

FIRST AMENDMENT

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Movie night prompts some deep thinking

Friday night is usually “movie night” for Lori and me, with Lori being the “movie-finder,” narrowing our choices to two or three, from which we mutually decide.

The genre for this last one was not for me. I’m not a horror movie

guy. I like to go to bed with pleasant thoughts. But last week was an exception. She found a horror movie that drew me in and kept me focused for two hours.

“Heretic” is not a movie for the faint of heart, not so much for the blood and gore so typical of horror movies but for the suspense this movie maintains throughout the film. It’s more of a suspense thriller, focusing on psychological torment than a typical horror movie.

The object of that tormentor (Mr. Reed, played by Hugh Grant) happens to be two Mormon missionaries. The movie’s writers use Mormonism as a straw man for religion in general. Hugh Grant’s character mounts a formidable frontal attack on all faiths. The arrows, which he fires in a shotgun-like fashion, casts doubt on all religions.

Because it’s a movie (not a documentary on the validity of or abuses in religion), there’s no time to examine flaws in his analogies. Only once does one of the missionaries counterattack, “I think you’re rhetoric is thin...”

Mr. Reed argues forcefully and convincingly. He’s even likable. (But I’m a Hugh Grant fan, anyway.) The audience gets the impression he knows what he is talking about.

“He has a point,” you find yourself thinking.

The writers are correct: If religion is all about control (the old Karl Marx accusation of religion as the “opium of the people”), then the adherents of religion are a deluded mass. And we are in a mess, for then we, the people, become our own higher power, each of us being a god unto ourselves, with the result that “right” and “wrong” mush into matters of personal preference.

As Fyodor Dostoevsky famously quipped, “Without God all things are permitted.” For the sadistic character Grant plays, what is permitted is frightening but no worse than the actions of many demented religious misleaders through the centuries.

It’s become an

accepted truth that we each choose our own truth and that becomes

truth. But that assumption points to something beyond ourselves, for it begs the question: Where did the idea of truth come from? If truth is not eternal, we contradict

ourselves in our denial.

As philosopher Ronald Nash said, “Any denial of the eternity of truth turns out to be an affirmation of its eternity.”

Exploring the notion of eternal ideas presents the atheist with the bigger problem:

explaining the existence of stuff and where it came from. Before the “Big Bang” ever “banged, what was? Go back even further: Try wrapping your mind around nothing. How did something come from nothing, existence from non-existence?

For the Apostle Paul, it all comes together in Christ, who was before all things and in whom His creation “holds together” (Colossians 1:16-17), inviting us into eternal Truth through his life, death, and resurrection.

Religions can become exercises in trying to reach God by acts and rituals that presumably please God, and, in so doing, evolve into complex systems of controlling others where its respective adherents step on each other on the way up the ladder.

But Christ is about having a relationship. Religion says, “Do,” while Christ says, “Done.” Religions require more and more to make ourselves right: do this, don’t do that, can’t you read the sign? Christ says, “Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The irony of ironies is that’s where the work begins, for following Christ is no easy business; dying daily to self and taking up the cross is humanly impossible; it’s a supernatural act of God’s grace.

As C.S. Lewis said, “If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don’t recommend Christianity.”

Maybe it’s too much to ponder for movie night. Maybe I should pick the movie for next time.

Mary Poppins, anyone?

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DAVID B. WHITLOCK
LIFE MATTERS

Opinion

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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Passage of HB 368 will harm communities and newspapers

BY JANE ASHLEY PACE

Every county in Kentucky has one local business that has been there longer than any other, most more than a century — while some are even closing in on two centuries.

In many of these counties, that business is the local newspaper.

I manage two of those local newspapers. The Oldham Era which is looking forward to celebrating our 150th anniversary next year. The Henry County Local has been publishing 168 proud years and counting. I also assist regionally with 13 other area newspapers with similar tenures.

Newspapers are the heartbeat of every community in Kentucky. We exist to inform, to raise awareness, to build community, to be the voice of those that can’t always speak for themselves, to cover local government and hold local officials accountable, to help local businesses grow, to enact change, to celebrate achievements and to archive our community’s history.

Our founding fathers felt so strongly about the importance of newspapers and the role we play in communities that we are the only profession explicitly named in the Constitution of the United States of America.

There are three ways in which newspapers have effectively carried out some of our most important roles — covering local government, keeping officials accountable, keeping citizens informed and helping transparency exist: public notices, open meetings and open records.

Without these three in place, knowing how your tax dollars are being spent, what bids are available and being rewarded, what decisions your elected officials are making for you, when meetings are being held and what new ordinances are being considered would not be as easily accessible.

There is currently a bill, HB368, that seeks to remove legal notices

from newspapers and place them on government websites. Websites that are run by the government themselves. What could go possibly go wrong with that?

When a legal ad is placed in a newspaper, it is placed in the local newspaper, dated and cannot be changed after the fact. In addition, it is placed on a website managed by the Kentucky Press Association where all legal notices in Kentucky can be found easily — kypublicnotices.com.

HB368 seeks to have entities including county and city governments place public notices on their own websites. Yet many have only one employee, if any, and can’t even keep their current websites updated. I found one city website in my area that hadn’t been updated with meetings or ordinances since 2020. Two others had very little information, none of the council members listed were current and the monthly meeting time was wrong.

Officials have said they would create their own statewide website for all notices. I would argue they are going to spend a lot more money creating a website we already have created and maintained successfully. Right now, paid legal notices are a very small part of county and city budgets — only 0.16%.

So why change? Is this what is really best for the community?

In counties of 80,000 or more a bill was passed in Kentucky to change the rules of public notices due to the cost of the larger newspapers. Yet, many of those counties, including Boone, Campbell, Fayette, Kenton, Madison and Warren, have decided that newspapers are still the best way to get their notices out and have continued to place them in newspapers despite the change.

Regardless of the county size, public notices should be posted by a third party, and with a newspaper in almost every county (and statewide website already in place) it just makes good, common sense.

Besides the concerns I’ve already addressed, while legal notices are not the only revenue that keep newspapers going — it is a part of it, and some smaller, rural counties could lose their local newspaper if this bill is passed.

A community without a local newspaper is a community without a heartbeat, and countless studies have shown in news deserts across this country that there will be negative, long-term effects for the community.

No, it is not the job of the legislature to keep newspapers running but why are they so against doing something that maintains transparency and at the same time, would hurt some of the oldest local businesses in this state?

I’m not blind to the criticism of the media. I was trained that a journalist is to cover the facts and to try and keep any biases out. I think your local newspapers do a pretty darn good job at still doing that. We have editorial pages that are open for opinions to be shared and topics to be discussed but they are clearly labeled and kept separate from the news content.

Your local newspaper employees are not pushing an agenda. We are actively involved and serving in our communities. We live, work, play and volunteer right alongside our community members. We take our role very seriously and that includes publishing public notices.

Any bill that seeks to change how public notices are handled or diminishes public meetings or public records, is going to be harmful to the community, and your local newspaper, in the long run. I urge you to stand up with your local newspaper and help us keep these three in place.

Jane Ashley Pace, a Campbellsville native, is publisher of the Oldham Era and Henry County Local, a regional advertising manager for Paxton Media and the 2024 president of the Kentucky Press Association.

Remember that we are one nation

I love my family, friends, co-workers and everyone else. This season has highlighted how divided we are. People speak as if their beliefs should be universal. It’s time to reflect and align our beliefs with our actions.

What is important to you? Not what others taught or believe, but what truly matters to you. Consider values like loving kindness, honesty, genuineness, positive attitude and life-long learning. List the values you care about and reflect on how your actions align with them.

Examine where you are aligned with what you care about and where you need to make changes.

If “love” is a belief for you, watch your thoughts and reactions when you disagree or don’t like something.

Recently, I have been in the company of people I care about attempting some “real” conversations only to have reactions of agitation with loud voices. If ever there was a time for “real” conversations it is now. Allow other people’s opinions to be different from yours. If you listen, you just might learn something new.

We are only divided by our beliefs if we choose to be. I’m a Christian/non-Christian; I’m a Democrat/Republican; I’m this color/that color. We are all people and like it



DR. ANGELIA BRYANT

or not, we are in this together. And we will get through this together.

Remember I John 4:18-21: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

Love God and people. Amen.

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