

Message for the Church: Changing Hearts Must Accompany Changing Laws

We are approaching the one-year anniversary of the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, a momentous event in the pro-life movement and one on which we continue to build legislatively. This is positive and encouraging.

At the same time, many laws are being passed that push back against radical trans-activism. This too is positive and encouraging.

But there is a very important lesson we must always keep in mind: changing laws without changing hearts will never bring about long-term social and moral progress. The changing of hearts must accompany the changing of laws. Otherwise, there will only be resentment, anger and ultimately rebellion leading to the reversal of the good laws. The short-term gains will become long-term losses.

I was reminded of this when reading some old reviews of the watershed 1989 gay activist book *After the Ball: How American Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. It was written by Marshall Kirk, a neuropsychologist, and Hunter Madsen, an advertising executive. And while its importance has often been downplayed by gay leaders over the decades, its influence is undeniable.

The argument has been that only Christian fundamentalists really paid attention to the book, while the LGBTQ community largely ignored it. (For an example of Christian leaders pointing back to this book, see [here](#).) As stated on Wikipedia, "Legal scholar Didi Herman writes that, despite being widely criticized and non-influential within lesbian and gay communities, the book has been strategically used by members

of the Christian right as proof of a secretive 'gay agenda' to subvert American Christianity and 'traditional' definitions of the family."

The reality is that the strategies put forth by Kirk and Madsen were wildly successful to the point of dramatically surpassing their stated goals. As for the idea that there was actually no such thing as a "gay agenda," that seems utterly laughable today now that so much of it has been implemented.

After the Ball was actually a bestseller in its day (who was reading it, if not for largely gay-identified Americans?) and it was reviewed in significant outlets such as the Los Angeles Times.

The review noted that, "One out of 10 Americans is gay, according to Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen in 'After the Ball,' and these 25 million men and women are 'forced to cower and skulk like a German Jew of the '30s.' They are the victims of 'a national sickness' that manifests itself in the fear and hatred of homosexuality. The only appropriate response from the gay community—and the only way to put an end to their oppression—is 'ice-cold, controlled, directed rage.'

"But 'After the Ball' is not a call to the barricades; rather, it is a curious call to the story boards and 30-second spots of Madison Avenue, a kind of sanitized upscale media radicalism that finds mass demonstrations to be 'ghastly freak shows' and prefers highway billboards that 'earnestly propound appealing truisms, the safer and more platitudinous, the better.' As the authors readily admit: 'We're talking about propaganda.'"

And that "propaganda" worked wonders, just as the authors envisioned.

A review in the Orlando Sentinel had this to say: "'Some gays, living in their progressive urban environments, think America is tolerant and there is no need to build greater public

support. They feel the way now is only through the courts and the legislatures,' says Madsen. 'They are all good tactics, but they are reversible, as soon as someone—usually on the religious right—fans the flames of public disapproval.'"

In order, then, to go beyond the courts and legislatures, since those rulings could be reversible, it was necessary to change hearts and minds. The authors' goal was the "conversion of the average American's emotions, mind and will through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media."

As stated at the beginning of the book, the authors called for a "campaign of unabashed propaganda, firmly grounded in long-established principles of psychology and advertising."

This "propaganda" even included the spreading of what they knew to be falsehoods, such as the idea that 1 in 10 Americans were gay (they admitted plainly that this number was inflated). But, in their view, spreading such falsehoods was only fair, since all kinds of negative falsehoods had been spread about their community over the years.

As to the success of their strategies, which reflected some of the thinking of other key gay activists and organizations, not even Kirk and Madsen believed that marriage would be redefined. Not a chance. That wasn't even one of their goals.

But even that sacred institution was outrageously redefined in 2015 by the Supreme Court primarily because the thinking of so many Americans had already been changed. Without that massive cultural shift, it is much more unlikely that the Court would have ruled as it did. In the view of many legal pundits, the cultural shift provided sufficient wind in their sails for the justices to make the change (at least, for someone like Anthony Kennedy, who was the swing vote).

To be sure, some of the shifts in American views toward gay and lesbian-identified people have been positive, recognizing

the many positive qualities they may have as individuals or couples and embracing our shared humanity. Many of the other shifts have been disastrous, contributing to millions of Americans losing their moral and societal bearings.

Our children and grandchild are paying the price today, with as many as 40% identifying as somewhere on the LGBTQ spectrum.

The takeaway from all this is that, while we labor tirelessly to enact pro-life, pro-family legislation—and we should—we must never take our eyes off the greater prize: the conversion of the hearts and minds of Americans, not by the spreading of propaganda but by the propagation of truth, grounded in the love, goodness and justice of God.

We have the ultimate, lasting, winning argument. {eoa}

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