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LOTARIO DEI SEGNI (POPE INNOCENT III), *De miseria humanae conditionis* [On the Misery of the Human Condition]

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Southern France or Spain, c. 1300-1325

iv (paper) + 46 + iii (paper) folios on parchment prepared in the manner of Southern Europe, seventeenth-century (?) foliation in ink and modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto, 1-46 (collation, i-iii¹² iv¹² [-11 and 12, cancelled with no apparent loss of text]), quires signed with roman numerals, middle, bottom margin (trimmed in quire 2), ruled very lightly (now mostly invisibly), but probably with single full length vertical bounding lines, and copied on every other ruled line, as demonstrated by the forty prickings in the outer margin (justification, 165-162 x 127-125 mm.), written below the top line in an upright southern gothic bookhand in twenty long lines, chapters lists copied in two columns of twenty lines, guide letters for initials, red rubrics, majuscules in text stroked in red, three- to one-line red plain red initials, cockled, edges darkened, ff. 1-3, stained in the outer margin, ink flaking on many folios, although text is usually legible, water damage to the top line of text, ff. 42v-46, at times rewritten in darker ink. Bound in modern red leather over wooden boards by Donald Taylor in Toronto, spine with three raised bands and black labels with title and date, paper stubs between quires, red cloth slipcase, in excellent condition (previously bound, with Bergendal MS 94, in sixteenth century vellum over wooden boards; the two texts were separated and rebound when owned by Joseph Pope; see Provenance, below). Dimensions, 220 x 160 mm.

The influence of this text, written by one of the greatest medieval popes while he was still a cardinal, on the thought of the Middle Ages can hardly be exaggerated. It survives in an exceptionally large number of manuscripts and was found in most monastic libraries, in the schools, and in princely collections. It was cited often by both Latin and vernacular authors, including such diverse authors as Christine de Pizan, St. Bernadine of Siena, and Chaucer. This copy was once owned by the noted art historian Comte Paul Durrieu.

PROVENANCE

1. Although few clues remain here as to the date and place of origin of this manuscript, the evidence of the type of parchment and ink certainly suggest an origin in Southern Europe. The script, with its rather tall and rectangular shape, also has some features of a southern gothic script, for example, the rounded "q," and "d" with very short descenders and ascenders; nonetheless, individual letter forms show considerable angularity (as the tops of "m," "n," and "a"), and "qui" is abbreviated in the "northern" fashion, with a superscript "i." Overall, these features, suggest an origin in Southern France or possibly Spain. Some of the abbreviations may also point to Spain (omi, for "omni," hoi, for "homini," hoies, for "homines"), but the matter needs further study. A date early in the fourteenth century, rather than in the thirteenth century, is suggested by the frequent use of decorative hairlines. The fact that this manuscript seems to have been written on every other ruled line is a codicological peculiarity that might help localize the manuscript.

Perhaps from a Carmelite monastery; previously bound with Bergendal MS 94, *Liber Pantheon*, an abridgement of Stephen Bourbon, *Tractatus de diversis materialis predicabilis*, with contemporary partially erased ex-libris, on f. 235, "Iste liber est fratris <...> ordinis beate maria de mons carne[lus]."

2. Collection of Comte Paul Durrieu (1855-1925), the distinguished art historian and collector, who wrote *La miniature flamande au temps de la cour de Bourgogne (1415-1530)*, Paris, 1921, and numerous studies on some of the most famous Books of Hours from the late Middle Ages, including the Turin Hours, the Très Belles Heures of Jean de Berry, the Rohan Hours, and others.
3. Librairie Paul Jammes of Paris, founded by Paul Jammes (1890-1983).
4. Belonged to Joseph Pope (1921-2010) of Toronto, investor banker and prominent collector of medieval manuscripts, who acquired it from Bruce Ferrini, Akron Ohio, August 1989; Bergendal Collection MS 121 (described in Pope, 1999, and online, Bergendal Collection; brief description in Stoneman, 1997, pp. 201-202, when it was still bound with Bergendal 94; an account of the collection is given in Pope, 1997).

TEXT

ff. 1-17v, *Incipit tractatus lotharii cardinalis dyaconi directo domino pietro portuensi et sancta rufine episcopo super miseria humanae conditionis*, incipit, "Dompo [sic] patri karissimo pietro portuensi et sancte rufine episcopo lotharius indignus dyaconus cardinalis gratiam ..."; *De miseria hominis, capitulum primum*, incipit, "Quare de vulva matris egressus sum ...; [chapter xxix] ... apud cogitaciones diuitum";

ff. 17v-37v, Chapter list, book two; f. 18, *Incipit secunda pars, De cupiditate capitulum i*, incipit, "Tria solent maxime homines ...; [chapter xxxix] ... a facie ignis ita peccatores peribuit";

ff. 37v-46v, Chapter list, book three; f. 37v, *Incipit tertia pars, De putredine cadauer capitulum i*, incipit, "Exibit spem eius ...; [chapter xvi] ... fumus et ignis ardens in secula seculorum." *Explicit liber de miseria condicionis humane. Ut vi scripsit scribat semper cum domine uiuat.*"

De miseria humanae conditionis was written in 1195 by Cardinal Lotario dei Segni, later Pope Innocent III; the text has been edited twice in modern editions. Maccarone (1955) based his edition, which is a traditional reconstruction of the author's original text, on ten manuscripts from the end of the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth century. He provides in his preface a partial list of 435 manuscripts and early editions that contain the *De miseria* (pp. X-XXII). Lewis (1978) instead presented an edition of the text as it commonly circulated in England during the Middle Ages, with translation, and includes an extensive survey of 672 manuscripts (pp. 236-253); also printed in PL 217:701-746. Neither editor knew of this manuscript. *De miseria humanae conditionis* underwent more than fifty printed editions by the middle of the seventeenth century and was translated into nearly every European language. Modern English translations in Howard and Dietz, 1969, and Lewis, 1978.

The text in this manuscript shows a number of discrepancies from the text printed by Maccarone (1955) and is, in fact, closer to the version reconstructed by Lewis (1978, see his discussion, pp. 51-53). The manuscript now begins with the prologue, and although there are

no leaves missing in the first quire, the omission of the chapter list is slightly odd, since chapters lists were copied before the second and third books. In book one, f. 2v, chapter 3 begins twelve lines before chapter 3 in Maccarone's edition (see p. 9, at chapter 2, section 3) and chapter 10 of the edition, p. 16, is copied as part of chapter 9 on f. 6. In Book 2, chapter 6 of the edition, p. 43, is here part of chapter 5 on f. 21; book two concludes with the chapter printed by Maccarone as book three, chapter one. Book three in this manuscript then begins with the chapter that is printed as chapter four of the edition, and, in common with most surviving manuscripts, omits book three, chapters two, three and eight (Lewis, 1978, p. 52, indicates that over two-thirds of the surviving manuscripts omit these three chapters).

Lotario dei Segni, the son of Trasimund, count of Segni, was born c. 1160, and died in Perugia in 1216 (on his life and career, see Moore, 2003, and Pennington, Online Resources). After his early education in Rome, he studied theology in Paris in the late 1170s or 1180s, and then probably studied law in Bologna. On his return to Rome he was ordained a sub-deacon, and was subsequently named cardinal-deacon by Pope Clement III. He was elected pope 1198, when he was only thirty-seven, and took the name Innocent III. He was one of the greatest medieval popes. He worked tirelessly to reform the Roman curia and to reestablish and expand papal authority over the Papal States, as well as expanding the role of the Papacy in secular affairs. He launched Crusades to recover the Holy Land, created new courts and procedures to combat heresy in Italy and Southern France, and presided over the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, a council that reformed many clerical and lay practices within the Church. As cardinal, Lotario wrote *De miseria humanae conditionis* and two short theological treatises on the Mass and on marriage, *De sacro altaris mysterio*, and *De quadrupartita specie nuptiarum*.

In *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, Lotario reviewed thoroughly the miserable conditions that accompany all humans as they pass through this world. The second book of this work calls particular attention to the unpleasant realities likely to confront a man living in the circles of the powerful and wealthy: avarice, corruption of justice, gluttony, lust, the love of honors. Moore (1981) proposed that this book describes the corruption of the Roman curia seen by Lotario during his career. Lotario's examples make clear that he did not need to look to merchants or princes to find these vices as they could easily be found among the upper clergy. He knew that the rule of celibacy was broken by priests "who embrace Venus at night and worship the Virgin at dawn..." (Howard and Dietz, 1969, p. xxii).

Partially rooted in the *contemptus mundi* tradition that stressed the negativity of all human existence, the *De miseria humanae conditionis*, with its three sections on "the miserable entrance upon the human condition," "the guilty progress of the human condition" and "the damnable exit from the human condition," may seem quite grim to the modern reader. Nonetheless, the work enjoyed tremendous popularity during the Middle Ages, witnessed by the numerous surviving manuscripts and printed editions. Lotario's modern biographer accounts for its enduring popularity in this way, (Moore, 2003, p. 276): "If happiness lies in adjusting expectations to what can be realized, the work must have provided comfort to many by reminding them of the inevitability of suffering and the inherent limitations of human life. It is clear, succinct, and full of pithy quotations from scripture and other writers, and it is well-seasoned with engaging word-play. And it is radically egalitarian. Everyone suffers the human condition, rich and poor, master and serf..." *De miseria* was to have been followed by a treatise on the Dignity of the Human Condition, which was never written, presumably because of

Lotharius's election as pope, "so that, as in the present work the proud man is brought low, in that [work] the humble man will be exalted" (ed. Howard and Dietz, 1969, p. 3).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Bergendal Collection of Medieval Manuscripts
<http://www3.sympatico.ca/bergendalcoll/>

The Latin Library Edition
<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/innocent.html>

On *De contemptu mundi* in Innocent III
<http://digilander.libero.it/ortodossia/lotario.htm>

On Pope Innocent III
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08013a.htm>

Kenneth Pennington, Biography of Innocent III (from *Encyclopedia Britannica*)
<http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/Medieval%20Papacy/InnocentIIIBiographyKP.html>

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