

Topic Page: [Valentinus, active 2nd century](#)

Summary Article: **Valentinus**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(vălĕntĕ'nĕs), fl. c.135–c.160, founder of the Valentinians, the most celebrated of the Gnostic sects (see Gnosticism) of the 2d cent. The little that is known of his life is found in the works of early Christian theologians who refuted him, such as St. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Probably born in Egypt, Valentinus received his education in Alexandria and after c.135 taught in Rome, where he attracted brilliant converts. Valentinus viewed ultimate reality as a procession of aeons, 33 in all, issuing in pairs from the primal aeons, abyss and silence. From these came mind and truth, in turn engendering word (logos) and life. The thirtieth aeon, Sophia, by her inordinate desire to penetrate the abyss, caused great disorder within the pleroma (divine realm). Her passion was banished to a formless existence outside the pleroma. It is for the restoration of order and the salvation of the progeny issuing from the expelled passion that the last three aeons are produced—Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus the Savior, who is the “common fruit” of the pleroma. Ruler of the outcast world is the proud Demiurge, identified with the deity of the Old Testament, who created the forms of life by which man is ensnared. Jesus appears in the world to reveal the knowledge (gnosis) that will restore man to the divine order. Valentinus wrote letters, homilies, and psalms, of which fragments survive. The recently discovered Coptic manuscript “Gospel of Truth” may be by Valentinus.

See Doresse, J. , *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (tr. 1960);

Grobel, K. , *The Gospel of Truth* (1960);

Rudolph, K. , *Gnosis* (1982);

Walker, B. , *Gnosticism* (1986).

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Valentinus. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/valentinus>



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