

FAITH IN THE GREAT CANON THEOLOGY OF ST. ANDREW OF CRETE

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INTRODUCTION

The theological ideas in the Great Canon of Andrew of Crete are presented in a deeply symbolic, allegorical form. Symbolism is inherent in any poetic work in general, and Eastern Orthodox liturgy in particular. It should also be taken into account that the Great Canon is heterogeneous in its content. It contains a huge number of troparia and irmoses (*hirmos* or *heirmos*, from εἰρμός), which, moreover, differ in their content: along with simple prayer appeals to God, there are odes written on the basis of the Holy Scripture. The Canon contains many repeated phrases and passages, its structure is cyclic and subject to the main theme – that is repentance. For this reason, it is called the Penitential Canon. The text of the Canon seems to make its way with the penitent human soul, which, in the process of repentance, successively experiences different feelings and situations.

Taking into account the abovementioned features of the structure and content of the Great Canon, the identification and analysis of the theological concept of faith at first glance looks like an insoluble task. The theology of the Canon is not systematically and successively set forth. The very word “faith” (πίστις) is mentioned in the Great Canon more than 20 times in different contexts. In one of the later edited unoriginal versions of the Great Canon, in the irmos of Ode 3 performed on Tuesday of the First Week of Great Lent, the word “unbelief” (ἀπιστία) is also mentioned: “My heart, which is shaken by unbelief” (τὴν καρδιά μου ποὺ κλονίζεται ἀπ’ τὴν ἀπιστία). [45] This word is presumably absent in original Greek (σαλευθεῖσαν τὴν καρδίαν μου [45] – in English “my unstable heart”) [46] and Old Slavonic (подвигшеесясердцее – literally “my hesitating heart”) [1] versions of the Canon. It is still debatable, which of Greek versions is original. That is why Old Slavonic version is here referred to. The Old Slavonic translation can be done from a lost manuscript.

The references to faith are more stylistic than theological. Nevertheless, it is necessary to pay attention to the numerous references of the author to persons and passages from the Old and New Testaments. Saint Andrew draws his examples from various books of the Old Testament. Most of them are from the Pentateuch, but there are references to other books such as Joshua, Judges, Kings, Psalms, Job, Jonah, Jeremiah and Daniel. The text of the Canon also contains numerous references and allusions to the books of the New Testament. Each of these passages has a rich tradition of exegesis in the Eastern Orthodox theology. Obviously, St. Andrew relies on the traditional interpretation of biblical texts and their theology. Various biblical stories in the Canon convey certain theological concepts and ideas, including the theological doctrine of faith. Thus, it is possible to come to an understanding of the theological concept of faith in the Canon by analyzing the exegesis of some Old Testament and New Testament stories, even if they do not directly mention faith.

So the purpose of the present paper is *to identify St. Andrew's theological conception of faith and its characteristics in the context of the Great Canon theology through the analysis of traditional Eastern Orthodox exegesis of some Old Testament stories, mentioned in the Canon*. The exegesis admits allegoric interpretations for the Old Testament texts. Allegories defy any rational interpretations. In order to cope with these problems, it is advisable to identify parallels between St. Andrew's references to the Old Testament stories and their allegoric interpretations in the works of previous Eastern Orthodox exegetes.

One of the key passages for understanding faith in the Great Canon is the story of the Lord's call to Patriarch Abraham to leave his native land. This event is described in the 12th chapter of Genesis. After the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11.1-9), part of the people settled in Ur of the Chaldees, from where soon one of the descendants of Shem, Terah, with his sons Abraham and Nahor, was going to move to the land of Canaan (Gen. 11.31), but managed to only reach Haran (Χαρράν)⁶⁹, having died in it. Already in Haran, the Lord speaks to Abraham. God asks him to come out of his land (ἐκ τῆς γῆς σου), from his family (ἐκ τῆς συγγενείας σου) and from the house of his father (ἐκ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου) into that land which He will indicate.

In response to faithfulness, the Almighty will magnify Abraham, producing from him a great nation and multiplying it, blessing those who bless him and

⁶⁹ Here and below Old Testament references in Greek are made to: [2]

cursing those who curse him, and give Canaan to his offspring (Gen. 12.7). And Abraham acts according to the will of the One who called him: at the age of 75, he leaves Haran and, together with his nephew Lot, property and servants, enters the land of Canaan. Here he passes some of it until he stops at Sichem, at the plain of Moreh, where he will spend most of the rest of his life, not counting the time that he lives in Egypt because of the famine in Canaan (Gen. 12.10-13.1).

In the Great Canon, two troparia are devoted to this episode of sacred history: the 15th and 16th troparia of Ode 3 in the succession of the Canon on Thursday morning in the 5th week of Great Lent. The 15th troparion is based on the call of the Lord to Abraham, and the first words leave no doubt about this, “Ἐκ γῆς Χαρορὰν ἔξελθε, τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ψυχὴ μου” (“Depart from sin and from the land of Haran, O my soul”). [45] Here, the reference to the first part of the call of God to leave his native land is obvious. The phrase is almost identical to the biblical “ἔξελθε ἐκ τῆς γῆς σου” (“get thee out of your country”, Gen. 12.1), only the name of the land (Χαρορὰν) is added. This earth is identified with sin, with sinful life. This call is actually the first call to repentance, to break with the former sinful life.

The first call is followed by the appeal of the author to the soul. The biblical purpose of the exodus of Abraham is interpreted as follows: the implied Canaan is interpreted as the earth, “which flows with incorruption and eternal life” (γῆν ῥέουσάν ἀεὶ ζῶον ἀφθαρσίαν). [3] Obviously, these are metaphors folded into one another: Canaan, probably because of the abundance of natural resources, is already called in the Book of Exodus “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3.8). This metaphor is repeated 16 times in the Pentateuch. Saint Andrew uses a similar metaphor to refer to the kingdom of heaven, which is not “flowing with milk and honey”, but “flows with incorruption and eternal life”.

Andrew of Crete calls to leave the spiritual Haran and enter (δεῦρο) into the symbolic Canaan, the Promised Land – eternal life, which, in his opinion, the great patriarch Abraham (ὁ Ἀβραάμ ἐκληρώσατο) also inherited. In fact, this is a reference to the promise of the Lord to give this land to his offspring, only expressed by a different verb (κληρώω instead of δίδωμι).

So, in the 15th troparion, St. Andrew takes the first call of the Omnipresent addressed to Abraham from the Book of Genesis as a basis for his further narrative. He also allegorically uses the image of milk and honey from the metaphor of Canaan in interpreting it as eternal life, while Haran is interpreted as a sin or a sinful way of life. In the 16th troparion, the author of the Canon continues to reflect on the events of the 12th chapter of the Book of Genesis. Here

Abraham's wandering through the Promised Land, forced by the exodus from his native land, is comprehended. Saint Andrew reminds the soul of this patriarch, "Thou hast heard how Abraham in days of old left the land of his fathers and became a wanderer". [46] The following is a more detailed description of Abraham's activities.

First and foremost, he once, in ancient times, left his homeland or literally "the land of his fathers" (γῆν πατρώαν), which is a direct fulfillment of the call received from the Lord. Such an unconditional and unquestioning fulfillment of the commands given by the Omnipotent is possible only on the basis of firm faith and absolute trust. Secondly, Abraham became a migrant, which refers to his migration to Canaan. Last but not least, the hymnographer calls upon the soul to imitate (μίμησαι) the decision of the patriarch. The word "resolution" (τὴν προαίρεσιν) can be translated as "voluntary decision" or "free choice".

In this ode, St. Andrew again focuses on the first call of the Almighty, only the emphasis, unlike the previous ode, shifts towards the fulfillment of this call. The author of the Canon calls on the soul to "move" from a sinful life and, like a patriarch, resolutely break off all communication with the vicious things that were once familiar to it, which, in turn, means becoming a stranger to them. In fact, this troparion implies the interpretation of Abraham's exodus from Haran as an image of the alienation of vice. Here the logical continuation of the previous troparion can be seen: if Abraham left Haran, interpreted as a sin, now he is a stranger to him. Now it is necessary to consider separately, in historical retrospect, each of the three exegetical motifs found in the two troparia of the Great Canon, and try to determine which representatives of their interpretations Saint Andrew is closest to.

The first to touch upon this event in his writings interpreting the Old Testament was the pre-Christian Jewish author, Philo of Alexandria, [4] who lived at the turn of the millennium. In his work, specially dedicated to the migration of Abraham of the same name (*De migratione Abrahami*), he interpreted it from epistemological positions: it is possible to know God only through the exodus of the soul from three areas. So, the native land (fatherland) symbolizes the first area – the body (σώματος), [5] since it was created from the earth and, according to the God-seer Moses (see Gen. 3.19), it will return to it. The family or relatives is a symbol of feelings (τὴν δὲ συγγένειαν αἰσθήσεως), [5] because the mind is related to them, since they are two parts of one soul (μιας ἁμφομέρη ψυχῆς ταῦτα). [5] The house of father is the word (ὁ λόγος), since the father manages the household through the word, just as a person dwells in a house, so

the mind dwells in the word (ἀνδρὸς ἐστία, καὶ νοῦ λόγος ἐν διαίτημα). [5] The call to the exodus means to be far from the mind of the flesh, feelings and words, not to allow any of this to carry away oneself. [5] Philo interprets Haran, based on its etymology, as “the hole” (τρώγλη). Since most of the sense organs are located in cavities (or holes), Haran is a symbol of the sensual (or “sense-perception”). [5] In a similar way, Philo derives the interpretation of Sichem. Since this word is translated from Hebrew as “shoulder”, it is a symbol of the work of the mind to know God. [5]

In his treatise “On Abraham” Philo approaches the interpretation of Abraham’s migration from the same epistemological positions. The migration itself, according to the traditions of Philo’s allegorical interpretation, is a symbol of the search for God. [6] However, at the same time, Philo does not forget to highlight Abraham’s obedience to the call of the Lord, “(Abraham), being an ardent adherent, diligently tried to follow God and appeared obedient to what He said”. [6] Obedience is closely related to the faith of Abraham. The concept of “faith” Philo connects with the promise of the Lord given to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, which Joseph mentions shortly before his death (Gen. 50.24). In this case, Philo talks about a firm faith carried from Abraham to Joseph. [6]

Regarding the epistemological approach, it is worth noting that Philo proceeds from the fact that the Chaldeans were scientists of their time, and Abraham, living in Haran, like them, could not know anything other than the sensual world. [6] Thus, for Philo, Haran is again a symbol of the sensual. Moreover, as long as the Patriarch, following the Chaldeans, recognized the world as autonomous and independent in its being, God could not appear to him. [6] Only when he went into himself, plunged into his soul and changed his place of residence and understanding of the world as ruled by someone more powerful, [6] the Lord appeared to him (apparently, this phenomenon is described in Gen. 12.7). [6]

Clement of Alexandria in his work “The Instructor”, interpreting the appearance of the Lord to Abraham, considers it the result of Abraham’s firm faith, “And he anointed not him that was comely in person, but him that was comely in soul. If, then, the Lord counts the natural beauty of the body inferior to that of the soul, what thinks He of spurious beauty, rejecting utterly as He does all falsehood? For we walk by faith, not by sight. Very clearly the Lord accordingly teaches by Abraham, that he who follows God must despise country, and relations, and possessions, and all wealth, by making him a stranger. And therefore also He called him His friend who had despised the substance which

he had possessed at home". [7] In fact, Clement of Alexandria argues that faith is superior to fatherland, family, property, and any wealth. Abraham is an example of such faith.

Clement's successor in the Alexandrian theological school, the famous theologian and heresiarch Origen, in his "Commentary on St. John's Gospel", also refers to the image of Abraham in connection with the concept of faith. In particular, Origen interprets Christ's words, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (Jn. 8.39) addressed to the Jews as a call to follow the example of the patriarch and leave the land of Haran, which served as an allegory for a sinful life. The words of the Lord were addressed not only to Abraham, but to all who would become his child through faith. Origen extends this call to all Christians who, through faith, must leave their former sinful life. Unlike other Fathers of the Church, Origen does not try to somehow interpret individual concepts – country, relations, possessions, or wealth. All these concepts are interpreted by the theologian as a generalized concept of a sinful life, which is opposed to "walking by faith". [9]

In the "Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah", authorship of which is attributed to Basil the Great, the commentary on the passage from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (Isa. 7.3-9) begins with reflections on the main points of the call to Abraham. The real exodus from Haran, according to this work, is the ascent to God. The earth is understood as everything bodily (σωματικῶν), the family as feelings, and the house of father as a shameful life. [10]

St. Gregory of Nyssa in his "Contra Eunomius" directly writes about the spiritual meaning of Abraham's migration: for him it is a symbol of the path of knowing God. The remaining elements of God's call are comprehended epistemologically: the earth is a symbol of meager and mundane thinking; family relations are understood as kinship with feelings. Freed from the shackles of the earthly and sensual, Abraham, to the extent of human nature, cognizes God. [11]

The Alexandrian theologian Didymus the Blind also interprets the event of sacred history under study. He explains the reason why God called the patriarch: there is faith in the patriarch, and therefore the believer in the True God can no longer live among idolaters. [12] By the father whose house one must leave, he means the devil, for "the father of every sinner is the devil" (referring to 1 Jn. 3.8). [12] By kinship is meant belonging to the same satanic children, while the earth is called submission to an unclean spirit. Haran is a symbol of feelings, which connects Didymus the Blind with Philo of Alexandria. Sichem, which means "shoulder", is a symbol of doing good deeds. [12] As can be seen,

Didymus Christianizes in detail Philo's interpretation of the biblical passages about the call and migration of Abraham.

Ambrose of Milan, in his work "On Abraham," directly formulates the exegesis of the patriarch, implied before him, as the mind: "Abraham represents the mind". [13] Ambrose also derives the exegesis of Canaan as feelings from etymology, "This mind was in Canaan, that is [according to etymology] in the abyss, subject to various passions". [13] The earth from the first part of the call means the need to leave earthly pleasures, customs and affairs of a past life (apparently, the one that was before baptism), and with a change not only and not so much of the place of residence, but of one's behavior and habits. The kinship of the second element of the call is bodily feelings, which is explained by the division of the soul into rational (mind) and unreasonable (feelings) parts. And, finally, the house of the father from the third part of the call, like that of Philo, is a symbol of the spoken word, because the mind controls the word, just as they evaluate it by the word. [13]

The ascetic author John Cassian the Roman in "The Conferences" quotes the instructions of Abba Paphnutius of Scetis on the three methods of invocation and the three renunciations (in Latin "De tribus abrenuntiationibus"). Describing the first of the calls – from God, Abba Paphnutius cites as an example the episode under study of the calling of Patriarch Abraham, quoting a passage from Genesis (Gen. 12.1). [14] Probably, Abba Paphnutius relies on similar arguments of Anthony the Great, who also considers this passage from the Book of Genesis as a call from God. Anthony the Great believes that the first call is based on God's love for Abraham. In response to this love and the call of God, Christians must renounce everything earthly.

Developing the ideas of Anthony the Great and Paphnutius, John Cassian discusses the types of renunciation that all monks must commit. To these types he refers the abandonment of wealth, the rejection of former skills and vices, and the departure from everything real and visible that distracts the mind. It was them that the Lord called the patriarch to leave: the land or homeland is an indication of the abandonment of wealth, relatives are the former way of life, which, clinging to a person from birth, "is related" to him, finally, the father's house is any memory of the world and everything appearing before the human eye. [14]

Cyril of Alexandria, being an ardent opponent of Nestorianism, compares the indication of Scripture that Abraham left Haran, along with all his close relatives and property (Gen. 12.5) and went to Canaan, with every Christian who

wanted to live according to the Will of God. He needs to get out of “life in worldly pleasures” along with all his “relatives”, that is, thoughts. [15] Only in this way will he be able to tear himself away from his former life and ascend “to the high earth,” that is, to such a mood of the soul, which is established in the virtues, and will not be able to fall again in passion. Cyril of Alexandria perceives the very calls of the Lord to Abraham as something that God wants to lead a person out of this life full of pleasures and vice. And for this, a person should abandon everything that connects with the world, “fatherland, and family, and the father’s house, and the acquisition of earthly things”. [15]

In monastic literature, there is an example of the use of the Lord’s call to Abraham as a call to potential monks – this is the “Ascetic Word” of Stephen of Thebaid, an Egyptian ascetic of the late 4th – early 5th century. He composes his calling of Christians to monasticism, taking as a basis the threefold call of the Lord to the patriarch. The exodus from the native land is transformed into a call to renounce (ἀποτάσσειν) from the world. The exodus from the family and house of father is transformed into renunciation of relatives. Renunciation of everything visible, that is, from the worries of the present age, is added in order to see the beautiful Kingdom of Heaven. [16]

Bishop Caesarius of Arles in the VI century in one of his sermons explains the calls of God as follows: the native land is interpreted by the figurative meaning of the word “body”, that is, the former vicious way of life, kinship – as the vices themselves, which are born and increase from the commission of iniquities, and the father (in the spiritual sense) is like the devil. The migration of Abraham is a symbol of the spiritual correction of man in the sacrament of Baptism. [17]

Maximus the Confessor in the 47th question-answer to Thalassius interprets land, kinship and home as a connection and passionate affection with the flesh, the feeling and the sensual. [18] Maximus compares with Abraham the one who renounced the flesh and found himself “outside” it, separated from the passions. Such a person leaves the power of feelings so that now his mind can calmly, without being tempted by them, “go to the divine land of knowledge. [19] So, apparently, Haran for Saint Maximus is a symbol of everything sensual and sinful, and Canaan is the knowledge of God by experience.

In his interpretations relating exclusively to locations from the history of the Lord’s call to Abraham, Maximus the Confessor draws analogies between geographical places and states of mind. To live in the country of the Chaldeans, that is, in Ur, for him means to be filled with lustful carnal passions. [20] Haran

symbolizes an intermediate state between vice and virtue, when purity from falls has not yet been achieved by feeling, and Canaan or the Promised Land – a state of freedom from any sin or ignorance. [20]

As can be seen, in Christian exegesis there were main traditions of interpretation of the episode of invoking Abraham connected with each other: epistemological (knowledge of God) and ascetic (sin and liberation from its shackles). Andrew of Crete undoubtedly adheres to the second, ascetic tradition. There is some similarity in the interpretation of locations in the Great Canon with the exegesis of Maximus the Confessor, with two differences that:

- 1) the epistemological emphasis is replaced by an ascetic one (obviously, in order to reveal the moral meaning of this passage from the Bible);

- 2) the exegesis of three locations is replaced by an interpretation of only two.

Apparently, it is evident that St. Andrew was acquainted with the exegetical reasoning of Maximus the Confessor, at the same time with an ascetic approach to them. The interpretation of Canaan as “the land, which flows with incorruption and eternal life”, or the Kingdom of Heaven is not accidental, it is an ancient exegetical tradition of the Church. The deviation of St. Andrew from the biblical text was due to the idea of the advantage of the Orthodox Byzantine people over the Jews, the elected nation. [21]

The phrase “the land, which flows with incorruption and eternal life” occurs only in the Great Canon, [45] so it is impossible to establish its exact source. However, it is possible to trace the theological tradition of using images of the Promised Land in exegesis with which this phrase is associated. Interestingly, the exegesis under consideration is not unique. For example, even in the apocryphal “Epistle of the Apostle Barnabas” of the 2nd century, this biblical idiom symbolizes the new state of man revived by Christ. The unknown author of the epistle likens Christians to babies who first eat honey, then milk. So “babies in Christ” first feed on honey, that is, faith in the promise of God, and then on milk, that is, the Word of God. This idea of the epistle is explained in more detail, based on a passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3.1-3), by Clement of Alexandria in “The Stromata”. [22]

Justin Martyr is one of the first to interweave the eschatological life with God or the Kingdom of Heaven into the interpretation of Canaan – the Promised Land. It touches upon the story of Noah’s blessing of his children and reveals its prophetic nature: the Jews, as the descendants of Shem, indeed soon captured the houses of Canaan, and their wealth, along with the land of Canaan, was soon inherited by the descendants of Japheth. Christ the Messiah, according to the

authority given to Him by the Father, came to call people to repentance, blessing and life together, promising them the possession of this land of saints. Actually, all peoples through faith in Christ and recognition of the truth of His teachings and prophetic writings are sure that "they will be with him in that land and receive an eternal and incorruptible inheritance". [23]

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, also considers the episode on the blessing of the children. Like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus sees it as a prophecy about the favor of God, first to the Jewish people, and then to the Gentiles. In essence, here the idea of human salvation is revealed through the relationship of God and peoples: first Jewish, then Christian. The words about the descendants of Shem point to the first, the phrase about the spread of the descendants of Japheth is understood as an indication of the calling of the Gentiles to the Church, and the expression about living in the houses of Shem – to life in the inheritance of the fathers with Christ with received birthrights. [24]

Origen in the homilies to the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, dwelling on the verse Jer. 11.5 ("That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey"), notes that the land in this passage cannot be understood as the geographical Promised Land. But it the land mentioned by the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5.5). [25] In this case, the Kingdom of Heaven is meant. Its image is Canaan, or the Promised Land.

In another passage, in the homily on the 15th psalm, stopping at its third verse ("But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight"⁷⁰), Origen remarks that God shows miracles saints and only those who are in His land. Its symbol was the earthly Judea – the earth itself is truly wide, flowing with milk and honey. Origen calls it the heritage of the meek in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5.5). [26] Apparently, the Alexandrian exegete interprets the colorful epithet of the Promised Land as an indication of the Kingdom of Heaven, which the meek will inherit.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa in "On Those Postponing Baptism" with numerous examples from the Old Testament convinces his reader to proceed to the sacrament of Water and Spirit as soon as possible. In particular, he calls to imitate Joshua: just as he, taking with him the kiot of the Covenant and crossing the wilderness, entered the Promised Land, so a person who is not in a hurry to be

⁷⁰ In King James Version, it is the 16th Psalm: [47]

baptized must arm himself with the Gospel, get out of the power of sin and hasten to life with Christ, "into a land abundant in fruits that bring joy, into a land flowing, according to the promise, with honey and milk". [27] In the same way, St. Thalassius of Libya interprets the Promised Land as the Kingdom of Heaven, which can be entered through faith, dispassion and knowledge. [28]

Thus, the ideological closeness of Andrew of Crete with Justin Martyr seems likely. The author of the Great Canon also speaks of eternal incorruption (according to St. Justin, this is "an eternal and incorruptible inheritance"), which Abraham inherited. Apparently, Andrew of Crete transferred the exegetical thought of St. Justin from the context of the blessing of the sons of Noah to the context of the calling of Abraham, which means a creative approach to the patristic source.

The exodus of Abraham from Haran also serves as an image of non-participation in sin in church exegesis. This idea is probably connected with the exegetical idea of ascetic literature, in which the wandering of Abraham is a symbol of the monks' alienness to the world and its pleasures. This tradition goes back to the Egyptian ascetics, in whom, beginning with St. Anthony the Great, monasticism is comprehended primarily as an internal renunciation of the world because of the similar calling of a monk to a new life, similar to the calling of Abraham to new lands. Having entered the society of monastics, a person became part of a kind of "new Israel" - monks, for whom the rest of the world has been a foreign land since then. From this comes the connection between the alienness of the monks to the world and its pleasures and the exit from Haran with the wandering around Canaan of the patriarch Abraham.

It seems that the first clear mention of the call to Abraham and his wanderings in relation to the monastics can be found in the "Epistle to the Monks" by St. Serapion of Thmuis. In the Epistle the author points out how the Patriarch was called by God and followed him. This episode serves as an occasion for him to somewhat compare his addressees with the patriarch: they were inspired by the word of God so that they followed him and took part in his blessing (meaning the blessing of Abraham from Gen. 12.2-3). [29] Most likely, Saint Serapion here develops the exegesis of the Apostle Paul, according to which Abraham is the prototype of all believers of both the Old and New Testaments.

Finally, in the famous "The Ladder of Divine Ascent" of John Climacus, a whole word or step – the third, "on wandering" – is devoted to the question of such a mood of a monk, in which he does not become attached to anyone or anything in the world, remaining in spiritual peace, like a stranger person in a

foreign country. No one has given himself up to wandering so strongly as Patriarch Abraham. "There is no greater example of renunciation than that great man (Abraham) who heard the command, "Leave your country and your family and the house of your father" (Gen. 12.1). Obediently he went to a foreign country where the language was different. And so it is that anyone following this model of renunciation is glorified all the more by the Lord". [30]

St. Andrew's approach to the story of Abraham's migration to the Promised Land, in fact, serves as a continuation and further development of the exegesis of the locations of Ur of the Chaldees, Haran and Canaan by Maximus the Confessor. This tradition can evidently be called ascetic.

In two troparia of the 3rd ode of the Great Penitential Canon, the author refers to only one of the three concepts that sounded in the call of the Lord to Abraham in the 12th chapter of the Book of Genesis – "land". There are three exegetical ideas in the troparia: a comparison of Haran as the land from which Abraham came out, with sin and a sinful life; location of Canaan (Promised Land) – with life with Christ, that is, in the Kingdom of Heaven; Abraham's wanderings in Canaan – with a symbol of alienation from sin. In the case of the first idea, there is a semantic similarity with the work of Maximus the Confessor, in the second case, with St. Justin the Martyr. It is also possible to recognize St. Andrew's acquaintance with the idea of Abraham's wandering as a symbol of alienation from sin.

Another biblical story significant for understanding the theological concept of faith is the sacrifice of Isaac. In Genesis 22, the Lord commanded Abraham, "And he said, Take now your son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. 22.2). Abraham, together with him, goes for three days to the indicated place: the son carries firewood, and the patriarch holds a knife and fire in his hands (obviously, some kind of torch) (Gen. 22.3-6). Isaac wonders where the ram for the sacrifice is, if they already have everything they need. To this, Abraham replies that the Almighty Himself will provide for him. Arriving at the place, Abraham prepared both the altar and the sacrifice for the act of offering to God, but at the very last moment, when the patriarch had already raised the knife over his son, the Angel of the Lord ordered him to stop, for God was convinced of his fidelity (Gen. 10-12). Instead of a son, Abraham sacrificed a ram standing nearby, entangled with its horns in the bushes. This event from the life of the patriarchs occurs in Ode 3 performed on Thursday of the Fifth Week of Great Lent.

The ode is addressed to the unfortunate soul (τάλαιναψυχή [45]) of a praying person. It is reminded that it knows a new sacrifice of Isaac, which is indicated by the words: “γνοῦσα”, (participle from the verb “γινώσκω” - “to know”) and “καινήν” (adjective from the word “καινή”, meaning not only “new”, but and “strange, unusual”, is used as a definition for the word “θυσίαν” – “sacrifice”). The English translation of the Great Canon uses the phrase “a new sacrifice”, although the translations of the word “καινήν” may indicate that Isaac is not only a “new”, but also an unusual sacrifice. Neither before this event, nor after it did the Lord require human sacrifices. God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his only son was, in fact, a test of his faith.

It is further stated that this sacrifice was mysteriously (μυστικῶς) sacrificed (όλοκαυρούμενον) to God. Apparently, St. Andrew believes that although physically Isaac survived and was replaced by a ram, in the spiritual sense, the Lord considered his obedience to his father and obedience to the God of Abraham as a sacrifice. This is probably a reference to Psalm 51.17-19,

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar”.

At the conclusion of the hymn, there is a call to the praying person to imitate the decision of Isaac. This fragment uses the word “τὴνπροαίρεσιν”, which means not just “decision”, but “conscious choice. [31] Probably, Isaac's humility and obedience to his father and God are meant during the journey to the mountain and the sacrifice itself. Thus, in this troparion, the event of the sacrifice of Isaac is comprehended from a moral position: attention is focused on his selflessness, and meekness and obedience are set as an example for a Christian. From this it can be assumed that the event of the sacrifice for Saint Andrew means the difficulties and temptations encountered on the path of Christians, which they are called to learn to endure, looking at the example of the son of Abraham.

It is interesting that in many commentaries of the Great Canon this accent of the ode is, for some reason, considered along with the typological interpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac. Isaac is compared in detail with Jesus Christ, after which reasoning follows about imitating Isaac's humility in enduring sorrows and selflessness in the fight against passions and temptations. [32] Many exegetes and theologians focus on testing Abraham’s faith. He is required to

unconditionally and unquestioningly obey God and sacrifice the most precious thing in his life – his only son, born at such an advanced age that he and Sarah cannot have more children. At the same time, considerable attention is paid to the obedience of Isaac. His obedience to the will of the Lord and father is associated with the words of the Apostle Paul, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12.1). The obedience of Isaac teaches Christians to surrender themselves into the hands of the Lord.

Obviously, the theological concept of Abraham’s faith should be seen as a model for all Christians to emulate. The Christian must be ready to sacrifice the most precious thing he has. The concept of “new (or unusual) sacrifice”, used by Andrew of Crete, can mean the complete consecration of one’s soul and body to Christ. Thus, the New Testament theology of salvation by faith is opposed to the Old Testament approaches.

It should be borne in mind that the first interpretations of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac as a call to firm faith and unquestioning obedience appeared in pre-Christian Judaism. [33] The apocryphal 4th Maccabean Book tells of Antiochus Epiphanes's persecution of the Jews in the 2nd century BC and the martyrdom of the seven brothers Maccabees and their mother Solomonia, as well as their teacher Eleazar. It should be emphasized that the dating of this apocryphal book varies from the beginning of the 1st century BC until the beginning of the 2nd century AD, that is, refers to the period of the dawn of Jewish apocryphal literature, with messianic expectations as a characteristic feature of the literature.

When describing the torment of Eleazar, the emphasis is on his *ó λογισμὸς* (thought, decision, reasoning), with which he defeated the “raging waves of passions”. [44] He suffered for keeping the Law of Moses and piety. [44] The elder with the spirit of prudence and determination of Isaac overcame the many-headed torment. So, he consciously, not knowing fear, went to suffering for the faith of his fathers. The courage of Eleazar is compared to the determination of Isaac, which served as an example for him to follow in faithfulness to the Law of Moses.

Jewish historian of the first century AD Titus Flavius Josephus in “Antiquities of the Jews” wrote that Isaac calmly listened to his father’s words that he was destined to be sacrificed to God, who once gave him to Abraham in answer to his fervent prayers. The historian, commenting on the behavior of Isaac, notes that under a righteous father it could not have been otherwise. Further, Josephus cites the words of Isaac that his birth would be lawless if he

completely disobeyed his father and God, giving his life as a sacrifice to the Omnipotent. [34] In other words, the meekness and obedience of Isaac to his earthly and heavenly father is emphasized here.

Anthony the Great in his 18th epistle notes that it is impossible to grow spiritually without obedience to spiritual fathers, since they themselves grew spiritually and became mentors only due to obedience to their teachers. St. Anthony calls to imitate those people who were submissive to their fathers and obeyed them; Isaac is also found among the persons on the list. Isaac, like other people from this list, obeyed his father, did his will, followed his instructions, and therefore acquired the Holy Spirit and knew the truth. [35] At the end of the second word of the four "On the Change of Names," St. John Chrysostom calls on listeners to imitate the meekness, benevolence, and every virtue of Isaac so that, through his prayers and the grace of God, Christians could reach the "bosom of Abraham". [36]

Ephraim the Syrian, discussing the virtues of Isaac, emphasized obedience to his father. When his father led him to the sacrifice, he went to his death with great desire. That is why he became a type (literally, "type" – τύπος) of Jesus Christ. Ephraim the Syrian also calls to show the obedience and zeal of Isaac, as well as to believe the fathers and obey them in order to receive from the Savior Christ a reward for faith and obedience. [37] The theologian explicitly typologically connects the image of Isaac with Jesus Christ, who also showed unconditional obedience to His Father.

The Syrian poet Jacob (451-521) in his story "On Abraham and Isaac" notes, "When Isaac saw that the lamb was not there, he asked where he was; as soon as he knew that he was a victim, he was not embarrassed. Elsewhere, he quotes Isaac's words to his father, "Fulfill your will: if the knife is sharpened against me, I will not recoil; if a fire is kindled for me, I will stand my ground; if the lamb must go bound, here are my hands, but if you are going to kill me unbound, I do not resist it". [38]

Obviously, the topic of Abraham's unshakable faith and Isaac's absolute obedience in Christian literature is inherited from Jewish exegesis. These traditions of exegesis are especially firmly rooted in the Syrian theological schools. Their influence on Andrew of Crete is obvious. It is necessary to keep in mind that St. Andrew was born in Damascus, where he received his home education. When he was 14, he moved to the Jerusalem monastery of St. Sava. It is hardly possible that he could absorb the Syrian traditions of exegetics, being so young. But probably he was influenced by these traditions through Christian

liturgical literature since Syria became the most significant region for the development of Christian poetics and hymnography in the Byzantine Empire. The liturgists of the 'Golden Age' of church poetry (V-IX c.) often used images and allegories from Jewish and apocryphal literature.

The theological concept of faith in the Great Canon is also revealed through the image of unbelief, the apostasy of man from God. A striking example is the image of the Babylonian pandemonium. This plot is dedicated to the troparion 36 of the second ode of the Great Canon, performed on Thursday of the fifth week of Great Lent. This event is described in the book of Genesis, in the eleventh chapter. All over the earth there was one people with their own language. Having dwelt in a plain in the land of Shinar, they made a technological breakthrough by using bricks and slime instead of the usual stones and mortar (Gen. 11.1-3). However, there was one strange undertaking based on the technological innovation: the building of a city and a tower with a pinnacle to heaven (πόλιν καὶ πύργον ἥ κεφαλὴ ἔσται ἕως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, Gen. 11.4). The Lord, seeing this event, decides to mix languages (αὐτῶν τὴν γλῶσσαν, Gen. 11.7) [39] so that the workers do not understand each other, thereby preventing the implementation of their plan. As a result, the once united people was divided into many small ones, and that place became known as Babylon, that is, "mixing" (Σύγχυσις).

In the ode, the author addresses the soul, exposing it in the fact that "Skillfully hast thou planned to build a tower, ... and to fortify it with thy passions" (Πύργον ἐσοφίσω οἰκοδομῆσαι, ... καὶ ὀχύρωμα πῆξαι – literally with the original word order "Tower decided to build ... and the stronghold fortify"). [45] He does not have an explicit univocal interpretation of both the tower and the stronghold. On the other hand, he indirectly points out the absurdity of the idea itself and the intention to build them by the very tone of speech. The construction of the extremely high tower and the strengthening of the stronghold, conceived by an unreasonable soul, obviously against the will of God, is in itself a senseless enterprise. Based on this, it can be assumed that St. Andrew uses the image of the tower as a symbol of disbelief in God, and the stronghold as a symbol of sinful life, or as an attempt at an autonomous existence without the Creator. The saint even indicates the material for the construction of the stronghold – these are the passions of the soul (ταῖς σαῖς ἐπιθυμίαις). The word "ἐπιθυμίας" means passions as "aspirations" or "desires" rather than passions as feelings or unconscious impulses (πάθη).

The second part of the ode is dedicated to Divine intervention in the affairs of the soul. The use of the conjunction *εἰ* with the particle *μή* (that is, “if not”) still indicates that the soul did not implement its impious plans, since the Lord did not allow the plan to be realized. The second half of the troparion indicates exactly how He did it. The Creator (*ὁκκτίστης*) confused (confound) intentions (*συνέχευ ... τὰς βουλάς*) of the soul and overturned its device to the earth. The phrase about the “confusion” of the plans is similar to the biblical “*συγχέωμεν ... αὐτῶν γλῶσσαν*” “confound their language” (Gen. 11.7) From such lexical coincidences, it can be assumed that St. Andrew understood the language of the single people as the plans, intentions or thoughts of unreasonable soul.

Saint Andrew uses the event from the Holy History to instruct the soul, which result in some deviation from the text of the Bible, despite the obvious desire to follow the biblical story. The book of Genesis does not mean any construction devices, or their overturning to the ground. To understand the deviations of the Great Canon from the text of the Old Testament, it is necessary to take into consideration the interpretations of the Bible by the exegetes preceding St. Andrew.

The traditions of interpreting the story of the Babylonian pandemonium were formed in the pre-Christian, Jewish exegesis. Philo of Alexandria was an outstanding interpreter of biblical stories. [4] He extensively used allegorical approaches to interpretation, which probably influenced the allegorical style of interpretation, specific for the Alexandrian Theological School. [40]

Philo wrote a separate work about the story of the Tower of Babel, entitled “On the Confusion of Tongues”. [41] The author interprets the people in the land of Shinar as foolish sinners whose whole life is restless. Desiring to live a sinful life not just in words, but to be imbued with sins, making them their sense and way of life, they were building a “city and tower to vice”. The material for the “building” is “passion and vice” (*πάθος καὶ τὴν κακίαν* [41]), mixed to a formless state, so that it would be easier to enjoy them. The initiator of such an enterprise is “mind that sets itself up against God”. [41] The tower itself is interpreted as an “argument of vice” (*τὸν περὶ κακίας λόγον* [41]), in other words, it is the confidence of the wicked in impunity. That is why this “tower” was erected to the skies, because sinners forget about the existence of God, [41] punishing for iniquity.

In other parts of his writing, Philo interprets the tower as “the preference to sense rather than understanding” and possibility for the sensory knowledge of the spiritual things. [41] The city is understood as an internal state of mind, which

can be, depending on the people living in it, either good or bad. [41] Philo interprets the Divine intervention in the construction as the will of God to protect the good and the virtuous from the attacks of the vicious by “confusion” that is “the annihilation of the specific nature and properties of each separate vice”. [41] Thus, the Alexandrian exegete considers the episode with the Tower of Babel from the position of moral and epistemological, understanding it as a reflection of the spiritual mood of the sinner and his confidence in impunity caused by unbelief.

Maximus the Confessor, most probably, is the only theologian before St. Andrew who, in a similar way, in his writings addressed the considered story of the Holy History. So, in the 28th question-answer to Thalassius, explaining the various manifestations of God to the righteous by their unequal readiness for this, he recalls the episode with the Babylonian pandemonium. The people who migrated from the east to the land of Shinar signifies humanity that has fallen into many opinions about the Deity (πολλὰς περὶ θεότητος δόξας). [18] Putting together the speeches of each opinion (ἐκάστης δόξης λόγον), [18] which symbolize the bricks (πλίνθους), they built, like a tower (πύργον), “polytheistic atheism” (τὴν πολὺ θεὸν ἀθεΐαν). [18]

In his other work, “Questions and Doubtful Passages” (*Quaestiones et dubia*), Saint Maximus uses the same exegetical understanding of the East as the knowledge of God and the land of Shinar as something negative. In view of the change in his approach from the epistemological in the previous essay to the ascetic, the understanding of the land of Shinar has also changed, now it is interpreted as the passion of gluttony (τῆς γαστριμαργίας πάθος). [42] Further, the saint confessor draws parallels between the construction of the tower and the activities of sinners: a person, placing his carnal sins (τὰ σαρκικὰ πάθη) above all else (περὶ πολλοῦ), joins sin with sin (πάθος πάθει), like bricks, and thus builds a “tower” (πύργον). [42] He will not leave care for the worthless, because he feels a strong attraction to it or desire for it. In order to educate the people, God stopped the building of the tower (παύει... τὴν τοῦ πύργου οἰκοδομήν) and confused languages (συγχεῖ τὰς γλώσσας). [42] Saint Maximus explains this by the example of a fornicator, whom God punishes with illness (νόσῳ παιδεύει) and forces him to take care of his bodily health, thereby destroying (συγχέας) constant cares about the passions (τῆς συνεχοῦς ... μελέτης τοῦ πάθους). [42]

Thus, St. Maximus considers the considered passage about the Tower of Babel separately in two dimensions: in the epistemological and in the ascetic ones. In the latter, using the example with the sin of gluttony and the prodigal

man, he shows a strong desire for sin and, as a result, its multiplication “even to heaven”, which stops (or “destroys”) God with illness or need, forcing a person not to think about passion, thereby mixing the “language” of the soul, that is, thoughts. So, the tower is the sinful life and state of person, the bricks are sins, its destruction is illnesses or any troubles, the “confusion of tongues” is a change in the way of thinking from sinful to another.

SUMMARY

As can be seen, few interpreters of the Holy Scripture addressed the story of the Babylonian pandemonium before the Great Canon. Nevertheless, on the basis of the works of Philo of Alexandria and Maximus the Confessor, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the significance of the image of the Babylonian pandemonium in the liturgical work of St. Andrew. A story from the beginning of the 11th chapter of the book of Genesis for an allegorical description of the activities of a sinner, while St. Andrew is not so close to the text of the Bible, since he leaves the city out of interpretation, in place of which he adds a stronghold. Further, in the Great Canon, the tower is meant as a symbol of defiance to God and confidence in impunity, which coincides with Philo’s understanding of it. According to St. Maxim, the tower is a symbol of sinful life and state, similarly to St. Andrew in relation to the stronghold. Different terms are used to designate the sins symbolized by bricks: Philo and St. Maxima τόπάθος (passion) and ἡκακία (vice), and in St. Andrew ἡἐπιθυμία (“passion” in the meaning of “attraction”, “desire”). [31] Finally, the Old Testament “confused” tongue is interpreted by Andrew as intentions and plans (ἡβουλῇ), while for Maxim it is care (ἡμελέτη). There is reason to believe that St. Andrew draws on a rich tradition of ascetic exegesis and allegorical interpretation of Old Testament texts. At the same time, the unbelief in God of the builders of the Tower is opposed to the faith of Abraham.

The Great Canon does not represent an explicit theological doctrine of faith as, for example, John Climacus does in his “Ladder of Divine Ascent”. [43] Faith is one of the highest steps in his Ladder together with hope and love. According to St. John, repentance precedes faith in the way of soul upstairs. The way of soul in the Great Canon is not an ascension, it is rather the swing of the pendulum: from the edge of desperation to the confidence in God’s mercy and forgiveness. The succession of odes, troparia and irmoses are gradually shifting from the despair to the confidence through a number of swings. In a similar way, faith

varies from the unbelief demonstrated by the builders of the Tower of Babel to Abraham's unconditional faith and obedience.

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FAITH IN THE GREAT CANON THEOLOGY OF ST. ANDREW OF CRETE

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Abstract

The article considers the theological aspects of faith in the Great Canon of Andrew of Crete. The purpose is to identify St. Andrew's theological conception of faith and its characteristics in the context of the Great Canon theology through the analysis of traditional Orthodox exegesis of some Old Testament stories, mentioned in the Canon. Three biblical plots are examined in detail: leaving his native land Haran by Abraham, sacrificing Isaac by Abraham, Babylonian pandemonium. The traditional exegesis treats the first two stories as examples of solid faith, the last one is an illustration of unbelief and disobedience. The interpretations and opinions of Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, Ambrose of Milan, Antony the Great, Titus Flavius Josephus, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus the Blind, John Cassian, Abba Paphnutius, Cyril of Alexandria, Caesarius of Arles, Thalassius of Libya, Serapion of Thmuis, Maximus the Confessor, John Climacus, John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian are referred to in the article in order to substantiate St. Andrew's interpretation of the three biblical stories. The theological conception of faith in exegesis is represented in a deeply symbolic, allegorical form. Eastern Orthodox Church Fathers, especially the representatives of Alexandrian Theological School (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Anthony the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind) extensively used allegories for exegesis. The author of the Great Canon thinks faith to be a process. Faith accompanies the human soul in its way of repentance, which is the main topic of the Canon sometimes called 'Penitential'. The penitent human soul swings to and from Abraham's steadfast faith. Its different states are allegorically illustrated by biblical stories.

Keywords

Andrew of Crete, Faith, liturgical theology, the Great Canon.