

best truth God gives him and all of it? The point is entirely mistaken if any one is led to think it a plea for looseness of doctrine or eccentric faith. No man can afford to do without the spiritual humility and mental sobriety that comes from placing his own faith beside the consensus of faith. It is solely a plea for honesty of search and impression, and loyal trust of the Word and Spirit of God.

The personal truth thus discussed is the message of life as well as perception; not simply truth as rational conclusion, but as profound conviction, heart experience. Preaching has been well called "truth through a man." There is no other ground for it or law for it. The incarnation teaches this, and every man who speaks of the Father must follow this Divine order, each in his own degree to the end of time. Why have the oral word at all? Why not let the book and pamphlet and paper take the place of the living voice? Because truth must be embodied and have the personal expression to become permeating. "I have seen, therefore have I spoken," is the Divine law of it. The experimental test is the real test. We cannot know it until we have tried to do it, and we cannot speak it with any persuasive power save as it comes from our life. What a word of humility is this! What a searcher of the heart! What a teacher of sincerity and charity and all openness of heart and life! A blessed and solemn responsibility is it to stand before men and say: "Come, my brothers, this is the Father's word: it has sounded through my own nature, and I have felt its purifying power. Open your natures to it, and you also shall have the witness of the sons of God." Here is the whole philosophy of preaching; and I might add, the whole philosophy of training for preaching. It is the making of a man. It is the getting the whole man open to truth, and then making the whole man vocal of truth.

This is not a plea for the autobiographical style of preaching, in which every truth is illustrated by personal experience, in which the hearer is led to measure and limit truth by a single and often narrow experience, in which so much of the rich variety and largeness of the Christian life is lost. It is not the man who forces the facts of his personal history upon our thought that infuses the most of his spirit into our life. It is no mechanical joining of truth and person that gives to preaching its best personal quality; rather the finer and subtler infusion of the truth through the person that magnifies the truth. Then, to use the figure of another, "the truth goes forth as the shot goes, carrying the force of the gun with it, but leaving the gun behind." John Bunyan tells us in his autobiography that he preached the truth that he was experiencing at the time, and so his word always had the freshness of discovery. You may not find a single personal allusion in Robertson's sermons, but they are all personal in this nobler sense: the truth stronger because he had thought it; the feeling more vivid because he had felt it. "These, my friends," Charles Kingsley would often say, "are real thoughts. They are what come into people's