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THE FORMATION OF OPINION.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM CLARK, M.A., LL D., TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO.

(Continued from page 253.)

WE may not be able to investigate all the grounds of unbelief, but we may easily test it by practical experience. We have *reason*, we have *conscience* and we have the evidence of its *effects* in human society. We may refuse, for example, to receive as part of Divine Revelation that which is self-contradictory, that which contradicts the fundamental truths of reason. We may refuse to accept as true anything which is repugnant to those moral instincts which God has implanted within us; and we may refuse to believe that a religion which blights instead of blessing the people among whom it is held can represent the unadulterated truth of God.

But in the case of many of our fellow-creatures, we may go further and say that they may quite reasonably act upon opinions which they have the means of testing only by their own life, and by the experience of the narrow circle in which they move. For example, a man may say:

“The religious opinions which I hold are the doctrines and principles which I was taught in my youth. I received them as true, and I have no sufficient means of determining the possibility of defending them on the grounds of reason and history. But one thing I know, that these principles have formed beautiful human characters and lives, lives full of truth and righteousness and goodness and love and devotion. I feel that they strengthen all that is good in me, and keep down everything which is low and base and ignoble, and I, therefore, cling to them as the noblest possession, as the greatest blessing of life.”

Let us be quite clear on this point. There is nothing irrational or unworthy in a man's taking such a view of the principles in which he has been brought up. It may be that such an one has little right to be a controversialist, and it would be well for such if they avoided the thorny paths of religious polemics; but they may