

You, too, may be an extremist

Devil's Advocate

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Having produced a photograph of a crucifix being submerged in a vat of urine in 1987, Andres Serrano spawned protests in France this week, one of which ultimately led to the destruction of his work.

A Christian activist group called "Civitas" has been on a mission recently to inspire a great awakening of sorts in France. This group apparently saw it more fit to destroy any opposition to Christianity rather than to campaign on its behalf, so that's just what they did.

Nearly 1,000 people gathered Saturday to march on the Avignon gallery, the gallery that houses the photograph. The mob even included government officials such as regional councilors,

and forced security to place Plexiglas around the photograph to ensure its safety.

Not giving up, four younger men went to the gallery the next day and snuck a hammer in, fought through the guards and destroyed the Plexiglas and the photograph. The group even managed to destroy another photograph that depicted the hands of a nun meditating.

An interesting thing about this story is, however, that as far as I have read, no one has called these people terrorists. This type of behavior coming from a Muslim or Atheist would be nothing short of a playground for the Christian right in the media. However, because this was a Christian group, it seems to have gone unnoticed, and somewhat unchecked.

How quaint, then, that the global media lets this act go relatively unnoticed. Where media is supposed to be unbiased, it reveals its alliance not through verbally taking sides, but carefully choosing its silences. Where any other group

would be branded as extremists and terrorists, Christian extremist groups are allowed to slip under the radar.

Darwinism shows us that we will protect our own groups because it in turn benefits us. It seems to me that when the media protects Christianity (regardless of how in the wrong they were), they are permeating our news with biased motives. As Mother Teresa so aptly put it, "God is the friend of silence."

Vision is blurred by religion. I mean this not only for the religious thought. The secular individual, whether he knows it or not, is seeing many aspects of the world through the blurred lens of the people who control our info. I urge everyone to branch out, look beyond what is fed to you, and know what is being said, and more importantly, not said. As an interesting ending to the situation in France, the gallery owner has decided to show the tattered art as a statement of the damage barbarians can manage.

Pastimes History Club presents:

This week in history (April 29 - May 5)

April 29, 1429

Jeanne D'Arc (Joan of Arc) arrives to relieve the Siege of Orleans. This would be Jeanne's first major military victory and the first significant French victory in the Hundred Year's War since their defeat at Agincourt in 1415. Jeanne became a national hero in France from this point on, and was even made a patron saint of France. Even the misogynistic Napoleon honored her memory.

April 30, 1945

Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun commit suicide after being married for one day. Some parts of the underground hide-out known as the Fuhrerbunker still exist to this day, having survived even an attempt by East German forces in 1959 to blow the whole thing up. These areas are, of course off limits to the public.

May 1, 1786

Opening night of what could be considered the most famous opera in history, The Marriage of Figaro by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Vienna, Austria. It was written as a satire of the aristocracy and was temporarily banned in Vienna because it was thought that it could spread dangerous ideas (such as those that were floating around France at the time).

May 2, 1536

Anne Boleyn, Queen of England, is arrested and imprisoned on charges of adultery, incest, treason and witchcraft. Having been King Henry VIII's second wife, the belief was widely held at the time (and is still to this day), that the true reason for her

arrest and execution was her seeming inability to produce a male heir. Also, Henry VIII was a pervert.

May 3, 1963

The police of Birmingham, Alabama change their tactic of dealing with the civil rights protesters of the Birmingham Campaign to one of "violent force." The images of the oppressive actions taken ending up causing a policy backfire as the African-American Civil Rights Movement gained further support and attention.

May 4, 1970

Members of the Ohio National Guard fire into a crowd of protesting students at Kent State University killing four and wounding nine, one of whom suffered permanent paralysis. Some of the students who were shot were a part of the protest, which was expressing opposition to America's invasion of Cambodia, but some were merely passing through the area or watching from a distance. Sixty-seven rounds were fired over a period of 13 seconds, but the reason for the shooting remains to this day, debated. None of the students fired upon were any closer to the guardsmen than 70 feet.

May 5, 1862

Cinco de Mayo, troops led by Ignacio Zaragoza halt a French invasion in the Battle of Puebla in Mexico. It is celebrated more in the United States than in Mexico as a celebration of Mexican pride.