

THE MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CAINE MUTINY

(delivered Westfield Rotary, 9/14/54; Springfield Probus, 12/13/54;
Spfld Naval Reserve Supply Officers, 2/8/55)

1. Introduction. (Story: *decide topic... oranges; *repeat speech... 2 rabbis, from memory)

- A. Not a book review. You get enough of that. Probably read the book anyway.
- B. Not a sermon. Not preaching to or at you.
- C. Rather, analysis of some of moral issues with which Wouk deals & which he raises.

2. Several Aspects.

- A. Of course, book has several major aspects: psychological, romantic, adventure, moral.
- B. I am interested primarily moral, think it's something vital each & every one of us.
- C. Central moral problem "Caine" is a conflict.
- D. All great literature has at its center a conflict - like real life.

3. First Step. The Necessity for Discipline.

- A. Keith's first set of experiences aboard CAINE: completely rejects "way of life" aboard vessel. Refuses to accept its particular discipline. Prefers own "Common Sense".
- B. Result of Keith's rejection of De Vries' discipline - gets another one, that of Capt. Queeg.
- C. i.e. point made is that there is no alternative to discipline as such. You can't live completely without discipline. Thus, Judaism is a discipline of life. So is idolatry. So is Communism. Science a discipline of thought. So is Reason. Always must live under some discipline, good or bad.
- D. But without Discipline altogether, Man cannot live in society; his life doesn't make sense and he must become an outcast.
- E. Thus name of boat is CAINE - and as Keefer points out in book, Caine of Bible was an outcast. Reason? - he rejected G-d's discipline, lived undisciplined life.
- F. Thus, first step established - must accept a discipline and follow and obey it.

4. Second Step. The Moral Issue: Conflict of Disciplines.

- A. But the basic moral issue of the CAINEMUTINY is the conflict bet. 2 kinds discipline.
 - 1) Official Discipline - Navy Law and subordination to Rank. Represented by Queeg. (i.e. once signed up in Navy, must accept Navy Law all the way through).
 - 2) Individual Discipline - self-preservation and Common Sense. By antagonists to Queeg. (i.e. no matter of "acceptance", but auto-discipline; listen inner conscience, mind).
- B. During the typhoon, we sympathize fully w Maryk and Keefer, feel certain tragedy if follow Official Discipline. But (if you think back) we're never really sure about it. Maryk - all along voice of conservatism, Ind. Disc. discouraged, now becomes supporter of Ind. Disc. Whereas Keefer, always plugging Ind. Disc., refuses to face Admiral Halsey, thus bears out Official Disc.
- C. This then is the MORAL ISSUE: granted I've accepted Off. Disc., how far must I follow it when my Ind. Disc. rebels and mutineers against it? When is it noble Discipline, and when ignoble Submissiveness?
- D. A very real problem. No easy answers. Blind Off. Disc. - ridiculous. (STORY: *rookie-cop, red-light). And always Ind. Disc. - lawlessness.
- E. Examples of such conflicts: *McCarthy: secret info; *Red China & spies - law or intuition; *Zionists in Rumania. *Frequently - very much so - similar case w Jewish Law.

5. The Solution.

- A. Basically, a matter of interpretation. (STORY: *tickets, anthropology, relics lost race)
- B. But I think my interpretation more than just a guess. What scientists call an "educated guess". Because I know Herman Wouk. Orthodox etc. Tell about him.
- C. Court-Martial itself favors mutineers, vs Queeg, thus for Individual Discipline. At least, so far as to say that use of Ind. Discipline wasn't nonsensical, had basis.
- D. But later see victory of mutineers only by legal shrewdness. After trial, at party, Greenwald supports Queeg, Off. Disc. Also, Keith's letter, after all incidents, that probably Queeg was right after all.
- E. Does that mean that Off. Disc. always to be followed? Every kind Off. Disc. so?
- F. No, otherwise sometimes ridiculous and sometimes tragic. Rather, Greenwald implies that this holds true only when you choose an Off. Disc. for its MORAL NATURE. Moral Nature Navy: protect shores U.S.A., protect mother, i.e. Jewish element.
- G. And where IN PRINCIPLE accept a discipline as a MORAL one, then and only then must it prevail under all conditions, even where I (i.e. Ind. Disc.) don't understand it.
- H. Wouk told me he intended to put on fly-leaf following Talmudic statement:
~~MOSHE BE'DORO~~ YERUBAAL BE'DORO KE'MOSHE BE'DORO, BADAN BE'DORO K'AHARON BE'DORO, YIFTACH BE'DORO KI'SHIMUEL BE'DORO (Tract. Rosh Hashannah, 25b). Moses far greater than Jerubaal, Samuel far superior to Jephtha; yet they represented the same Official Discipline: Torah, and the Word of G-d. The situation is equivalent in the case of the CINE MUTINY: QUEEG BE'DORO KE'DE VRIES BE'DORO, both represent the same MORAL Official Discipline: Navy Law.

6. Conclusion.

- A. Once you have decided to accept a discipline, and live by it, and you have recognized its moral nature, then that is the discipline which must guide you throughout, especially moments of great crisis when temptation greatest to throw off the discipline and live according to your instincts.

That holds true in military life. It holds true in political life. It holds true in international affairs. And, above all, it holds true in matters of Religion.