

It may be that the existence of parties in Church and State is a necessity, and we need not determine this question. But no one will deny that party feeling is an erroneous obstacle to the formation of true opinions. Even in the judgment of matters of fact, the most opposite results are arrived at by different men when the proofs presented are the same. The simple explanation of the matter is to be found in the fact that one party is determined to believe all the alleged facts simply because they consider them helpful to their own party interests, while the other party, for a similar reason, determine that they are not to be believed.

Is there, then,—it may be asked— to be no loyalty to party? The answer ought to be very simple: loyalty to party must always be subordinate to loyalty to truth. The greatest philosopher of antiquity (he was a heathen, but how much might Christians learn from him!) set for the certain opinions which, he said, were at variance with the teaching of Plato. It was true, he said, that Plato was his friend; but truth was a still dearer friend. Is it not sad that the disciples of Jesus should need to go to Aristotle to learn a lesson so simple, so fundamental? Loyalty to truth is loyalty to God. Loyalty to party, when it is opposed to truth, is not only disloyalty to God, it is disloyalty to man and to the conscience itself. Be loyal to your party when the only sacrifice is your own private feelings or your own private interests. But there must be limits to such loyalty. When your party deserts its principles, when it deserts truth, God, humanity, then be true to yourself, whatever it may cost you.

5: There is one question which demands consideration in connection with the general subject now before us. We refer to the *changing of opinion*.

It is a subject on which it is easy

enough to lay down general principles which cannot be gainsaid; and yet it is a subject on which there is often great difficulty in applying those principles. For instance, we can say, without hesitation, that it is lawful to change one's opinion, and in certain cases it is necessary, and our bounden duty. To refuse to change from error to truth is to confess one's stupidity or want of principle. To say that a man is bound through life to adhere to the opinions which he was taught as a child, is not merely to imply that every one is taught opinions sufficiently good for the conduct of his life, but that humanity is incapable of learning or of improvement. It is hardly necessary to refute a theory so monstrous, a theory which some persons are foolish enough to assert, but which no one is unwise enough to act upon.

On the other hand, to be continually changing one's opinion is a sign of inconsiderateness and inconstancy, and it is a proof that our adoption of opinions is of no value. The love of novelty, or an inherent weakness which is incapable of resisting every new impression, may account for such changes, not the love of truth.

But there is another remark which it is no less necessary to offer in this connection. It is quite lawful for a man to change his opinion, and almost every one does so in matters small or great, and sometimes without knowing it; but it is not lawful for a man to hold, at the same time, opinions which are incompatible and mutually contradictory. Nor is this a matter so uncommon as might be supposed; and it arises from the neglect to refer our opinions to deep and universal principles. Instead of basing our judgments upon self-evident truths and the sure teaching of ascertained facts, we allow our conclusions to be determined by sentiment, by passion, by prejudice, by self-interest.