

## Armoured bears don't threaten faith

NOTHING GETS ME INTO THE SWING OF THE holiday season like some eggnog, a warm fire, the smell of pine, and some good-old fashioned religious controversy. And now, with the observed birthday of Jesus right around the corner, the freight train of power and clout that is Christianity is motoring along, looking for any sign of heathens to mow down.

This year's target of choice is the book-turned-film *The Golden Compass*. Originally written in 1995 by Philip Pullman as the first in a trilogy of fantasy novels aimed at pre-teens, older, more astute readers found very complex challenges of some of the major tenants of Christianity in the book, including creationism, heaven and hell, and sin.

While the book has been around for over a decade, its adaptation to the theatrical realm, along with Pullman's brash admission that he's an atheist and that *The Golden Compass* is about destroying God, has brought the work under intense attack from Christian groups. The primary concern is that the book and film will spur children to question Christian beliefs—or, even worse, shun their religious upbringings altogether.

But this is nothing new. In 2006, it was the film adaptation of *The Da Vinci Code*—though the book had already received a lot of flack as well. For the last decade, the *Harry Potter* series has been trumpeted as being anti-Christian. But even long before these big-name works were released, the religious right has had a relationship based around conflict with the media. From the liberalization of television to the rise of rock & roll, if something doesn't jive with the book of Job, some God-fearing individual is bound to raise his or her voice.

But what's really unsettling is that you rarely hear a voice of dissent from the other side. As an atheist myself, I don't think that the existence of any piece of religious work or teachings diminishes my ability to have a different belief system. I don't want to be preached to or told that I'm wrong, but if you want to read the Bible, be my guest—it doesn't affect me one way or the other.

Yet some religious fundamentalists choose to be scared of anything that challenges or goes against their belief system. Why do they feel compelled to try to dictate what *everyone* can read, view, or listen to, and not just worry about themselves?

Maybe there's more to it than just a desire not to have their belief system cast in a negative light. Recent studies in Europe and the United States show how religious affiliation is plummeting, specifically among 16–29-year-olds. One study by the Barna Group showed that this category of people is becoming more skeptical towards Christianity, and feel that its beliefs and viewpoints are out of date—specifically, that they're best categorized as anti-homosexual.

This backlash against content that is perceived as anti-Christian could be a last-ditch attempt to hold on to and develop a new religious base among young people, but all it really serves to do is exacerbate the viewpoint that many people involved in these organizations are very self-interested, even at the cost of dictating—and alienating—the rest of society.

It's high time that people practicing religion—whichever it may be—fully embrace that fact that it should be a private endeavour. They should stop crying wolf whenever they think there's a threat aimed at their belief system and realize that society is full of differing viewpoints, many of which are in constant conflict. Because if—preferred deity forbid—you're legitimately being discriminated against, people are just going to think you're shouting about that children's book you don't like.

RYAN HEISE  
Deputy News Editor

## Nobody likes Jill

Oh noes, mumps outbreak!  
Unless you want swollen balls,  
Get yourself the shot.

CONAL PIERSE  
Opinion Editor



CONAL PIERSE

## LETTERS

### Booze does more harm than hangovers

(Re: "The drink-makers' guide to the galaxy of inebriation," 21 November) I generally don't read the *Gateway*, as I find its compilations of poor and misguided information to be an insult to a university institution. However, I did happen to pick it up this Thursday and noticed some rather offensive material.

I first want to say to all the drinkers out there that your liver sure as heck doesn't consider drinking to be a "work-out", and such an attitude, in a perfect world, would cause your liver to get up and walk out on you. Secondly, the idea that a shot of vodka can be considered a serving of vegetables is a joke. In case anyone is confused by this, here is why it's not: the only part of the potato that potato vodka (that's right, not all vodkas are made from potatoes, and the ones that are generally have a hefty price tag associated with them) uses is the sugar, not the important stuff that makes potatoes.

What you would know as maltose is used to make vodka. Maltose is a sugar; therefore, a shot of vodka is nothing more than a shot of sugary poison. That's right, ethanol is a poison and is, truth be told, bad for your health. Sarah's argument is nothing more than childish defence of a poor behaviour.

Moving on, Lauren unfortunately seems to have a poor grasp on biochemistry. Her point that "recent

studies have [...] shown that red wine reduces HDL (ie bad) cholesterol" has many problems, which hopefully at least a few people have noticed already. Firstly HDL is actually your good cholesterol, and you really do not want to lower that. LDL, however, is bad cholesterol, and has been shown to be reduced by red (optimally French) wines.

However, this doesn't mean that if you get wasted on red wine it will help your health in any form. The correlation between red wines being beneficial towards bad cholesterol levels completely breaks down when consumption increases over one glass a day for women or two glasses a day for men.

Alcohol isn't good for you, and getting wasted is even worse. In our population, it sickens me to see such poor attitudes being taken towards such a dangerous drug. Maybe we all think it's fun to go out every Friday and get trashed; however, many of us don't realize that statistics suggest that one in three of you that are getting your kicks from such abuse will end up with a serious addiction.

Alcohol is no laughing matter. It is responsible for copious amounts of family and spousal abuse as well as criminal deviance such as violence and destruction of property. Alcohol abuse is a huge problem in our society, and destroys many peoples lives.

So next time, before we decide to advertise for drugs of abuse, can we please take a moment to give respect and grievance to those that have suffered so vastly at the hands of alcohol. I, personally,

am disgusted by the manner in which the *Gateway* so blatantly promotes such a risky and detrimental behavior.

LACEY GERBRANDT  
Science IV

### Screw your opinion; whales need protection

(Re: "Save the planet, screw the whales," 21 November) I understand what you're trying to do Miss Climenhaga; opinion articles are an excellent medium for causing discourse and attracting attention to emotionally deprived individuals such as yourself.

The one thing that surprises me is that a Senior News Editor would thrust her apathetic opinions into the public arena without any argument other than misinformed personal belief.

Your points, [which] consisted of [stating that] whales "aren't human" (well observed, madame,) and [that] "whales aren't even cute," were very effective.

Your use of humanity as a term is blatantly contradictory of your unfounded stance. You contend that whale hunting isn't barbaric. It escapes me how you don't view suffocating any creature in a net or repeatedly stabbing a beast countless times as barbaric. Utilizing our humanity should afford us the ability to oppose such actions of a dwindling species.

By your own admission, the humpback whales are no longer endangered, but protected. How do you think species become endangered?

By allowing excessive and unnecessary killing of their population.

I never expect anyone to hold the same beliefs as I [do] on the topic of human rights, but your justification of slaughter [of one species] with that of another (lab rats) left me personally disgusted. To apply your apathy to all us foolish people with morals and causes is astounding. There are things worth fighting for Natalie, and I hope that one day you can find something you care about more than yourself.

We're living in a deteriorating world, and you're part of the problem. I may have spent my childhood and teen years unaware and contributing to our global decline, but I will do my best to make a difference. Me and my pointless morals and beliefs. Enjoy your dessert Miss Climenhaga; I'm sure it will be alone.

BEN SIR  
Arts

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Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student identification number to be considered for publication.