ANCIENT WRITINGS

THE DIDACHE

Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles



Complete English translation from French

Reading guide

The English text, commentary and sources are gathered in the first part. Documentary reproductions appear at the end of the volume. Historical illustrations accompany the reading.

Part One · English 3

Appendix · Facsimiles 38

References to editions and manuscripts have been retained. Contents-page references and internal links point to the new pagination.

Illustrated English edition

The Didache

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

The Didache is a short Christian manual on conduct in life, baptism, fasting, prayer, the communal meal and the reception of travelling teachers. Its Greek title means ‘teaching’. The expanded title transmitted by the manuscript is: ‘The Lord’s teaching conveyed to the nations through the twelve apostles’.

This volume presents the sixteen surviving chapters through their final sentence. Each chapter is immediately followed by its Translation Choices. The illustrations reproduce older works of art; the ten final plates allow readers to consult the pages of the Jerusalem manuscript in the reproduction published in 1887.

Cover: Giulio Clovio, Towneley Lectionary, c. 1550, fol. 6v. New York Public Library, MA 91. Renaissance illumination.

Reading contents

Each chapter is followed by its Translation Choices. Page numbers are clickable.

Introduction and method 5

Chapter or fragment	Text	Choices
Chapter I · The two ways and love of one's neighbour	7	7
Chapter II · Protecting life and keeping one's word	9	9
Chapter III · Avoiding the paths that lead to evil	11	11
Chapter IV · Living together, sharing and confessing faults	13	14
Chapter V · The way of death and injustice	16	16
Chapter VI · Bearing the yoke and discerning foods	17	17
Chapter VII · Baptism and its preparation	18	18
Chapter VIII · Fasting and the Lord's Prayer	20	20
Chapter IX · The cup, the bread and unity	21	21
Chapter X · Thanksgiving after the meal	23	23
Chapter XI · Discerning apostles and prophets	25	26
Chapter XII · Welcoming travellers and preventing exploitation	27	27
Chapter XIII · First fruits and support for prophets	28	28
Chapter XIV · The Lord's gathering and reconciliation	29	29
Chapter XV · Choosing leaders and correcting peacefully	30	30
Chapter XVI · Keeping watch until the Lord's coming	31	31

The manuscript in ten plates 34

Textual sources 35

Provenance of the illustrations 36

Introduction and method

The text adopted

The French translation underlying this English edition principally follows the Greek text published by J. Rendel Harris in 1887, with his photographic reproductions of the Jerusalem manuscript, Panagiou Taphou 54, often abbreviated H54. A witness (a manuscript or early edition transmitting the text) shows which formulations have actually come down to us. Comparing these documents helps establish the text; it does not by itself confirm the historical reality of everything a work recounts. [HARRIS1887]

The edition and French translation by Hemmer, Oger and Laurent, published in 1907, provide a comparison for linguistic difficulties and proposed corrections. The numbering in sixteen chapters and one hundred paragraphs is retained. The short titles in the reading contents are editorial guides; they replace no passage. [HEMMER1907]

Readable language, visible choices

The French text was revised sentence by sentence to avoid literal renderings that obscure the meaning. An idiomatic expression may be clarified where its scope can be identified: thus, a ‘girded’ garment becomes clothing tightened at the waist. Significant images are retained and explained. Parentheses in the translation provide only brief vocabulary clarifications. This English version follows that French text.

The Translation Choices follow each chapter. They distinguish a word’s possible meaning, a difference between two early formulations, and a correction proposed by an editor. The last is sometimes called a conjecture: it is then a reconstructed reading, not letters directly present in the manuscript. Relevant Greek forms appear with explanations translated from French.

Some passages remain obscure, notably XI.11 and XVI.5. An intelligible reading is adopted in the main text, then explicitly presented as an interpretation in the notes. Other serious readings are set out there. No claim of certainty replaces missing words or an unresolved difficulty.

Scope and presentation

The translation includes every paragraph of the adopted text. The final break at XVI.8 is respected. Prayers are translated in their own form, with their repetitions and differences, without being brought into line with a familiar liturgical formula. Thematic commentaries are replaced by only those explanations needed for the translation choices.

The illustrated works are later than the composition of the Didache. Their captions give their period and provenance: they accompany the reading without being presented as contemporary images of the earliest communities. Textual sources and full illustration credits appear at the end of the volume.

Chapter I

1 There are two ways: one of life, the other of death; and the difference between the two ways is great.

2 This, then, is the way of life: first, you shall love God who created you; next, your neighbour as yourself. And whatever you would not wish done to you, do not do to another either.

3 This is the teaching of these words: bless those who curse you, pray for your enemies and fast for those who persecute you. For what credit is it to you if you love those who love you? Do not the pagans do the same? As for you, love those who hate you, and you will have no enemy.

4 Abstain from the desires of the flesh and the body. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, offer him the other also, and you will be perfect. If someone compels you to go one mile, go two with him. If someone takes your cloak, give him your tunic also. If someone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back: you do not, in any case, have the power to insist on its return.

5 Give to everyone who asks you, demanding nothing in return; for the Father wants everyone to receive a share of His own gifts. Blessed is the one who gives according to the commandment: he is innocent. Woe to the one who receives! If someone receives because he is in need, he will be innocent; but someone who receives without needing it will have to answer for it: why did he receive this gift, and for what purpose? Taken into custody, he will be questioned about his actions and will not leave until he has repaid the very last quadrans (a small Roman coin).

6 But it has also been said on this subject: ‘Let your alms “sweat” in your hands until you know to whom to give them.’

Translation Choices

1:4 - A negation retained

Οὐδὲ γὰρ δύνασαι literally means ‘for you cannot even do so’. ‘You do not, in any case, have the power to insist on its return’ makes explicit the reference to the preceding verb, demand back. The text says neither ‘even if you can’ nor why this demand would be impossible. The mile is a Roman measure of about 1.48 km.

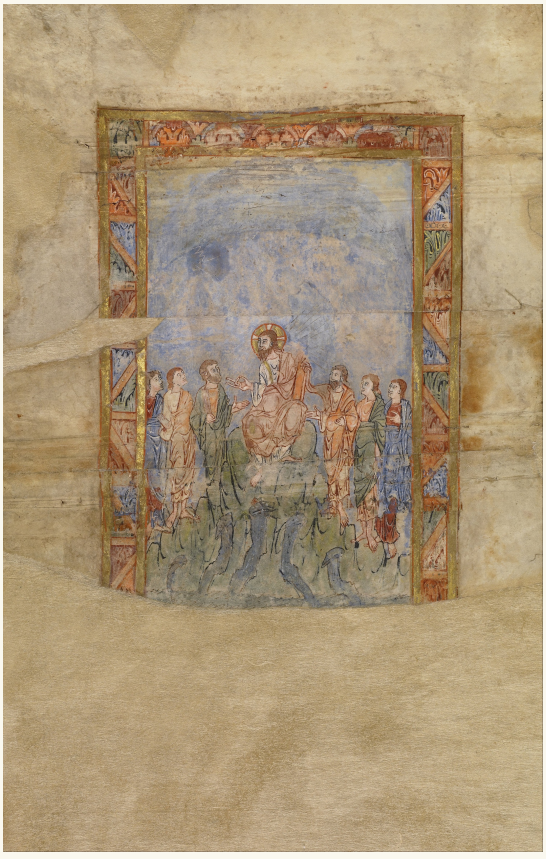
1:4 - The flesh and the body

Harris's Greek retains *σαρκικῶν* and *σωματικῶν*, 'of the flesh' and 'of the body'. The repetition is therefore retained. Replacing the second term with 'of the world' would follow a proposed correction based on a related text, rather than the word preserved in the manuscript.

1:5–6 - The coin and alms that 'sweat'

The quadrans is worth one quarter of an as: it is a very small Roman coin. Alms that 'sweat' are a deliberately surprising image: the gift is held in the hand while its recipient is discerned. A freer translation might be 'Take time to know whom you are giving to'; this conveys the advice but erases the ancient image. The inner quotation marks signal this image here. Harris reproduces the form ἱδρωτάτω, generally regularised as ἱδρωσάτω, with no difference in meaning.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.



Christ Teaching. Anonymous illuminator, c. 1000. J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 9. A medieval depiction of Christ's

teaching, later than the composition of the Didache. [provenance]

Chapter II

1 This is the second commandment of the teaching:

2 You shall not murder, commit adultery, sexually corrupt children, engage in debauchery, steal, practise magic or use poisons. You shall not kill a child by abortion or put it to death after birth. You shall not covet your neighbour's possessions.

3 You shall not swear falsely, bear false witness, speak ill of others or hold a grudge.

4 You shall have neither duplicity in your thoughts nor double speech: double speech is a deadly snare.

5 Your word shall be neither false nor empty: it shall be put into action.

6 You shall be neither greedy, grasping, hypocritical, malicious nor proud. You shall form no evil design against your neighbour.

7 You shall hate no one: some you shall rebuke, for others you shall pray, and still others you shall love more than your own life.

Translation Choices

> 2:2 - Corruption of children and poisons
>
> Παιδοφθορεῖν here refers to sexual corruption of children; the translations 'corrupt children' and 'defile boys' reflect choices of precision, not two entirely different prohibitions. Φαρμακεύειν can mean to poison or to use magical preparations. 'Use poisons' adopts the first meaning; 'use philtres' remains possible.

2:4–5 - Thought, speech and conduct

Διγνώμων suggests a double or divided mind; ‘duplicity in your thoughts’ adopts the moral sense here, alongside double speech. ‘A divided mind’ is another possible reading. ‘Speech filled with deeds’ would be a literal rendering of μεμεστωμένος πράξει. ‘It shall be put into action’ clearly conveys the meaning: deeds must give reality to speech.

2:7 - Those for whom prayer is offered

The construction ‘some… others… still others’ follows the usual reading. Hemmer connects the prayer to those who are rebuked. The text allows this syntactic uncertainty; no additional category is added in the translation.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter III

1 My child, flee every evil and everything that resembles it.

2 Do not be quick to anger, for anger leads to murder; be neither jealous, quarrelsome nor hot-tempered: from all these things murders arise.

3 My child, do not indulge in lust, for lust leads to debauchery; do not speak obscenely or cast shameless glances: from all these things adulteries arise.

4 My child, do not study omens, for this leads to idolatry; practise neither incantations, astrology nor magical purifications, and do not even desire to watch them: from all these things idolatry arises.

5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft; be neither greedy for money nor vain: from all these things thefts arise.

6 My child, do not be prone to grumbling, for this leads to blasphemy; be neither arrogant nor ill-intentioned: from all these things blasphemies arise.

7 Be gentle, for the gentle will inherit the earth.

8 Be patient, merciful, without malice, peaceable and good; always tremble before the words you have heard.

9 You shall not make yourself great in your own eyes or let insolence enter your soul. Your soul shall not attach itself to the proud; you shall associate with the righteous and humble.

10 Welcome events as good, knowing that nothing happens without God.

Translation Choices

3:4 - Astrology and purifications

Μαθηματικός here means ‘astrologer’, not ‘mathematician’ in today’s usual sense. Περικαθαίρων denotes someone who practises ritual or magical purifications. These meanings are determined by the list of divinatory practices; they are not differences between manuscripts.

3:6 and 9 - Grumbling and exalting oneself

Γόγγυσος expresses discontent and grumbling, not merely speaking quietly. ‘You shall not make yourself great in your own eyes’ conveys the prohibition on exalting oneself without suggesting a physical movement.

3:8 and 10 - Respect and acceptance of events

‘Tremble before the words’ retains the ancient image of respect mingled with fear. ‘Welcome what happens to you as a good thing’ follows the Greek: replacing this request with a promise that only happy events will occur would change the point.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter IV

1 My child, remember night and day the one who proclaims God's word to you; honour him as the Lord, for where the Lord's authority is proclaimed, there is the Lord.

2 Seek each day to meet the saints, so that you may find comfort in their words.

3 You shall not seek division; you shall reconcile those who fight one another. You shall judge justly and show no favouritism when rebuking faults.

4 Do not remain in uncertainty, asking yourself: 'Will it happen, or not?'

5 Do not be among those who stretch out their hands to receive and withdraw them when it is time to give.

6 If you possess the fruit of your hands' labour, you shall give for the redemption of your sins.

7 You shall not hesitate to give, and when giving you shall not grumble; for you shall know who rewards generously.

8 You shall not turn away from someone in need; you shall share everything with your brother and shall not say that these possessions are yours alone. For if you share in what is immortal, how much more in mortal things!

9 You shall not relax discipline towards your son or daughter; from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God.

10 You shall not give harsh orders to your male or female slaves, who place their hope in the same God as you, lest they cease to fear the God who rules over you all. For God does not call people according to their rank: He calls those whom the Spirit has prepared.

11 And you slaves, submit to your masters as to an image of God, with respect and fear.

12 You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything that displeases the Lord.

13 You shall not abandon the Lord's commandments; you shall keep what you have received, adding nothing and taking nothing away.

14 In the assembly you shall confess your faults, and you shall not come to pray with a bad conscience. Such is the way of life.



Translation Choices

4:1–2 - Authority and saints

Κυριότης expresses the Lord's authority or sovereignty; 'authority' avoids an uncommon term in the French. Here the 'saints' are people one can meet in the community. The word does not imply official recognition after their death. 'Find comfort' translates the idea of finding support or rest in their words.

4:3–4 - A question whose subject is unspecified

The manuscript reads ποθήσεις, 'you shall desire', hence 'you shall not seek division'. In 4:4 no specific event is named: 'Will it happen, or not?' preserves that absence. The judgement to come and an answer to prayer are two possible explanations. Adding either to the text would supply a certainty the Greek does not provide.

4:6 - The fruit of labour or the act of giving

'Through your hands' may qualify the possessions, as in the adopted text, or the act of giving: 'If you have the means, give with your hands for the redemption of your sins.' The Greek construction allows both readings.

4:9–11 - Discipline, harshness and slavery

'Not withdrawing one's hand' is an expression of family discipline; 'not relaxing discipline' makes it understandable. The image may include corporal punishment without specifying its form. In 4:10, 'harsh' conveys bitterness directed against slaves. The vocabulary of slavery is retained. In 4:11, 'your masters' follows the regularised ὑμῶν; Harris notes that the manuscript has ἡμῶν, 'our'.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.



Feeding the Hungry. Abraham Bosse, 1635, from The Works of Mercy series. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.49.15. The

engraving accompanies the instructions on sharing. [provenance]

Chapter V

1 This is the way of death: above all, it is evil and full of curses. It consists of murders, adulteries, lusts, debaucheries, thefts, idolatries, practices of magic, poisonings, plundering, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity of heart, deceit, pride, wickedness, arrogance, greed, obscene speech, jealousy, insolence, haughtiness and boasting.

2 This is the way of those who persecute the good, hate truth and love falsehood, know nothing of the reward of righteousness, cling neither to goodness nor to just judgement, and put their vigilance at the service of evil rather than good. Gentleness and patience are foreign to them. They love vain things, pursue advantages, have no pity for the poor, do not grieve over the sufferer's lot and do not know the One who created them. Murderers of children, destroyers of what God has fashioned, they turn away from the needy and oppress the afflicted; champions of the rich and unjust judges of the poor, they are laden with every sin. May you, my children, be delivered from all these things!

Translation Choices

> 5:1 - A list without additions
>
> The series of actions and dispositions follows Harris's Greek text. 'Absence of fear', added by some editors from related texts, is not in the Jerusalem manuscript and is not inserted here.

> 5:2 - Making a sentence readable
>
> The Greek list shifts from actions to the people who commit them. 'This is the way of…' makes that connection explicit without adding a category. 'Put their vigilance at the service of evil' preserves the opposition between watching for evil and watching for good.

> 5:2 - Advantages and a fashioned work
>
> Ἀνταπόδομα means reward, recompense or an advantageous return. 'Pursue advantages' avoids confusing this self-interested pursuit with the 'reward of righteousness' named above. Πλάσμα denotes what has been fashioned; no more precise complement is added after 'what God has fashioned'.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter VI

1 Take care that no one leads you astray from the way of this teaching: anyone who did so would be teaching you without regard for God.

2 For if you can bear the Lord's entire yoke, you will be perfect; but if you cannot, do what you can.

3 As for dietary rules, observe what you can bear; but guard yourself most carefully against food offered in sacrifice to idols: this is indeed worshipping dead gods.

Translation Choices

6:1 - Teaching without regard for God

Παρεκτὸς θεοῦ means 'apart from God'. The chosen translation expresses this exclusion in more natural language. The Greek does not here attribute to God the teaching that would lead someone off the way.

6:2–3 - The yoke and dietary rules

The 'yoke' remains an image of requirements one bears. In the next paragraph, 'observe what you can bear' conveys the injunction to bear what one can concerning food. The passage gives no complete list of these rules; no list is reconstructed.

6:3 - Sacrificed food and dead gods

Εἰδωλόθυτον denotes food offered in sacrifice to an idol. The judgement 'dead gods' belongs to the text: it describes these divinities as without life. It should not be understood as an account of their deaths.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter VII

1 Concerning baptism, baptise in this way: after setting out everything above, baptise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in living water (spring or running water).

2 If you have no living water, baptise in other water; if you cannot do it in cold water, do it in warm water.

3 If you have neither, pour water three times over the head, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

4 Before baptism, let the person baptising and the person being baptised fast, together with others if they can. You shall instruct the person about to be baptised to fast for one or two days beforehand.

Translation Choices

7:1 - Living water

Ὕδωρ ζῶν literally means ‘living water’. In this passage’s practical instructions, it refers to spring or running water. The parenthesis explains this immediately.

7:3 - ‘Neither’

The Greek does indeed say ‘if you have neither’. Since it then instructs that water be poured, it cannot mean an absolute absence of all water. An explanatory reading would be ‘if you do not have enough of these waters for a bath’. This clarification about quantity remains an interpretation and is not presented as a word in the manuscript.

7:1 and 3 - The baptismal formula

Both mentions of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit occur in the Greek. They are retained in their order, without adaptation to another liturgical formula.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.



The Baptism of Jesus. T'oros the Deacon, Armenian Gospel book, 1311. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, group 2020.142.1–

4. This Gospel scene illuminates the history of baptismal imagery; it does not depict a ceremony from the Didache. [provenance]

Chapter VIII

1 Let your fasts not coincide with those of the hypocrites: they fast on Monday and Thursday; you, fast on Wednesday and Friday.

2 Nor should you pray like the hypocrites; rather, as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, pray thus: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, may Your name be sanctified, may Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today the bread we need. Forgive us our debt, as we too forgive our debtors their debts. And do not bring us into trial, but deliver us from evil. For Yours are the power and the glory for all ages.’

3 Pray thus three times a day.

Translation Choices

8:2 - Features of the transmitted text

The codex has ‘in heaven’ and ‘our debt’ in the singular. Its concluding praise mentions power and glory without adding the kingdom or ‘Amen’. These features are retained rather than bringing the prayer into line with a later liturgical formula.

8:2 - Three lexical choices

Ἐπιούσιος is difficult: ‘the bread we need’ adopts the idea of bread needed for the day; ‘our daily bread’ or ‘our bread for the coming day’ are other possible translations. Πειρασμός may be rendered ‘trial’ or ‘temptation’. Finally, τοῦ πονηροῦ allows ‘from evil’ or ‘from the Evil One’, understood as a personal adversary. These alternatives concern the meanings of the same Greek words, not manuscripts containing three different prayers.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter IX

1 Concerning the eucharist (thanksgiving), give thanks in this way:

2 First, for the cup: ‘We give You thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David, Your servant, which You made known to us through Jesus, Your servant. Yours is the glory for all ages!’

3 Then, for the broken bread: ‘We give You thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge You made known to us through Jesus, Your servant. Yours is the glory for all ages!’

4 ‘As this broken bread was once scattered over the mountains and, when gathered, became one loaf, so may Your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom. For Yours are the glory and the power through Jesus Christ, for all ages!’

5 Let no one eat or drink of your eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord’s name. For it was also on this subject that the Lord said: ‘Do not give what is holy to dogs.’

Translation Choices

9:1–3 - Thanksgiving and servant

Εὐχαριστία means ‘thanksgiving’ and may here denote the meal over which this prayer is said. Παῖς (pais) can denote a child or a servant. ‘Servant’ is adopted for both David and Jesus, as in Hemmer, to keep the same word in both places. ‘Child’ remains another possible translation; the Greek does not here use υἱός, the word usually translated ‘son’. This lexical choice does not by itself settle a doctrinal question.

9:4 - The bread once scattered

Κλάσμα is what has been broken, here the bread. The Greek says it was scattered over the mountains before being gathered. The image is usually explained by the grains that make up bread, but the word ‘grains’ does not occur in the sentence. ‘One loaf’ merely makes explicit what becomes one: it does not describe a harvest absent from the text.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.



The Last Supper and the Washing of Feet. Leaf from a royal psalter, England, c. 1250–1270. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.24.3. A medieval image of the meal and service to the disciples. [provenance]

Chapter X

1 After you have eaten your fill, give thanks in this way:

2 ‘We give You thanks, holy Father, for Your holy name which You made dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge, faith and immortality You made known to us through Jesus, Your servant. Yours is the glory for all ages!

3 You, almighty Master, created all things for Your name. You gave people food and drink to enjoy and to give You thanks; but to us You granted spiritual food and drink, together with eternal life, through Your servant.

4 Above all, we give You thanks because You are mighty. Yours is the glory for all ages!

5 Remember, Lord, Your Church: deliver it from all evil and lead it to perfection in Your love. You who sanctified it, gather it from the four winds into the kingdom You prepared for it. For Yours are the power and the glory for all ages!

6 May grace come and this world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come; if he is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.’

7 As for the prophets, allow them to give thanks as much as they wish.

Translation Choices

10:2–3 - The name and the servant

The prayer calls for the ‘name’ to be understood as a way of speaking of God Himself and His presence. ‘For Your name’ retains ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου; ‘in honour of Your name’ would be a more explanatory reading. Παῖς is rendered ‘servant’, as in chapter IX. Harris regularises the manuscript’s ‘your hearts’ to ‘our hearts’, according to the person saying the prayer.

10:4–5 - Praise and a rearranged sentence

In 10:4, Harris restores ‘to You’ before ‘the glory’. In paragraph 5, ‘You who sanctified it’ conveys the meaning of ‘it which has been sanctified’: turning it into a clause avoids a pile-up of pronouns without changing either the Church referred to or the kingdom prepared for it.

10:6 - God of David

The Jerusalem manuscript has θεῷ, ‘God’, and Harris retains this word. The formula ‘Son of David’ results from an editorial correction proposed to recover an acclamation known elsewhere; it is not treated as the text of another independent Greek manuscript of the Didache.

10:6–7 - Maranatha and freedom to pray

Maranatha transcribes an Aramaic expression. Depending on the division of the words, it may mean ‘Our Lord, come!’ or ‘Our Lord has come’. The context favours the call to come. The formula is retained to keep this uncertainty visible. ‘As much as they wish’ translates the breadth of ὅσα θέλουσιν without imposing an exact duration on the prophets’ prayers.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XI

1 Welcome, then, anyone who comes to teach you everything said above.

2 But if this teacher turns away from this teaching and brings you another that destroys it, do not listen to him. If, instead, his teaching increases righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as the Lord.

3 Concerning apostles and prophets, act as follows, in accordance with the precept of the Gospel.

4 Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as the Lord.

5 But he shall stay only one day, or the following day as well if necessary. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

6 When the apostle leaves, let him take nothing except bread to reach his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

7 You shall not test or judge a prophet speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit: every sin will be forgiven, but that sin will not be forgiven.

8 Yet not everyone who speaks under the inspiration of the Spirit is necessarily a prophet: he must also live in the Lord's manner. It is therefore by their way of life that the false prophet and the prophet will be recognised.

9 A prophet who, under the inspiration of the Spirit, asks for a meal to be prepared shall not eat it himself; otherwise, he is a false prophet.

10 Every prophet who teaches the truth but does not do what he teaches is a false prophet.

11 If a prophet recognised as genuine performs acts representing the mystery of the Church on earth, without teaching others to do what he himself does, you shall not judge him: it is for God to judge him. The prophets of old also acted in this way.

12 If someone says under the inspiration of the Spirit, 'Give me money or something else,' you shall not listen to him. But if he asks that others in need be given something, let no one judge him.

Translation Choices

11:5 - A correction needed for the sense

The manuscript omits εἰ μή, ‘except / only’, before ‘one day’. ‘He shall stay only one day’ follows their restoration by editors. Without them, the sentence would say not to stay one day, whereas what follows allows the next day if necessary.

11:7–9 - Inspiration, conduct and a meal

‘Under the inspiration of the Spirit’ renders ἐν πνεύματι, literally ‘in the Spirit’. ‘Prepare a meal’ renders the expression concerning a table, τράπεζα. The text does not specify for whom the meal is intended; its charitable character remains a possible explanation, not an added detail.

11:11 - A genuinely obscure passage

The phrase ποιῶν εἰς μυστήριον κοσμικὸν ἐκκλησίας can be rendered very literally as ‘acting with a view to the earthly mystery of the Church’. It does not allow the practice intended to be identified with certainty. The main translation adopts the explanation in terms of symbolic acts: ‘acts representing the mystery of the Church on earth’. Another reading understands a concrete enactment of the mystery, possibly through ascetic marital conduct. This choice makes the sentence readable but remains an explicitly identified interpretation, not a certain reconstruction of a lost practice.

11:11 - Judgement belongs to God

‘With God he has his judgement’ here means that it is for God to judge this prophet. The French wording is rearranged to make this relationship explicit, without turning the sentence into certain approval of his actions.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XII

1 Welcome everyone who comes in the Lord's name. Then test the person to know whom you are dealing with: you will know how to distinguish right from left.

2 If the newcomer is merely passing through, help him as much as you can; but he shall stay with you only two or three days, if necessary.

3 If he wishes to settle among you and has a trade, let him work to feed himself.

4 If he has no trade, make arrangements with discernment so that a Christian does not live idly among you.

5 If he refuses to act in this way, he is someone who trades on Christ. Beware of people of this kind.

Translation Choices

> 12:1 - Distinguishing right from left
>
> The Greek uses the image of right and left to speak of discernment after examination. It does not specify what the two sides represent. A freer translation would be 'you will know how to tell the difference'. The image is retained without assigning it a political meaning or identifying two communities.

> 12:3–5 - Work and trading on Christ
>
> 'Let him work to feed himself' renders the coordination 'let him work and eat', making its connection explicit. Χριστέμπορος (christemporos) combines Christ and trade: 'someone who trades on Christ' preserves this accusation in clear language. The text targets a refusal to work, expressed by 'he does not want to', and distinguishes this refusal from the lack of a trade mentioned earlier.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XIII

1 Every true prophet who wishes to settle among you deserves to be given food.

2 Likewise, the true teacher also deserves to receive his food, like the worker.

3 Therefore take the first fruits (the first portions) of all the produce of the press and threshing floor, as well as of oxen and sheep, and give them to the prophets: for they are your high priests.

4 But if you have no prophet, give to the poor.

5 If you prepare a batch of bread, take its first portion and give it according to the commandment.

6 Likewise, if you open a jar of wine or oil, take its first portion and give it to the prophets.

7 From your money, clothing and all your possessions, take the first portions as you think best, and give them according to the commandment.

Translation Choices

> 13:1–3 - Food, first fruits and high priests
>
> 'Deserves to receive his food' renders 'is worthy of his food'. First fruits are the first portions set aside; they do not necessarily mean a tenth. The threshing floor is where grain is threshed. Ἀρχιερεῖς does indeed mean 'high priests', a title the text here applies to prophets.

> 13:5–6 - Bread and a jar
>
> Σιτία may denote a food preparation based on grain. 'Batch of bread' adopts Hemmer's meaning; 'preparation of food' would be more general. Κεράμιον is an earthenware vessel: 'jar' does not impose a capacity.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XIV

1 On the Lord's day, gather together, break bread and give thanks, after confessing your faults, so that our sacrifice may be pure.

2 Let anyone who has a dispute with his companion not join you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be profaned.

3 For this is the sacrifice of which the Lord said: 'In every place and at every time, let a pure sacrifice be offered to Me; for I am a great king, says the Lord, and My name is wonderful among the nations.'

Translation Choices

14:1 - Our or your sacrifice

H54, transcribed by Harris, p. 9, has ἡμῶν, 'our', retained here. Bryennios and several editors correct it to ὑμῶν, 'your', as in 14:2; Hemmer translates it that way. This is a correction of the manuscript reading, not two independent Greek manuscripts.

14:1 - The day and confession

Κυριακὴ κυρίου literally means 'the Lord's dominical', with 'day' understood; 'the Lord's day' renders this expression. H54 reads προσεξομολογησάμενοι. Editors correct the prefix to προεξομολογησάμενοι, emphasising prior confession. The sequence 'after confessing' is the one adopted in the translation.

14:1–3 - The term sacrifice

Θυσία (thysia) means 'sacrifice' and is retained as such. The context links it to bread, thanksgiving and reconciliation. Rendering it simply as 'prayer' would insert an interpretation; deriving a full theory of sacrifice from this word alone would also exceed what is said.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XV

1 Therefore choose for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, gentle men, free from love of money, truthful and proven; for they too perform for you the service of prophets and teachers.

2 So do not despise them: they are among those you honour, together with the prophets and teachers.

3 Rebuke one another, not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel. Let no one speak to someone who wrongs another, and let him hear nothing from you until he repents.

4 As for your prayers, alms and all your actions, perform them as you find in the Gospel of our Lord.

Translation Choices

15:1 - Bishops, deacons and appointment

Ἐπίσκοποι literally means ‘overseers’ or ‘leaders’; διάκονοι, ‘servants’ or ‘ministers’. The traditional names ‘bishops’ and ‘deacons’ are retained without assuming that their functions already had all their later characteristics. Χειροτονήσατε may be translated ‘choose’, ‘elect’ or ‘appoint’: the verb does not describe a complete appointment procedure.

15:3 - An instruction to remain silent

The Greek retained by Harris has ἀκουέτω, ‘let him hear’. The sentence therefore asks that no word from the community reach the offender until he repents. The correction ἀκουέσθω would instead yield ‘let him not be listened to’. This second reading is an editor’s proposal, not the form adopted here.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.

Chapter XVI

1 Watch over your life. Let your lamps not go out and your garments remain tightened at the waist; be ready, for you do not know the hour at which our Lord will come.

2 Gather frequently, seeking what is good for your souls; for all your years of faith will avail you nothing if, at the last moment, you have not reached perfection.

3 For in the last days false prophets and corrupters will multiply; sheep will turn into wolves and love will turn into hatred.

4 As lawlessness advances, people will hate, persecute and betray one another. Then the one who leads the world astray will appear, presenting himself as Son of God. He will perform signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands. He will commit impious acts unlike any since the beginning of time.

5 Then humanity will pass through the fire of trial; many will succumb and perish, but those who have persevered in their faith will be saved by the very one who was cursed.

6 Then the signs of truth will appear: first a sign unfolding in heaven, then the sound of the trumpet, and third, the resurrection of the dead.

7 Not of everyone, however, but as it has been said: 'The Lord will come, and all the saints with Him.'

8 Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.

Translation Choices

16:1–2 - Clothing and time spent in faith

The expression 'loins girded' evokes a long garment held by a belt in readiness for action. 'Your garments remain tightened at the waist' conveys its concrete meaning. 'All your years of faith' expresses time spent in faith; the Greek gives no number of years.

16:4 - The one who leads the world astray

Κοσμοπλανής denotes someone who deceives or leads the world astray. The French ‘séducteur’, in its older sense of deceiver, risks being read in its modern romantic sense. ‘As Son of God’ describes this figure’s presentation; it does not identify him as Jesus.

16:5 - By the one who was cursed: the adopted reading

The manuscript has ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ καταθέματος, literally ‘by the very object of the curse’. ‘By the very one who was cursed’ adopts a personal reference, understood by Hemmer as referring to Christ. ‘By the curse itself’ or ‘by what was cursed’ remain possible renderings. Harris also notes a proposed correction: replacing ὑπ’, ‘by’, with ἀπ’, ‘out of / delivered from’, yielding ‘will be saved from this very curse’. This last meaning does not correspond to the preserved preposition. The personal identification in the main text is therefore an explicit interpretative choice, not an imposed certainty.

16:6 - An unfolding or an opening

Ἐκπέτασις (ekpetasis) expresses an unfolding or an opening. ‘A sign unfolding in heaven’ keeps the movement without naming an absent object. ‘The sign of heaven opening’ is another possible reading. The cross is a proposed interpretation, but the passage does not name it.

16:8 - The surviving ending

The Jerusalem manuscript stops after this sentence. The translation reproduces this abrupt ending without adding a final judgement or rewards taken from other works.

Sources: HARRIS1887 · HEMMER1907.



Angels Restrain the Four Winds. Leaf from a manuscript of Beatus's commentary on Revelation, Spain, c. 1180. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.232.7. A medieval illustration of Revelation 7:1–3, placed alongside the images of waiting and gathering. [provenance]

The manuscript in ten plates

Photographs published in J. Rendel Harris's 1887 edition, plates I–X. They reproduce folios 76r to 80v of manuscript H54. The letters r and v mean recto and verso, the two sides of a leaf. The first image shows only the lower part of folio 76r, where the Didache begins.

Textual sources

HARRIS1887. J. Rendel Harris, The Teaching of the Apostles, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1887.

Greek text, pages 1–10; commentary; plates I–X. Textual basis and facsimile used.

https://archive.org/details/cu31924029296114

HEMMER1907. H. Hemmer, G. Oger and A. Laurent, Les Pères apostoliques: Doctrine des Apôtres, Épître de Barnabé, Paris, Alphonse Picard et fils, 1907.

Early edition and translation used for comparison; linguistic notes and proposed corrections.

https://bkv.unifr.ch/fr/works/cpg-1753/versions/la-doctrine-des-douze-apotres-didache

LAKE1912. Kirsopp Lake, The Apostolic Fathers, volume I, 1912, Greek text of the Didache, CCEL transcription.

Additional consultation. Errors and omissions in the electronic transcription, notably IX.2 and X.5, are not treated as manuscript variants.

https://www.ccel.org/l/lake/fathers/didache.htm

Provenance of the illustrations

The captions identify the reproduced works and their periods. The images accompany the text; they are not presented as contemporary depictions of the events recounted.

The Sermon on the Mount

Giulio Clovio (1498–1578), miniature from the Towneley Lectionary, c. 1550 according to the catalogue. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division, MA 91 / MssCol 2557, fol. 6v, image 1610036. Public-domain reproduction supplied by the NYPL and distributed through Wikimedia Commons. The crop removes the modern photographic support and calibration chart; the miniature and its painted border are retained.

https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-e645-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

Christ Teaching

Christ Teaching, c. 1000, tempera, gold leaf and ink on parchment, 30.8 × 20 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 9. Google Art Project reproduction distributed through Wikimedia Commons as a faithful photograph of a public-domain work (PD-Art). Image resized without altering its content.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_Teaching_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Feeding the Hungry

Abraham Bosse, Feeding the Hungry, 1635; publisher Jean I Leblond. Etching and engraving, 25.8 × 32.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.49.15, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1926. Open Access image, public domain. Reproduction resized.

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/385967

The Baptism of Jesus

T'oros the Deacon, Baptism, one of Four miniatures of the life of Christ from a gospel book of 1311. Ink and pigments on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, group 2020.142.1–.4, Purchase, Giorgi Family Foundation Gift, 2020. Open Access image, public domain. Leaf reproduced without retouching its content.

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/751462

The Last Supper and the Washing of Feet

Manuscript Leaf with the Last Supper and the Washing of the Apostles' Feet, from a Royal Psalter. England, c. 1250–1270; tempera and gold on parchment. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.24.3, Rogers Fund, 1922. Open Access image, public domain. The scene is not presented as an original illustration of the Didache's prayers.

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466370

Angels Restrain the Four Winds

Leaf from a Beatus Manuscript: Angels Restrain the Four Winds; the Angel Ascends from the Rising Sun. Spain, c. 1180; tempera, gold and ink on parchment. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.232.7. Purchase, The Cloisters Collection, Rogers and Harris Brisbane Dick Funds, and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1991. Open Access image, public domain.

https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466202

Folio 76r - lower part

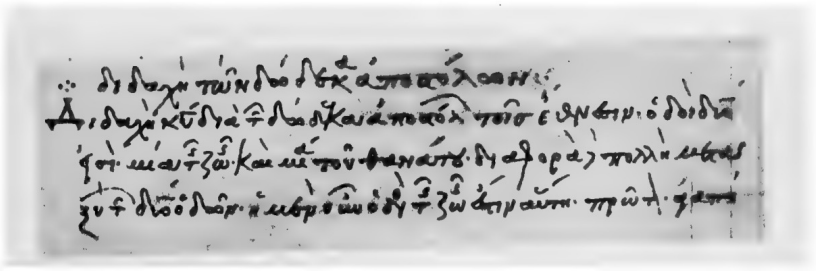


PLATE I. Fol. 76 a

H54 · 76r · Harris 1887, plate I. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 76v

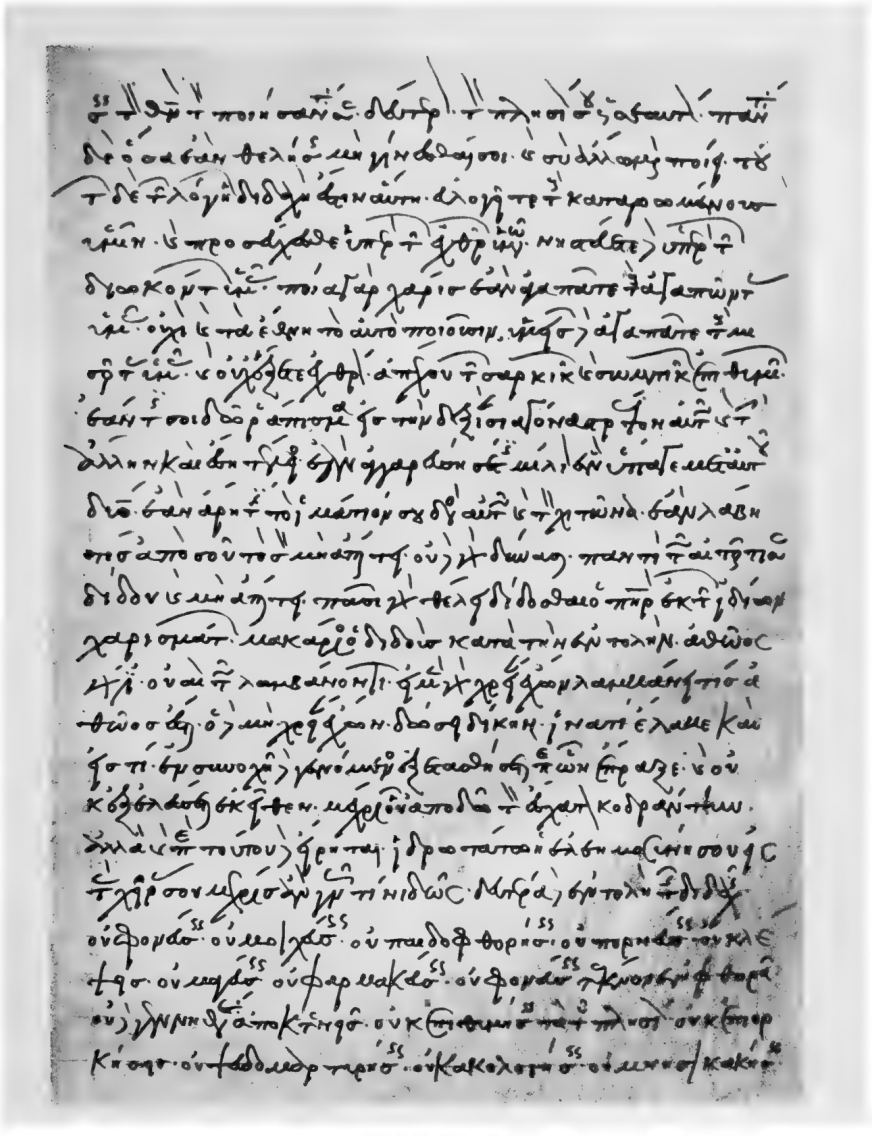


PLATE II. Fol. 76 b

H54 · 76v · Harris 1887, plate II. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 77r

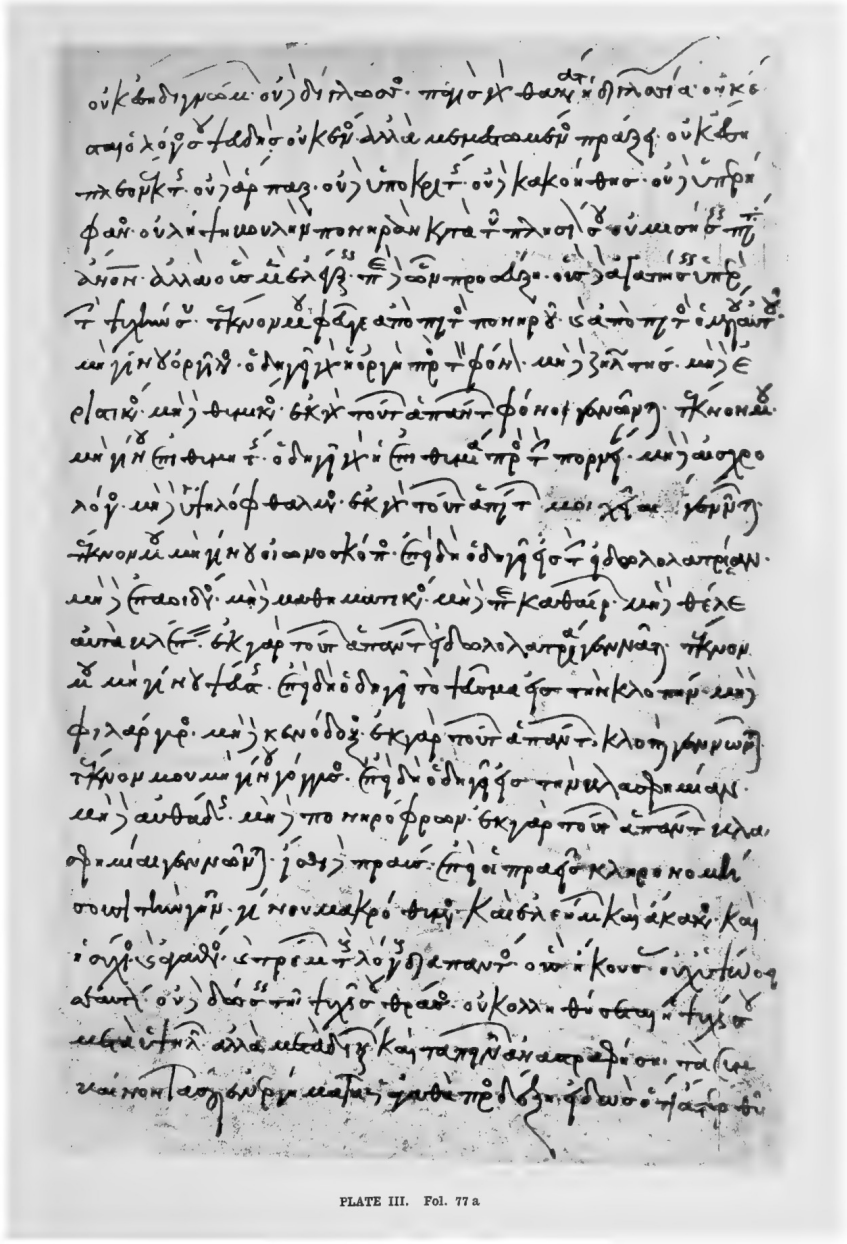


PLATE III. Fol. 77 a

H54 · 77r · Harris 1887, plate III. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 77v

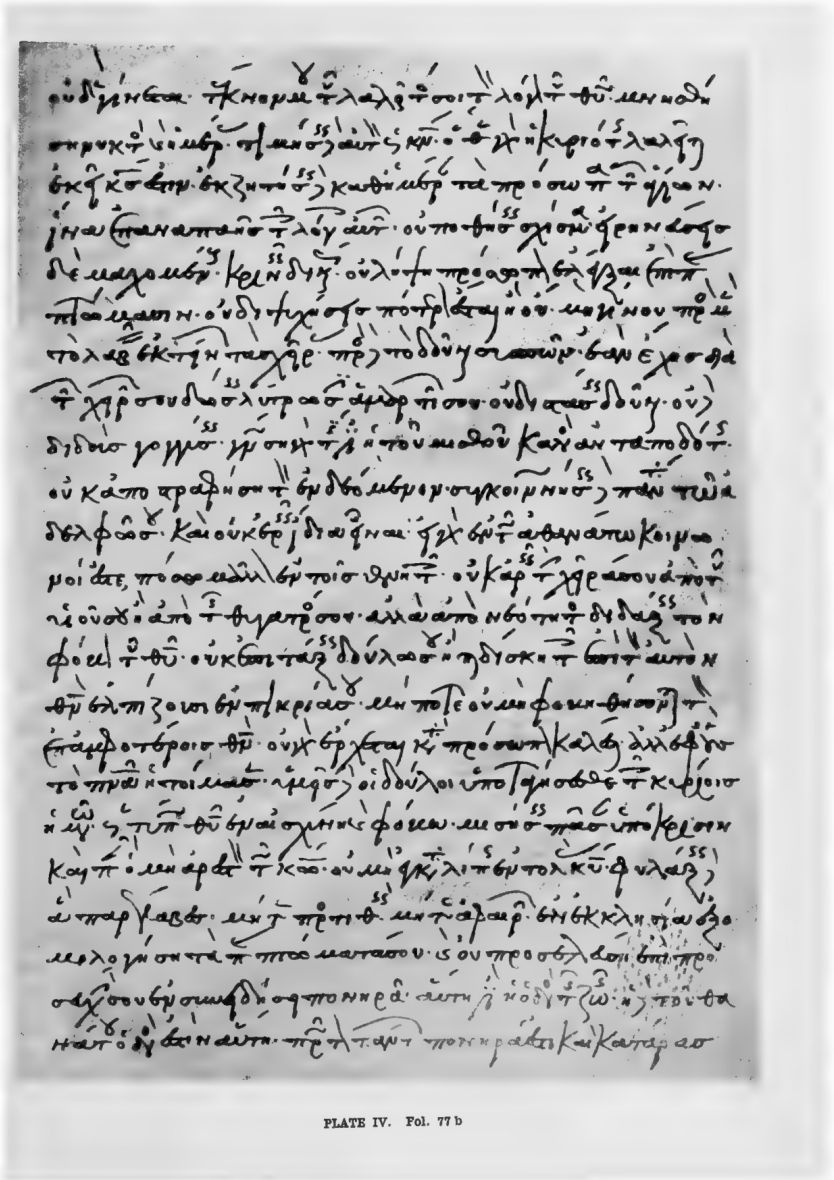


PLATE IV. Fol. 77 b

H54 · 77v · Harris 1887, plate IV. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 78r

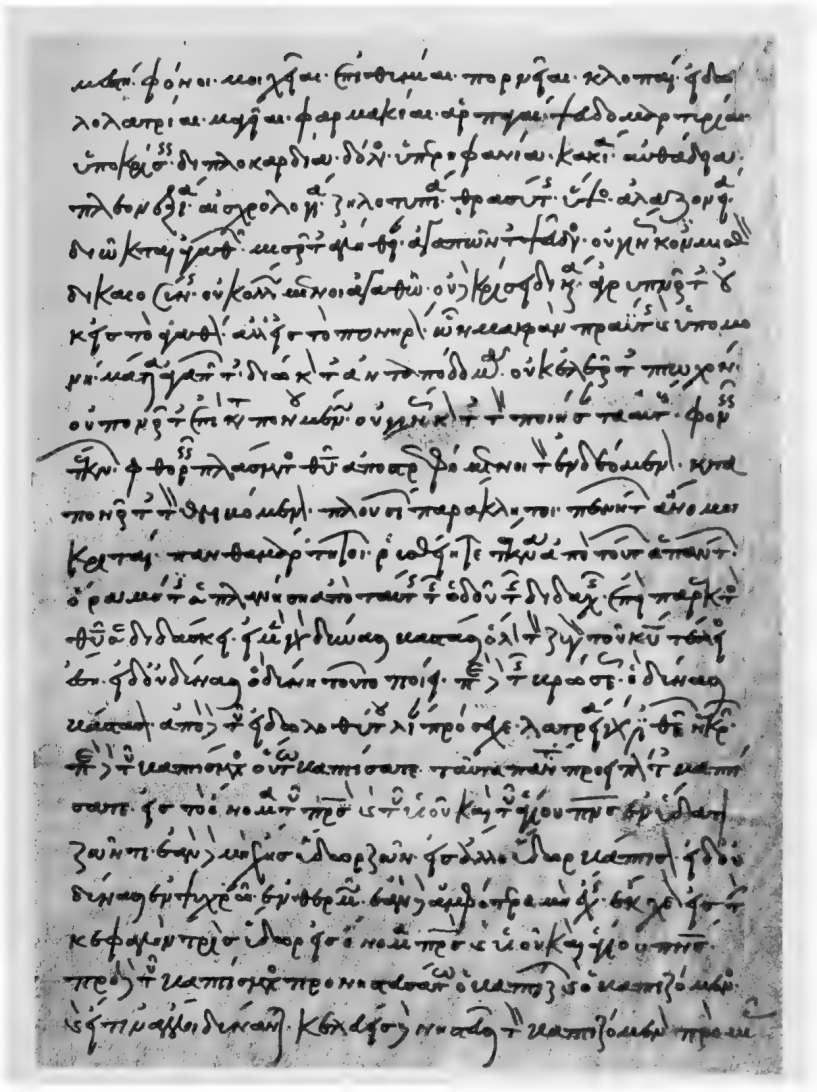


PLATE V. Fol. 78 a

H54 · 78r · Harris 1887, plate V. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 78v

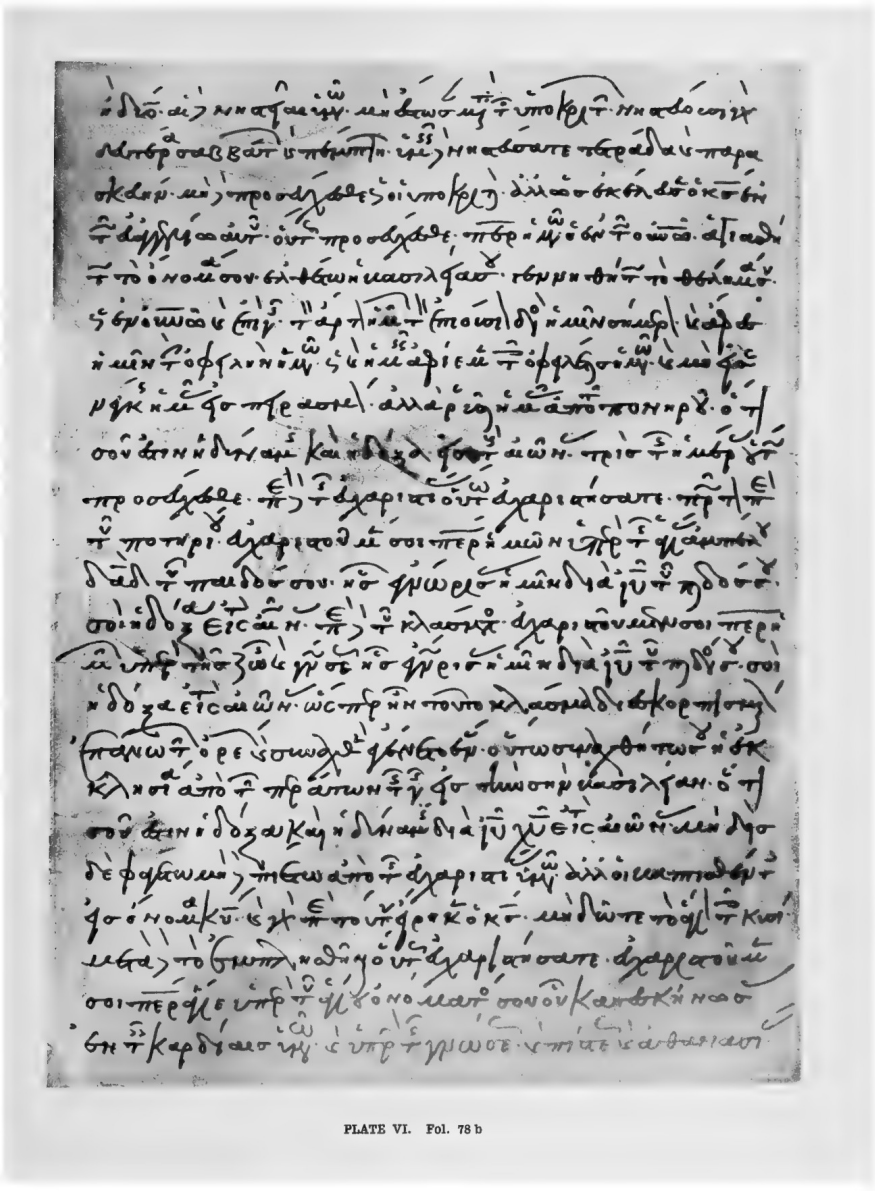


PLATE VI. Fol. 78 b

H54 · 78v · Harris 1887, plate VI. Early photograph of the manuscript.

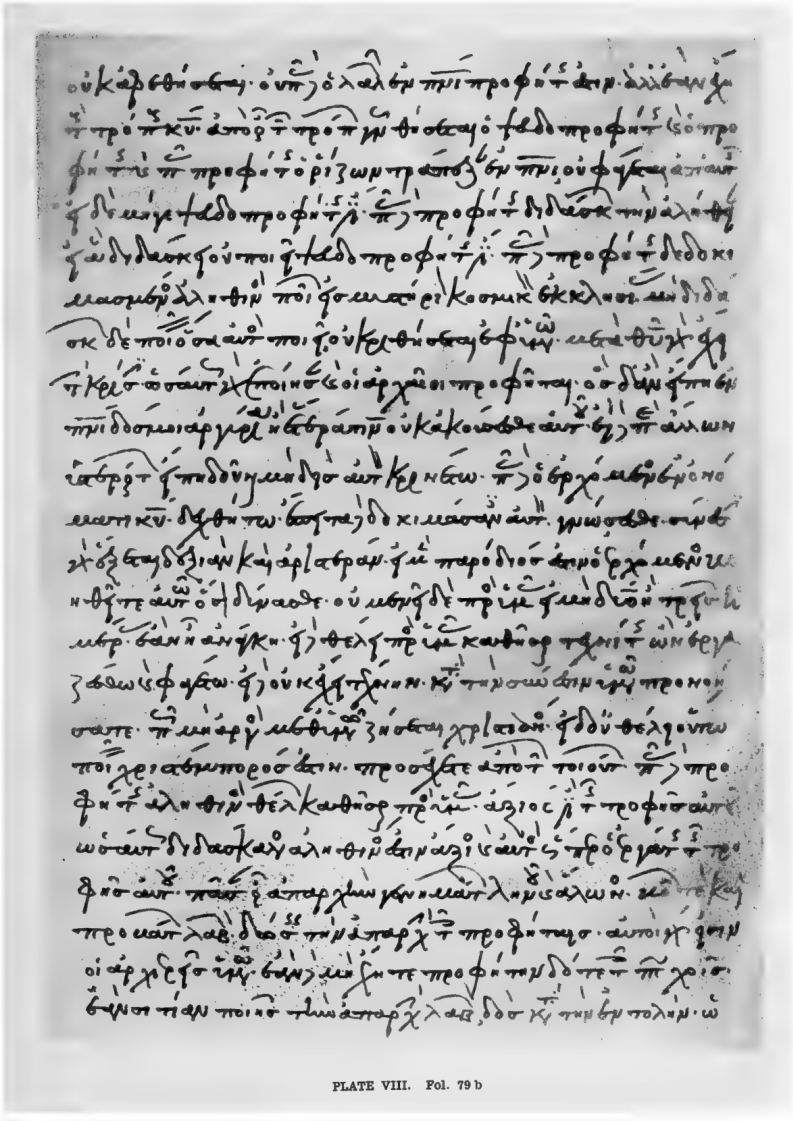
Folio 79r



PLATE VII. Fol. 79 a

H54 · 79r · Harris 1887, plate VII. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 79v



H54 · 79v · Harris 1887, plate VIII. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 80r



PLATE IX. Fol. 80 a

H54 · 80r · Harris 1887, plate IX. Early photograph of the manuscript.

Folio 80v



PLATE X. Fol. 80 b

H54 · 80v · Harris 1887, plate X. Early photograph of the manuscript.