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**Christ – the path to God and working with the
Christian to reach Heaven**

-Summary-

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Summary

The present thesis is meant to be a dogmatic - neotestamentary exegesis of the works of our Lord Jesus Christ „A mediator between God and men” (Galatians 3:19-20; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15, 12-24), and of His dogma in the world regarding the path that leads to the Heavenly Father and to obtaining Heaven because knowing God and His work is, on the one hand, based on His willingness to reveal Himself to us as an absolute spiritual being, and, on the other hand, on the possibility of men as rational being to start a dialogue, to speak to God „For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). As Jesus is the Saviour of the entire humanity and He is also the gate to the Heavenly Father’s Kingdom Who sent His Son on earth for the salvation of all men. No one comes to the Father except through the Son. Thus, in order to understand this aspect well and to be able to read through the hidden mysteries not known by many of us, we chose this thesis – „**Christ – the path to God and working with the Christian to reach Heaven**” - with the purpose to understand God’s mysteries through love and experience, the way it is taught by the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, because to Know God and to communicate with Him - „you must love Him, feel Him and experience Him with your entire body (Hebrews 7:25). We know that it is not easy to know God, but it is not impossible because in order to know God, to feel Him and to experience Him, the Christian has to follow Christ the way that the Holy Apostles followed Him and carried the Gospel’s words in the entire world: „Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mathew 28:19).

God speaks to us through the works of His providence and through the influence of His Holy Ghost on the heart. In the different circumstances and situations of our life, in the changes that daily take place around us, we can find valuable lessons only if our hearts are opened to understand them. The psalmist, presenting the works of God’s providence, says “Approach Him and be enlightened; and your faces will not be confounded” (Psalm 33:5). Furthermore, God speaks to us through His Word. We here have in the clearest way the revealing of His divine-human character, of the way He cares for the people, but especially the great redemption done by His Son for us through His crucifixion, out of God’s great love for creation, for the being. Here the history of the patriarchs and of the prophets is presented, as well as that of other holy men

from antiquity. These were men „subject to wants and weaknesses like those of our own bodies” (Jacob 5:17). In His Word, we see how they fought discouragement the same as us and still they regained their courage and conquered through God’s grace. Noticing all these, we are encouraged in our pursuit of innocence. When we read about the wonderful experiences intended for them, about the light, the love, and the blessing that they enjoyed and about the work they did through the grace given to them, the Ghost that inspired them also lightens in us the fire of a holy desire to be like them in our pursuit for God.

Man was created after all the other creatures because he represents a replenishment of them and because he incorporates in himself the material world with the spiritual one. Man is God’s servant on earth and the spokesperson of the entire creation in the face of God. He is sympathetic with the entire creation and, in a way, responsible for it in the face of God. Man is thus made of body and soul, as spiritual being in a body. Through the material body, man feels connected to earth and to all the creatures on earth. He is the condition of man’s treading on earth, in time and space. The soul comes from God through creation (Genesis 2:7): “The first human, Adam, became a living being” (I Corinthians 15:45), not through aura, man remaining through him in contact with God and the spiritual world.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, incarnated in human body, taking on our human nature - „and He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7), existed in order to raise us from the sin of perdition and to give us again the possibility to enter His eternal and blissful Kingdom of the holy light and of eternal bliss. As man was created in God’s image, only the Son could take on this quality, becoming the Son of Man and „every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, into the glory of God-the Father” (Philippians 2:11). Thus, God’s knowledge is objective and certain because it comes from God; you can achieve it through faith and by experiencing it through ascesis and love: „this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

Many are the ways through which God tries to reveal Himself to us and to lead us into communion with Him. Nature endlessly speaks to our apprehension and understanding, but it is up to us if we let the heart and the reason understand God’s hidden mysteries. The heart that opens widely will be impressed by God’s love and glory, the way they are revealed through the works of His hands. The ear that tries to listen can hear and understand what God tells us through

the things in nature. The green plains, the tall trees, the buds and the flowers, the passing clouds, the raindrops, the sound of the rivers, the sparkle of the sky – all these speak to our hearts and invite us to recognise the One that created all these things.

Our Saviour linked His valuable lessons to things in nature. The trees, the birds, the flowers in the valleys, the hills, the lakes and the beautiful sky, as well as the events and circumstances of daily life, they were all linked with the word of truth so thus His teachings be forever alive in our minds, even among the worries and the preoccupations of life.

God would like His sons to appreciate His works and to find their pleasure in the simple and quiet beauty with which He adorned our earthly home. He loves beauty and would like us to foster purity and simplicity, this silent charm of the flowers. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us about the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and this is even more valid for those of the New Testament, that „they testify about Me” (John 5:39), the Redeemer, the One towards whom we channel all our hopes regarding eternal life. However, the entire Holy Scripture tells us about Christ, even from the creation, as “without Him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3), and to his last word: „and behold I come quickly” (Revelation 22:12). We read His works and we listen to His voice. The more we want to know the Saviour, the more reason for us to read the Holy Scripture because it tells us about Him.

Fill your heart with God’s Word! He is the living water that consumes your burning thirst. He is the living bread that came down from heaven. Christ the Lord says: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). And He explains Himself by saying: „he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:54). Our bodies are fed through what we eat and drink; and as things are in the natural world, so they are in the spiritual one. The things we meditate on will set the pace and the strength of our spiritual life. When your being rejoices at the sight of the attractive beauty of the earth, think of the New Earth that will never know the stifling atmosphere of sin and death and where the face of nature will never carry the shadow of the curse. Let your imagination reveal the land of the redeemed ones and do not forget that it will be greater than any brilliant imagination can depict. In the various gifts that God placed in nature, we can only see the faintest sparkle of His grace. As it is written: “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him” (Corintians 2:9).

Man is the last of God's creatures and at the same time the greatest among them, the one through which God finishes and crowns His entire creation. Through his nature and dignity, man distinguishes himself from all earth's creatures, being however linked to them, the same as he is linked to the spiritual world. Although created the last, man holds a unique position in this world that is the middle place between the spiritual world and the material one: he belongs to the first one through his soul and to the other one through his body. He is the intersection between the two worlds and at the same time a synthesis of them, a summary and a small representation of the wide world (the macrocosmos), which means he is a microcosmos.

The Genesis describes the creation of man as follows: „Then God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth! So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:26-28).

According to the words of the Holy Scripture, it was the body that was created first from dust and then the soul through divine breath. However, we should not think from here that, by the ad literam meaning of the Scripture's words, the creation of man were two separate and consecutive actions – the creation of the body and then the creation of the soul, but a single creative act or a simultaneous creation of the body and of the soul. Because it is only this way that God's almighty and wisdom and the unity of man's creation are kept untouched. What the Holy Scripture wants to express here - „And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7), is not the sequence of the two elements but the idea that man was created through a special creational act, with body and soul at the same time. Therefore, if the idea of the soul's creation after the body is wrong, not the least wrong is the idea according to which the soul was created before the body (pre existentialism). Synod V Oecumenical (553) rejected Origen's idea about the pre existence of the soul, teaching about the simultaneous creation of the soul and the body.

Redemption is the theme on which the angels want to look upon, to know it; it will represent the knowledge and the song of those redeemed along the endless times. Is it not worth to deeply meditate upon it and to study it carefully now? The love and the infinite mercy of Christ the Lord, the sacrifice He made in our favour, require from our part the most serious and

solemn meditation. We should insist more on the works of our Lord Jesus Christ and reflect more on the one that came to redeem His people of their sins. When we contemplate on the great themes of heaven in this way, our faith and our love will become stronger, and God will hear our prayers more because they will be more and more filled with faith and love. Then there will be a more lasting faith in Christ the Lord and a daily and alive experience of His power to completely deliver all those that go to God through Him.

If we want to listen, then the things created by God will teach us the precious lessons of obedience and trust. From the stars, which on their way through space have been following their given track, to the smallest particle, all things in nature listen to their Creator's will. And God looks after and supports everything that He created. He who supports the endless worlds in the enormity of the space, at the same time takes care of the needs of the sparrow that chirps her modest song without fear. When men set off to their exhausting daily work, the same as when they go for prayer, when they go to sleep at night, or when they get up in the morning, or when the poor one gathers his children around his modest table, all of them are watched over by our heavenly Father. No tear is shed without God knowing about it. There is no smile that He has not seen.

We should not receive the teachings of a man as teachings of the Holy Scripture, but we should personally study the Word of God. If we allow others to think for us, then we will end up having only weak and cripple intellectual energies and completely reduced abilities. The noble powers of the mind can be so strong due to the lack of preoccupation for those subjects worthy of attention that they lose the power to notice the profound significance of God's Word. Intellectual strength will develop if it is used to understand the connection between the themes of the Holy Scripture in order to compare a text with a text and the spiritual things with the spiritual things.

Nothing is stronger for strengthening the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. For our spiritual development, no other book is as powerful as to lift the thoughts and to give strength to the intellectual faculties as the vast and noble truths of the Holy Scripture. Only this way we can know God and only this way we can see His great love manifested towards us. If God's name were studied the way it should be, then people would have such wide views and such noble and constant characters that you rarely see nowadays.

We cannot attain our heavenly wisdom and we cannot know God without a serious research and without a study accompanied by prayer and love. We must carefully look into

everything reflecting on the divine cognition, only with a lot of prayer and a lot of love as only in this way we can get to know God from our interior and we will thus receive ample reward. The way the miner discovers the vein of the precious metal hidden in the heart of the earth, the same way the one that persistently searches God's Word as for a hidden treasure, he will find truths of great value, truths that are hidden away from the sight of the careless seeker. The words of the divine inspiration, well weighed in our heartswill be like a stream flowing from the Stream of Life and only this way the true christian can Know God and This will grow a lot in his heart as great is the love of This Stream of Life.

The Holy Ghost elevates and glorifies the Saviour. It is His work to present Christ, His immaculate purity, and the great redemption that we have through Him. Christ says: "He will glorify Me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you" (John 16:14). The Spirit of Truth is the only efficient teacher of the divine truth. So much must God appreciate humans that he offered His own Son to die for us and then commissioned his Holy Ghost to be the permanent Teacher and Leader of the believer!

If we absolutely believed these, then all our unfounded worries would go away. Our life would not be full of disappointments as it is now because any thing, big or small, would be in God's hands, Who is neither put into difficulty by the amount of worries nor overwhelmed by their weight. We would then enjoy such an inner peace than many have never felt.

The poets and the naturalists have said a lot of things about nature, about knowledge and about God's love, but Cristianity is the one that fully enjoys the beauty of the earth, the true knowledgeof God, but also the love above love, and appreciates it for its high value, because he sees God's work in everything and he sees His love in a flower and in a tree and in man, the pinnacle of His creation. No one can fully understand the importance of the hills, of the valleys, of the rivers, of the sea, of man, if he does not regard them as an expression of God's love for man. While we meditate on the perfection of our Saviour, we will want to be completely converted and furbished after His pure image. Our soul will be thirsty and will famish after the image of the One that we adore.

The Holy Scripture was not written just for the educated ones; on the contrary, it was meant for the ordinary people. The great truths necessary for our salvation are presented as plain as day so, nobody will get lost and lose the path except those that follow their own judgement instead of following God's will, which is so clearly uncovered in His Word. Thus, the Holy

Scripture tells us about the two integrant elements of human nature not only in the description of the creation but in many other places, the spiritual nature of man being sometimes called soul, other times spirit (*psyche* and *pneuma*, respectively). The souls of the dead are called both spirits and ghosts, and it is said about them that the spirit, the ghost, and the soul leave them: „he gave up his spirit” (Mathew 27:50). The Saviour somewhere says that, „He lays down His life for His sheep” (John 10:15), and somewhere else that „He commits His spirit” (Luke 23:46). Therefore, spirit or ghost and soul are only distinct terms that express the same reality in man, and that is the principle of life. The dichotomous character of the human nature is clearly stated, God being the creator of both the body and the soul of which man is made of, and man is neither the body nor the soul by itself, but he is made up of body and soul, the two forming a whole.

Referring to the texts from 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - „may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept” and Hebrews 4:12 - „For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit”, and based on the philosophy of Platon and Plotin regarding human nature, the apollinarists, as well as some protestant theologists, advocate a trichotomous view on human nature that, so they say, it is made up of three elements: body, soul and spirit. These texts only apparently speak of three component elements of the human nature. However, in reality the soul and the spirit are not two separate realities that may lead to a trichotomous structure of man, but two functions of the same spiritual nature of man, the soul being the strength of the organic life, and the spirit the strength of the spiritual life.

The dichotomous structure of man is stated everywhere in the Holy Scripture, and the Saviour speaks about both the body and the spirit of man. The man that leads a life into the spirit of Christ is a spiritual man, and the one that sticks to this world becomes a physical man. In the Christian outlook, the soul is a real, immaterial, rational, alive and immortal substance. The Saviour says that the soul cannot be killed while the body can (Mathew 10:28) because the body is weak and the spirit strong and immaterial given to man by God.

Man is superior to the other creatures not only through his soul but also through his body. The body was created with a special mission, that of being the bearer of a spiritual life; although inferior to the soul, the body is not a reflection or a shadow of the soul and neither its prison, as Platonism says, but an element of divine origin the same as the soul. If Christ chose to incarnate, it means that the body takes part in the redemption and that the connection between soul and

body is an inseparable unity. It is obvious that the union between soul and body, in the unity of men, is a special mystery for the human understanding. The insertion of the spirit in the material nature is so intimate that the human spiritual element can not be conceived as pure spirit, but it has to be understood from the beginning as an incarnated spirit or as a body with roots in the spirit. Man is capable of feelings and understanding through senses that, however, keep and reveal his self-consciousness, his freedom, and the power of his movement through the passing of time. Thus, man has the opportunity of an existence according to his own will as the consciousness has the body participating to the spirit's acts of knowledge and of movement.

The body as a whole is of an endless complex sensitivity because of the soul. Man perceives through it the entire vibrations of the world, and it is through it as well that we can express the complex relationship of the human with the world. The body is not evil in its nature; it is not the cause of sins and evils that haunts man's life. Without being evil in itself, the body is however subjected to sin. Where does this come from? The Holy Fathers identified its source in man's disobedience towards God's will. The sinful soul dragged the body in the gutter of sin too. The possibility of strengthening the body is given through its merging with the soul, through the synthetic unity of the existence of man in body and soul. Man represents a material-spiritual unity in the sense that none of these elements can be absent without man seizing to be man. If man is a „synthetic unity”, it results that the good that is done belongs not only to the soul but also to the body and in the same way the evil done belongs to the soul and to the body as well. Responsible for the deeds committed, either good or bad, is the whole man, body, and soul, because the whole man does them. The Holy Fathers distinguish between the body as a constituent element of man and the body as an instrument for the sin.

The quality of the image of God imposes on man the duty to subject his life to God. Man is ordained to resemble the image of God by committing himself to the good, by acquiring virtues and by free cooperation with the uncreated divine grace. Although the body can go against the soul, good deeds can be done only in unity. The soul can keep its freedom and not become the slave of the body but it can make either impurity out of it or a temple to God. The body can be transfigured by the power of the Holy Ghost the way that the divine grace can transfigure matter.

Man holds a special place and a mission not only towards the nature from which his body is built, but also towards God and himself. In relation to God, man's position and mission is determined in connection with the purpose of creation in general. Man's mission is to know and

love God, to glorify Him and to have a closer communion with Him. In relation to himself, man's mission is to be the spokesperson of the world before God and God's representative in it, its owner, through God's power, in order to lead it to perfection.

When we speak about man in eastern Christianity, we take into account his quality as person, image of God, in which the opposition between body and soul loses sense by disappearing in the unity of the image.

Our thesis „**Christ – the path to God and working with the Christian to gain the Kingdom of Heaven**” is structured in four chapters and more subchapters in which we will develop and discuss the following topics:

Chapter I - „**Christ the image of the Father and man's creation after the image of the Holy Trinity**” – we will start from the first announcement of the arrival of a Redeemer into the world- „I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15), immediately after the fall into sin of our proto-fathers Adam and Eve. This announcement, called „protoevangelium”, is the one that shows us the gleam of Christ's arrival into the world, the Son of God Who will crush the snake's head: „I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15), and will make the seed of divine justice appear in the world from the venter of a pure Virgin. This is announced by the big and the small prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah ch. 42, 50, 52, 53; Jeremiah ch. 31; Ezekiel ch. 34, 37) and by their cries towards the chosen people that wondered in darkness, showing them all regarding God's incarnation when the time came, His mission into the world, but also His Sufferings, His Death, His Ressurection and His Rapture to heaven. All these are predicted in great detail by the prophets of the Old Testament.

In chapter II – „**The Son of God became the Son of Man through incarnation and through His activity in the world**”, in our research, we will discuss the way the Father reveals His Son to the world, as well as the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ cures the sick and summons all the dead – dead on the interior – to eternal and blissful life. By forgiving the sins of all those that follow Him, through His Sufferings, His Crucifixion and His Resurrection, Christ, the Son of God the Crucified and Resurrected, will lead all men to the Father's Kingdom, a never-ending Kingdom, a Kingdom of love and of eternal harmony, a Kingdom of perfection.

Chapter III – „**The redemption of man by Jesus Christ Whose sacrifice is dedicated to the Father**”, is meant to support those showed in the previous chapter, this time emphasising the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, comes willingly to his suffering and crucifixion, obeying and fulfilling the word of Who sent Him; because the Sufferings, the Crucifixion and the Burial are redeeming moments for the entire humanity; and Lord’s Resurrection conquered death and emptied Hell of God’s righteous people that lived in darkness, thus being a crucial moment for the entire humanity of all times and places.

In the last chapter – „**The fruits of the redemption acquired by the Christians**”, we will discuss and show the acts through which each Christian by himself, but also in the community, can redeem himself, but not outside the Church, but inside the Church, which is the settlement of our redemption and a crossing bridge between God and people. The Christian can receive all these fruits and the practice of the virtues in everyone’s life only through the Holy Communions that are „life-giving” and the path to the Heavenly Father. Fulfilling and living after God’s word, the Christian partakes of the Heavenly Father’s joy and love and thus anticipating the Kingdom of Heaven for those that respect and love God with a pure soul and heart.