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

**In Latin, manuscript on parchment  
likely Italy, c. 1250**

39 folios, complete (although certain chapters omitted from this copy) (collation: i<sup>s</sup>, ii<sup>s</sup>, iii<sup>s</sup>, iv<sup>s</sup>, v<sup>7</sup> [8-1], with last folio likely cancelled), on parchment, ruled in plummet, written in brown ink in a tight Gothic bookhand, on up to 25 long lines (justification 105 x 63 mm), copied by at least two hands (ff. 1-24v and ff. 25-39v), some prickings still visible, some catchwords visible, rubrics in red, some capitals stroked in red, numerous 2-line high initials in red, Roman numerals in margins referring to chapter numbers as given in index, some sporadic penults. Bound in a French (Lyonnaise?) sixteenth-century brown calf binding over pasteboards, back sewn on 5 raised thongs, boards paneled and tooled in blind with multiple frames traced in blind filets, single fleuron in central frame and four 4 fleur-de-lys at angles of intermediary frame, remnants of ties, former French book vendor's plate (18th. c. ?) pasted in upper righthand corner of front pastedown, partially removed: "Chez Vend[...]. Rue des M[...]" (unidentified). Good general condition but with some fading to ink on first folios. Dimensions 135 x 95 mm.

Central to medieval thought, this popular text enjoyed an exceptionally prolific manuscript tradition, of which this is an early copy. Considered a classic in the Middle Ages, the *Misery of Human Condition* was found in most monastic libraries, in the schools, and in princely collections. The onset of humanism saw an effective rebuttal of its pessimistic view of human nature with Gianozzo Manetti's "On Human Dignity."

### PROVENANCE

1. Likely written in Italy, perhaps during the first half or mid-thirteenth century, judging solely on the script. The present manuscript resembles an early stationer's exemplar, copied on thick and creamy vellum by at least two different scribes, and presenting differences in the gatherings, although the text flows correctly.
2. Added inscription in Latin (15<sup>th</sup> c.?), on verso of last folio, partially legible with difficulty: "[...] curienti septeno [...] testificate redas occisum de duo vulni [...] perisau ( ?) ville gaudent obtinere mille [...]". The town referred to could be Perisau or Pertisau, in the Tirol (Austria).

### TEXT

ff. 1-2, Table of chapters; rubrics, *Incipit liber domini pape innocentii .iii. de contemptu mundi. Capitula prime partis; Explicit. Capitula secunde partis. Incipiunt secunde; Capitula tercie partis; Note that for Book II, the*

scribe made a mistake in his chapter numbering, and crossed out the wrong chapters as of chapter 11, correcting his list below those he crossed out.

f. 2, Lotario dei Conti dei Segni, *De miseria humane conditionis*: Prologue; rubric, *Incipit prefatio*; incipit, "Domino patri karissimo P[etro] Portuensi et sancte Rufine episcopo Lotarius..."; explicit, "[...] humilis exaltetur";

ff. 2-15v, Lotario dei Conti dei Segni, *De miseria humane conditionis*: Book I; rubric, *De miseria hominis*; incipit, "Quare de vulva matris me[a]e egressus sum..." [Liber I, cap. 1: "De miserabili humane conditionis ingressu" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 7)]; rubric, *De pena innocentis*; incipit, "Nemo se confidat ex partem..." [Liber I, cap. 30: "Quod quandoque punitur innocens et nocens absolvitur" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 36)]; rubric, *Explicit pars .i. Incipit pars secunda*;

Book I is complete in 30 chapters. The present manuscript starts numbering the chapters 1 to 29 after the first chapter, for which it omits numbering: the 30 chapters are effectively present.

ff. 15v-30, Lotario dei Conti dei Segni, *De miseria humane conditionis*: Book II; incipit, "Tria maxime solent homines..." [Liber II, cap. 1: "De culpabili humane conditionis progressu" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 39)]; rubric, *De fucatione colorum*; incipit, "Artificialis species superducitur et facies..." [Liber II, cap. XL: "De ornatu persone et mense et domus" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 71), here numbered 39]; rubric, *Explicit pars secunda. Incipit tertia. De putredine cadaverum*;

Book II is complete in 40 chapters. The present manuscript starts numbering the chapters 1 to 39 after the first chapter, for which it omits numbering. Thus, the 40 chapters are effectively present.

ff. 30-39v, Lotario dei Conti dei Segni, *De miseria humane conditionis*: Book III in 16 chapters; incipit, *De putredine cadaverum*: "Exibit spiritus eius..." [Liber III, cap. 4: "De putredine cadaverum" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 79)]; in this manuscript marked cap. 1]; rubric, *Quod nichil proderit dampnandis*; incipit, "Tunc non proderunt opes..." ; explicit, "[...] sulphur et ignis ardens in secula seculorum" [Liber III, cap. 20 (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 97-98); in this manuscript marked cap. 16]; rubric, *De cordis mundicia*; incipit, "Non est qui de cordis mundicia..." [Liber III, cap. 1: "De dampnabili humane conditionis egressu" (ed. Maccarrone, 1955, p. 75)]; in this manuscript marked cap. 17]; explicit, "[...] peccatores peribuntur [in inferno ubi nulla est vero]" [text in square brackets completed by another hand, in darker black ink].

Book III contains here 17 numbered chapters, whereas Maccarrone (1955) publishes 20 chapters. Missing here are chapters II and III, as well as chapter VIII. There is no gathering or folios missing, so it seems this manuscript was never meant to include them. Also another anomaly can be noted as the first chapter *De cordis mundicia* (Maccarrone, 1955, Liber III, cap. 1) is placed at the end in the present manuscript and is numbered here cap. XVII. This chapter was not included in the table of contents that precedes the text: although the body of the chapter was copied in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript, it is signaled in the table of contents by another hand, penned in the lower margin, as if forgotten and corrected (f. 2).

*De miseria humanae conditionis* was written c. 1196 by Pope Innocent III when he was still Cardinal Lotario. As cardinal, Lotario wrote three short treatises, all in Latin, intended for a clerical audience [*De miseria humanae conditionis*; *De quadrupartita specie nuptiarum*; *De missarum mysteriis*]. In 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. His examples make clear that he did not need to look to merchants or princes to find these vices as they flourished also in 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 dreadfully morbid to the modern reader. Nonetheless, the work enjoyed tremendous popularity and survives in nearly 700 manuscripts. *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. *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). Moore (1981) has proposed that Book II describes the corruption of the Roman curia seen by Lotario during his career. Moore (2004): "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..." (Moore, 2004, p. 276). Not until the fifteenth century with the onset of humanism was Innocent III's work effectively refuted, specifically by Gianozzo Manetti, who wrote a spirited rebuttal called "On Human Dignity."

Maccarone (1955) based his edition of the *De miseria* on 10 manuscripts dated all end of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. to mid 14<sup>th</sup> c. He provides in his preface a partial list of manuscripts and early editions that contain the *De miseria* (Maccarone (1955), pp. X-XXII). The present manuscript would fit quite early in the manuscript tradition.

## LITERATURE

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Moore, John C. "Innocent III's *De miseria Humanae Conditionis: A Speculum curiae*," in *Catholic Historical Review* 67 (1981), pp. 553-564.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

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>