

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

What urges us to proselytize for our opinions. To what extent are we allowed to oppose our opinions to those of others?

An opinion is a result of thinking. An opinion is view held between mere belief and knowledge concerning subjects or things. One who has an opinion about a thing, is distinguishable from those who have either knowledge of or a mere belief concerning the subject matter. One has an opinion because he has thought about the subject. His opinion may be correct or incorrect. Whether it is correct or not will depend upon his premises and method of reasoning, If his reasoning is without prejudice, his opinions will usually be correct, and, even though he start with wrong premises, he will prove them to be wrong in the course of his reasonings. If, however, he allows prejudice to interfere with his reasoning, or bases his premises on prejudices, the opinion which he forms will usually be incorrect.

The opinions a man has formed represent to him the truth. He may be wrong, yet he believes them to be right. In the absence of knowledge, a man will stand or fall by his opinions. When his opinions concern religion or some ideal, he believes that he should stand up for them and feels an impulse to get others to adopt his opinions. Thence comes his proselytizing.

That which urges us to proselytize for our opinions is the faith or knowledge on which our opinions rest. We may also be urged by the desire that others should benefit from that which we consider good. If to one's underlying knowledge and the desire to do good are added personal considerations, the efforts to convert others to one's own opinions may develop fanaticism, and, instead of good, harm will be done. Reason and goodwill should be our guides in proselytizing for our opinions. Reason and good-will allows us to present our opinions in argument, but forbid us to try to compel others to accept them. Reason and good-will forbid us from insisting that others should accept and be converted to our opinions, and they make us strong and honest in the support of what we think we know.

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