

LOTARIO DEI SEGNI (POPE INNOCENT III), *De miseria humanae conditionis* [*On the Misery of the Human Condition*], followed by two moral quotations attributed to SENECA In Latin, manuscript on parchment  
Northern France, c. 1450-1475(?)

*i* (parchment) + 87 + *i* (parchment) folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil, top outer recto, 1-87 (collation *i-x*<sup>8</sup> xi<sup>8</sup> [-7; cancelled with no text lacking]) quires *i-x* signed *a-k* and numbered in Arabic numerals in dark brown ink in outer lower margin (partially cropped), horizontal catchwords by scribe in dark brown ink in inner lower margin (partially cropped), ruled in faded red ink with full-length vertical and horizontal bounding lines, prickings visible in outer lower margins (justification, 78-80 x 49-50 mm.), written in dark brown ink in an elegant Gothic semihybrid script in twenty long-lines, guide notes for rubrication partially visible in outer margins, rubrics in faded red, two- to four-line spaces left for initials, guide letters visible, parchment slightly cockled but otherwise in good condition, seventeenth-century(?) inscription in upper margin of f. 1, modern inscription, "Phillipps MS 788," in lower margin of f. 1. Early (possibly original) binding of leather over wooden boards with three raised double bands, "305" written on the upper spine in black ink, traces of fore-edge attachment, possibly a clasp, now missing, on upper board with some corrosion to the parchment flyleaf underneath, most likely from contact with a nail, now missing, some damage to upper outer corner of lower board and some worming in both boards, stitching of binding intact, but almost entirely detached from the boards, spine split at the top, upper board and first flyleaf loose, front flyleaf is a fragment of a French diploma dated "mil quatercens quarante quatre [1444]" (recto), two inscriptions effaced on the recto of the back flyleaf with one remaining fifteenth-century inscription along the fore-edge, now mostly illegible, bearing the date "1473" in Arabic numerals, three modern numbers inscribed on verso of front flyleaf, "Theol. No. 97" in black ink, "3192" in red ink, and "305" in pencil, along with lion rampant inkstamp above "Sir T. P / Middle Hill / 788." Dimensions 132-136 x 90-92 mm.

Surviving in an exceptionally large number of manuscripts, this work, written by one of the greatest popes of the Middle Ages, was often cited by medieval authors, including Christine de Pizan, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Bernardine of Siena, who is quoted at the end of this volume. It appealed to everyone from pious monks to rich aristocrats. This elegant copy contains a longer (and less common) version of the text, and was likely copied for a wealthy owner; in the nineteenth century it was similarly treasured by the important bibliophiles, Charles Chardin and Sir Thomas Phillipps

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script and binding materials suggests that this manuscript originated in Northern France around the middle of the fifteenth century. If, as seems likely, the current binding was original, this book could not have been bound before 1444, the year on the fragmentary diploma employed as the front pastedown. Further examination of the people and places identified in this diploma may help localize the manuscript's binding or shed light on its early provenance. Though never completed, this handsome and high-end copy appears to have been made for a well-to-do owner.
2. A seventeenth-century(?) inscription on f. 1, "In conuent des minimes[?] de s. mihiel," suggests that this manuscript may have belonged for a time to the convent of Minims established in Saint-Mihiel, in Meuse, in 1598.

3. Belonged to Charles Chardin (1742-1826), French bookseller and bibliophile; his number "305" is inscribed in ink on the manuscript's spine and in pencil on the verso of the front flyleaf. The English bibliographer and bibliophile Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776-1847) wrote of him in the second volume of his *Bibliographical, Antiquarian and Picturesque Tour of France and Germany* (London, 1829) that "M. Chardin is the last surviving remains of the OLD SCHOOL of booksellers in Paris" whose "taste consists principally in a love of ornamented MSS. and printed books UPON VELLUM" (pp. 400-401). Chardin offered this book in his sale of 1811 (lot 158) and sold the book (along with more than 120 others; for a full list see Phillipps's *Catalogus librorum*, 1837, pp. 9-10, 32\*) to Sir Thomas Phillipps in his sale on 9 February 1824; lot 305 in *Catalogue des livres rares et précieux, de manuscrits, de livres imprimés sur vélin, etc. de la bibliothèque de M. Chardin*, Paris, 1823 (p. 30 in this catalogue).
4. Belonged to Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872); his lion rampant inkstamp surmounting "Sir T. P / Middle Hill" and his number "788" appears on the verso of the front flyleaf and the inscription "Phillipps MS 788" appears on f. 1. Phillipps was an English antiquary and book collector renowned for having amassed the largest nineteenth-century collection of manuscripts. Fittingly self-described as a "vello-maniac," he collected over 100,000 manuscripts and in doing so nearly bankrupted himself and his family. The present manuscript was offered for sale by Sotheby's in 1899 (lot 743) and was sold in a Sotheby's sale on 29 April 1903; lot 614 in *Bibliotheca Phillippica: Catalogue of a Further Portion of the Classical, Historical, Topographical, Genealogical and Other Manuscripts and Autograph Letters, of the Late Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart. F.R.S. etc.*, London, 1903 (p. 83 in this catalogue).

## TEXT

ff. 1-84v, *Liber de miseria hominis editus a felicis recordacionis Innocencio papa tercio. Sanctorum sergij et bachi diachono cardinali*, incipit, "[D]omino patri carissimo per dei gracia portuensi episcopo Lotharius indignus diaconus gratiam in presenti et gloriam in futuro ... vt per hec [sic] humilis idem exaltetur"; f. 1v, [Book One] *De miseria hominis in Iohanne*, incipit, "[Q]uare de vulua matris mee egressus sum ... lampas contenta apud cogitaciones diuitum"; f. 29, *Secunda pars huius libri. De cupiditate*, incipit, "[T]ria maxime solent homines affectare ... neque descendet[?] cum eo gloria domus eius"; f. 61, *Tercia pars huius libri in epistola canonica*, incipit, "Non est qui de cordis mundicia valeat gloriari ... nos liberet dominus Ihesus christus qui est benedictus in seculorum secula amen. Explicit";

f. 84v, [Two short quotations added by the scribe] incipit, "Seneca. Si scirem deos ignoscituros et homines ignoraturos adhuc sola vtilitate peccati peccare de dignarer"; incipit, "Ber. et seneca. Luxuria est sitis arida corruptio fetida amaritudo continua delectacio momentanea eterna pena per quam caro consumitur sensus ebetatur et spargitur intellectus obtenebratur et confunditur"; ff. 85-87v, blank but ruled.

Both of these quotations are attributed here, as was common in the Middle Ages, to the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger (4 BC - 65 AD). The second quotation appears in the commentary on the Apocalypse by the Franciscan missionary and reformer Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444), explaining the dual attribution here to both Bernardine and Seneca.

*De miseria humanae conditionis* was written in 1195 by Cardinal Lotario dei Segni, later Pope Innocent III. The text has been edited in two modern editions. Maccarone (1955) bases his edition, which seeks to reconstruct the author's original text, on ten manuscripts dating 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 presents 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, not including this manuscript). The text is also printed in *PL* 217.701-746. *De miseria humanae conditionis* was issued in more than fifty printed editions by the middle of the seventeenth century and was translated into nearly every European language. Modern English translations appear in Howard and Dietz (1969) and Lewis (1978).

The text found in this manuscript is the longer – and less common – version. In keeping with Maccarone's reconstruction of Lotario's text, Book Three begins in the present manuscript with Lewis's Book Two, chapter 41; Lewis does not follow Maccarone's designation of this chapter as the beginning of Book Three because, as he notes, over two-thirds of manuscripts begin Book Three with a different chapter, specifically the one given as Book Three, chapter 4 in this present manuscript (see 1978, p. 53). The more common practice observed by Lewis corresponds with the omission of three chapters (2, 3, and 8) from Book Three; Lewis indicates that over two-thirds of the surviving manuscripts omit these three chapters (see 1978, p. 52). These three chapters remain largely intact in this manuscript; the entirety of chapter 2 and most of chapter 3 are copied here as a single chapter and chapter 8 appears here in its entirety.

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 in 1198, when he was only thirty-seven, and took the name Innocent III. He was one of the greatest medieval popes. Not only did he work tirelessly to reform the Roman curia and to reestablish and expand papal authority over the Papal States, but he was also responsible for expanding the role of the Papacy in secular affairs. He launched the 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 *De miseria*, Lotario reviews 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*, 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, translations into the vernacular, and printed editions. Lotario’s modern biographer (Moore, 2003) accounts for its enduring popularity in this way: “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 ...” (p. 276). *De miseria* was to have been followed by a treatise on the dignity of the human condition – it was never written, presumably because of Lotario’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).

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

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