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## THE TRUE MYSTERIES

### SACRAMENTALISM IN THE *GOSPEL OF PHILIP*<sup>1</sup>

BY

APRIL D. DECONICK

Previous scholars of *Philip* have identified the sacraments (which they have understood to be ritual activities) as a particularly troublesome puzzle. Thus ritual in *Philip* has been the subject of numerous important and intriguing academic studies over the last generation. Each of these studies has helped steadily advance our understanding of the subject, clarifying many of the problems connected with interpreting the *Gospel of Philip*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A rough draft of this paper was presented in 1998 to the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism Group at the annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature. It appeared in draft form in the *SBL Seminar Papers*, Part 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 483-523 under the title, "Entering God's Presence: Sacramentalism in the Gospel of Philip." I would especially like to thank my respondents, Elaine Pagels and Charles Gieschen, for their comments and criticisms on that draft as well as the members of the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism Group. In addition, my gratitude is extended to Gilles Quispel and Rachel Elior for reading earlier drafts of this article and providing me with their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> The major works include: H.M. Schencke, "'Das Evangelium nach Philippus'. Ein Evangelium der Valentinianer aus dem Funde von Nag Hammadi", *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 84 (1959) 1-26; E. Segelberg, "The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel according to Philip and its Sacramental System", *Numen* 7 (1960) 189-200; *idem*, "The Baptismal Rite according to some of the Coptic-Gnostic Texts of Nag-Hammadi", *Studia Patristica* 5 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962) 117-128; R. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip", *Vigiliae Christianae* 15 (1961) 129-140; H.-G. Gaffron, *Studien zum koptischen Philippus-Evangelium unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sakramente* (Dissertation, Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität at Bonn, 1969); A.H.C. van Eijk, "The Gospel of Philip and Clement of Alexandria: Gnostic and Ecclesiastical Theology on the Resurrection and the Eucharist", *Vigiliae Christianae* 25 (1971) 94-120; M.A. Williams, "Realized Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip", *Restoration Quarterly* 3 (1971) 1-17; *idem*, "Uses of Gender Imagery in Ancient Gnostic Texts", in C. Walker Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman (eds.) *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 196-227; J.-M. Sevrin, "Les Noces Spirituelles dans l'Évangile selon Philippe", *Le Muséon* 87 (1974) 143-193; *idem*, "Les Rites et la Gnose, d'après quelques Textes Gnostiques Coptes", in J. Ries (ed.), *Gnosticisme et Monde Hellenistique* (Louvain-La-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain Institut Orientaliste, 1982) 440-450; J.E. Ménard, "'L'Évangile selon Philippe' et 'L'Exégèse de l'Âme'", J.E. Ménard (ed.) *Les Textes de*

Yet, despite this extraordinary effort, several issues need more discussion since we have yet to come to a consensus on the number of sacraments in *Philip* let alone a "sacramental theology." Given this situation, some scholars suggest that the style of *Philip* is so allusive that we can not understand the individual actions of the specific sacraments.<sup>3</sup> This line of reasoning is supported in the recent article by E. Pagels, "Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*", in *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years*, and is further evidence that scholars are still struggling to reconstruct the ritual activity alluded to in this enigmatic gospel.<sup>4</sup> In face of this impasse, I propose that the ritual activity in *Philip* and its sacramental theology can be reconstructed by seeing these traditions as reflective of similar traditions developing simul-

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*Nag Hammadi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975) 56-67; J.J. Buckley, "A Cult-Mystery in the Gospel of Philip", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980) 569-581; *idem*, "'The Holy Spirit is a Double Name': Holy Spirit, Mary, and Sophia in the *Gospel of Philip*", in K. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 211-227; *idem*, "Conceptual Models and Polemical Issues in the Gospel of Philip", in W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II*, 25.5, 4186-4190; D.H. Tripp, "The 'Sacramental System' of the Gospel of Philip", in E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 17, part 1 (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982) 251-260; K. Rudolph, "Response to 'The Holy Spirit is a Double Name': Holy Spirit, Mary, and Sophia in the 'Gospel of Philip' by Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley", in K. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 228-238; E. Pagels, "Adam and Eve, Christ and the Church: A Survey of Second Century Controversies Concerning Marriage," in A.H.B. Logan and A.J.M. Wedderburn (eds.), *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clarke, 1983) 146-175; *idem*, "The 'Mystery of Marriage' in the Gospel of Philip Revisited", in B.A. Pearson, *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 442-454; *idem*, "Ritual in the Gospel of Philip", in J.D. Turner and A. McGuire (eds.), *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years, Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, NHMS 44 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997) 280-291; M.A. McPherson Oliver, "The Gospel of Philip and Early Conjugal Christianity", paper delivered at Nag Hammadi Seminar, Haverford College, November 17, 1995; J. Buckley and D.J. Good, "Sacramental Language and Verbs of Generating, Creating and Begetting in the Gospel of Philip," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5 (1997) 1-19.

Summaries of ritual activity in *Philip* also can be found in the several commentaries on this gospel: R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip* (New York and Evanston: Harper&Row, 1962); J.-E. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Philippe. Introduction, texte, traduction, commentaire* (Paris: Letouzy & Ane, 1967); W.W. Isenberg, "The Coptic Gospel According to Philip" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968); "Introduction", in B. Layton (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7 together with XIII, 2\*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1), and P.Oxy. I, 654, 655, Nag Hammadi Studies* 20, v. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989) 131-139; H.-M. Schenke, *Gospel of Philip. German & Coptic. Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II, 3)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> See especially, Williams, "Realized Eschatology", 1-17; Sevrin, "Les Noces Spirituelles", 143-193.

<sup>4</sup> Pagels, "Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*", 280-291.

taneously in early Jewish mystical circles, circles which were advocating mystical ascent through the heavenly Temple and a transforming vision of God.<sup>5</sup>

According to the pioneering research of R. Elijor, in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., Jews within these mystical circles were perpetuating Temple worship by fostering the idea of a surrogate heavenly Temple. This idea was developed largely from the visions of Ezekiel which were preserved following the destruction of the first Temple. Refusing to accept the end of their religious worship in the wake of the destruction of their cult center, they focused on the notion of a spiritual world whose cultic practices now operated on a mystical-ritual praxis. The structure of the earthly Temple was projected into the heavens as a series of three or seven *hekhalot* or shrines, *merkavot* or chariots, *devirim* or Holy of Holies.<sup>6</sup> The priestly and levitical traditions of Temple worship were elevated and transferred to these supernal regions in the form of angelic duties and liturgical practices. The priestly ritual was understood to be performed by the angels in the heavenly sanctuary. As the primary liturgical performers, the angels were responsible for the ceremonies associated with the priestly blessing, the use of Divine Names, the pronouncement of the unutterable Name of God, the recitation of prayers, and the performance of music.<sup>7</sup>

The Jewish mystic could now ascend through the various *hekhalot* or shrines in order to journey to the inner sanctum and worship before God's

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<sup>5</sup> Early Jewish mysticism is an esoteric tendency within Second Temple Judaism which was characterized by speculation about ascending into heaven and gaining a transforming vision of the manifestation of God. Evidence for this tendency can be seen mainly in the Philonic corpus, Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Qumran manuscripts, and the Hekhalot texts. For a fuller discussion, refer to A.D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 28-37; *idem*, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and other Ancient Christian Literature*, JSNTS 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) especially 47-61.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the three heavens, see C.R.A. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate. Part 1: The Jewish Sources", *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993) 203-205. These are replaced by a seven-tier system. On this, refer to A.Y. Collins, "The Seven Heavens in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses," in J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane (eds.), *Death, Ecstasy and Other Worldly Journeys* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) 62-87.

<sup>7</sup> See R. Elijor, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and its Relation to Temple Traditions", *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (1997) 217-267. Cf. J. Maier, *Vom Kultus zur Gnosis* (Salzburg: Mueller, 1964) 133-135; C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (Atlanta, 1985); *idem*, "He Has Established for Himself Priests", in L. Schiffman (ed.), *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 114-115.

throne.<sup>8</sup> He could enter the *devir*, the Holy of Holies, and gaze on God's manifestation enthroned upon the *merkavah*, the seat consisting of two cherubim with wings spread over the *kapporet*, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chron 28:183; cf. 1 Kings 6:23-28, 8:6-7; 2 Chron 3:10-1, 5:7-8). For the human practitioner, this journey was understood to be a transformative experience. This transformation generally was described in terms of the human's transfiguration into an angel, his participation in the heavenly liturgy, or his own enthronement.<sup>9</sup> Often the transfiguration involved the revelation of secret knowledge about the world's operation.<sup>10</sup>

In the *Gospel of Philip*, we are faced with a series of three Temple shrines rather than seven: the Holy shrine, the Holy of the Holy shrine, and the Holy of the Holies shrine:

There are three shrines (ἑεῖ)<sup>11</sup> for sacrifice in Jerusalem. The one opening to the west was called "the holy" (ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΔ). Another opening to the south was called "the holy of the holy" (ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΔ ἈΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΔ). The third open-

<sup>8</sup> The general concept of ascent has been the subject of several works: W. Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 4 (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1901) 136-169, 229-273; G. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 7 (Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1950); C. Colpe, "Die 'Himmelsreise der Seele' ausserhalb und innerhalb der Gnosis," in U. Bianchi (ed.), *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966, Numen Supplements* 12; (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967) 429-447; A. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity, and their Environment", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 2.23.2 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1980) 1333-1394; U. Mann, "Geisthöhe und Seelentiefe: Die vertikale Achse der numinösen Bereiche", *Eranos* 50 (1981) 1-50; M. Smith, "Ascent to the Heavens and the Beginning of Christianity", *Eranos* 50 (1981) 403-429; I.P. Culianu, "L' 'Ascension de l'âme' dans les mystères et hors des mystères," in U. Bianchi and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *La Soteriologia dei culti orientali nell'Impero romano* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982) 276-302; *idem*, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983); *idem*, *Expériences de l'Extase* (Paris: Payot, 1984); M. Dean-Otting, *Heavenly Journeys: A Study of the Motif in Hellenistic Jewish Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1984); J.D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986); M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> For the idea of transformation, see C. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkavah Tradition", *Journal for Jewish Studies* 48 (1992) 1-31. For a ground-breaking discussion of participation in angelic liturgy, see Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines". Refer also to the earlier work by Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 29-71. For the theme of enthronement, see E. Wolfson, "Yeridah la-Merkavah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism, in R.A. Herrera (ed.), *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics and Typologies* (New York: Peter Lang) 13-45.

<sup>10</sup> I. Gruenwald, "Knowledge and Vision: Towards a Clarification of Two 'Gnostic' Concepts in the Light of Their Alleged Origins", *Israel Oriental Studies* 3 (1973) 63-107.

<sup>11</sup> I translate ἑεῖ as "shrine" because this translation captures its meaning within this

ing to the east was called “the holy of the holies” (ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ Π̄ΝΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ), the place where only the high priest enters (69:15-21).

*Philip* associates these shrines with particular “sacraments:” “Baptism is ‘the holy’ shrine. Redemption is ‘holy of the holy’. ‘The holy of the holies’ is the bridal chamber” (ΠΒΔΠΤΙΣΜΑ ΠΕ Π̄ΝΕΙ ΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ [Π]Ω[Τ]Ε ΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ᾹΠΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΠΕΤ[ΟΥΑ.]ΔΒ Π̄ΝΕΤΟΥΑΔΒ ΠΕ Π̄ΝΥΜΦΩΝ) (69:22-25).<sup>12</sup> Also in 67:28-30 we find a passage which identifies the “sacraments” as baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, and bridal chamber: “The Lord [did] everything in a mystery: a baptism and a chrism, a eucharist and a redemption, and a bridal chamber” (ΑΠΞΟΕΙ [C Ρ] ΩΒ ΝΙΜ Ω̄ΝΟΥΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΟΥΒΑ[Π]ΤΙΣΜΑ ᾹΝ ΟΥΧΡΙΣΜΑ ᾹΝΟΥΕΥΧΑΡ[ΙΣΤ]ΙΔΑ ᾹΝΟΥΣΩΤΕ ᾹΝΟΥΝΥΜΦΩΝ).<sup>13</sup>

Clearly baptism, chrism, and the eucharist are ritual activities. But what about “redemption” and “bridal chamber?” Does ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ, or “sacrament,” have to indicate a *ritual* sacrament as Segelberg and others after him have assumed? Or can it be more inclusive, describing an experience in which the human does not participate alone, but where he acts in communion with God? In a “sacrament,” the human participates in a higher reality, the reality of the Spirit without ever ceasing to be human. Long ago, the Church Father John Chrysostom explained that a “sacrament” had a double meaning: “what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another.”<sup>14</sup> The distinctive feature of a sacrament is that it is at once both “visible and invisible.”<sup>15</sup> It is a combination of “an outward visible sign with an inward spiritual grace.”<sup>16</sup> They

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context better than “building” as W.W. Isenberg renders in the critical edition edited by B. Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codes II,2-7 together with XIII,2\**, *Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1)*, and *P. Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, *Nag Hammadi Studies* 20, v. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989) 180-181. The Coptic ΗΕΙ is associated with σκηνή (temple or house), οἶκος (temple or house of god), οἶκημα (chamber, temple, or chapel), μυχός (the innermost room), and δίαυτα (room). On this refer to Crum, 66a. Cf. R. Cameron, “Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of the Gospel of Thomas and Christian Origins,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999) p. 242.

<sup>12</sup> Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7*, 180.

<sup>13</sup> Punctuation is my own. For text and translation, see Layton and Isenberg, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7*, 176-177. In this passage, I understand swte to refer to the redeeming power of the rituals, available through participation in the Eucharist in particular, and realized or actualized in the eschatological Bridal Chamber. Thus it is not a separate ritual. Other passages in *Philip* seem to support this interpretation: 62:14, 69:23; 69:26; cf. 53:2; 53:14; 71:2-3; 85:29.

<sup>14</sup> *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 7.1 (P.G. 61.55).

<sup>15</sup> T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition* (New York: Penguin, 1993) 274.

<sup>16</sup> Ware, *Orthodox*, 274.

are the means by which "God's grace is appropriated to every Christian *individually*."<sup>17</sup> Today, according to Meyendorff, "a sacrament is a 'passage' to true life; it is man's [humanity's!] salvation."<sup>18</sup> A sacrament is an "eternal Mystery where the boundaries between heaven and earth are broken and where human decision and action acquire an eternal dimension."<sup>19</sup>

If we allow for this broader definition of **ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ** in *Philip*, then "redemption" and the "bridal chamber" might not be actual rituals, but instead holy "mysteries" which, in some way, allow the human to connect to the divine source of life. Therefore, the sacraments should be understood to include manners of thinking sacrally, mundane activities infused with sacrosanct meanings, as well as ritual performances. *Philip's* sacraments seem to have this double entendre: a worldly meaning which is "deceptive" and an eternal meaning which is "correct" (53:24-35). Thus, I contend that it is necessary to let **ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ** function in this broader sense rather than the narrowly confined understanding that has permeated previous scholarship. If we allow for this broader definition, I believe that the complicated passages which refer to baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, bridal chamber, and marriage in *Philip* become much more sensible.

In this paper, therefore, I propose a new paradigm for interpreting the sacraments in *Philip*, a paradigm grounded in the broader definition of "sacrament." So I understand "sacraments" or the "true mysteries" to include more than ritual activities; they also identify those human thoughts and actions which have been invested with sacral meaning.

In addition, I hope to demonstrate that just as the Jewish mystics invented a surrogate supernal Temple of seven shrines through which they could ascend to the Presence of God and perform their liturgical duties, the *Gospel of Philip* preserves a similar celestial Temple tradition. Its three heavenly Temple shrines represent the esoteric reality behind the sacraments. It is plausible that these sacraments are understood on the spiritual level to represent the three rooms of the previously destroyed Temple: the *ulam* or vestibule; the *hekhhal* or central room; and the *devir* or inner sanctum. Just as each of these rooms represents a greater degree of holiness within the Temple,<sup>20</sup> so does each sacrament in *Philip*. Each stage in the ascent through

<sup>17</sup> Ware, *Orthodox*, 276.

<sup>18</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984) 20.

<sup>19</sup> Meyendorff, *Marriage*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

the rooms of the heavenly Temple brings the believer closer to the *deiv*, the Holy of Holies where the Presence of God dwells, seated upon his *merkavah*. As the believer moves through each Temple shrine, he is progressively transformed. For the Christian Gnostic, this ascent culminates in an eschatological experience at the much-anticipated End, when the believer finally is able to enter the Holy of Holies and gaze upon the Father, fully transformed.

### 1) *The Initiatory Sacramental Rituals*

The initiatory stage in the mystical-sacramental praxis is a ritual performance stage. Since this stage is the first of the three Holy shrines, it plausibly can be associated with the *ulam* or vestibule of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is quite noteworthy that before the priests were permitted to enter the Temple, they had to ritually immerse themselves (cf. Mishnah, *Tamid* 1:2, 4; 2:1; cf. *Yoma* 3:3). This immersion took place in the “sea of bronze” (1 Kg 7:23-26), a great water container supported by twelve statues of bulls (2 Chron 4:6). This basin was located to the south of the altar just outside the *ulam*.<sup>21</sup> This aspect is transferred to the angels in the *Hekhalot* literature where they too must bath and purify themselves in order to carry out their liturgical functions in the heavenly Temple.<sup>22</sup>

In *Philip*, the two initiatory rituals are performed at the same time: baptism by water and baptism by fire, which is unction or chrism (cf. 57:23-29; 67:3-9; 69:5-15). These rituals are performed for purification purposes. Baptism by water and fire operate on two levels, purifying the “visible” or physical aspect and the “hidden” or spiritual aspect: “It is through water and fire that the whole place is purified—the visible by visible, the hidden by hidden” (ϩΙΤ̄̄ ΟῩΜΟΟῩ Μ̄̄ ΟῩΚΩ̄Ω̄Τ̄ ΕῩΤΟῩΒΟ̄ ᾹΠΛᾹ ΤΗ̄ΡῩ ΝΕΤΟῩΟΝ̄ϩ̄ ϩΙΤ̄̄ ΝΕΤΟῩΟΝ̄ϩ̄ ΕΒΟΛ̄ ΝΕΘΗΠ̄ ϩΙΠ̄̄ ΝΕΘΗΠ̄) (57:23-25). *Philip* explains that the water and oil work to consecrate the soul and the spirit: “It is from water and fire that the soul and spirit came into being . . . the fire is the chrism” (ΕΒΟΛ̄ ϩ̄̄ ΟῩΜΟΟῩ Μ̄̄ ΟῩΚΩ̄Ω̄Τ̄ Ν̄ΤᾹ ΤΨῩΧ̄[Η] Μ̄̄

<sup>21</sup> R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (translated by J. McHugh; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961) 319-320; H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (translated by D. Green; London: S.P.C.K., 1966) 161; F.J. Murphy, *The Religious World of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) 77.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981) paragraphs 54, 181, 184-185, 811, 814-816, 916. For discussion, refer to Elior, “From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines”.



πῖπᾶ ὕωπε . . . πκωστ πε πχρισμα) (67.3-6). The hidden quality of the oil is that it is the holy fire of the sacred realm “whose form is white, which is bright and beautiful, and which gives beauty” (πκεουδα ετε <τε>χμορφη ογαβψ ετο ἡουοειν ενεσωφ δω ετ† ἡτᾶντσα) (67:7-9).

I suggest that the hidden quality of the oil functions to consecrate the person so that he may enter the fiery realm of heaven. It is a well-documented part of heavenly geography that a river of fire flows near the throne of the Glory.<sup>23</sup> The angels in Jewish texts purify themselves in the river of fire in order to prepare themselves to join in the heavenly Temple liturgy (3 *Enoch* 36; Schäfer, section 920). It appears that this heavenly geography was embedded deeply in the Valentinian tradition since it shows up in the *Extracts of Theodotus*<sup>24</sup> as well. In this text, there is a river of fire that runs beneath the throne. Moreover, the whole space of the Holy of Holies is fire. The veil conceals the fiery depths of the Holy of Holies from view so that no one is “destroyed by the sight of it” (Διὰ τοῦτο . . . καταπέτασμα ἔχει, ἵνα μὴ ἐκ τῆς προσόψεως ἀναλωθῆ τὰ πνεύματα). Only the archangel, the High Priest, enters the Holy of Holies. This is Jesus who was called in and enthroned. He will provide passage for the saved seed into the Pleroma only at the End (38:1-3).

The connection between the initiatory rituals and immersion in the fire of heaven may have developed in response to the fact that some traditions remembered Jesus’ own baptism as an event bringing with it heavenly fire. Justin Martyr, for instance, tells Trypho that the Jordan River was blazing with fire when Jesus entered the water (πῦρ ἀνήφθη ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ). When he came out of the water, he received the Holy Spirit (*Dialogue with Trypho* 88).<sup>25</sup> In two old Latin recensions of Matthew 3:15, there is mention that a great light shone out of the water at the moment of Jesus’ baptism (It<sup>a</sup>: *et cum baptizaretur, lumen ingens circumfulsit de aqua*; Vg<sup>ms</sup>: *et cum baptizaretur Iesus, lumen magnum fulgebat de aqua*). According to Ephrem’s *Commentary on the Diatessaron* 4.5, there was “the shining of the light upon the waters”. The combined evidence has caused W.L. Petersen to con-

<sup>23</sup> For a complete list of references, refer to H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928) 60 n. 19, 112 n. 4.

<sup>24</sup> For critical edition, see F. Sagnard, *Les Extraits de Théodote, Sources Chrétiennes* 23 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1948).

<sup>25</sup> Epiphanius records that after the voice spoke from heaven, “immediately a great light shone around the place” (εὐθὺς περιέλαμψε τὸν τόπον φῶς μέγα) *Panarion* 30.13.7.

clude that this tradition is very old and was either forgotten or rejected by later Christians.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to their consecrating power, the initiatory rituals in *Philip* are understood to be a new birth for the believer, begetting him “through Christ in the two [*i.e.*, baptism and chrism]” (ϞΙΤ̄̄ ΠΕΧ̄̄ Ϟ̄̄ ΠCΝΔΥ) (69:5-7; cf. 67:13-20). This emphasis on rebirth is also highlighted in the Valentinian *Extracts of Theodotus* 78:1-2 where baptism liberates one from Fate, bringing about rebirth. This rebirth probably mirrors the spiritual birth of the aeon Jesus who had been conceived through the union of the Virgin or Holy Spirit and the Father in the Pleromic bridal chamber (*Gos.Phil.* 55:24-29; 71:4-11), since the text indicates that “we are indeed reborn through the Holy Spirit” (ΕΒΟΛ ϞΙΤ̄̄ Π̄̄ΝΔ̄̄ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΔΒ CΕ ΔΠΟ ΜΕΝ ᾹΜΟ[Ν] Ν̄ΚΕCΟΠ) (69:5).<sup>27</sup>

Because the text understands baptism to be regenerative (cp. John 3:3), it should not be surprising that it takes issue with the Pauline theology that through baptism the believers undergo ritual death: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death (ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν)? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death (συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον)” (Rom 6:3-4a).<sup>28</sup> In response, *Philip* explains that “by perfecting the water of baptism, Jesus emptied it of death. Thus we go down into the water, but we do not go down into death” (Ν̄ΘΕ Ν̄ΤΑ ῙC ΔΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ᾹΠΜΟΟΥ ᾹΠΒΑΠΤΙCΜΑ ΤΑΕΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΔΥΠΩΡΤ ΕΒΟΛ ᾹΠΜΟΥ ΕΤΒΕ ΠΑΕΙ Τ̄̄ΒΗΚ ΜΕΝ ΕΠΙΤ̄̄ ΕΠΜΟΟΥ Τ̄̄ΒΗΚ ΔΕ ΔΝ ΕΠΙΤ̄̄ ΕΠΜΟΥ) (77:8-11). Rather, through the baptismal ceremonies, which included anointing with holy oil, the initiate is reborn of the Holy Spirit and then is invested with this Spirit (64:23-27).<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the investment of the Holy Spirit through the initiatory rituals is connected to the investment with the redeeming Name of God. Indeed, in *Philip* the initiate not only gains the name of Christ through

<sup>26</sup> W.L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 20. Cf. B.H. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Concerning this notion, see now Pagels, “Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*”, 285-286.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Pagels, “Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*”, 286-287.

<sup>29</sup> On the connection in early Christianity between unction and the reception of the Holy Spirit, see A.D. De Conick, “Stripped Before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991) 125-127.

chrism (74:12-25), becoming a “Christian”, but he now is transformed into “a Christ” (ΟΥΧΡ̄C ΠΕ) (67:29). The name of Christ, of course, is the unutterable Name of the Father which he gave to Jesus (ΟΥΡΑΝ ΟΥΩΤ ΜΑΥΤΕΥΟΥΑΥ ρ̄Μ ΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΠΡΑΝ Π̄ΤΑ ΠΕΙΩΤ ΤΑΔΑΥ ΜΠΨΗΡΕ) (54:6-10). Moreover, as *Philip* indicates, Jesus “clothed himself with the Name of the Father” (ΑΥ† ρ̄ΙΩΩΥ ᾹΠΡΑΝ ᾹΠΕΙΩΤ) so that he would be transformed into the Father (54:10-11). The Christians who have been invested with this Name, know the Name but do not speak it (54:11-12). It is “the Name above all things: the name of the Father” (ΥΔΟΣΕ ΕΟΥΟΝ ΝΙΜ ΕΤΕ ΠΔΕΙ ΠΕ ΠΡΑΝ ᾹΠΕΙΩΤ) (54:7). Obviously, it is the same as referred to in Philippians 2:9, τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὄνομα, which is given to Jesus: κύριος the Greek substitute for the Tetragrammaton.<sup>30</sup>

The investiture of the Valentinian Christian with the unutterable Name of God may have been in imitation of Jesus’ own baptism and investiture with the Name since the Valentinians taught that the descent of the spirit or dove (cf. Mark 1:10) is associated with the investiture of the Name of God (cf. *Extracts of Theodotus* 22:5-6).<sup>31</sup> Thus, through the initiatory rituals, the believer imitates Jesus’ investment with the Name at his own baptism in the Jordan.

Irenaeus alludes to this connection in his statement about the investiture of the Name upon the Valentinians: “the Name which is hidden (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον) from every deity, dominion, and power, which Jesus the Nazarene donned (ὁ ἐνεδύσατο) in the spheres of light, [the Name] of Christ” (*Adv. haer.* I.21.3). Notice, according to Irenaeus, that Jesus puts on the Name in the “spheres of light”. This must denote investiture within the heavenly realm perhaps representing the supernal hidden reality behind Jesus’ external baptism.

Such an allusion makes me speculate whether Jesus’ investiture and that of the Valentinians as newly born Christians, should be understood within the context of priestly investiture in the heavenly Temple. This becomes plausible when we recall that in the *Gospel of Philip*, Jesus is associated with the “high priest” who will be able to enter the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Temple, bringing with him the Saved, those of the “order of the priesthood” (ΕΡΨΑ ρ̄Ν̄ΡΟΕΙΝΕ ΨΩΠΕ ρ̄Ν̄ ΤΦΥΛΗ Π̄ΤΑΝΤΟΥΗΝΒ ΝΔΕΙ

<sup>30</sup> Refer to J. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 36 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985) 95-106.

<sup>31</sup> G. Quispel, “Gnosticism and the New Testament”, *Gnostic Studies I* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1974) 208.

ΝΑΨΘῆ ΓΟΜ ἸΒΩΚ ΕΡΟΥΝ ΕΠΣΑ ΝΡΟΥΝ ἈΠΚΑΤΑΠΕΤΑΣΜΑ Ἀἰ  
ΠΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ) (85:1-5).

According to Exodus 29, the consecration ceremony for the priest began by first washing him at the entrance to the Tent. Then the priest was to be invested with the priestly garb which included the turban. There is evidence that the turban was decorated with the Name of God (cf. Philo, *De vita Mos.* 2.114, 132; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.331). Furthermore, his head was anointed with oil. After these ceremonies, he could enter the holy place and perform his liturgical functions.

Similarly, the priest must be consecrated in heaven once the Temple was projected into the supernal realm in the esoteric Jewish traditions. We find a clear example of this in the *Testament of Levi* where Levi journeys through heaven in a vision. He calls the uppermost heaven the Holy of Holies in which the great Glory is enthroned (3:4; 5:1-2). The gates of the heavenly Temple are opened and he sees the Glory within. Then God gives him the blessing of the priesthood (5:1-2). Later, Levi is washed, anointed, clothed in the priestly garments and fed bread and wine (8). In the Aramaic manuscript, the angels say, "Now, see how we elevated you above all and how we gave you the anointing of eternal peace".<sup>32</sup>

Comparably, in *2 Enoch*, the hero Enoch ascends to the seventh heaven where God is enthroned and the angels perform the liturgy before him. Michael removes Enoch's earthly garments, anoints him with good oil, and clothes him in glorious garb (22:8). The oil is described as "greater than the greatest light, its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh; and its shining is like the sun" (22:9-10). He is transformed into an angel (22:10-11). It is clear that this investiture and transformation is of a priestly nature, since the discussion of Enoch's progeny toward the closing of *2 Enoch* understands them to be of priestly descent (cf. *2 Enoch* 68-73).

It should be noted that the association of baptism and chrism with the priesthood and admittance to the heavenly Temple is not unknown in other early Christian literature. For instance, in the Christian-Jewish text, the *Pseudo-Clementina*, chrism is directly connected to the consecration of Aaron. It is stated that when Jesus became man, God anointed him with oil which was taken from "the wood of the tree of life." Because of this,

<sup>32</sup> H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985) 461.

Jesus is called “Christ.” Moreover, Jesus now “anoints with similiar oil every one of the pious when they come to his Kingdom, for their refreshment after their labors, having overcome the difficulties of the way; so that their light may shine, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, they may be endowed with immortality” (*Recognitions* I.XLX). The author goes on to state that Aaron, the first High priest, “was anointed with a composition of chrism, which was made after the pattern of that spiritual ointment of which we have mentioned previously” (*Recognitions* I.XLVI).

This cluster of ideas must be connected to the early tradition embedded in 1 Peter 2 where the Christians are described as “being built into a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομείσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον ἀνεγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους [τῷ] θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (2:5). They are “the chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired” (γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν) which has been called out of darkness into “his marvelous light” (2:9). This transformation into a Christian priesthood, according to 1 Peter, is the result of having been “born anew (ἀναγεννημένοι) not of perishable but of imperishable seed” (1:23). Certainly this language is reminiscent of the initiatory rituals as interpreted by *Philip*.<sup>33</sup>

We might note, as well, the reference in Hebrews 10:19-22 which states that Christians can enter the heavenly Temple with confidence because their hearts have been “sprinkled” clean and their “bodies washed with pure water” (λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ). Similiarly, we find a reference to the spiritual Temple in the *Epistle of Barnabas* where the author expresses his concerns about the destruction of the earthly Temple and the rebuilding of the “incorruptible” Temple. The incorruptible Temple will be built “in the name of the Lord” and “in glory.” How? The author explains:

Having received the forgiveness of sins and having placed our trust in the name of the Lord, we have become new creatures, formed again from the beginning . . . [God has] opened the doors of the Temple to us who were

<sup>33</sup> The notion that Jesus’ own baptism in the Jordan transferred him to the priesthood serves as the basis of Christian baptism in the Syrian tradition rather than the Pauline idea of dying and rising with Christ. On this, see S.P. Brock, “The Syrian Baptismal Ordines”, *Studia Liturgica* 12 (1977) 177-183. Cf. *Didascalia* 16: “As of old the priests and kings were anointed in Israel, do thou in like manner, with the imposition of the hand, anoint the head of those who receive baptism . . .”

enslaved by death . . . By giving us repentance, [God has] introduced us into the incorruptible Temple (16).

Since the phrase, “having received the forgiveness of sins,” probably indicates baptism, while “having placed our trust in the name of the Lord” must allude to chrism, we find that this text preserves a similar interpretation of these rituals: they open the doors of the spiritual Temple and allow the initiate to enter as “new creatures,” bearing the image of God which was given to the human in the beginning.

It seems that *Philip* is aware of this trajectory of Christian interpretation of baptism and chrism. This gospel further develops this understanding by connecting the initiatory rituals with the language of life and resurrection. The initiate rises from the water and is anointed into the “resurrection” as *Philip* states: “it is from the olive tree that we get the chrism, and from the chrism, the resurrection” (ΤΒΕΝ̄ΞΟΕΙΤ Ν̄ΤΑ ΠΕΧΡΕΙΣΜΑ ΨΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΟΥΤΗ̄Σ ΕΒΟΛ ΟΥΠΟΟῩ ΑΤΑΝΑΚΤΑΚΙΣ) (73:17-19). In the same passage, *Philip* associates the oil from the olive tree with the Tree of Life in the garden of Eden (73:15-17). *Philip* stresses this connection, rebuking those who think otherwise: “Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing” (ΝΕΤΞΩ̄ ᾹΜΟC ΞΕ ΣΕΝΑΔΜΟΥ Ν̄ΨΟΡΠ ΔΥΩ ΣΕΝΑΤΩΟΥΝ [Ν̄] ΣΕΡ̄ΠΑΔΑΝΑΚΘΕ ΕΥΤ̄ΑΞΙ Ν̄ΨΟΡΠ Ν̄ΤΑΝΑΚΤΑΚΙΣ ΕΥΟΝΘ̄ ΕΥΨΑΔΜΟΥ ΣΕΝΑΔΞΙ ΛΑΔΥ ΔΝ) (73:1-5). Just as Christ was resurrected, so too the initiated are resurrected through chrism (56:15-20). They are assured that upon their deaths, when they “strip off the flesh”, they will enter “rest” because they have acquired “the resurrection” while in this world (ΟΩC ΕΝΨΟΟΠ Ο̄Α ΠΕΕΙΚΟCΜΟC ΨΨΕ ΕΡΟΝ ΕΞΠΟ ΝΑΝ Ν̄ΤΑΝΑΚΤΑΚΙC ΞΕΚΑΔC ΕΝΨΑΚΑΔΑΚΝ ΔΘΗΥ Ν̄ΤCΑΡΞ̄ ΕΥΝΑΘΕ ΕΡΟΝ Ο̄Ν ΤΑΝΑΠΑΥΚΙC Ν̄Τ̄Ν̄Τ̄ΑΜΟΨΕ Ο̄Ν ΤΛΕCΟΤΗC) (66:16-20; cf. 67:13-16).

Acquiring rebirth, the Name of God, and resurrection through the baptismal and anointing ceremonies is the beginning of the initiate’s transformative experiences. *Philip* explains this initial transformation by using the analogy of God as a professional “dyer”. The dyes both purify and immortalize. This purifying effect is expressed in one of *Philip*’s stories: “The Lord went into the dye works of Levi. He took seventy-two different colors and threw them into the vat. He took them out all white. And he said, ‘Even so has the Son of Man come [as] a dyer’” (63:25-30). Immersion also infuses the initiate with immortality. Just as good dyes “dissolve with the things dyed in them, so it is with those whom God has dyed. Since his

dyes are immortal, they become immortal by means of his colors” (ΕΠΕΙΔΗ Θ̄Ν̄ΗΔΑΤΜΟΥ ΝΕ ΝΕΥΔΩΣΕ ΨΔΥΡ̄ ΑΤΜΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΘΙΤΟΥΤΥ Ν̄ΝΕΥΠΑΘΡΕ) (61:13-19). So “God baptises what he baptises in water” (ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΔΕ Ρ̄ΒΑΠΤΙΖΕ Ν̄ΝΕΥΡ̄ΒΑΠΤΙΖΕ Λ̄ΜΟΥ Θ̄Ν̄ ΟΥΜΟΥ) (61.20).

Lastly, *Philip* associates the initiatory rituals with a particular visionary experience. This association is made in 69:5-14 where it is stated that through baptism and chrism the initiate is not only begotten by the Holy Spirit and Christ, but he is joined (ΘΩΤΡ) to them. This union is necessary in order for the person to gain the ability to “see” in the “light”. “For this reason, it is fitting to baptize in the two, in the light [which is chrism] and the water” (ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΨΥΕ ΔΡ̄ΒΑΠΤΙΖΕ Θ̄Μ ΠCΝΑΥ Θ̄Μ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ Μ̄Ν ΠΜΟΥ ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΔΕ ΠΕ ΠΧΡΙCΜΑ).

For *Philip* such a visionary encounter is nothing less than transformative. This belief in the transformative power of vision rests upon the ancient belief that the image enters the seer through the eye and becomes part of his soul. As we find in Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe*: “The pleasure which comes from vision enters by the eyes and makes its home in the breast; bearing with it ever the image . . . it impresses it upon the mirror of the soul and leaves there its image” (5:13).<sup>34</sup> *Philip* teaches the newly initiated about this awesome transforming power of their visionary experience: “It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that actually exist unless he becomes like them (Μ̄Ν [ΟΥ]ΘΟΜ Ν̄ΤΕ ΑΔΔΥ ΝΔΥ ΑΔΔΔΥ Θ̄Ν̄ ΝΕΤCΜΟΝΤ ΕΙ ΜΗΤΙ Ν̄ΤΕ ΠΕΤ̄ΜΔΥ ΨΩΠΕ Ν̄ΘΕ Ν̄ΝΕΤ̄ΜΔΥ) . . . You saw something of that place, and you became those things. You saw the Spirit, you became the Spirit” (ΑΛΛΑ ΔΚΝΑΥ ΕΑΔΔΥ Ν̄ΤΕ ΠΔ ΕΤ̄ΜΔΥ ΔΚΨΩΠΕ Ν̄ΝΕΤ̄ΜΔΥ ΔΚΝΑΥ ΔΠ̄Ν̄Δ ΔΚΨΩΠΕ Μ̄Π̄Ν̄Δ) (61:20-23, 28-30).

Thus the baptismal and anointing ceremonies, according to *Philip*, first cleanse the initiate, allowing him access into the first of the three heavenly Temple chambers. Moreover, through this ceremony he is ritually reborn of the Holy Spirit, receiving the Name and the resurrection. As a consecrated priest and a child of the resurrection, he mystically enters the first of the sacred shrines and encounters the Holy Spirit face to face.

It is fascinating to find that this understanding of the initiatory rituals is confirmed by another Valentinian text from Nag Hammadi, the *Valentinian Exposition*. We find in this text, fragments which describe both baptism and

<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Andrea Lieber for bringing this text to my attention.

chrism. Baptism in the water or the Jordan is for the “forgiveness of sins” which brings the human into “imperishability.” When the initiate enters the Jordan, he descends into imperishability, being “[sent] out [of the world] into the Aeon.” Furthermore, the descent into the Jordan is really “[the upward progression], that [is, our Exodus] from the world [into] the Aeon” (41:24-38). Another fragment relates that the descent into the Jordan is the ascent from the “[blindness] of the world [into the sight of] God.” In addition, it is the ascent from the carnal into the “spiritual,” from the physical state to the “angelic,” from the created kosmos to the eternal Pleroma or Aeon, from slavery to “sonship.” Thus, the text concludes, through baptism “we were brought [from] seminal [bodies into bodies] with a perfect form . . . And [Christ brought] us forth who are [in him, and] from now on the souls [will become] perfect spirits” (42:10-37). The next section of this paper will explore how this transformation into “perfect spirits” was believed to be fully accomplished.

## 2) *The Eucharist Sacrament*

The eucharist sacrament is another ritual activity referred to by *Philip*. It seems to correspond to the Holy of the Holy shrine, the shrine closely tied to “redemption” (69:23). Accordingly, this shrine is to be associated with the second room in the Temple, the *hekhal* or holy place. In the *hekhal* stood a golden altar for incense offerings (1 Kg 7:48; cf. 1 Kg 6:20-21), ten lampstands (1 Kg 7:48-49), *shulchan ha-panim* or the table of the Countenance (1 Kg 7:48-49) upon which was ritually offered *lechem ha-panim*, the bread of the Countenance. Every Sabbath twelve loaves of unleavened bread were placed on the table before the face of Yahweh (Lev 24:5-9). After a week, the loaves were eaten by the priests (Lev 6:7-9; 24:5-9).<sup>35</sup> There seems also to be evidence that the priests placed jugs of wine on the Table along with the loaves and then partook of beverage and bread when the time came for them to participate in the weekly meal.<sup>36</sup>

Andrea Lieber, in her research on feasting language and visions in Jewish mysticism, has sparked renewed interest in the cult meal and its ritual context. The holy meal seems to have represented some type of sacrifice to Yahweh. This is supported not only by Ezekiel who compares the table

<sup>35</sup> de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 319; Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 160.

<sup>36</sup> Haran, 216-217.



with an altar (Ezek 41:21-22), but also by Leviticus 24:5-9 where the eating of the bread by the priests is equated with the most holy offering to God. As such it was a meal offered to God (Lev 3:11, 16) and one which the priests eventually shared (Lev 24:5-9). It is plausible that, since both God and the priests partook of the bread, this sacrifice can be understood as effecting some sort of communion between Yahweh and Israel, perhaps affirming kinship between the deity and the human community. Further, the priests seem to have assimilated the sacred aspect of the bread by consuming the loaves in God's presence. By imbibing sacred bread, they incorporated the sacred within their bodies (Lev 6:7-9).<sup>37</sup>

According to *Philip*, the second shrine is the eucharist and "the eucharist is Jesus (ΤΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΑ ΠΕ ΙC) . . . 'the one spread out', for Jesus came to crucify the world" (63:21-25). As we find in John, Jesus' body is understood to be bread from heaven which provides nourishment to those who eat it. Thus *Philip* exclaims: "When Christ the Perfect Man came, he brought bread from heaven in order that the human might be nourished with the food of Man" (ΝΤΑΡΕ ΠΕΧC ΕΙ ΠΤΕΛΙΟC ΠΡΩΜΕ ΔΥΕΙΝΕ ΝΟΥΘΕΙΚ ΕΒΟΔ ΘΝ ΠΤΕ ΨΙΝΑ ΕΡΕ ΠΡΩΜΕ ΝΑΡΤΡΕΦΕCΘΑΙ ΘΝ ΠΤΡΟΦΗ ΑΠΡΩΜΕ) (55:11-14).

This action is associated with the crucifixion when Jesus was offered up to God in place of animal sacrifices. Unlike the previous sacrificial cult which offered up animals alive who then died, Jesus was offered up dead and then lived (55:1-5). Thus, Jesus' body is nourishing, life-giving. His body is living bread from heaven. And "to those who so desired, he gave [life, that] they might not die" (ΝΕΤΟΥΩΨ ΔΥ† ΝΔΥ [ΝΟΥ]Ω[ΝΘ] ΔΕ[ΚΑΔC] ΝΝΟΥΜΟΥ) (73:25-27).<sup>38</sup> Certainly there is a connection between these ideas and the Christological title that *Philip* applies to Jesus in 85:1-5: the title High Priest.

<sup>37</sup> A.B. Lieber has developed these ideas as part of her doctoral dissertation, "God Incorporated: Feasting on the Divine Presence and the Eschatological Meal in Early Jewish Mysticism" (Columbia University, 1998). I am indebted to her for allowing me access to her unfinished manuscript. Cf. W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972); J.G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, 4 volumes (London: Macmillan, 1910); *idem*, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1951); M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); *idem*, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); N. Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>38</sup> Cp. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians* 20:2, where the eucharistic elements are the "medicine of immortality". D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 179-197, discusses the Greco-Roman perception of prophylaxis.

These ideas are very old since many of them are found embedded in the text of Hebrews. There, Jesus is the High Priest who has entered the Holy of Holies and offered himself up for the sins of humanity just as the previous High Priests had offered the blood of animals for the sins of the people annually in the Temple in Jerusalem (1:3-4; 2:17; 5:8-10; 6:19-20; 7:23-28; 9:1-28; 10:11-14). The Christians are told to “have confidence” to “draw near to the throne of grace” (τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος) (4:16), to let their hope enter “the inner shrine room behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner” on their behalf as the High Priest (ἦν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος) (6:19-20). They are instructed to “offer God acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire” (ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκον) (12:28-29).

How do believers enter the Temple to worship God who dwells in the fiery depths of the Holy of Holies? In Hebrews 10:19-22, we find an answer not unlike the one *Philip* offers: through the initiatory rituals and the eucharist meal: “We have confidence to enter the Temple by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh (ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ, ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ, προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως βεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ)”.

The emphasis, in Hebrews, is on partaking the body and blood of Jesus as an *atonement* sacrifice whereas in *Philip* the focus is on the consumption of a divine body as a *divinizing* mechanism. Gilles Quispel makes this distinction clear in his discussion about the differences between the Roman mass and the Greek Orthodox eucharist: “In the Roman Mass, God is a tremendous majesty, who is to be atoned by the sacrifice offered to him. The aim and purpose of the Roman Mass is atonement; of the Greek eucharist, at-one-ment.”<sup>39</sup> Quispel explains, “The Greeks venerate in their liturgy the Unknown God beyond understanding, they venerate Christ,

<sup>39</sup> G. Quispel, “The *Asclepius*: From Hermetic Lodge in Alexandria to the Greek Eucharist and the Roman Mass,” in R. van den Broek and W.J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany: SUNY, 1998) 70.

who in a mysterious way sacrifices and is sacrificed and whose spirit is invoked upon the faithful and upon the elements of bread and wine in order to divinize the initiates who participate in this mystery.”<sup>40</sup> It seems that *Philip* preserves an understanding of the eucharist very close to that of the Orthodox.

*Philip* associates the benefits of the eucharist with the eschatological resurrection. In 56:26-57:22, the author is involved in a debate over what kind of body we will have in the resurrection. He seems to be arguing with a group of Christians who contended that they must rise in the flesh because they could not be naked before God. *Philip* responds to this, arguing that those who would rise in the body actually will be naked. He further responds by exegeting 1 Corinthians 15, stating that instead, we must unclouthe ourselves so that we can be re clothed in our spiritual bodies. He maintains that the believer who partakes in the eucharist, will already have received Jesus’ “flesh” as clothing in which to arise. He summarizes:

What is this which will not inherit? This which is on us [*i.e.*, our bodies] (ΤΑΕΙ ΕΤΕΛΩΩΝ). But what is this, too, which will inherit? It is that which belongs to Jesus and his blood (ΤΑ ΙC ΤΕ ΜΝ ΠΕΥCΝΟΥ). Because of this he said, “He who shall not eat my flesh and drink my blood has not life in him” (John 6:53). What is it? His flesh is the word, and his blood is the Holy Spirit (ΤΕΥCΑΡΞ ΠΕ ΠΛΟCΟC ΔΥΩ ΠΕΥCΝΟΥ ΠΕ ΠΠΝΑ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΔ). He who has received these has food and he has drink and clothing (ΠΕΝΤΑΡΞΙ ΝΔΕΙ ΟΥ[Ν]ΤΕΥ ΤΡΟΦΗ ΔΥΩ ΟΥΝΤΑΥ CΩ ΨΙ ΕCΩ) (56:33-57:9).

*Philip* repeatedly refers to this clothing as the “Perfect Man” (ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟC ΡΡΩΜΕ), a reference to the resurrected or transformed body of Jesus. In 75:15-25, he tells us that the cup contains “wine and water”, the image of Jesus’ blood. This must be a reference to John 19:34 where blood and water poured out of Jesus’ pierced side at the crucifixion. This cup of wine and water is “full of the Holy Spirit” (ΥΜΟΥC ΕΒΟΛ Ψ ΠΠΝΑ ΕΤΟΥΔΑΔ), belonging to “the wholly Perfect Man” (ΠΑ ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟC ΤΗΡΥ ΡΡΩΜΕ ΠΕ). When the believers drink of the cup, they will receive for themselves “the Perfect Man” (ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟC ΡΡΩΜΕ). Thus the “living water”, the eucharistic cup, “is a body” (ΠΜΟΥC ΕΤΟΝC ΟΥΕCΩΜΑ ΠΕ). Since it is necessary for the believer to “put on the living man” (ΨΨΕ ΕΤΡΗ† ΨΙΩΩΝ ΜΠΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΟΝC), he must first descend into the waters of baptism, unclouting himself, so that he might now put on the Living Man through imbibing the eucharistic body.

<sup>40</sup> Quispel, “*Asclepius*,” 70.

The union of the believer with the resurrected body of Jesus has a significant soteriological purpose. The transformation into the Perfect Man has the effect of cloaking the believer from the archons during ascent.<sup>40a</sup> This may reflect the fact that Jesus' own movement through the heavens was undetectable to the archons who populate the realms. The *Extracts of Theodotus*, for instance, mention the fact that Jesus put on the psychic Christ whose body was invisible to the archons (59:3).

So important is this eucharistic theology, that *Philip* repeats it three times in his gospel. On the first occasion, he states: "The archons do not see those who are clothed in the perfect light, and consequently are not able to detain them." He will clothe himself in this light by uniting (ϙωτῖ) with the Perfect Man sacramentally (70:5-10). In the second instance, *Philip* associates the garment of perfect light with the body of the Perfect Man: "Not only will they be unable to detain the Perfect Man, but they will not be able to see him, for if they see him they will detain him. There is no other way for a person to acquire this grace (χαρις) except by putting on the perfect light." The one who has cloaked himself in the light will enter heaven (76:23-30). In the third case, we are told that the person must receive the perfect light while on earth because "he will not be able to receive it in the other place" (ετῶ οὐδ' εἰς τὴν ἐν ἑσπερίῳ γῆρας εἰσέλθῃς). He restates that the reception of the body of light provides invisibility so that the believer can not be detained during his final ascent (πετασθῆναι ποῦ οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν ἑσπερίῳ γῆρας εἰς τὴν ἐν ἑσπερίῳ γῆρας εἰσέλθῃς). And he adds that no power will be able "to torment a person like this while he dwells in this world" (86:6-11).

These ideas seem to be the basis for a passage found in another Valentinian text, the *Interpretation of Knowledge*. In this text, believers must "receive" Jesus' "shape," probably through the eucharist meal. This "shape" "exists in the presence [of the Father]." So it seems that the resurrected body of Jesus is being described. Furthermore, the shape or resurrected body is the vehicle which will allow the believer to ascend because Jesus is bearing him upon his "shoulders." Jesus commands him, "Enter through the rib whence you came and hide yourself from the beasts" or Archons (10:24-36). Clearly the believer is understood to become part of the resurrected body of Jesus,

<sup>40a</sup> Irenaeus associates the sacrament of last rites with this cloaking effect stating that certain Valentinians anointed those who were dying so that "their inner man may ascend on high in an invisible manner." The rite made the person "incapable of being seized or seen by the principalities and powers" (Iren., *Adv. Haer.* I.21.5).

which is also described as the body of the primordial Adam. The connection with the primordial Adam should not be surprising since the first earthly man was identified in Jewish and Christian literature with the “image and likeness of God,” the heavenly Man, and the *Kavod*.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, for the Valentinians, to receive the resurrected body, the Perfect Man, is to have one’s own body transformed into the primordial body which can be resurrected but which also will be invisible to the archons. Only if one possesses the transformed body will one be able to enter the heavenly throneroom and gaze on the Father. *Philip* explains: “Do not despise the Lamb [*i.e.*, the sacrificed body], for without it, it is not possible to see the King. No one will be able to go in to the King if he is naked” (ἄπρκαταφρονει ἄπρσειβ ἀζήτηγ γαρ μῆ ψβομ ενδγ επ<ρ>ρο μῆ ἀδδγ ναψ† πεφουοει ερουν επ̄ρο εκκηκαρηνυ) (58:15-17). The transformed body then is the proper covering for the ascent into the cosmic Temple and the much-anticipated vision of the Father.

Therefore, the body of the human must be transformed into the body of the Perfect Man. This occurs by incorporating the body and blood of Christ. Such ritual action has extreme consecrating and redeeming power and is to be associated with the believer’s entrance into the second holy shrine of the heavenly Temple, the *hekkhal*. Here, on a regular basis, just like the priests in the past, the believer approaches the table of the Presence, now the table of the eucharist, and partakes of the holy bread and wine. In so doing, he incorporates the divine body and blood of Christ into his own body. Just as the believer saw the Holy Spirit and thus became the Holy Spirit in the first shrine, *Philip* reminds the believer that here he has *seen* Christ and has become Christ: “It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that actually exist unless he becomes like them . . . You saw something of that place, and you became those things. You saw the Spirit, you became the Spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ” (ἀκνα[γ δ]π̄χ̄ς ἀκψωπε ἵχ̄ς) (61:20-23, 28-31).

It is noteworthy that connections between the eucharist and ascent into the heavenly Temple have been preserved in the Roman Mass and the Greek Orthodox eucharist liturgies, suggesting that *Philip* was aware of some very early Christian interpretations of this ritual. During the Roman Mass and Greek eucharist, the congregation is supposed to lift up their hearts to heaven and sing with the angels before God’s throne as Isaiah

<sup>41</sup> Fossum, *Name*, 266-291.

heard during his throne vision (Isa 6:3), “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God.” Quispel surmises that “the idea that the faithful make a heavenly journey during the Eucharist is not just simply a metaphor, but must be taken quite literally,” especially in light of texts like the *Apocryphon of James* in which “the terminology of this heavenly journey (‘gave thanks,’ and ‘we also’) clearly is an allusion to the liturgy, where the hearts are lifted up during the Eucharist and man sings in harmony with the angels.”<sup>42</sup>

### 3) *Marriage as a Sacrament*

Thus we approach the *devir*, the third and most holy chamber of the heavenly Temple. In the *devir*, it was believed that God’s Presence dwelled. As such, his *kavod* or manifestation was enthroned upon the *merkavah* behind the veil which separates the inner sanctum from the *hekhal*. The cherubim with outstretched wings overlaid the lid of the Ark of the Covenant and formed the seat of the special throne (1 Chron 28:18; Sirach 49:8; cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kg 19:15; Isa 37:16; Ps 80:1, 99:1).<sup>43</sup> The goal of the Jewish mystic was to ascend through the seven *hekhalot* in order to reach the innermost shrine where the mystic would “behold the King in his beauty”. The mystic’s journey is also called a “descent to the chariot” or *yeridah la-merkavah*. As E. Wolfson has argued convincingly, this expression probably refers to the actual entry into the chariot, resulting in the enthronement of the mystic, his vision of the manifestation of God, and his participation in the heavenly liturgy.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Quispel, “*Asclepius*,” 71.

<sup>43</sup> M. Haran, “The Ark and the Cherubim: Their Symbolic Significance in Biblical Ritual”, *Israel Exploration Journal* 9 (1959) 30-38, 89-94; *idem*, “The Divine Presence in the Israelite Cult and the Cultic Institutions”, *Biblica* 50 (1960) 251-267; *idem*, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 247-259; J.-M. de Tarragen, “La Kapporet est-elle une fiction ou un élément de culte tardif?” *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981) 5-12.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfson, “*Yeridah la-Merkavah*”, 13-45. For previous interpretations, see P. Bloch, “Die *Yorede Merkavah*, die Mysiker der Gaonenzeit, und ihr Einfluss auf die Liturgie”, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 37 (1893); G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1965); I. Chernus, “The Pilgrimage to the Merkavah: An Interpretation of Early Jewish Mysticism”, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987) 5; J. Dan, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, The Seventh Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies (University of Cincinnati, April 26, 1984) 34 n. 29; G. Stroumsa, review of I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, *Numen* 28 (1981) 108-109; D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen, 1988) 226-227; A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 322 n. 77.

In some Jewish sources the *devir* or Holy of Holies is associated with God's bridal chamber.<sup>45</sup> This notion is reflected in the midrashic tradition which uses the simile of the Temple as a couch or bed in order to exegete Song of Songs 3:7, "Behold, it is the couch of Solomon":

And why was the Temple compared to a couch? Because just as this couch serves fruitfulness and multiplication (*i.e.*, sexual intercourse), so too the Temple, everything that was in it was fruitful and multiplied" (*Tanhuma Num* fol. 17).<sup>46</sup>

The analogy between the inner sanctum of the Temple with the bed of Yahweh may be very early since already in Ezekiel's visions the association has been made between the Holy of Holies and the womb of Yahweh's wife (16 and 23).<sup>47</sup>

I suppose that the association of marriage with the Holy of Holies in Jewish tradition should not be too surprising since these two are connected semantically. The sacred act of marriage in Hebrew is קידושין or *kidushin*. The verb, "to marry a couple," is לקדש or *lekadesh*. The word for "Temple," is מקדש or *mikdash* while "Holy of Holies" is קדש קדשים, *kodesh kodashim*. In addition to its marriage connotations, לקדש also means "to consecrate" and refers to anything that belongs to God. Thus the whole semantic field surrounding the concept of marriage is equal to the semantic field of the Temple and, in particular, the Holy of Holies. It seems then that the expression "Bridal Chamber" is really equivalent to the "Holy of Holies" when one understands how these words functioned in Hebrew!<sup>48</sup>

So it should not be surprising to find that, in the *Gospel of Philip*, marriage is associated with the third shrine of the heavenly Temple, the Holy of Holies. On one level, *Philip* talks about marriage as a sacrament in terms of its human institution. On another level, it is understood to be the great eschatological event, the Bridal Chamber, when the cleansed and transformed spirit finally enters the Holy of Holies, marries his angel, and is granted to see the Father face to face. Due to the constraints of language, confusion arises since human marriage is reflective of the perfect marriage

<sup>45</sup> For a full discussion, refer to R. Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967) 88-95, cf. 226-233.

<sup>46</sup> Ed. Buber, 33.

<sup>47</sup> For a complete discussion, see J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife*, SBL Dissertation Series 130 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 89-125. It may be that the veil which separated the *hekhal* from the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod 26:33; Josephus, *B.J.* V, v, 5) represented her hymen.

<sup>48</sup> This insight developed out of a conversation I had with Rachel Elior in 1998.

which takes place in the heavenly realm. This is expressed succinctly in 76:6-10:

In this world the union is one of husband and wife—a case of strength complemented by weakness<sup>49</sup>—in the eternal realm the form of the union is different, although we refer to them by the same names (*i.e.*, marriage and bridal chamber) (ΕΠΡΩΤῚ ΨΟΟΠ Θῶ ΠΕΕΙΚΟCΜΟC ΘΟΥΤ ΘΙ CΘΙΜΕ ΠΜΑ ΕΤCΟΜ Μῆ ΤΑΝΤCΩB Θῶ ΠΑΙΩΝ ΚΕΟΥΔ ΠΕ ΠΕΙΝΕ ἈΠΡΩΤῚ ΕΛΛΟΥΤΕ ΔΕ ΕΡΟΥΥ ἩΝΕΙΡΑΝ).

This means that for *Philip* marriage was a sacrament on two levels: in the way it was lived during the earthly experience of the couple; and as an end-of-the-world event when the angelic marriages took place in the Pleroma, the Holy of Holies or the Bridal Chamber.

#### a. *Human Marriage*

One of the most telling passages in *Philip* regarding human marriage is found in 64:31-32: “Great is the mystery of marriage! For [without] it the world would [not exist]” ([ΠΜ]ΥCΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΑΠΤΑΜ[ΟC] ΟΥΝΟC [ΠΕ ΔΖΝ]ΤῚ ΓΑΡ ΝΕ ΠΚΟC[ΜΟ]C ΝΑΨΩ[ΠΕ ΔΝ]). Here, human marriage is associated with procreation. Furthermore, the marital union that *Philip* demands for his followers differs from the normal marital practices of non-Valentinians. *Philip* demands that the perfect human marital union be one controlled by pure thought rather than one controlled by sexual desire. Thus *Philip* refers to the former as “marriage of purity” (ΠΤΑΜΟC ἩΔΤΖΩΘΜ) (82:5) while the latter is “marriage of impurity” (ΠΤΑΜΟC ἈΠΤΖΩΘΜ) (64:36-37; 82:5).

In sacramental human marriage, known in *Philip* as the “marriage of purity,” during sexual intercourse, the thoughts of the couple must not be adulterous, focusing on another lover. For if this were the case, the child conceived would resemble the lover rather than the spouse: “The children a woman bears resembles the man who loves her” (78:14). Nor must the couple’s thoughts be focused on the world. For then the child who is born will resemble the world (78:20-25). What *Philip* proposes is that the couple direct their thoughts to God so that the child conceived will be of the spiritual race resembling the Lord:

Now you who live together with the son of God, love not the world, but love the Lord, in order that those you will bring forth may not resemble the world,

<sup>49</sup> Text is corrupt, thus emended by Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 7, 194: ΠΜΔ ΕΤCΟΜ Μῆ ΤΑΝΤCΩB.



but may resemble the Lord (ἸΩΤῆ ΔΕ ΝΕΤΨΟΟΠ ΜἸ ΠΨΗΡΕ ἈΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΜἸ ἈΡΡΕ ΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΔΑΛΔΑ ΜἸΡΡΕ ΠΖΟΕΙΣ ΨΙΝΑ ΝΕΤΕΤΝΑΔΠΟΥ ΝΟΥΨΩΠΕ ΕΥΕΙΝΕ ἈΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΔΑΛΔΑ ΕΥΝΑΨΩΠΕ ΕΥΕΙΝΕ ἈΠΖΟΕΙΣ) (78:20-25).

Because the partners have united with God in their thoughts and love, they draw the heavenly spirit or light down to rest upon their own spirits, thus conceiving children of the Spirit:

Spirit mingles with spirit, and thought consorts with thought, and [light] shares [with light] (ΤΔΕΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΨΑ[ΡΕ] ΠΠἸἈ ΤΩΡ ΜἸ ΠΠἸἈ ΔΥΩ ΠΛΟ[ΤΟΣ] ΨΔΥΡΚ[Ο]ΙΝΩ[Ν]ΕΙ ΜἸ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ [ΔΥΩ ΠΟ]ΥΟ[ΕΙΝ] ΨΔΥΡΚΟΙΝΩΜΕΙ [ΜἸ ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ]) . . . If you become [a spirit], it is the spirit which will be joined to you (ΕΚΨΔΨΩΠΕ [Μ ΠἸἈ] ΠΠἸἈ ΠΕΤΝΑΡΩΤΡ ΕΡΟΚ). If you become thought, it is thought which will mingle with you (ΕΚ[ΨΔΨΩΠΕ] ἸΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΕΤΝΑΤΩΡ ΝἈΛΔΚ). If you become light, it is the light which will share with you (Ε[Κ]ΨΔΨΩΠΕ ἸΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΠΟΥΟΕΙΝ ΠΕΤΝΑΡΚΟΙΝΩΜΕΙ ΝἈΛΔΚ). If you become one of those who belong above, it is those who belong above who will rest upon you (ΕΚΨΔΨΩΠΕ ἸΝΑ ΠΣΑ ΝΡΡΕ ΝΑ ΠΣΑ ΝΡΡΕ ΝἈἸΤΟΝ ἈΛΟΥ ΕΡΡΔΙ) (78:29-79:5).

It is noteworthy that this section of *Philip* is immediately preceded by a passage which seems to be familiar with the *Song of Solomon*: “Spiritual love (ΤΑΓΔΑΠΗ ἈΠΝΕΥΜ[ΑΤΙΚΗ]) is wine and fragrance” (77:35-36). Compare this with the *Song of Solomon* 1:2-3, “For your love is better than wine, your anointing oils are fragrant”, and 4:10, “How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!” It may be that *Philip*’s understanding of the marriage of purity which is to be governed by contemplation of the Lord may be one of the earliest Christian exegeses of the *Song of Solomon*.

At any rate, the mystical aspect of marriage according to *Philip* also is referred to in 81:30-82:26. In this passage, *Philip* states that sexual intercourse between married partners is done “in private” (ϚἸ ΟΥΠΕΘΗΠ) in order to beget children. He says that the private procreative moment is a “mystery” (ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ) for every ordinary married couple. If procreation within the ordinary marriage of impurity is a mystery, *Philip* declares how much more mysterious is conception between partners of pure thought: “If there is a hidden quality to the marriage of impurity, how much more is the marriage of purity a true mystery!” (ΕΨΔΕ ΠΣΑΜΟΣ ἈΠΖΩΡΜ ΦΡΗΠ ΠΟΣΩ ΜΔΔΛΟΝ ΠΣΑΜΟΣ ἸΑΤΖΩΡΜ ΟΥΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΠΕ ἸΔΔΗΘΕΙΝΟΝ) (82:4-6). The proper marriage is the marriage that is based on “pure” (ΤἸΒΗΥ) thought rather than mere “carnal” (ΣΑΡΚΙΚΟΝ) activity, “belonging not to desire, but to the will” (ΕΦΗΠ ΔΝ ΔΤΕΠΘΥΜΙΑ ΔΔΔΔ ΕΠΟΥΨ) (82:9). During sexual intercourse, the couple must send their will to heaven.

In so doing, they will draw down the light and at the mysterious moment of conception, the light will consort with the couple. Thus *Philip* states regarding this moment: "It belongs not to the darkness or the night but to the day and the light" (82:9-10). So sacred is this private mystical moment between the partners when heaven's own descends and mingles with them, that *Philip* declares sexual relations which are not conducted in private, to be "prostitution" (πορνεία) (82:9-10).

Thus *Philip* explains that those who partake of the marriage of purity conceive "from the grace" (χάρις) which is within their spouses (59:5-6). Associated with this is the emphasis in *Philip* on kissing between the perfect partners. Because they have been nourished with the body of the Perfect Man by partaking of the eucharistic elements, when they kiss each other, they conceive and give birth to perfect children (59:1-4). Even Jesus seems to be engaged in kissing activity with Mary Magdalene (63:35-36). The idea that life or the spirit could be transferred or exchanged by a kiss is a very old idea and probably underlies this particular behavior and interpretation.<sup>50</sup> It was through the kiss, *Philip* seems to say, that the perfect spirit of the child is conceived while the body through sexual intercourse itself. Thus marriage and conception involve physical activities as well as a mystical consciousness which invites the divine light to mingle with the couple in order that they may conceive a child of the spiritual race.

Of course, this ideology of marriage and sexual activity must be what Irenaeus is objecting to when he claims that the Valentinians believe themselves "to be perfect," "the elect seed" because they possess "grace" which has "descended from above by means of unspeakable and indescribable intercourse" (αὐτοὺς δὲ ιδιόκτητον ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀνονομάστου συζυγίας κατεληλυθυῖαν ἔχειν τὴν χάριν). Thus the Valentinians maintain that "in every way it is always necessary for them to practice the mystery of intercourse (διὸ καὶ ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου δεῖν αὐτοὺς αἰεὶ τὸ τῆς συζυγίας μελετᾶν μυστήριον)." But for the non-elect, sexual intercourse is dangerous because it is not performed as a sacramental union but as an expression of sexual desire. Irenaeus quotes them as saying, "Whosoever being in this world does not so love a woman as to obtain possession of her (ὅς ἂν ἐν

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Gen 2:7; Jn 20:22; 1 Cor 16:20; OdesSol 28:6-7; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.9.6. See I. Löw, "Der Kuss", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 65 (1921) 253-276, 323-349; K. Thraede, "Ursprünge und Formen des 'Heiligen Kusses' in frühen Christentum", *JAC* 11-12 (1968-1969) 124-180; G. Stählin, "φιλεῶ etc.", *TDNT* 9, 113-171.

κόσμῳ γενόμενος γυναῖκα οὐκ ἐφίλησεν, ὥστε αὐτῇ κραθῆναι), is not of the truth, nor shall attain to the truth. But whosoever being *of* the world (ὁ δὲ ἀπὸ κόσμου ὢν) has intercourse (κεράννυμι) with a woman, shall not attain to the truth, because intercourse with his wife resulted from desire (διὰ τὸ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ κραθῆναι γυναικί).” Those *in* the world but not *of* the world are the Valentinians who will attain to the Pleroma. They are expected to be involved in sacramental sexual practices as married couples. The psychics or ordinary Christians, however, are *of* the world. In order to attain to the “intermediate habitation” or the dwelling place of the Lower Sophia, they must practice “continence and good works (ἐγκράτειαν καὶ ἀγαθὴν πράξιν)” (*Adv. haer.* 1.6.4). If they are sexually active, even during their marriages, they are involved in impurity and sin because their minds are focused on fulfilling the pleasures of their bodies rather than the will of their spirits.

*Philip's* understanding about the esoteric nature of sexual intercourse is very similar to that espoused by the Hermetics. According to both the Latin and the Coptic fragments of *Asclepius*,<sup>51</sup> intercourse is a great “mystery” (*mysterium*; ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ) (Latin *Asc.* 21; *NHC* 65:15-66:24) which reflects God's own creative potency. *Asclepius* 21 insists that “the mystery of intercourse” must be performed “in secret” (*effectus itaque huius tam blandi necessarique mysterii in occulto perpetratur*; ΠΑΪ ΠΑΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ἸΤΣΥΝΟΥΣΙΑ ΕΥΕΙΡΕ ἌΛΟΥ Θῆ ΟΥΘΩΠ) so that the couple may not be disgraced in front of those who do not themselves partake in the esoteric reality of the sexual experience.

The esoteric reality of the sexual encounter is one that only the pious understand and perform. To the impious, the “holy mysteries” of intercourse are “laughable and unbelievable”. The pious direct their thoughts to the contemplation of their true divine selves so that the divine selves are able to mingle with the other, having arisen in both natures from the sexual coupling (Latin *Asc.* 21: *inperitis utriusque naturae divinitas ex commixtione sexus cogatur erubescere*). Unlike the pious, the impious focus on their passions which are an “incurable sore” gnawing at the soul. During intercourse, harmful desire dwells within the impious and blocks them from rising above pure matter (Coptic *Asc.* 67:9-20). Those, however, who listen to God imitate him by restraining their passions. Like the androgynous Father who “crafted

<sup>51</sup> For Latin, see A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* 2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945) 259-401; for Coptic fragments, see D.M. Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2-5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4, Nag Hammadi Studies 11* (edited and translated by P.A. Dirkse and D.M. Parrott; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979) 395-452.

all things by his own will" (*C.H.* V.7),<sup>52</sup> their thoughts and actions must be controlled by their own will (*Coptic Asc.* 67:25-28).

It seems that the Hermetics extended their ideas of self-contemplation to sexual activity, turning a generally carnal activity into the supreme meditative moment when the divine Mind within each sexual partner unites with the other. Thus, the Hermetics claim that the begetting of children is "a duty in life to be taken most seriously and greatly revered". Furthermore, "should any human being pass away childless", they suffer "the worst misfortune and irreverence". Accordingly, "after death such a person suffers retribution from demons" (διὸ καὶ μεγίστη ἐν τῷ βίῳ σπουδὴ καὶ εὐσεβεστάτη τοῖς εὖ φρονουσίῳ ἐστὶν ἡ παιδοποιία, καὶ μέγιστον ἀτύχημα καὶ ἀσέβημα ἐστὶν ἄτεκνόν τινα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαλλαγῆναι, καὶ δίκην οὕτως δίδωσι μετὰ θάνατον τοῖς δαίμοσιν) (*C.H.* II.17). Is it possible that the Hermetics understood this reverent coupling to produce children filled with Mind, while the coupling of those who do not rise above the carnal pleasures of intercourse, was responsible for propagating those the Hermetics called "the souls of men devoid of Mind" (*C.H.* IV.3), mere fodder for death (*C.H.* I.18)?

This understanding of sexuality may help us to make sense of a difficult passage in *Corpus Hermeticum* I.18, a passage which has usually been interpreted by scholars as an example of a text advocating sexual asceticism: "let he who has Mind in him recognize that he is immortal, that *eros* is the cause of death" (ἀναγνωρισάτω <ὁ> ἔννουσ ἑαυτὸν ὄντα ἀθάνατον, καὶ τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα). Outside of its context, this passage smacks of sexual renunciation. But when viewed within its context, this interpretation becomes problematic:

God immediately spoke a *holy* speech: "Increase in increasing and multiply in multitude, all you creatures and craftworks, and let he who has Mind in him recognize that he is immortal, that *eros* is the cause of death, and let him recognize all that exists". After God said this, Providence, through fate and through the cosmic framework, caused acts of intercourse and set in train acts of birth; and all things were multiplied according to kind. The one who recognized himself attained the chosen Good, but the one who loved the body that came from the error of desire goes on in darkness, wandering, suffering sensibly the effects of death (*C.H.* 18-19).

It seems that sexual activity itself is not the problem according to this passage, but sexual intercourse focused on *eros* or carnal desire. The one who

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<sup>52</sup> See A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum* I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945).

directs his thoughts inward and contemplates his divine self, has risen to God and partakes in the esoteric reality of intercourse. Unfortunately, the Hermetics state that most people do not do this while having sex. They are led astray by their desire because they have focused their love on their bodies rather than their divine selves. In this way, they can not rise to the heavens during intercourse and, uniting with the divine, perpetuate immortality. Rather, they continue to wander around the darkness of the sense world, and through their ignorance will perpetuate death.

According to the Gospel of Philip, there are further advantages to the pure marriage. If the married couple have drawn down the spirit or light to consort with them during sexual relations, both are protected from the unwanton advances of evil spirits which would otherwise be free to fondle and defile them (65:3-26).<sup>53</sup> One receives this spiritual spouse from the marriage of purity which is called here, "the mirrored bridal chamber" (ΠΝΥΜΦΩΝ Ν̄ΖΙΚΟΝΙΚΟΣ) (65:13) since it imitates the future marriage that will occur in the eschatological bridal chamber between the person's spirit and his angel. Thus the descent of the spirit or light is also referred to by *Philip* as the descent of an angel. If the partners unite their thoughts and love with God, the angel descends into their midst and unites with them during sexual intercourse (cf. 65:24-26).

According to *Philip*, this type of marriage is supposed to imitate the hierogamy of the Father and the Virgin Spirit who, in the great bridal chamber, conceived Jesus in order to reflect the pristine harmony of the pleroma (71:5-10). The conception was a fiery event in which the spiritual body of the aeon Jesus was begotten (71:6-9). He left the bridal chamber "as one who came into being from the bridegroom and the bride" (71:10-11).

Now such a union is to be enacted by human activity because its imitation helps to reestablish the harmony within the pleroma, a harmony which was lost when Sophia conceived outside the boundaries of marriage. This lost harmony was perpetuated after the creation of Adam and Eve when Eve followed Sophia's example and separated from Adam, having sex with him outside of marriage. So "Eve separated from Adam because it was not in the bridal chamber that she united with him" (70:22-23).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> This is an old idea reflected in Genesis 6 and 1 Corinthians 11.

<sup>54</sup> The notion that Adam and Eve had sex outside of marriage may be connected to the popular belief that they had sex before they had reached adulthood; cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3,22,4; *Demonstratio* ch. 12; Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 2,25; Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11,111,1.

*Philip* teaches that Jesus came to reestablish the lost harmony by restoring marriage and conception to its proper form. This was accomplished through Jesus' own conception and birth. Because Jesus' earthly conception and birth imitated the conception and birth of his aeonic body, the proper form of marriage finally was brought to earth, a marriage which mirrored the great hierogamy: "Christ, therefore, was born from a virgin to rectify the fall which occurred in the beginning" (71:19-21). Jesus came "to repair the separation which was from the beginning" by bringing, through his own birth, the divine bridal chamber to earth. Now those who imitate this divine union in their marriages "will no longer be separated" (ΝΕΝΤΑΘΩΤῚ ΔΕ Θᾶ ΠΠΑΚΤΟΣ ΟΥΚΕΤΙ ΣΕΝΑΠΩΡΔ) (70:20-21). The believers, by following the example of the divine marriage, will enter rest, reestablishing the lost harmony of the pleromic world (70:10-22; 71:12-15; cf. 68:22-26).

It is fascinating how similiar ideas develop in the later Jewish mystical traditions where sexual imagery particularly becomes connected to the act of God's enthronement upon the cherubim seat in the Holy of Holies. In *Hekhalot Rabbati*, God's enthronement takes the form of a sacred marriage. Thus the mystic must recite when he enters the *merkavah*:

Gladden the King who [sits] upon you [the throne], as the joy of the bridegroom in his bridal chamber (חַשְׂמַח מֶלֶךְ שְׁעֵלִיב כְּשִׂמְחָה חָתָן בְּבֵית חֻפְתּוֹ).<sup>55</sup>

God's "embellishment is more exquisite than the embellishment of the bridegroom and bride in the house of their wedding" (חַתָּנִים וְכֻלּוֹת בְּבֵית) (חֻפְתָּם).<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the faces of the angels are compared to "the appearance of the bride" (אִפְיֵהוֹן כְּחִזּוֹ דְּכֻלָּא).<sup>57</sup> Therefore, God commands those mystics who have entered the *merkavah*:

Bear witness to them of the testimony you see in me regarding what I do to the visage of Jacob, your father, which is engraved upon my throne of glory, for when you say before me, Holy, I bend down over it (literally: her), clasp it, embrace it, and kiss it, (קְדוֹשׁ כּוֹרַע אֲנִי עֲלֶיהָ וּמִנְפָּף אֶחְזָק וּמְחַבֵּק אֶחְזָק וּמְנַשֵּׁק אֶחְזָק) and my hands are on its arms, thrice daily, for you say before me, Holy, as it says, "Holy, holy, holy".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse*, paragraph 94. Cf. paragraphs 154 and 687; *idem*, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, 105 and 185.

<sup>56</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse*, paragraph 159.

<sup>57</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse*, paragraph 353.

<sup>58</sup> Schäfer, *Synopse*, paragraph 164.

The sexual nature of the enthronement is alluded to in the Talmudic tradition as well, where emphasis is placed on the two cherubim between which the Shekhinah rests:<sup>59</sup>

When Israel used to make the pilgrimage, they (*i.e.*, the priests) would roll up for them the veil and show them the cherubim which were intertwined with one another, and say to them: "Behold! Your love before God is like the love of the male and female" (*b. Yoma* 54a).

Such passages have caused E. Wolfson to treat the enthronement of God's manifestation as "a metaphor for a sacred union of the masculine and feminine aspects of the divine".<sup>60</sup>

Ingenuously, M. Idel connects this imagery with the talmudic dictum: "If a man and woman are worthwhile, the divine Presence dwells between them, if not—they shall be consumed by fire" (*b. Sotah* 17.a).<sup>61</sup> Idel suggests that this dictum should be interpreted as pertaining to sexual intercourse between married partners, an act whose performance, according to some Jewish traditions, affected the appearance of the Shekhinah on earth. Not only was the Shekhinah believed to be present during intercourse,<sup>62</sup> but if the union produced children, the Shekhinah would continue to dwell on earth.<sup>63</sup> Thus, according to Idel, this dictum suggests that "perfect sexual union influences the Divine Presence, causing it to dwell with the worthy pair".<sup>64</sup> Idel concludes that after the destruction of the Temple, the role of the cherubim as performers of the sacred union with God was transferred to human partners, thus partially perserving the sacred union by human activity.<sup>65</sup> The pure union of male and female in marriage restored the Shekhinah to her place on earth among the Jews, reestablishing the harmony that had originally existed in the Temple.<sup>66</sup>

In Kabbalistic traditions, it was believed that each person had an astral body which was linked to the image of God in which the human was created. Rabbi Eleazar of Worms says:

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Midrash Tadshé*, Jellinek, *Beth Hamidrash* iii, 167.

<sup>60</sup> E. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 101.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Pirke de-R. Eliezer*, ch. 12, and *R. Tuviah ben Eliezer's Lekah Tov on Genesis*, 2:23.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Bereshit Rabba* 8,9 (p. 63); 22,2 (p. 206).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Yevamot* 63b-64a.

<sup>64</sup> M. Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah", in D. Kraemer (ed.), *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 201-202.

<sup>65</sup> Idel, "Sexual Metaphors", 203.

<sup>66</sup> Idel, "Sexual Metaphors", 204.

Each person has his form above, who is his advocate . . . an angel who guides that person's "star." And when he is sent below, he has the image of that person who is beneath him . . . And this is, "and God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him" [Genesis 1:27]. Why twice, "in his image/in the image of"? One is the image of man, and one is the image of the angelic being, who is in the form of that man (*Hokhmah ha-Nefesh* [Lemberg, 1876] 117-118).

This angel was understood to be the person's divine double which was imprinted on him at the moment of conception.

In the Zohar, the personal angel is understood to be a preexistent primordial shape or garment that the soul wears prior to entering the body. The Zohar says:

When a man begins to consecrate himself before sex with his wife with a sacred intention, a holy spirit is aroused above him, composed of both male and female. And the Holy One, Blessed Be He, directs an emissary who is in charge of the human embryos, and assigns to him this particular spirit, and indicates to him the place to which it should be entrusted. . . . Then the spirit descends together with the image, the one in whose likeness [the spirit] existed above. With this image, man grows; with this image he moves through the world (III,43a-b).

Again in the Zohar it is stated, "at the moment of sex, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, sends a likeness that has the physiognomy of the person who is about to be formed imprinted and etched upon this image, and it stands over the act of intercourse. And were the eye allowed to see, he would observe above his head an image formed like the physiognomy of that person, and in that same image man is created (III, 104b)."

Thus, according to Idel, the later Kabbalists had developed this ancient idea of sacral marriage. They stated that when the husband and wife have intercourse, the husband's thought must "unite with the supernal entities" because his thought will draw "the supernal light downward". Then the light will rest upon the semen.<sup>67</sup> The goal of intercourse is procreation in cooperation with the Shekhinah by having sex with a mystical consciousness united with God. The union of the parent's human bodies produces the child's body, while the soul emerges from the spiritual realm through the union of pure thought with God.

According to Idel, in the Kabbalistic tradition, marriage and sex are "transformed into a mystery . . . whose success is crucial for both the divine

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<sup>67</sup> Chavel, *Kitze ha-Ramban*, II,373.



cosmos and the lower universe”.<sup>68</sup> Pure sexual relations were understood as participating mystically in the divine hierogamy by imitating it and influencing the harmony of the upper world.<sup>69</sup>

It seems that the idea of sacramental marriage was not uncommon in Jewish, Valentinian traditions and even Hermetic traditions. The notion seems to be based on an ancient view of sexuality—that it was more than a physical activity with physical consequences. The thoughts of the sexual partners either raised intercourse to a sacred height or drew it down to the depths of sin. When performed sacramentally, the spirit of the child conceived would resemble God. Being immortal, it would be drawn down from the heavens above to sojourn on earth until it returned to its spiritual origin at death. But when performed out of desire, the child would merely resemble the world and its darkness and become fodder for death.

#### b. *The Eschatological Bridal Chamber*

The great day of complete “restoration” (ΑΠΟΚΤΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ) when the spirit of the person finally will enter the bridal chamber and marry his angel (67:16-20) will take place at the end of the world. Until that time, the bridal chamber, the Holy of Holies, remains hidden behind the veil (84:20-26). At the Eschaton, however, the veil will be rent “from top to bottom” (85:10) and the interior of the Holy of Holies will be revealed (84:25-26).<sup>70</sup> The world will be left desolate and the Demiurge will flee the cosmos. He, however, will not be able to flee into the heavenly Temple shrines because he “will not be able to mix with the unmixed [light] and the [flawless] pleroma” (84:27-34).

In contrast, the believers who “belong to the order of the priesthood” because they have prepared themselves sacramentally for entry into the Temple, will “go within the veil” led by Jesus “the High Priest” (ΕΡΨΑ ΘΗΘΟΕΙΝΕ ΨΩΠΕ ΘΗ ΤΦΥΛΗ ΝΤΑΠΤΟΥΗΝΒ ΝΑΕΙ ΝΑΨΩΉ ΣΟΜ ΝΒΩΚ ΕΘΟΥΝ ΕΠΣΑ ΝΘΟΥΝ ΑΠΚΑΤΑΠΕΤΑΣΜΑ ΜΗ ΠΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ) (85:3-5). The Ark of the Covenant is “their salvation” since they find themselves under “the wings of the Cross” (ΣΝΑΨΩΠΕ ΘΑ ΝΤΗΘ ΑΠΡΟΣ [ΔΥΩ ΘΑ Ν]ΕΨΘΒΟΕΙ ΤΕΕΙΣΒΩΤΟΣ ΝΑΨΩ[ΠΕ ΑΠΟ]ΥΟΥΖΑΕΙ ΝΤΑΡΕ ΠΚΑΤΑΚΛΥΣΜΟΣ ΑΛΟΟΥ ΕΜΑΘΤΕ ΕΘΡΑΪ ΕΞΩΟΥ) (84:33-35). This state-

<sup>68</sup> Idel, “Sexual Metaphors”, 208.

<sup>69</sup> Idel, “Sexual Metaphors”, 210.

<sup>70</sup> Exegesis of Hebrews 9:1-10 seems to have contributed to the development of this description of the end of the world.



room (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.21.3). In this way, the human marriage of the couple was understood to be a sacramental union anticipating the eschatological marriage in the great Bridal Chamber.

It seems then that the sacramental experiences allowed the believer to mystically penetrate the heavenly Temple as far as the veil of the Holy of Holies. Through the sacraments of initiation and the eucharist meals, the believer gazed upon the Spirit and was transformed into the Spirit, beheld the Christ and was transfigured into Christ. Moreover, by enacting the sacred marriage through properly directed sexual activity, the believer participated mystically in the hierogamy taking place behind the veil and thus influenced the harmony of the divine world. *Philip* reminds the believer that at this third stage, the human is enacting the divine marriage, and in so doing: “You saw the Father” (ΔΚΝΔΥ ΔΠ[ΕΙΩΤ]) (61:31). But complete transformation into the Father must wait until the Eschaton when “you shall become Father” ([Κ]ΝΔΥΩΠΕ ΝΕΙΩΤ) (61:31). In that divine bridal chamber, the believer will see his angelic self, “and what you see you shall [become]” (ΠΕΤΚΝΔΥ ΓΑΡ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΚΝΔΥ[ΩΠΕ ΜΛ]ΟΥ) (61:32-35).

Similarly, according to the *Extracts of Theodotus*, on the Lord’s Day, the believers which have been purified and have passed into the second room of the heavenly Temple where they have discarded their soul bodies, are transformed into their pure spiritual bodies. Together with their angelic bridegrooms, they cross the threshold, passing into “the bridal chamber” (τοὺς νυμφίους). They “attain to the vision of the Father” (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὄψιν ἔρχονται), now “having become intellectual aeons, in the intellectual and eternal marriages of the Syzyge” (Αἰῶνες νοεροὶ γενόμενα, εἰς τοὺς νοερούς καὶ αἰωνίους γάμους τῆς συζυγίας) (64:1-65:1).

#### 4. *Redemption*

“Redemption (ΩΠΕ)” is also called a “sacrament” in the *Gospel of Philip* (67:28-30; cf. 69:25-26; *Tripartite Tractate* 127:25) and is mentioned in the writings of the Church Fathers (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.13.6, 1.21.1-5; Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 4.41). But, like marriage, I believe that it should not be understood as a ritual event. Rather it is the “mystery” of “being redeemed” by God, of entering the heavenly Temple (cf. 69:24-25).

Therefore, in *Philip*, it is associated with the standard ritual events. It is connected with baptism (69:25-26): “Baptism possesses the resurrection and the redemption (Π[ΒΑΠΤΙ]ΣΜΑ ΟΥΝΤΑΥ ΜΛΔΥ ΝΤΑΝΑΣΤΑΣ[ΙΣ ΜΝ Π]

ΩΤΕ.” In 62:15-17, it is associated with the eucharist, the “measuring” of Jesus. Thus: “‘Jesus’ in Hebrew is ‘the redemption’ (ἸϞ ἸϞΛΗΤΩΕΒΡΑΙΟϞ ΠΕ ΠΩΠΕ) . . . It is ‘the Nazarene’ and ‘Jesus’ who have been measured.” This interpretation is particularly inviting when one recalls that according to 63:22-25, the name “Jesus” is also identified with the eucharist: “The eucharist is Jesus (ΤΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΑ ΠΕ ἸϞ). For he is called in Syriac ‘Pharisatha,’ which is ‘the one who is spread out,’ for Jesus came to crucify the world.” And finally “redemption” is associated with the eschatological Bridal Chamber (69:25-26): “As regards the redemption, it is in the Bridal Chamber (ΕΠΩΤΕ ΘῪ ΠΝΥΛΦΩΝ).” At the end of the world, those who have entered the Bridal Chamber and its perfect light will receive the real chrism, not just the earthly type or image of it as they had formerly when on earth. This will “redeem (ΩΤΕ)” the “captives.” Only then will they be able to marry their betrothed angels.

What I conclude from this is that, for the Valentinians who wrote *Philip*, there was an important esoteric distinction between their ritual performances and the performances of ordinary Christians: that is, the rituals performed by the Valentinians effected a deeper spiritual action than those performed by other Christians because the Valentinians believed that their rituals actually “redeemed” the person. This conclusion is supported by the evidence given to us by Irenaeus. He admits being confused about how the Valentinians understood “redemption” because they associated it with each of the different rituals. Irenaeus sorts this out by stating that some Valentinians associate redemption with baptism: the pneumatics automatically are redeemed when they are baptized, while the ordinary Christians, the psychics, receive only the remission from their sins when they are baptized (*Adv. haer.* 1.21.2-3). Other Valentinians connect redemption with chrism (1.21.4) or the anointing rites preceding death (1.21.5) so that “their inner man may ascend on high in an invisible manner as if their body were left among the created things in the world, while their soul is sent forward to the Demiurge.” Still others claim that redemption was achieved through their sacramental unions in marriage (1.21.3). And finally, their were some who teach that “knowledge” itself was redemption because only the spiritual element in the human will actually be redeemed (1.21.4).

Although it is certainly possible that different Valentinian groups connected redemption with different rituals, with the evidence in *Philip*, it seems more likely that the Valentinians generally understood that all of their sacraments possessed the mysterious power of redemption, while the same sacraments did not for ordinary Christians. This interpretation would

also explain Hippolytus' enigmatic statement that the Marcosians performed a second baptism which is called "redemption." I wonder if the Marcosians had found it necessary to rebaptize their new converts in order to ensure their redemption once they left behind the ranks of the ordinary Christians.

### 5. Conclusion

This reconstruction of attitudes toward marriage in *Philip* certainly separates the Valentinians from other Gnostic sects which may have tended toward more encratic lifestyles.<sup>72</sup> This study supports the conclusion that a sacramental marriage virtually was required between Valentinian Christians since it enacted and embodied the supernal hierogamy and the union of the transcendent aeons. This conclusion is in line with Clement of Alexandria's understanding of the Valentinians. In his famous tract *On Marriage* in which he vehemently writes against the encratic lifestyle, he praises the Valentinians since they believe in the sanctity of marriage. He begins his book by stating: "The Valentinians, who hold that the union of man and woman is derived from the divine emanation in heaven above, approve of marriage" (Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀμφὶ τὸν Οὐαλεντίνον ἄνωθεν ἐκ τῶν θείων προβολῶν τάς συζυγίας καταγαγόντες εὐαρεστοῦνται γάμφῳ) (*Misc.* III,1,1). In the *Extracts of Theodotus*, he records that the Valentinians believe that procreation is "necessary for the salvation of the believers" because procreation must continue until all the children of the spiritual race have been born (67:4). Furthermore, so sacred is conception that it is compared to the mingling of the bodies of aeons Jesus, the Church, and Wisdom (17.1-4). Once the children are born, they are able to partake of the sacraments where they receive "the form of the Savior" and "become children of a bridal chamber" (ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ Σωτῆρος μορφωθέντες Ἄνδρὸς καὶ Νυμφῶνος γεγόναμεν τέκνα) (68:3-4).

This sacramental theology may help to shed light on a perplexing passage in the *Extracts of Theodotus*. In 27:1-6, Clement of Alexandria discusses the ascent of the soul into the intelligible realm. The ascent of the soul is said to be the entry of the high priest with "the Name engraved upon his heart" (τὸ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐγκεχαραγμένον Ὄνομα ἔχων) into the Holy of Holies. Before entering the Holy of Holies, he must first enter "the sec-

<sup>72</sup> This is in contradiction to Idel, "Sexual Metaphors", 211-214, who seems to associate all gnostics with encratism and the return to the primal androgyne state; also, in contrast, is M.A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 148-150.

ond veil" (τοῦ καταπετάσματος τοῦ δευτέρου), the *hekhal* where the altar of incense stands. The priest's body is said to already have been consecrated "like the golden plate" which is "pure and light through purification" since the body previously had been "engraved" with the "lustre of piety", being "clothed with the Name" (τὸ Ὄνομα περικείμενος).

The golden plate on the high priest's turban which has been decorated with the Tetragrammaton, is the body which has been consecrated through baptism and chrism, engraved with the Name. This investiture purifies the body so that the priest can enter the *hekhal*. As he enters, the body is laid aside revealing pure soul. Here he worships with "the angels who are the ministers of prayers carried aloft". Now he is ready to enter the Holy of Holies. As he does so, he is transformed completely into a spiritual body, as it were, "a body of the Power" (τὸ δυνάμεως). The work of "the Power" (τὸ δυνάμεως) is such that the person "becomes the bearer of God . . . as it were, his Body" (τὸ θεοφόρον γίνεσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον . . . καθάπερ σῶμα αὐτοῦ γινόμενον). Only then can the transformed person pass into the spiritual realm in order to "rest" with his "bridegroom", being granted "to see God 'face to face'".

It would seem that Clement is referring to a common Valentinian interpretation of the sacraments here, an interpretation not unlike what we have so far reconstructed from *Philip*.<sup>73</sup> The sacraments of baptism and chrism purify the body, etching the Name upon the person. This makes it possible for the person to enter the *hekhal* of the heavenly Temple. Within this holy room, the person is further transformed into the Body of God probably through partaking of the eucharist. Thusly transformed, he will be able to enter the Holy of Holies one day and marry his angel.

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<sup>73</sup> This would argue for the case that this pericope represents Theodotus' views rather than those of Clement as Sagnard reconstructs: Sagnard, *Les Extraits de Théodote*, 11, 220-223. Thus, I agree with J. Buckley that this passage is consistent with Valentinianism. See her, *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) 66-70.