

Annual meeting of the
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Honorius Augustodunensis

An Early-medieval Bestselling Author between Originality and Reception History



UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 359, *Lucidarius*, Straßburg 1420, fol. 66r
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gaelic_Poet.jpg)

Scientific direction and organization:

Dr. Paul Hellmeier OP, Prof. Dr. Isabelle Mandrella, Prof. Dr. Martin Thurner
Martin-Grabmann-Forschungsinstitut für mittelalterliche Theologie und Philosophie,
Faculty for Catholic Theology, LMU Munich

We do not even know the correct name of Honorius Augustodunensis, whose extant work is dated between the end of the 11th and the first half of the 12th century, since the meaning of the toponym is unclear. Little is known about his life. We know that during the years in which he wrote most of his works, he lived in southern Germany, probably in Regensburg. In addition to the scant news about his life, the editions are in a very unsatisfactory state: in order to read the many works of Honorius, we must rely principally on volume 172 of Mignes's *Patrologia Latina*.

Honorius, however, was not only an extremely productive writer; his writings were also widely distributed and widely read. Among the few works for which a critical edition is available is the *Elucidarium* (also *Lucidarius*), an exposition of the Christian faith organized in questions and answers by master and student, for which Valerie Flint counted more than 330 manuscripts. The *Elucidarium*'s concise and effective exposition of the faith brought great success to the text, as evidenced by several translations into different vernacular languages. The *Elucidarium*, however, is not the only work of Honorius with a wide circulation. For her edition of the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Flint identified about 90 manuscripts, though a re-examination by Rossana Guglielmetti has now revealed approximately 150 manuscripts. This increase may indicate that there are still significantly more manuscripts of other works of Honorius than is known to date. There could also be considerable growth in the already well-attested collection of sermons of the *Speculum ecclesiae* (more than 70 manuscripts according to Flint) and in the liturgical treatise *Gemma animae* (more than 50). The number of witnesses to another important and already published work, namely the *Imago mundi* (more than 110 manuscripts), is also very high. These are extraordinarily high figures, rising the question, why the author so far has hardly been researched and that most of his works are still waiting for a critical edition.

But it is not only the quantitative data that push for further investigation of Honorius and his writings. The different elements of the intellectual atmosphere that produced such famous writers as Hildegard of Bingen, Rupert of Deutz, Otto of Freising, Gerhoch of Reichersberg, and others, and in which Hugh of St. Victor received his education, are particularly evident in Honorius. These characteristic elements include, in addition to the theological reading of history and the interpretation of Scripture according to paradigms with strong symbolic density, an interest in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius and his interpreters. Among these interpreters John Scotus Eriugena plays a special role. An entire work of Honorius, the *Clavis Physicae*, is actually an epitome of the *Periphyseon* of Eriugena.

In the other works of Honorius, too, there are often precise traces, if not the clear and structuring imprint of Eriugena's speculations. Beside the great Irishman, Honorius is particularly close to another author, namely Anselm of Canterbury. Even if Honorius was not a direct student of Anselm, he seems to have maintained close contact with Anselm's school at the turn of the century.

His influence on later writers is just as interesting as the panorama of the sources of Honorius. Apart from the extraordinarily broad history of the *Elucidarium*, among the readers of Honorius – especially among the later German authors – we find prominent personalities such as Albert the Great, Berthold of Moosburg and Nicholas of Cusa.

Honorius has the merit of having dealt with various philosophical and theological problems and themes. Among his innovative solutions, some stand out. For example, in the 12th century, Honorius is the clearest representative of the doctrine of the "unconditional incarnation", that is, the doctrine that Christ would have become man, even if Adam had not sinned. His line of thought in this regard was to lead to remarkable developments in the controversies of the following century. Honorius' *Speculum Ecclesiae* is also the first medieval collection of sermons for didactic use. His views on anticipating the events of the Last Days are entirely new

with regard to the positive role attributed to the Jews in the final confrontation with the Antichrist. The work *Imago mundi* is an important example of the geographical ideas of that time. The position of Honorius in the conflict between *sacerdotium* and *imperium* makes him an important witness to a historical constellation of political importance that can hardly be overestimated.

Honorius is also intensively concerned with the subject of free will. His opinions, particularly in the *Inevitabile*, provide insights into his work's sources and their assimilation and, at the same time, demonstrate a considerably developed elaboration of the problem. Finally, it is noteworthy how in Honorius the theological culture of his time, in particular the interest in Apocalypticism and especially in the theology of history, coexisted with the will to speculate on the basis of *ratio* and to engage in metaphysical analysis. Here the question arises of the inner unity and coherent logic of the different theological and philosophical dimensions of his thought.

Given all these themes, questions, historical references and lines of development, it should be clear that a single meeting cannot fully or even conclusively examine the importance of this author, who has been neglected for far too long. However, we want to give an impetus to and create a basis for others to continue the future work. To this end, we have decided to structure the program into four thematic areas:

1. Introduction to Honorius and his works (biography, state of editions, manuscript tradition).
2. Systematic contexts of his thought (Anthropology, the Problem of Time, Apocalypticism, Geography, Symbolic Reading of Reality, Exegesis, Christology, Ecclesiology).
3. The sources (especially Eriugena, Anselm).
4. Theological controversy and heritage (Honorius and theology in the German context in the 12th century, "German Symbolism", Rupert of Deutz, Hildegard of Bingen, Hugh of St. Victor, Albert the Great, Berthold of Moosburg, Nicolaus Cusanus, translations into vernacular languages).

We invite your paper proposals along with an abstract of approximately 1 page by 15 November 2021 by e-mail to isabelle.mandrella@lmu.de

If possible, the conference will take place in person. The travel and accommodation costs of the speakers will be covered. We look forward to your ideas!