CASE 10-4: The Resurrection Conspiracy: Blasphemy or Artistic Freedom?

Moral Agent: Samuel Weintraub, independent producer and film distributor

Question: Should Samuel Weintraub distribute *The Resurrection Conspiracy* for Francois Savoir?

Issue: Francois Savoir, a producer of artistic films, has recently produced a film about the alternative account to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. This account begins as a story about the ministry of Jesus on earth, depicting him as a charismatic leader that posed a threat to the Roman authorities. Following the crucifixion, Jesus does not resurrect three days later, but instead the disciples are shown fearful of Roman authorities and determined to continue the legacy that Jesus left by creating a false resurrection that would challenge Roman authority over the Jewish people. Mary Magdalene is a part of this plan as the main one to spread the false gospel. Previously, the French filmmaker has produced other controversial films that earned him enmity from the Catholic Church, thus bringing him to America in another attempt to distribute a controversial film. After producing the film using his own funds and some from investors, being rejected by three major studios, Savoir is looking for a distributor.

Other major figures:
Francois Savior, producer of art films
Michael Shadwell, film critic

SAD Analysis:

**Situation**
- Other major film studios rejected the film
- Film critic, Michael Shadwell, called the film an assault to Christianity
- Previous films by Savoir earned him enmity from the Catholic Church

**Analysis**
- Issue of Weintraub’s belief in freedom of expression
- Weintraub could potentially suffer a financial loss if he is unable to book the film to mainstream movie houses
- Savoir promoted as a political drama and not a historical truth
- Challenges fundamentals of Christian faith
- Issue of Weintraub’s reputation
- Issue of morals for movie patrons
Moral theories:

A) Deontological
   • Duty to take responsibility for actions
   • Duty to respect the morals of people

B) Teleological
   • Morally offensive to people
   • Damage to Weintraub’s credibility as a film distributor
   • Not allowing Savoir to express his work of art

C) Value
   • Weintraub could chose not to distribute the film to avoid a loss
   • Savoir could find another distributor
   • The film will not be produced

Decision

This is a difficult situation simple because Weintraub’s own personal beliefs are included in the decision. Weintraub holds a strong belief in freedom of expression and that no work of art should neglected production based on its offensiveness. He is now in the position to choose whether he wants to make the decision based on his own, strong-held belief or if he should make a decision that would avoid moral offense to others, and an economical loss to his own business.

Given Weintraub’s own personal beliefs on the idea of expression, he understands the importance of a belief and he recognizes that the film would not serve any socially redeeming purpose by speaking negatively of Christian beliefs. While viewers also have the freedom to boycott the film, the distribution of the film will have a negative effect on the media’s reputation and the respect that is held for morals.

Weintraub’s decision to distribute the film will cause undue strife and be harm to others morally, which weighs nearly as heavily as the idea of taking away freedom of expression in art. Weintraub will pay for the decision to distribute the film in the form of his own reputation, his financial stability, and the credibility of media in general. Respecting the morals of others is his duty as a film distributor.