

repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ, must be first and frequently and thoroughly taught. We must not ordinarily go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach them the perfection, that have not learned the first principles of religion: for, as Gregory of Nyssa¹ saith: 'We teach not infants the deep precepts of science, but first letters, and then syllables, &c. So the guides of the Church do first propound to their hearers certain documents, which are as the elements; and so by degrees do open to them the more perfect and mysterious matters.' Therefore did the Church take so much pains with their catechumens, before they baptized them, and would not lay unpolished stones into the building.

4. Throughout the whole course of our ministry, we must insist chiefly upon the greatest, most certain, and most necessary truths, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach Christ to our people, we shall teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged truths of religion are those that men must live upon, and which are the great instruments of destroying men's sins, and raising the heart to God. We must, therefore, ever have our people's necessities before our eyes. To remember the 'one thing needful' will take us off gauds and needless ornaments, and unprofitable controversies. Many other things are desirable to be known; but this must be known, or else our people are undone for ever. I confess I think NECESSITY should be the great disposer of a minister's course of study and labour. If we were sufficient for everything, we might attempt everything, and take in order the whole Encyclopaedia: but life is short, and we are dull, and eternal things are necessary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious. I confess, necessity hath been the conductor of my studies and life. It chooseth what book I shall read, and tells me when, and how long. It chooseth my text, and makes my sermon, both for matter and manner, so far as I can keep out my own corruption. Though I know the constant expectation of death hath been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the

¹ A Cappadocian Father (4th century).