



“I have set before you death and life ... choose life!” (Deut. 30: 19)

ON LIFE – AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT AND DEFEND IT

This article is about the heart and essence of it all: **life!** Until and unless we have a view of life *that is God's view of it* – eventually we will end up not being able to view it at all without a tremendous amount of fuzziness and distortion – more so than now - and any related values, judgments and decisions made in its regard will be faulty, contaminated and decayed from

the “rot of the root!” I am hopeful that I will be able in just a few short pages to outline both some basic moral dilemmas of our time, as I see them; and an already available though minimally implemented solution! God in his amazing Wisdom seems to have developed a possible solution right in front of our eyes, at the same time as the moral dilemmas were exacerbating in ferocity and cunning these past 35 years. My treatment will begin with a 1957 film entitled: “The Incredible Shrinking Man” – starring Grant Williams, from a novel and screenplay written by Richard Matheson and directed by Jack Arnold. After this purposefully imaginative introduction I will proceed to a more theological and moral application, ending with an exhortation to use what God has given us to clarify our own view of everything – especially the gravely moral issues that will be brought up in the treatment! And now, on to “The Incredible Shrinking Man.”

The Incredible Shrinking Man

The Plot: (obtained from Wikipedia)

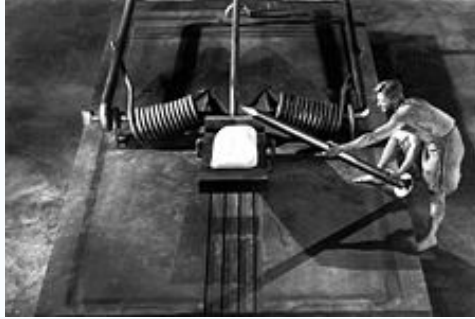
Scott Carey (Grant Williams) is contaminated by a radioactive cloud and pesticide, and he slowly begins shrinking. When he's three feet tall, he briefly becomes friends with a female circus midget but then continues to shrink, eventually being reduced to living in a dollhouse. After nearly being killed by a cat, he winds up trapped in a basement and has to battle a voracious spider, his own hunger, and the fear that he may eventually shrink down to nothing. After defeating the spider, the hero accepts his fate and (now so small he can escape the basement by walking through a space in a window screen) looks forward to seeing what awaits him in ever smaller realms. Eventually, he shrinks to infinitesimal size and then disappears altogether, but a surprising thing happens at that point: read the third quote from the movie below.* (*text emphasis mine*)

Three thought-provoking lines from the film:

"That's silly, honey. People just don't get smaller." (Louise reassuring her shrinking husband, Scott)

"The unbelievably small and the unbelievably vast eventually meet, like the closing of a gigantic circle." (Scott, to himself)

"And I felt my body dwindling, melting, becoming nothing. My fears locked away and in their place came acceptance. **All this vast majesty of creation, it had to mean something. And then I meant something, too. Yes, smaller than the smallest, I meant something, too. To God there is no zero. I still exist.**" (Scott, to himself - last line in movie.)



Scene from
The Incredible Shrinking Man

The implications of this film can be very helpful in discussing some serious moral issues of our day! The most obvious being: **size does not matter:** “To God there is no zero.” Once a person begins to exist *he/she exists: in all the vast majesty of creation.* And most important of all: no matter what size a person might be: **“I mean something!” I matter!**

THE CREATION OF A HUMAN BEING

To begin a moral application of the film we begin with a brief lesson in the creation of a human being! This amazing miraculous act comes from **THREE INDISPENSIBLE SOURCES:** *the female gift of self* (the egg) according to its natural ordered process; *the male gift of self* (the sperm) according to its natural ordered process; *God’s gift of self: image and likeness* (the soul: that which makes the united egg and sperm “human (a ‘person’)” – according to His own supernatural ordering).

While it is true that the female and male creates the physical body of a child, unless and until God contributes his gift of image, likeness and human soul, then what the female/male create remains simply elements of a union and not yet human!

There is every reason to believe, however, that **the union of these three elements occurs simultaneously** at the moment of conception. All that comprises the full potential of the individual human person is there at that moment and will remain forever – throughout the long process of growth and diminution every human being goes through – even to returning to the dust of the earth.

Applying this to *The Incredible Shrinking Man*: If we could reduce any fully grown human being including *the shrinking man* and even ourselves, down to the infinitesimal size we all started out as – we would find that what is so amazing is that: “we” still exist! – thus reduced. (In fact, even if at this point we were reduced to having no visible body at all (no material parts) we would *still exist!* So either way, infinitesimal or invisible according to the analogy *we would still count, we would still mean something in the great majesty of God’s creation!* Once created by God, our soul (our personhood) is eternal! One day just as he has promised he will reunite our bodies to our souls and bring them to the stature, beauty and grace he always has had in mind for them to be! Until then, he expects us to reverence and hold sacred **everything that has to do with life: our own and that of others**: from the moment of conception to natural death!

The Current Moral Problems

Currently, in modern society, in our country, in our Church there are moral issues of great magnitude that need to be addressed in a united and effective way while there is still time to avoid just retribution by God for blatant disobedience to the supernatural law; and natural moral and ethical principles that he has given to everyone, everywhere by means of a conscience (a conscience is part of the soul, and is given when God contributes his gift to the creation of a child).

1. There is a dangerous notion that God is distant, uncaring and not paying attention to what is going on in lives, and in the world.
2. There is a dangerous notion that freedom means license to do whatever comes to mind.
3. There is a dangerous notion that God’s justice is our justice, rather than the other way around.
4. There is a dangerous notion Judgment Day is only a “story” that will probably not really take place.

It appears to me that there are three categories of moral issues that are far more grave than some others. These three have to do with **LIFE AS GOD THOUGHT ABOUT IT AND MADE IT!** and I am talking here about the *very stuff of life* – the egg and the sperm and the human soul and the magnificent donors involved in offering them: *the female human creation of God* (woman); *the male human creation of God* (man); and *God himself* willing to share *his personhood* with his created male/female unit that he joined together “in the beginning.” This then has everything to do with these three topics:

- **MARRIAGE**
- **MANIPULATING THE MOST SACRED GIFTS OF MARRIAGE**
- **THE WILFUL TERMINATION OF THE LIVES OF PREBORN CHILDREN**

MARRIAGE:

Marriage is the very first “institution” that God himself established for his “newly born” (created) male and female creations! *It was his will, his plan and his desire that a man and a woman would unite in a mutual embrace of total self-donation which was open to the possibility of new life: and then welcome children when they are born!* This tremendous institution is the basis of all married and family life for all civilizations for time immemorial. In itself it can be seen as the “primordial sacrament,” as it a sign that prefigures the coming of Christ and his uniting with human creations in a Bridge/Groom relationship! Jesus himself took what was already there, and at the wedding feast of Cana raised it to the dignity of a sacrament for his Church-to-be.

To tamper with the reality of marriage at all, especially its definition; to attempt in any way to change what God himself has ordered would be a very serious act of disobedience, sacrilege and blasphemy! Marriage is not a civil right, as is housing and health care. Marriage is a sacred vocation – a calling by God for his own purposes and ends. He wants to use marriage as a visible symbol to the world of how much he truly *does* love the world, how he *does* care, how he *is* present, and how he is *hoping* that we make

right and good decisions so that he will not have to mete out his kind of justice upon us!

REPEALING THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT – would allow dis-“ordered” marriages (marriages not conforming to God’s original intent and design) to take place! This would demean the existing institution of ordered marriage. It would put unnecessary tensions and strain on all family life; and it would cause a slow but sure moral erosion to the whole infrastructure of American society and ultimately government (made up of members of families). And because our country is so influential on the world stage – this moral delinquency would seep into creviced foundations of other societies and countries throughout the world. The beacon that America is would become significantly less bright and the prospect of relighting it would be very slim.

One of the real issues here is discrimination. *No one* deserves to be discriminated against as an individual for any reason. But common sense tells us that legal rights can certainly be established for those who for one reason or another find themselves in a variety of committed friendships and relationships of like kind. However, **any attempt at reformatting of marriage is like mixing apples with oranges: the one is supernatural in origin; the other is natural in seeking ethical civil rights. Marriage itself, as I said above, however, is not a civil right! No one has a right to marry. But everyone called to marry has the joy of responding to God’s invitation to the married state! The proposed repeal then is a grave moral evil** and since it goes back to “the beginning” – might invite just and swift retribution by God.

To put it another way: marriage, in a real sense, transcends both Church and State. It existed before either of them existed and therefore, having that exalted place of honor alone makes it clear that it is not to be tampered with. Marriage consists of a man consenting to give himself totally to and for his wife; the woman consenting to give herself totally to and for her

husband. God has ratified this consenting and ordained that it must be consummated by the union of the marital embrace: to concretize the consent of self-donation. This concretization must be open to the possibility that with God's cooperation a new human life will emerge as a sign of married love and family life. This is marriage – nothing less and nothing more.

The state does not “marry” husband and wife, any more than the Church does – it simply affirms for civil legal purposes the consent of the couple and ensures that the family oriented unit has what it needs to survive. The state, therefore, has no right to redefine marriage in any way – marriage transcends the state. It would be extreme presumption and arrogance to do so.

The church on the one hand also, does not “marry” husband and wife. The priest (who at this point represents both church and state: talk about ‘separation of church and state’) witnesses the consent that two baptized people make which releases the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Christ's own presence into the union to be a perpetual aid for the good times and the bad, the joys and the sorrows, the sickness and the health and the procreation and education of children as new members – brothers and sisters – who God wants very much to be a part of his Kingdom to come! Therefore, not even the church has any right to tamper with marriage in anyway. It would be blasphemous to do so.

MANIPULATING THE MOST SACRED GIFTS OF MARRIAGE:

Ends do not justify means! Using a human being as an object for any purpose is degrading and robs the person of his/her dignity as a treasured human creation in the sight of God.

God has the right to order creation as he wants it ordered! Any deviation from that order needs to be avoided. “Playing God” – is to be avoided as well. Now, this is not to be confused with using intelligence to develop what

has been given to help better the plight of mankind. But parameters do very much exist, boundaries that ought not to be crossed – without the grave consequence of divine retribution. Therefore scientific projects such as **EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH, IN VITRO FERTILIZATION, SURROGATE PARENTING, CLONING** and the like, because they are a manipulation of *the very stuff* of life itself: eggs and sperm: is prohibited by divine law and natural moral ethical guidelines

Again, many good ends could occur with such “out-of-the-properly-ordered” (“dis-ordered”) means: but from God’s perspective (and his is the one that ultimately counts) - it will not do! And he has every right to censure and punish those who interfere with his intentions in this way!

There are many other related disorders that apply in this area but these mentioned are the most obvious and blatant.

Therefore a **REPEAL OF THE BAN ON EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH** would be morally reprehensible and the cause of unwanted divine consequences.

ABORTION: THE WILFUL TERMINATION OF THE LIVES OF PREBORN CHILDREN

The most obvious application of “The Incredible Shrinking Man” film belongs here. It would seem reasonable to assume that premeditated killing of another person is not the goal of abortion. Women do not choose abortion for that reason. The most common reasons for abortion are: “fear” “shame” “coercion/force” “inconvenience” or “untimeliness” or “upsetting of lifestyle” “economic hardship”: **all having to do with the woman**. Other reasons certainly do exist but these are among the top. **The person who seems to be discounted from the very beginning here is the person of the baby already existing – no matter how miniscule the form is at the time!**

It is interesting: when a woman finds out she is pregnant (and she “wants” a child) what is now alive in her is called a “baby” – “I’m going to have a baby – the baby that is now inside of me!” – she so lovingly and proudly tells everyone! But when she wants an abortion what is inside her is now more often thought of as just an unwanted object, a fetus, a disposable clump of tissues in her body!

It is also interesting: when a woman mis-carries a “wanted” child, she says with great sorrow and pain: “I lost ‘the baby!’”

It ought to be evident just from these observations (and others like it) that what has been growing in the mother’s womb is a “baby.” A person! With its own soul, subjectivity and identity! It is not just an object – a biological mass of cells and tissues. Just because the baby is hooked up to her as a life-support now, it is no less of a person than it will be late in life when it might also need to be dependent on others and even hooked up to life-support systems. **Being physically independent does not define personhood!** A very deep instinct tells her and all of us that this is true. And it is undeniable!

And so: the entire “person” is present at the moment of conception – **at the confluence of the three donations from: female /male /God.** To figure that God arbitrarily makes his donation randomly at another time in the process is neither logical nor admittedly scientifically provable one way nor the other. But while not “provable” by means of scientific investigation, the presence of personhood is “provable by faith:” which is reason enhanced by Divine Light itself. And along with this, for the scientist, *there is a gut-level feeling* (pardon the pun) that this is provable even without mentioning “faith” - because of natural conscience. My question is this: why gamble with the possibility that abortion *might be murder*, or simply a surgical procedure for removing a “non-personed prehuman object?” **If human personhood and life does begin at conception then abortion is clearly premeditated murder.**

If we let the newly formed person grow to full maturity it will be a man or a woman, who if even through a fictional adventure of the likes of the

film (TISM) was reduced back down to its smallest size – and even now, disappears, corporally: it would still be alive in soul, spiritually – until the time when body and soul are reunited. Once created a person, a human being by God – there will be life forever!

To carry through the TISM (The Incredible Shrinking Man) analogy here:

The third quotation from the film most eloquently applies at this point: **no matter what size this part of the majesty of creation is: he/she counts, he/she matters, he/she means something: he/she is not a zero – for to God there is no zero once he creates it!** What gives any human being the gumption to consider zero what God would never do!

Therefore, an agenda item of the new administration of the Federal Government to pass and sign the **FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT** – (which in truth has nothing to do with freedom whatsoever or women’s rights - but has everything to do with is the abuse of freedom belonging to preborn babies, who will continue to be “counted as zero” and aborted at an accelerated rate) would be a completely unorthodox and morally reprehensible thing to do. **No one is free simply to do whatever they want to do! No woman, no man, no child. No president, no king, no potentate! But everyone is free to do what God wills!** God gave us free will for two reasons: **to love and glorify him because he is God!; and to love and serve one another as we respect and love our own selves** (whom we can see to prove our love from him whom we cannot see with our human eyes).

That is it! That is what freedom is for! And so: not only in the Church, but in society, **that which contributes to this goal in a direct or indirect way is the right use of freedom; that which is against this, directly or indirectly, is the improper use of freedom** and is therefore *not freeing at all* – and is subject to accountability to God the giver of the gift in the first place!

And not only would this act be a gross misuse of freedom, it would be a wreckless winding back of the clock to pre Roe v

Wade practices! The hard-won requirements of safe environment, qualified doctors, waiting periods, parental notification, accountability and responsibility would become suddenly be eliminated. *Any form of interfering with the decision and execution of aborting a baby by any female of any age would be prohibited by the Act.* This clearly has everything to do with wreckless licensing and nothing at all to do with real freedom!

The Federal Government – and indeed all government – in a sense is most effective and efficient and credible, authentic and genuine when in a “generic sort of way” it uses the same truth, goodness and justice to order society with that the Church uses to order its members. For **all authority comes from God in the first place** – and **all in public office are ultimately responsible to him** – and **will be accountable to him directly and personally on Judgment Day** – no matter what religion any one of them is or is not. That is a given – it has nothing to do with “personal belief.” (*Just because I personally do not believe that Niagara Falls exists does not mean that it is not there!*)

And so – taking stamped-in-conscience principles and applying them ought to be the goal of civil authorities! **There is only one TRUTH! and that is the PERSON of Jesus Christ! There is only one FREEDOM! and that is the Freedom OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD that was won for all people everywhere when Jesus died on the Cross!** This is not only a theological conjecture; it is a spiritual fact that applies to everyone! Now if individuals and groups of individuals want to deny this real freedom and say that it does not apply to them – they are “free to do so” – but it will not make it any less applicable to them, and accountable for it! Niagara Fall is really there!

Finally, **there is only one PEACE** – and that is the harmony which will exist only one day when Christ will come and share the reward that he won for all of mankind by his Death and Resurrection! He is always ready and willing to forgive! His reaction to our killing him was to forgive us and offer us everlasting peace! This is truly amazing!

His mercy is boundless for the erring and misguided intentions of human beings! He knows all about us – remember? That’s why he came here to earth! So he could really understand us! And really take all our ignorance and sins upon himself and transform them into **forgiveness and reconciliation!**

He is ascended into heaven now and waiting for the signal from his Father to come and judge us all – according to how well and graciously, generously and self-lessly we treated one another – how well we treated all of those placed on the planet at the same time that we are - including most importantly the very least of his brothers and sisters – the poor, and the sick, the hungry, the naked and the imprisoned, but in a very special way those most precious and sacred to him: the unborn children who wait each day - anticipating and reaching for - the light of day!

No one knows for sure what the general resurrection will be like. I personally envision it as all people being judged and assigned where they chose to be assigned. Those who listened to the Word of God their whole lives long either directly or even generically; those who were *for life in all of its aspects* - will be gathered into an eternity of happiness and joy! Those who did not listen to the Word that was proclaimed loudly and clearly; those who were for death, for themselves and their projects plans, choices, decisions, freedoms, manipulations and schemings - not really caring about other people at all – will be gathered into an eternity of *more of the same* in a place where *God-is-not*, and the *Devil and will be there to frustrate every one of their plans forever and ever and ever!*

But before the separation, at the time when bodies and souls are reunited - I can hope to see everyone restored to his ideal best. I would hope at this time that all the aborted persons **who are now fully grown to what they might have been** – *will face the ones who aborted them* – and – *forgive them!* I would think that for any who did the aborting who will not be spending eternity in the same place as these brave ones - this act of

forgiveness would make their eternal punishment all the more severe!

What I mean here is: at the judgment everyone will be there, everyone, and *the secret thoughts of each heart shall be made known*, as Scripture tells us! And God will then have his time to avenge what needs avenging! We have been forewarned for centuries and millennia! And we are warned NOW!

The Moral Imperative

From Wikipedia, an internet source:

A **moral imperative** is a principle originating inside a person's mind that compels that person to act. It is a kind of categorical imperative, as defined by Immanuel Kant. He took the imperative to be a dictate of pure reason, in its practical aspect. Not following the moral law was seen to be self-defeating and thus contrary to reason. Later thinkers took the imperative to originate in conscience, as the **divine** voice speaking through the human spirit. The dictates of conscience are simply right and often resist further justification. Looked at another way, the experience of conscience is the basic experience of encountering the **right**.

I bring up the moral imperative here more as **a call to immediacy of action**. When – through prayer, divine light shining on human reason, a basic right is encountered then it would seem that it ought to be acted on as soon as possible depending on the gravity of the matters involved.

It would seem clear that the above three moral problems of our day are of a grave moral matter. The topics involved deal with evil through and through. Therefore, I see it as the responsibility of the Catholic citizens of this country to do two things immediately: 1) continue to organize political opposition to the three legislative proposals of the New Congress; 2) pray in a unified way for the derailing of these proposed legislations, and also, encourage pastors and bishops to work on a comprehensive solution to these and all other related matters, if one is possible and available. The time for concentrating on the problem seems to be coming to an end; it might be time now to concentrate on a real solution!

I believe there is such a solution and now I will tell you how I see it!

A Possible Moral / Ethical Solution

An amazing solution to the above mentioned issues – which also touches on so many other pertinent topics – was given to us by the Holy Spirit at precisely the same time as the problems were emerging, developing and escalating! I do believe that God always gives us the answers to any delinmas we face if only we look around during our suffering and prayer!

The solution as I see it – and I am certainly not alone in my perspective – is the magnificent pastoral teaching work of Pope John Paul II entitled: **The Theology of the Body (TOTB)**. Compared with the theological systems of other great figures in Church history beginning with The Apostle/Evangelist John and St. Paul – John Paul’s amazingly comprehensive project might be precisely what we need at this particularly critical moment in our nation’s and salvation histories! Both seem to be converging rapidly and **TOTB** is the “approach lights” to the final meeting and consequent festivities!

*From Christopher West’s: **Theology of the Body for Beginners**:*

“Theology of the body” is the working title Pope John Paul II gave to the first major teaching project of his pontificate. In 129 short talks delivered between September of 1979 and November 1984, the Pope offered the Church and the world a rich, biblical reflection on the meaning of human embodiment, particularly as it concerns sexuality and erotic desire.

Catholic theologian George Weigel describe John Paul’s theology of the body as “one of the boldest reconfigurations of Catholic theology in centuries” – “*a kind of theological time-bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences...perhaps in the 21st century.*”

[At the end of his book West concludes]:

If the future of humanity passes by way of marriage and the family, we could say that the future of marriage and the family passes by way of John Paul II’s theology of the body. Put simply, *there will be no renewal of the Church and of the world without a renewal of marriage and the family. And there will be no renewal of marriage and*

the family without a return to the full truth of God's plan for the body and sexuality. Yet this won't happen without a fresh theological proposal that compellingly demonstrates how the Christian sexual ethic- far from the cramped, prudish list of prohibitions it's assumed to be – is a liberating message of salvation that corresponds perfectly with the yearnings of the human heart. This is precisely what John Paul II's theology of the body offers us. As **such it provides the antidote to the culture of death and a theological foundation for the “new evangelization.”**

If the theology of the body provides the answer to the crisis of our times, it does so only because it reconnects the modern world with the “great mystery” of Christ and his Church. As John Paul II writes, “We are certainly not seduced by the naïve expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula, but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: “I am with you!” Christ the Bridegroom is with us!

West concludes: this is our living hope. **This is the hope that John Paul II offers us in his theology of the body. If we share this hope with the world, together, we shall not fall short of renewing the face of the earth!**

And what I say, with Mr. West is *“we must shout about this Person, this Christ, this Message, this Truth, this Theology of the Body from the housetops!”* **The theology of the body – which is the newest theology of the entire Gospel will not fail us if we avail ourselves of it!**

Those who truly embrace and live this theology will find a total world view that will touch and influence every aspect of their lives. They will find no need for abortions, for artificial birth control, for alternative forms of marriage and partnership, marriage will be seen for what it is: a magnificent gift of God, just as it is, without any need for modification or reformatting, given for the happiness and eternal salvation of the participants in it – including all members of the family.

There will be no need for allowing scientific inquiry into areas not approved by the Church. There will be much less call for divorce and a greater understanding about the nature of sex, sexuality, celibacy, virginity and homosexuality: all, surprisingly enough as they relate to marriage – the primordial institution. There will be an emphasis on viewing others as *subjects* (persons, with feelings and God-given rights), rather than as *objects* (non-persons for dominance and personal gratification). There will be no need for billions of dollars a year pornography and prostitution industries. This money certainly could feed and fuel entire nations, including our own! *Those who live the theology will have an entirely different outlook on everything!*

There are 2 billion Catholics in the world. If only a small fraction truly bought into this theology – **the Light of Christ – the Light of the Church** – could help dispel the ever darkening world of moral evil just as it is supposed to be doing. And then, secular society, seeing that *we (the Church) just might have something worth imitating* may want to develop its own kind of generic version (as secular society is wont to do) – until that Final Day – **when Christ will come as King – and he will submit all power and authority on earth to himself – and hand us all over to God his Father!** This is most assuredly the future of the world! If only more people really believed this – then what a different place the world would be!

I can only recommend therefore that readers of this paper organize in a peaceful and charitably motivated way to oppose the proposed morally objectionable acts of legislation that are on the horizon; and also, persuade local church leaders to become familiar with John Paul II's entire **Theology of the Body** and to teach the whole course – bit by bit - to their flock! **It may be our only hope!** It is no coincidence that this possible “solution” was developing at the same time as the “problems” were exacerbating!

Father William Dinga, Jr.
Solemnity of Christ the King
November 23, 2008

For further reading: [Man and Woman He Created Them \(A Theology of the Body\)](#), John Paul II, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 2006. [Theology of the Body Explained](#), Christopher West, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 2003. [Theology of the Body for Beginners](#), Christopher West, Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, 2004.