THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS

by MAURO GAGLIARDI · Language: EN

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Overview

Mauro Gagliardi's "THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS" offers a comprehensive and systematic analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas's Christology. The book meticulously unpacks Aquinas's profound theological insights into the person of Jesus Christ, focusing primarily on the mystery of the Incarnation and the hypostatic union. Gagliardi guides the reader through Aquinas's intricate arguments concerning how the divine and human natures coexist perfectly in the one divine person of the Son, addressing the philosophical and theological challenges inherent in this central Christian doctrine. It explores Aquinas's engagement with patristic tradition, conciliar definitions, and various Christological heresies, demonstrating the enduring relevance and coherence of Thomistic thought.

The work is significant for its clear exposition of complex theological concepts, making Aquinas's Christology accessible while maintaining academic rigor. Gagliardi highlights Aquinas's methodical approach, which integrates philosophical reasoning with scriptural exegesis and dogmatic tradition to construct a robust understanding of Christ's identity and mission. The book serves as an invaluable resource for theologians, philosophers, and students seeking a deeper appreciation of classical Christology, offering a foundation for contemporary discussions on the nature of Christ and the implications of the Incarnation for Christian faith and life.

Key Takeaways

- Aquinas's Christology fundamentally posits the unity of Christ's person despite having two distinct natures, divine and human.
- The hypostatic union is the central concept explaining how divinity and humanity are perfectly united in the single divine person of Jesus Christ.
- St. Thomas Aquinas systematically addresses and refutes various Christological heresies by clarifying precise theological and philosophical terms.
- Gagliardi demonstrates the rigorous philosophical methodology Aquinas employed to analyze and articulate profound theological mysteries.
- Understanding Aquinas's Christology provides a crucial historical and doctrinal foundation for contemporary theological discourse.

• The book illuminates how Aquinas integrated scriptural revelation, patristic thought, and philosophical reason to construct his Christological synthesis.

• Christ's human knowledge and will, though distinct, are always perfectly subordinated to and informed by his divine personhood.

Chapter Summaries

Introduction: The Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas and its Relevance

This introductory section sets the stage for Gagliardi's systematic exploration of Aquinas's Christology. It emphasizes the enduring significance of Aquinas's thought for understanding the Person of Christ, particularly in contemporary theological discourse. Gagliardi outlines his methodology, which involves a careful exposition of Aquinas's arguments, primarily from the Summa Theologiae (IIIa pars), while also engaging with modern interpretations and challenges. He highlights Aquinas's precision in defining key concepts such as 'person,' 'nature,' and 'hypostatic union,' arguing for their continued necessity in articulating orthodox Christological doctrine against various heresies and misunderstandings. The introduction establishes the book's aim to present a comprehensive and faithful account of Thomistic Christology.

The Mystery of the Incarnation: God Becomes Man

This chapter delves into the foundational mystery of the Incarnation, examining Aquinas's reasons for its fittingness and possibility. Gagliardi explains how Aquinas addresses the question of why God became man, exploring divine wisdom, goodness, and justice as motivations. He discusses the concept of the Incarnation as a work of divine grace, not necessity, and how it perfects creation and redeems humanity. The chapter also touches upon the metaphysical possibility of the union of divine and human natures in one Person, clarifying that this union does not diminish either nature but rather elevates the human. Gagliardi elucidates Aquinas's understanding of the Incarnation as the greatest of God's works, demonstrating God's infinite love and condescension.

The Hypostatic Union: One Person, Two Natures

This central chapter meticulously unpacks the doctrine of the hypostatic union, which is the cornerstone of Aquinas's Christology. Gagliardi explains Aquinas's precise terminology, distinguishing between 'person' (subsistent individual) and 'nature' (essence). He clarifies that in Christ, the divine nature and a complete human nature are united, not confused or mixed, in the single divine Person of the Word. The chapter addresses potential misunderstandings, such as Nestorianism (two persons) and Monophysitism (one nature), by showing how Aquinas safeguards both the integrity of Christ's divinity and humanity. Gagliardi emphasizes that the Person of the Word is the subject of both divine and human operations, providing a robust metaphysical framework for understanding Christ's identity.

The Person of the Word as the Subject of the Incarnation

Building on the previous chapter, Gagliardi focuses specifically on the divine Person of the Word as the ultimate subject of the Incarnation. He elaborates on Aquinas's teaching that the human nature assumed by Christ does not constitute a new human person, but rather is assumed by the pre-existing divine Person of the Son. This chapter explores the implications of this truth, particularly regarding the communicatio idiomatum, where properties of both natures can be predicated of the one Person (e.g., 'God suffered,' 'the man is omnipotent'). Gagliardi clarifies how this doctrine avoids any division in Christ's Person while affirming the distinctness of his natures, ensuring that all actions and attributes, whether divine or human, ultimately belong to the one divine Person.

The Integrity and Perfection of Christ's Human Nature

This chapter examines the completeness and perfections of Christ's assumed human nature according to Aquinas. Gagliardi details how Christ possessed a true human body and a rational soul, with all their essential faculties, including intellect, will, and affections. He addresses questions regarding the integrity of this human nature, such as whether Christ could have sinned (impeccability) or suffered from ignorance or concupiscence. Gagliardi explains Aquinas's view that Christ's human nature, while truly human, was perfected by its union with the divine Person, rendering it free from sin and concupiscence, and endowed with perfect grace and knowledge from the moment of conception. This perfection, however, did not negate its genuine humanity.

Christ's Knowledge: Beatific, Infused, and Acquired

Gagliardi dedicates this chapter to Aquinas's nuanced doctrine of Christ's threefold knowledge. He explains that Christ, as the incarnate Word, possessed: 1) Beatific knowledge, by which his human soul directly saw God's essence from the moment of conception; 2) Infused knowledge, a perfect understanding of all created things, infused by God; and 3) Acquired or experimental knowledge, which he gained through sensory experience and learning, like any other human being. Gagliardi clarifies how these three forms of knowledge coexisted without contradiction, demonstrating the unique perfection of Christ's human intellect. He addresses the theological implications of this doctrine, particularly how Christ's human knowledge was truly perfect yet also genuinely human and developmental in its acquired aspect.

Christ's Grace and Virtues: The Grace of Union and Habitual Grace

This chapter explores the various forms of grace present in Christ's human nature. Gagliardi distinguishes between the 'grace of union' (gratia unionis), which is the hypostatic union itself, making Christ's human nature subsist in the divine Person, and 'habitual grace' (gratia habitualis), which is an inherent quality perfecting his human soul. He explains that Christ possessed habitual grace in its fullest measure, making him the fount of all grace for humanity. The chapter also discusses Christ's virtues, both theological (faith, hope, charity) and moral (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance), explaining how they were present in him in a perfect and exemplary way, not as means to an end but as intrinsic perfections of his human nature.

Christ's Will and Freedom: Two Wills in One Person

Gagliardi examines Aquinas's teaching on Christ's two wills: the divine will, which is identical with the Father's, and a perfect human will. He explains how these two wills, though distinct, always acted in perfect harmony, with the human will always submitting to and conforming with the divine will. This chapter addresses the Monothelite controversy, showing how Aquinas's doctrine safeguards Christ's full humanity, including his human freedom, while affirming his divine sovereignty. Gagliardi clarifies that Christ's human will was truly free, yet impeccably oriented towards the good, incapable of sinning due to its perfect union with the divine Person and its endowment with perfect grace. The chapter highlights the significance of Christ's human will in his redemptive obedience.

Christ's Passions and Suffering: The Mystery of the Cross

This chapter addresses the challenging topic of Christ's human passions and his capacity for suffering. Gagliardi explains that Christ, having a true human nature, experienced genuine human emotions and passions (e.g., joy, sorrow, fear, anger), but always in a perfectly ordered and sinless manner, subject to his rational will. He delves into Aquinas's understanding of Christ's suffering and death on the cross, emphasizing its voluntary nature and its redemptive efficacy. Gagliardi clarifies that while the divine nature is impassible, the human nature of Christ truly suffered, and this suffering, belonging to the one divine Person, possessed infinite value for the atonement of human sins. The chapter underscores the profound theological meaning of Christ's passion and death.

The Adorability of Christ and the Cult of the Sacred Humanity

This concluding chapter explores the implications of the hypostatic union for the worship and adoration of Christ. Gagliardi explains that because Christ's human nature subsists in the divine Person of the Word, his humanity is rightly adored with the same adoration (latria) due to God alone. He clarifies that this adoration is directed not to the human nature per se, but to the one divine Person who subsists in that human nature. The chapter discusses the theological basis for the cult of the Sacred Humanity, including devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Eucharist, as legitimate expressions of worship directed to the incarnate God. Gagliardi synthesizes the book's arguments, emphasizing the coherence and profundity of Aquinas's Christology for understanding and worshipping the Person of Christ.

Themes

- Hypostatic Union
- Divine Personhood
- Christological Doctrine
- Thomistic Theology

- Incarnation Mystery
- Systematic Theology

Frequently Asked Questions

What is THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS about?

Mauro Gagliardi's book provides an in-depth exploration of St. Thomas Aquinas's Christology. It systematically analyzes Aquinas's teachings on the person of Jesus Christ, focusing on the hypostatic union, the coexistence of divine and human natures in one divine person, and the implications for understanding Christ's knowledge, will, and saving work. It's a scholarly examination of a central Christian doctrine.

Is THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS worth reading?

Yes, for anyone interested in Catholic theology, Christology, or the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, this book is highly recommended. Gagliardi offers a clear, rigorous, and comprehensive exposition of complex theological concepts, making Aquinas's profound insights accessible while maintaining scholarly depth. It's an essential resource for students, theologians, and educated lay readers.

Who should read THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS?

This book is ideal for students of theology, seminarians, priests, and scholars specializing in Christology or Thomistic studies. Educated lay readers with a strong interest in systematic theology and the historical development of Christian doctrine will also find it highly rewarding. It requires a foundational understanding of theological concepts.

How long does it take to read THE PERSON OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. AQUINAS?

Based on its length of 288 pages and an average reading speed of 250 words per minute for academic texts, it would take approximately 345 minutes, or about 5 hours and 45 minutes, to read the entire book.

Questions & Answers

What is the main objective of Mauro Gagliardi's "The Person of Christ According to St. Aquinas"?

Gagliardi's primary objective is to provide a systematic and comprehensive exposition of St. Thomas Aquinas's Christology, particularly focusing on the concept of the "Person" of Christ. He aims to present Aquinas's thought in its integrity, clarifying its foundational principles, key distinctions, and theological implications. The book seeks to demonstrate the coherence and enduring relevance of Thomistic Christology for contemporary theology, addressing potential misunderstandings and highlighting Aquinas's precision in articulating the mystery of the

Incarnation.

How does Gagliardi structure his analysis of Aquinas's Christology?

Gagliardi structures his analysis by following the logical progression of Aquinas's own treatment of Christology, primarily as found in the Summa Theologiae III. He begins with the Incarnation itself, then delves into the hypostatic union, the properties of Christ's divine and human natures, His knowledge, will, and grace, and finally His redemptive work. This systematic approach allows Gagliardi to build a complete picture of Aquinas's thought, moving from fundamental metaphysical principles to specific theological applications.

What is the significance of the term "Person" in Gagliardi's exposition of Aquinas's Christology?

The term "Person" is central because, for Aquinas, the Incarnation means that the divine Person of the Son assumed a human nature, not that a human person was united to the divine. Gagliardi emphasizes that the unity in Christ is a unity of Person, not of nature. This distinction is crucial for understanding the hypostatic union, avoiding both Nestorianism (two persons) and Monophysitism (one nature). The Person of the Word subsists in two natures, divine and human, making Christ truly God and truly man.

How does Gagliardi explain the concept of the hypostatic union in Aquinas?

Gagliardi explains the hypostatic union as the substantial union of the divine and human natures in the one divine Person of the Word, without confusion, change, division, or separation. It is a union in persona, meaning the human nature is assumed by the divine Person, not absorbed or altered. The human nature retains its integrity, but its subsistence is not its own; it subsists in the Person of the Son. This concept is fundamental to Aquinas's Christology, ensuring Christ's full divinity and full humanity.

What heresies does Gagliardi show Aquinas to be refuting or clarifying in his Christology?

Gagliardi demonstrates how Aquinas's Christology systematically refutes classical Christological heresies. He shows how Aquinas counters Nestorianism by affirming the single Person of Christ, not two. He also addresses Monophysitism by maintaining the distinctness and integrity of Christ's two natures. Furthermore, Aquinas's work clarifies positions against Apollinarianism (denying a human soul in Christ) and Eutychianism (confusion of natures), ensuring a balanced and orthodox understanding of the Incarnation.

According to Gagliardi, what is Aquinas's understanding of Christ's human knowledge?

Gagliardi explains that Aquinas attributes three types of knowledge to Christ's human soul: beatific knowledge (seeing God directly), infused knowledge (perfect knowledge of all things pertaining to salvation and creation, infused by God), and acquired or experimental knowledge (knowledge gained through sensory experience and reasoning, like any human). This tripartite distinction ensures Christ's full humanity while also affirming His divine wisdom and perfect

human intellect, avoiding any limitations that would contradict His role as Savior.

What role does the concept of assumptio play in Aquinas's Christology, as presented by Gagliardi?

Gagliardi highlights assumptio (assumption) as a key concept. It signifies that the divine Person of the Word assumed a human nature, rather than the human nature uniting itself to the divine. This emphasizes the active role of the divine Person and the passive, receptive role of the human nature. The assumption is unilateral, from the divine to the human, ensuring that the divine Person is the subsisting subject of both natures, thus preserving the unity of Christ's Person.

How does Gagliardi address the question of Christ's human will in Aquinas's thought?

Gagliardi explains that Aquinas affirms two distinct wills in Christ: a divine will and a human will, corresponding to His two natures. The human will is perfectly subject to the divine will, always choosing what is good and in conformity with God's plan. This avoids Monothelitism, which posits only one will. Aquinas emphasizes that Christ's human will, though distinct, is never in opposition to His divine will, demonstrating perfect obedience and freedom.

What is Gagliardi's view on the contemporary relevance of Thomistic Christology?

Gagliardi argues strongly for the enduring contemporary relevance of Thomistic Christology. He believes that Aquinas's precision, systematic rigor, and deep philosophical and theological insights offer a robust framework for understanding the mystery of Christ, capable of addressing modern theological challenges and providing a solid foundation for faith. He suggests that returning to Aquinas can help overcome ambiguities and superficialities in current Christological discourse.

How does Gagliardi present Aquinas's method of theological inquiry in Christology?

Gagliardi presents Aquinas's method as one characterized by rigorous philosophical analysis, careful distinctions, and a profound respect for Scripture and tradition. Aquinas employs reason to illuminate faith, using philosophical concepts (like person, nature, substance) to articulate theological truths. His method involves posing objections, presenting arguments, and offering detailed replies, systematically building a coherent theological system that integrates revelation with rational inquiry.

What is the relationship between Christ's grace and His human nature, according to Gagliardi's interpretation of Aquinas?

Gagliardi explains that Christ's human nature was endowed with the fullness of grace from the moment of the Incarnation. This grace, known as the grace of union, is distinct from habitual grace, but it perfects His human soul and enables Him to be the Head of the Church, the source of grace for all humanity. Christ's human nature is the instrumental cause of grace, while His divine Person is the principal cause, making Him the perfect mediator.

Does Gagliardi discuss the Immaculate Conception in relation to Aquinas's Christology?

While Gagliardi's book focuses on the Person of Christ, he implicitly touches upon related Marian doctrines by discussing the Incarnation's prerequisites and consequences. Aquinas himself did not explicitly teach the Immaculate Conception in the developed sense later defined, but his Christology provides the theological framework for understanding the unique purity and sanctity required for the Mother of God, which later theologians built upon to articulate the doctrine. Gagliardi's focus remains on Christ's Person.

How does Gagliardi explain the concept of Christ as the "Head of the Church" in Aquinas?

Gagliardi shows that for Aquinas, Christ is the Head of the Church in multiple ways: by pre-eminence (He is superior to all members), by perfection (He possesses the fullness of grace), and by causality (He communicates grace to all members). As the Head, Christ is the source of all spiritual life and growth for the Mystical Body, His Church. This concept underscores the salvific and unifying role of Christ's Person, extending His Incarnation's benefits to believers.

What is the significance of Christ's suffering and death in Gagliardi's presentation of Aquinas?

Gagliardi emphasizes that Christ's suffering and death, though pertaining to His human nature, derive their infinite salvific value from the dignity of His divine Person. Because the Person suffering is God, His sacrifice has infinite merit, capable of atoning for all sins. Aquinas, as presented by Gagliardi, views the Passion as both a satisfaction for sin and a meritorious act, demonstrating God's immense love and providing a perfect example of obedience and charity.

What audience is "The Person of Christ According to St. Aquinas" primarily intended for?

The book is primarily intended for students and scholars of theology, particularly those interested in Thomistic thought, Christology, and systematic theology. Its rigorous academic approach, detailed analysis, and engagement with complex philosophical and theological concepts make it suitable for advanced theological studies. It serves as a valuable resource for anyone seeking a deep and precise understanding of Aquinas's Christological contributions.

How does Gagliardi differentiate between "nature" and "person" in Christ, following Aquinas?

Gagliardi meticulously differentiates between nature and person. Nature refers to the essence or whatness of a being (e.g., human nature, divine nature), defining its operations and properties. Person refers to the subsisting individual rational nature. In Christ, there are two distinct natures (divine and human), but only one Person (the divine Person of the Word). The human nature does not subsist as a separate person but is assumed by the divine Person, which is the ultimate subject of all Christ's actions.

What is the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Aquinas's Christology, as discussed by Gagliardi?

Gagliardi, in discussing the Incarnation, naturally addresses Mary's unique role as the Mother of God (Theotokos). Aquinas affirms that Mary is truly the Mother of God because she bore the Person who is God. Her virginity before, during, and after childbirth is also affirmed. Her role is essential as the means through which the Word assumed human nature, making her integral to the mystery of the Incarnation, though the book's primary focus remains on Christ's Person.

Spoiler: What is the ultimate conclusion Gagliardi draws about Aquinas's Christology?

Spoiler: Gagliardi ultimately concludes that Aquinas's Christology offers an unparalleled synthesis of biblical revelation, patristic tradition, and philosophical rigor, providing the most coherent and comprehensive theological account of the Person of Christ. He asserts that Aquinas's distinctions regarding person and nature, his understanding of the hypostatic union, and his treatment of Christ's knowledge, will, and grace remain indispensable for a profound and orthodox understanding of the Incarnation, serving as a perennial model for theological inquiry.

How does Gagliardi address the concept of Christ's impeccability (inability to sin)?

Gagliardi explains that Aquinas affirms Christ's impeccability based on the hypostatic union. Because Christ's human nature is united to the divine Person of the Word, and the divine Person is infinitely holy and incapable of sin, Christ's human will is necessarily confirmed in goodness and cannot choose evil. His impeccability is not a lack of freedom but a perfect freedom from the possibility of sin, stemming from the absolute perfection of His Person.

What practical or spiritual insights can readers gain from studying Gagliardi's book on Aquinas's Christology?

Readers can gain a deeper, more precise understanding of the central mystery of Christianity: the Incarnation. The book fosters intellectual clarity regarding complex theological concepts, strengthening faith by demonstrating the rationality and coherence of Christian doctrine. It encourages a more profound appreciation for Christ's Person, His dual natures, and His salvific work, leading to greater adoration and a more informed spiritual life rooted in the truth of who Christ is.