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READING THE *GOSPEL OF
PHILIP* AS A TEMPLE TEXT

For many Latter-day Saints, their introduction to studies on Latter-day Saint ritual was in reading the works of Hugh Nibley, who specifically focused on the rites of the temple. Nibley was the first to point out the parallels between the religious behavior of earlier cultures, especially the ritual experiences of early Christianity, and our own. In this paper, Gaye continues this tradition as she introduces us to the Gnostic text the *Gospel of Philip* and points out intriguing similarities between this text and our own temple experience. —DB

IN NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER OF 1945, two brothers stumbled upon a cache of ancient texts in the Upper Egyptian region of Nag Hammadi. The cache consisted of twelve codices and part of a thirteenth.¹ Although for a long time it did not receive the same amount of public press, this discovery is as important to the study of Christian origins as the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was to the study of Second Temple Judaism. The library has often been categorized as a Christian Gnostic library,² but there is still considerable debate about the Gnostic character of some of the tractates.³ The term “Gnosticism” comes from a Greek word for “knowledge” (*gnōsis*). It is an umbrella term that modern scholars use

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to describe a number of Christian groups that early Church Fathers denounced as heretics.⁴ Although these groups each had their own unique teachings, their shared common belief was that followers gained redemption through the acquisition of knowledge, either a secret tradition passed down by the Apostles or from a revelation received by their founder.⁵ In the *Excerpts of Theodotus*, an ancient Gnostic text preserved by Clement of Alexandria, we find a definition of *gnōsis*: “knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth” (78.2).⁶

One of the Gnostic groups was known as the Valentinians. They received their name from their founder, Valentinus, who established an influential school during the second century CE. According to Tertullian, they required a minimum of five years of instruction before a person could be initiated. The Valentinians sought to explain how (1) the divine element in humans came to exist in a fallen and hostile world that was ruled over by the Demiurge (i.e., the creator god) and his Archons (or rulers), and (2) how humans can escape and return to the Pleroma, the place where the Father dwells.⁷ With the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library, a number of Valentinian texts became available for the first time in the modern era. One of those texts is the third tractate in Codex 2, known as the *Gospel of Philip*.

The Coherence of the *Gospel of Philip*

Even though it is called a Gospel, the *Gospel of Philip* is very different from the four canonical Gospels in the New Testament. It certainly does not contain the same narrative flow of the canonical Gospels. In 1959 a German scholar by the name of Hans Martin Schenke published the first modern translation of it in German.⁸ Since that initial publication, there has been an ongoing scholarly debate about the nature of its composition. On the one hand, we have Schenke, who divided it into 127 independent sayings and concluded that it is “a kind of florilegium (or an anthology) of Gnostic sayings and thoughts.”⁹ On the other hand, some scholars have also recognized that the *Gospel of Philip* does seem to have

some organizational principles that govern it. For example, early on, both Robert McLachlan Wilson and Jacques E. Ménard identified recurrent themes and catchwords that seemed to connect the seemingly disparate passages.¹⁰ This polarity of opinions is reflected in Robert Grant's famous description of the *Gospel of Philip* as "chaotic arrangement."¹¹ More recently Martha Turner has argued for a more mediating assessment. She concluded that the *Gospel of Philip* is a collection of study notes, taken from a number of different sources as the compiler studied two questions: "the origin and nature of evil in the world, and the nature of the highest possibilities open to human beings."¹² She notes that ancient collections did contain certain organizing principles that resulted from "its collector's interests and choices of materials,"¹³ even though they were collected from a number of different authors. However, she concludes that if there was "no one author, and if the materials derive from multiple communities of faith, we cannot talk meaningfully of the document's position, its author's beliefs, or its community's practices."¹⁴ In other words, she does not understand the *Gospel of Philip* to reflect a single theological entity.

It seems to me, however, that there is another approach that we could profitably take to understand the *Gospel of Philip* that has not as yet been considered in the scholarly debate: that it functioned as a temple text. John W. Welch has defined a temple text as one "that contains allusions to the most sacred teachings and ordinances of the plan of salvation, things that are not to be shared indiscriminately. In addition, temple texts are often presented in or near a temple. They ordain or otherwise convey divine powers through symbolic or ceremonial means, presented together with commandments that are or will be received by sacred oaths that allow the recipient to stand ritually in the presence of God."¹⁵ While there is no evidence that the *Gospel of Philip* was ever presented in or near the temple, the Jerusalem temple does play a prominent role in the text, and, as Turner noted, it is very interested in discussing "the nature of the highest possibilities open to human beings,"¹⁶ which for Valentinians meant a return to the Pleroma. In addition, the *Gospel of Philip* identifies five mysteries: "The lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism [anointing] and a eucharist and a redemption and the bridal

chamber” (67.27–30).¹⁷ Walter Burkert defines mysteries as “initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience with the sacred.”¹⁸

It appears that these five mysteries may have been the ritual means whereby individual initiates could return to the Pleroma. Three of these mysteries are familiar to ancient Christian practice: baptism, chrism (anointing), and the Eucharist. The fourth and fifth mysteries, however, have no counterpart, but their association with baptism, chrism, and the Eucharist strongly suggest that they should also be understood as rituals rather than as simple metaphors.¹⁹ Although we know very little about how the Valentinians understood redemption and the bridal chamber, we are told that redemption takes place in the bridal chamber (69.27–28). An early Church Father, Irenaeus, indicates that the purpose of the redemption was to make the individual invisible to the Archons so that they could rise up and return to the Pleroma (*Against Heresies* 1.21.1). Although he acknowledged that there is some variety in the way redemption was performed, he said that it consisted of some form of unction and invocation.²⁰ But it may also have been associated with some form of robing ceremony.²¹ Either way, the purpose of redemption seems to have been to ensure that the individual became invisible to the Archons and, therefore, was not hindered from returning to the Pleroma.²²

For Latter-day Saints, perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the *Gospel of Philip* is its frequent mention of the bridal chamber.²³ Irenaeus described the Valentinian bridal chamber as “the conjugal unions on high” (i.e., that take place in the Pleroma).²⁴ The *Gospel of Philip* says that the union produced in the bridal chamber is eternal (70.19–20) and associates the bridal chamber with the Holy of Holies in the temple (69.23–27). Wilson describes the bridal chamber as “the central and deepest mystery” of the *Gospel of Philip*.²⁵ Yet readers must be cautioned that although the Valentinians seem to have engaged in physical marriages,²⁶ the sacramental bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* seems to have involved an undefiled union between the individual and their angel (65.1–26; 81.34–82.7).²⁷

Let us now look more carefully at the *Gospel of Philip*'s reference to the Jerusalem temple. It is found in lines 69.14–70.4 and reads as follows:²⁸

There were three shrines²⁹ of sacrifice in Jerusalem. The one opens to the west [literally, the underworld] it is called “the holy.” Another opens to the south it is called “the holy of the holy.” The third which opens to the east it is called “the holy of the holies,” the place where the high priest enters alone. Baptism is the house which is holy. Redemption is the holy of the holy. The holy of the holies is the bridal chamber.³⁰ Baptism leads to resurrection and redemption.³¹ For redemption [takes place] in the bridal chamber.³²

The rest of the passage is heavily damaged, and so it is very difficult to make much sense of what is going on, but its reference to the tearing of the veil of the temple is significant.

But the bridal chamber is in that which is exalted above [. . .]³³ you will not find [. . .] those who pray [. . .] Jerusalem. [. . .] Jerusalem who [. . .] Jerusalem those who look [. . .] these which are called “the holy of the holies” [. . . the] veil was torn [. . .] bridal chamber except the image [. . .] above. Because of this its veil was torn from the top to the bottom. For it was appropriate for some from below to go upward.

The section about the temple abruptly appears in the middle of a discussion of the bridal chamber. According to Schenke, “The fact that the speech in the *Gospel of Philip* addresses the topic of the Jerusalem temple is so unexpected that there is good reason to see this as breaking new ground.”³⁴ We must assume that the original audience would have appreciated the significance of the comparison. But what would the original audience have gained from identifying the bridal chamber with the holy of the holies in the Jerusalem temple? We can attempt to understand the answer to that question only by understanding the role of temples in ancient societies.

Ritual and John Lundquist’s Typology of the Temple

For many ancient societies, temples were the center of the people’s way of life. Geographically, they were often found at the very heart of the

village or city, with all other buildings radiating outward from them,³⁵ but sometimes their centrality had more to do with ideology or sociology than geography.³⁶ Although no two temples were exactly alike,³⁷ John Lundquist has developed a literary typology that highlights nineteen features that stand at the foundation of temple worship in the ancient world.³⁸ In appealing to Lundquist's typology to examine the *Gospel of Philip*, I recognize that this is a literary typology. Nevertheless, Meike Bal has provided the methodological background for applying a ritual interpretation to a literary text. While a tradition of text-critical analysis has provided numerous avenues for fruitful study of ancient texts, Bal insists that we must examine not just what was written but how the texts were received and used by their audiences. "The history of their reception cannot be ignored, since it is *with* their subsequent reading traditions that they have reached us; moreover, the key moments of that tradition have to be explained." Further, she argues, "These extra considerations are needed because of the otherwise unbridgeable gap between context and function of the texts in their past and the present use of them."³⁹ I argue that Lundquist's typology will help us to understand how an audience could have understood ritual implications from the text. In this paper I am suggesting that the *Gospel of Philip* may have functioned for the Valentinians in a way similar to that in which the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* acted for the Eleusinian mysteries and the *Golden Ass of Apuleius* acted for the Isiac and Osirian mysteries. These texts contained coded language that would only have been fully appreciated by those initiated into their respective communities. Their purpose was to change the way the reader looked at reality. For a modern reader to recognize and appreciate the text, we must be able to identify its symbolism and understand it within its ritual context.⁴⁰ As William E. Paden has argued, "Whatever else it is, the sacred is something acted out."⁴¹

Bal has also argued that the "linguistic and cultural nature" of literature conveys a "mediating function between the individual and the social motivations," which "characterizes the ritual symbol as well." While she does not think that all literature is necessarily a form of ritual, she argues that "the common aspects between ritual and a literary event, such as the

use of condensed symbols, repetition, community, make for a relation that allows us not to equate the two but to understand the one better through the insight of the other."⁴² Therefore, even though Lundquist's typology is a literary construct, I will use it to suggest the ritual implications that its audience may have recognized.

Lundquist's Typology of the Temple and the Gospel of Philip

Of the nineteen temple features that Lundquist identifies in his typology, we find that thirteen of them are either implied specifically in the temple passage or are important within the larger context of the *Gospel of Philip*.⁴³ Each of these features, I would argue, provides a unifying strand running throughout the text which could be used to help the audience "stand ritually in the presence of God."⁴⁴

First, "the temple is the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain." This cosmic mountain was often represented by "a natural mountain that is transformed into the cosmic sphere."⁴⁵ By specifically identifying the houses of sacrifice as being in Jerusalem, the author also connected them with the concept of a mountain. Not only were Jerusalem and its temple built upon a mountain but the temple was often associated with Mount Sinai.⁴⁶ Devotees, therefore, left behind the world and "ascended into the mountain [*har*] of the Lord" (Psalm 24:3; see Isaiah 2:2–3; Micah 4:1). The journey of ascent is made explicit at the end of our passage in the *Gospel of Philip*. We learn that once the veil of the temple was torn, "it is appropriate for some from below to go upward."

Richard Clifford defines the cosmic mountain as "a place set apart because of a divine presence or activity which relates to the world of man—ordering or stabilizing that world, acting upon it through natural forces, *the point where the earth touches the divine sphere*."⁴⁷ In other words, the temple acted as the *axis mundi*, providing a conduit that linked the earth to the Valentinian Pleroma. One passage in the *Gospel of Philip* specifically draws together the concept of mountains and revelation:

Jesus took them all by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which [they would] be able to see him. He

appeared to [them all. He appeared] to the great as great. He [appeared] to the small as small. He [appeared to the] angels as an angel, and to men as a man. Because of this his word hid itself from everyone. Some indeed saw him, thinking that they were seeing themselves, but when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount he was not small. He became great, but he made the disciples great, that they might be able to see him in greatness. (57.28–58.10)

This passage seems to be a reference to the events on the Mount of Transfiguration, but, as Wilson notes, “a mountain is a common place for revelations of the risen Christ in Gnostic documents.”⁴⁸ The important point here is that many failed to understand who Jesus really was because they were limited by their own experience: to the great he was great, to the small he was small, to the angels he was an angel, and to men he was a man. Their view and understanding of Jesus was limited by their reality. But just as climbing a mountain can enable an individual to gain greater perspective, in the temple setting of the mountain, Jesus was able to transform his disciples and unshackle them from the limitations of their mortality so that they could gain perspective and see him as he really was.

The second feature of the typology is closely related to the first: “The cosmic mountain represents the primordial hillock, the place that first emerged from the waters that covered the earth during the creative process.” Note how the following Midrashic passage connects the Jerusalem temple with that creative process: “Just as a navel is set in the middle of a person, so the land of Israel is the navel of the world. . . . Jerusalem is in the center of the land of Israel; the sanctuary is in the center of Jerusalem; the Temple building is in the center of the sanctuary; the ark is in the center of the Temple building; and the foundation stone, out of which the world was founded, is before the Temple building.”⁴⁹

As the primal hillock, the temple represents the divine imposition of order on the waters of chaos. In the *Gospel of Philip* there is a stark contrast between the sacred and the profane. It describes the world as a place

that “fell into the hands of the robbers and was taken captive” (53.11–12). It is the realm of error, where the unenlightened do not understand truth (55.19–24; 56.15–21; 26–34). The primordial hillock in the *Gospel of Philip* which brings order to disorder, truth and understanding to error and deception, is the temple that encompasses the sacraments of salvation: baptism, redemption, and the bridal chamber. These sacraments, associated with the three buildings of the temple, are what separate the initiates from those that live in the profane world and enable them to “go upward” (70.2–3).

Third, “the temple is associated with the tree of life.” According to Lundquist, the tree of life was “an integral part of the ‘primordial landscape’” because it “grows up out of the primordial waters of the abyss, and thus there is an intimate mythological and cultic connection between the tree and the waters of life.”⁵⁰ It is significant, however, that in many Gnostic texts, the Genesis account of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden have been reworked. For example, in the *Apocryphon of John*, it was the Archons who placed the tree of life “in the midst of paradise.” As a result, “the root of this (tree) is bitter and its branches are death, its shadow is hate and deception is in its leaves, and its blossom is the ointment of evil, and its fruit is death and desire is its seed, and it sprouts darkness.” Further, “the dwelling place of those who taste from it is Hades and the darkness is their place of rest.” In contrast, the tree of knowledge of good and evil is “the Epinoia of light,” and it was the Lord who “brought about that [Adam and Eve] ate [it]” (*Ap. John* 21.16–22.2).⁵¹

In the *Gospel of Philip*, however, the picture appears to be much more in line with the traditional view of the tree of life. It contains two passages that refer to it, the second of which is stronger than the first. Unfortunately, the first is badly damaged. The tree of life is not specifically mentioned in the readable portions, but its presence can be assumed from the first sentence and from the general sense of contrast with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. “There are two trees growing in Paradise. The one bears [animals], the other bears men. Adam [ate] from the tree which bore animals (*thērion*). [He] became an animal, and he

brought forth animals. For this reason the children of Adam worship [animals]. The tree [...] fruit is [...] increased. [...] ate the [...] fruit of the [...] bears men, [...] man. [...]" (71.22–34). It is interesting, though, that in this passage the tree of knowledge is not described positively: eating from it meant that Adam bore animals. In this passage the tree of life, if I am reading the sense of the lacunae correctly, would have been positive: eating it produces men in contrast to animals, although it is difficult to know exactly what that might mean here.⁵²

The second passage is undamaged. It follows a discussion of the Resurrection and baptism; both of which, we are told, bring life. "Philip the apostle said, 'Joseph the carpenter planted a garden because he needed wood for his trade. It was he who made the cross from the trees which he planted. His own offspring hung on that which he planted. His offspring was Jesus and the planting was the cross.' But the tree of life is in the middle of the garden. And it is from the olive tree that we get the chrism, and from the chrism, the resurrection" (73.8–19).⁵³ Our passage is aware of the Jewish tradition that the tree of life was an olive tree.⁵⁴ This tree is different from the other trees in the garden that surround it. Whereas they brought death, the olive tree, or the tree of life, brings the resurrection. The *Gospel of Philip*, therefore, views the tree of life in a very positive light that is in keeping with the overall temple typology.

Fourth, "the temple is built on separate, sacral, set-apart space." In the *Gospel of Philip* this feature is most pronounced by the naming of the three houses of sacrifice in Jerusalem as "the holy," "the holy of the holy," and "the holy of the holies." Such designations indicate the sacrality of each of the buildings and fundamentally separates them from the surrounding space.⁵⁵ The *Gospel of Philip* does not mention what initially set these buildings apart as sacred space, but the tradition that the Jerusalem temple was built upon the same place where Abraham bound Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice and hence where the angel appeared to them was well known and may have been assumed by the author.

Fifth, "the temple is oriented toward the four world regions or cardinal directions, and to various celestial bodies such as the polar star. As such, it is, or can be, an astronomical observatory, the main purpose of

which is to assist the temple priests in regulating the ritual calendar. The earthly temple is also seen as a copy or counterpart of a heavenly model.” That the *Gospel of Philip* understood that the temple was oriented toward the four cardinal directions is seen in the very specific comments about the directions towards which the three shrines of sacrifice opened. The fact that only three of the four directions are mentioned is probably to coincide with the tripartite nature of Near Eastern temples. Additionally, it is very clear throughout the *Gospel of Philip* that the things of this world are copies or images of their counterparts in the Pleroma, or the heavenly realm. Earlier in the text, the bridal chamber, or the Holy of Holies, is described as “the duplicate bridal chamber” (65.11–12),⁵⁶ and Wilson believes that we should therefore understand the bridal chamber as a copy of the heavenly bridal chamber.⁵⁷

Sixth, “temples in their architectonic orientation, express the idea of a successive ascension toward heaven.” The very structure of the temple reinforced in the people’s minds that the temple was the means of transcending this earthly existence. In other words, ancient temples, by their architectural design, represented a journey from the profane to the sacred. The tripartite nature of temples was often seen as representing the world, the underworld, and the heavens.⁵⁸ However, in Valentinian Gnosticism, it would perhaps be more functional to understand the three buildings as the world, the Ogdoad (or the middle place between earth and the Pleroma), and the Pleroma. In ancient Jewish temples, the highest level was represented by the Holy of Holies: the very name designated the most sacred space. The Holy of Holies was the place of God’s throne. This most sacred of all space was separated from the Holy Place by a veil. Only the high priest passed through that veil, and he did it only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (69.19–22).

In the *Gospel of Philip* we see the successive ascension through the ritual assigned to each of the three buildings, starting with baptism and culminating with the bridal chamber.⁵⁹ It is significant that the *Gospel of Philip* designates each of the three levels as buildings or shrines. This designation emphasizes the architectural boundaries that separate the different grades of sacrality.⁶⁰ The fact that the bridal chamber is the

culmination of this ascension is known from Mesopotamian sources, where the bridal chamber is located at the top of the seven-staged ziggurat⁶¹ or is described as being at the top of a mountain.⁶² Unlike the Israelite temple, however, this Gnostic idea of ascension is not available only to the high priest. The fact that the veil, probably signifying ignorance, is torn in two means that there is no barrier between humanity and deity if the former are willing to embark upon the journey. Later in the *Gospel of Philip*, the author explicitly describes this process:

If some belong to the order of the priesthood they will be able to go within the veil with the high priest. For this reason the veil was not rent at the top only, since it would have been open only to those above; nor was it rent at the bottom only, since it would have been revealed only to those below. But it was rent from top to bottom. Those above opened to us the things below, in order that we may go in to the secret of truth. This truly is what is held in high regard, (and) what is strong! But we shall go in there by means of lowly types and forms of weakness. They are lowly indeed when compared with the perfect glory. There is glory which surpasses glory. There is power which surpasses power. Therefore the perfect things have opened to us, together with the hidden things of truth. The holies of the holies were revealed, and the bridal chamber invited us in. (85.1–21)

It is also important to note the sense, in both the temple pericope and this text, that not everyone can participate in the glory and power of that which was behind the veil. In 70.2–3 it is explicitly stated that it is only fitting for “some [or certain people (*hoine*)] from below to go upward.” In Valentinian theology, a certain class of people known as the *hylic* never get the chance to make the ascent into the Pleroma. The *Gospel of Philip* characterizes this group as the animals, slaves, and defiled women (69.1–4). The “some” probably refers to another group known as the *psychics*, who must make good choices before they are afforded the opportunity to enter the bridal chamber.

Seventh, “the plan and measurements of the temple are revealed by God to the king or prophet, and the plan must be carefully carried out.” Speaking of the Jerusalem temple, the *Wisdom of Solomon* says, “You have commanded me to build a temple in your holy mountain, and an altar in the city of your dwelling, A copy of the holy tent which you prepared from the beginning” (9.8).⁶³ The *Gospel of Philip* does not mention any epiphany about the plan and measurements of the temple. Two things, however, imply that the original readers would have assumed such: the fact that it is the Jerusalem temple, and the fact that there is a very strong theme recurring in the *Gospel of Philip* that the things of this world are merely copies or images of the Pleromatic realm (65.24; 72.13–16).⁶⁴ As we have already noted, the bridal chamber in 65.11–12 is described as a duplicate. We can assume that if something is a duplicate, then at some point someone must have seen what the original, Pleromatic version was like.

Eighth, “inside the temple, images of deities as well as living kings, temple priests, and worshippers are washed, anointed, clothed, fed, enthroned, and symbolically initiated into the presence of deity, and thus into eternal life. Further, New Year rites held in the temple include the reading and dramatic portrayal of texts which recite a pre-earthly war in heaven; a victory in that war by the forces of good, led by a chief deity; and the creation and establishment of the cosmos, cities, temples, and the social order. The sacred marriage is carried out at this time.” Our emphasis in this discussion is on the experience of the temple worshippers. Schenke has suggested that the term *baptism* in lines 69.22–23 is a cover term that includes *chrism*⁶⁵ and that *redemption* in 69.23–24 is a cover term that includes the Eucharist.⁶⁶ Regardless of whether this is so, *chrism* and the Eucharist are certainly important in the larger context of the *Gospel of Philip*. Along with baptism, these two qualify as examples of the initiate being washed, anointed, and fed. In addition, under this model, it is significant that this temple passage is immediately followed by a discussion on being clothed in the perfect light that is achieved “sacramentally in the union” (70.5–9).⁶⁷ All of these rituals are just preparatory acts to prepare the initiate to enter the presence of deity, which occurs in the Holy of Holies.⁶⁸

The second part of this point in the typology is a little more difficult to connect with the *Gospel of Philip*. The *Gospel of Philip* does not contain a detailed account of the cosmogonic myth like we find in Irenaeus or in other Gnostic texts such as the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. The myth, however, is clearly assumed by a number of references. In the Valentinian story, it is not a war in heaven that is the catalyst for the creation of the material world, but the fall of Sophia with her subsequent creation of the Demiurge and his Archons. As a result of her fall, Sophia is separated into two distinct but related beings. Irenaeus identifies the two beings as the “first” or “upper” Sophia and the Sophia “which they also term Achamoth” (Hebrew *khokmah*; *Haer.* 1.4.1). Here we see a play on words where both the Greek *sophia* and the Hebrew *khokmah* mean “wisdom.” The *Gospel of Philip* contains evidence that it knows of Sophia’s fall and her two manifestations, although the terminology is slightly different from that used by Irenaeus. Here the name of Achamoth is applied to both manifestations, “although with a difference of vocalization.”⁶⁹ “Echamoth is one thing and Echmoth another. Echamoth is Wisdom simply, but Echmoth is the Wisdom of death which is the one which knows death, which is called ‘the little Wisdom’” (60.10–15). In another place we are told that “Wisdom who is called ‘the barren’” (a phrase which is equivalent to “little Wisdom”) is “the mother of the angels” (63.30–32; see 59.30–32). Schenke has shown that these angels must refer to the Demiurge and his Archons.⁷⁰

The Demiurge wanted to create the “world imperishable and immortal,” but he failed. Thus “the world came about through a mistake” (75.2–5). The Archons, also identified as robbers or powers (55.1; 59.19), play a prominent role in the *Gospel of Philip*. We learn that they took the world captive (53.11–12) and that they seek to deceive humans so that they can “bind them to those that are not good” and make them “a slave . . . forever” (54.18–31). However, the readers also learn that although the Archons think that they work independently, they are really only accomplishing the will of the holy spirit. The Archons’ work will ultimately be thwarted because “truth, which existed since the beginning, is sown everywhere” (55.14–22). The purpose of dramatizing and retelling this

cosmogonic myth was to help the initiates understand who they were and what their place was in the cosmic order, and to break the cycle of deception perpetuated by the Archons.

The last part of this point of the typology is that the sacred marriage, or *hieros gamos*, takes place as a part of the ritual and pedagogic activities of the temple. In Sumer the *hieros gamos* represented the marriage between Inanna—the goddess of love—and Dumuzi—the shepherd god/king of Eridu and Eanna.⁷¹ Thus, after a vivid portrayal of lovemaking between Inanna and Dumuzi, we read the following:

At the lap of the king, the high-standing cedar . . . ,

The plants stood high by (his) side, the grain stood high by (his) side,

The . . . garden flourished luxuriantly by his side. (“Prosperity in the Palace,” iii.9–11)

The *hieros gamos* represented for the Sumerians the continuation of life and their ability to survive in a hostile agricultural environment.⁷² Therefore, it is not surprising that it became the focus of Sumerian ritual. Samuel Kramer notes that “from the days of Šulgi on, and perhaps even earlier, the king of Sumer, whoever he was and whatever his capital, was designated as the husband of Inanna, but only as Dumuzi incarnate.”⁷³

There is pottery evidence that this marriage took place in the temple. The Uruk Vase dates to the end of the fourth millennium BCE. According to Jacobsen, “Its reliefs show the bride, Inanna, meeting her groom, Dumuzi, at the gate to admit him and his servants who carry the bridal gifts, an endless abundance of edibles of all kinds.” Behind Inanna is “the sanctuary in her temple with its altar and sacred furniture, including vases.” He continues, “Scholars believe the Uruk Vase may once have stood in that sanctuary.”⁷⁴

There is another text that may stand as an intermediary between the Sumerian *hieros gamos* and the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*. It was discovered as part of the excavations at Emar, a thirteenth-century BCE city in Syria. The text (Emar 369) describes the installation of the

NIN.DINGIR-priestess that culminates in her marriage to the storm god, Baal.⁷⁵ The ritual celebrations take place over an approximately nine-day period and “begin with the confirmation of a new candidate.”⁷⁶ During that time she “makes a gradual transition from the household of her father” to that of the storm god.⁷⁷ This transition involves a period of sanctification, two anointings, numerous sacrifices and the associated banquets, and an enthronement ceremony. Twice during this period the priestess makes the journey from her father’s house to the temple, only to return again at night.⁷⁸ “Only on the last day does the ‘wedding begin.’” It begins with the sacrifice of two sheep and a meal in the temple. When the priestess leaves her father’s house, her head is covered “as a bride with a colorful sash” and “her two maids will embrace her as a bride.”⁷⁹ On route to the temple, a number of sacrifices are performed at various minor temples, and then the city elders give to her a fine garment, a bed with an Akkadian blanket, a chair, and a footstool.⁸⁰ The final act is the washing of the priestess’s feet before she “will ascend to her bed and lie down.”⁸¹

There are two things about his text that are interesting for our discussion. First, the priestess comes to the temple twice before she can take up residence there. In other words, temple attendance is not always equivalent with claiming a permanent residence in God’s presence. Initially temple attendance is preparatory, rather than the culminating ritual experience. Part of those preparations includes washings, anointings, and sacred meals. Second, there is no evidence that this marriage is linked with fertility, as it was in Sumer. There is no mention of a surrogate marriage partner, and there is no indication that any ritual sexual activity takes place as part of this marriage. Instead the emphasis of the ritual is one of transition: the priestess leaving behind her earthly home to order to take up residence in the presence of God.

Although there is no direct evidence that ritual marriages similar to those we discussed in Sumer or Emar were ever performed in the Jerusalem temple, there is some indirect evidence of a *hieros gamos* within Judaism. The Psalmist compares God’s glory to a “bridegroom coming from his wedding chamber (*huppāh*)” (Psalm 19:5; author’s translation; 19:6 in the Hebrew Bible). Isaiah compares the garments of God’s

salvation to bridal clothes (Isaiah 61:10). Likewise, the covenant that God makes with his people is often depicted with very specific bridal imagery.⁸² Jeremiah (2:2), Ezekiel (16), and Hosea (1–3; especially 3:16–20) all compare the house of Israel to Jehovah's betrothed. Ezekiel's language, in particular, would fit well in a ritual context. In addition, both Rabbinic and Christian writers have traditionally understood the Song of Solomon to be an allegory for a divine marriage rite.⁸³

But we cannot overlook the significance that the *Gospel of Philip* makes a very specific connection and identifies not the temple per se but the Holy of Holies as the bridal chamber.⁸⁴ However, there are some significant points of contact between the earlier rituals and what we find in the *Gospel of Philip*. For example, the *Gospel of Philip's* bridal chamber also functions to help initiates to survive in a hostile environment created by the Demiurge and his Archons. But unlike the Sumerian ritual, its purpose is to ensure not life in this world but life in the Pleroma. Mesopotamian religion did not have a developed view of an afterlife, and immortality was reserved for the gods.⁸⁵ The *Gospel of Philip's* concept of the bridal chamber could not have developed in a Mesopotamian religious milieu. It needed the introduction of Plato's concept of the eternal nature of the soul (*Phaedrus* 245c) that becomes trapped in a mortal body (*Phaedrus* 250c)⁸⁶ but can be released at death to return and "dwell among the gods" (*Phaedo* 69c). The value of the Emar text is that it suggests that it was possible, even in the Near East, to conceive of a ritual union with divinity outside the realm of sexual acts. So in this point the *Gospel of Philip* seems to have reworked the Near Eastern connection between the *hieros gamos* and the temple to include the Platonic notion of the soul and its journey back to the Pleroma.

Ninth, "the temple is associated with the realm of the dead, the underworld, the afterlife, the grave. . . . The unifying principle between temple and tomb is the resurrection. . . . The temple is the link between this world and the next." This link is an important concept for our temple passage and the *Gospel of Philip*. We learn that the first of the three shrines mentioned is called the holy, and it faces the underworld. It is also the symbol of baptism that, we are told, leads to the resurrection and the redemption.

Whereas redemption is part of the immediate discussion, resurrection picks up on earlier passages and also anticipates others that follow. For instance, later we learn that resurrection is part of the package one receives in the bridal chamber when a person is anointed (74.18–22). The Valentinians certainly recognized the resurrection to be an important link between this world and the next, although they understood it in very different terms than other Christians (see 53.29–35). Rather than it being a state that is acquired after death, it is something that Valentinians must attain in this life if they are to return to the Pleroma. “Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing” (73.1–4; see also 56.24–34). Further, “while we are in this world it is fitting for us to acquire the resurrection, so that when we strip off the flesh we may be found in rest and not walk in the middle. For many go astray” (66.16–21).

It is precisely this realized eschatology that accounts for what Wilson deems to be an inconsistency within the *Gospel of Philip*.⁸⁷ On the one hand we read that “some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and [they] do not know that it is those who wear the [flesh] who are naked. [It is] those who [. . .] to unclot themselves who are not naked. ‘Flesh [and blood shall] not inherit the kingdom [of God]’ (1 Corinthians 15:50).” This passage seems to be a polemic against those Christians who believed in a physical resurrection. But another passage in the *Gospel of Philip* reads: “I find fault with the others who say that it will not rise. Then both of them are at fault. You say that the flesh will not rise. But tell me what will rise, that we may honor you. You say the spirit in the flesh, and it is also this light in the flesh. [But] this too is matter which is in the flesh, for whatever you shall say, you say nothing outside the flesh. It is necessary to rise in this flesh, since everything exists in it” (57.9–19). Michael Williams has shown that it is precisely the Valentinian belief that the resurrection must take place in this world that requires that it takes place in the body, even though ultimately, when the person leaves this world and passes back to the Pleroma, they will become freed of the flesh.⁸⁸ Thus we see that the resurrection was a pivotal connection between this world and the next.

Tenth, “sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with the temple ritual, often at the conclusion of or during a covenant ceremony.” We know that at least some Valentinians participated in sacred meals because of a text known as the “bridal chamber inscription.” It talks of a “hunger for [ban]quets” in connection with the bridal chamber.⁸⁹ In the *Gospel of Philip*, the sacred meal is the Eucharist. It is part of the five mysteries mentioned in 67.27–30, and, if Schenke is correct, its practice is associated with the temple as part of the redemption.⁹⁰ The Eucharist consisted of bread that Christ brought from heaven (55.6–14) and a mixture of water and wine (75.14–17). As with other Christians, the emblems of the Eucharist are Jesus’ flesh and blood (56.32–57.5; see also John 6:53). The purpose of the Eucharist is to receive Jesus’ word and the Holy Spirit (57.6–7). The process is variously described as receiving clothing (57.8) and “receiv[ing] for ourselves the perfect man” (75.14–21).

The *Gospel of Philip* makes it clear, however, that the power of the Eucharist is only available to those who are pure. “The pure man is completely pure,⁹¹ down to his very body. For if he has taken the bread, he will purify it. Or the cup or anything else that he gets, he will purify. Then how will he not purify the body also?” (77.2–7; author’s translation). In what appears to be a polemic against other Christian Eucharistic practices, we read the following story, immediately preceding mention of the Eucharist. “An ass which turns a millstone did a hundred miles of walking. When it was loosed it found that it was still at the same place. There are men who make many journeys, but make no progress towards any destination. When evening came upon them, they saw neither city nor village, neither human artifact nor natural phenomenon, power nor angel. In vain have the wretches labored. The eucharist is Jesus” (63.11–21).⁹² Perhaps part of the problem of the other Christians is that they practice the Eucharist but do not go any further. The *Gospel of Philip* also teaches that, as important as the “bread and the cup and the oil (i.e. chrism)” are, “there is another one superior to these” (74.36–75.2). This superior sacrament, in the *Gospel of Philip*, strongly points to the bridal chamber. Thus Jorunn Buckley concludes, “It seems safe to say that the eucharist here is connected to the bridal

chamber ritual, and I suggest that the former may be a prerequisite for the latter.”⁹³

Eleventh, “God’s word is revealed in the temple, usually in the holy of holies, to priests or prophets attached to the temple or to the religious system that it represents.” The acquisition of knowledge is fundamentally important in Gnostic circles, and this is certainly the case in the *Gospel of Philip*. “Ignorance is the mother of [all evil]” (83.30–31), but, conversely, “he who has knowledge of the truth is a free man” and “does not sin” (77.15–17; cf. 84.10–13). Knowledge is one of four essential elements—faith, hope, love, and knowledge—that enable people to develop. “Faith is our earth, that in which we take root. [And] hope is the water through which we are nourished. Love is the wind through which we grow. Knowledge then is the light through which we [ripen]” (79.18–30). The *Gospel of Philip* is also clear, however, that knowledge is not for everyone. “There are many animals in the world which are in human form. When [God] identifies them, to the swine he will throw acorns, to the cattle he will throw barley and chaff and grass, to the dogs he will throw bones. To the slaves he will give only the elementary lessons, to the children he will give the complete instruction” (81.7–14). The place where the children receive the complete instruction is the Holy of Holies in the temple. We have noted earlier the importance of the tearing of the temple veil for the initiates’ successive ascension into heaven. In this part of the typology, the tearing of the veil designates that initiates have access to the Holy of Holies, where “the perfect things have opened to us, together with the hidden things of truth. The holies of the holies were revealed, and the bridal chamber invited us in” (85.18–21). The last two sentences in the *Gospel of Philip* best summarize its overall message: “The world has become the eternal realm (aeon), for the eternal realm is fullness for him (i.e., the son of the bridal chamber). This is the way it is: it is revealed to him alone, not hidden in the darkness and the night, but hidden in a perfect day and a holy light” (86.13–18).

Twelfth, “the temple is a place of sacrifice.” This element signified to would-be initiates that temple worship was not without cost. In the *Gospel of Philip*, this aspect is highlighted in 69.14–15 when the author

identifies the temple as the “three shrines specifically for sacrifice in Jerusalem.” But it is clear from the larger text that the Valentinians did not understand the shrines for sacrifice in the same sense that the Israelites did. The sacrifice of animals that the Israelites performed was not salvific; it was merely an offering to the powers. In contrast, “if man is [saved, there will not] be any sacrifices” (54.31–35). But the Valentinians did believe in sacrifice, as is evidenced in the following passage: “God is a man-eater. For this reason men are [sacrificed] to him. Before men were sacrificed animals were sacrificed, since those to whom they were sacrificed were not gods” (62.35–63.4). This passage does not mean that Valentinians participated in human sacrifice. Instead it refers to sacrificing the things that tie them to this world, particularly to the body (56.26–30). “Those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal” (53.21–23). In this context, we should probably understand the three shrines of sacrifice in Jerusalem to represent acts symbolic of how the initiate is sacrificed. The *Gospel of Philip* does not specifically elaborate on this, but there may be some clues for baptism and the bridal chamber within the larger text. Since we know so little about the Valentinian concept of the Redemption, it is difficult to even speculate about what sacrifice may have been associated with it.

In Pauline theology, baptism represents a spiritual death (see Romans 6:3–6). It is significant that the *Gospel of Philip* identifies the first shrine as facing west, which direction, in many ancient societies, was associated with death. The baptismal sacrifice seems to be equivalent to dying to the things of the world (see also 78.20–24). Later in the *Gospel of Philip* we read, “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 in order that we may not be poured out into the spirit of the world. When that spirit blows, it brings the winter (i.e., death). When the holy spirit breathes, the summer (i.e., life) comes” (77.7–15). The most prominent symbol of the world in Valentinian Gnosticism is the material body. Perhaps the sacrifice here represents a willingness to sacrifice “a contemptible body” in the resurrection, which some people were afraid of doing (56.24–33).

The third shrine of sacrifice is the bridal chamber. It is significant that this shrine faces east, which direction was the symbol of new life. For Valentinians, new life was only ultimately achieved as the individual reunited with his or her image and thus overcame the effect of Adam and Eve's separation (68.22–26). This reunion was the very reason that Christ came to earth, and it could be a lasting union only if it occurred in the bridal chamber (70.9–20). It seems to me that the sacrifice most fitting in this scenario is the sacrifice of all other unions except with the angels who are the initiates' images (58.10–14). It is only then that the individual becomes whole again and is ready to return to the Pleroma. It is certainly possible that some Valentinians entered into sexual marriages,⁹⁴ but once they entered this stage of the initiation, marriage had a very different connotation than it did in the world (76.6–9).

Thirteenth, "the temple and its ritual are enshrouded in secrecy. This secrecy relates to the sacredness of the temple precinct and the strict division in ancient times between sacred and profane space." We have already noted that the *Gospel of Philip* excludes certain groups from the bridal chamber and repeatedly designates it as a mystery. In regards to the temple symbolism, we should also recall that baptism and redemption were also included under the same label of "mystery" in 67.28–30. Throughout the *Gospel of Philip* the author repeatedly stresses that there is a definite distinction between that which is revealed and that which is hidden. Unless a person embarks upon the initiatory journey where the things dealing with the sacred realm are revealed to him or her, the truths remain hidden (82.30–83.8; 84.20–23; 85.19–21).

Most of the remaining points in the typology deal with the political legitimization that the temple gives to the state. Given the Valentinian belief that the material world was created and maintained by the Demiurge and his Archons, it is hardly surprising that we do not find evidence of these points in the *Gospel of Philip*. For all of the scholarly discussion surrounding the make-up and function of the *Gospel of Philip*, no one, as far as I am aware, has published any analysis that considered its function as a temple text.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Let me be clear here: I am not suggesting that the Valentinians built temples in the same sense that Solomon, Herod, or the devotees of Isis did. I am suggesting, however, that they understood a process of initiation that encouraged individuals to leave behind the profane world and enter into the realm of the sacred. Where those ritual initiations might have taken place is unclear, although Irenaeus does mention that some of the Valentinians “prepare a bridal chamber” (*numphōna*; *Against Heresies* 1.21.3).⁹⁶ Unfortunately, Irenaeus passes over this description without further comment or explanation, probably because as an outsider he did not associate any significance with it. In addition, the Latin word translated as “prepare” is *adaptant*, a cognate of the English “adapt.” The verb used in the Greek text, *kataskeuazō*, conveys the sense of “fully furnishing,” or even “building.” Why and how did the Valentinians “adapt” a room for the rituals? What kind of furnishings did they use? Did they actually build special rooms for the ceremony, or were rooms specifically remodeled? If the latter, were the rooms maintained solely for the rituals, or could the Valentinians use the room for the ritual and then return it to more normal use? Unfortunately, Irenaeus leaves all of these questions unanswered, and the *Gospel of Philip* provides no additional clues. But the rituals would have had to be performed somewhere that was viewed as being tied, at least symbolically, to the Jerusalem temple. Even though the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the ideal of the temple continued to live on within the Christian matrix.⁹⁷

I am also arguing that the *Gospel of Philip* may have been a text used to help ritually guide Valentinian initiates through the transition between the profane world in which they found themselves and the ultimate sacred space of the Pleroma. Modern uninitiated readers may read the text and only see discontinuities in it, but the catch words that Wilson and Ménard saw recurring in the document may have facilitated its ritual use. If this is true, then what seems to modern readers to be a disjointed text could have made perfect sense to the initiates, especially when it was read as part of a larger ritual context. Modern Latter-day Saint temple patrons can resonate with this idea when they consider that participation

in the temple experience can help them to see and understand concepts and teachings in the scriptures when viewed through a temple lens.

The purpose of the *Gospel of Philip* and, by extension, all ritual or temple texts, is to facilitate the reception of knowledge (*gnosis*), so that initiates can see things differently from their worldly perspective. Thus an important part of ritual is to enable initiates to see things from a higher perspective, to understand and view their origin and their *raison d'être* through the lens of eternity. Just as the *Gospel of Philip* teaches that Jesus made the disciples great so that they could “see him in his greatness” (58.8–10)—that is, gain an eternal perspective of him—so also could the *Gospel of Philip* as a temple text make the initiates “great” or transformed so they could better understand who they were and what were their eternal possibilities (61.32–35). Thus, ritual texts such as the *Gospel of Philip* are about perspective, a perspective that is not available to everyone. Rather, it is reserved for those who pay the price to be initiated into a higher realm of existence. According to the *Gospel of Philip*, “Truth, which existed since the beginning, is sown everywhere. And many see it being sown, but few there are who see [truth] being reaped” (55.19–22).

The value that I see for Latter-day Saints studying the *Gospel of Philip* is not just that it provides insights into how some early Christians understood and practiced the Christian message, as important as that is. I would suggest that it can also help us better understand our own ritual experience. Understanding why the Jerusalem temple was so important to the Valentinian Christians, even though it had been destroyed, can help us to appreciate the value of having temples so readily available to us. Although the Valentinian interpretation may be different than that of the Latter-day Saints, the *Gospel of Philip's* teachings and emphases on the sacred and profane, the successive ascension toward heaven, the clothing, washing and anointing, marriage, and sacrifices can help us better appreciate some of the architectural and ritual aspects of our temple experience and help us more clearly see them as part of our personal ritual ascension into the presence of God.

Notes

1. For a more detailed description of their discovery, see James M. Robinson, introduction to *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 1–26.
2. See, for example, Richard Smith, preface to *Nag Hammadi Library*, ix.
3. This is particularly so for the *Gospel of Thomas*. For a summary of the debate, see Gregory J. Riley, “The *Gospel of Thomas* in Recent Scholarship,” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994): 229–32.
4. For a discussion on the value of this term, see Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). Even though Williams makes a very strong case, the term has continued to be useful in both academic and lay discussions.
5. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Frank L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 683–84.
6. Translation from *The Excerpta Ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, ed. and trans. Robert Pierce Casey (London: Christophers, 1934), 89.
7. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1675–76; Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians*, 1.
8. Hans Martin Schenke, “Das Evangelium nach Philippus,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 84, no. 1 (January 1959): 1–26.
9. Schenke, “Das Evangelium nach Philippus,” 1, 5–26.
10. R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip* (London: Mowbray, 1962), 7–9; Jacques E. Ménard, *L’Évangile Selon Philippe* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1967), 3–6.
11. Robert M. Grant, “Two Gnostic Gospels,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 2.
12. Martha Lee Turner, *The Gospel According to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 38 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 261.
13. Turner, *Gospel According to Philip*, 116.
14. Turner, *Gospel According to Philip*, 255.
15. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount: An Approach to 3 Nephi 11–18 and Matthew 5–7* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 23–24.
16. Turner, *Gospel According to Philip*, 261.
17. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Gospel of Philip* are from Wesley W. Isenberg, “The Gospel According to Philip,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7; together with XIII, 2**, *Brit. Lib. OR.4926(1)*, and *P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, ed. Bentley Layton, 2 vols., Nag Hammadi Studies 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 131–215.
18. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Carl Newman Lectures (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 11.

19. April D. DeConick understands these “‘sacraments’ or the ‘true mysteries’ to include more than ritual activities.” She argues, “They also identify those human thoughts and actions which have been invested with sacral meaning.” “The True Mysteries: Sacramentalism in the ‘Gospel of Philip,’” *Vigiliae Christianae* 55, no. 3 (2001): 230.
20. Irenaeus said that Marcossian Valentinians “redeem the dying at the very moment of their departure by putting oil and water, that is, the above-mentioned ointment and water, on their heads, while pronouncing the above invocations. The purpose of this is that these [dying] might become incomprehensible and invisible to the Principalities and the Powers.” *Against Heresies* 1.21.5. Unless noted otherwise, all translation of Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies* are from Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, vol. 1, *Ancient Christian Writers* 55 (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).
21. According to the *Gospel of Philip*, one becomes invisible to the Archons through receiving a garment of light (70.5–9; 76.22–29). See also the *Tripartite Tractate*, in which “those who have received redemption” wore a garment (128.22–24). For further discussions on redemption, see Eric Segelberg “The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip and its Sacramental System,” *Numen* 7 (1960): 200; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*, trans. and ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987), 244; and Elaine Pagles, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 37. For a divergent voice, see Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians*, *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* 60 (Boston: Brill, 2006), 360–77. Thomassen argues that Irenaeus’s redemption is “performed as a recollection and a renewal of an initiation with water baptism and anointing that had been received previously. There is, moreover, nothing in Irenaeus’ description of it which confirms that this death ritual was actually named ‘the redemption’; thus Irenaeus’ presentation of it as such is most probably inaccurate” (p. 364). Against Thomassen, see Nicola Denzey Lewis, “Apolytrosis as Ritual and Sacrament: Determining a Ritual Context for Death in Second-Century Marcossian Valentinianism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, no. 4 (2009): 525–61.
22. Irenaeus also describes redemption as putting on Pluto’s helmet to make the wearer invisible to the Archons. *Against Heresies* 1.13.6.
23. For a discussion of LDS interest in the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*, see Gaye Strathearn, “The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 1 (2009): 83–103.
24. See also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.21.3.
25. Wilson, *Gospel of Philip*, 10.
26. See *Gospel of Philip* 76.6–9, and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.1.1.

27. The power to ward off the evil spirits does not come from a male or a female power as Isenberg translates it, but from a male *and* a female power. Wesley W. Isenberg, "The Gospel According to Philip," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 171. The Coptic reads *men* ("and"), not *ē* ("or"). Sevrin is correct, therefore, to interpret the power as coming from the combined androgynous power of the male *and* the female. In this context, the bridegroom and bride refer to the Christ/Sophia syzygy. J.-M. Sevrin, "Les Noces Spirituelles Dans L'Évangile Selon Philippe," *Muséon* 77 (1974): 154n36; see also C. J. De Catanzaro, "The Gospel According to Philip," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1962): 48–49. For a fuller discussion of other cautions that Latter-day Saints should consider, see Strathearn, "Valentinian Bridal Chamber," 100–103.
28. Although the Coptic word *erpe* is never used in this passage, the context makes it clear that the three houses are part of the temple. For a discussion of the Israelite tradition identifying the Holy of Holies as God's bridal chamber, see Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple in Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1967), 226–33.
29. Here I prefer DeConick's translation of *ēei* as "shrine" rather than Isenberg's "house" because it better captures the concept of temple. "The True Mysteries," 228–29n11.
30. The emphasis here on just the three sacraments of baptism, redemption, and the bridal chamber indicates that this passage probably did originate from a different source than 67.27–30, where there are five sacraments. Segelberg originally said that this saying was "based on the mistaken idea that there were three halls in the temple at Jerusalem," but afterwards notes that "some authors count with three rooms." He does note the seeming incongruity between this passage and 67.27–30. "The Coptic-Gnostic Gospel," 198, 199n18.
31. Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium: (Nag Hammadi-Codex II,3), neu herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 143 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997), 407. As Schenke notes, the inclusion of resurrection here seems to be intrusive. It is not a sacrament, but it does have catchword connection with both earlier and later passages (56.15–34; 66.7–20; 67.9–19; 73.1–4; 74.18–22).
32. Cantanzaro translates lines 25–27 as "[Baptism] has the resurrection and the ransom to flee into the bride-chamber." "The Gospel According to Philip," 53. The difficulty is that there is no verb in the sentence and it must be supplied by the translator. Isenberg prefers "takes place," which seems to me to fit the context better.
33. The lacuna here is unfortunate, but the sense is that the bridal chamber is exalted over the sacraments of baptism and redemption. Schenke shows that

- linguistically this idea is borne out in the structure of lines 69.22–25. In the first two lines the sacrament is in first position, but in the third the bridal chamber is in the third position, which emphasizes that the author considered it to be qualitatively different from baptism and redemption. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 405.
34. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 403.
 35. An example of this arrangement is Israel's tabernacle (Numbers 2:1–34). We can see a modern example of this phenomenon in Salt Lake City, where the Latter-day Saints first chose the temple lot and then planned the rest of the city around it.
 36. John M. Lundquist, "The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State," in *SBL 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 285.
 37. For a discussion of the differences even within the continuity of Israelite temples, see Carol Meyers, "The Elusive Temple," *Biblical Archaeologist* 45, no. 1 (1982): 33–41.
 38. John M. Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 53–76. See also his other related articles: "Studies on the Temple in the Ancient Near East" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1983); "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God*, ed. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 205–19.
 39. Meike Bal, "Experiencing Murder: Ritualistic Interpretation of Ancient Texts," in *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology*, ed. Kathleen M. Ashley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 4.
 40. Bal, "Experiencing Murder," 5.
 41. William E. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 94.
 42. Bal, "Experiencing Murder," 6.
 43. Lundquist does "not claim that every instance of an actual recovered temple, or of a text detailing temple related practices contains all the elements of the typology," but he does "claim that . . . these elements (and others yet to be discovered and enumerated) . . . employed in the creation of a temple, in the carrying out of its ritual, and which, taken together, constitute the temple ideology of the ancient Near East." "Studies on the Temple in the Ancient Near East," 187.
 44. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 23–24.
 45. Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 60.
 46. Lundquist, "Common Temple Ideology," 60.

47. Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and in the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 7–8; emphasis added.
48. Wilson, *Gospel of Philip*, 92.
49. Midrash Tanhuma, *Qedoshim* 7.10, in *Midrash Tanhuma, Translated into English with Introduction, Indices and Brief Notes* (S. Buber Recension), trans. John T. Townsend (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing, 1989–2001), 2:309–10.
50. Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 68.
51. In other accounts, the story differs from that of the *Apocryphon of John*, but they agree that eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a positive event (*Hyp. Archons* 89.31–19; *Test. Truth* 45.23–48.18).
52. See Schenke’s suggested profile for the uneven section starting with *etbe pai* at the end of line 27. *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 423.
53. Isenberg translates *auō* at the beginning of the sentence in a contrastive sense as “however” (“Gospel According to Philip,” 189), but I agree with Layton that we should understand these two sentences as being in parallel, so I prefer to translate it as “and.” Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 345.
54. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 439.
55. For a discussion of sacred space and Herod’s temple, see Donald W. Parry, “Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space: The Temple of Herod Model,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 413–39.
56. Isenberg translates the *eikonikos* bridal chamber as the “mirrored bridal chamber.” “Gospel According to Philip,” 171. I am persuaded here, however, to agree with Michael Williams’s translation of “duplicate bridal chamber,” which, he says, should be understood as a representative of a divine reality. *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 149, 295n28. See also “εἰκονικός,” in *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*; ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 409–10.
57. Wilson, *Gospel of Philip*, 121–22.
58. This is one of the points in Lundquist’s typology. “Common Temple Ideology,” 58.
59. George MacRae writes, “The allegory seems to identify these [courts] with three different sacraments in the sacramental system of the Valentinian Gnostics. But I think it is more than that. It is more than that because it builds on the concept that one moves toward the divine presence as one moves successively through the outer courts of the temple toward the inner holy of holies, to which only the priest has access. Consequently the order in which the courts are identified with sacraments becomes very important. The initiatory rite of baptism is the outermost one. The rite of redemption, whatever that may have consisted of, is the second one. And it is the bridal chamber,

- the rite of which was the supreme rite for the Valentinian Gnostic, which is the approach into the presence of God himself." "The Temple as a House of Revelation in the Nag Hammadi Texts," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman Madsen (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 184–85. For a discussion of the three rituals in relation to the ritual practice in the Israelite temple, see DeConick, "True Mysteries," 231–61. DeConick does not understand marriage and redemption to represent ritual activity. Rather she sees them in the broader sense of sacraments, where "the human participates in a higher reality, the reality of the Spirit without ever ceasing to be human" (229). For Latter-day Saints, however, this state is generally achieved through some form of ritual action such as baptism, sacrament, or the temple ordinances.
60. By having the three areas in the *Gospel of Philip* designated as separate buildings, there would be no dispute over where one level finished and the next began, as sometimes happened in later Rabbinic discussions. See Parry, "Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space," 418–20.
 61. E. Douglas Van Buren, "Foundation Rites for a New Temple," *Orientalia* 21 (1952): 301–2.
 62. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1976), 126.
 63. Likewise, Moses was shown a pattern for building the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8–9) that, according to Hebrews, was based on the heavenly temple (8:2, 5; 9:24). In this dispensation, Brigham Young taught, "Prophet Joseph [Smith] . . . not only received revelation and commandment to build a temple, but he received a pattern also, as did Moses for the tabernacle, and Solomon for his temple; for without a pattern, he could not know what was wanted, having never seen one, and not having experienced its use." *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 415.
 64. The concept was fairly common in the ancient world and seems to be the background for the passages in the *Gospel of Philip*. For example, in Mesopotamia the king was the image of God (see Franz Marius Theodor Böhl, *Der babylonische Fürstenspiegel*, Mitteilungen der altorientalischen Gesellschaft 11.3 [Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1937; repr. Osnabrück: O. Zeller, 1972], 49), and in the Akkadian story of Adapa (version A), Ea created the sage Eridu as the model of men (Adapa A, 1–9). In Plato's *Timaeus*, the world must be a "likeness of something" (*Timaeus* 28–29). This worldview is seen again in Plato's famous metaphor of the subterranean cave (*Republic* 7). In the *Hyphostasis of the Archons*, a Nag Hammadi text, Sophia establishes Samael's (the chief of the Archons) offspring "after the pattern of the realms that are above, for by starting from the invisible world the visible world was invented" (87.8–11).

65. Compare with 57.22–28, where the two are linked together.
66. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 405–6. DeConick has argued the same in her article, “True Mysteries,” 259–60.
67. We are told that the powers cannot see those who are clothed in this perfect light and therefore cannot detain them (70.5–7; see also 76.22–29). In Irenaeus’s account the ritual of redemption is the putting on of Pluto’s helmet, which serves the same purpose as being clothed in the perfect light. It may be, therefore, that in the *Gospel of Philip*, the act of redemption is the putting on of the perfect light.
68. See *Testament of Levi* 3.4; 5.1–2, where the uppermost heaven where God dwells is called the Holy of Holies.
69. Wilson, *Gospel of Philip*, 103.
70. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 335.
71. There is some ambiguity about the place of Dumuzi in the texts. On the one hand, the *Sumerian King List* identifies him as a god who ruled for thirty-six thousand years, and says that after the flood he ruled for another one hundred years prior to the reign of Gilgamesh (who is also called divine), but in another text Inanna selects Dumuzi ahead of the other kings and calls him “to the godship of the land.” “Prosperity in the Palace,” i.23, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, trans. S. N. Kramer, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 643.
72. Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 103. See also H. W. Fairman’s assessment of the sacred marriage between Horus and Hathor at the Edfu temple complex in Egypt: “It is . . . evident that the Sacred Marriage is a very complex festival. The marriage itself is an intimate part of the harvest, for it ensured fertility and an abundant crop.” “Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 37 (1954–55): 196–200.
73. Samuel N. Kramer, “The Dumuzi-Inanna Sacred Marriage Rite: Origin, Development, Character,” in *Actes de la XVIIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Brussels: Comité belge de recherches in Mésopotamie, 1969), 137.
74. Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 24, 26.
75. For a translation and commentary, see Daniel E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal’s High Priestess at Emar: A Window on Ancient Syrian Religion*, Harvard Semitic Studies 42 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992).
76. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 65.
77. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 292.
78. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 66–67.
79. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 60–62.
80. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 69–71.
81. Fleming, *Baal’s High Priestess*, 74–75.

82. For a detailed discussion, see Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).
83. Ezra 5:24–26 and 12:51 uses language from the Song of Solomon to indicate that the author interpreted the Song as an allegory for God’s love of and choosing of Israel. Rabbi Akiba described the Song of Solomon as “the holy of holies” (Mishnah *Yadayim* 3:5). For a discussion on Origen’s interpretation, see J. Christopher King, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom’s Perfect Marriage-Song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 206–11, 240–48
84. We do know that some Rabbinic writers described the Holy of Holies as God’s bridal chamber. Patai, *Man and Temple*, 226–33.
85. In Mesopotamian belief, the part of the person that lives in the world of the dead is the *eṭemmu*, which Jean Bottéro describes as “the human phantom.” *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van De Mieroop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 275. The classic Mesopotamian story that immortality is reserved for the gods is that of Gilgamesh. He spent years seeking to gain immortality. Although he goes through numerous trials, he fails in his attempt.
86. The Greeks have a very different definition of “soul” than we find in Doctrine and Covenants 88:15. Socrates (followed by his student Plato) differentiated between the body and the “true self,” or soul. Socrates taught that truth can only be found as one dissociates the body and the soul: “For I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls” (*Apol.* 30 a, b). Also, “We are in fact convinced that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul by itself” (*Phaed.* 66 d). R. Renehan notes that “the notion of a real being without a body is very subtle and involves a conscious contemplation on a mode of existence not posited until philosophy had attained a high level of abstract thought.” “On the Greek Origins of the Concepts of Incorporeality and Immateriality,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 21, no. 1 (1980): 125.
87. Wilson, *Gospel of Philip*, 84–85.
88. Williams, “Realized Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip,” 10–17.
89. “Co[brothers; *sunadelphoi*] of the bridal chambers celebrate with torches the [ba]ths [*loutra*] for me; They hunger for [ban]quets [*eilathinas*] in ou[r rooms; *hēmeteroisi domoisi*], [La]uding the Father and praisin[g; *doxazontes*] the Son; O, may there be flow[ing; *rusis eiē*] of the only [sp]ring [*pēgēs*] and of the truth in that very place [or: them].” Peter Lampe, trans., “An Early Christian Inscription in the Musei Capitolini,” in *Mighty Minorities? Minorities*

- in *Early Christianity—Positions and Strategies*, ed. David Hellholm, Halvor Moxnes, and Turid Karlsen Seim (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 79–92. See also V. Blomkvist, “An Early Christian Inscription?,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 88 (1997): 143–44.
90. Schenke’s connection between the Eucharist and Redemption becomes even stronger when we remember that in the Jerusalem temple the Holy Place contained the table of shewbread (see Leviticus 24:7; 1 Kings 7:48–49), which loaves were eaten by the priests (see Leviticus 24:9). Menachem Haran has argued that jugs of wine were also found at the table and were also consumed by the priests. *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 216–17.
 91. Isenberg translates *prōme etouaab* as “priest.” “Gospel According to Philip,” 197. But I think that this translation is too narrow.
 92. See also Segelberg, “Coptic-Gnostic Gospel According to Philip,” 196.
 93. Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment in Gnosticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 119.
 94. “Indeed every act of sexual intercourse which has occurred between those unlike one another is adultery” (61.10–12). The implication is that, at least on one level, only sexual intercourse that occurs between those who are like one another is legitimate.
 95. Adam Lamoreaux wrote an unpublished paper as part of his master’s work at Brigham Young University (1990) that made a preliminary attempt in this direction.
 96. In the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, A. Cleveland Coxe translates it as “a nuptial couch,” but both the Latin (*sponsale cubiculum*) and the Greek (*numphōna*) versions of the text suggest that Irenaeus referred more to a room than just a couch or bridal bed.
 97. Although the early Christians did not specifically build temples, Hugh Nibley has shown that they did model parts of their worship after the temple. Hugh W. Nibley, “Christian Envy of the Temple,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959–60): 97–123, 229–40. See also Marcus von Wellnitz, “The Catholic Liturgy and the Mormon Temple,” *BYU Studies* 21 (1980): 3–35.