

Notes on Clifford:

2 cases: Ship builder convinces himself the ship is safe, everyone dies. He's blameworthy. Just because everyone died? No—he'd be blameworthy even if everyone lived. He failed in an obligation to found his belief in the soundness of the ship on adequate evidence.

We persecute practitioners of a religion because we convince ourselves that they do horrible things, and we go out trying to convince others of this. A commission finds out that we're wrong—and that we could have easily found this out by looking into it a little. Even though we believed the practitioners were bad guys, we've done moral wrong by holding our beliefs on insufficient evidence. Even if the commission verified that the practitioners *were* bad guys, we'd be in the moral wrong all the same.

Objection: It's the *result* of the unjustified belief that makes it wrong, not the holding of the belief itself. It's not what the shipbuilder allowed himself to *believe*, but what he *did* as a result.

Reply: No. You can't condemn the act stemming from the belief without criticizing the holding of the belief. "The existence of a belief not founded on fair inquiry unfits a man for the performance of this necessary duty."

Why think this?

1. It weakens the overall set of beliefs that we hold, and makes us less likely to "get it right" when we're trying to make decisions.
2. Any real belief influences the actions of the believer—if not right away, then eventually.
3. Our beliefs are part of "an heirloom which every succeeding generation inherits as a precious deposit and a sacred trust to be handed on to the next one." "An awful privilege, and an awful responsibility, that we should help to create the world in which posterity will live." (303)
 - a. **Huh?**

Why did the shipbuilder and persecuter have obligations to justify their beliefs with adequate evidence? "[I]n both these cases the belief held by one man was of great importance to other men. But forasmuch as no belief held by one man, however seemingly trivial the belief, and however obscure the believer, is ever actually insignificant or without its effect on the fate of mankind, we have no choice but to extend our judgment to all cases of belief whatever." (303)

Question the premise about all beliefs having effects on the fate of mankind.

“No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe.” (304)

Why do we believe on in sufficient evidence? “It is the sense of power attached to a sense of knowledge that makes men desirous of believing, and afraid of doubting.” (304)

-Interesting: Not laziness, but the *feeling of believing* that motivates us

Arg: But if we believe without justification, we don't deserve the feeling.
Why? Because we have a duty to “guard ourselves from such beliefs as from pestilence.”

Isn't this circular?

Prudential reason: If I am credulous, then others will lose sufficient respect for me to tell me the truth.

I weaken society, and contribute to its sinking “back into savagery.”

Deep crit:

“IT IS WRONG ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE, AND FOR ANYONE, TO BELIEVE ANYTHING UPON INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.”