

FASTING, BAPTISM AND ESCHATOLOGY IN THE DIDACHE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

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Introduction

The study of the early Christian texts brings to light beliefs and perceptions that derive from the New Testament years and at the same time highlights aspects of the life of the early Christian community. The contact with these texts is therefore of great importance because they serve as a link with the era of the New Testament and reveal to us how the early Christians behaved in matters of faith, ministry and pastoral care. Most importantly, however, they show the evolution of orthodox doctrine which is the completion and increase of truth and the illumination of the Paraclete that will lead to all truth.¹ It is therefore interesting to see from these sources, and without the Orthodox doctrine having received its full formation, the faith of the early Christians on issues of Trinitarianism, Christology, Ecclesiology.

Most of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers were written either by named or anonymous authors. The named ones, who are called Apostolic Fathers, are considered, and are obviously, successors and continuators to the work of the Apostles. These are Clement of Rome, Ignatius Theophore and Polycarp of Smyrna. However, the textual tradition of the Apostolic Fathers also includes a text from an unknown author, the Didache of the Apostles, which is included and examined together with the other texts of the Apostolic Fathers because “[...] it is an excellent source of news about the regime of

¹ Jn 16,13.

the early Christian Church, reflects the believers' ethical beliefs and [...] provides crucial information about the liturgical practice of the ancient Church".²

In this regard, we will deal here with the Didache of the Twelve Apostles as part of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. With the Didache we don't really have something new. It presents the meanings briefly and clearly. This is because it is in fact stating things that are true and known. The text reveals a Church with a broader orientation, but also with a very strong Jewish heritage in its Tradition. Here we would like to note the view of J. M. Creed, who observes: "The Didache apparently illuminates the process of transition, but even if we had no Didache we should still know that the transition had actually occurred. In the Didache the Apostles, though they still stand at the head, seem to be fading out".³ The Didache is divided into two different parts with a loose connection. The first one (1-6) mainly includes the Christianized doctrine of the two ways (life and death). The second one includes instructions on baptism, fasting and the Eucharist (7-10), as well as instructions (11-15) on how the faithful can distinguish true prophets from false prophets. Chap. 17 deals with the end times that are approaching.

In this context we will focus on specific issues as they are set forth in the Didache, especially the issues of fasting, baptism and the Last Days. The order of the material will follow the following sequence: In the first chapter we will talk about fasting and the issues surrounding it, such as the days when fasting should be practiced, as well as the importance of fasting in the life of the Church from the early Christian community to the present day. The second chapter will expose and examine the importance and manner of Baptism with special reference to the other practices used in case of

² Nikolaidēs N., *Αποστολικοί Πατέρες*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica 2002, 13.

³ Creed J.M., *The Didache*, *Journal of theological studies*, vol. 39, 1938, 386.

emergency, as preserved in the text of the Didache. Finally, chapter three will make special reference to the last days as presented in the Didache. We will therefore focus specifically on eschatology in relation to Christology, Trinitarianism and Ecclesiology, since none of the chapters of the doctrinal theology of the Church is examined in isolation, but as a relation to the others. In the following, we will discuss the importance of eschatology for the Christian faith, which is illuminated by the expectation of the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of the Lord.

Fasting as an Exercise in Abstinence and a Pathway to a Heavenly Life

a. The virtue of fasting in the teaching of the Church

In chapter 7 of the Didache of the Twelve Apostles, an exhortation is given to the one who is to be baptized, his godparent and anyone else who is able to fast. It is even specified that it is good “the baptized has to fast a day or two beforehand”.⁴ The above exhortation becomes even more important, since, as will be seen later in the text, the author connects fasting with the Sunday Prayer.⁵ The importance of fasting for the Church from the earliest Christian years is obvious. Fasting is a great virtue for the Christian. Gregory of Nyssa calls it the ‘foundation of virtue’.⁶ Indeed, fasting is a fundamental virtue and this is because through fasting the Christian cultivates humility, the basis and inclusion of every virtue. Fasting, then, together with humility and the other virtues, contribute to the building up of the faithful in the charismatic communion of the Church.

⁴ Didache XII Apostolorum, 7.1, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuillier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 172.

⁵ Nikolaides N., Αποστολικοί Πατέρες, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica 2002, 164.

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, De Beneficentia, ed. A. van Heck, Gregorii Nysseni Opera, vol. 9, Leiden, 1967, 95

The importance of fasting in the spiritual life of the Church is great. According to the Canon Law of the Church, fasts were called the days on which one must abstain from the pleasures of life and from certain foods and drinks. According to K. Rallis, fasts are called the days established by the Church “on days when the faithful, in spiritual devastation and repentance, ought to lift up their spirit to the Lord through the fasting of the flesh, abstaining from the pleasures of life and from certain foods and drinks”⁷. Consequently, fasting became known in the Church from the beginning not only in the sense of abstaining from certain foods, but also in the sense of perfect fasting. Not exclusively in monasticism, but also more broadly in the life of the Church, fasting is an exercise of abstinence, self-control and reconciliation with the inner passions of the self, reconciliation with God. The training of the self that is attempted through fasting contributes decisively to the overcoming of opposing demonic forces and temptations and brings Christ closer to the heart of the Christian. Besides, the God-Man Himself is the one who recommended fasting, since according to His words “This kind can come out only by prayer”.⁸

The Christian life urges us to become imitators of Christ, to crucify the flesh with its sufferings and desires.⁹ However, in no case should fasting be done for the purpose of showing off. Nor should pity and sympathy be sought in fasting. The Christian, on the contrary, should walk the path of fasting alone and have deeply engraved in his consciousness the conviction that the fasting he does in secret will be rewarded in the open by God the Father.¹⁰ It is obvious from the above that the virtue of fasting is important for the Church, which is a quasi “[...] expression of angelic life, which is appropriate for every

⁷ Menevisoglou P., Τὸ Σύνταγμα Ράλλη καὶ Ποτλῆ: Τὸ Σύνταγμα Ράλλη καὶ Ποτλῆ καὶ ἄλλαι ἐκδόσεις ἱερῶν κανόνων κατὰ τὸν 19ον καὶ 20ὸν αἰῶνα [Νομοκανονικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 23], ἐκδ. Ἐπέκταση, Κατερίνη, 2009, 37.

⁸ Mk 9, 29.

⁹ Gal 5, 24.

¹⁰ Basil of Caesarea, De jejunio, homilia II, PG 31, 188.

Christian who wishes to overcome human limits and find oneself in the spiritual sphere”.¹¹

Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the desert and His example is a model for our own efforts. Christ’s fasting in the desert is the application of the Father’s commandment and is contrasted with Adam’s disobedience in Paradise. “The basis of fasting therefore starts from the fact that it is the antithetical energy to the energy of Adam. Adam showed extremism and gluttony, and the Christian must, in order to rectify this situation, abstain and practice fasting”.¹²

According to John Damascene “it is good to fast every day, but the one who does not eat should not blame the one who eats”.¹³ And Basil the Great, speaking of fasting, says that the one who will suffer trials but will fight lawfully as a good soldier and athlete of Christ will be crowned in the end, because temperance is a characteristic of everyone who strives for something special.¹⁴ And the great Father and saint of the Church continues, choosing for fasting characterizations that reveal the benefits it offers to the Christian both to the soul and to the body. He names it: ‘the likeness of angels’, ‘the messmate of the righteous’, ‘the correction of life’.¹⁵ Fasting, moreover, is one of the conditions for participation in the Eucharist. Finally, as Professor Mantzaridis observes, “the importance that the Orthodox Church attaches to exercise and fasting reveals the central position in which it places the body and its participation in the renewal in Christ [...] Renewal in Christ is not partial or fragmentary, but complete and uni-

¹¹ Sotiropoulou M., «Οι προ των εορτών νηστείες της Ορθοδόξου Χριστιανικής Εκκλησίας», *Theologia*, vol. 76, 2005, 243.

¹² Sotiropoulou M., «Οι προ των εορτών νηστείες της Ορθοδόξου Χριστιανικής Εκκλησίας», *Theologia*, vol. 76, 2005, 244.

¹³ John of Damascus, *De Sacris Jejunis*, PG, 69AB.

¹⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *De jejunio*, homilia II, PG 31, 188.

¹⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *De jejunio*, homilia II, PG 31, 193.

versal. And the exercise for its intimacy is not limited to combating negative situations, but unfolds within the perspective of Christian hope and joy”.¹⁶

b. The fasting *typicon*: The Monday,
Wednesday and Friday fasts

In the 8th chapter of the Didache, the days of fasting are distinguished. The author's exhortation is that Christians should not fast with the hypocrites. By hypocrites he probably means the Jews. As mentioned earlier, both the person to be baptized and the godparent were required to fast before the sacrament was administered. Wednesdays and Fridays were the predetermined days of fasting, a custom that contrasted with Jewish practice, which considered Monday, Thursday and Saturday to be the traditional days of fasting.¹⁷

In any case, “The weekly fasts of the Orthodox Church are the fasts of Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The fast of Monday is defined in the *Typica* to be practices by the monks throughout the year. The fast of Monday, along with the fast of Wednesday and Friday, sets the faithful apart from the habit of the Pharisees, who fasted on the Sabbath, i.e. two days of the week, and makes them surpass [...]. So, Wednesday and Friday are the weekly fasts of Orthodox Christians, with the conceptual meaning and value that has been emphasized, while the Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday [...] The fasting of Wednesday and Friday is therefore institutionalized, as well as that of Lent, since the time of the Holy Apostles”.¹⁸

The above shows the contribution of the Didache in emphasizing the correct determination of the time and manner of fasting, as well as

¹⁶ Mantzarides G., Χριστιανική Ηθική II, ed. Pournaras, Thessalonica 2003, 552.

¹⁷ Didache XII Apostolorum, 8.1, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuilier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 172.

¹⁸ Sotiropoulou M., «Οι προ των εορτών νηστείες της Ορθοδόξου Χριστιανικής Εκκλησίας», Theologia, vol. 76, 2005, 250.

the importance attributed to the institution of fasting on specific days, both by Canon Law and by the Fathers of the Church. In addition, the rules of the Church point out the importance of the fasts of Lent, as well as Wednesday and Friday.

Baptism: The Door To The New Reality Of The Church

A. Importance Of Baptism

The 7th chapter of the Didache speaks about baptism and all that goes with it. Specifically, some instructions are given on how to be baptized; this is done in the name of the Holy Trinity in 'living water 'or hot water'. Otherwise, in case of emergency it can be done by water infusion.¹⁹ In this regard, the importance attached to baptism by the early Christian community is evident. Those who believe in the gospel of salvation should be baptized since baptism is the gateway to entry into the body of Christ, the Church. The founder of the Church, the God-Man Jesus Christ, proclaimed to his disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you".²⁰ Baptism, therefore, introduces us into the charismatic communion of the Church, since "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved".²¹ According to saint Nicholas Cabasilas "Baptism is a birth[...] one cannot walk or feed before one is born".²²

Through baptism the faithful participates in the burial and resurrection of Christ so that he can then also participate in the 'new life'

¹⁹ Didache XII Apostolorum, 8.1, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuilier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 170-172.

²⁰ Mt 28, 19-20.

²¹ Mk 16, 16.

²² Nicolas Cabasilas, Vita in Christo, 2, 5, ed. Gongourdeau M. H., SC 355, Paris, 1989, 136.

in Christ. As Professor Nikos Nikolaides says: “[...] in baptism two seemingly opposite but miraculous events take place simultaneously: one of them is death. And it is reflected and painted with water, which in baptism covers us. And the other is life, which is offered to us as an engagement of the Holy Spirit because of Christ’s Resurrection [...]”.²³ From what has been said above we could say that the sacrament of baptism is 1) introduction into life, 2) birth into life, and 3) a journey, a walk into a new life.²⁴

In addition, it is easy to see that there is a continuity between the Didache and the other texts of the Apostolic Fathers and today as regards the celebration of the sacrament and the importance attributed to it for the spiritual regeneration of the faithful in Christ. In the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers, baptism is considered the beginning of the new life and salvation of man. Most importantly, baptism according to Didache was performed in the name of the Holy Trinity, which means that it not only built up the life of the baptized faithful, but also contributed to the building up of the whole local Church. The sacrament of baptism is therefore “not an individual matter, but an event of the whole Church”.²⁵

b. Celebrating the mystery

As was said in a relevant reference in the previous paragraph, the sacrament of baptism “is performed by immersion in living water, i.e. in flowing water, and only in order to save necessity is the use of other water and sprinkling permitted”.²⁶ The Trinitarian formula is used in baptism. The celebration of baptism in the name of the triune

²³ Nikolaides N., *Ανάλεκτα (Περί τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος καί τῶν ὄντων)*, vol. Α΄, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica, 2002, 99.

²⁴ Matsoukas N., *Δογματική και Συμβολική Θεολογία Β΄*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica, 2003, 475.

²⁵ Skouteris K., *Ιστορία Δογμάτων*, vol. Α΄, Athens 1998, 199.

²⁶ Chrestou P., *Ελληνική Πατρολογία Β΄*, Thessalonica 1978, 29-30.

God takes place, according to John Damascene, because “those who are baptized must be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity in order to preserve and maintain them”.²⁷ The exhortation of the author of the Doctrine that in case of lack of living water, baptism should be done with other water, if necessary, with hot water, shows the importance of baptism for the body of the Church.

However, baptism by immersion in running water, mainly rivers or springs, was the usual way of performing the sacrament. Baptism by pouring water or sprinkling was used in cases of emergency. The reference in the Didache to baptism by the instillation of water into the baptized is the only reference from the 1st and 2nd centuries concerning this type of baptism.²⁸ Moreover, the baptism of necessity, which is performed in certain cases of emergency, i.e. when a serious illness befalls the infant, is merely a customary tradition. But this tradition is deeply rooted in the principle that all those who are baptized are baptized at the burial and resurrection of the Lord and therefore for them as well as for all of us it is a return to the primordial and pre-falling beauty. This is why baptism is always recommended, since the unbaptized person is “out of Paradise and [...] a partaker of Adam’s exile”.²⁹

The Eschatological Hope and Perspective of the Second Coming of The Lord

a. Spiritual alertness and readiness as the Christian’s armour for the end times

Special mention is made in the 16th chapter of the Didache of the Twelve Apostles in the last days. The text urges Christians to be

²⁷ John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei*, 82, ed. B. Kotter, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 12, 184⁶⁴⁻⁶⁵.

²⁸ Quasten J., *Patrology*, vol. 1, Utrecht-Brussels 1983, 31.

²⁹ Nikolaides N., *Ανάλεκτα (Περί τοῦ ὄντως Ὄντος καί τῶν Ὄντων)*, vol. Α', ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica, 2002, 106.

spiritually alert and prepared for the end times, which are approaching.³⁰ Christians should be ready with their belts on and their lamps lit,³¹ since no one knows the hour at which the Lord will come. The day of the Lord ‘comes like a thief in the night’, according to the Apostle Paul.³² The hymnographic tradition of the Church, among the numerous excellent troparia and hymns, also preserves an extremely moving troparion, which is sung during the services of Holy Week: “Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night; and blessed is the servant He shall find awake and watching; unworthy is the other He shall find being lazy. So beware, O soul of mine, be not overcome by sleep, so that you not be handed over to death and be shut out from the Kingdom [...]”.³³

The above passage is highly revealing as to the meaning of alertness and the degree of readiness for the Christian life in general. In the surrounding atmosphere of its lyrics, it testifies to the coming of the Bridegroom Christ emerging in the night. The troparion, therefore, blesses the one who watches, waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom. On the contrary, the one who will be found unworthy is the one who will be judged unprepared and surrendered to sloth and slothfulness. That is why the hymnographer recommends vigilance, so as not to be delivered to sleep, and therefore to death, which would mean being excluded from the kingdom of heaven. As the late Professor Nikos Matsoukas says in this regard: “[...] Sloth, or even idleness, makes a man give way to haste and reject the gifts of grace and patience [...]”. And elsewhere he says: “Therefore, man, always a creature in the image and likeness of God, seeks first and foremost the kingdom of heaven [...] Therefore, he must unite every

³⁰ Didache XII Apostolorum, 16.1, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuilier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 194.

³¹ Lk 12,35.

³² 1 Thes 5,3.

³³ Η Μεγάλη Εβδομάς, ed. «Aster», Athens 1991, 23.

division and reconcile earth and heaven in obedient love. It takes away the haste and violence in this agonistic and heartfelt love, according to Mt. 11, 12: ‘the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it!’ Here the violator is the fighter. This is the way of the post-apocalyptic age: agonistic and dramatic in the midst of throws of childbirth and sorrows, while the actions of God heal the wounds of humanity [...]’.³⁴

In the rest of the text of the Didache, the faithful are exhorted to assemble densely in the Eucharistic assembly, since the whole time of their faith will be in vain if it is not rewarded in the last days. Faith alone is not enough to lead to perfection, that is, to being conformed to God by grace.³⁵ Constant vigilance, repentance and prayer are required for a ‘good confession’ before the God-Man at his second and glorious coming.

b. The end of the world and the Second Coming of the Lord

In the end times, always according to the text of the Didache, the false prophets and corrupters of men will increase and the sheep will turn into wolves and love will turn to hate.³⁶ It is easy to see that the text of the Didache echoes the doctrinal teaching of our Church on the Last Days and contains “[...] formulations [that] are based on corresponding New Testament texts, a fact that demonstrates the correlation between the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers and that of the Bible [...]’.³⁷ The doctrinal teaching of the Church mentions other

³⁴ Matsoukas N., *Οικουμενική Θεολογία*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica 2005, 190-192.

³⁵ Didache XII Apostolorum, 16.1, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuillier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 194: «Πυκνῶς δὲ συναχθήσεσθε ζητοῦντες τὰ Ἀνήκοντα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· οὐ γὰρ ὠφελήσει ὑμᾶς Ὁ πᾶς χρόνος τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, ἐὰν μὴ ἐν τῷ ἐσχάτῳ καιρῷ τελειωθῆτε».

³⁶ Didache XII Apostolorum, 16.3-4, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuillier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 194-196.

³⁷ Nikolaides N., *Αποστολικοί Πατέρες*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica, 2002, 480.

points, such as: 1) The preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles; 2) The return to Christ of the Israelite people; 3) The rise of apostasy from God, the appearance of many false prophets and the coming of the Antichrist; 4) The intensity in the world of moral and physical evil; 5) According to others, the coming to the land of Enoch and the Elijah.³⁸ As the Apostle Paul says 'the day of the Lord' will not come, 'until the rebellion occurs'.³⁹ The points mentioned before, especially the third and fourth, are also presented in the Didache. So, we have an increase in lawlessness and hatred among people and it is at that time that the Antichrist will make his appearance, "as the Son of God; he will do signs and wonders, the earth will be given into his hands and he will do iniquities that have never been done since the beginning of time".⁴⁰ Saint Paul calls him 'son of perdition', 'man of iniquity'.⁴¹

In those last years the judgment of men will be tested. The faithful will go through the 'test fire'. Many people will be shaken under the rule of the forces of darkness and will perish. But those who endure patiently in their faith will be saved from the Antichrist's encroachment. After the eruption of morality and the power of the forces of evil, the signs of truth will be seen: "first the sign of the extension in heaven, then the sign of the resounding trumpet, and, thirdly, the resurrection of the dead". The tribulations of the last days will end with the coming of the Lord and 'all the saints with Him'. The event of the Second Coming of the Lord is, of course, the most important of all of the above. The God-man will appear gloriously coming 'above the clouds of heaven'⁴² and "surely there will then follow the universal

³⁸ Metsopoulos N. E., *Θέματα Ορθοδόξου Θεολογίας*, Athens 2001, 375-377.

³⁹ 1 Thes 2, 3.

⁴⁰ Didache XII Apostolorum, 16.4, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuilier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 196.

⁴¹ 2Thes 3-4.

⁴² Didache XII Apostolorum, 16.6-8, ed. Rordoff W. – Tuilier A., SC 248, Paris, 1978, 198.

judgment of men and the consignment of the wicked to eternal hell and eternal spiritual death, while the righteous will be consigned to blissful life [...]”.⁴³ But in any case, God’s infinite love will be the final measure of judgment. According to St. Isaac the Syrian: “Those who are punished in the Gehenna are punished with the scourge of love. And what a bitter and fierce hell of love!”.⁴⁴

In conclusion, we find the words of the late Professor Christos Giannaras very revealing: “In the dimensions of the ‘eighth day’ the reality of the Resurrection is revealed – the union of God with ‘Adam the fatherless’ – with all men. But this union, while it will abolish the physical distance of man from God, will not, even then, violate the freedom of each person. Thus, for the ‘saints’, as St. Maximus says, those who accept God’s love, union with Him will be ‘Divine and unconceived pleasure’, while for the ‘unworthy’, those who have denied the possibility of love, it will be ‘unspeakable suffering’. There is no other quality of life in the ‘eighth day’: love judges, love justifies”.⁴⁵

Conclusions

The Didache of the Twelve Apostles preserves, as we have seen, unique testimonies from the early Christian era on the subjects of fasting, baptism, and the Last Days. Studying the text of the Didache and focusing on the chapters where the specific issues are addressed, one finds the following: 1) The teaching of the Didache largely echoes the teaching of the Church, both with regard to fasting and with regard to baptism and the last rites. 2) This is natural, since

⁴³ Nikolaides N., *Αποστολικοί Πατέρες*, ed. P. Pournaras, Thessalonica, 2002, 480-481.

⁴⁴ Isaac the Syrian, *Orationes Ascetici*, 22, 131-135, ed. M. Pirar, Iberon Monastery, Holy Mountain of Athos, 423.

⁴⁵ Yannaras C., *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, Translated by K. Schram, Edinburgh, 1991, 119.

the text of the Didache is closely dependent on the New Testament, where the teachings of the God-Man and the Apostles are largely stored, and it makes use of the New Testament passages to support the views of the early Christians on these issues. 3) It aims at the edification of believers through the body of Christ, that is, the Church. Therefore, it is no coincidence that all three of the above themes are directly related to the Eucharist, the 'sacrament of the sacraments'.

In particular, fasting is intended to prepare the baptized person for the sacrament of baptism. With baptism, as was said in the corresponding chapter, the faithful is introduced into the communion of the New Creation, the Church. But the 'walk' of the faithful 'in a new life' is completed with the Eucharist. Now how is the Eucharist connected with the last days? The connection, of course, is made with the saying of the God-Man that the one who receives the 'medicine of immortality', the antidote of 'not dying', will be resurrected by Christ. It is clear then that the Eucharist has a clear eschatological meaning. But let's take each issue separately. We have seen the importance attached by the Didache to fasting. Fasting is a virtue that approaches the angelic life. Through fasting, abstinence and self-control are cultivated, which in turn lead to humility. The model of our fast is Christ's fasting in the desert for forty days. The relationship between fasting and the body and its place in orthodoxy is also direct. Fasting is done with the prospect of the Resurrection and is therefore accompanied by hope and joy. Also, the days of fasting have been instituted by the Canon Law of the Church and are done in remembrance of the Lord's betrayal and Passion.

Baptism and in the Didache is also done using the Trinitarian formula. The importance of baptism is stressed, since the triune God restores man to the ancient pre-baptismal beauty, where he puts on the glittering robe of glory. The importance and significance of the

sacrament allows in cases of necessity other types of baptism, such as the pouring of water with the prospect of not remaining unbaptized, because if one is not born 'from above', it is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, the teaching of the Didache of the Last Days is identical both with that of the New Testament and with the doctrinal teaching of the Orthodox Church in general, as stated earlier. The end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist are presented in extremely ominous images. The curse of the Antichrist will lead people to discord, hatred and perhaps some to death. Those who keep their faith unquenched in those troubled times will be saved. The end of suffering will be marked by the Second Coming of Christ, accompanied by cosmogonic phenomena and above all the resurrection of the dead. The judgment that will follow will place everyone in either heaven or hell, which are nothing but relationships and situations in relation to the self-life of the triune Divinity. Thus, the friends of God commune and are illuminated by the light of the Divinity, while the damned feel terrible anguish as they are outside of God's loving fellowship, in a state of un-friendship and incommunicability.

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