

Personhood Rides Again and Falls Off Again

On November 2nd 2010, Amendment 62, the Colorado *Personhood* Initiative, was defeated by a large margin. The **Yes** vote was 508,110, which was 29.5 % of the vote. The **No** vote was 1,214,438, which was 70.5 % of the vote.

The sponsors are claiming a *percentage* increase over the 2008 vote, but the numerical vote for *Personhood* in 2010 was **77,000 fewer votes** than Amendment 48 received in 2008 when 585,561 voted for it. It hardly indicates that **legal Personhood** is on the way to winning *the hearts and minds of The People*.

But **Remember William Wilberforce !** they tell us. He kept at it year after year until slavery was outlawed.

The Wilberforce Myth

William Wilberforce was a Member of Parliament who began sponsoring laws to abolish the slave trade. And then laws to abolish slavery itself. Slavery in the British Empire was finally outlawed in 1833, a year after his death.

Wilberforce was a real person, but it is a myth that slavery was abolished by persistent parliamentarianism. And it is a Grand Illusion to believe that Abortion will be stopped in America by political heroes pushing *Personhood* initiatives. The false faith that abortion in America can be ended via law and conventional politics is one of the major causes of the defeat of the pro life movement. It is a symptom of the deeper cause: the false faith of those worldly Christians who hang onto wealth or the hope of wealth and who identify with power and define the pro life challenge within those limits. *Get me into Congress and I'll take care of it !*

Those who pursue seats in Congress want to give Wilberforce the credit because that is how they justify their own commitment to coming in at the high end or not at all. That is their mandate for the pursuit of political power.

The Quaker Witness

George Fox began leading the Quakers in opposing slavery 116 years before William Wilberforce made his first speech in Parliament against the slave trade in 1787. Thousands of Quakers were put in prison in England in the 17th century because of their radical and non-conforming Christian faith and morals, which led them to refuse to go along with war and slavery. The Quakers were also persecuted in America. They were banned from Plymouth, imprisoned in Virginia and Maryland, and hanged in Boston. Pennsylvania, founded by William Penn after he became a Quaker, was the first American colony to allow religious freedom. The Quakers and the Amish and the Mennonites and the Moravian Brethren who migrated there established the first authentic Christian faith in the new world, by contrast to the slave owners and traders and the rapacious land seekers of Virginia and New England, for whom war and slavery were an integral part of their pseudo Christian faith and morals.

Thomas Clarkson, who became a vice president of the new anti slavery society in 1823 along with William Wilberforce, pioneered in organizing the anti slavery movement which was the social force that eventually led to the anti slavery legislation passed by Parliament. His first major work on the slave trade published in 1786 was based upon the *Historical Survey of New Guinea* by the American Quaker Anthony Benezet. Benezet's writings about slavery were well known to Patrick Henry and Benjamin

Franklin and the other American *founding fathers*. And ignored by them when they enshrined slavery in the American Constitution in 1789.

William Wilberforce was a wealthy aristocrat who bought his seat in Parliament in 1781. He became a convert to Christianity and took up the cause of opposing slavery in 1787. It is to his credit that he used his position to do something, in contrast to all the other wealthy and powerful Englishmen who did nothing to oppose it even if they did not actually make money from investing in plantations or the slave trade. But it is a dangerous myth that Christians can hold on to wealth and pursue political power and conform to this world and still effectively oppose the evil of society. The rank and file of the abolition movement were those who had neither wealth nor political power and they were more likely to wind up in jail than to wind up in Parliament.

Slavery was already outlawed in England before Wilberforce entered Parliament. In 1772, in the *Sommersett* case, the British high court even ruled that any slave landed in England thereby became a free man. It was just the opposite of the *Dred Scott* decision in America in 1857, 85 years later, which ruled that slaves were still property even if taken to free territories.

[Adam Hochschild *Bury the Chains* 2005 is a very good history of the Abolition movement.]

The power of the British sugar plantation owners and investors long delayed the end of slavery in the British empire, even though they were a very small part of the population. How much longer would it have been delayed if America had remained in the British empire ?

The American Answer to Slavery

The history of how slavery was abolished in America--**how we failed to abolish it**--is far more relevant to our failure to stop abortion, than any fairy tale counter example imported from England. In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson, the **apostle of freedom**, fired the man who was trying to enforce the new law against the slave trade and replaced him with someone who looked the other way while the slave trade flourished. And the slave trade continued right up to the time of the Civil War even though it was nominally illegal. ***

Jefferson is the archetype of our various Presidents, from Reagan to Bush, who have pretended to care about stopping abortion while they continued to go along with it. The idiots who persisted in believing that Thomas Jefferson was serious about *freedom* were the spiritual ancestors of the idiots who persist in believing that Reagan and Bush were ever serious about stopping abortion.

In 1820, Thomas Jefferson still defended the extension of slavery into the new territories. Which led directly to *Bloody Kansas*, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry and the Civil War. When Jefferson died bankrupt in 1826 his slaves had to be sold to pay up his wine bills. Americans are stuck with the legacy of Thomas Jefferson. American prisons are full of his descendants and the descendants of the other founding slave owners. It is no use our trying to substitute William Wilberforce for our real *founding fathers*. It is from them that we have received our real spiritual and moral legacy, the legacy of the American Cult.

The Civil War

The failure to put an end to slavery in a peaceful way led to a fratricidal war in which 600,000 Americans were killed. Like other wars, it was a contest for wealth and political power, rather than for the **Great Moral Purpose** it pretended to serve. As witness General Sherman's blunt statement: *All*

the niggers in the South aren't worth the blood of one Union soldier. This is about control of the Mississippi River.

The Civil War devastated the South. And a condition of semi-slavery for Southern Negroes persisted until the 1960s. Today we are still living with the consequences of slavery. Millions of impoverished Negroes living in slums. American prisons are full of them. The bill for their incarceration should be sent to the estates of our founding slave owners.

Many American Negroes finally escaped from semi slavery and racial segregation, not because of lawyers delivering speeches in Congress, but because rank and file Christians joined the nonviolent direct action movement of the 1960s. The Civil Rights movement was corrupted soon enough, but it accomplished something before that happened. The Civil Rights Laws of 1964 and 1965 were the result, not the cause, of a broad movement which bypassed conventional politics. And the real changes in American society have come from the power of that movement, not from anything done by the lawyers and the lawyer politicians who claim the credit.

For a few short years, the Civil Rights Movement showed how much real power for moral and social change can be generated by a nonviolent direct action movement. There were those who seriously attempted to build a just society. And the anti Vietnam War movement which followed, illustrated it once again. It is one of the few times in history that people have ever managed to halfway stop a war. And they set an example which was copied by the pro life rescue movement of the 1980s in St Louis and Philadelphia.

Rescue Movement R.I.P.

The Pro Life movement has become corrupted in the same basic ways, without accomplishing much of anything except for the few who have remained faithful to Sidewalk Counselling. The *Rescue* movement fizzled because of a leadership obsessed with political power and a followership with a false faith in conventional politics and the American Cult: *The President will take care of it, all I have to do is Vote.* And that is where we are now. = no where.

The *Rescue* movement of 1988-1991 was the largest nonviolent direct action movement the country has ever seen. It died out after the Wichita summer of 1991. Between 1988 and 1991, 60,000 people were arrested for sitting down and blocking the entrances of abortion clinics. It was a mostly Protestant rescue movement which grew out of the Catholic rescue movement in St. Louis and Philadelphia in the 1980s. It became a national movement almost over night because it was publicized for a while by Pat Robertson's *700 Club* and James Dobson's *Focus on the Family*--before they chickened out.

The cover story now circulating in the pro life movement says that the F.A.C.E bill--*Free Access to Clinic Entrances*--killed the Rescue Movement. It is not true. The Rescue Movement was as dead as vaudeville **before** FACE was passed. FACE did not stop it, it stopped itself. It collapsed because it was built upon the sand foundations of a secular Christian faith. All FACE did was provide it with a timely excuse.

When Congress passed a new law against draft card burning in the fall of 1965, the effect was to stimulate the anti Vietnam War Movement--like throwing gasoline on a fire. It turned draft card burning into a popular fad and the government gave up trying to enforce it. (I tore a draft card in two in March 1966 and served 10 months in Danbury FCI.) A similar thing would have happened had there been any real momentum in the so-called *Rescue Movement*. Federal jails are no worse than the city jails that rescuers had to put up with. In fact they are much nicer. And it would have raised the profile of *rescue* to a national level.

the real *rescue* movement

I say *so-called Rescue Movement*, because the real rescue movement has continued. Anything you do which saves a baby from death by abortion is properly called a **rescue**. That is just what Sidewalk Counsellors do every day of the week standing out in front of the abortuary with their signs and literature. That is what people do by handing out pro life leaflets in front of the high schools.

We have people who have been coming faithfully once or twice a week for 20 years. And we have **rescued** a couple of babies every week. If you can't show up at least once a week faithfully on the front line in front of the abortuary, you should not pretend to be *pro life*. Those who show up once, or once in a while, are fooling themselves. They aren't fooling God and we should make it plain to them that they do not fool us either.

But there should be a *Rescue Movement* of people willing to face arrest to stop the abortion mill from going. And there could be, if we can clear the wreckage of the last one off the tracks. The first step is to understand why it failed.

No doubt there was a failure of leadership. Randall Terry chickened out in Wichita and the Operation Rescue leadership followed his lead. The big rally addressed by Pat Robertson produced a final flourish of righteous hot air. The next morning, nobody rescued. The rescuers still in jail were left to get out on their own as best they could. The crowd went home, where they could watch Pat Robertson on TV in comfort. Randall Terry threw himself into a futile attempt to arrive at political power. And everybody followed that lead too.

the failure of follower-ship

But there was also a failure of follower-ship. People did not believe in building a Christian Society via Do It Yourself Christianity. They believed in leaving it up to God and the Government. Why go to jail when all you have to do is Vote for Bush ? So **rescue** became a one time fad. People got their rescue medal and decided they only needed one. 60,000 rescued once. 6000 rescued twice. 600 rescued three times. 60 rescued four times. We ended with half a dozen die hards still rescuing.

It was the Secular Christian Faith of Pat Robertson and Randall Terry and all the rest which eroded the moral strength and the spiritual vitality of the movement. And we are still in that same place. We still have people using the pro life movement to run for political office. We still have people concocting endless silly strategies aimed at somehow stopping abortion within the framework of American law and politics. They have keen eyes for opportunities to promote themselves and their organizations. And a corresponding blindness to the challenge of building a serious pro life movement. There has been an endless diversion of time, money and energy into the futility of conventional politics. Behind the novelty of the *Personhood* initiatives is the same old silliness: Stop abortion by voting.

Nonviolent Direct Action = Christian Witness = Do It Yourself Christianity

Most of those who participated in the Rescue Movement of 1988-1991 had never picketed an abortuary, never done sidewalk counselling, never handed out pro life leaflets on the street. They still haven't. Many of them used *rescue* as their excuse for neglecting to do anything else. The fundamental defect of their faith is that they believe in Vicarious Christianity. *Passive Righteousness*. They don't believe in Do It Yourself Christianity. They believe they are **SAVED** by their opinions. Deploying one finger once every two years is all the *works* they feel called to perform.

They lack that Spirit of Courage which enables people to Bear Witness to the Truth of an unpopular cause, when you have to step out beyond the safety of the majority. The only courage they have is crowd courage. When the crowd leaves, they leave. For a while it worked for the Rescue Leadership to send them in bunches to sit down in front of the abortuaries. Then they discovered that they were on their own once they wound up in jail, while the leaders held a press conference back at the hotel.

Ever since then, most of the pro life movement has stayed on the broad and easy road of conventional politics. Cast your vote. Say a prayer. Send somebody \$ 5. So, not surprisingly, after 40 years of what pretends to be a pro life movement, we are farther away from stopping abortion than when we started.

excommunicating slavery

The Abolitionist Movement was the forerunner of the Civil Rights Movement. It was the work of the Quakers and other radical Christians who were opposed by the American establishment and by the Christian establishment of America. They organized the Underground Railroad which helped many individual slaves to escape to freedom, much as today, the Sidewalk Counsellors help many babies escape from abortion.

The real crusade against slavery in America began with the Quakers who excommunicated slave owners and slave traders at a time when America's Founding Slave Owners still clung to their property and put laws protecting slavery into the Constitution.

By 1776, American Quakers excluded from their membership anyone who owned slaves. They **ABOLISHED SLAVERY** from their own community at a time when George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry were still buying slaves. Except for the Quakers and a few other radical Christian groups, the so-called Christian Churches went along with slavery right up to the time of the Civil War. Their failure to arrive at a moral and spiritual answer to slavery is paralleled by their present failure to do anything effective to stop abortion. After the Civil War put an end to formal legal slavery, these worldly *Christian* churches were often the bastions of racial segregation. 11 am on Sunday was *the most segregated hour in America*.

Imagine today's church excommunicating those who practice contraception and tolerate abortion. Which is to imagine a church which has taken the road back from that **MASS CHURCH OF NO STANDARDS** which was established by Secular Christianity. Which is to imagine a Church which no longer **CATERS TO THE CROWD** and holds on to wealth and power. Is it impossible to imagine ? Almost. But how shall we abolish abortion in the larger society if we cannot do it in our own Christian society ?

the challenge of the churches

People who are serious about stopping abortion have to target the churches, not the states. If you cannot abolish abortion in the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church and the Baptist Church you are never going to abolish it in Colorado or in America. At least these churches pretend to be pro life. That offers a foot hold. A toe hold anyway.

Is the Catholic Church pro life ? On paper, it is. But Catholics voted for Obama just like they vote for other pro abortion politicians. They tolerate Joe Biden who proudly proclaimed his *pro choice* position in the 2008 Vice Presidential debate. And it isn't different in the other churches which have a paper position against abortion.

The *Roots of Abortion* [see my book of that title] go just as deep as the roots of slavery once did and they are much more widespread. The slave owners and slave traders who were invested in slavery, were a minority who wielded a disproportionate influence because of their money. The Americans who have a financial stake in abortion are an entrenched majority. Most so-called *Christians* joined them long ago.

That is just what the 2008 and 2010 vote against *Personhood* shows. All the blather about *personhood* did not fool anyone. They recognized that it would outlaw abortion. And they tacitly recognize that abortion is the necessary back up to contraception and that *more money / fewer children* is the basis of that American lifestyle to which they precariously cling.

The majority of Americans owned no slaves and lost no money when the slave owners were finally forced to give up their slaves after a long and bitter war. But the majority of Americans are heavily committed to *careers for women* which require contraception backed by abortion. They devoutly believe in *wealth through investing* and abortion has become the best and most necessary of all investments. [See *Four Fallacies of the Personhood Amendment* and *The Roots of Abortion*, part III THE ABORTED AMERICAN LIFESTYLE.]

social, not political

The real followers of Jesus are *social*, but not **political**. They do not depend upon the government to sponsor us. Christian society cannot be established by the army or by the lawyers in the legislature. It does not rely upon **the power of the people**--the phantom *moral majority*. It does not attempt to conscript the pagans to help build a Christian society. It does not follow the lead of those pseudo Christians who are obsessed with the pursuit of political power.

The church itself--if it really was the Christian Church--is the Christian Society we need. It is the church we need to fix, not the State. The State can't be fixed. In trying to make it *Christian* we only de-Christian ourselves. We only fool ourselves thinking that we can fool others, that we can somehow trick false Christians and anti Christians into voting for Christian morality.

If Christians themselves--all those who take the name *Christian* in vain--would live up to the Christian faith they pretend to believe and the Christian morals they pretend to have, we would not have to beg the Immoral Majority to pass laws which force us to do what we won't do voluntarily. Our spiritual impotence pushes us into a vain attempt to acquire the political power to re-establish Christian morality in the law.

We are still stuck with this ancient illusion that The Law can be Just and that it can be effectively enforced. There is no justice in the law and it cannot be enforced unless most of those affected keep it voluntarily. The essential problem with the Law is that good people don't need it and bad people won't heed it. It didn't work for Israel and it won't work for us. When America had strict laws against abortion, abortion was common in America. It was kept out of sight.

Passing laws produces a foolish complacency. Marijuana is against the law so you don't have to worry about your kid using it. The law does not allow people to come to the United States unless they have gone through the proper procedures. So you need not notice the 20 million illegal immigrants. *Legally*, they do not exist, so why worry about them ?

foundations of Christian Society

We are commanded to *love one another as I have loved you* and we are commanded to *love thy neighbor as thyself*. We are even commanded to *love your enemies, do good to those that hate you*.

And all of those injunctions mandate a Christian Society. Christians must be social. But not political. It is two different things. None of these injunctions square with doing a deal with The World so we can get hold of the police power and impose Christian morality by force of Law upon the recalcitrant pagans. When pseudo *Christians* get hold of that power, it gets hold of them. They have never yet succeeded in imposing Christian morality by The Law. What they arrive at instead is hypocrisy, the legal pretence of morality. Like they have in Brazil, which has millions of abortions that are nominally illegal. Like we had in America before Governor Reagan *reluctantly* signed the 1967 California abortion law.

There is not always a simple and obvious answer as to how we can live in the World while we refuse to conform to the World. But it is obvious that Worldly Christians have betrayed Christian Society. Have tried to replace it with *Christendom*--a society which pretends to be Christian while it persists in pursuing wealth and political power, which depends upon the Empire to enforce Christian morality.

That is how we arrived at this morally helpless version of Christianity which waits for the Government to bail us out. It is not going to do it. Because it can't do it. Until we learn that lesson, the effort to establish a Christian Society in America--a truly **pro life** society--is doomed to failure. Just as this fundamentally foolish and un-Christian initiative was doomed to failure.

Building an Abortion Free Society

We can build a Christian society which is free from abortion. But those who are obsessed with law and politics, whose own ambitions constantly push them back into conventional politics lead us in the wrong direction.

It is futile to try and impose Christian morality upon a society which is not Christian. The false faith of the Worldly Christians blinds them to this basic fact. It would be Satanic to try and do it by military power--if we had military power. To try and do it by popular vote is just plain silly. The whole enterprise has been a Ship of Fools first to last.

Christians did not need the help of the Roman Senate and the Roman Emperor in building Christianity. That is the false faith of Secular Christianity. When they did get the sponsorship of the Emperor, it established that false Christianity which is with us still. Which is the crippling disease, the chronic and epidemic spiritual disease, of that which pretends to be the Christian Church. Which is the fundamental cause of abortion. A real pro life movement cannot depend upon laws and lawyers, it cannot put its faith in politicians. That is the false faith which is destroying the American pro life movement as it has destroyed the Christian church.

The pro life movement is never going to get any where until we acknowledge that The People **ARE NOT** on our side. That the Immoral Majority must be confronted by the Courageous Minority--that minority of real Christians who have the Spirit of Courage. And they must be confronted by the Spirit of Truth. The faith that it can be done some other way is a false faith, is a morally fatal illusion. We have to forget about **voting** and start **fighting** ! We have to fight the way that Jesus taught us. [see *The Spiritual Warfare of Jesus Christ*]

The pro life movement has to be a moral crusade. A moral crusade has to chart a course which avoids the futility of the Law and the immoral compromises that are in the very nature of conventional politics. We aren't going to win the battle in the court or in the legislature until we have won the battle out on the sidewalks and inside the shopping malls. Until we have won the battle **WITHIN THE CHURCH**. We are a long way from winning that battle because we haven't even begun to fight it seriously.

We need to escape from that fantasy land of the American Cult where the Worldly Christians wander while they avoid the realities of our present situation and their complicity in creating it.

Terry Sullivan November 9th 2010

see <i>Four Fallacies of the Personhood Amendment</i> for the earlier article about Amendment 48, which was defeated in 2008
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see <i>Colorado Human Life Amendment</i> original circular letter of November 2007 about the proposed <i>Personhood Amendment</i>
