

St. Jerome

**Seven Letters: English Translations of  
Letters 93-94, and 150-154<sup>1</sup>**

by  
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## Introduction

Complete translations of the letters of St Jerome exist in French and Spanish, but not in English. On investigation, however, it seems nearly all of Jerome's letters have indeed already been translated into English. The letters included here are those for which no English translation seems to exist.

The Latin text used is that of Isidor Hilberg (1918) in CSEL 55 and 56, except for "letter 150" which is taken from the Vallarsi edition. Hilberg's medieval spellings have been removed, and some additional punctuation added.

"Letter 150" has a strange history. It has no connection whatever with St Jerome, nor is it pseudepigraphical. It is in fact letter 81 of Procopius of Gaza, one of a number written by that Greek author in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD to a friend of his, also called Hieronymus. It appears in the Benedictine edition (vol. 3, 1706)<sup>2</sup> of Jerome's letters, but it is not included in the list of letters. Rather it appears on a separate page right at the end, with a heading stating that it is spurious. The editor, Dom Jean Martianay, gives the original Greek text, with a Latin translation, and states that he is reprinting this from an earlier publication by Isaac Vossius. The Latin translation is presumably by Vossius. The next edition, that of Domenico Vallarsi (1734, vol. 1)<sup>3</sup>, brings it into the list of letters of Jerome, and assigns it the number 150, the last of the letter. Vallarsi also gives the Greek and Latin in parallel, and states that the letter is spurious, but that he has included it only so that his book includes

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<sup>2</sup> Accessed online at <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=tllX5j-ieokC>

<sup>3</sup> Accessed online at [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Sancti\\_Eusebii\\_Hieronymi\\_Stridonensis\\_Pr/py9oAAAACAAJ](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Sancti_Eusebii_Hieronymi_Stridonensis_Pr/py9oAAAACAAJ)

everything in the Benedictine edition. In Jean-Paul Migne's reprint of Vallarsi (1845, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 22) the Greek is silently omitted, but square-brackets appear around a set of words, with a note claiming falsely that these are missing in the Greek. The other notes are copied from Vallarsi, including the note referencing the Benedictine edition. The whole process testifies to the power of the publishing industry, ensuring that their edition is "more complete" than its predecessors. In the critical edition by Hilberg, the numbering of 150 is retained but the bogus letter text is indignantly (and correctly) omitted.

Letters 151-154 were first published by D. de Bruyne, *Revue Bénédictine* 27 (1910), p. 1-11,<sup>4</sup> from three manuscripts in the Escorial. They are given here from Hilberg's edition.

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<sup>4</sup> Accessed online: [https://archive.org/details/revue-benedictine\\_1910\\_27](https://archive.org/details/revue-benedictine_1910_27)

## Seven Letters

### 93. Response of the synod of Jerusalem to the letter of the superior synod of Theophilus.<sup>5</sup>

Eulogius, John, and the other bishops who were present in Jerusalem on the holy day of the Encaenia,<sup>6</sup> to the noble and honourable and most blessed bishop Theophilus.

You already know, O noble and all-praiseworthy Father, even before our letter, that almost all of Palestine, by the grace of Christ, is free from the scandal of the heretics, except for a few who, acquiescing in the errors of Apollinaris, are reading the harmful writings of their teacher. And if only, through the prayers of the saints, the serpents of the Jews, the incredible foolishness of the Samaritans, and the most open impieties of the pagans would not harass us, the multitude of whom completely close their ears to the truth of our preaching and in the likeness of wolves circle the flock of Christ. And they impose no small watch and labour on us, while we are unwilling to guard the sheep of the Lord, for fear that they are torn to pieces by them.<sup>7</sup>

And because Your Holiness has written to us that certain persons have been found in Egypt who want to introduce some pestilential teachings of Origen into the churches and deceive the hearts of the unwary, we have deemed it necessary to signify to Your Holiness that this kind of preaching is foreign to our ears.<sup>8</sup> For we have never heard anyone teaching that the kingdom of Christ must ever come to an end — far be this teaching from the ears of the faithful, as the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary about He who was about to be born, the Christ, and said, “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33) —nor that the Devil,<sup>9</sup> released from all the vices of sin, might obtain the dignity which he had before he fell, so that both he and Christ will be brought under the sole rule of God the Father; for those who believe that will go into the darkness which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels; and if there are any who have handed down in their treatises that the Son is truth compared to us, but compared to the Father, is a lie; and who say that, what Peter and Paul are to the Saviour, this is what the Only-begotten Son and Word of God is, compared with the Father; and — to briefly state our opinion, (and it is not necessary to repeat the same again) — whoever preaches these things, which your Beatitude signifies must be condemned, and which are at variance with that faith which our Fathers wrote with pious understanding in the city of Nicaea, let them and their teachings be anathema to the church, along with Apollinaris, who, going against the Holy Scriptures, says that an imperfect man was taken up by our Lord Jesus Christ, and not that the full assumption of him, both of soul and body, was given salvation. For we, following in the footsteps of the Fathers and the learned words of the

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<sup>5</sup> Letters 93 and 94 are translations by Jerome of official responses to letter 92, the letter of the synod of Alexandria in 400 condemning Origenism. The responses are addressed to the Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria.

<sup>6</sup> Encaenia was the 8-day celebration of the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on September 13, 335.

<sup>7</sup> The sense is perhaps that the bishops are so busy rooting out heretics, which is what they want to do – or what Theophilus wants them to do – that they cannot protect their congregations from Jews, Samaritans and pagans. Possibly there is a bit of a jab at Theophilus here.

<sup>8</sup> The bishops seem to feel that Theophilus will blame them if he can.

<sup>9</sup> Lit. “Zabulus” in Hilberg’s edition, from “diabolus” via “zabolus,” a later Latin spelling. Probably Jerome wrote “diabolus”.

Scriptures, teach and preach in the churches, and confess, that the Trinity is uncreated, eternal, of a single essence in three subsistences and one Godhead.<sup>10</sup>

But if Your Reverence separates anyone from communion, either on account of their depraved teaching, or for other causes, just as you have deigned to indicate to us, know that they will not be received in our churches until you yourself have granted them pardon for their repentance, if nevertheless they are willing to condemn these perverse things. Greet all who along with you are in the priestly order.

#### Latin text:

XCIII. (RESPONSUM SYNODI HIERSOLYMITANAE AD SUPERIOREM THEOPHILI SYNODICAM EPISTULAM.)

Domino et honorabili, beatissimo episcopo Theophilo Eulogius, Johannes et caeteri episcopi, qui Hierosolymis in sancta encaeniorum die repperti sunt.

Nosti, Domine cuncta laudabiliter pater, et ante nostras litteras, quod omnis propemodum Palaestina gratia Christi ab haereticorum aliena sit scandalo, praeter paucos, qui Apollinaris erroribus acquiescentes, noxia praeceptoris sui scripta meditantur. Atque utinam sanctorum orationibus, non nos inquietarent Judaici serpentes, et Samaritanorum incredibilis stultitia, atque Gentilium apertissimae impietates, quorum turba quam plurima et ad veritatem praedicationis omnino auribus obturantes, in similitudinem luporum gregem Christi circuientes, non parvas nobis excubias, et laborem incutiunt, dum nolumus oves Domini custodire, ne ab his dilacerentur!

Et quia scripsit nobis Sanctitas tua, repertos quosdam in Aegypto, qui et Origenis dogmatibus pestifera quaedam velint introducere in ecclesiis, et simplicium corda decipere, necessarium duximus significare Sanctitudini tuae, quia istius modi praedicatio a nostris auribus aliena sit. Neque enim audivimus umquam docentes, quod Christi regnum aliquando sit terminandum — absit hoc a fidelium auribus, Gabriel angelo loquente ad Mariam de eo, qui nasciturus est Christus, atque dicente: “Regnabit super domum Jacob in aeternum et regni eius non erit finis.” (Luke 1:33) — neque, quod Zabulus cunctis peccatorum vitiis liberatus dignitatem obtineat, quam habuit, antequam caderet, ita ut et ipse, et Christus sub unum Dei Patris redigantur imperium. Qui enim ita credunt, ituri sunt in tenebras, quae praeparatae sunt Diabolo et angelis eius, et si qui sunt, qui in suis tractatibus tradiderunt, quod Filius nobis sit comparatus veritas, Patri conlatus mendacium, et quod est, inquit, Petrus et Paulus, ad Salvatorem, hoc est Unigenitus Filius, et Dei verbum,

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<sup>10</sup> The transmitted text is corrupt at this point. “unius esse” leaves the question of what “unius” describes. The next bit is “in tribus subsistentiis” meaning “in three hypostases” but Latin would later usually use “persona”, with “three persons”. The sentence ends with “odorantes” or “adorantes”. Hilberg prints “odorantes”, and is forced to suppose a lacuna before it, which he marks with “\*\*\*”. This resolves the problem by suggesting that the word belongs to an otherwise lost sentence. Likewise “adorantes”, “worshipping” looks like a scribe’s guess derived from the impossible “odorantes”.

Vallarsi proposed that “substantiae” should be read here, “of a substance/essence”, matching “unius”, which is what I have translated. Here is the note by Vallarsi:

‘Read, at your own risk, “substances”, for what we have left from the Mss. “adorantes.” The similarity of the letters composing each word, which you will more easily see if you describe them in capital letters, as they call them, and perhaps the earlier letters, which were also worn out in the manuscript, have completely deceived the inexperienced copyist. But both the sense, which will by no means be otherwise clear, and the very words “of the one,” which would not have a substantive name to which it refers, and finally “adorantes” itself, which is a certain defect in this place, not only protect our emendation, but also vindicate it.’

comparatus Patri et — ut breviter nostram sententiam declarem, (neque necesse est eadem rursus iterare) — quicumque haec praedicat, quae Beatitudo tua damnanda significat, et quae discordant ab ea fide, quam pio sensu Patres nostri in urbe Nicaena scripserunt, et ipsi et dogmata eorum sint ecclesiae anathema, cum Apollinare, qui contra sanctas scripturas vadens, imperfectum hominem dicit a Domino Jesu Christo nostro esse susceptum, et non plenam assumptionem eius et animae et corporis salutem datam. Nos enim insistentes Patrum vestigiis et scripturarum vocibus eruditi, docemus et praedicamus in ecclesiis, et confitemur, Trinitatem increatam, aeternam, unius esse in tribus subsistentiis, et in una Deitate \*\*\* odorantes [adorantes?].

Si quos autem tua Reverentia, vel propter dogmatum pravitatem, vel propter alias causas a communione sejungit, sicut nobis indicare dignatus es, scias in nostris ecclesiis non recipiendos, donec tu paenitentiae eorum, si tamen voluerint damnare perversa, veniam dederis. Saluta omnes, qui tecum sunt sacerdotales gradu.

#### **94. Letter of Dionysius, bishop of Lydda, to Theophilus**

Dionysius, Bishop of Lydda, to the most blessed Lord Theophilus.

1. Our good God, who is glorified in the councils of the saints, [Ps.88:2] and prepares for Himself friends and prophets in every age, if you look at the state of our generation, has also raised up , O most blessed lord and brother, as a champion for the right faith, that you might both overthrow with apostolic rigor the heretical superstition flowing from the fountain of the pagans, and that you might bring back the human race, which is drawn away by many errors, and the scattered flock of Christ to its shepherd; to He who gave his life for all at the time of his passion, so that we who believe can now say, “Truly God is among us.”[1 Cor.14:25] For who is so foolish or impious as not to confess that you have given the greatest gift to the world, by casting out the most wicked disciples of the blasphemous Origen, lest the Church of Christ be polluted by these? The cancer and incurable leprosy of these have so pervaded the hearts of many that even those who pretend to repent are joining perjury to heresy, and they do not cease to hate us because they are forced to be silent.

2. So be strong and act manfully,[1 Chron. 22:13] O servant of God, and hunt down the fictions of Origen to the very end, so that unwary minds cannot be taken in under the shadow of knowledge by his seductive charms, and a schism made in the body of Christ. For all who understand the things above eagerly proclaim you as Father, a hope, and a crown of the faith, because you have skewered with the sword of the gospel both the teacher of Arius and his disciple. The brothers of my cell in the town greet and the brothers who are with you.

#### **Latin text:**

XCIV. (EPISTULA DIONYSII, LIDDENSIS EPISCOPI, AD THEOPHILUM.)

Domino beatissimo Theophilo Dionysius, Liddensis episcopus.

1. Bonus Deus noster, qui in conciliis sanctorum glorificatur, [Ps. 88:2] et amicos sibi, ac prophetas singulis temporibus praeparat, si ordinem nostrae generationis aspicias, et , Domine frater beatissime, aemulatorem rectae fidei suscitavit, ut et superstitionem haereticam de gentilium fonte manantem apostolico rigore everteres, et humanum genus, quod multis trahitur erroribus, ac dispersum gregem Christi ad suum pastorem reduceres; qui tempore passionis idcirco pro cunctis dedit animam suam, ut nunc possimus credentes dicere: “Vere Deus in nobis est.”[1 Cor. 14:”5] Quis

enim ita aut stultus, aut impius est, ut non confiteatur, te maximum orbi dedisse munus, ejectione sceleratissimis blasphemi Origenis discipulis, ne ecclesia Christi ab his polluat, quorum cancer, et insanabilis lepra sic multorum corda pervasit, ut etiam, qui simulant paenitentiam, haeresi jungant perjurium; et nos, quia tacere coguntur, odire non desinant?

2. Confortare igitur et viriliter age,[1 Paral. 22:13] Dei famule, et usque in finem Origenis figmenta perseguere, ne simplicum mentes sub umbra scientiae blandis eius capiantur illecebris, et fiat in corpore Christi scissurae divisio. Omnes enim qui sapiunt, quae sursum sunt, te Patrem, et spem, et coronam fidei alacres profitentur, quod Arii magistrum, et discipulum eius evangelico mucrone confoderis. Fratres cellulae meae oppido et salutant, et fratres qui tecum sunt.

## 150. From Procopius to Jerome.<sup>11</sup>

150. Procopius to Jerome.

Once again it's all Egypt and luxury [for you],<sup>12</sup> and as for us, we are poverty-stricken to you, and there is no regard for those left behind. That is nothing, you would only laugh, watching the Nile flowing with gold. Even if you raise your eyebrow still higher, the fact is that we will endure your scorn. For there will come a time when you will see Elusa once more, and you will weep for the sand scattered by the winds and devastating the vines down to the roots. There are [only] some strange nymphs (springs) coming with sea-water, and Jupiter the rain-giver is there nowhere. Then indeed will I myself laugh and mock fate. As for you, who today think me lowly, you will then think me blessed. Still, while the Nile allows you to live in pleasure, just write; and call us "pygmies" and "just like those things which creep along the earth". For thus both we will enjoy you writing, and I will bear your pride more gently in anticipation of the future.

### Latin text:

EPISTOLA CL. PROCOPII AD HIERONYMUM.

Procopius Hieronymo.

Iterum Aegyptus et mollities, nosque tibi pauperes, et absentium ratio nulla. Nihil est istud, rideas modo, auro fluentem spectans Nilum. Etiam si magis etiamnum attollas supercilium, contemptum omnino patiemur. Erit enim tempus cum iterum videbis Elusam, et flebis arenam disiectam ventis et radice tenuis vastantem vites. Peregrinae aliquae et mari advenientes Nymphae et Jupiter<sup>13</sup> pluvius ibi nusquam. Tunc quidem ipse ridebo et subsannabo fortunam. Tu vero me nunc abjectum, tum beatum putabis. Verumtamen dum tibi Nilus deliciis vivere permittit, scribe tantummodo, et nos minutos et velut quosdam humo prorepentes appelles.

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<sup>11</sup> See introduction for the details of this "letter."

<sup>12</sup> The letter of Jerome must have boasted in a condescending way of the good fortune of the writer and the luxuries of Egypt.

<sup>13</sup> The *Patrologia Latina* 22, col. 1224 is in error at this point. The text places "vites... Jupiter" in square brackets, preceded by note f, which reads, "In the Greek text of this letter, a gap of not a few words has crept in, namely of those which correspond to the place enclosed by brackets in the Latin text, and they read as follows:...". But the PL is reprinting Vallarsi, who is reprinting Martianay, and no such omission is present in the Greek text, nor in the Latin translation, in either of them.

## 151. To Riparius.<sup>14</sup>

Jerome, to Riparius, truly holy lord, and a brother worthy of all respect.

1. From the reports of the many who come here, I have learned that you have fought bravely against the heretics and that you have triumphed in the battles of the Lord. For not only have they polluted Gaul and Italy with their deceptions and perjuries, but also the most famous city of Palestine, having a patron,<sup>15</sup> and the partner of his own master, the one whom the Lord Jesus killed with the spirit of his mouth [2 Thess. 2:8] and has left as an example for everyone of how dangerous it is to resist the Catholic faith and to try to overturn the foundations of the Church.

2. But where in the world your holiness may be in the future, or whether you will still dwell in the city, I cannot know, but let us nourish our friendship begun in Christ with frequent letters to each other, so that at least our rare annual correspondence does not cease. For us, the sudden death of the holy and venerable virgin of Christ Eustochium has saddened us greatly and it has almost changed the state of our way of living, because we are also unable to do many things that we would like, and the weakness of old age overcomes the fervour of our spirit.

3. The holy brothers who are with me greet you most warmly. I recommend to your favour my holy son, the deacon Theon, and I ask you to send me familiar writings about your entire way of living and state, and where you plan to live. May the mercy of Christ, our God, keep you safe and mindful of me, O truly holy and worthy brother.

### Latin text:

CLI. AD RIPARIUM.

Domino vere sancto et suscipiendo fratri Ripario Hieronymus.

1. Fortiter te contra haereticos dimicasse et domini vicisse certamina multorum advenientium relatione cognovi. Non solum enim Gallias et Italiam, sed et Palaestinae urbem celeberrimam suis fraudibus perjuriisque maculant, habentes patronum et consortem magistri sui, quem dominus Jesus interfecit spiritu oris sui et omnibus reliquit exemplum, quam periculosum sit catholicae fidei resistere, et ecclesiae cupere fundamenta subvertere.

2. Tua autem sanctitas ubinam sit futura vel utrum adhuc in urbe versetur, scire non possum, ut saltim rara scriptio per annos singulos non pereat, sed coeptas in Christo amicitias mutuis epistulis frequentemus: nos sanctae (ac) venerabilis virginis Christi Eustochiae repentina dormitio admodum contristavit et paene conversationis nostrae mutavit statum, dum quoque, quae volumus, multa non possumus et mentis ardorem superat imbecillitas senectutis.

3. Sancti fratres, qui mecum sunt, plurimum te salutant, sanctum filium meum Theonem diaconem commendo dignationi tuae et quaeso, ut mihi super omni conversatione et statu tuo, vel ubi disponas vivere, familiaria scripta transmittas; incolumem (te) et memorem mei Christi, dei nostri, tueatur clementia, domne vere sancte et suscipiende frater.

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<sup>14</sup> Letters 151-154 were only discovered by De Bruyne in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are not found in the Vallarsi edition reprinted by Migne in the Patrologia Latina vol. 22.

<sup>15</sup> A powerful political protector.

## 152. To Riparius.

To the truly holy lord and most worthy and longed-for brother Riparius, from Jerome.

The arrival of the holy and venerable priest Innocent has afforded me much joy, because he both delivered your letter to me, and also he demonstrated with his own words that that you are busy in a zeal of faith. But do not trouble yourself too much about the raging of Julian and his associates along with the rubbish of Pelagius, and the loquacity of Caelestius, one of whom blasphemes with his own verbosity, the other speaks with words begged from others. Nor am I moved by their writings, which I do not know, although I do know that these have indeed a wretched purpose of blasphemy, but lack strength of wisdom and eloquence, and especially they lack knowledge of the holy scriptures (which are the foundation of the faith), the law of the ecclesiastical court, and the authority of the ancients. However if they do write something and it comes into my hands, (not to speak arrogantly, but to be equal to their insanity), I suppose that all their volumes with the same verbosity, over which they have burned the midnight oil, will have to be refuted with perhaps a single session of late-night study and a single dictation. But in urging me to write, you place a heavy burden on a little old donkey. For both sharpness of mind and strength of body have utterly deserted us, which we have lost through the constant weakening caused by illness. May the mercy of Christ our God keep you safe and mindful of me, O truly holy lord and much longed-for brother.

### Latin text:

CLII. AD RIPARIUM.

Domino vere sancto et multum suscipiendo et desiderando fratri Ripario Hieronymus.

Multum mihi gaudii praestitit sancti et venerabilis Innocenti presbyteri adventus, quod et tuas mihi litteras tradidit et te fidei calore ferventem etiam suis sermonibus indicavit. De furore autem Juliani et sociorum eius Pelagiique naeniis, et garrulitate Caelestii magnopere non cures, quorum alter propria verbositate blasphemat, alius emendicatis verbis loquitur, nec eorum scriptis, quae ignoro, moveor, cum sciam voluntatem quidem blasphemiae pessimam, sed vires prudentiae et eloquentiae non habere, praecipueque sanctarum scripturarum notitiam, quae sunt fidei firmamentum, et ius ecclesiastici fori, auctoritasque maiorum; tamen, si scripserint et in meas aliquid pervenerit manus, ut non superbe loquar, sed sim par insaniae eorum, omnia elucubrata volumina eadem verbositate et una forsitan lucubratiuncula et dictatione confutanda reor. Quod autem ad scribendum cohortaris, grave asello vetulo imponis onus; nos enim et acumen ingenii et vires corporis penitus deseruerunt, quas assidua morborum debilitate perdidimus; incolumem te et mei memorem Christi, Dei nostri, tueatur clementia, domine vere sancte et multum desiderande frater.

## 153. To Boniface.

Jerome, to the most blessed Pope Boniface.<sup>16</sup>

Your Reverence cannot doubt how much joy I have felt [on learning of] your ordination as pontiff, when the holy priest Innocent brought both the news and the letter of your beatitude, since we were once brought together by a shared disposition and began to love each other before we knew each other, and each inward man is so united to another that it is unaware of the failings of the

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Boniface I.

outward man. This [news] alone has mitigated our sorrow for the passing of the holy and venerable virgin of Christ Eustochium, except that, even in this, our sadness is no less because she is deprived with us of so much joy. For with what joy would she have rejoiced, if she had won the right to hear this while in the body; with what prayers and thanksgivings would she have implored the mercy of Christ, had she learned that her holy and venerable parent was the successor of the apostolic see!

The younger Paula, who was brought up in your hands, has been imposed upon our necks like a symbol of the holy and venerable memory of Laeta. Whether we are able to bear this burden is for the Lord to know, whom the future does not deceive; and there is no strength in us except for our holy purpose, which is confirmed, not by the outcome of things but by the longing of the soul. I beseech your Reverence, that you may always consider us as your own, and know that we rejoice especially in the advancement and honour of your Reverence. Certainly the holy and venerable priest Innocent will be able to tell your Beatitude how much joy we have taken even in that very sorrow, and how, if it were possible, we would prefer to adhere to your embraces.

[Again.]

What I write to your Beatitude I write in my own hand. Let the heretics feel that you are an enemy of faithlessness. Let them hate, so that you may be more beloved by Catholics. Be the executor and enforcer of the decision of your predecessors, and don't allow heretics to be patrons and partners in the episcopal name.

**Latin text:**

CLIII. AD BONIFATIUM.

Beatissimo papae Bonifatio Hieronymus.

Quantum gaudii super ordinatione pontificatus tui, sancto Innocentio presbytero et nuntium et litteras tuae beatitudinis perferente, susceperim, ambigere non potest tua reverentia, cum olim mutuo jungamur affectu et ante coeperimus nos amare quam nosse, interiorque homo ita sibi conjunctus sit, ut exterioris hominis damna non sentiat, haec sola res dolorem nostrum super dormitione sanctae ac venerabilis virginis Christi Eustochiae mitigavit, nisi quod et in hoc tristitia non minor sit, quod tanto nobiscum privata sit gaudio, quo enim illa, si hoc in corpore constituta audire meruisset, gestisset gaudio, quibus precibus et gratiarum actione Christi clementiam flagitasset, quod sanctum ac venerabilem parentem suum apostolicae cathedrae successorem esse didicisset! Infans Paula, quae in tuis nutrita est manibus, quasi pignus sanctae ac venerabilis memoriae Laetae nostris est imposita cervicibus. Quod onus utrum ferre valeamus, Domini est scire, quem futura non fallunt, in nobisque nihil opis est praeter sanctam voluntatem, quae non rerum effectu sed desiderio animi conprobatur. Obsecro reverentiam tuam, ut quasi ad tuos semper adscribas et nos proprie super profectu et honore reverentiae (tuae) gaudere cognoscas. Certe sanctus ac venerabilis Innocentius presbyter beatitudini tuae poterit indicare, quantum in ipso maerore gaudii ceperimus et quomodo, si fieri posset, tuis cuperemus haerere complexibus.

[Item.]

Propria manu quod scribo, beatitudini tuae scribo. Sentiant haeretici inimicum te esse perfidiei et oderint, ut a catholicis plus ameris, et executor atque completor sis sententiae praecessorum tuorum nec patiaris in episcopali nomine haeticorum patronos atque consortes.

## 154. To Donatus.

To the holy and most worthy lord Donatus, from Jerome.

1. It is written, “Many are the scourges of sinners”, [Ps. 31: 10] which we do testify that we have both deservedly endured and do endure, provided that they lead to our future salvation. But that the hearts of heretics cannot be cleansed, I am a witness, for it has been decreed to me to never believe in their repentance; because they feign charity to this end, to destroy by means of fake friendships those whom they could not kill through enmity. Their hearts are full of poison and, as you have most aptly said, neither can “the Ethiopian change his skin nor the leopard his spots” [Jer. 13:23]. Yet we do believe that, in the mercy of Christ my lord, the holy and venerable bishop Boniface, will root them out, whom in the spirit of Christ we must pardon if, at the outset, he offers charity and tries to save through his own mercifulness and gentleness those who nevertheless can never be healed. I will say frankly what I feel: with these heretics, that saying of David must be applied: “In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land.” [Ps. 100:8] They must be destroyed, spiritually killed, cut off with the sword of Christ, they who will never receive health through plasters and gentle treatments.<sup>17</sup>

2. The passing of the holy and venerable lady Eustochium has grieved us deeply. You know that she gave up her spirit in the very heat of confession, and she preferred to abandon her family estate and her home and endure honourable exile rather than be stained by communion with heretics.

3. I pray that you will greet my holy son Mercator on my behalf, and that you will admonish him to show the fervour of his faith and to shun those tainted by any suspicion of the Pelagian heresy. I especially beseech you to greet my holy sons Marcus, Januarius, Primus, Restitutus, and Trajan, all my fellow soldiers in the Lord. The ruin of others was for them the cause of their salvation. As for me, worn out by grief and extreme age, and broken down by frequent illnesses, I can scarcely utter these few words.

### Latin text:

CLIV. AD DONATUM.

Domino sancto et multum suscipiendo Donato Hieronymus.

1. Scriptum est: multa flagella peccatorum, quae nos et merito sustinuisse et sustinere testamur, dummodo proficiant in futuram salutem. Haereticorum autem pectora non posse purgari, ego testis sum, cui decretum est numquam paenitentiae eorum credere, ad hoc enim simulant caritatem, ut, quos per inimicitias occidere non potuerunt, per fictas amicitias interficiant. Pectora eorum plena sunt venenis et — secundum quod optime locutus es — nec “Aethiops mutare pellem nec pardus varietates suas.” Tamen credimus in Christi misericordiam quod dominus meus sanctus et venerabilis episcopus Bonifatius eradicet eos, spiritu Christi cui debemus ignoscere, si in principiiis

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<sup>17</sup> The violent language in the first paragraph is not a call for actual execution, but for excommunication. The heretics must be severed from the church, and expelled from it, which is a spiritual death sentence. Jerome must be aware, however, that at this period the Catholic Church was the only legal religion. So this would also potentially involve his enemies in persecution by the secular authorities. In this same period St Augustine is using soldiers to persecute the Donatists.

suis offert caritatem, et per clementiam suam et mansuetudinem servare conatur, qui tamen numquam curandi sunt. Vere dicam quod sentio: in his haereticis illud exercendum est Daviticum: "in matutinis interficiebam omnes peccatores terrae." Delendi sunt, spiritualiter occidendi, immo Christi mucrone truncandi, qui non possunt per emplastra et blandas curationes recipere sanitatem.

2. Sanctae et venerabilis dominae Eustochiae nos vehementer dormitio contristavit, quam in ipso confessionis ardore sciatis spiritum reddidisse, libentiusque habuit et rem familiarem et domum suam dimittere et honorata exilia sustinere quam haereticorum communionem maculari.

3. Sanctum filium meum Mercatorem ut meo obsequio salutes precor, et moneas, ut ostendat ardorem fidei et detestetur eos, qui suspitione aliqua Pelagianae haereseos maculati sunt. Praecipueque obsecro ut sanctos filios meos Marcum, Januarium, Primum, Restitutum, Traianum, omnes conmilites in Domino salutes, quorum aliena perditio fuit causa salutis. Ego autem et maerore et longa aetate confectus et frequentibus morbis fractus vix in haec pauca verba prorupi.