

PART I

CATHOLIC THOUGHT

CHAPTER 1A **MAGISTERIUM**

The Catholic Church's ideas about the soul developed over time, and were shaped by history, philosophy and theology. Yet the belief in the spiritual soul has been an essential, consistent component of its teachings. The first part of chapter one analyses recent magisterial, papal and curial statements pertaining to the soul/body, then considers some ecclesial theological responses to the sciences.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church's *Catechism* (CCC), is presented as "a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine, enabling everyone to know what the Church professes, celebrates, lives, and prays in her daily life."¹ Significant teachings about body and soul in the *Catechism*, and its subsequent *Compendium*, are parsed under three headings: unity of the person, body/matter, soul/spirit.

"Body and Soul But Truly One" (CCC 362-368)² and

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Questions 69 and 70³

(read each row, from left to right)

| UNITY OF THE PERSON | BODY, MATTER | SOUL, SPIRIT |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| 362 The human person, created in the image of | at once corporeal | and spiritual.... |

¹ John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter *Laetamur Magnopere*, in which the Latin typical edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is approved and promulgated," in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St.Pauls Publications, 2000), pp.xiii-xvi (p.xiv). The *Catechism* contains many quotations from church councils, canon law, writings of the popes, doctors of the church, saints, and ecclesiastical writers.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos.362-368, pp.92-94

³ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St.Pauls Publications, 2006), Q.69 and Q.70, pp.43-44

| | | |
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| God, is a being | | |
| 363 In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human life or the entire human person | | "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the spiritual principle in man. |
| | 364 The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": It is a human body | precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, |
| it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit | | |
| <i>Man,</i> | <i>though made of body</i> | <i>And soul,</i> |
| <i>is a unity.</i> | <i>Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator... (Gaudium et Spes 14)</i> | |
| 365 The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider | | the soul to be the "form" of the body, i.e. it is because of its spiritual soul |
| | that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body: | |
| | | i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that |
| | the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; | |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature. | | |
| | | 366 The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not "produced" by the parents - and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates |
| | from the body at death, | |
| and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection | | |
| | | 367 Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: (I Thess 5:23)...this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul. "Spirit" signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God. |
| | | |
| 368 The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the heart, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God. | | |
| | | |
| | | Q.69 <i>How do the soul</i> |
| | <i>and body</i> | |
| <i>form a unity in the human being?</i> | | |
| The human person is a being | at once corporeal | and spiritual. |
| In man | | Spirit |
| | and matter | |
| form one nature. | | |
| This unity is so profound | | that, thanks to the spiritual |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | principle which is the soul, |
| | the body which is material, becomes a living human body and participates in the dignity of the image of God. | |
| | | <i>Q.70 Where does the soul come from?</i> |
| | | The spiritual soul does not come from one's parents but is created immediately by God and is immortal. It does not perish at the moment when it is separated |
| | from the body in death | |
| and it will be once again reunited with the body at the moment of the final resurrection. | | |

"I believe in the resurrection of the body" (CCC 988, 997, 999-1000)⁴ and Question 203⁵

| UNITY OF THE PERSON | BODY, MATTER | SOUL, SPIRIT |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | | 988 The "resurrection of the flesh" (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) means not only that the immortal soul |
| | but that even our "mortal body" will come to life again | |
| | | 997 What is "rising"? In death, the separation of the soul |
| | from the body, the human body decays | |
| and the soul goes to meet | God, in his almighty | |

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.988, 997; 999-1000; pp.260-261

⁵ *Compendium of the Catechism*, Q.203, p.70

| | | |
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| God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. | power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies | |
| reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection. | | |
| | 999 How? Christ is raised with his own body: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself"; but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, "all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear," but Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body," into a "spiritual body." | |
| Q.203 What is meant by the "resurrection of the body"? This means that the definitive state of man will not be one in which his spiritual soul is separated from his body. | | |
| | Even our mortal bodies will one day come to life again. | |
| 1000 This "how" exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. | | |

The *Catechism* quotes Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* 14 which contains a paradox: "A being, though made of body and soul, is a unit [sic.] (the Latin is *unus*)'. Does the Council therefore espouse monism, or dualism?"⁶ The *Catechism* and *Compendium* likewise fluctuate between body, soul, and unity. Due to the soul, the body becomes a living human body; matter and spirit form a single nature (CCC 365;

⁶ Eric D'Arcy, "Towards the First Golden Age?," *The Australasian Catholic Record* Vol.LXXIV No.3 (July 1997), pp.294-306 (p.302). Before being appointed a bishop and an archbishop, Rev.Dr.D'Arcy (1924-2005) was a philosopher at the University of Melbourne, in Victoria, Australia, and at one stage head of the philosophy department; cf. James Franklin, *Corrupting the Youth: A History of Philosophy in Australia* (Paddington, New South Wales: Macleay Press, 2003), p.152.

Q.69). This entails two entities, one perishable, one imperishable and immortal (CCC 366). That is, the union of $2 = 1 + 1$, though in this case, Person = Body + Soul. However this unity does not endure; the soul separates from the body at death and is destined to be reunited with the body in a final resurrection (CCC 366). There is a note of dissonance in the harmony of body and soul.

According to W.Charlton, the Catholic Church offers two accounts of the soul.⁷ The ‘Lateran’ doctrine, Platonic in nature, from the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council declared that God “created all things, visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal.” Then in the encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950) Pope Pius XII says that souls are “immediately created” by God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the soul is not produced by the parents (CCC 366). The second account is called ‘Vienne’ by Charlton, from the 1312 Council of Vienne which declared that the ‘substance of the rational or thinking soul is truly and of itself the form of the human body.’ It uses Aristotle’s ‘form’ (*forma*), and Aquinas’s argument that the thinking soul is the form of the body, and this is the view that appears the *Catechism*: ‘The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the “form” of the body.’ (CCC365) The Lateran doctrine is that a human being is a composite of soul and body; yet the Vienne doctrine teaches that a human being not a composite of soul and body but a unity.⁸

Recent Popes

In answer to the question, ‘did Christianity really destroy *eros*?,’ Pope Benedict XVI replied that man is composed of body and soul, truest when both are united. If he aspires to be pure spirit and rejects the flesh of animal nature alone, then body and spirit both lose their dignity. Yet, “should he deny the spirit and consider matter, the body, as the only reality, he would likewise lose his greatness.”⁹ He refers to the exchange between the epicure Gassendi who used to offer Descartes the humorous greeting: ‘O Soul!’ And Descartes would reply: ‘O Flesh!’. Yet as the pope remarks, it is “neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves. Only when both dimensions

⁷ William Charlton, “Two Theories of Soul,” *New Blackfriars* Vol.90 No.1028 (July 2009), pp.424–440.

⁸ Charlton, *Two Theories of Soul*, p.427

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Encyclical Letter, *On Christian Love* (Strathfield, New South Wales: St.Pauls Publications, 2006), no.5; pp.10-11

are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love - *eros* - able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.”¹⁰

In contemporary thinking, Benedict XVI links a reduced understanding and vision of soul to the difficulties experienced by humanity in its development.¹¹ A technological mind-set and psychological outlook handles problems and emotions of the interior life, even using neurological reductionism. Therefore, humanity’s interiority loses meaning, lessening awareness of the human soul’s ontological depths, as explored by the saints.¹² There is a profound failure to grasp the spiritual life. Development requires material plus spiritual growth, “since the human person is a ‘unity of body and soul’, born of God’s creative love and destined for eternal life.”¹³

There is also an existential dimension. Far away from God, humans are unsettled: “social and psychological alienation and the many neuroses that afflict affluent societies are attributable in part to spiritual factors. A prosperous society, highly developed in material terms but weighing heavily on the soul is not of itself conducive to authentic development.”¹⁴ Examples are the slavery to drugs and the lack of hope, which Benedict XVI says are explained in sociological, psychological but also spiritual terms. Emptiness and abandonment are felt by the soul in the face of abundant therapies for body and psyche. In other words, “There cannot be holistic development and universal common good unless people’s spiritual and moral welfare is taken into account, considered in their totality as body and soul.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no.5, p.11. .See Emily Michael, “Renaissance Theories of Body, Soul, and Mind,” in Wright & Potter (eds.), *Psyche and Soma*, pp.147-172, who notes that Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), adversary of Descartes, adopts atomistic ideas and rejects Aristotelian forms as unintelligible. From Gassendi’s perspective, the human body is not a substance comprised of form and matter, but a composite of many substances each having atoms as its fundamental matter and argues for a corporeal soul. (pp.165-166)

¹¹ He does this in Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, *Encyclical Letter*, On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth (Strathfield, N.S.W.: St.Paul Publications, 2009)

¹² Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no.76, p.140. Authentic human development includes the spiritual. The pope sees development as closely connected with the understanding of the human soul, e.g. over-simplifications of the self (*ego*) reduced to the psyche (*psyche*) and the soul’s health (*animae salus*) is confused with emotional well-being (*emotionis bono*).

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no.76, p.140

¹⁴ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no.76, p.141

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no.76, p.141

Pope John Paul II identifies bodily and spiritual elements as the direct subject of suffering.¹⁶ To an extent ‘suffering’ and ‘pain’ can be used synonymously; *physical suffering* occurs when “the body is hurting” while *moral suffering* is “pain of the soul”. He says, “it is a question of pain of a spiritual nature, and not only of the ‘psychological’ dimension of pain which accompanies both moral and physical suffering.”¹⁷ Moral suffering is extensive and diverse, matching physical suffering but John Paul II finds moral suffering less identified and less reachable by therapy.¹⁸

Although not recent, there is also Pope Pius XII’s Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* [The Most Bountiful God] (1950) which defined the dogma of the Assumption of Mary.¹⁹ For the just, God usually does not grant the full effects of the victory over death until the end of time. Bodies, even of the just, decay after death to await the last day. But the Blessed Virgin Mary was exempted due to the unique privilege of sinlessness from her Immaculate Conception. Mary was “not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body.”²⁰ After completing her earthly life, Mary was “assumed body and soul into heavenly glory”.²¹ This is also the destiny for humanity.

Others Teachings and Worship

The soul features in various teachings. The *Declaration on Procured Abortion* left aside the question of the moment “when the spiritual soul is infused. There is not a unanimous tradition on this point and authors are as yet in disagreement... It is not

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris, Apostolic Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (Homebush, New South Wales: St.Paul Publications, 1984), para.5; p.12

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, para.5; 12. Pain and suffering are themes in theology, psychology, pastoral care, palliative care, bioethics and so forth. J.L.A.Garcia, “Sin and Suffering in a Catholic Understanding of Medical Ethics,” *Christian Bioethics* Vol.12 No.2 (2006), pp.165-186; Jacqueline R.Cameron, “Minding God/Minding Pain: Christian Theological Reflections on Recent Advances in Pain Research,” *Zygon* Vol.40 No.1 (March 2005), pp.167–180

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, para.5; p.12. Animals suffer physical pain but only “the suffering human being knows that he is suffering and wonders why; and he suffers in a humanly speaking still deeper way if he does not find a satisfactory answer. This is a *difficult question*, just as is a question closely akin to it, the question of evil. Why does evil exist?” (para.9; p.19). Traditional theodicy addresses the latter question, but on the question of suffering, John Paul II answers that love is “the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ.” (para.13; p.26)

¹⁹ Pope Pius XII, “Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, The Most Bountiful God,” in Edward R.Lawler, CSP (ed.), *Four Marian Encyclicals and the Apostolic Constitution ‘Munificentissimus Deus’ of Pope Pius XII* (New York: Paulist Press, 1959), pp.19-45

²⁰ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, Nos.4-5, pp.20-21

²¹ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, No.44, p.43

within the competence of science to decide between these views, because the existence of an immortal soul is not a question in its field.”²²

It is a philosophical question inclusive of two other points.

1. Supposing a delayed animation, there is nonetheless a human life, preparing for a soul wherein the nature received from the parents is completed
2. It is sufficient that this presence of the soul is probable, something which cannot be disproved, “in order that the taking of life involve accepting the risk of killing a man, not only waiting for, but already in possession of his soul.”²³

The Instruction *Dignitatis Personae* reaffirmed that “the presence of the spiritual soul cannot be observed experimentally.”²⁴ While no empirical data is adequate to lead to the recognition of the soul, however human embryology can offer indications for discerning “by the use of reason a personal presence at the moment of this first appearance of a human life: how could a human individual not be a human person? The Magisterium has not expressly committed itself to an affirmation of a philosophical nature.”²⁵ John Paul II echoed these views when he was writing on life issues.²⁶

Catholic worship expresses the belief that death is not the end and does not undo the bonds forged in life.²⁷ The Church commends the dead to “God’s merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins. At the funeral rites, especially at the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice, the Christian community affirms and

²² Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of The Faith (SCDF), “Declaration on Procured Abortion,” in Austin Flannery OP (ed.), *Vatican Council II, More Post Conciliar Documents*, Vatican Collection Volume 2 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982), footnote 19, p.452

²³ SCDF, *Declaration*, footnote 19, p.452

²⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction, Dignitatis Personae: On Certain Bioethical Questions* (Strathfield, New South Wales: St.Pauls Publications, 2008), no.5; p.11. It reaffirmed the earlier teaching in *Donum Vitae* (1987), see below.

²⁵ *Donum Vitae* I,1; otherwise known as the document of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine Of The Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, Replies to Certain Questions of the Day* (Homebush, New South Wales: St Paul Publications, 1987), I,1; p.21

²⁶ Above all scientific debates and “those philosophical affirmations to which the Magisterium has not expressly committed itself, the Church has always taught and continues to teach that the result of human procreation, from the first moment of its existence, must be guaranteed that unconditional respect which is morally due to the human being in his or her totality and unity as body and spirit.” John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life, Evangelium Vitae* (Homebush, New South Wales: St.Pauls – Society of St.Paul, 1995), no.60; p.114

²⁷ International Commission on English in the Liturgy. *Order of Christian Funerals*, Second Edition (Sydney & Wellington: E.J.Dwyer, 1989). no.4, p.2

expresses the union of the Church on earth with the Church in heaven in the one great communion of saints.”²⁸

In the final commendation and farewell the community prays

Saints of God, come to his/her aid!

Hasten to meet him/her, angels of the Lord!

R. Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High.²⁹

The response, “receive his/her soul...” is repeated three times to respond to different verses. It can be interpreted this is another example of a belief and practice which includes an understanding of the soul, where a spiritual bond exists between the living and the dead. The belief is that “all the faithful will be raised up and reunited in the new heavens and a new earth, where death will be no more.”³⁰ This belief is practised in prayers for the dead, particularly during November.³¹

‘Communion and Stewardship’

Having considered teachings and practices, the Church’s theological scholarship is worth exploring. The International Theological Commission (ITC) document *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* (C&S),³² was offered as a “theological meditation on the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.”³³

²⁸ In other words, “though separated from the living, the dead are still at one with the community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and intercession.” ICEL, *Order of Christian Funerals*, no.6, p.3. See Patricia A.Sullivan, “A Reinterpretation of Invocation and Intercession of the Saints,” *Theological Studies* Vol.66 No.2 (June 2005), pp.381-400, for discussion of the saints as intercessors in a post-Vatican II theological and pastoral time, in addition to being models of holiness in the Catholic Church. Sullivan observes that the faithful, “half of whom know little if anything about the saints or the meaning of their unique place in the ‘communion of the saints.’ The saints have virtually disappeared from churches, religious education classes, and popular Catholic discourse.” (p.381)

²⁹ *Order of Christian Funerals*, no.174, p.90

³⁰ *Order of Christian Funerals*, no.6, p.3

³¹ Eamon Duffy, “Praying for the dead,” *Priests and People* Vol.17 No.11 (November 2003), pp.418-422; and a different perspective in Nicholas Peter Harvey, “Praying for the dead,” *The Way Supplement* Vol.100 (Spring 2001), pp.85-96. Harvey finds the marginalizing in the Catholic Church of an “indulgence-based approach to praying for the dead makes room for a much healthier sense of our continuing involvement with them...placatory prayer for the dead, along with its accompanying practices, is no longer apposite.” (p.87 & p.95)

³² International Theological Commission (ITC), “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,” *Origins* Vol.34 No.15 (23 September 2004), pp.233-248. The numbers are those of the document. The page numbers are from the *Origins* publication.

³³ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.2, p.235

C & S finds theology today striving to overcome dualistic anthropologies which tended to recognise the *imago Dei* in spiritual part of human nature. Influenced partly by Platonic and then Cartesian dualistic anthropologies, “Christian theology itself tended to identify the *imago Dei* in human beings with what is the most specific characteristic of human nature, viz., mind or spirit.”³⁴ The ITC looks to biblical anthropology and elements of the Thomistic synthesis for guidance.

The bible speaks of humans wholistically, and excludes mind-body dualism. The central dogmas of the Christian faith mean that the body is essential to human persons and participates in being created in the image of God. The Christian doctrine of creation “utterly excludes a metaphysical or cosmic dualism since it teaches that everything in the universe, spiritual and material, was created by God and thus stems from the perfect Good.”³⁵ The body belongs fundamentally to the human person; this is intrinsic to the teaching about the resurrection of the body at the end of time, implying that humans exist in eternity as complete physical and spiritual persons.³⁶

C&S finds that to maintain the unity of body/soul, the Magisterium relied on Thomistic anthropology drawn from the philosophy of Aristotle:³⁷ body and soul as the material and spiritual principles of a single human being. The ITC also compares this to modern physics which shows that the most elementary particles of matter are “purely potential and possesses no tendency toward organization. But the level of organization in the universe, which contains highly organized forms of living and non-living entities, implies the presence of some ‘information’. This line of reasoning suggests a partial analogy between the Aristotelian concept of substantial form and the modern scientific notion of ‘information’.”³⁸

It cites DNA of the chromosomes, bearing the information required for matter to be organised according to what is characteristic of a particular individual or species.

³⁴ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.27, p.238

³⁵ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.28 and no.29, pp.238-239

³⁶ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.29, p.239

³⁷ Aristotle’s ideas are more complex than our discussion may portray, e.g. Herbert Granger, *Aristotle’s Idea of the Soul*, Philosophical Studies Series Vol.68 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), on analytic philosophy’s interpretation of the nature of the Aristotle soul . It does not fit neatly into categories such as property and thing, attributivism and substantialism.

³⁸ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.30, p.239.

Similarly the substantial form provides to prime matter the information necessary to be organised in a specific manner. The ITC cautions that care is needed with this analogy because spiritual concepts cannot be plainly compared to material data.³⁹

If the soul, created in God's image, “forms matter to constitute the human body, then the human person as a whole is the bearer of the divine image in a spiritual as well as a bodily dimension.”⁴⁰ Christians locate the scientific account of the universe within the theology of creation. The place of human beings in the history of cosmic evolution has been charted by the sciences, and only be viewed completely with the light of faith “as a personal history of the engagement of the triune God with creaturely persons.”⁴¹

C&S sees disagreement over the pace and mechanisms, but notes support for some theory of evolution to explain the development and diversity of life.⁴² The decisive factor in human origins is a continually increasing brain size, culminating in *homo sapiens*. As the human brain developed, “the nature and rate of evolution were permanently altered: with the introduction of the uniquely human factors of consciousness, intentionality, freedom and creativity, biological evolution was recast as social and cultural evolution.”⁴³

C&S cites John Paul II’s 1996 “Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Evolution,” critical of materialistic theories of human origins. It calls for an adequate understanding of the ‘ontological leap’ to “the human which cannot be explained in purely scientific terms”⁴⁴ The person created in the image of God is able to form relationships of communion with other persons and with the triune God, while exercising sovereignty and stewardship in the world.

³⁹ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.30, p.239

⁴⁰ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.31, p.239. The Christological implications the image of God are invoked.

⁴¹ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.62, p.243. This is something theologians have been doing.

⁴² It comments that molecular biology and physical anthropology both make a credible case for the origin of the human species in Africa about 150,000 years ago in a humanoid population of common genetic lineage.

⁴³ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.63, p.244

⁴⁴ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.64, p.244. The implication of these remarks is “that theories of evolution and of the origin of the universe possess particular theological interest when they touch on the doctrines of the creation ex nihilo and the creation of man in the image of God.” (C&S 64)

The understanding of the origin of human beings in the Catholic tradition comes from the revealed truth of an essentially personalist or relational view of God and human nature.⁴⁵ On the immediate or special creation of each human soul, C&S upholds an ontological discontinuity between matter and spirit, and a divine intimacy for each person from the first instant of his/her existence.⁴⁶ Particular actions of God result in effects that transcend the capacity of created causes.

The appeal to divine causality to “account for genuinely causal as distinct from merely explanatory gaps does not insert divine agency to fill in the ‘gaps’ in human scientific understanding (thus giving rise to the so-called ‘God of the gaps’).”⁴⁷ The world is open to non-disruptive divine action. The emergence of the first members of the human species, as individuals or in populations, represents an event not inclined to pure natural explanations. It can be attributed fittingly to divine intervention: Acting indirectly through causal chains, “God prepared the way for what Pope John Paul II has called ‘an ontological leap...the moment of transition to the spiritual’.”⁴⁸ C&S teaches that science can examine these causal chains, yet it is theology which locates special creation of the human soul within the plan of the triune God.

These ‘teachings’ raise some questions about the methodologies of theology and science. Some theologians specialising in the theology-science relationship have differing views to the magisterial ones and the quasi-official theology of the ITC. This will be considered later.⁴⁹

Brain Death

At a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 2006, a majority affirmed the mainstream account of brain death.⁵⁰ Brain death is death; where the criteria for brain

⁴⁵ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.65, p.244.

⁴⁶ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.65, p.244

⁴⁷ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.70, p.245

⁴⁸ ITC, *Communion and Stewardship*, no.70, p.245

⁴⁹ As we shall see later, this may be too interventionist for some theologians, e.g. D.Edwards’ ideas on secondary causes discussed for instance. in his book, *How God Acts*.

⁵⁰ Various signatories, “Why the Concept of Brain Death is Valid as a Definition of Death, Statement by Neurologists and Others,” in Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (ed.), *The Signs of Death, The Proceedings of the Working Group 11-12 September 2006*, Pontificiae Academiae Scientiarum Scripta Varia 110 (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Scientiarum, 2007) pp.xxi-xxix. See also Cf.also James L Bernat, “A defense of the whole-brain concept of death,” *The Hastings Center Report* Vol.28 No.2 (March-April 1998), pp.14-23.

death are not met, the barrier between life and death remains, irrespective of how severe and irreversible any brain injury is.⁵¹

Brain death is the death of the individual. Technology can preserve the organs of a dead person for a time, usually only hours to days; nonetheless, the individual is dead.⁵² The medical-philosophical view is that the body is ‘directed’ by the brain. The ITC says that “we are not a ‘brain in a vat’⁵³ but it has to be recognised that the brain is the receiving centre of all sensory, cognitive, and emotional experiences and that the brain acts as the neural central driving force of existence.”⁵⁴

When brain death occurs the individual is dead “because the body is no longer capable of receiving the being and the life of the soul, given the failure of the central function of the brain in the nervous system but also in several other systems.”⁵⁵ It can be said that without the body the brain is nothing, just as “without the brain the body is nothing because both depend on the soul. The brain is the marvel of the soma but it is a marvel in, and with, the soma, like the head in the body.”⁵⁶

The thinking is that it would be wrong to hastily conclude that the neurosciences have irrefutably demonstrated materialistic monism and no spiritual presence in humans.⁵⁷ The soul confers unity on the body and its essential qualities, as shown in the dynamic unity of cognitive and inclinational activities working in harmony with intelligence and the will.

⁵¹ *Why the Concept of Brain Death is Valid*, p.xxii.

⁵² *Why the Concept of Brain Death is Valid*, p xxii. After the brain is dead, the functioning of other organs can be maintained directly and indirectly by artificial means. It is a process which starts with an irreversible failure of the integrative functions exercised by the brain and brain stem on the body and finishes in brain death and therefore the death of the individual. For a contrasting view see Jeff McMahan, “The Metaphysics Of Brain Death,” *Bioethics* Vol.9 No.2 (April 1995), pp.91–126. McMahan distinguishes two concepts of death; death of the physical organism and the death of the self or person, and uses a form of mind-body dualism.

⁵³ The ‘brain in a vat’ is not referenced, but is from Hilary Putnam’s case of an evil scientist who removes a person’s brain from the body and places it in a vat of nutrients to keep the brain alive. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.6.

⁵⁴ It is acknowledged that the loss of circulation to the brain causes death.

⁵⁵ “Questions For Neurologists and Others About Brain Death As The Criterion For Death,” in Sorondo (ed.), *The Signs of Death*, p.xlii. Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo was Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

⁵⁶ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xliii. The speaker here is M.Sánchez Sorondo

⁵⁷ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xliii .

Brain and soul are interrelated. The brain is the centre of the nervous system but it functions with essential parts throughout the organism; and the organism only functions with its centre. There is physiological unity and consciousness, but ontological unity is conferred by the soul, not the brain.⁵⁸

However, if the brain cannot give such functional unity with the body because neurons have died or the brain has been separated from its organism, “the capacity of the body to receive the being and the unity of the soul disappears, with the consequent separation of the soul from the body, that is to say the death of the organism as a whole.”⁵⁹

The brain is not the intermediary between soul and body but without the brain, the capacity for union of soul and body is absent. The brain is the centre of the nervous system and “the first instrument of the soul in its dynamic and operative function in the body.”⁶⁰ The destruction of the brain (or the destruction of the brain cells) causes

the body to lose the capacity or disposition to receive life, thus preventing the soul from giving life and being to the body. Therefore, what remains is not a body but a corpse, even when it may seem alive because a ventilator masks its death. It is not a human body because it neither has the being nor the life of the intellectual soul, but ‘ex-sists’ in time as a corpse.⁶¹

We note that this extends the *Catechism* teaching that because of its spiritual soul the body made of matter becomes living (CCC 365). In the brain death view, the additional reason for death is because the body is not able to receive life from the soul, stemming from brain and nervous system failures. Hence the body/brain *and* the soul contribute to a live person.

Intermediate State

Benedict XVI’s encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* refers to the intermediate state when interpreting the parable of the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Benedict XVI says the

⁵⁸ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xliv

⁵⁹ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xliv

⁶⁰ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xlvi

⁶¹ Various speakers, *Questions For Neurologists and Others*, p.xlvii

intermediate state can involve purification and healing which matures souls for communion with God.⁶² In the Western Church these ideas gradually developed into the doctrine about Purgatory. At death one's life-choice becomes definitive before the judge.

Some see the "chief riddle" as how the soul both carries full personal identity in the 'intermediate state', yet is inadequate in carrying full personhood because it has no body.⁶³ The physical body, cadaver or corpse, decays.⁶⁴ There is no more 'I'. Nevertheless, since body and soul are 'one' in life and destined to be 'one' in a resurrected life and an intermediate state, the soul is the sole-bearer of identity and is 'me' without my body before general resurrection.⁶⁵ Others pose questions of personal identity about the souls in purgatory.⁶⁶

Conclusions

The teachings and thinking of the Catholic Church on the soul, and implicitly in the Church's worship, offer stable metaphysical and theological reference points on body and soul, their unified interrelationship, as well as ideas on death and the afterlife. Yet the ITC shows there are questions which need explaining in light of science today, particularly a tendency to dualistic anthropologies as named. For many, the

⁶² Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, no.45; pp.82-83.

⁶³ Vincent Battaglia, "The Resurrection of the Body: Some reflections on the Biblical data," *Compass* Vol.39 No.4 (Summer 2005), pp.11-18. Battaglia finds, "the only viable solution is to hold these truths in tension; the soul carries human identity in death such that the deceased is said to exist, yet this soul is not quite the full person." Battaglia, *The Resurrection of the Body*, p.18 and footnote no.9

⁶⁴ Nonetheless dead bodies are given respect due to feelings about the person alive who was alive, the memories built into the cadaver and what it represents now, and respect for relatives' grief; D.Gareth Jones and Maja I.Whitaker, *Speaking for the Dead: The Human Body in Biology and Medicine*, Second Edition (Farnham, U.K. and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2009), pp.22-23, 36-38.

⁶⁵ This presumes we are not concurring with the notions of resurrection in death. For instance, Bernard P.Prusak, "Bodily Resurrection in Catholic Perspectives," *Theological Studies* Vol.61 No.1 (March 2000), pp.64-105. Prusak interprets the intermediate state in relation to an individual's particular resurrection in death, following Karl Rahner and Gisbert Gresahke, while also respecting Joseph Ratzinger's (now emeritus Pope Benedict XVI) theological writings.

⁶⁶ David B.Hershenov and Rose Koch-Hershenov, "Personal identity and Purgatory," *Religious Studies* Vol.42 No.4 (December 2006), pp.439-445. Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov explain that if humans are a hylomorphic composite of soul and matter, then as Thomas Aquinas noted we are each not identical to our soul (*Anima mea non est ego*, I am not my soul). If Purgatory involves an immaterial soul undergoing purification between death and resurrection, then the individual will not be in Purgatory. The ideas of Derek Parfit are theologically adapted so that "that the soul can benefit from Purgatory and be concerned with the well-being of the resurrected human being which will 'inherit' its purged psychology." (p.439). See also Michael Potts, "Aquinas, Hell, and the Resurrection of the Damned," *Faith and Philosophy* Vol.15 No.3 (July 1998), pp.341-351; L.Nathan Oaklander, "Personal Identity, Immortality and the Soul," *Philo* Vol.4 No.2 (Fall-Winter 2001), pp.183-192.

church teachings about the soul amount to a form of dualism and are subject to scientifically-minded criticism, as we shall see.

However, traditional Catholic thought and practices concerning the soul also recognise psychophysical unity, which has relied on the philosophy and concepts of St. Thomas Aquinas. An understanding of the historical Aquinas' thought is needed firstly to understand long-established church teachings, and secondly because Thomism is frequently held as the 'official philosophy' of the Church. It is to his thought that we now turn.