

# FROM VOYEURISM TO IMPERIALISM

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Perhaps the most aggravating aspect of “Nothing Sacred” is the audacity of the executive producers, David Manson and Richard Kramer, to admit that it is their purpose to create “dialogue” among Catholics about the teachings of their church. Who ever asked—or appointed—these two men, both of whom are Jewish and both of whom believe in nothing, to foment dialogue in my church?

That three of the five writers for the show have been identified as Catholic puts the lie to the argument that there is a “Jewish” cabal at work. But I still want to press the issue of the propriety of someone who is outside the Church appropriating to himself the right to create dialogue about my religion.

On July 22, ABC held a press conference to answer the charges of the Catholic League. Manson began by wondering aloud how “I’m going to sit up in front of 200 people and explain how a Jew is doing a piece about a Catholic priest.” That’s a stupid way to begin. As Michael Medved has shown, it was nothing but Jews who produced the finest movies about Catholics in the 1930s and 1940s. The real question is why so many Jews and others in Hollywood today are bent on making movies about Catholics that smack of a politically correct agenda.

It used to be that those who were not Catholic and had a beef with the Church were content on being voyeurs, that is, they would look, listen, talk and write about the Church in a most curious way. But those days are gone: we’ve now hit the stage where attempts to literally manipulate public opinion is commonplace; this represents a shift from voyeurism to imperialism.

“One of our goals,” said David Manson, “is to subvert people’s

expectations as to the nature of a priest's or nun's life in the contemporary world." What he didn't say is that the purpose of this subversion is to put a positive spin on a priest who rejects the Church's idea of sexual ethics, thereby endearing him to "progressive" Catholics and to those non-Catholics who also find fault with the Church in this area.

Manson has a highly politicized understanding of dialogue. He explicitly says that his aim is "to create dialogue where not very much exists." But there is very little dialogue among Jews about groups like Jews for Jesus, yet Manson wouldn't think of doing a show that creates dialogue among Jews by favorably portraying a leader from this marginalized group.

The term "dialogue," when used in this context, is dishonest. It's not about dialogue, it's about dissent. What it comes down to is that Manson and Kramer are architects of the raw use of Hollywood's political muscle to undermine respect for the Magisterium. How they pull this off is interesting.

First, they create a priest who serves the needy by tending to his soup kitchen. Then they show him openly proclaiming the folly of the Church's teachings on sexuality. This is followed by his unwillingness to counsel against abortion in the confessional. What it boils down to is this: this is a Nineties kind of priest—he's compassionate, not hung up on sex and bravely autonomous. On the other hand, those parishioners who complain about the homeless who use their neighborhood as bathrooms are depicted as heartless, though loyal, Catholics (read: it is because they're loyal that they're heartless).

The dichotomy that is at work here is obvious. Catholics who care about the poor are also smart enough to accept contraception, abortion, homosexuality and promiscuity, while those who would grind their heels in the face of the poor (they're called "yuppie scum" by Father Ray) are dumb enough to swallow the Church's moonshine about sexuality.

All of which brings me back to my first point: "Nothing Sacred" is political propaganda against the Magisterium being waged by producers who are outsiders. It is no more their business to concern themselves with the degree of dialogue that exists within the Catholic Church than it is the business of Catholic broadcasters to concern themselves with the degree of dialogue that exists between secular and religious Jews. Just imagine the reaction if a Catholic band sang songs that glorified orthodox Jews at the expense of those who never attend synagogue!

It all comes down to sex. Hollywood can't get enough of it and any institution that preaches the virtue of restraint is bound to be seen as the enemy. That is why attempts to undermine the moral authority of the Church to pronounce on matters sexual will not abate any time too soon. It also signals why the Catholic League will never walk away from a fight.