

The Gnostic Hope

by Roger Samsel

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Only two of the three kinds of men have any hope of salvation according to Gnosticism. Spiritual men (Gnostics), being the elect, are assured of salvation. However, before they can obtain this salvation, they must experience every thing there is to experience; they must do everything there is to do. Because this is impossible for anyone to accomplish in one lifetime, it is necessary to be reincarnated many times until every possible experience has been had, and every type of lifestyle has been lived, and every gamut of choices has been run.

To Gnostics, salvation consists in being divested of their physical bodies and their animal souls and ascending to become pure, intelligent, God-like spirits. Immediately upon their death, they pass above the heavens, above the Demiurge, and go to their mother Achamoth. They will enter, in an invisible manner, into the Pleroma and become the spiritual brides of the angels created by Achamoth.

During this ascension, there are certain obstacles to be avoided or overcome. One of these is the Demiurge, whom in this context they refer to as, "the judge." Because of the Redemption¹, they maintain that the judge will not be able to see or capture them upon their ascension. However, if he does capture them, then they believe they can escape him by repeating these words:

"O thou, who sittest beside God (Sophia), and the mystical, eternal Sige, thou through whom the angels, who continually behold the face of the Father, having thee as their guide and introducer, do derive their forms from above, which she in the greatness of her daring inspiring with mind on account of the goodness of the Propator, produced us as their images, having her mind then intent upon the things above, as in a dream,— behold, the judge is at hand, and the crier orders me to make my defense. But do thou, as being acquainted with the affairs of both, present the cause of both of us to the judge, inasmuch as it is in reality but one cause."

When Sophia (who is listening to these proceedings) hears these words, she causes the person to become invisible, allowing him to escape the judge. Then she catches them up and leads them to the wedding chamber and hands them over to their angelic consorts. Thus, they are restored to their former state (preexistence) as consorts of angels.

There is no place for the resurrection of the body in Gnosticism. This is in accord with their belief that all material substance is evil, imperfect,

defective, and unredeemable. They taught that all material substance will be annihilated. Their concept of salvation, for themselves as the "spiritual," and even for Christians as the "animal," was to be freed from the body and from the material universe and to ascend to a heavenly destiny. For themselves, this heavenly destiny was to become god-like spirits (like the Aeons) in the Pleroma. For Christians, this heavenly destiny was to find rest in the intermediate place.

Thus, the Gnostics denied two fundamental Christian doctrines. They denied the resurrection of the flesh, including the resurrection of the Lord, and of all men including both the just and the unjust. They also denied that the earth will be redeemed and restored to its pristine, Edenic state, as the eternal destiny and inheritance of the righteous.

1. The Gnostic concept of "Redemption" will be discussed in a separate article.