

City seeks answer to 'What's the Big Idea?'

Things are calm in Colorado Springs, but we're in the eye of a hurricane. Next week will end a "perfect storm" of religion, art and public life.

Last Friday saw the release of the movie "Expelled." A few days later, Focus on the Family held a debate on "One Nation Under God." UCCS Theaterworks is presenting "Playboy of the Western World." Next week, "Constantine's Sword" premieres. Whew!

I'll probably have seen "Expelled" by the time you read this. It was a tough call, as I hate giving money to anything having to do with intelligent design. But even though I hope the film dies a horrible death at the box office, I can't tell people to stay away, lest I be accused of membership in the evil "big science" conspiracy. Plus if I don't see it, I can't talk about it from a truly informed perspective. So I'll go.

If you're thinking about going, could I ask a favor? Before you go, invest a half hour of your time with the "Expelled Exposed" Web site: www.expelledexposed.com. It's run by the National Center for Science Education. After all, you didn't take "Fahrenheit 9/11" at face value. Don't take "Expelled" that way either.

I was at Focus' "Under God" debate, ably moderated by Gazette editor Jeff Thomas. I'm ashamed to admit that toward the end, I booed the Focus representative. I'd like to apologize for that, particularly to the nice young lady who had the misfortune to sit next to me. I was a guest in Focus' house, and I should've behaved better.

But when the speaker said he wanted ID taught alongside evolution, I just lost it. Doesn't he read my column? How could he have resisted my awe-inspiring acumen and artful argument, the persuasive power of my perspicacious prose? Sigh.

Speaking of bad audience behavior, Synge's "Playboy of the Western World" started a riot when it premiered a century ago. Synge gave up Christianity after reading Darwin, so it takes guts to perform "Playboy" in Colorado Springs. I haven't seen it yet, but hope to go tonight. Come check out the UCCS Theaterworks student production. Last show is May 3.

As if a pro-ID documentary, a Focus



OPINION

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debate, and one of the most blasphemous plays of the 20th century weren't enough, "Constantine's Sword" is coming to town May 9. That's a month earlier than originally scheduled, probably because of all the buzz it's been getting.

(Full disclosure: Parts of the raw footage for "Constantine's Sword" were filmed at my home. From the pre-release clips, it looks like I appear in it for approximately .27 seconds. This should help the film gross another \$5-\$10 at the box of-

fice).

"Sword" is a documentary based on the best-selling book by James Carroll, a former priest whose investigations into the roots of Christian anti-Semitism led him to leave the priesthood. It's really his story. The director, Oren Jacoby, has already been nominated for an Oscar for his film celebrating the courage of Sister Rose Thiering.

The film is a profound meditation on religion and war. Much of the action takes place at locations around town. Ted Haggard is interviewed (pre-Mike Jones), and of course the ubiquitous Mikey Weinstein figures prominently.

Some have accused "Sword" of anti-Catholic bias. Given that Carroll is Catholic, and that religious leaders of all dominations have praised the film, I think that's a highly dubious charge. But see it and judge for yourself. It opens at Kimball's next Friday.

What does this all mean? Why so many Big Events dealing with Big Issues in our little town?

Like it or not, Colorado Springs is a microcosm for larger battles being waged in our society as a whole. What is truth? What is science? Which religion is the One True Faith? What is the proper relationship between church and state? How do we discern right and wrong? Does God exist? What, ultimately, is America all about?

Colorado Springs wrestles with these and other Big Questions every day: In our schools, in our theaters, in our homes and on these pages. We're a little town that likes Big Ideas. I wouldn't have it any other way.

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