

*in manuscript form*

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**«THE PYRAMID OF FAITH»  
IN CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY**



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# AUTHOR'S PREFACE



**Dear Reader,**

This work was born from long reflection on a simple and yet bottomless question — what happens inside a person when they say, «I believe»?

Over many years, observing the life of the church community, engaging in psychological counseling, and delving into the study of Scripture and the patristic heritage, I became increasingly aware of how fragmented and simplified our view of faith often is. We either reduce it to a set of dogmatic formulas, or to an area of vague feelings, or to social identity or a set of behavioral rules. As a result, the spiritual life of many believers resembles a building with disconnected floors, without stairways between them: bright mystical experiences coexist with an inability to build relationships, impeccable knowledge of the catechism with inner dryness of heart, zealous observance of rituals with an incapacity for personal, responsible choice.

An urgent need arose for a holistic map of faith — for a model that would not oppose reason to feeling, the personal to the social, earthly effort to heavenly gift, but would show them as interconnected elements of a single, living, and dynamic system. Thus emerged the idea of the «Pyramid of Faith».

The proposed model of living religious faith is not dogma or a new theological system. It is a metaphorical tool and a hermeneutical key, an attempt to sketch a schematic of the internal «landscape» of a living believing person. It is based on the conviction that genuine, Gracious faith (Lat. *fides miraculosa*), spoken of in the Gospels, does not cancel or ignore human nature, but transforms it from within, involving all levels of our being in the process of healing and growth: from bodily habits and social ties to the depths of the heart and the heights of intellectual insight.

In the first part of the work («Elements»), we introduce and distinguish the key types of faith, which become the «building blocks» of the model. In the second part

(«Structure»), we assemble these blocks into the «Pyramid of Faith» itself, showing how the «Seed» of grace, the «Dyads» of internal and external tensions, the «Cross» of material practices, and the «Pillar» of communion with God form the unified architecture of the «Pyramid of Faith». And finally, in the third part («Significance»), we consider how this map can be used in practice — in Christian psychology or counseling, as well as in pastoral care and for personal spiritual diagnostics.

My main hope is that the «Pyramid of Faith» will serve not merely as a dry theoretical scheme, but as a living practical guide to spiritual sobriety and growth. So that everyone, looking at it, can ask themselves honest questions: «On which 'floor' of my faith is there currently the greatest disorder or dear order? Has my social piety turned into a façade, behind which existential emptiness hides? Am I trying to substitute rational schemes for living trust in God and living communion with Him in the depths of my heart? Is my heart, like plowed soil, ready to receive the seed of the grace of Gracious faith?»

This work is an invitation to dialogue and joint search. It is written as a manuscript, so I understand it as the beginning of a conversation, not the final word. I will be sincerely grateful for any constructive criticism, questions, and testimonies from personal experience that can help clarify and deepen the proposed integrative model of faith.

May the Lord bless us all on this path to wholeness — to that «circle of faith» where our knowledge becomes love, practice becomes joy, and our personal «yes» to God sounds in harmony with all creation.

**With respect, hope, and faith,**

*Serge N. Glushenko*

# A.

## ELEMENTS

### OF THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH»

The main elements of the «Pyramid of Faith» are the basic types of Christian faith:

- **Gracious Faith** (Rus. «чудотворная вера») — the highest, gracious level of faith, understood as the gift of direct contact between the human spirit and Divine action (the pneumatological aspect). This is faith that transcends natural laws, personal experience, and rational understanding, being the source of radical transformation and the point of synergy (co-operation between man and God).
- **Social Faith** (Rus. «социальная вера») — the totality of stable convictions, values, and practices assimilated by the individual from the outside through the religious community, tradition, and culture (the exteriorized, collective pole). It forms the «external framework» of religious identity, providing continuity, a language of expression, and a sense of belonging.
- **Personal Faith** (Rus. «персональная вера») — the internal, subjective core of faith, arising as a result of personal, autonomous choice, existential search, and unique experience of relationship with God (the interiorized, individual pole). It is the foundation of responsibility, sincerity, and spiritual maturity.
- **Emotional Faith** (Rus. «эмоциональная вера») — the affective-emotional component of faith, encompassing stable emotional states and deep heart experiences related to God (love, reverence, hope, tenderness). Serves as the main energetic and motivational source of religious life.
- **Cognitive Faith** (Rus. «когнитивная вера») — the rational-meaning component of faith, including intellectual assent to doctrines, systematic knowledge, and comprehension of the truths of Revelation. Performs the function of structuring, protection from delusions, and building a holistic «map of reality».

These types of faith are explored in detail further in this section.

## A.1. GRACIOUS FAITH



Gracious faith represents the highest and central level in the architecture of the «Pyramid of Faith», serving as its theological and existential epicenter. It is not merely one of the types of faith, but its qualitatively different state — a gift of grace (charisma), which marks the point of immediate encounter and synergy between human freedom and divine action.

### A.1.1. Essential Core: The Gift of Faith as an Encounter with the Divine

Gracious faith is ontologically distinct from other levels of the pyramid. If social, personal, cognitive, and emotional faith are the results of human effort, development, and assimilation (albeit with the assistance of grace), then Gracious faith is the primary gracious act, bestowed from above.

- **Not a human achievement, but a gift from above.** It cannot be «earned» or «formed» through the development of the lower levels of the pyramid. These levels only create «prepared soil» — openness, thirst, the cry of the heart — but the very «seed» of faith that transcends nature is given mercifully and sovereignly.
- **The point of synergy between the human and the divine.** This is the moment when the vertical of the «Pillar of Faith» reaches its intense fullness. Human «petition» meets Divine «giving», and the person becomes a living conduit of power surpassing their natural capabilities.

### A.1.2.

#### **Paradoxical Nature: The Summit and the Source**

Gracious faith possesses a structural paradox that defines the dynamics of the entire pyramid:

- **As the summit of ascent to grace (katabasis).** It is the culmination and goal of spiritual ascent. All work on harmonizing the dyads and strengthening the material foundation is directed towards making the person capable of receiving this gift.
- **As the source of the descent of grace (anabasis).** Simultaneously, the received grace becomes the starting point for a descending transfiguration. The «seed» of Gracious faith sprouts, radically renewing all underlying levels:
  - Transforms *personal faith*, turning it from a struggle for choice into joyful self-surrender.
  - Revitalizes *social faith*, filling rituals and fellowship with genuine love, not formality.
  - Integrates *cognitive and emotional faith*, turning knowledge into living experience, and feelings into states rooted in reality.

- Fills *material faith* with meaning, making practices not a ritual, but a sacrament.

### A.1.3.

#### Manifestation:

#### Transcending Natural Laws

Practically, Gracious faith manifests not in «controlling reality», but in transcending it for the purposes of salvation and transformation. Its action is realized in three main planes:

- **Transcending physical and psychological laws.** Inner or outer grace (healing, inexplicable preservation of peace in catastrophe, a prophetic word, salvation) as a sign of a different, gracious order of being, invading our world.
- **Transcending personal negative experience.** The ability to hope in the goodness and power of God despite the totality of past traumas, disappointments, and «statistics» of failures. This is faith based not on experience, but on trust in a Person.
- **Transcending the rational paradigm.** This is an act of free will, performed not contrary to reason, but beyond its boundaries. Reason, having reached its limit, capitulates not in despair, but in trust: «I do not understand how, but I believe in Him».

### A.1.4.

#### Critical Boundaries:

#### Distinction from Spiritual Delusion and «Magic»

The most important aspect of understanding Gracious faith is its clear demarcation from distorted forms:

- **Not «magic».** It is not a «magical» technique for coercing «higher spiritual forces» to fulfill human will. Its source is the love and mercy of the Living

God, and its goal is the salvation and transformation of the person, not the service of their ego.

- **Not spiritual delusion.** Genuine Gracious faith is accompanied by humility («not I, but the grace of God within me») and leads to an increase in love and responsibility. Delusion, however, feeds pride, a thirst for exclusivity, and leads to detachment from the church community and sober self-control.
- **Not emotional exaltation.** Genuine Gracious faith is not the peak of strong religious feeling. Gracious faith can be accompanied by peace and silence, or by ecstasy. But its criterion is the objective change of reality (internal or external) in accordance with God's will.

### A.1.5.

#### Significance in the «Pyramid of Faith»:

##### Faith as Life in the Spirit

In the context of Christian psychology, «Gracious faith» possesses a pneumatological status and denotes the limit where psychology as a science of psychic processes (psyche) meets the realm of the action of the Spirit (pneuma). This is precisely «life in the Spirit». It completes and surpasses the human architecture of the pyramid, being the theological answer to the human existential cry. If the entire pyramid from bottom to top is the prayer «I believe, Lord! Help my unbelief!», then Gracious faith is the manifested answer: «My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness» (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thus, Gracious faith (*Gracious faith*) is not simply the «top floor» in the structure of personality, but a transformative principle which, once given, restructures the entire internal architecture of a person's faith, making it a holistic, living, and growing organism of grace-filled life.

## A.2. SOCIAL FAITH



Social faith represents the fundamental external pole in the structure of religious consciousness, formed by the community and serving as the social framework that predefines for the individual the language, form, and space for their personal faith. This is faith as heritage, tradition, and belonging to a group.

### A.2.1.

#### Essence and Functions:

#### The Social Framework of Spirituality

Social faith is a system of stable convictions, values, rituals, and behavioral patterns that an individual assimilates not as a result of personal revelation or rational inquiry, but through belonging to a specific religious community and culture.

- **Function of the «external social skeleton».** Social faith provides the person with ready-made semantic and behavioral structures:
  - *Language of faith.* Vocabulary, symbols, doctrinal formulas (e.g., «Trinity», «redemption», «grace»).

- *Behavioral scripts*. Liturgical order, prayer rules, ethical norms, festive cycles.
- *Sense of «We»*. The experience of belonging to the people of God, historical continuity, the «big family» of believers.
- **Function of social legitimization and transmission of tradition.** Social faith ensures the objectivity and suprapersonal authority of religious experience, rooting it not in subjective feelings, but in the centuries-old tradition of the community.

### A.2.2.

#### **Sources and Mechanisms of Formation**

Social faith is incorporated into the personality through key channels of socialization:

- **Primary group (family).** Early, pre-verbal assimilation of religious practices, cognitive, and emotional elements of faith.
- **Church community.** Systematic participation in worship, sacraments, community life, where faith is reinforced by group ritual and the authority of pastors, assimilated through imitation.
- **Cultural environment.** The broad context of traditions, art, literature, and social norms permeated with religious meanings (e.g., Orthodox culture in Russia, charismatic culture in the USA, Catholic culture in Europe, etc.).

### A.2.3.

#### **Dynamics: Connection with Personal Faith**

The key property of a healthy, proactive social faith is its non-closedness. It is not a prison for the personality, but acts as material for interiorization.

- **From social to personal.** Prayers learned in childhood become the basis for personal, heartfelt conversation with God. Doctrines accepted on faith from the community become the subject of deep personal reflection and acceptance. Formal ritual is filled with individual, existential meaning.
- **Risk of stagnation.** If this transition does not occur, social faith degenerates into ritualism, formalism, or «faith out of habit». A person performs practices without investing their personal heart, but out of fear of judgment, a desire to conform, or by inertia.

#### A.2.4.

### **Critical Risks and Distortions**

Social faith, divorced from dynamics with personal faith, gives rise to a number of spiritual-psychological dysfunctions:

- **Pharisaism.** Reducing religion to impeccable external observance of norms with internal emptiness or pride.
- **Conformism and fear of judgment.** Suppressing personal doubts and questions to preserve belonging to the group.
- **Collective fanaticism.** Loss of critical thinking and personal responsibility in favor of unquestioning adherence to group attitudes.
- **Cultural Christianity.** Identifying faith with national or family tradition without a personal encounter with Christ.

#### A.2.5.

### **Significance in the «Pyramid of Faith»: The Social Foundation of Spirituality**

In the logic of the pyramid, social faith constitutes a necessary but insufficient element of integral faith.

- **As a foundation.** It provides starting capital — language, practices, community support. Without it, personal faith risks becoming ungrounded, subjective fantasy, devoid of connection with historical Revelation and testing in dialogue with others.
- **As part of a dyad.** Together with personal faith, it forms the dyad «We — I», the tension in which is the driving force of spiritual growth. Healthy faith exists in a dynamic equilibrium between these poles.
- **As soil for the «seed».** Being rooted in healthy social faith (and not its distorted forms) creates a stable context in which the person can safely seek a personal encounter with God, preparing for the possible gift of Gracious faith.

Thus, social faith (*rooted in social beliefs and arising from them*) is not the enemy of genuine spirituality, but its necessary social shell and school. Its task is not to replace personal faith, but to become its nurturing environment, language, and test of authenticity in real relationships within the Body of Christ.

### A.3.

## PERSONAL FAITH



Personal faith represents the internal, subjective pole of religious consciousness, serving as the existential core of the personality, formed by free, responsible choice and unique experience of encounter with God. This is faith as a deeply personal confession «I believe», experienced and affirmed from within.

#### A.3.1.

##### Essence and Functions: The Personal Core of Faith

Personal faith is a system of convictions and attitudes that crystallizes not under the pressure of external norms, but as a result of internal work, search, and personal revelation.

- **Function of the «subjective center».** It is the point of internal autonomy and responsibility, where:

- Faith ceases to be an answer to the question «what do people believe here?» and becomes an answer to the existential question «What do I believe and why?»
- Religious truths and practices are experienced not as external social heritage, but as personally appropriated, suffered through, or joyfully acquired possessions.
- **Function of authenticity and sincerity.** It is at this level that faith becomes genuine, overcoming the risks of formalism and hypocrisy. It is responsible for the depth and stability of religious life, when external circumstances (change of community, crisis) do not destroy it, but only purify and deepen it.

### A.3.2.

#### Sources and Mechanisms of Formation

Personal faith is born at points of personal spiritual tension and search:

- **Existential crisis or deep spiritual question.** Confrontation with suffering, death, meaninglessness, prompting a personal search for Truth.
- **Conscious search and reflection.** Intellectual and spiritual search, study of Scripture, theology, comparison of traditions, leading to conscious agreement.
- **Personal experience of encounter («mystical» experience).** Experiencing the immediate presence, mercy, answer to prayer, or internal transformation perceived as personal dialogue with God.

### A.3.3.

#### Dynamics:

#### Connection with Social Faith

Genuine personal faith does not remain a hidden possession. It strives for expression and dialogue, enriching the social context.

- **From personal to social.** Personal mystical experience seeks a language for expression, which it often finds in the forms provided by tradition (social faith). Personal conviction prompts testimony, service, and creative participation in the life of the community, thereby revitalizing and renewing it from within.
- **Risk of isolation.** If this outward movement is blocked (by pride, fear, disappointment in the community), personal faith can degenerate into spiritual individualism, subjectivism, or sectarian closedness, losing healthy correction, support, and the fruit of serving others.

#### A.3.4. Critical Risks and Distortions

Focus on the personal pole without a healthy connection to the social leads to distortions:

- **Pride and spiritual delusion (prelest').** A sense of one's own «chosenness» or «special revelation», leading to opposition to church tradition and community.
- **Subjectivism and relativism.** Asserting that «my truth» is more important and authentic than the common one, leading to the erosion of the integral foundations of faith.
- **Spiritual isolation and fruitlessness.** Refusal of salvific criticism and the nurturing environment of the community makes faith ungrounded and deprives it of its missionary dimension.

#### A.3.5. Significance in the «Pyramid of Faith»: The Role of the Person in Spiritual Development

In the architecture of the pyramid of faith, personal faith plays the role of an irreplaceable engine and crystallizer.

- **As a condition for authenticity.** Without it, the entire «Pyramid of Faith» risks remaining a beautiful but lifeless construct of external ritual and borrowed ideas. It is personal faith that breathes life into social forms.
- **As part of a dyad.** Together with social faith, it creates the axis «I — We», the tension of which is the main driving force of spiritual maturation. The dialogue and conflict between the personal and the collective is a key driver of growth.
- **As a necessary condition for the «seed of Gracious faith».** The gift of Gracious faith is given not to the community as an abstraction, but to a concrete person. The free, conscious, and responsible «yes» of the person (an act of personal faith) is a necessary condition for encountering this gift. Personal faith prepares the unique, irreplaceable vessel for grace.

Thus, personal faith (*rooted in personal beliefs and arising from them*) is not simply a «private opinion», but the internal existential dimension of faith, without which religion degenerates into ideology or cultural ritual. It is that living center where faith becomes a genuine, responsible, and personality-transforming choice, open to the vertical of the divine gift.

## A.4. EMOTIONAL FAITH



Emotional faith represents the affective-emotional component of religious consciousness, performing the function of the emotional energetic heart and motivational center of faith. This is a system of stable, deeply rooted emotional states and heart movements arising in response to the divine call addressed from God to man, and coloring the entire religious experience of the living religious person.

### A.4.1. Essence and Functions: The Fiery Heart

Emotional faith is faith as deep, personal experience. It transforms abstract truths into existential reality.

- **Function of emotional energization and motivation.** It is responsible for the «fire in the heart» — that inner strength which turns knowledge about God into a thirst for God, and moral duty into a joyful striving for holiness. Without it, faith becomes a lifeless duty.

- **Function of personal connection.** Through emotions (reverential fear, love, gratitude, hope, tenderness) faith becomes not a worldview, but personal relationships with God. This is the «language of the heart» in dialogue with the Divine Thou.
- **Function of experience integration.** It «stitches together» various aspects of faith into a single holistic experience, giving personal significance and warmth to cognitive truths and social practices.

#### A.4.2.

### Sources and Mechanisms of Formation

Emotional faith is nourished from sources that directly affect the sensory and intuitive sphere:

- **Experience of personal prayer and worship.** The immediate experience of presence, closeness, beauty, or holiness of God in moments of solitary or corporate prayer.
- **Aesthetic perception of the sacred.** A deep response of the heart to the beauty of an icon, architecture, church singing (psalmody), liturgical action, nature as creation.
- **Empathy with key events of Sacred History.** Sincere compassion for the Cross of Christ (the Passion) and joy at Easter, forming emotional attachment to the core narrative of faith.
- **Experience of an answer to prayer, consolation, or inner peace in sorrow.** Personal experience interpreted as the direct action of God in a person's life.

### A.4.3.

#### Dynamics:

#### Connection with Cognitive Faith

In healthy spiritual life, emotional faith is not isolated but is in constant dialogue with reason.

- **From emotional to cognitive.** Strong religious feelings naturally generate a thirst for knowledge. Love for God motivates studying Scripture to better know the Beloved. Experiencing God's holiness motivates cognitive inquiry into His nature. Thus, emotion becomes an engine for intellectual growth, filling it with vital force and personal interest.
- **Risk of detachment (emotionalism).** If this connection breaks, emotional faith degenerates into unstable emotionalism or a «religion of feelings». Here, the main criterion of truth becomes subjective feeling («it feels good/inspiring»), leading to spiritual instability, dependence on «spiritual highs», despondency in their absence, and an inability to pass through the «dark nights» of faith.

### A.4.4.

#### Critical Risks and Distortions

Imbalance towards the emotional pole without cognitive and volitional correction leads to characteristic distortions:

- **Spiritual delusion (prelest') and self-deception.** Mistaking strong but natural or passionate emotions (e.g., pleasurable states, exaltation) for the undoubted action of grace.
- **Manipulative religiosity.** Striving for constant stimulation of religious feelings through certain music, charismatic preaching, «graces», turning faith into a search for emotional drugs.

- **Cyclicity of «highs and lows».** Spiritual life turns into an alternation of ecstasies and depressions, where faith exists only on the crest of an emotional wave, and proves insufficient in periods of dryness or trials.

#### A.4.5.

### Significance in the «Pyramid of Faith»:

#### Vital Force and Ardor

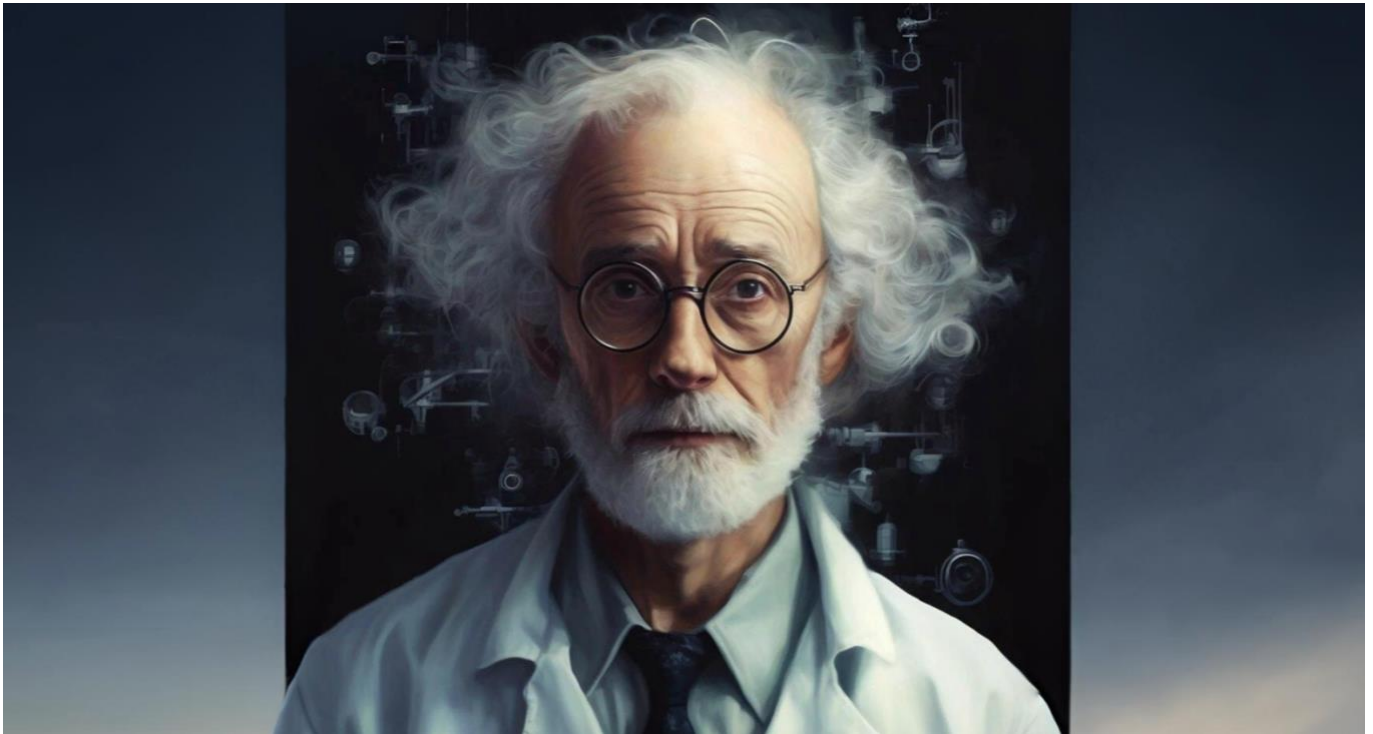
In the architecture of the «Pyramid of Faith», emotional faith plays the role of vital energy and inner warmth, without which the entire religious edifice remains cold and uninhabited.

- **As an animating principle.** Without it, cognitive faith is dead (James 2:26), social faith is formal, and personal faith can become severe and joyless asceticism. Emotional faith gives the taste and joy of knowing God.
- **As part of a dyad.** Together with cognitive faith, it forms the axis «Heart — Mind», forming wisdom. Their synergy is a process in which the light of reason directs and purifies the fire of the heart, and the fire of the heart warms and animates the light of reason. A healthy heart thirsts for truth, and true knowledge warms the heart.
- **As a necessary predisposition for the «seed».** Gracious faith, being a gift, often descends upon a thirsting and open heart. Emotional faith as «thirst for God» (Ps. 42:1) creates that inner emptiness and striving which make a person receptive to grace. It is love for God and hope in Him that form the inner attitude that allows one to trust Him beyond the visible and reasonable.

Thus, emotional faith (*rooted in emotional beliefs and arising from them*) is not a secondary or dangerous addition to «real» faith, but its indispensable vital force and genuine language of relationship. It is the fuel that allows the entire structure of the pyramid not merely to exist as a model, but to live dynamically and grow in love for God and neighbor.

## A.5.

# COGNITIVE FAITH



Cognitive faith represents the rational-meaning component of religious consciousness, performing the function of the structural backbone and intellectual map of faith. This is a system of conscious, verbalizable convictions, doctrines, and knowledge about God, the world, and salvation, formed through study, reflection, and intellectual agreement.

### A.5.1.

#### **Essence and Functions: The Map of the Spiritual Path**

Cognitive faith is faith as knowledge and understanding. Its core consists not of feelings or traditions, but of meaningful, logically connected truths.

- **Function of structuring and clarity.** It answers the questions «What do I believe?» and «Why do I believe it?» It turns vague intuitions and emotions into a clear, consistent system of views (dogmatics, biblical theology).

- **Function of protection and discrimination.** It acts as the intellectual immunity of faith. It allows one to distinguish orthodox teaching from heresy, spiritual experience from delusion, relying not on subjective sensations, but on the criteria of Scripture and church Tradition.
- **Function of meaning-making.** It gives meaning to religious experience and practices. Understanding why a sacrament is performed or what Christ's sacrifice means turns ritual into conscious participation, and experience into an event rooted in truth.

### A.5.2.

#### Sources and Mechanisms of Formation

Cognitive faith is formed through purposeful intellectual activity and critical reflection:

- **Systematic study of sources.** Reading and exegesis of Holy Scripture, study of dogmatic theology, works of the Church Fathers, church history.
- **Rational apologetics (defense of faith).** A conscious response to doubts, questions from science, philosophical criticism, leading to a deeper and more reasoned assimilation of the truths of faith.
- **Catechesis and education.** Structured learning of the foundations of doctrine, both within church education and through self-education.

### A.5.3.

#### Dynamics:

#### Connection with Emotional Faith

The strength of healthy cognitive faith lies in its ability to nourish and ennoble other levels.

- **From cognitive to emotional.** Intellectual understanding of the truths of faith forms and directs emotions. Awareness of Christ's sacrificial love (a

cognitive act) generates responsive love, gratitude, and contrition of heart (an emotional response). Knowledge of God's sovereignty and faithfulness provides a basis for deep inner peace in any circumstances. Reason gives emotions dignity, depth, and stability, preventing them from descending into chaos or exaltation.

- **Risk of detachment (scholasticism).** If this flow is interrupted, cognitive faith degenerates into dry, lifeless scholasticism — a set of abstract dogmas detached from the life of the heart. This leads to intellectual pride, pharisaic «correctness», and cold formalism, where «truth» is more important than love and mercy.

#### A.5.4.

#### Critical Risks and Distortions

Imbalance of the cognitive component creates specific spiritual-psychological problems:

- **Intellectual pride (Gnosticism).** A sense of superiority over «simple» believers, reducing salvation to «correctness of knowledge», neglect of personal piety and mystical experience.
- **Dogmatic fundamentalism and rigidity.** Inability to distinguish the essence of faith from its cultural-historical forms, aggressive rejection of any questions or new interpretations.
- **«Textbook faith».** A situation where a person knows everything *about* God but does not know the Living God Himself. Faith becomes a subject of academic study, but not living personal relationships.

### A.5.5.

#### **Significance in the «Pyramid of Faith»: The Rational Foundations of Spiritual Life**

In the architecture of the «Pyramid of Faith», cognitive faith plays the role of the supporting framework, giving the edifice logical form and stability.

- **As protection from chaos.** Without cognitive faith, emotional faith is blind and susceptible to manipulation, social faith is superficial, and personal faith can stray into subjective thickets. It sets boundaries and direction.
- **As part of a dyad.** Together with emotional faith, cognitive faith forms the axis «Mind — Heart». Their healthy tension (synergy) is a process in which the fire of the heart warms the truth, and the light of reason illuminates the path for feelings. «Love the Lord... with all your mind» (Matt. 22:37).
- **As a necessary floor for the «seed of Gracious faith».** Gracious faith is not irrational. It transcends reason but does not contradict it. An enlightened mind, rooted in truth, becomes the sober «steward» that helps distinguish the genuine action of the Spirit from illusions and correctly comprehend the received spiritual experience.

Thus, cognitive faith (*rooted cognitive and beliefs and arising from them*) is not the enemy of living faith, but its necessary intellectual support and navigation system. It turns faith from a vague feeling or blind following of tradition into a conscious, responsible, and adult path of knowing the Truth, who is a Person — Christ.

## **B.**

# **STRUCTURE**

## **OF THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH»**

When analyzing the logical structure of the «Pyramid of Faith», it is useful to distinguish the following elements:

- The Seed of Gracious Faith
- The Dyad of Social and Personal Faith
- The Dyad of Emotional and Cognitive Faith
- The Foundation of Material Forms of Faith: The Cross and the Square
- The Pyramid of Salvific Faith
- The Pillar of Salvific Faith
- The Circle of Integral Faith

When analyzing the structure of the «Pyramid of Faith», it is important to understand that:

- In the structure of the «Pyramid of Faith», types of faith do not exclude each other and can both complement each other (e.g., emotional reinforcement of scientific convictions or inclusion of material convictions into integral faith) and conflict (e.g., emotional faith vs. cognitive criticism, material faith vs. Gracious faith);
- Through the inclusion and interconnection of its elements, the «Pyramid of Faith» shows that living faith is not static but includes all aspects of the whole person — from external to internal, from collective to personal, from irrational to rational to supernatural, from personal and collective to gracious gifts.

# B.1.

## THE SEED OF GRACIOUS FAITH

MIRACULOUS FAITH



The seed of Gracious faith (*seed of Gracious faith*) is the spiritual summit and essential core of the entire construction of the «Pyramid of Faith», understood as a gift of divine grace and mercy, as the supernatural action of God in man, as faith transcending natural laws, personal experience, and rational understanding.

Gracious faith is a «seed» because, on the one hand, it grows from all underlying levels, and on the other — it contains the potential for transforming a person's entire life, being the point of direct contact between the human spirit and the Divine.

Gracious faith is not simply the top level of the «Pyramid of Faith», but the metaphysical and psychological center of the entire model, which can be

understood through three interconnected aspects — through its essential core, paradoxical nature, and transformative function:

### **B.1.1.**

#### **The Essential Core of Gracious Faith: The Gift of the Encounter between Human Nature and the Divine Spirit**

*A gift of grace and mercy, not the result of effort.* Gracious faith is not the logical outcome of personal development that can be achieved simply by «pumping up» the lower levels of the pyramid. It is a gift (charisma), given from above by God's grace and mercy. The lower levels (material, social, cognitive) are the preparation of the soil, the aspiration, the cry of the human heart. But the «seed» itself is graciously and mercifully given from above as an answer to these human efforts, not as their result.

*Supernatural action in the human heart.* This means that the source and energy of a person's confidence in constant divine help and constant divine presence is outside the human psyche. It manifests as confidence, strength, or knowledge that surpasses all available data, logical conclusions, and emotional resources of a person. For example, inexplicable, unshakable peaceful hope in an objectively catastrophic situation, leading ultimately to an actual Gracious resolution of a real practical situation.

*The point of contact between the divine and the human.* Here the model transitions from the plane of psychology into the realm of the divine. This is the moment when the personal structure («Pyramid of Faith») becomes permeable to Divine Action and the Divine Spirit. It is not that man «has» such faith, but that he is encompassed by it, as a result of which human nature and destiny encounter the Spirit and are Graciously transformed and healed by Him.

## B.1.2.

### **The Seed of Gracious Faith: The Paradoxical Result and Source of Spiritual Growth**

The «seed» is the central ontological metaphor, revealing the dialectic of the spiritual process embedded in the foundation of the concept of «Gracious faith».

On the one hand, Gracious faith grows from the underlying levels. The «soil» must be prepared. Without material embodiment (practices, rituals) there is no anchor for the spirit. Without social context (community, tradition) faith becomes subjective fantasy. Without emotional thirst and cognitive search there is no ardor and direction. Without personal choice and responsibility there is no personal encounter. All these levels are a necessary condition, a vessel ready to receive the gift.

On the other hand, Gracious faith contains the potential for transforming the entire life. A seed must sprout in the soil. Here the «seed» is not the result, but the cause and beginning of new life, a dynamically unfolding process. The received gift of Gracious faith begins to descend down the pyramid, radically transforming all its levels:

- *Social and Personal faith are transformed.* Personal choice becomes not an agony, but joyful self-surrender; relationships in the community are filled with genuine love, not formality.
- *Emotional and Cognitive faith are transformed.* Knowledge becomes living experience, and emotions become rooted in reality, not in mood.
- *As a result, all Material faith is transformed.* All physical actions and objects become not routine, but sacraments and conduits of grace.

In other words, the seed of Gracious faith has a paradoxical nature: it is simultaneously the culmination of the human path (the summit of the pyramid) and the inception of God's action in man (the beginning of new life), both the finish line of ascent and the starting point of the descent of grace.

### B.1.3.

#### **Gracious Faith Transcending Laws: The Living Transformation of the Heart and Life**

How does Gracious faith manifest practically? Primarily through various living forms of transformation of the heart and human life:

- **Transcending natural laws.** This is not a magical change of physics, but a divine change of reality. A person gains internal and external freedom from the dictate of circumstances, receives Gracious healing, salvation, and forgiveness.
- **Transcending personal experience.** Faith continues to live and bear fruit even when all accumulated life experience speaks of the impossibility of divine intervention. It is based not on past statistics, but on trust in a Person, leading to Gracious transformations of life and thinking.
- **Transcending rational understanding.** Reason is not denied but acknowledges its limits. A person is able to say: «I do not understand how or why, but I believe, and I know Whom». This is an act of free will and trust, not an intellectual conclusion. Following intellectual capitulation comes an inexplicable grace in life.

Thus, the seed of Gracious faith transforms a person's heart and life, not by their own efforts, but as a result of the gracious union of personal human efforts with divine mercy.

### B.1.4.

#### **Gracious Faith as an Experience of Contact between the Human and the Divine**

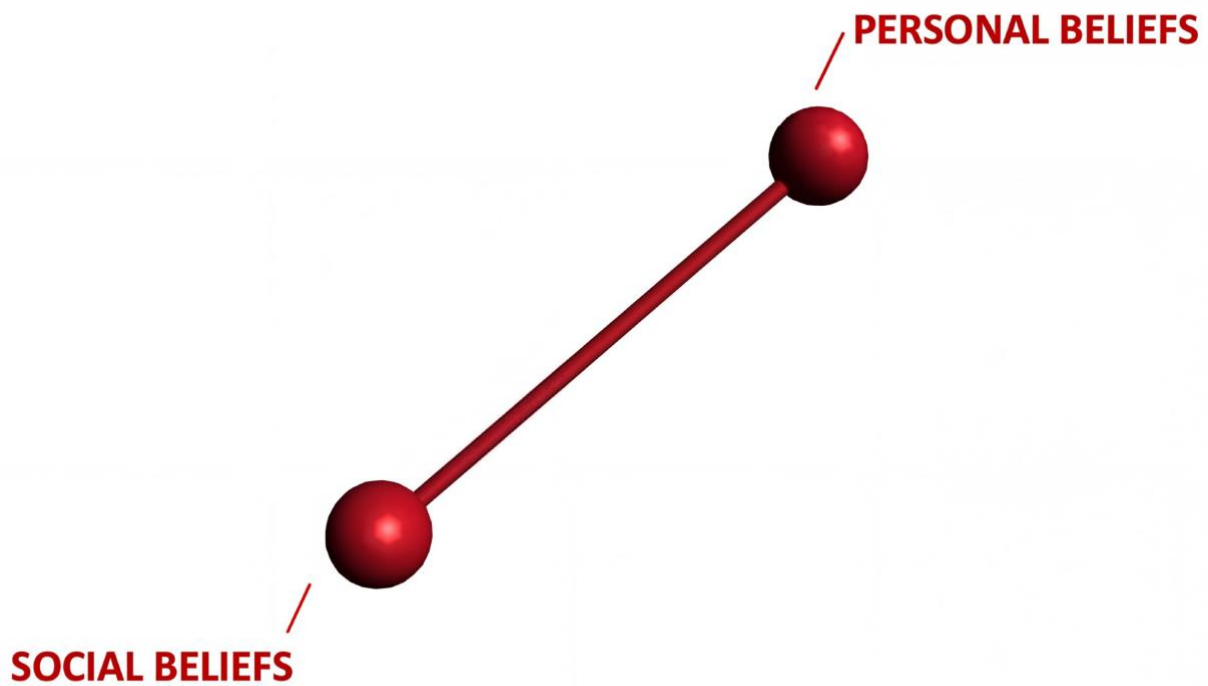
The «seed of Gracious faith» is the point where psychology (the science of psychic processes) ends and pneumatology (the teaching on the action of the Spirit) begins.

In the model of the logical pyramid, the «seed of Gracious faith» performs a key function: it is the theological answer to the human hierarchy of needs and efforts. If the entire pyramid from bottom to top is humanity's cry: «I believe, Lord! Help my unbelief!», then the «seed of Gracious faith» is the gracious and merciful answer from heaven: «My grace is sufficient for you» (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thus, without this «seed», the pyramid of Gracious faith would remain merely a humanistic model of self-development. With it, it becomes a dynamic map of the redeemed human person, in which human striving and Divine grace meet, giving rise to a whole, transforming, healing person.

## B.2.

# THE DYAD OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL FAITH



This is the first fundamental «edge» of the material cross, forming the base of the logical pyramid of faith. It describes the dynamic tension and inseparable connection between faith given to a person from without (as heritage and a gift of the community) and faith born within (as a personal response and choice).

## B.2.1.

### Social Faith:

#### The External Framework of the Believing Person and Collective Identity

Social faith is faith as heritage, tradition, and a space of belonging:

- **Function.** Social faith acts as the «external framework», providing the person with the language of faith, a system of symbols, models of behavior (liturgy, prayers, moral norms), and a sense of belonging to a greater whole — the people of God.
- **Sources.** This faith is transmitted through family, church community, culture, religious education. It answers the basic human need for roots and belonging.
- **Risk.** At this level, faith can remain purely external, formal, «faith out of habit», or under pressure from the surroundings.
- **Key dynamic.** Social faith «constantly flows into personal faith». This means that social forms of faith are not a prison for the personality. They offer themselves as material for interiorization. A prayer learned in childhood can become the basis for a personal, heartfelt prayer. A dogma accepted on faith from authorities can become the subject of deep personal reflection and acceptance. A ritual can be filled with individual meaning.

## B.2.2.

### Personal Faith:

#### The Internal Core of the Believing Person and Autonomous Choice

Personal faith is faith as personal decision, responsible confession, and unique experience:

- **Function.** It is the «core of personality», the point of internal subjectivity, where a person says «I believe» not because «everyone believes so», but

because this has become their own, suffered-through or joyfully discovered path.

- **Sources.** Personal spiritual search, existential crisis, deep experience of encounter with God, conscious study and acceptance of truths.
- **Risk.** Isolation, subjectivism, retreat into individualistic spirituality, detachment from healthy correction and community support.
- **Key dynamic.** Personal faith «constantly flows into social faith». Genuine personal faith does not remain a hidden possession. It strives for expression, testimony, and service in the social context. Personal mystical experience seeks a language, which it often finds in traditional forms. Personal conviction pushes a person to participate in the life of the community, to serve others, to creatively renew social forms of faith from within. Thus, the living core of the personality revitalizes and renews the «framework» of tradition.

### **B.2.3.**

#### **The Dialectic of the Dyad of Social and Personal Faith: The Axis of Dynamic Equilibrium**

Key ideas of the dyad of social and personal faith:

- Healthy faith exists in a tense and creative equilibrium between the poles of «social faith» and «personal faith». Social faith provides stability, continuity, and the objectivity of Revelation. Personal faith gives this structure life, sincerity, and existential depth.
- Between the social and personal poles there is a constant «flow». Social faith is constantly interiorized, becoming personal. And personal faith, in turn, is expressed and strengthened in the social context. Conflict or harmony between them is an important driver of spiritual growth.

The dyad of social and personal faith is a dynamic process:

- It is precisely in this dyad, at the junction of «I» and «we», that the primary crystallization of faith as a conscious position of a person in the world occurs. This is the layer where the «soil» is prepared for receiving the gift from above: the community prays for the person and supports them, and the person makes their free step towards God.
- And then, having received the grace of Gracious faith, the person returns to the social context already transformed, to serve others with their renewed life and nourish the community itself — closing and enriching the cycle of spiritual dynamics.

#### B.2.4.

### The Role of the Dyad of Social and Personal Faith in the Life of a Christian

The dyad of social and personal faith reflects the dialectic of «we» and «I» in spiritual life:

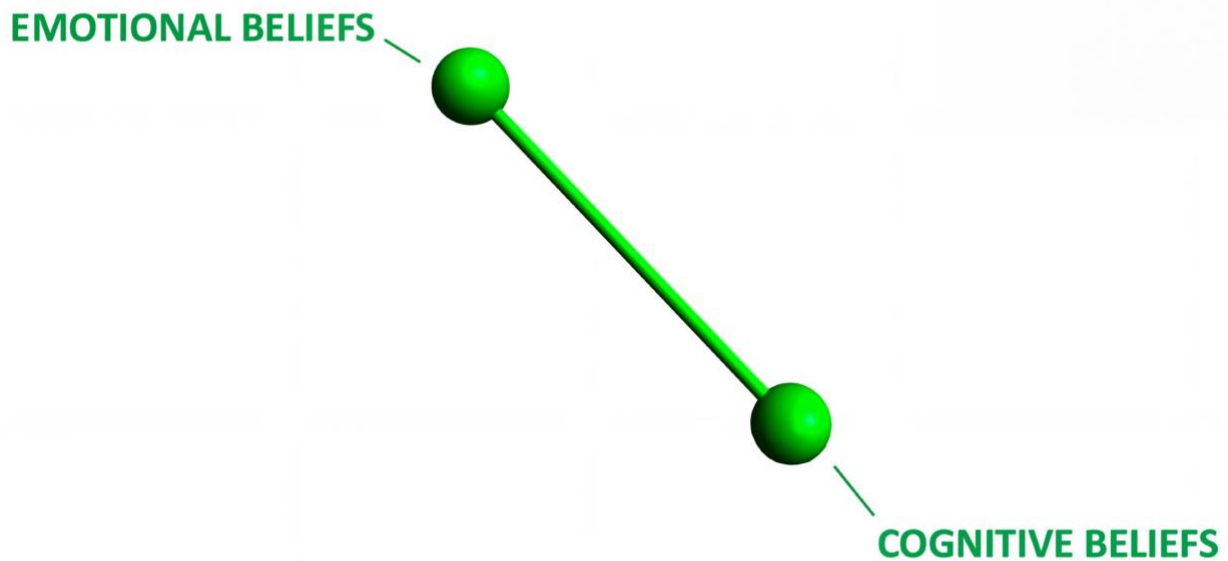
- **Social faith (*seeded by social beliefs and transforming them*).** This is the external framework, the collective context. It is faith formed by society, the church community, traditions, culture. It provides the framework of identity, a language for expressing faith, and a support system.
- **Personal faith (*seeded by personal beliefs and transforming them*).** This is the internal core, the personal pole. These are deeply individual convictions, choice, responsibility, and unique experience of relationship with God.

This «edge» of the material cross of faith is not a static boundary, but a channel of living exchange between the believing person and society:

- Without the social, personal faith risks becoming an ungrounded fantasy, lacking testing, continuity, and the fruit of service.
- Without the personal, social faith degenerates into dead ritualism, hypocrisy, or collective fanaticism.

### B.3.

## THE DYAD OF EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE FAITH



This is the second fundamental «edge» of the material cross, forming the base of the logical pyramid of faith. If the first edge (social/personal) describes the connection of the person with society, this edge (emotional/cognitive) describes the internal world of the person — the interaction between their heart and mind, establishing the dialectic of feeling and thought in the spiritual life of the believing individual.

**B.3.1.**  
**Emotional Faith:**  
**Faith Rooted in**  
**Stable States of the Heart**

Emotional faith is faith as a stable deep feeling, affective attachment, and intuitive heart knowledge; it is faith as the experience of love, fear, hope, peace:

- **Function.** Emotional faith is responsible for the «energetic» and motivational charge of faith. It is the force that turns an abstract idea into a passionate striving, a cold truth into an object of love or reverent fear. Emotional faith is the «fire in the heart», giving the believer joy, consolation, boldness, as well as healthy «fear and trembling».
- **Sources.** The source of emotional faith is experiences of God's presence (e.g., during prayer, worship, contemplation of nature), the experience of a Gracious answer to prayer, deep empathy with the sufferings of Christ or the joy of the Resurrection. Also formed through aesthetic perception (icon, music, architecture).
- **Risk.** Emotional faith can become unstable, dependent on momentary mood, leading to exaltation or, conversely, to despondency in the absence of expected experiences. It can degenerate into a «religion of feelings», where the main criterion is «it feels good/inspiring».
- **Key dynamic.** Emotional faith «constantly flows into cognitive states». Emotions do not remain in isolation. A strong feeling of gratitude to God prompts studying Scripture to better know His character. Experiencing God's holiness motivates cognitive search for understanding His will. Thus, emotion becomes an engine of knowledge, filling intellectual truths with vital force.

**B.3.2.**  
**Cognitive Faith:**  
**Faith Rooted in**  
**Stable States of the Mind**

Cognitive faith is faith as rational comprehension, intellectual agreement with doctrines, and systematic work of the mind on truth, expressed in knowledge and understanding:

- **Function.** Cognitive faith is responsible for the substantive, structural, and protective side of faith. This is the «map of the terrain», giving faith clarity, consistency, and protection from delusions. Cognitive faith allows one to understand what and why one believes. It is based on the study of Sacred Scripture, theology, church tradition, on apologetic practice (defense of faith).
- **Sources.** Sources of cognitive faith are personal empirical experiences, systematic learning and reflection, reading, personally pondered preaching, thoughtful theological discussion, rational study of Church history.
- **Risk.** Cognitive faith can become dry, lifeless scholasticism, a set of abstract dogmas detached from the life of the heart — leading to Pharisaism, intellectual pride, or cold formalism.
- **Key dynamic.** Cognitive faith «constantly flows into emotional states». Intellectual understanding of the truths of faith forms and ennobles emotions. Awareness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (a cognitive act) generates responsive love, gratitude, and contrition of heart (an emotional response). Understanding God's faithfulness and sovereignty (knowledge) provides a basis for deep inner peace (feeling) even in a storm. Reason structures and directs emotions, preventing them from descending into chaos.

### **B.3.3.**

#### **The Dialectic of the Dyad of Emotional and Cognitive Faith: The Integration of Heart and Mind**

This edge of the cross of material faith is the axis of the internal integrity of the believing person:

- Without the emotional component, cognitive faith becomes spiritually barren, incapable of transforming life. «Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up» (1 Cor. 8:1).
- Without the cognitive component, emotional faith becomes blind and unstable, easily led astray. «Love the Lord... with all your heart... and with all your mind» (Matt. 22:37).

Emotional and cognitive faith are in constant synergy. Healthy faith requires the synergy of mind and heart. Emotional faith without knowledge is like a ship without a rudder and map. Cognitive faith without feeling is like a map without a traveler longing for a journey. The integral success in the contest the believing person achieves only by attaining synergy of faith in their feeling and reason.

### **B.3.4.**

#### **The Role of the Dyad of Emotional and Cognitive Faith in Spiritual Growth and Preparation for Grace**

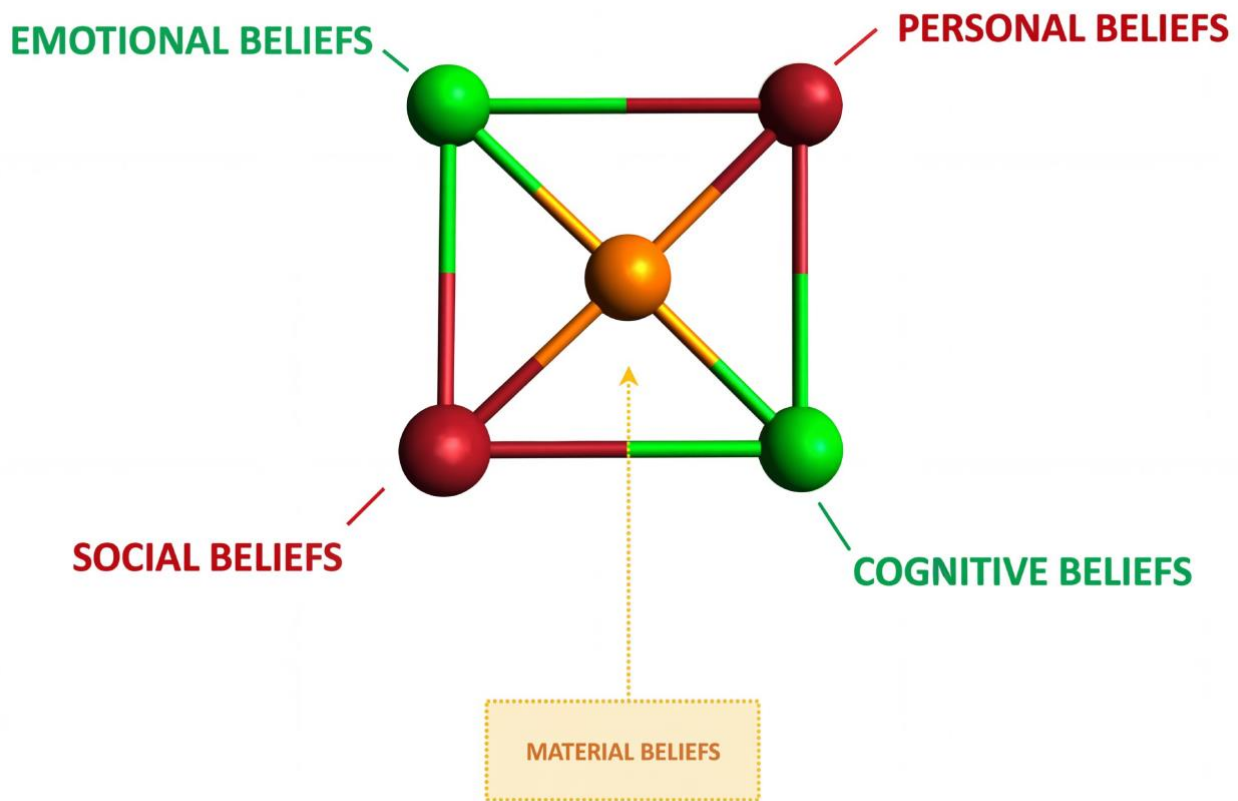
The key idea of the dyad of emotional and cognitive faith: «Reason and feelings are in constant dynamics». On one hand, emotions fuel and animate cognitive constructs (e.g., love for God deepens the desire to study Scripture). Intellectual understanding, in turn, forms and directs emotions (e.g., awareness of Christ's sacrifice generates gratitude). Their imbalance leads either to dry rationalism or to the instability of emotionalism.

It is precisely in the dyad of emotional and cognitive faith that the internal processing and assimilation of basic divine truths occurs, preparing a person for an

encounter with Gracious faith, crystallizing the integral internal «landscape» for the change of heart:

- A heart thirsting for God (the emotional pole) creates motivation and openness for an encounter with healing divine grace. When there is love and thirst in the heart, and clear understanding of the foundations in the mind, the personality becomes an integral vessel, capable of receiving the gift of grace, distinguishing the genuine movement of the Spirit from delusion, and then comprehending and expressing the received experience.
- A mind enlightened by truth (the cognitive pole) creates a «grid of coordinates» for recognizing and comprehending God's action, protecting the person from empty self-deception. Thus, the dyad of emotional and cognitive faith forms a kind of «crucible» of internal life, where raw experience and abstract information are transformed into personal, conscious, and living conviction.

## B.4. THE CROSS OF MATERIAL FAITH



This is the foundation and material base of the logical pyramid of faith, the point where faith ceases to be merely an internal conviction or social phenomenon and acquires dense, tangible reality in a person's daily life. Here, the «Material Cross of Faith» is formed by the intersection of the two previously described dyads, creating a stable field for the embodiment of faith due to the fact that this cross is inscribed within a square.

#### B.4.1.

### The Structure of the Cross of Faith: The Intersection of Two Axes

At the base of the logical pyramid of faith lies a dynamic construct in the form of a cross, where each axis represents a dialectical unity:

- **First axis (*social/personal faith*):** the socio-psychological aspect. This is the dimension of a person's connection with others and with themselves. It answers the questions: «How does my faith manifest in communication? How does personal choice relate to the tradition of the community?»
- **Second axis (*emotional/cognitive*):** the emotional-cognitive aspect. This is the dimension of a person's internal life. It answers the questions: «What do I feel towards my faith? How do I understand and comprehend it?»
- **Material faith (*material faith*)** arises precisely at the point of intersection of these two axes. This is not simply the «lowest level», but a synthesis, the result of the living interaction of all four basic components (Social, Personal, Emotional, Cognitive).

#### B.4.2.

### The Essence of the Cross of Faith: Embodied Conviction

Material faith is faith in action, become habit, deed, and practice. This is the form of faith that can be seen, recorded, and taught.

*Basic Dyads — the «cross of material faith» (diagonals in the square of the material faith foundation):*

- **Social + Personal:** Conciliar confession and personal repentance. The external act of confession before a priest in the presence of the community (Social) is the form for a deeply personal, internal act of repentance and receiving forgiveness (Personal). Or: a personal decision to marry (Personal),

performed as a church sacrament strengthening the family as a small church (Social).

- **Emotional + Cognitive:** Studying the Gospel or spiritual literature. Intellectual comprehension of the meaning of a parable or dogma (Cognitive) evokes a personal feeling of tenderness, consolation, or resolve to change life (Emotional). Or: the emotional experience of the beauty of an icon or chant (Emotional) leads to a desire to cognitively understand their theological symbolism and history (Cognitive).

*Additional Dyads — the «square of material faith» (the square built upon the cross of material faith as a base):*

- **Social + Emotional:** Participation in joint prayer or liturgy, where the common ritual (social) evokes and expresses a personal feeling of reverence (emotional).
- **Social + Cognitive:** Observing the fast or ethical norms of the community (social), based on personal understanding of their spiritual meaning (cognitive).
- **Personal + Emotional:** Personal, sincere prayer (personal), born from a feeling of gratitude or repentance (emotional).
- **Personal + Cognitive:** A conscious, rational decision to live by the commandments (cognitive), despite possible social pressure (personal choice).

*Material «conductors» of faith:*

- These are concrete objects and actions: a Bible for reading, an icon for prayer, a candle as a symbol of light, almsgiving as an act of mercy, attending a service, the sign of the cross.
- They are the embodiment, materialization of internal convictions and social norms, and depend both on personal choice and social norms, on current emotional state, and on the current level of knowledge of the believing individual.

### B.4.3.

#### **The Function of the Cross of Faith: Emotional Stability and Reality Testing**

The cross of material forms performs key functions:

- **Function of stability.** Just as a cross is a stable geometric figure, so this level gives faith stability and steadfastness in a changing world. Regular practices (prayer rule, participation in sacraments) create a spiritual «rhythm» and «framework» for life.
- **Function of reality testing.** Here faith passes the test of authenticity. It is easy to declare faith (cognitively) or experience inspiration (emotionally). But material faith is the price a person is willing to pay for their faith daily: time, effort, resources, conveniences. The daily labor for the sake of faith allows us to understand whether our faith is truly as strong as it seems.

### B.4.4.

#### **The Cross of Faith as «Prepared Soil» for the «Seed of Gracious Faith»**

Material forms of faith are the «training ground» where, through repeated material actions (prayer, fasting, mercy), a person cultivates the corresponding internal qualities (humility, temperance, love).

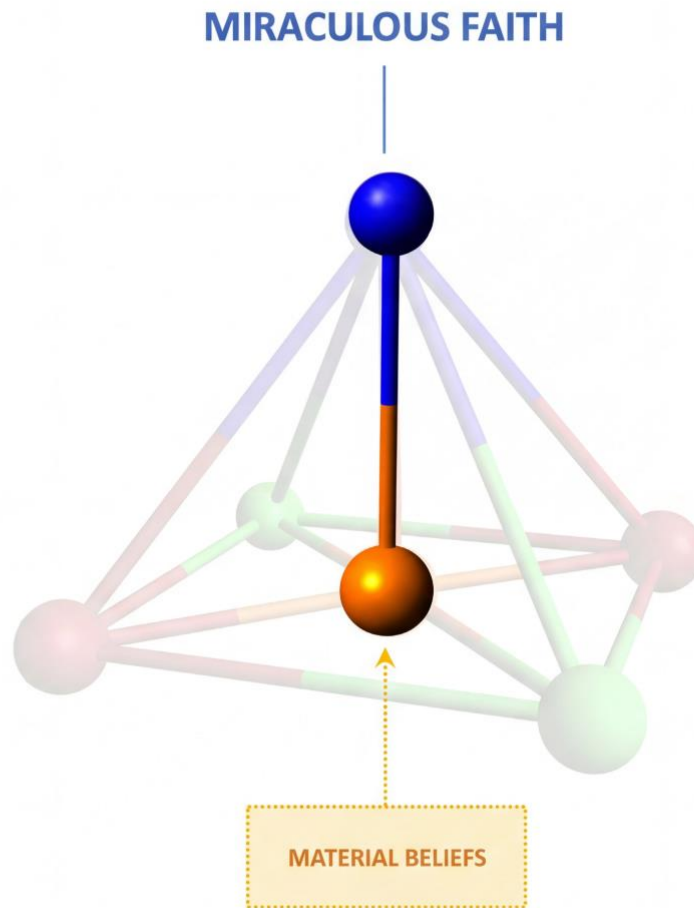
It is precisely on this foundation of the «cross of material forms of faith», in a healthy balance of social and personal, emotions and reason, embodied in concrete practices, that the soil is prepared for receiving the «seed» of Gracious faith.

The social context supports and directs, personal responsibility makes faith genuine, emotions give it vital force, reason provides sobriety and understanding, and daily practice creates the ways through which the grace of Gracious faith can pour into daily life and transform a person's life.

*Conclusions on the cross of material forms of faith:*

- The cross of material forms of faith is not a primitive, but a basic level of faith, the soil for the seed of Gracious faith: it is the workshop where the seed of the spirit and Gracious faith are «cultivated by the actions of human hands».
- Without personal labor and without this solid embodied foundation, reflected in the cross of material forms of faith, the highest level of the logical pyramid of faith (Gracious faith) risks hanging in the air, becoming a speculative theory. For only in daily practical life does faith acquire material density and become embodied in tangible reality, as it is said: «Faith without works is dead» (James 2:26).

## B.5. THE PILLAR OF SALVIFIC FAITH



This is the central supporting axis that permeates the entire pyramid from base to summit, giving it stability, meaning, and direction. If the pyramid of faith shows structure and dynamics, the pillar of faith reveals the main principle on which everything rests: the inseparable connection between human effort and Divine gift, between the earthly world and heavenly grace.

### B.5.1.

#### **The Essence of the Pillar of Faith: The Vertical Axis of the Encounter between Man and God**

The pillar of faith is the fundamental vertical connecting two fundamental poles of faith's existence:

- **Lower pole (material / earthly faith).** The entire totality of embodied human experience — practice, community, personal choice, emotions, reason. This is «I give what I have» — everything a person can bring to God from themselves.
- **Upper pole (Gracious / heavenly faith).** The action of grace, the supernatural intrusion of God into human life. This is «I receive what I cannot have myself» — a gift surpassing human possibilities.
- **The pillar shows** that the poles of earthly and heavenly faith are not opposed, but inseparably connected, as two parts of a single whole.

### B.5.2.

#### **The Function of the Pillar of Faith: The Support and Dialogue between Man and God**

In the logical architecture of the pyramid of faith, the pillar of faith performs the following key functions:

- **Supporting pillar, ensuring stability.** The pillar of faith provides vertical stability to the entire construction of the pyramid of faith. This means that, being composed of separate elements, living faith nevertheless does not disintegrate into separate experiences and Christian practices. Everything is held together by a single axis — the relationship between man and God. Without this axis, the pyramid of faith would crumble into a set of psychological techniques (material pole) or be reduced to mystical reveries (Gracious pole).

- **Dialogue between man and God (man's call to God and the responsive descent of grace).** The pillar is the path of two-way movement:
  - **Bottom-up (anabasis):** Along this channel rises human striving, prayer, labor, the cry of the heart — everything that is preparation and request.
  - **Top-down (katabasis):** Along this same channel descends Divine grace, answer, strength, healing, peace — everything that is gift and response.

### B.5.3.

#### **The Meaning of the Pillar of Faith: The Bridge of Salvation**

The transfiguration and salvation of the human soul by Gracious faith occurs precisely within the space of this pillar of faith: it is not in human effort alone (then it is self-salvation) and not in divine gift alone without human participation (then it is «mechanistic magic» or coercion).

Transfiguration and salvation of the soul is synergy, a meeting on the bridge:

- **Man builds his side of the bridge** — erects the material foundation of the pyramid, strives to transform his entire earthly being, direct his whole self towards the heavenly divine world, towards God, towards the revelation of the seed of Gracious faith.
- **God completes the bridge with His side** — reveals Himself to man with descending and healing grace, which supplements human weakness, forgives confessed and repented sin, and as a result animates and transforms human nature.

The line connecting these two «constructions», human and divine, is the living, salvific faith constituting the pillar of faith. As it is said: «The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth» (1 Tim. 3:15). In the context of the structure of the believing person's personality, the pillar of

faith is precisely that personal «ground of the truth», that point of unshakable support in faith, which animates life and saves the human soul.

#### **B.5.4.**

### **The Pillar of Faith in Action: The Practice of Spiritual Life**

Practically, the pillar of faith manifests in those moments of spiritual life where the co-operation of man and God is evident, for example:

- **Mental and heartfelt prayer.** A person makes an effort to stand for prayer, gather their mind, find words (material pole), and God in response gives the prayer warmth, tenderness, an answer in the heart or circumstances (Gracious pole).
- **Humility of passions.** A person resists a passion, using asceticism, sobriety, study of scriptures, and community counsel (material pole), and God grants unexpected help, weakening of temptation, personal internal strength of heart and mind (Gracious pole).
- **Participation in the sacraments.** A person comes with faith and repentance, performs certain social actions (material pole), and God in response acts in the sacrament invisibly but really, granting grace perceived by the person's heart and mind (Gracious pole).

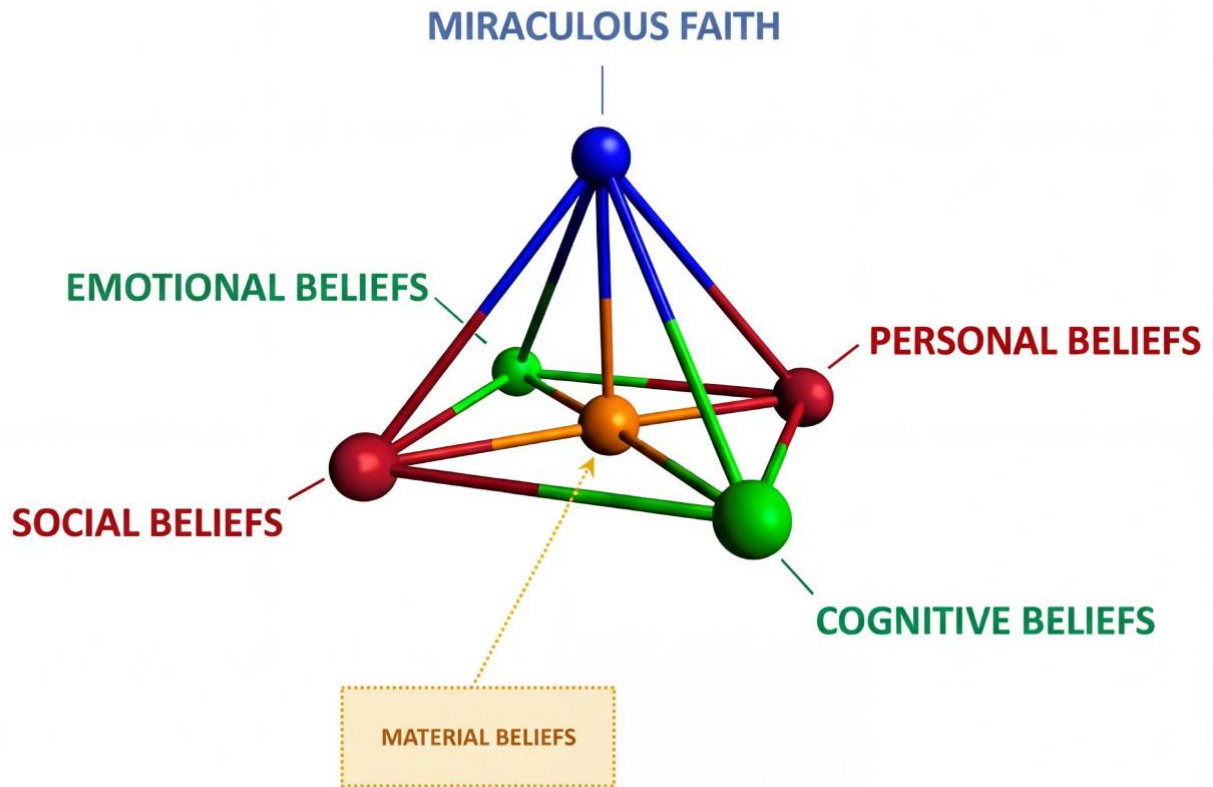
#### *Conclusions on the pillar of faith:*

- The pillar of salvific faith is the ontological principle that makes the pyramid not merely a model of development, but a map of the transformation of the human being and the healing of human life in accordance with God's design.
- The pillar of salvific faith reminds us that all our spiritual work is not a self-sufficient process, but a continuous dialogue with God, reaching upward to Heaven and God, like a prayerful sigh.

- The pillar of salvific faith shows us that our task is to build our side of faith in faithfulness and humility, knowing that its completion and strength come from the Lord, and that He will surely answer.
- The pillar of Gracious faith is a visible expression of the truth that our Lord is the Alpha and Omega of our faith, its Beginning and Completion, reflected in the architecture of the human soul.

## B.6.

# THE PYRAMID OF GRACIOUS FAITH



This is the complete structural logical model in which the previously analyzed elements (the seed of faith, the dyads of faith, the cross/square of faith) cease to be separate components and begin to work as a single, living organism of spiritual growth. The pyramid is not merely the sum of parts, but a synergistic whole, visualizing the path of a person from simple acknowledgment to transforming union.

### B.6.1.

#### **The Unifying Function: Elements as Functions of the System**

The logical pyramid of Gracious faith serves as an integrative framework that:

- **Connects the levels of faith into a hierarchy.** The pyramid of faith clearly shows that faith has its own «anatomy» and «physiology» — from the simplest, basic forms (material behavior) to the most complex (gracious grace).
- **Sets the direction for the development of faith.** The pyramid of faith answers the question «Where to grow?» The goal is not to «pump up» the lower levels, but to become capable, through their development and integration, of receiving and living by the gift of Gracious faith.
- **Makes the process of faith development visual.** The pyramid of faith allows for diagnosing «imbalances» in spiritual life (e.g., excessive emphasis on social ritual with neglect of personal experience, or vice versa).

### B.6.2.

#### **The Vertical Dimension: The Principle of Dialogue between Man and God**

The vertical dimension of the logical pyramid of faith is its main axis of faith, which sets the main trajectory of spiritual effort and preparation:

- **From the material foundation (from the plane on which the pyramid stands).** Everything begins with concrete, repeated actions — prayer, participation in sacraments, works of mercy. This is the school of obedience and embodiment, where faith becomes habit and discipline.
- **Through the synthesis of the dyads (elements of the pyramid's base).** This stage is the school of integrity, where internal and external

conflicts of faith are resolved. Movement upward passes through internal work on harmonizing:

- *Social and Personal* (finding oneself in the community and the community in oneself).
  - *Emotional and Cognitive* (uniting the fire of the heart with the light of reason).
- **To the full revelation of the heavenly, divine seed of Gracious faith (the summit of the pyramid).** The ascent to Gracious faith is crowned not by «personal achievement», but by openness and thirst for the gift of grace, which descends in response to a person's realization of their own powerlessness to achieve Gracious faith independently. This is the moment when the human «I can no more» meets the divine «My grace is sufficient for you». The summit is not the result of our efforts, but the place of meeting with God.

### B.6.3.

#### **The Principle of Unity: The Integrity and Harmony of the Elements of Gracious Faith**

Gracious faith is called «salvific» because it encompasses and transforms the whole person. The structure of the pyramid of faith shows in detail that deficient faith, lacking any of its necessary aspects, cannot be complete:

- Without the *material* — it is disembodied and useless («faith without works is dead»);
- Without the *social* — it becomes individualistic and loses its roots;
- Without the *personal* — it is hypocritical and faceless;
- Without the *emotional* — it is cold and lifeless;
- Without the *cognitive* — it is blind and superstitious;

- Without the *Gracious* — it is limited by the human horizon and strength.

Thus, the salvific nature of Gracious faith is connected to the inclusion of all its elements and its maturity, when all elements of human faith are coordinated and directed towards God.

#### B.6.4.

##### The Dynamic Nature:

##### The Descent of Grace (Anabasis) and the Transfiguration of Life (Katabasis)

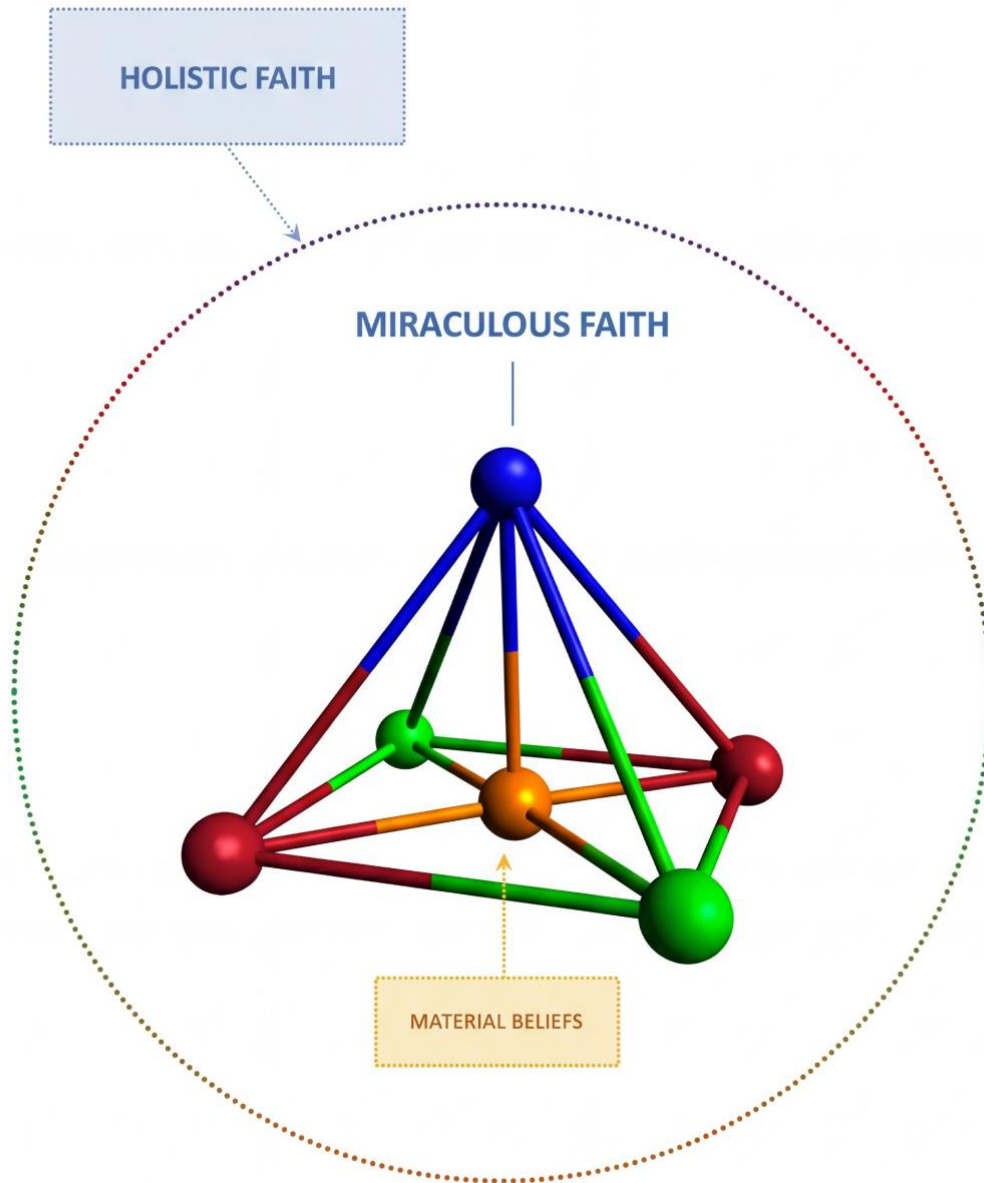
The key dynamic of the pyramid of Gracious faith is bidirectional: it is not only the ascent of man, but also the descent of grace, transforming the entire edifice:

- **Ascent (anabasis):** Human effort in building and harmonizing all levels. This is the preparation of the «vessel».
- **Descent (katabasis):** The gift of Gracious faith, received at the summit, begins to «flow» downward, radically renewing each level:
  - Transforms the inner world (emotions and thoughts).
  - Renews personal and social relationships.
  - Fills material practices with new, living meaning.
  - The received «seed» sprouts, changing the entire soil.

##### *Conclusions on the pyramid of salvific faith:*

- The pyramid of salvific faith is a map of the spiritual formation of an integral personality, showing that salvation is not a one-time act, but a process of healing and transformation of the entire human nature: from bodily habits to the depths of the spirit, accomplished in the synergy of free human effort and all-transforming Divine grace.
- The pyramid of salvific faith is a model of how a person, rooted in practice and community, enlightened by reason and warmed by the heart, becomes capable of containing the impossible — the very life of God.

## B.7. THE CIRCLE OF INTEGRAL FAITH



This is the highest metaphor and the final state of the spiritual path represented by the logical pyramid of faith. If the pyramid of faith shows the structure of spiritual growth and the development of life-giving faith, and the pillar of life-giving faith represents the main principle (the main synergy) of this process of life's rebirth, then the circle of integral faith symbolizes the qualitatively new being of life-giving

faith — its living dynamic wholeness, healing internal harmony, and daily reproduced vitality.

The circle of integral faith is the image of a personality made whole and transfigured by Gracious faith, in which faith has ceased to be a «one-time process of spiritual formation» and has become a whole living form of a person's daily renewed being.

### B.7.1.

#### **Cyclicity and Integration: Integral Faith as Spiritual Breathing**

In the circle of integral faith, we consider Gracious faith not as a one-time ascent from the earthly foundation to heavenly grace, nor as a one-time descent of grace from heaven upon man, but as an endless cycle of mutual transformation between grace and human effort:

- **Descending phase (Grace → Regenerated Life).** The Gracious experience (the summit of the pyramid), received as a gift, does not remain an isolated experience. It descends like rain, watering and transforming all lower levels: it enlightens the mind, pacifies and directs emotions, deepens personal relationship with God, revitalizes social ties in the community, and fills material practices with new meaning.
- **Ascending phase (Regenerated Life → New Grace).** This renewed foundation — now not «rough soil» but fertilized and tilled — becomes the basis for an even deeper and bolder striving towards God. Transfigured practices give rise to purer prayer, an enlightened mind — to more sensitive discernment of God's will, a pacified heart — to greater openness. Thus, the circle is closed: the renewed life of the person becomes a vessel for a new, deeper measure of grace.

Integral faith is spiritual breathing: inhalation — receiving the gift, exhalation — its realization in life; the next, deeper inhalation — and so on ad infinitum. In the circle of faith, Gracious faith becomes not a static «possession», but a living, pulsating exchange with the Heavenly Source of Life.

## B.7.2.

### **Integrity and Completion: The Synergy of the Elements of Integral Faith**

In the circle of integral faith, all previously distinguished elements of living faith lose their logical separateness from each other and enter a state of full and harmonious synergy:

- **The opposition of «top» and «bottom» disappears.** Material behavior (prayer, almsgiving) becomes the immediate, easy, and joyful expression of an inner gracious state. There is no longer a struggle between «must» and «want» — the desire of the heart and the duty of reason coincide.
- **Integration of the horizontal and vertical.** The circle encompasses both the pillar (the vertical axis of communion with God) and the cross (the horizontality of relations with the world and oneself). Internal prayer and external service, personal piety and social witness cease to be different «spheres» and become different facets of a single integral act of life in Christ.
- **A stable living system.** This is a state where faith becomes the immune system of the personality. Conflicts between reason and feeling, personal and social do not disappear, but are resolved within this integrity quickly and organically, as a healthy cell deals with a threat. Faith acquires the property of spiritual inertia — it can no longer be easily shaken by external circumstances.

## B.7.3.

### **The Circle of Integral Faith as Goal and Criterion: The Integrity of Transfiguration and Salvation**

The «circle of integral faith» is precisely the visual description of what is understood as mature, salvific Gracious faith:

- **The goal of the path.** The entire journey along the pyramid is movement from the fragmentation and conflict of human nature to this wholeness

(holism), where God's grace permeates, heals, and unites all levels of human being.

- **The criterion of authenticity.** Faith lacking any of the components of the circle (e.g., only emotional or only ritual) remains deficient, «non-circular», and therefore incapable of sustainable self-reproduction and fullness of life in God. The circle is the tuning fork of fullness, by which one can check the harmony of one's spiritual development.

#### B.7.4.

### **Practical Dimension: What Life Looks Like in the «Circle of Integral Faith»**

This state manifests not in constant ecstasies, but in deep, stable peace and fruitfulness:

- **Naturalness of spiritual life.** Prayer, participation in sacraments, reading Scripture become not «obligatory exercises», but as natural and necessary a need as breathing.
- **Integrity of reactions.** A person responds to life's challenges not fragmentarily (only with emotions or only with calculation), but integrally: their mind, will, feelings, and actions, rooted in trust in God, move harmoniously in one direction.
- **Witness without strain.** Their life itself becomes a non-verbal testimony of Christ, because from within them radiates that very integrity (*integrity*) which attracts and points to Christ.

*Conclusions on the circle of Gracious faith:*

- The circle of integral faith is the model of a «deified» (theosized) personality. Integral faith is the state in which the architecture of the pyramid of faith (its structure), the energy of the pillar of faith (its synergy), and the dynamics of the dyads (particular processes of the development of grace-filled faith) merge into a single, living, and perfect image of the life of the reborn person.

- In the circle of integral faith, a person no longer «builds» their faith; they abide in it. Attaining integral faith, a person themselves becomes that very «circle», where the beginning (the Divine call) and the end (human aspiration) coincide in the eternal, life-giving presence of God, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and whose perfection is the source and image of all integral life.

## **C.**

# **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH»**

The «Pyramid of Faith» can become the theoretical and practical framework for Christian psychology:

- As a structural and integrative meta-model of personality;
- As the basis for diagnostic and therapeutic tools;
- As the basis for a theory of development and crises;
- As the foundation for the practice of Christian psychotherapy.

This is explored in detail below.

## **C.1.**

### **THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH» AS AN INTEGRATIVE META-MODEL OF PERSONALITY**

The «Pyramid of Faith» offers a unified language for describing the human person, overcoming the gap between theological anthropology («spirit-soul-body») and modern psychology (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, social systems).

The pyramid becomes a metaphorical map of the internal world, where:

- The cross of material forms corresponds to behavioral psychology and body-oriented approaches (practices, habits, somatic manifestations of faith/trauma).
- The dyad of social/personal describes the area of social psychology, attachment theory, and existential psychology (identity, belonging, personal choice).

- The dyad of emotional/cognitive corresponds to the sphere of cognitive-affective psychology and rational-emotional therapy (the mutual influence of thoughts and feelings).
- The pillar of faith establishes the vertical dimension, introducing concepts of vocation, responsibility, dialogue, and grace, which are absent in secular models.
- The seed of Gracious faith describes the phenomenology of transcendent experience, radical transformation, and synergy (co-operation of God and man), which is a unique contribution of Christian psychology.

## C.2. THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH» AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

The pyramid can be used in the practice of Christian counseling for problem analysis and building a help strategy.

Level of the Pyramid of Faith	Possible «Dysfunctions» (Psychological/Spiritual Problems)	Corresponding Therapeutic Goals and Methods in Christian Psychology
Seed of Gracious Faith	Spiritual delusion (attributing gifts to oneself), passivity («let God do everything»), disappointment from the absence of a grace.	Discernment of spirits, help in acknowledging one's own weakness and forming active openness to the gift, focusing not on «receiving a grace» but on trust in the Person of Christ.

Level of the Pyramid of Faith	Possible «Dysfunctions» (Psychological/Spiritual Problems)	Corresponding Therapeutic Goals and Methods in Christian Psychology
<b>Dyad: Social / Personal Faith</b>	<p><b>Social imbalance:</b> Pharisaism, dependence on community opinion, fear of judgment.</p> <p><b>Personal imbalance:</b> spiritual individualism, pride, detachment from tradition.</p>	<p>Harmonization through: work with projections onto God and the community, techniques for establishing healthy boundaries, working through family scenarios in faith, practices of responsible personal choice within the community.</p>
<b>Dyad: Emotional / Cognitive Faith</b>	<p><b>Emotional imbalance:</b> religious exaltation, depression as «loss of feelings», dependence on «spiritual experiences».</p> <p><b>Cognitive imbalance:</b> scholastic dryness, rigidity of dogmas, intellectual pride.</p>	<p>Integration through: keeping a diary of feelings and thoughts before God, cognitive restructuring of irrational beliefs about God («God will punish me»), meditative reading of Scripture (<i>Lectio Divina</i>) to unite mind and heart.</p>
<b>Cross of Material Faith</b>	<p>Ritualism without meaning, «magical» attitude towards</p>	<p>Introducing conscious practices (conscious prayer, gratitude journal), bodily practices (work with</p>

Level of the Pyramid of Faith	Possible «Dysfunctions» (Psychological/Spiritual Problems)	Corresponding Therapeutic Goals and Methods in Christian Psychology
	sacraments, psychosomatic symptoms, avoidant behavior.	breathing in prayer), behavioral experiments (taking a concrete step of love).
Pillar of Faith	Faith as duty/guilt, feeling of «deaf heaven», existential crisis, feeling of abandonment by God.	Work with inner striving towards God, practices of contemplative prayer and «pauses» for listening, the practice of beholding God, keeping a dialogue with God in a diary (writing one's own words and «answers» through Scripture, thoughts, events).
Pyramid of Faith (Systemic, Architectural Level)	Systemic rupture or conflict between levels (e.g., high spiritual experiences with complete failure in social relationships; or impeccable ritual with internal existential emptiness). Lack of dynamics of «ascent» and «descent» — faith as a static, lifeless construct.	<p><b>Systemic integration and harmonization through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structural analysis:</b> Helping the client map their current state across all levels of the pyramid to visualize imbalances.</li> <li>• <b>Restoring connections:</b> Targeted work on the most weakened connections between levels — e.g., through practices combining material and spiritual — «prayer with the body»;</li> </ul>

Level of the Pyramid of Faith	Possible «Dysfunctions» (Psychological/Spiritual Problems)	Corresponding Therapeutic Goals and Methods in Christian Psychology
	<p>Inability to see a particular problem in the context of the holistic system of personality.</p>	<p>or through discussion of how personal experience (personal) can be expressed in the community (social).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initiating healthy dynamics:</b> Using resources from a strong level to reinforce a weak one (e.g., relying on developed intellect (cognitive) to understand and order turbulent emotions (emotional) in a crisis).</li> <li>• <b>Meta-awareness:</b> Forming in the client the ability to see their spiritual life as a holistic developing system, where difficulties on one level logically affect others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Circle of Integral Faith (Integrative, Synthetic Level)</b></p>	<p>Self-sufficiency of achieved «integrity» (feeling of «finish line», loss of growth dynamics), formalization of spiritual experience («debugged system» instead of living dialogue), unconscious resistance to new</p>	<p><b>Revitalizing integrity through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing elements of new, unpredictable spiritual experience (pilgrimage, new service, deepening in asceticism).</li> <li>• Practices of «grateful wonder» — shifting focus from «I in faith» to contemplating the ineffable mystery of God.</li> </ul>

Level of the Pyramid of Faith	Possible «Dysfunctions» (Psychological/Spiritual Problems)	Corresponding Therapeutic Goals and Methods in Christian Psychology
	challenges of grace that might disrupt the comfortable balance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service as giving of integrity — mentorship, spiritual accompaniment of others, where one's own faith is constantly tested and renewed in dialogue.</li> <li>• Conscious acceptance of «blessed restlessness» as a call to a new cycle of growth.</li> </ul>

### C.3.

## THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH» IN THE THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT AND CRISES

Spiritual-psychological development can be described as the process of integrating the levels of the pyramid and growth along the pillar of faith — from external, socially conditioned faith to mature, integral, and personal communion with God.

Crisis of faith (doubts, despondency, disappointment in the community) cease to be catastrophes and are seen as symptoms of imbalance or transition between the levels of the Pyramid. For example, an existential crisis can be a painful but necessary stage of transition from «social faith» to «personal faith».

## C.4.

# THE «PYRAMID OF FAITH» IN PSYCHOTHERAPY AND COUNSELING

The structure of the «Pyramid of Faith» establishes the following principles for therapy:

- **Holism (integrity):** Genuine healing requires attention to all levels of the pyramid, not just symptoms. To treat anxiety (emotion), one must work with catastrophic thoughts about the future (cognitions), the absence of peace practices (material level), and disturbed trust in God (pillar of faith).
- **Dynamics of synergy:** The psychologist's task is to help the client «prepare the soil» (work through conflicts in the dyads, strengthen the material foundation through practices) so that the «seed» of grace can act in their life. The psychologist works in the horizontal plane, helping to clear space for the vertical action of God.
- **Goal — The Circle of Integrity:** The outcome of the process is not mere adaptation, but the achievement of greater internal consistency (*integrity*), where faith becomes not a source of tension, but a resource integrating all aspects of personality.

### **Concluding theoretical insight:**

The «Pyramid of Faith» provides Christian psychology with a powerful heuristic and hermeneutic tool. It allows:

- Translating theological categories (sin, grace, repentance, humility) into the language of psychological processes (dysfunctional schemas, resource states, cognitive distortions, emotional regulation).
- Explaining how spiritual practices have a psychotherapeutic effect (fasting teaches self-regulation, confession provides catharsis and integration of «shadow» aspects, prayer changes neural pathways).

- Creating unique Christian interventions that do not copy secular methods, but grow from a holistic understanding of the human person as a being destined for dialogue with God.

Thus, the proposed model of the «Pyramid of Faith» helps transform Christian psychology from a simple application of Christian ethics to psychological practice into an independent, systematic theory of personality and its healing in the perspective of deification (theosis).

# CONCLUSION

## AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed model of the «Pyramid of Faith» is a theoretical attempt at a structural and dynamic cartography of the spiritual life of a believing person, which shows:

- **The structure of Gracious faith:** »Of what components does living human faith consist?«
- **The dynamics of Gracious faith:** »How do these components interact and flow into one another?«
- **The direction of growth of living Gracious faith:** from external and material — to internal and spiritual.
- **The condition for the integrity of living faith:** the necessity of developing all aspects without imbalances (e.g., only social ritualism or only emotional experiences).
- **The goal of spiritual development in living faith:** Achieving the «circle of integral faith», where the gracious action of God («Gracious faith») is inseparably and harmoniously connected with the entire fullness of the human being, day by day life-givingly transforming the person's life.

As already indicated in the first sections of this work, the «Pyramid of Faith» can become the theoretical and practical framework for Christian psychology:

- As a structural and integrative meta-model of personality;
- As the basis for diagnostic and therapeutic tools;
- As the basis for a theory of development and crises;
- As the foundation for Christian psychotherapy.

Let us hope that the proposed logical model of the «Pyramid of Faith» will serve not only to improve the spiritual and theoretical understanding of Christian psychology regarding the structure and development of living Gracious faith, but

also for realizing the paths of our actual Christian transformation, helping believing Christians consciously cultivate the soil of their hearts, and for pastors, Christian psychologists, and educators to become a practical tool for accompanying a person on the path to living wholeness in Christ.