

## Three Kinds of Men

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As we have said, in Gnosticism, there are three kinds of substance: Material, Animal and Spiritual. Everything that is material will perish – that is, pass out of existence. Every animal substance, because it is neither material nor spiritual but has certain things in common with both, will pass to whichever side its inclination draws it. Spiritual substance was deposited in some men, but not in all, in order that it might be united with the soul and secure the soul (the animal substance) for salvation. This spiritual substance they call the “salt” and the “light.” This is also the “spiritual progeny” brought forth by Achamoth as consorts for the angels. Thus, those who are spiritual had a preexistence as spiritual consorts of angels. Furthermore, the Savior came in order to secure the soul for salvation.

Just as there are three kinds of substance, so there are three kinds of men: spiritual, material, and animal. The “consummation of all things” will take place when all that is “spiritual” has been perfected by Gnosis (knowledge). In other words, the consummation of all things will take place when all *spiritual men* have acquired perfect knowledge and been initiated into the Gnostic mysteries by Achamoth. Of course, the Gnostics styled themselves these “spiritual men.” *Material men* are destined as a matter of course for corruption. *Animal men* are instructed in animal things such as good works and faith. But they do not have perfect knowledge. According to the Gnostics, Christians are these animal men.

The three kinds of men – spiritual, material, and animal – have three archetypes, namely, Cain, Abel, and Seth, respectively. Yes, you read that correctly; Cain is the archetype of the spiritual man, the very model of the perfect Gnostic, the man Gnostics aspire to be. In fact, one of the early Gnostic sects was called the *Cainites*. Abel is the archetype of the material man, destined for corruption and annihilation. Seth is the archetype of the animal man – the original Christian.

Here is the difference between the spiritual and the animal man. Animal men (Christians) lack perfect knowledge, that is, knowledge of the Gnostic mysteries. Consequently, good works are necessary for them. Without good works, Christians cannot be saved. But for spiritual men (Gnostics), good works are not necessary. It is impossible for spiritual substance to ever come under the power of corruption regardless of what sort of actions they indulge in. The illustration they used was that of gold

immersed in filth. Just as the gold does not lose its beauty or become diminished in any way by the filth, so they cannot by any means suffer harm or lose their spiritual substance.

Because of this belief, the Gnostics were known for all kinds of decadent, depraved and abominable behavior. They called themselves "the elect." They arrogantly and confidently indulged every lust of the flesh. They also differentiated multiple types of "grace" declaring for example that Christians receive "*grace for use,*" for which reason it might also be taken away, but the Gnostics had "*grace as a special possession,*" and could therefore in no way lose it.

Material men can never be saved. For them, there is no hope. Spiritual men can never be lost. For them, there is no possibility of perishing. They are the elect. Because they have the seed of Achamoth, they are superior to the rest of mankind and are more dearly loved. Animal men may be saved or perish depending on their inclination and depending on their conduct. Thus, the way of "salvation" is different for animal and spiritual men. But the Hope is also different for each. The Hope of the Gnostics and their concept of salvation is the subject of the next article.