revelation: and to this comparison of scripture with scripture, as a part of study, I would particularly direct your attention. It will afford you not only an extensive knowledge of the meaning of scripture, but enlarged views of christian doctrine, and a richness of illustration and proof, which you cannot otherwise acquire.

As yet your knowledge of the word of God has been principally obtained through the medium of translation. The previous part of your education, however, enables you now to peruse it in those languages in which it was at first delivered to the church; and this, I would recommend to you, as a productive means of improvement. In suggesting the utility of this exercise, I would not be supposed to insinuate that our common version of the Scriptures is badly executed. In the course of my own studies, I have attended considerably to biblical research; and, as far as I know, it is excelled by none. Many have attempted to expose what they conceived to be its inaccuracies; and some, to produce a more correct translation; but no substitute of equal excellence has ever appeared. Other versions of scripture may contain elucidations of particular passages, for which they deserve to be consulted; but, in retaining the spirit of the original, they are all more defective. Our