

2 of our 52 of the USA began dramatic rebellions driven by the rage for rights. They gave us Bunker Hill (MA) and Ft. Sumter (SC). And they are the only 2 whose legal codices accord legal rights to the fetus. I haven't heard how SC in coming along on pro/con seat-belt legislation, but my state is becoming hyperactive against a seat-belt law that slipped out of our Boston Statehouse and clamped down on us 1 Jan 86 (I'm writing this 16 Jan 86, the day after the MA government accepted a petition to overthrow the law, the repeal issue to appear on the 4 Nov 86 ballot in binding referendum.)...Why the apparently odd association, in this thinksheet, of the abortion issue and the seat-belt issue? Because when you're emotionally involved in an issue (as I am in abortion), it's multi-good to step out of the heat and into a for-you cool issue that has some parallels with the for-you hot issue. That's what I'm doing in this thinksheet.

1. For ease of referencing when in conversation on a legal principle and/or case and/or double (comparative) casuistic (instance this thinksheet), I've drawn up this grid. My primary aim is to help my fellow-clergy become less fluzzy, less sentimental, more "legal" (in the basic sense, viz, competent in social-coercive thinking), and more realistic; but what I've to say could help laity as well. Here's the grid:

EXPLANATIONS: (1) "US" is in quotes THIS LAW PROTECTS ME-US AGAINST.. to warn that both

meanings may apply:
both "little us," ie,
a group less than
the whole of society,
and "big us," ie,
society itself....(2)
Anti-seat-belt-ers
see themselves as
UNprotected: the
whole grid is ir-

THIS	YOU(S.)	YOU(PL.)	ME	"US"
LAW	A	B	C	D
PRO-TECTS	E	F	G	H
SOCIETY	I	J	K	L
AGAINST..	M	N	O	P

relevant because it does not include how the citizen shall be "protected" against the law when it violates "the freedom of the individual." The MA petition says that position "C" (laws to protect me against me) exceeds the due limits of legislation vis-a-vis the individual citizen, whose moral responsibility is to be good news to personal-societal self, a responsibility government should not invade, to say nothing of replace...(2) To make it onto the chart, the fetus would have to be a "me": that right there is what, legally, the fuss is all about: since for me the fetus is not a "me," it doesn't have legal rights...(3) What can protect me/little us/big us from "the law"? Only coup or revolution if (a) "the law" does not have self-correcting provisions or (b) the self-correcting provisions are inoperative (as in the case of Hitler's 1933 edict of absolute power)....(4) While all sophisticated legal systems on the globe these past four millenia have had / have self-correcting provisions, only the "Anglo-Saxon" system (since AD/CE 1200, Magna Carta) reinforces those provisions with an ethos of proud wariness against governmental infringement of human-civil and civil-codical rights, ie, governmental self-limitation of powers--the legal atmosphere in which both Washington and King, our two "Day" heroes, worked and won. In contrast, S.African law is Dutch-Boer, not Anglo-Saxon; the 7% Anglo in the population is struggling, on the apartheid issue, toward Anglo-style jurisprudence, aided by nonwhite Anglos (eg, Tutu, a bishop in the Anglo, Anglican, English church of S.Africa). Some now living under developed Anglo-Saxon law feel we should press it on other peoples--eg, "one-man-one-vote" on S.Africa. I'm against this cultural imperialism with its sanctions and other forms of warfare, and Christians who identify this imperialism with Christianity call me "unChristian" (eg, documents both denominational and ecumenical--NCC, WCC, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, et al--unabashedly administer Christian baptism to the Anglo-Saxon model of "rights," deChristianizing (debaptizing?) all who, like me, disagree).

OVER

2. The devil's track-record for successfully tempting to arrogance proportionate to a person's powers and commitments has ever been "in the gold." Sunday p.m. I heard an old Pentecostal saint, David du-Plessis, take a good two hours to say love wins all battles if you only let it: not one good word for coercion, which is the essence of law, which is the eskeleton of social order, which is the precondition of --yes!--a loving society! He, and virtually all his fellow clergy in, now, virtually all churches, are prejudiced against coercion (except, of course, when it furthers their own ends: right now, most of them are hot for economic coercion, ie, "sanctions," against S.Africa, eg). I can think of a dozen pre-feminist terms to pan this clergy arrogance, blindness, and hypocrisy; but I can't use any of them, on pain of being nailed as "sexist" and "macho."

3. Should citizens be coerced for their own good? This was argument #1 toward the present MA seat-belt law, and it's dangerously paternalistic: "Mandatory what else?" many are asking. "How else will 'Boston' try to protect me from myself?" The governor calls it "a life-belt law" and cites accident statistics in favor of belting up, admitting that belting up had to be made a matter of law because the people didn't want to belt up! I'm bemused by the reasoning, and would like to see it applied against the sale of tobacco, which annually kills six times more citizens than do automotive accidents....Those who unsuccessfully opposed the legislation now law, and are now campaigning for reversal, adduce a formidable battery of arguments (in light of which the passage into law is quite remarkable). Here's my collection: (1) It abrogates personal liberty, infringing a constitutional amendment; (2) It's inequitable, compelling taxi and route drivers while exempting police and bus passengers; (3) With or without seat-belt, you total a car and you suffer permanent disability; (4) A belt's restraint may worsen whiplash; (5) A faulty lock may prevent unbuckling; (6) Seat-belts are of uneven quality and tension and size/position; (7) A seat-belt endangers those with an aortic aneurysm or any upper-respiratory condition; (8) A seat-belt is a danger to two beings at once in the case of a pregnant woman; (9) The fear of frying: your car may quick-fire or explode, the time to unbuckle making the difference between escape and death; (10) A seat-belt is a terror to claustrophobics and may even reduce the quality of their driving; (11) "A friend of mine was cut in half by her seat-belt." A medic, tongue-in-cheek, has suggested that the category of law, viz (on my chart, "C") to protect people against endangering themselves, be extended from the seat-belt law to include "football, boxing, skydiving, skiing, soccer and perhaps even war." Do I sound as though I'm for repeal? I don't know whether I am or not; don't really care one way or the other; maybe should; may by November 4.

4. But I care deeply when my category "C" gets extended to protecting a pregnant girl/woman against "doing something she'll regret for the rest of her life," viz, getting an abortion. A triple foul play! Projections galore! And disingenuousness: aiming to protect the fetus, this argument rhetorically displaces to protecting the pregnant! She may or may not regret, and if she "has the baby" she may regret or may not that she didn't have an abortion, and society local (family) and larger (community, government) may or may not regret her having or not having "the baby." A feeling-morass to obfuscate. On a TV show soon, I'll be over against a woman who regrets her abortion and presents herself, prominently, as a case support for the "regret" argument. When she's sunk in herself/her past/an incident about her past/ a feeling she has about that incident--when she's captive to so little a picture, how can I help her to see "the big picture," the concentric ripples in human society and the biosphere if she'd "had her baby"?