

# LAMENT OVER “NOTHING”

If there is one bet we'd like to make for the new millennium, it is that well into the next century the few fans of the ABC TV show, “Nothing Sacred,” will still be expressing their lament over the demise of their lousy show. Indeed, “Nothing” fans easily qualify as a cult. But instead of seeking therapy, they prefer to vent their emotions—which run the gamut from anger to sorrow—in the pages of the *New York Times*.

So it is that out of nowhere comes “Nothing” executive producer David Manson. On August 22, the *Times* printed a letter he wrote registering his anger at the Catholic League. Manson was furious that in a *Times* article on the league's attack on “Dogma,” credit was given to the Catholic League for killing “Nothing.” He contends that low rating did the show in. The truth is that both claims are correct.

“The Catholic League,” Manson writes, “which trumpets an undocumented membership of 350,000 (less than 1 percent of the country's Roman Catholic population) receives a level of media attention far beyond its power or the size of its constituency.” About this a few thoughts.

Manson would have the reader believe that when an organization like the ACLU says it has 300,000 members, that this figure has been documented by some prestigious source, but that when the Catholic League says it has 350,000 members, that no such documentation exists. Absurd on the face of it, we know of no other organization in the world that constantly has to put up with such pure, unadulterated propaganda as this, as does the Catholic League.

So what if less than one-percent of Catholics belong to the Catholic League? There are more Jewish women who belong to Jewish women's organizations than there are women who belong to the National Organization for Women (NOW) , yet no one

seems to care just who Patricia Ireland really speaks for (the head of NOW) when she says she speaks for women. What Manson should be worried about is that the Catholic League is the fastest-growing civil rights organization in the U.S.

As for our power, if we had none, Manson wouldn't be perturbed. Heck, if it wasn't for us, he'd still have a job.

After the Manson letter appeared (August 22), we sent a letter to the *Times* responding to the charges (it was dated August 24). It wasn't printed. Fine. But what was highly unusual was that on September 5, two Sundays after Manson's letter appeared, another attack on the league's role in killing "Nothing" appeared. This time we were guilty of an "illusion of power."

Now it almost never happens that letters on one subject appear on different dates (they are typically clustered on the same date, with pro and con). Unless, of course, the subject is the Catholic League.

We're getting used to this kind of thing, and while it is patently unfair, it is nice to know that the *New York Times* is under no illusion about the Catholic League's power: otherwise they wouldn't be trying so hard to discredit us. David Manson, please take note.