LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Hands of God and Men:

Old Testament Physiognomy Repurposed in the New Testament

Submitted to Dr. Myron Kauk, in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the completion of the course,

THES690

By

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Contents

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Abstract

Physiognomy, the ancient practice of "reading" an individual's outward appearance to determine their personality or psychological makeup, was extremely popular in the ancient near east. Such scholars as Callie Callon, Mikeal Carl Parsons, and Mladen Popović have explored the use of physiognomy in the Old Testament and New Testament, but there has not been a study comparing Old Testament physiognomy and Old Testament physiognomy.[1]

Physical description pervades the Book of Samuel in the Hebrew Bible in the descriptions of Saul, David, and Goliath. The book's focus on Saul, the first monarch of Israel, and his successor, David, interrogates the nature of rule and the theme of suitability to rule, concluding that Saul was not fit to rule, and David was. The physicality in the descriptions of Saul and David are particularly physiognomic. In the Acts of the Apostles, physical description also pervades the narrative. As the Acts of the Apostles develops, the reader encounters physical descriptions of various characters, most notably the proto-martyr, Stephen, who had the "face of an angel." This phrase appears in a non-canonical physical description of the Apostle Paul, the only such description from the ancient world. Reading Saul's fall and the Apostle's rise in the context of physical description and physiognomy reveals how the New Testament repurposed the Old Testament as a challenge to the Law of Moses that Paul would rail against in his epistles. The Old Testament Saul becomes the New Testament Saul of Tarsus, who becomes Paul the Apostle, and all three appear in the context of decidedly strategic and physiognomic programs of characterizing an individual's psychological makeup from their outer appearance.

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[1] Callie Callon, *Reading Bodies: Physiognomy as a Strategy of Persuasion in Early Christian Discourse* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019); Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Mladen Popović, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, volume 67 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

This project will involve numerous word studies in addition to engagement with the recent scholarly conversation about physiognomy in the New Testament. This thesis demonstrates that the New Testament repurposes Old Testament physiognomy in the same manner as it repurposes other aspects of the Old Testament. As Maud Gleason has demonstrated, physiognomy was a necessary skill in the ancient world because of the cosmopolitan nature of a society in which new interpersonal encounters were the norm.[2] This means that although it is a pseudo-science, physiognomy can shed light on cultural and intellectual trends in the ancient world.

As a theoretical foundation for this project, this thesis examines the phenomenological hermeneutic tradition begun by Edmund Husserl and developed by Paul Ricœur. This thesis also incorporates the Talmudic writings of French phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas, whose "face-to-face" construct will figure prominently in my discussion of the nature of physiognomy and the ethical implications of "reading a person by their cover." This project will demonstrate that physiognomy prefigured phenomenology and the conceptual framework for hermeneutics that would eventually guide interpretation of the Bible.

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[2] Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Dedication

I dedicate this to my mom for teaching me the belief needed to understand.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Liberty University's Rawlings School of Divinity faculty, in

particular Dr. Myron Kauk, for preparing me to write this thesis. I also want to thank my Creator

for getting me through this process and affording me the opportunity to rediscover Him.

List of Abbreviations

BDAG Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

BDB Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006.

HALOT Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by Mervyn E. J. Richardson. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

NIDNTT Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975).

TDOT G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974).

TWOT Gilchrist, Paul R. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

Chapter 1: An Overview of Ancient Physiognomy

Introduction to Ancient Physiognomy

Physiognomy is the ancient practice of "reading" an individual's outer appearance to determine their personality and psychological makeup, and it was extremely popular in the ancient near east. Allegedly invented in the Mediterranean by Pythagoras (c. 570 – c. 495 B.C.) and Hippocrates (c. 460 – c. 370 B.C.), physiognomy dates to Babylonian mantics, which hold that the body displays signs indicative of life expectancy.[3] Physiognomy was codified in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* around 400 B.C., when it became a well-established practice.[4] An extension of ancient psychological theory, physiognomy posits a universal psychology with an ethos based solely on the body and how physical appearance reflects emotion and personality.[5] Ancient physiognomy had an ethical and practical purpose because it provided an easy way to understand the psychological makeup of important and influential people by teaching expectations of oneself and others, thus allowing it to provide an individual protection against bad luck in interpersonal relationships.[6] Although philosophers who did not believe in an innate character of the soul did not engage with physiognomic theory, their psychological models nevertheless had an implicit assumption that physical appearance reflects personality.[7]

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[3] Alain Touwaide, "Physiognomy," in *Brill's New Pauly*, ed. Christine F. Salazar (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[4] Marke Ahonen, "Ancient Physiognomy," in *Sourcebook for the History of the Philosophy of Mind Philosophical Psychology from Plato to Kant*, ed. Simo Knuuttila and Juha Sihvola, vol. 12 (Dordrecht; Heidelberg; New York; London: Springer, 2014), 623.

[5] Arnaud Zucker, "Psychology and Physiognomics," in *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Rome and Greece*, ed. Georgia L. Irby-Massie, vol. 1 (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 484, 494, 495.

[6] Voula Tsouna, "Doubts About Other Minds and the Science of Physiognomics," *The Classical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1998):185-186.

[7] George Boys-Stones, "Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33.

Physiognomy was common in many ancient cultures and today in the discipline of psychology.[8]

There is evidence that physiognomy was practiced in ancient India, Mesopotamia, and the

Mediterranean.

Physiognomy is a pseudo-scientific means for discerning the unseen, internal nature of an

individual by observing and diagnosing their outward appearance. It seeks to assign a class of

signifiers to the most involuntary and unchanging physical features, in particular the face.[9] The

word *physiognomy* comes from the Greek word φυσιογνωμονία, a compound of φύσις, which

refers to *nature* or *natural quality*, and γνώμων, meaning *interpreter* or *discerner,* or *one who*

knows.[10]

Physiognomy has garnered significant attention from scholars and critics, with several

studies exploring physiognomy's prevalence in the ancient world. Tamsyn Barton argues that

physiognomy should be central to any study of ancient science, and David Rohrbacher

convincingly demonstrates that Roman biographers wrote for an audience they assumed familiar

with physiognomic theory.[11] George Boys-Stones argues that physiognomy was not the starting

point for philosophical speculation, since ancient philosophers never assumed it actually worked

and instead used its vocabulary to comment on the relationship between the body and soul.[12]

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[8] Barbara Böck, "Physiognomy in Ancient Mesopotamia and Beyond: From Practice to Handbook," in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010), 199.

[9] Aristoteles, *Physiognomonica*, ed. Sabine Vogt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), 37. Per definitionem legt die Physiognomik die Klasse der Signifikanten auf möglichst unwillkürliche und unveränderliche physische Merkmale des Körpers und besonders des Gesichts fest, die Klasse der Signifikate auf Charakterzüge.

[10] Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, eds., *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[11] Tamsyn Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine Under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994); David Rohrbacher, "Physiognomics in Imperial Latin Biography," *Classical Antiquity* 29, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 92–116.

Studies have also demonstrated that physiognomy was also an integral part of the Judeo-Christian intellectual tradition. For example, Mladen Popović comparatively traces physiognomic theory from ancient Jewish traditions through the Hellenistic period, and Chad Hartstock focuses specifically on the New Testament's treatment of blindness to argue that physiognomy is both programmatic and problematic in the Luke-Acts.[13] Building on the work of Popović and Hartstock, Mikeal Parsons argues that Luke characterizes people physiognomically in order to subvert them, while more recently Callie Callon has argued that physiognomy was used by early Christians as means of persuasion.[14] Physiognomy, therefore, was an integral part of ancient psychological theory in both the pagan world and in Judaism and early Christianity.

Only four texts dedicated to physiognomy have survived from the ancient Near East, and the corpus of ancient physiognomy texts provides a small but relatively vivid glimpse into this ancient pseudo-science. The earliest surviving text is a treatise once attributed to Aristotle (384–322 BC) entitled *Physiognomonica.* The other three surviving treatises include the Greek texts by the sophists Polemo of Laodicea (c. 88 – 144 AD) and Adamantius and an anonymous 4th century Latin text entitled *De Physiognomia*. Although they do not focus specifically on physiognomy, a 10th century B.C. series of Akkadian tables and two texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran manuscripts 4Q186 and 4Q561) include elements of physiognomy.

Physiognomy in Ancient Mesopotamia

[12] Simon Swain, ed., *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.

[13] Popović, *Reading the Human Body*; Chad Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008).

[14] Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity*; Callie Callon, *Reading Bodies: Physiognomy as a Strategy of Persuasion in Early Christian Discourse.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

Although the earliest surviving text from the ancient Near East is Aristotle's (384–322 B.C.) *Physiognomics* (from around 300 B.C.), there is evidence that physiognomy was practiced in ancient Mesopotamia as early as the seventh century B.C. The earliest evidence for Babylonian physiognomic omens dates to the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000–1600 B.C.).[15] Babylonian physiognomic knowledge spread as far the Indian subcontinent, where the earliest documentation of physiognomic omens originates.[16] Babylonian physiognomics eventually moved into the Hellenistic period (323 – 31 B.C.).

Babylonian scholars arranged their physiognomic omens systematically, such that the gaze of the physiognomer started with head and moved down towards the feet.[17] The two primary premises of Mesopotamian physiognomy held that the gods communicated to people through signs and that the diviner/physiognomer had to interpret the gods' will through these signs.[18] By the late Babylonian period, physiognomy incorporated zodiacal signs into the diagnostic process.[19] The process of connecting the stars to human body is called melothesia, by which the stars govern a specific region of the body.[20] Babylonian physiognomy was primarily a divinatory art used to predict an individual's future based on their physical appearance.[21]

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[15] Popović, *Reading the Human Body*, 72.

[16] Kenneth Zysk, "Mesopotamian and Indian Physiognomy," in *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body. Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World.*, ed. J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 41.

[17] Ibid., 45.

[18] Ibid., 50.

[19] Marvin Schreiber, "Late Babylonian Astrological Physiognomy," in *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body. Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World.*, ed. J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 119–40.

[20] Ibid., 123.

[21] Popović, *Reading the Human Body*, 69.

Babylonian physiognomy focused primarily on predicting an individual's fate and future, while Greco-Roman physiognomy focused on uncovering an individual's character.

The primary source for Babylonian physiognomy is the c. 1000 B.C. Akkadian tablet series *Šumma alamdimmu*, "If the form," which comes from the libraries of Assurbanipal in Nineveh in the mid-seventh century B.C.[22] *Šumma alamdimmu* tablets provide "if…then" statements that allow physiognomic prognostication, with statements "If the form," "If the shape," "If the speech," and "If the blemish."[23] This pattern of "if … then" statements, a conditional statement made up of the protasis ("if") and the apodisis ("then"), recurs throughout ancient physiognomic thought.

Pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomica*

The earliest extant text from the ancient world focusing on physiognomy is a brief Greek treatise entitled *Physiognomica*. It was once thought to have been written by Aristotle, but modern critical consensus holds that it was likely written by a student at Aristotle's school. The text seeks to establish physiognomy as a science.

The *Physiognomica* begins with a thesis statement (805a): "Dispositions [διάνοιαι] follow bodily [σώμασι] characteristics and are not in themselves unaffected by bodily impulses [σώματος κινήσεων]."[24] The text immediately mentions (815a) animals as a basis for "previous physiognomists," who focused on three methods [τρόπους]: the first method supposes "one type of body [τούτοις σῶμά] for the animal and then have concluded that the man who has a body similar to this will have a similar soul [ψυχὴν ὁμοίαν]"; the second focuses on "the genus of man [τῶν

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[22] Zysk, "Mesopotamian and Indian Physiognomy," 43.

[23] Ibid., 44.

[24] [Aristotle], "Physiognomics," in *Minor Works*, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936). All subsequent citations of *Physiognomics* refer to this edition and translation.

ἀνθρώπων γένους] itself, dividing him into races, in so far as they differ in appearance and in character" [διελόμενοι κατὰ τὰ ἔθνη, ὅσα διέφερε τὰς ὄψεις καὶ τὰ ἤθη], such as with Egyptians, Thracians and Scythians; and the third uses "superficial characteristics, and the dispositions which follow each—the passionate man, the fearful, the sexual and each of the other affections" [οἱ δέ τινες ἐκ τῶν ἠθῶν τῶν ἐπιφαινομένων, οἵᾳ διαθέσει ἔπεται ἕκαστον ἦθος, τῷ ὀργιζομένῳ, τῷ φοβουμένῳ, τῷ ἀφροδισιάζοντι, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων δὴ παθημάτων ἑκάστῳ].[25] These methods—similarities with animals, racial categorization, and "superficial characteristics" related to "affections"—foreshadow the strategies of subsequent physiognomies.

Ps.-Aristotle cautions (805b) that physiognomic diagnosis based solely on "characteristics" [ἤθη] is wrong for two reasons: first, two dissimilar men might have the same "facial expressions" [προσώπων ἤθη] but have significantly different "dispositions" [διανοίας] and, second, the same two men might have different expressions depending on the circumstances. Ps.-Aristotle also notes that the animal-based physiognomy is erroneous because a physiognomist can never glean "clear evidence from common signs." Instead, the physiognomist should select signs from animals with similar mental affection.

Ps.-Aristotle lists (806a) sources of signs from which the physiognomist may base his conclusions:

> movements, shapes and colours, and from habits as appearing in the face, from the growth of hair, from the smoothness of the skin, from voice, from the condition of the flesh, from parts of the body, and from the general character of the body.
>
> ἔκ τε γὰρ τῶν κινήσεων φυσιογνωμονοῦσι, καὶ ἐκ τῶν σχημάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν χρωμάτων, 30καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἠθῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου ἐμφαινομένων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν

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[25] Ibid., 85, 87.

τριχωμάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῆς λειότητος, καὶ ἐκ τῆς φωνῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός, καὶ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν,

καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τύπου ὅλου τοῦ σώματος. καθόλου μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτά ἐστιν ἃ λέγουσιν οἱ

φυσιογνώμονες περὶ ὅλων τῶν γενῶν ἐν 35οἷς ἐστὶ τὰ σημεῖα.

The rest of the first part of the treatise provides formulae for determining a man's character. For instance, a "mock-modest man is fat about the face and puckered about the eyes; the expression on the face appears sleepy" (808a) and a "little-minded man" has "is small limbed, small and round, dry, with small eyes and a small face, like a Corinthian or Leucadian."

Ps.-Aristotle's comments on the Corinthians and Leucadian's reflect the ethnic stereotyping that was integral to Graeco-Roman physiognomy.[26] Ps.-Aristotle (812a) argues that those with dark skin [μέλανες] are cowards [δειλοί], although overly white skin [λευκοὶ] can signify a coward as well in the case of women.

The second part of the treatise begins (808a) with a reiteration of the thesis from the opening of part one: "soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it changes also the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul" [Δοκεῖ δέ μοι ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα συμπαθεῖν ἀλλήλοις· καὶ ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἕξις ἀλλοιουμένη συναλλοιοῖ τὴν τοῦ σώματος μορφήν, πάλιν τε ἡ τοῦ σώματος μορφὴ ἀλλοιουμένη συναλλοιοῖ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἕξιν]. However, (808b) "If it were possible for the form of the body to persist after the soul was released from these emotions, the soul and body might still interact, but their reactions would not be synchronous" [εἰ μὲν οὖν ἦν τῆς ψυχῆς λελυμένης ἔτι τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος μορφὴν μένειν, ἦν μὲν ἂν καὶ οὕτω ἡ ψυχή τε καὶ τὸ σῶμα συμπαθῆ, οὐ μέντοι συνδιατελοῦντα ἀλλήλοις]. In other words, temporary mental states do not result in permanent

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[26] Swain, *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, 10.

physiognomic markers. Because fleeting mental states do not leave lasting bodily signs, providing treatment to the body also provides treatment to the soul (808b), and since madness is a malady of the soul, treating the body cures "madness" [μανίας] by releasing body and soul simultaneously such that they "their reactions evidently synchronize" [δῆλον ὅτι συνδιατελοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις].

Ps.-Aristotle privileges (809a) syllogistic deduction [συλλογισμῷ] for selecting signs, although the first part of the treatise is inductive because it begins with the details used for physiognomic diagnosis. As an inverse to the first part's inductive strategy, i.e., a dissembler has a certain appearance and a petty-minded man has a certain combination of bodily signs, Ps.-Aristotle provides a lengthy list of deductive diagnostic criteria about what specific body signs denote in an individual. For instance, (810b) "Knock-knees are a sign of deviants" and "A well-sued and sturdy back marks strength, and a narrow feeble back softness or character, as in males and females respectively."

Ekphrasis, a literary description of a work of art, played a part in many of the philosophical impulses of physiognomy, namely in its dictum to "make visible." Physiognomy is analogous to ekphrasis because the former uses ekphrastic practices couched in rhetorical theories, while the latter seeks to describes humans, heroes, and gods based on physiognomically derived empirical data.[27] An ancient physiognomist could employ the uncontroversial theory of ekphrasis to address ethnic differences between and among human populations.[28]

Qumran Physiognomy

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[27] Alessandra Stavru, "Pathos, Physiognomy and Ekphrasis from Aristotle to the Second Sophistic," in *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body. Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World.*, ed. J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 144.

[28] Antti Lampinen, "Physiognomy, Ekphrasis, and the 'Ethnographicising' Register in the Second Sophistic," in *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body. Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World.*, ed. J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 250.

Qumran manuscripts 4Q186 and 4Q561 provide insight into Second Temple period

Judaism (c. 516 B.C. – 70 A.D.), and like Babylonian and Greco-Roman physiognomic traditions,

these manuscripts include astrological considerations as part of physiognomic diagnoses. 4Q186

and 4Q561 highlight Second Temple Judaism's incorporation of thought from surrounding

cultures.[29] These manuscripts employ unusual linguistic characteristics, including left-to-right

Aramaic script and paleo-Hebrew, Greek, and cryptic characters.[30] 4Q186 in particular reflects

influence from the Greco-Roman impulse to combine various types of knowledge into one type of

text.[31]

Polemon of Laodicea

Born in 88 A.D. in the Anatolian (modern Turkey) city Laodicea, Marcus Antonius

Polemo, (commonly known as Polemon) became a successful Sophist in Smyrna during the period

known as the Second Sophistic (50-350 A.D.). Polemon chose to die voluntarily instead of

prolonged suffering from arthritis.[32] Polemon appears prominently in Philostratus' (c. 170 –

247/250 A.D.) *Lives of the Sophists*, but Philostratus never mentions Polemon's text on

physiognomy, likely because he sought to undermine Polemon's credibility as a physiognomist so

that he could avoid legitimizing Polemon's negative physiognomic evaluation of Favorinus,

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[29] Mladen Popović, "Physiognomic Knowledge in Qumran and Babylonia: Form, Interdisciplinarity, and Secrecy," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 13, no. 2 (2006): 151.

[30] Ibid., 156.

[31] Mladen Popović, "4Q186. 4QZODIACAL PHYSIOGNOMY. A FULL EDITION," in *The Mermaid and the Partridge: Essays from the Copenhagen Conference on Revising Texts from Cave Four*, ed. George Brooke and Jesper Høgenhaven (Brill, 2011), 236.

[32] Grant M. Boswell, "Marcus Antonius Polemo," in *Classical Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources*, ed. Michelle Ballif and Michael G. Moran (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2005), 286.

another sophist and rival of Polemon.[33] In the *Lives of the Sophists* (534), Philostratus refers to Polemon as "the best man" (ἄριστος ἀνήρ) from Smyrna.[34]

Sophists were essentially orators and teachers for hire who provided instruction in rhetoric and declamation. In the words of G.W. Bowerstock, "sophists represent a category within the general group of rhetors, which will have been the broader term. The sense of sophist can perhaps best be had from the modern notion of professionalism. The sophist was a virtuoso rhetor with a big public reputation."[35] Plato expressed disdain for sophists in his dialogues, but despite the conflicting opinions about Sophists in the ancient world, sophists were in high demand in the ancient Mediterranean. They often were financially successful and had many clients. Second Sophistic authors had a preoccupation with paradoxography related to animals, such as had been seen in Aesop's *Fables*.[36] The Second Sophistic also reflected the pursuit of self-examination that was characteristic of second-century Greek culture.[37]

Polemon's *Physiognomia* is the second oldest treatise on the subject to pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomics*. Polemon's original treatise has been lost but survives in complementary Arabic

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[33] Callie Callon, "Philostratus' Omission of Polemo's Physiognomic Skills: A Brief Reexamination and A Proposed Explanation," *Classical Philology* 114, no. 1 (2019): 164.

[34] Qtd. in Matthijs den Dulk and Andrew M. Langford, "Polycarp and Polemo: Christianity at the Center of the Second Sophistic," in *The History of Religions School Today : Essays on the New Testament and Related Ancient Mediterranean Texts*, ed. Clare K. Rothschild, Robert Matthew Calhoun, and Thomas R. Blanton IV (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 217.

[35] G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 13.

[36] Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire.* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 183.

[37] Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

and Greek versions, in essence translating into Arabic Greek thought for an educated Islamic audience.[38] Arabic literary traditions considered Polemon the "Master of Physiognomy."[39]

The Leiden manuscript of Polemon's treatise is entitled *In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: The Book of Polemon on Firasa, that is, his Book on Physiognomy, Containing Seventy Chapters*.[40] The Islamic tone of the first part of the title—*God, the Merciful, the Compassionate*—highlights the cultural influence of the text's Arabic translation, echoing the first line in the Koran: "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." It begins with a detailed table of contents of chapters that focus on specific parts of the body. In contrast to Ps.-Aristotle, Polemon does not characterize individual physiognomic diagnoses with the character of the individual; in other words, Polemon's focus is entirely deductive.

The first chapter opens with language that resonates with the beginning of Ps.-Aristotle's *Physiognomica*: "Know that the eyes are the gateway to the heart, from which arise the cares of the soul and appear the secrets of the conscience."[41] Polemon dedicates a significant part of his deductive diagnoses to the eyes and what they signify.

Adamantius the Sophist

Adamantius the Sophist was a Jewish doctor and *iatrosophist* ("professor of medicine") who was expelled from Alexandria in c. AD 412 and converted to Christianity in Constantinople before returning to Alexandria.[42] Not much else is known about Adamantius except for his

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[38] Swain, *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, 1.

[39] Ibid., 5.

[40] Ibid., 335.

[41] Ibid., 341.

[42] Vivian Nutton, "Adamantius," in *Brill's New Pauly*, ed. Christine F. Salazar (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

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abridgement of Polemon's *Physiognomy*. Along with an Arabic translation, Adamantius' 4th

century Greek abridgement of Polemon's Physiognomy represents the only remnants of Polemon's

original. Adamantius' abridgement includes four introductory chapters before it begins to

resemble the original.[43]

The text immediately mentions Aristotle and Polemon as previous authorities on

physiognomy. Adamantius states that physiognomy is the "discovery of divine men" able to

"confer the most and the greatest benefits on those who study it" [Θείων δε ανδρών είπερ άλλο τι

και το φυσιογνω μονείν εύρημα πλείστα].[44] In contrast to Ps.-Aristotle, Adamantius begins

deductively by starting with individual body parts and the personality types they signify. In the

second book of the treatise, Adamantius provides inductive reasoning by describing character types

and their associated bodily characteristics.

Anonymous Latinus

This anonymous 4th century treatise is entitled *Physiognomonia* or *liber Phisiognomoniae*

in older manuscripts, and in more recent manuscripts the treatise has been falsely attributed to

Loxus, Aristotle, or Polemon; at one point, the treatise was attributed to Platonist philosopher and

rhetorician Apuleius (c. 124 – after 170), the author of the novel *Metamorphoses*.[45] In the opening

paragraph, Anonymous Latinus writes that his primary sources were "Loxus the physician,

Aristotle the philosopher, and Polemon the orator."[46] Loxus is notable among physiognomists

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[43] Swain, *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, 177.

[44] Ibid., 495–96.

[45] Ibid., 549.

[46] Ibid., 557.

because of his theory of the seat of the soul (in the blood), a hotly debated topic in antiquity.[47] The treatise then immediately distinguishes between the bodily signs of men and women.

Anon. Latinus outlines the three ways the ancients practiced physiognomy: 1. By establishing "characters of peoples and provinces and compared individuals with regard to their similarity to them" [*gentium vel provinciarum propositis moribus ad similitudinem singulos quosque homines refcrebant*]; By establishing "whatever expression or posture of body a man had through the particular movements of his mind" [*quo quis esset wltu vel in quo corporis statu per singulos animi sui motus*]; and by establishing "pronouncements about the characters of men with regard to their similarity to animals" [*ut ad similitudinem animalium de animis hominum pronuntiaretur*].[48] Anon. Latinus writes that the physiognomer must do three things: 1. memorize "the importance of the signs" [*significationes signorum,*]; 2. Learn the signs' "worth" [*dignitates*]; and 3. Interpret the signs he finds and "compare them among themselves" [*ea inter se conferre*].[49] Anon. Latinus also mentions that blood has an effect on appearance. The rest of the treatise lists body parts with variable characteristics and what the variable signs signify. Like Polemon and Adamantius, Anon. Latinus spends several paragraphs on the eyes.

Conclusion

These texts dedicated to physiognomy are not the only ancient remnants of physiognomy. Hippocrates and Pythagoras (c. 570 – c. 495 B.C.) are credited for having invented or discovered physiognomy (at least in the ancient Mediterranean), and Galen (129-216 A.D.) established much of the terminology used by physiognomers who followed them. During the Second Sophistic,

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[47] Geneva Misener, "Loxus, Physician and Physiognomist," *Classical Philology* 18, no. 1 (1923): 4.

[48] Swain, *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, 560–61.

[49] Ibid., 563–64.

historians such as Suetonius (69-122 A.D.) and Tacitus (56-120 A.D.) used physiognomy to depict Roman emperors, and Apuleius used physiognomic theories in his famous novel, the *Metamorphoses*.

The four physiognomy manuals share several similarities. First, they serve as manuals for the aspiring physiognomer. Second, they engage the debates about the soul's relationship to the body contemporary to them. Third, they provide diagnostic criteria for the physiognomist attempting to "read" another person from their outer appearance.

The most striking difference among the four surviving physiognomy manuals include the alternating use of inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. Placing one before the other makes a rhetorical gesture that suggests the author's predilection for the first one listed. In all four treatises, diagnostic material follows the introductory material, and the treatises end with a dead drop and little in the way of conclusion. Perhaps the lack of a concluding frame reflects the nature of physiognomy itself, a pseudo-scientific means for seeing the unseen and looking into another's soul.

Chapter 2: Old Testament Physiognomy in the Books of Samuel

Introduction

The Books of Samuel depict the rise of David, including his defeat of the Philistine Goliath and the Ark of the Covenant narrative, two of the most famous narratives in the Old Testament. The Goliath episode is one of many instances in which the Books of Samuel focus on physicality and violence in depicting the rise of David from a young boy to a necessarily violent king of Israel.

While the Old Testament generally does not dwell on physical descriptions of its participants, the Hebrew words for "face," פָּנֶה, and "hand," יָד, appear throughout the Old Testament, including the Books of Samuel. Examining the Books of Samuel's use of פָּנֶה and יָד suggests the possibility that physiognomical thinking had traveled from its earliest known birthplace (Babylon) through cultural circulation among diasporic Israelites during or after the Babylonia exile. Furthermore, many occurrences of פָּנֶה in 1 and 2 Samuel appear in the context of bowing, supplication, or reverence, which means that פָּנֶה carried greater significance than merely referring to a part of the human body. Similarly, occurrences of יָד carry theological implications in addition to the literal meaning of "hand."

Historical Context of the Books of Samuel

The Book of Samuel, which Christian Bibles since the LXX have split into 1 and 2 Samuel, was likely finalized around 630–540 B.C. The Books of Samuel detail approximately 100 years of events that occurred in the 11th century B.C. According to R.W. Klein, the events were recorded first in the 8th century, and editorial redactions occurred in the 7th century during or after the Babylonian exile with a completed version of the text appearing in the mid-6th

century B.C.[1] An early 1990s archaeological find in the ancient city Dan (in the Golan Heights) has provided the first extra-biblical evidence that suggests the historical existence of King David. The epigraphic evidence dates to the 9th century B.C., and some argue that the inscription reads in part "House of David."[2]

Literary Context of the Books of Samuel

The text of Samuel has a complicated transmission history. The Masoretic text, i.e., the "received" version of the Hebrew Bible, was compiled between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. The oldest manuscript of the Hebrew Bible is the Aleppo Codex from approximately 1000 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a text related to astrological physiognomy (4Q186) as well some sections of 1 Samuel in 1QSam (1Q7), 4QSam^a (4Q51), 4QSam^b (4Q52), and 4QSam^c (4Q53). 1QSam is the oldest of the scrolls and preserves 1 Sam. 18:17–18; 20:6–10; 21:16–18; and 23:9–12. Although the Dead Sea Scrolls post-date the composition of the Books of Samuel, their content is much older than the earliest date for the scrolls (around 300 B.C). The Qumran scrolls are more than 1000 years older than the Aleppo Codex, and scroll 4Q51 (or 4QSam^a) is better preserved than any other Qumran biblical manuscript.[3] However, the Qumran manuscripts related to Samuel contain only about ten percent of the entire Samuel narrative.[4] 1 Chronicles reiterates some of the material from Samuel, while external witnesses include the LXX from the third to second century B.C. and Flavius Josephus' (37-100 A.D.) *Jewish Antiquities.*

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[1] R. W. Klein, "Samuel, Books Of," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 4: Q-Z (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 316.

[2] For an overview of the critical reception of the Tel Dan Stele, see Matthew J. Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael: A Literary and Historical Analysis of the Tel Dan Inscription," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 66, no. 3 (2007): 163–76.

[3] A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2012), 2.

[4] Ibid., 4.

A part prophetic, part historical book appearing after Judges and before Kings, the Books of Samuel detail the birth and life of Samuel, the anointing and reign of Saul, and the story of David, from the defeat of his rival Saul to his reign as Israel's second king. 1 and 2 Samuel comprise part of what some have called "Deuteronomistic History," which also includes Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Kings, and (according to some) the Book of Jeremiah. First proposed by Martin Noth in 1943, the Deuteronomistic History theory holds that the Old Testament books from Joshua to Kings were written by a single historian and later were redacted to make the narratives more consistent with the theology propounded in Deuteronomy.[5] There is some evidence that three major episodes in 1 and 2 Samuel—the story of the Ark of the Covenant, the story of David's accession to monarchy, and the narrative about succession—were originally three different independent stories.[6]

Critics have either accepted Noth's thesis, rejected it, or qualified it with their own findings. Before the appearance of Noth's book, Henry Smith had argued that the Books of Samuel idealize people and events and are dominated by a theological concept, and because it follows the redactions to the Book of Judges, the redactors might have replaced earlier history with their own to keep it consistent with the Deuteronomist theory of history; this situates the final redactions during or after the Exile.[7] Robert Bergen argues that although the Levitical prophet-judge Samuel may have recorded some of the material that comprises the work, the Book of Samuel underwent numerous editorial changes and came into being anonymously no

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[5] R. P Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 14; Martin Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien 1* (Halle (Saale): Niemeyer, 1943). See also the English translation, Martin Noth, *The Chronicler's History*, trans. H.G.M. Williamson, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 50 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

[6] Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 12.

[7] Henry P. Smith, *Samuel I and II* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), xx.

earlier than the sixth century B.C.[8] Paul S. Evans similarly places the final redaction *during* the

exile.[9] Robert Alter disagrees with the Deuteronomistic History theory, arguing that the Book of

Samuel was edited during King Josiah's reforms in the late seventh century B.C., although there

may have been secondary Deuteronomistic editing during the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century

B.C.[10] Toshio Tsumura also disagrees with the Deuteronomistic History theory, arguing instead

that the final editorial changes to the Book of Samuel occurred no earlier than the 10th century

B.C.[11]

Except for Tsumura, all these critics agree that there were Deuteronomist redactions

during or after the exile. Tsumura's argument that the text was finalized in the 10th century B.C.

is problematic because it is unlikely that the depiction of an historical event would have

remained unchanged from its occurrence to its first documented written version. The text was

likely collaborative, and 2 Samuel's depiction of David's rise to power as violent and tumultuous

suggests that ancient Judea was a dangerous place and that the King of Israel was born amid the

kind of violence the Hebrews would have witnessed during the exile. While it may be unlikely

that a single author composed all the Deuteronomist books, the redactors of the Book of Samuel

would have probably made changes to reflect the Babylonian exile. Many of the events

described in the story of David depict Israel's epic hero, David, fighting for his right to exist,

which seems to suggest a redaction date range extending from the beginning of the Babylonian

exile through the period just following the Exile. The basic narrative presented in the Books of

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[8] Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 23.

[9] Paul S Evans, *1& 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 22.

[10] Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 2000), x, xii.

[11] Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 11.

Samuel might very well reflect a historically accurate version of the events of the historical David in the tenth century B.C., but the textual changes that must have occurred in the transmission of the text from its initial tenth-century composition to its "final" post-Exilic form gave the Books of Samuel its narrative structure and imagistic qualities.

Despite the seeming unity of the Davidic narrative arc, there are many inconsistencies among the Deuteronomistic texts that problematize finding linguistic consistency among Joshua-Kings. Since the nineteenth century, criticism of the Books of Samuel has attempted to trace the parallel elements from the Pentateuch through the historical books, although evidence of a lack of unity once suggested to critics that the Books of Samuel contain, in Eugene Merrill's words, "doublets, contradictions, redactional seams, and other features" that suggest it is a highly composite composition originating from the Deuteronomist's redactions.[12] However, Merrill argues that the recent appreciation for Samuel's literary integrity has been a reaction against previous perspectives that "atomistically" disintegrated the book into numerous literary particles, and new literary analysis has suggested that the Books of Samuel are a "monument to articulate and purposeful history-writing."[13] This means that the Books of Samuel are both composite and unified while still retaining literary cohesion.

Cultural Context of the Books of Samuel

As a prophetic book, the Books of Samuel understandably depict aspects of divination, a form of ethereal knowledge. Alter argues that Saul and David represent antithetical relationships with divinatory knowledge, with Saul failing with oracles, prophecies, and dreams in favor of

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[12] Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 308.

[13] Ibid., 310.

necromancy, while David succeeds solely through pious knowledge of the divine through prayer.[14] In 1 Samuel 15:23 Saul is warned against divination, which is tantamount to rebellion: "For rebellion is as reprehensible as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as reprehensible as false religion and idolatry. Since you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king." Alter argues that instead of simply promoting prophetic ideology, David problematizes the idea of prophecy by considering what can "become of the imperfect stuff of humanity when the mantle of prophecy is cast over it."[15] Long associated with divination, physiognomy represents a divinatory attempt to grasp the unknown.

Prophets in ancient Israel assisted the village by screening strangers and foreigners to determine which ones were friends and which were foes.[16] Although some prophetic parts of the Bible predict the future, prophets in the ancient Near East played more of a social and political role.[17] This means that prophets could expect to have a complicated relationship with the village chiefs, tribe leaders, or (eventually) monarchs. While political leaders had a responsibility to the people they governed, prophets had a higher responsibility to Yahweh and believed that the authority bestowed upon the monarch fell under the authority of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.[18] If prophets could tell whether a foreign entity was dangerous, they could also predict political fallout that can follow a certain course of action. Chad Hartsock argues that there is sufficient (if sparse) evidence that physiognomy was practiced in the Old Testament and

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[14] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 20.

[15] Ibid., xxvi.

[16] Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250 - 587 BCE* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 211.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 212.

that although the Greeks had developed physiognomy as a meticulously organized and scientific discipline, reading bodies was prevalent in the cultures of Mesopotamia.[19] Hartsock demonstrates that Ehud in Judges and Saul in the Books of Samuel are characterized physiognomically, with Ehud's left-handedness signifying deceitfulness and Saul's height paradoxically signifying his failure as king by demonstrating Saul's failure to use his natural physical size.[20]

Another important physiognomy scholar, Mladen Popovic, argues that considering its first-century B.C. date, the Qumran scroll *4QZodiacal Physiognomy* represents the early stages of horoscopic astrology during Second Temple Judaism that attempted to translate ideas unfamiliar to the Jews into Hebrew.[21] Second Temple period Judaism began with the construction of the Second Temple in the 6th century B.C., and the diasporic Jews returning from the Babylonian Exile would have brought with them the previous centuries' cultural and philosophical traditions. Some would have been in contact with practitioners of divination, chiromancy, and physiognomy in Mesopotamia during the Exile, which began in 586 B.C. This is not to say that every redactional change reflects an influence from the circulation of physiognomic thought, but rather to suggest that creative choices in these redactions subtly focused on physical features related to physiognomy.

The Pentateuch strictly and explicitly forbids witchcraft and divination as a preemptive corrective to such practices among the diasporic Jews returning home who may have witnessed such things during the Exile. Exodus 22:18 demands death to witches: "You shall not allow a

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[19] Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization*, 83.

[20] Ibid., 84–92.

[21] Popović, *Reading the Human Body*, 130.

sorceress to live." Leviticus 19:26b forbids the practices of witchcraft: "You shall not practice

divination nor soothsaying." Leviticus 20:27 specifies a penalty for engaging in witchcraft:

"Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall

be stoned with stones, their blood guiltiness is upon them." Deuteronomy 18:9-22 forbids

sorcery and divination in the context of foreigners entering the land of Yahweh:

> When you enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to
> imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone
> who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, a
> soothsayer, one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a
> medium, or a spiritist, or one who consults the dead. For whoever does these things is
> detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God is going
> to drive them out before you. You are to be blameless before the Lord your God. For
> these nations, which you are going to dispossess, listen to soothsayers and diviners, but as
> for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.

Frederick Cryer notes that physiognomic and diagnostic omens were common across time and

space, with texts from Hittite Hattusa based on Old Babylonian texts and from late Assyrian

copies, the textual tradition of which goes back to Old Babylonian times.[22] If the physicality and

violence depicted in the Books of Samuel reflect an inter- or post-exilic consciousness in the

aftermath of the violent purge in Babylon, it stands to reason that the cultural influences of

diasporic Israelites had already assimilated with the surrounding cultures. This cultural

assimilation would have included beliefs about astrology and physiognomy.

Uses of פָּנֶה ("Face") in the Old Testament

The most important bodily feature for the physiognomist is arguably the face. The

Hebrew word for face, פָּנִים, occurs 2126 times in the Old Testament.[23] The word is typically

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[22] Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 142 (Sheffield: ISOT Press, 1994), 167–68.

[23] H. Simian-Yofre, "פָּנִים Pānîm," in *TDOT*, vol. 11, 1974, 592.

associated with another substantive or proper noun, and more than half of its occurrences refer to anthropoid beings, such as animals and hybrids (cherubim and seraphim).[24] When used with objects, פָּנִים refers to the part or side facing the observer; for cosmic entities, it frequently describes geography; for animals, it refers to the front of the head; and for humans, it refers to the face anatomically as well as a way to express emotions.[25] פָּנִים often occurs in the plural, likely because it represents a combination of different features.[26] Thus, פָּנִים often appears in metaphor and synecdoche.[27] "Face" in the Bible can describe both the outer manifestation of an individual's physiology in addition to engaging with behavioral patterns.[28] פָּנִים announces a person's identity and reveals the sentiments and attitude of the person, so it can also refer to the self.

A famous scene from Exodus illustrates what Elizabeth Evans has called the ancient "physiognomic consciousness."[29] Exodus 34:29-35 depicts Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets after having spoken with Yahweh, with Moses unaware that the "skin of his face shone" because he had been speaking with Yahweh. When Aaron and the Israelites see Moses' shining face, "they were afraid to approach him." Moses addresses the Israelites, and

> When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever
> Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he
> came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been

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[24] Ibid., 591.

[25] Ibid., 594.

[26] Victor P. Hamilton, "פָּנָה (Pānâ)," in *TWOT*, 1980, 727.

[27] Simian-Yofre, "פָּנִים Pānîm," 594; William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 231.

[28] Hamilton, "TWOT," 1980, 727.

[29] Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 59, no. 5 (1969): 5.

commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So, Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

וַיְכַל מֹשֶׁה מִדַּבֵּר אִתָּם וַיִּתֵּן עַל־פָּנָיו מַסְוֶה:
וּבְבֹא מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ יָסִיר אֶת־הַמַּסְוֶה עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְיָצָא וְדִבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת אֲשֶׁר יְצֻוֶּה:
וְרָאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־פְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה כִּי קָרַן עוֹר פְּנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְהֵשִׁיב מֹשֶׁה

Critics commenting on this passage have located some of the imagery in Near Eastern Assyro-Babylonian traditions. For instance, Julian Mortgensen notes that from the mid-8th century B.C., the growing influence of the Assyro-Babylonian religion and its associated solar elements exerted influence on practices and beliefs in Israel such that Yahweh began to be represented graphically as a divine and radiant being that emits brilliance like the gods of the Assyrian pantheon, specifically Shamash the sun-god.[30] Seth Sanders traces a connection between light and horns, which was a common aspect of Near Eastern cuneiform culture in the first millennium B.C., and he demonstrates that the Babylonian astronomical tradition made the same connection.[31] In contrast to critical conjecture that Moses' veil refers to ancient cultic masks, Henharem Haran argues that the focus of this passage is Moses' face and not on any tradition of Near Easter cultic rituals.[32] Joshua Philpot also argues that the veil in this passage does not have cultic significance and that the veil's function is merely to conceal Moses' face when he is not serving as the mediator.[33] Regardless of whether the passage reflects cultic rituals

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[30] Julian Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925): 8–9.

[31] Seth Sanders, "Old Light on Moses' Shining Face," *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 3 (2002): 403.

[32] Menahem Haran, "The Shining of Moses' Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT press, 1984), 168.

[33] Joshua M Philpot, "Exodus 34:29-35 and Moses' Shining Face," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23, no. 1 (2013): 10.

contemporary to Moses, the passage highlights the importance of facial expression and facial reading: Moses sees the need to hide his face because he has been talking to Yahweh. Face-hiding becomes a major theme in the Books of Samuel.

Two Hebrew idioms involving פנים appear throughout the Old Testament. The idiom, נשא פנים, "lift the face" appears throughout the Old Testament (28 times in total).[34] At Lev. 19:15, it means to show partiality; at Deut. 28:50, it means respect greatly; at Gen. 19:21, it means grant request; and at Job 11:15, it means be confident.[35] Another idiom, "set the face," also appears frequently. Isaiah 50:7 uses the phrase to refer to a Stoic resistance to showing shame: "For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have made My face [שַׂמְתִּי פָנַי] like flint [כַּחַלָּמִישׁ], And I know that I will not be ashamed [אֵבוֹשׁ]."

Another important Old Testament use of פָּנִים appears in Isaiah 63:9: "In all their distress He was distressed, And the angel of His presence saved them" [בְּכָל-צָרָתָם לֹא (לֹו) צָר, וּמַלְאַךְ פָּנָיו הוֹשִׁיעָם]. More literally, "angel of His presence," וּמַלְאַךְ פָּנָיו, says "angel of his faces." These angels also appear in the Book of Jubilees and some of the Qumran scrolls. These exalted angels in heaven perform several functions: 1. Praising and blessing God for creation; 2. Officiating as priests; 3. Serving during the six days of creation and celebrating the Sabbath with God; 4. Serving as conversational partners with God, who sometimes allows them to participate in his planning and accompany him to earth; and 5. Keeping basic laws in heaven.[36] In the context of the angels of the presence, פָּנִים refers to something considerably more important theologically than mere "faces."

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[34] Douglas Mangum, "The Biblical Hebrew Idiom 'Lift the Face' in the Septuagint of Job," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 74, no. 3 (2018): 3.

[35] John C. Lübbe, "Idioms in the Old Testament," *Journal for Semitics* 11, no. 1 (2002): 48.

[36] James VanderKam, "The Angel of the Presence in the Book of Jubilees," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7, no. 3 (2000): 379.

Uses of פָּנֶה ("Face") in the Books of Samuel

Several occurrences of "face" appear in the Deuteronomic historical books in the context of shame, with meanings such as "to hide the face" (2 Sam. 19:5 and 1 Kings 19:13) and "public disgrace or shame" (2 Chr. 32:21 and 2 Sam. 19:6).[37] "Face" also appears in the context of sadness or distress (1 Sam. 1:18) as well as in the context of joy and happiness.[38] Mounce defines פָּנֶה as a word that typically refers to "the front side of something or someone, typically the head or the face" and argues that the use of cognate words related to פָּנֶה suggests that the use of the word is more idiomatic than theological and can be used literally and figuratively as well as positively and negatively.[39] Several definitions for פָּנֶה in HALOT refer specifically to the Books of Samuel; פָּנֶה can refer to "features" of the face (1 Sam. 14:20); "appearance of the matter" (2 Sam. 14:20); "in front" (2 Sam. 10:9); a "person's self" (2 Sam. 17:11); and "in the face of, in the sight of, before" (2 Sam. 15:18).[40] Careful philological analysis of the use of פָּנֶה in context demonstrates that the use of the word in the Books of Samuel also has theological implications.

The first appearance of פָּנֶה in the Books of Samuel occurs at 1 Sam. 5:3 in reference to the fall of the Philistine god, Dagon: "When the Ashdodites got up early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground [נֹפֵל לְפָנָיו] before the ark of the Lord. So, they took Dagon and set him back in his place" (NASB). The physical violence in 1 Sam. 5:4 foreshadows the violence that characterizes the rest of the David narrative.

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[37] *HALOT*, 939.

[38] Ibid.

[39] William D. Mounce, ed., "Face," in *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 231.

[40] William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 293.

The David versus Goliath narrative of 1 Sam. 17-18 contains several uses of פָּנֶה. David's beauty as described at 1 Sam. 17:42 contrasts with the horrific death of Dagon, and Goliath hates David for his beauty: "When the Philistine looked and saw David, he was contemptuous of him; for he was only a youth, and reddish, with a handsome appearance [וְאַדְמֹנִי עִם־יְפֵה מַרְאֶה]." The Hebrew says something closer to "ruddy with a fair appearance." Goliath asks David, "Am I a dog [הֲכֶלֶב], that you come to me with sticks?" The LXX uses the Greek word κυνός for dog in this verse, and the Vulgate uses *canis*.

Dogs played a significant role in ancient cultures, and in the ancient Near East they symbolized conformity and devotedness in diplomacy and imperial administration.[41] Dogs could also denote a person as despicable, and in the Bible, dogs typically carry a negative connotation and could be used as a term for self-denigration.[42] Texts from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Bible generally use dogs to signify violent, contemptible, or worthless people.[43] The thirty-two occurrences of כלב in the Old Testament have four emphases and none are positive.[44]

The term *cynic* comes from the Greek word for dog-like, κυνικός, and became associated with the Cynic life philosophy. Diogenes the Cynic (412 – 323 B.C.) was the most prominent ancient practitioner of the Cynic ideal and was referred to as "the dog" by some ancient writers as a by-word for shamelessness.[45] Most of the Cynics' writings have been lost, and their

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[41] Idan Breier, "Shaming by Naming: 'Dog' as a Derogatory Term for Human Beings in Ancient Near Eastern Sources," in *Impious Dogs, Haughty Foxes and Exquisite Fish*, ed. Tristan Schmidt and Johannes Pahlitzsch (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 60.

[42] Ibid., 65.

[43] Ibid., 67.

[44] John N. Oswalt, "כלב," in *TWOT*, 1980, 439.

[45] J. L. Moles, "Cynics," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 402.

philosophy about living in virtue according to nature was distorted in the ancient Greek world because of misrepresentation by their contemporaries about their writings and behavior.[46] Cynics strove for asceticism and emphasized virtue for happiness (eudaimonian ethics), bold speech, and shameless behavior, and they were influenced by Socrates and had a considerable influence on the Stoics.[47]

Ancient physiognomists frequently used dogs to describe human attributes. Pseudo-Aristotle writes that "railing is a character peculiar to dogs."[48] Polemon writes that dogs are "tame, loyal, patient, ready to help, protective, desirous, alert to what should be defended, cheating when necessary, courageous at home and submissive away from home, loathing the stranger, covetous, miserly, stubborn, prattling, gluttonous, dirty, bad-natured, lacking in modesty, and mundane."[49] Polemon's comprehensive comments about dogs carry both positive and negative connotations. Adamantius writes that those with an "oblong brow are strong in the senses and are teachable, like dogs."[50] Anonymous Latinus writes, "Those who have the skin of the brow loose and relaxed, as if smiling. are flatterers, although they are not harmless; they are referred to the appearance of wheedling dogs."[51] Latinus also notes that the dog is "easily

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[46] Ibid., 403.

[47] Harry A. Ide, "Cynics," in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 200.

[48] Ps.-Aristotle, "Physiognomy," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 649.

[49] Marcus Antonius Polemon, "A New Edition and Translation of the Leiden Polemon," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain, trans. Robert Hoyland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 385.

[50] Adamantius, "The Physiognomy of Adamantius the Sophist," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain, trans. Ian Repath (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 567.

angered, easily flattered, devoted to dainty food [,] gluttonous [,] easily offended [and] readily stays awake."[52] A man compared to a dog, according to Latinus, has a "sharp face, a gash of a mouth, a long body, a sharp nose, protruding eyes, and be abusive, impetuous, fickle and quick to anger."[53] Although the ancient physiognomists' comments about dogs suggest both positive and negative qualities about canines, the tenor of all of their comments suggests that people who resemble dogs do not have human self-control.

Goliath believes David considers him less than human, but Goliath was in fact more than human: he was "six cubits and a span" (1 Sam. 17:4), or nine feet nine inches tall. Goliath is attired in lavish armor and weaponry, and he threatens David explicitly: "I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam. 17:44). David returns with a threat: "I shall smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth, that all the world may know that Israel hath a God" (1 Sam. 17:46). In both threats, animals play a key figurative role: they both threaten to feed the remains of the other to wild animals.

David kills Goliath by striking "the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone penetrated his forehead [בְּמִצְחֹו], and he fell on his face to the ground." (1 Sam. 17:49). The word for forehead, מֵצַח, appears very few times in the Old Testament, but several appearances are in the prophetic books, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.[54] Jeremiah 3:3 uses the term in the context of a

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[51] Anonymous Latinus, "*Book of Physiognomy*," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain, trans. Ian Repath (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 567.

[52] Ibid., 631.

[53] Ibid.

[54] *BDB*, 594.

diagnostic for shame: "Therefore the showers have been withheld, / And there has been no spring rain. / Yet you had a prostitute's forehead [וּמֵצַח]; You refused to be ashamed."

Metoposcopy refers to reading the lines on an individual's forehead to determine their character or fate, so it is therefore a physiognomy of the forehead. Pliny the Elder (23/24-79 A.D.) uses the term in *Naturalis Historia* speaking about an artist:

> He also painted portraits so absolutely lifelike that, incredible as it sounds, the grammarian Apio has left it on record that one of those persons called 'physiognomists,' who prophesy people's future by their countenance, pronounced from their portraits either the year of the subjects' deaths hereafter or the number of years they had already lived.[55]
>
> *Imagines adeo similitudinis indiscretae pinxit, ut—incredibile dictu—Apio grammaticus scriptum reliquerit, quendam ex facie hominum divinantem, quos **metoposcopos** vocant, ex iis dixisse aut futurae mortis annos aut praeteritae vitae.*[56]

Metoposcopy comes from a Greek word, μετωποσκόπος, meaning one who looks at foreheads. Metoposcopy would not be developed fully until the sixteenth century by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) as part of the foundation of kabbalah and continuation of medieval Jewish mysticism. However, Luria based his metoposcopy on ideas developed in the *Sefer Yetsirah*, the "Book of Creation," which was composed sometime between the second and sixth centuries A.D.[57] The Qumran texts have been dated to as late as the first century A.D.[58] This means that

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[55] Pliny, *Natural History*, ed. and trans. H. Rackhan, vol. 9: Libri XXXIII-XXXV (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 327.

[56] Ibid., 9: Libri XXXIII-XXXV:326.

[57] Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 154.

the intellectual foundations for metoposcopy appeared just after the latest possible composition date of the Qumran texts, including the text on physiognomy.

Compared to Goliath, David seems almost angelic. Despite his attractive appearance, David also shows deference at 1 Sam. 20:41b by hiding his face: "When the boy was gone, David got up from the south side, then he fell on his face to the ground [וַיִּפֹּל לְאַפָּיו] and bowed three times." The Hebrew at the end [וַיִּפֹּל לְאַפָּיו] more literally says "he fell to his nose," although אַף can also refer to face.[59] The author (or authors) of the David story focus on the emotional, psychological, moral, and physical dilemmas presented to David.[60]

Face-hiding also pervades 2 Sam. At 2 Sam. 2:22b, Abner asks Asahel, "How then could I show my face to your brother Joab? [וְאֵיךְ אֶשָּׂא פָנַי אֶל־יוֹאָב אָחִיךָ]." 2 Samuel 3:13 reflects Moses' face-hiding from Exodus: "And he said, 'Good! I will make a covenant with you, only I require one thing of you, namely, that you shall not see my face [לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־פָּנַי] unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me [לִרְאוֹת אֶת־פָּנָי].'" Hiding the face suggests shame or humility, and like Goliath's self-description as a dog, פָּנַי means more than a part of the body when taken in the context of characters experiencing shame.

2 Sam 13:1-14:33 relates the story of David's daughter, Tamar, and David's third son, Absalom. Tamar is raped. Like David, Tamar is very beautiful: "she was a woman of beautiful appearance [יְפַת מַרְאֶה]." The phrase יְפַת מַרְאֶה mirrors the description of David at 1 Sam. 17:42. The characters in this narrative are leading politicians consciously and strategically acting for

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[58] Gregory L. Doudna, "16 Dating the Scroll Deposits of the Qumran Caves: A Question of Evidence," in *The Caves of Qumran: Proceedings of the International Conference, Lugano 2014*, ed. Marcello Fidanzio (Brill, 2017), 238.

[59] *BDB*, 65.

[60] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, xxiii.

their own best interests or the interests of their household.[61] To bring disgrace upon one's household was an egregious transgression in the ancient world and one for which the transgressor would undoubtedly feel or be made to feel shame. Shame and people falling to their face are prominent motifs throughout this sequence.

The Amnon and Tamar sequence frequently uses פָּנֶה to refer to people falling to the ground in supplication. For instance, 2 Sam. 14:4 reads, "Now when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face [אַפֶּיהָ] to the ground and prostrated herself [וַתִּשְׁתָּחוּ], and said, 'Help, O king!'" 2 Sam. 14:22 notes that Joab did the same: "And Joab fell on his face [אֶל-פָּנָיו] to the ground, prostrated [וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ] himself, and blessed the king."

2 Sam. 14:24 develops the motif of face hiding: "However, the king said, 'He shall return to his own house, but he shall not see my face [וּפָנַי לֹא יִרְאֶה].' So Absalom returned to his own house and did not see the king's face [וּפְנֵי]." 2 Sam. 14:25 relates that "Now in all Israel there was no one as handsome [יָפֶה] as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot [מִכַּף רַגְלֹו] to the top of his head [מִכַּף רַגְלֹו] there was no impairment [מוּם] in him." The word used for "impairment," מוּם, means something closer to "blemish" or "defect," although it can carry connotations of "moral blemish" or "shame of repulse."[62] Even though Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years, "he did not see the king's face" (2 Sam. 14:28), but he demands to do so at 2 Sam. 14:32: "Now then, let me see the king's face, and if there is guilt in me, he can have me executed." The passage ends with another supplication (2 Sam. 14:33): "So when Joab came to the king and told him, he summoned Absalom. Then Absalom came to the king and prostrated himself with his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom."

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[61] Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250 - 587 BCE*, 184.

[62] *BDB*, 549; Walter C. Kaiser, "מאם," in *TWOT*, 1980, 488.

Uses of יָד ("Hand") in the Old Testament

Appearing 1600 times in the Old Testament, the word יָד literally refers to "hand" or "forearm," i.e., "the terminal part of the arm used to perform functions of man's will."[63] יָד frequently appears in the combination meaning "in the power of."[64] Hands in the Old Testament are rarely empty, and the hand has a dominant role as a symbol of action.[65] It can also carry the sense of personal responsibility and the means by which defilement occurs through contact with the unclean.[66] Most importantly, the Old Testament use of יָד carries several associations with power, i.e., divine power and creative power in addition to divine impotence and transmission of power.[67] Theologically it carries its greatest significance though idiomatic usage.[68]

Uses of יָד ("Hand") in the Books of Samuel

In the Books of Samuel, יָד carries several figurative meanings. It can denote "side" (1 Sam. 4:18); "share in king" (2 Sam. 19:44); "in the hand of" (1 Sam. 14:12); "in the possession of" (1 Sam. 9:8); "out of the hand" (1 Sam. 17:37).[69] It can refer to being "implicated" (2 Sam. 14:19); "at the side" (1 Sam. 19:3); "having nothing in mind" (1 Sam. 24:12); "human assistance" (2 Sam. 23:6); and "monument" (1 Sam. 15:12).[70]

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[63] *HALOT*, 386; *BDB*, 389.

[64] P. R. Ackroyd, "יָד, Yāḏ," in *TDOT*, vol. 5, 1974, 423.

[65] Ibid., 395.

[66] Ibid., 408.

[67] Ibid., 423.

[68] Ralph H. Alexander, "יָד (Yād)," in *TWOT*, 1980, 362.

[69] *BDB*, 388–90.

[70] Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 127–28.

The first figurative use of יָד in the Books of Samuel occurs at 1 Sam. 4:8a: "Woe to us! Who will save us from the hand [מִיַּד] of these mighty gods?" After the Ark of the Covenant is captured, God wields his power to punish the Ashdodites. 1 Sam. 5:4 uses יָד literally in the description of the brutal slaying of the god, Dagon:

> But when they got up early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the torso of Dagon was left. For that reason, neither the priests of Dagon nor any who enter Dagon's house step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

cוְאַ֫רְצָה לִפְנֵ֣י אֲר֣וֹן יְהוָ֔ה וְרֹ֨אשׁ דָּג֜וֹן וּשְׁתֵּ֣י ׀ כַּפּ֣וֹת יָדָ֗יו כְּרֻתוֹת֙ אֶל־הַמִּפְתָּ֔ן bוְהִנֵּ֤ה דָגוֹן֙ נֹפֵ֤ל לְפָנָיו֙ aוַיַּשְׁכִּ֣מוּ בַבֹּ֔קֶר מִֽמָּחֳרָ֔ת נִשְׁאַ֥ר עָלָ֖יו dהַמִּפְתָּ֑ן רַ֥ק דָּג֖וֹן.

Two verses later the word is used figuratively again: "Now the hand of the Lord [יַד־יְהוָה] was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He made them feel devastated and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories" (1 Sam. 5:6). The Ashdodites reiterate this use of יָד in the following verse: "When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, because His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.'" God directs the power of his hands at Ashdod: "After they had taken it away, the hand of the Lord was against the city, creating a very great panic; and He struck the people of the city, from the young to the old, so that tumors broke out on them." For the destruction of Ashdod, "the hand [יַד] of God [הָאֱלֹהִים] was very [מְאֹד] heavy [כָּבְדָה]" (1 Sam. 5:11). Dagon's literal hands are no match for Yahweh's hand of power.

The physicality of Dagon's violent death contrasts with the metaphorical power of God's "hand." The use of יָד in this passage to refer both to the physical and metaphorical underscores the Abrahamic promise that the Books of Samuel see to fruition. Samuel's narrative also presents something of a post-exilic *specula principum*, "mirror for princes," with the weak and

incompetent king Saul serving as a foil to Dagon and the ideal (and idealized) king David

serving as a foil to the Hebrew God. However, the Samuel narrative complicates David's reign

by forcing David to make difficult decisions that have violent outcomes. As William

Shakespeare writes in his own *speculum principium*, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a

crown."[71]

Conclusion

While faces and hands in the Books of Samuel do not explicitly carry theological

significance, the contexts in which they appear highlight the metaphorical nature of Old

Testament narrative. Although the Books of Samuel are technically historical books, their

presentation by the prophet Samuel suggests that the original historical nature of the David

narrative took on the dimension of political commentary. Composed by the prophet Samuel and

others and then redacted by an individual editor or collective editors, the Books of Samuel are

historical and political first and prophecy second. On the other hand, the nature of the lessons

about political power and leadership are prophetic in a wider sense in that through David the

reader learns what to do and what not to do with power, i.e., every action has an equal and

opposite reaction. The פָּנֶה is the focus of speaking, dialogue, and diplomacy, while the יָד is the

instrument used for action, the exercise of power, and violence. The Books of Samuel posit a

dichotomy between talk and action through the פָּנֶה and the יָד, and students of this narrative must

come to an understanding of when to talk and when to act.

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[71] William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of the History of Henry IV: The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.1.31.

Chapter 3: New Testament Physiognomy in the Acts of the Apostles

Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles occupies a unique place in the New Testament for several reasons. First, it is the longest book by far in the New Testament; second, it is the only truly *historical* book in the New Testament, and it serves as a transition between the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline Epistles; and third, it is the only book in the New Testament to incorporate historiographical literary techniques that follow Greek, Roman, and Hellenistic secular models. It is the New Testament foil to the great Jewish epic of David in the Books of Samuel.

Although the Books of Samuel include some physical descriptions that critics have noted, the prevalence of physiognomy in the Old Testament is somewhat difficult to trace because of the lack of extant texts on physiognomy contemporaneous with Old Testament authorship. However, literary evidence contemporaneous with the authorship of the New Testament unequivocally demonstrates that physiognomy was a concept with which early Christians would have been familiar.

Early Christians frequently repurposed Old Testament motifs, and physiognomy is no exception. As in the Old Testament use of the Hebrew words for "face," פָּנֶה, and "hand," יָד, the New Testament use of the Greek words for "face," πρόσωπον, and "hand," χείρ, come with greater significance than referring merely to body parts. An examination of the use of πρόσωπον and χείρ in the Acts of the Apostles, with a specific focus on the description of the martyred Stephen and its similarities with the description of the Apostle Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the comparison of Jesus with David, and the motif of the *right* hand, the δεζιος, reveals the importance of faces and hands among early Christians. The first Christians spread the gospel of Jesus Christ orally, i.e., face-to-face, at times risking violent retribution, and the power of

right thinking, whether it is at the right hand of God or in the extension of a hand in fellowship, pervades the Acts of the Apostles in Luke's history of the early Christian Church.

Historical Context of the Acts of the Apostles

The Acts of the Apostles was written sometime during the early decades of the Roman Empire, with more specific dates of composition falling into one of three possibilities: before A.D. 64, between A.D. 70 and 85, and sometime in the second century.

If Acts was written before A.D. 64, it would have been composed during the reign of Roman Emperor Nero. After the death of Emperor Claudius, Nero became emperor in A.D. 54 and reigned until his death by suicide in A.D. 68. In A.D. 64 the Great Fire of Rome started at the Circus Maximus, and Nero blamed and persecuted the Christians for starting it. Because Acts does not mention the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), the Great Fire of Rome (A.D. 64), or Emperor Nero's persecution of the church (A.D. 64 and following), according to this view, Acts must have been written before A.D. 64.

If Acts was written between A.D. 70 and 85, it would have been composed during the early years of the Flavian dynasty in Rome. In A.D. 69 a civil war began in Rome over the transition from the Julio-Claudian line to the Flavian, with four different emperors ruling Rome successively in A.D. 69 alone. While this civil war in Rome may not have had immediate repercussions on the outer provinces of the Empire, the political and bureaucratic instability would have been more than palpable. Acts makes no mention of any instability of the Roman empire and, in fact, depicts the Roman authorities as having an effective ethos for governing the outer provinces and the Christians who lived in them. F.F. Bruce notes that if Christians were as lawless as some believe, Paul would not have been able to spread the gospel via the praetorian

guard who had him in custody.[1] All of this suggests that Acts could not have been written

between A.D. 70 and A.D. 85.

Some critics following the Tübingen School critics argued for a second-century date for

the composition of Acts. Founded in the late eighteenth century by German New Testament

scholar, F. C. Baur at the University of Tübingen, the Tübingen School applied Hegelian

dialectics to a reading of Acts in which there are two competing impulses in Acts: The Jewish

Pauline and the Gentile Petrine. This tension, according to these scholars, was only resolved in

the second century. Originating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a second-

century composition date for Acts has been rejected by virtually all recent scholars.

The debate about dating Acts is ongoing. In his recent commentary on Acts, Craig

Keener equivocates and suggests the date is "early 70s, with dates in the 80s and 60s still

possible, and a date in the 90s not impossible."[2] Colin Hemer notes that Acts does not mention

the fall of Jerusalem, the outbreak of the Jewish War in 66, any immediate fallout in relations

between Rome and the Christians, knowledge of Paul's letters, or the death of James.[3]

Furthermore, Hemer notes that the authority and prominence of the Sadducees places Acts before

70, as does the sympathetic treatment of the Pharisees in Acts.[4] Because of the lack of historical

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[1] F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 9.

[2] Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 400.

[3] Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad H. Gempf (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 376–77.

[4] Ibid., 378.

details in Acts referring to events after A.D. 64 and the depiction of the Roman authorities' stability, following Hemer, Acts was most likely composed before A.D. 70.[5]

Cultural Context of the Acts of the Apostles

Judea was under occupation by the Roman empire when Acts was composed. The early Christians simultaneously challenged two authoritarian systems: the Old Testament understanding of God and salvation and the Roman empire, the latter of which sought to maintain law and order as an occupying foreign state. Multiple languages were spoken within the Roman empire, including Latin, Greek, and Aramaic, making the Roman empire the site of cross-cultural interaction that permeated every aspect of daily life. Trade would have necessitated multi-lingual merchants, and the circulation of cultural ideas and beliefs would have been common.

This circulation of ideas would have included astronomy. During the Roman and Hellenistic periods and after the breakdown of traditional beliefs, new astrology and mystery religions proliferated.[6] At one point, critics argued that Luke's list of nations was adapted from an astrological list of nations following the twelve signs of the zodiac.[7] Craig Keener lists Hellenistic Judaism, the book of Enoch, Josephus, and Philo as sources through which Luke might have had familiarity with astrology and the zodiac.[8] Physiognomy is a subset of astrology, and the two have been linked since Babylonian and Mesopotamian times.

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[5] Ibid., 390. Hemer offers a thorough account of the arguments involved in all three hypotheses. See pp. 366-410.

[6] Ibid., 83.

[7] Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 1:837.

[8] Ibid., 1:838.

The disciples and early Christians engaged in παρρησία, a Greek word meaning "say everything" with the implication of speaking frankly and freely and is a word that takes on a political and liberatory dimension in Hellenistic writing. In his 1982 lecture at the University of Grenoble, Michel Foucault argued that παρρησία is a "test and touchstone for the soul" because if a soul wants to "know the state of its health" and the "truth of its opinions," it needs another soul with knowledge, benevolence, and παρρησία.[9] Foucault's notion of a knowing, loving, and freely speaking individual describes the disciples and the early Christians, as they knew about the gospel and its truth, they loved their neighbors and enemies, and they freely spread the gospel even if it meant violent treatment at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

Παρρησία is also constitutive of good sovereignty, according to Foucault, because it involves the delegation of a power that otherwise would solely reside with the prince, state, or ruling authority.[10] Because of this rupture at the site of power, in Foucault's understanding, παρρησία breaks previous forms of writing and rhetoric because it is an *action* that "allows discourse to act directly on souls."[11] The witness testimonies of Christ's miracles perform precisely this inscription, as their purpose is *ex vi termini,* by definition, to spread the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Literary Context of the Acts of the Apostles

Forming the second part of what is known as Luke-Acts, the book of Acts depicts the spread of Christianity through the Roman Empire. Its geographic movement—East to West, from Jerusalem to Antioch—mirrors the attempts of the Seven Deacons, including the first

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[9] Michel Foucault, "Parrēsia," in *Discourse and Truth and Parrēsia*, ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 11–12.

[10] Ibid., 13.

[11] Ibid., 17.

Christian martyr, Stephen, to spread the gospel from Jews in Jerusalem to Gentiles in Antioch. The Apostle Paul is introduced in this book as Saul of Tarsus, whose conversion is detailed in Acts 9. In Acts 20:22-3, Paul says, "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that chains and afflictions await me" [καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ δεδεμένος ἐγὼ τῷ πνεύματι πορεύομαι εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ συναντήσοντά μοι μὴ εἰδώς, πλὴν ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κατὰ πόλιν διαμαρτύρεταί μοι λέγον ὅτι δεσμὰ καὶ θλίψεις με μένουσιν]. The word, συναντήσοντα, comes from συναντάω, which means "meet face to face."

Acts was written in Koine Greek during a period that has become known as the Second Sophistic, a term used to describe the revival of Hellenistic Greek writing under the Roman empire during the first two centuries A.D. Physiognomy was a very popular topic among Second Sophistic writers. Claudius was lampooned physiognomically by several authors, including the Roman historian Tacitus (c. A.D. 56 - c. 120) and the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC – A.D. 65). Tacitus used physiognomy in his *Annales* and the *Historiae*, as did the next great Roman historian, Suetonius (69-122 A.D.), whose *De vita Caesarum* (commonly known as the *Twelve Caesars*) physiognomically depicts the Julio-Claudian line of Emperors.[12] Seneca lampoons Claudius physiognomically in *Apocolocyntosis divi Claudii* (*The Gourdification of the Divine Claudius*) by focusing on Claudius' supposed stammer and his physical disabilities. Classical references in Acts include Paul and Barnabas

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[12] See, for example, Alan E. Wardman, "Description of Personal Appearance in Plutarch and Suetonius: The Use of Statues as Evidence," *The Classical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1967): 414–20; D. Thomas Benediktson, "Structure and Fate in Suetonius' *Life of Galba*," *The Classical Journal* 92, no. 2 (1996): 167–73; Maria Christine Roberts, "The Face of the Caesars: Physiognomy in Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum*" (MA thesis, University of Georgia, 2011); Gian Franco Chiai, "Good Emperors, Bad Emperors: The Function of Physiognomic Representation in Suetonius' *De Vita Caesarum* and Common Sense Physiognomics," in *Visualizing the Invisible with the Human Body. Physiognomy and Ekphrasis in the Ancient World.*, ed. J. Cale Johnson and Alessandro Stavru (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 203–26; Damian Shaw, "Suetonius, Paracelsus and the Flimsy Foundations of Physiognomy," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 2019, 1–2.

being taken for Zeus and Hermes (Acts 14:8-18), which recalls Ovid's tale, Baucis and Philemon from the *Metamorphoses*, and Paul's speech, which is evocative of Lucian of Samosata's philosophic debates in *The Eunuch*.[13]

Three recent monographs have analyzed physiognomy in the New Testament and early Christian writings. Mikeal Parsons argues that Luke uses the principles of physiognomy in Luke and Acts to subvert the characters he is describing when Luke seeks to establish an eschatological community based on Jesus Christ and the Abrahamic covenant.[14] This new community of Christ was comprised not only of social outcasts and sinners but also people who were ostracized for deformity, disfigurement, or disability, with Luke's use of physiognomy ultimately serving to demonstrate that all are welcome in the Kingdom of Christ.[15]

Parsons provides several examples of physiognomic thought in writings contemporary with the composition of the Gospel of Luke and Acts. In his analysis of the bent woman in Luke 13:11-17, Parsons argues that because of the prevalence of Greco-Roman physiognomy, readers initially would have understood the woman's bent posture as a moral weakness.[16] The woman is described in 13:11: "And a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all" [καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας ἔτη δεκαοκτὼ καὶ ἦν συγκύπτουσα καὶ μὴ δυναμένη ἀνακύψαι εἰς τὸ παντελές]. In other words, the bent woman's physical appearance reflected the inner turmoil of her soul that "Satan has kept bound" [ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ Σατανᾶς]. However, Jesus heals her on the Sabbath, which

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[13] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 5.

[14] Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity*, 14–15.

[15] Ibid., 15.

[16] Ibid., 85–86.

draws the ire of the synagogue. Jesus then reprimands the hypocrisy of the synagogue and reminds everyone that the bent woman is a daughter of Abraham who has been kept prisoner of her affliction by Satan.

Parsons focuses some of his individual readings on New Testament figures with physical disabilities. In his analysis of Zacchaeus and his short stature in Luke 19:3, Parsons argues that readers of Luke would have viewed Zacchaeus as "laughable, even despicable" because Luke's audience would have viewed Zacchaeus as "a tasteless joke deriding the deformed."[17] This verse reads, "Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature [μικρὸς]." Parsons notes that the Greco-Roman context for Zacchaeus would have associated his shortness with "pathological dwarfism," and generally Luke's audience would have seen Zacchaeus as a "ludicrous figure."[18] In his analysis of the lame man in Acts 3:1-10, Parson's argues that Luke subverts Greco-Roman physiognomic conventions to entice the audience into the narrative.[19] The lame man is described in Acts 3:2 as "a man who had been unable to walk [ἀνὴρ χωλὸς] from birth [ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς] was being carried, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order for him to beg for charitable gifts from those entering the temple grounds." The phrase, ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς, literally means "from his mother's womb," which suggests that lame has been unable to walk since birth. Parson's writes that the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8 [Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος] who meets Philip follows anatomical, zoological, and ethnographic physiognomic assumptions.[20]

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[17] Ibid., 101.

[18] Ibid., 103–4.

[19] Ibid., 121.

[20] Ibid., 127–36.

Parsons also notes the Apostle Paul refers to his own physical ailment in several of the Pauline Epistles (Galatians 4:13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 10:1; 12:7).

Focusing on the motif of blindness, Parsons' student, Chad Hartsock, argues that blindness serves as a programmatic interpretive principle prevalent throughout Luke-Acts.[21] Hartsock first surveys the use of physiognomy in the Old Testament and Second Temple texts by focusing on the description of Saul, who is described as considerably taller than the left-handed Ehud, who "can smuggle a dagger on his right thigh," and the overweight king Eglon, whose "fat folds can swallow the hilt of the dagger."[22] Ehud is described in Judges 3:15 as "the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man" [אִישׁ אִטֵּר יַד־יְמִינוֹ]." The word אִטֵּר here means "shut up, bound," i.e., "lame," and the phrase means "a man bound, restricted, as to his right hand, i.e. left-handed."[23]

Hartsock provides a physiognomic analysis of the description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and argues that the reader of this text would have assumed that Paul's physical description would predict his behavior in the narrative (and it does). Hartsock concludes that the text offers a heroic portrait of Paul that foreshadows what the reader can expect from Paul's actions.[24] Like Parsons, Hartsock also analyzes the bent woman of Luke 13:10-17, Zacchaeus, the lame man at the Temple in Acts 3, and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 to argue that Luke introduces physiognomic signs specifically to subvert them later.[25]

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[21] Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization*, 1.

[22] Ibid., 87.

[23] *BDB*, 32.

[24] Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features in Characterization*, 135.

[25] Ibid., 172.

Callie Callon argues that early Christian writers used physiognomy as a rhetorical strategy to denigrate theological opponents, form community boundaries as pertaining to heretics, self-represent their moral superiority to Greco-Roman non-Christians, and cultivate a collective self-identity in some martyrologies.[26] Through an analysis of physiognomic depiction of disabled bodies and their defects, the appearance of an "ideal" Christina, the depiction of martyrs, and the depiction of Christ himself, Callon argues that physiognomy, although not a perfectly scientific system, enabled early Christians to pose questions about character that had theological implications.

For example, In her analysis of the depiction of heretics, Callon argues that the physiognomy's "persuasive power" enabled "early Christian negotiations of insider–outsider boundaries."[27] In her analysis of physiognomy in the 2nd century A.D. apocryphal text, the *Acts of Peter*, Callon notes that Simon Magus's voice is described as "thin" and "shrill" and "weak and useless."[28] Callon provides examples from Quintilian Pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomica* to demonstrate that a man with a weak voice was not considered capable of effective oratory.[29] By contrast, Peter in this text is depicted as having a "strong" voice.[30] Furthermore, the ship captain in the narrative performs a physiognomic analysis on Peter himself, who appears to the captain as a faithful and worthy minister.[31] The weak-voiced Simon Magus is the foil to the strong-

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[26] Callon, *Reading Bodies: Physiognomy as a Strategy of Persuasion in Early Christian Discourse*, 2.

[27] Ibid., 36.

[28] Ibid., 47.

[29] Ibid., 48–49.

[30] Ibid., 49.

[31] Ibid., 47.

voiced Peter in the *Acts of Peter*, a contrast that in effect uses physiognomy as more than a mere rhetorical flourish because it informs the message of the text.

In her analysis of the depiction of an ideal Christian, Callon argues that physiognomy provides an effective perspective through which to view early Christians' focus on the significance on "bodily comportment" which includes "walking, laughter, and other seemingly innocuous physical undertakings,"[32] Callon provides numerous examples from texts by Clement of Alexandria (A.D. c. 150 - c. 215) about gait, voice, bodily deportment, and other aspects of physical appearance and movement to show that Clement believed that the ideal Christian must have self-control.[33] Callon concludes that self-comportment aligned with physiognomy enabled early Christians a way to demonstrate their own moral superiority as Christians by means of an outward appearance that was observable by outsiders.[34]

The overlapping examples in Parsons', Hartsock's, and Callon's analyses suggest that early Christians were very aware of physiognomic concepts and many used them in their writings, including the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and non-canonical writings by later Christians. Philological and literary analysis of πρόσωπον and χείρ underscore Parsons, Hartsock, and Callon's work on New Testament physiognomy in addition to revealing the theology developed in the Acts of the Apostles that is complemented and augmented by Luke's use of physiognomy.

Luke was a physician, which means that he would have been familiar with medical concepts and beliefs contemporary to him. Greek physician Hippocrates (c. 460 – c. 370 BC) was the first to develop and codify (in writing) humoural theory, which holds that the human

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[32] Ibid., 36.

[33] Ibid., 88–93.

[34] Ibid., 113.

body is controlled by four "humours": blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. Written by

associates of Hippocrates, the Hippocratic Corpus established medical observational practices for

diagnosis of physical ailments, which performs a gesture like physiognomy.[35] In other words,

physicians diagnose physical illnesses based on symptoms just as the physiognomist diagnoses

an individual's personality or character from outer signs, i.e., symptoms. Greek physician Galen

(A.D. 129 – c. 216) followed Hippocrates humoural model for diagnosing illness and used

physiognomy as a diagnostic tool.[36]

Uses of πρόσωπον ("Face") in the New Testament

The word, πρόσωπον, "face," appears 900 times in the LXX, usually as a translation for

the Hebrew word for face, פָּנִים." Πρόσωπον generally refers to "face, visage, countenance" even

when in a plural form.[37] In classical Greek, it can also refer to "face, death-mask, actor's mask,

[and] the part played by the actor."[38] Words derived from πρόσωπον can mean partiality or bias,

give a partial or biased judgement, or take sides.[39]

The English word, *prosopopoeia*, comes from the Greek derivative of πρόσωπον,

προσωποποιία, literally "to do" or "make a face." Prosopopoeia is a rhetorical device in which an

inanimate object or animal is depicted with human characteristics or attributes and speaks and is

spoke to as if it were a human (anthropomorphism); it also can carry the connotation of

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[35] Chiara Thumiger, "The Tragic *Prosopon* and the Hippocratic Facies: Face and Individuality in Classical Greece," *Maia* 68, no. 3 (2016): 637–64.

[36] Elizabeth C. Evans, "Galen the Physician as Physiognomist," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 76 (1945): 287–98.

[37] Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 701.

[38] *BDAG*, 585.

[39] Erich Tiedtke, "Face," in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown, vol. 1, 1975, 585.

impersonation.[40] In addition to personification and anthropomorphism, πρόσωπον can also refer to a mask and metonymically it can refer to a dramatic part or an actor.[41] Metonymy, the use of a quality of something to refer to the whole thing, introduces considerable complexities for interpreting this word in context.

The New Testament also uses πρόσωπον metonymically. The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines πρόσωπον simply as "the front part of the human head," i.e., "face."[42] However, πρόσωπον can also refer to a man's face, metonymically to the whole person, the earth's surface, and specifically God and/or Christ's face.[43] It also can refer to a "person" or "bodily presence."[44] Therefore, πρόσωπον has Christological significance that follows from its metonymic use in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 refers to a passage from Exodus and inverts the face-covering motif to suggest that Christ removes the veil Moses wore after he had come down from Mount Sinai:

> Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech [παρρησία], and we are not like Moses, who used to put a veil [κάλυμμα] over his face [πρόσωπον] so that the sons of Israel would not stare at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains

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[40] Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 123.

[41] Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 701.

[42] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 887.

[43] Tiedtke, "Face," 585.

[44] Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 701.

unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil

lies over their hearts; but whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we

all, with unveiled [ἀνακαλύπτω] faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are

being transformed into the same image [δόξης εἰς δόξαν] from glory to glory [δόξης εἰς

δόξαν], just as from the Lord, the Spirit [πνεῦμα].

In other words, Christ lifts the veil that separates the individual from God. Paul refers to the

"great boldness in our speech," i.e., παρρησίας as differentiating the disciples and early

Christians from Moses, who literally and figuratively could not allow himself to see God face-to-

face, which contrasts with a Christian covenant in the Pauline epistles that allows for universal

salvation through belief and faith in Christ. In order to practice παρρησία, an individual must

speak without any dissimulation, including facial expressions and body language, thereby

making παρρησία the antidote to physiognomy.

For the witnesses of Christ to use great boldness in their speech, to speak with παρρησία,

requires the communication to be sincere and delivered without dissimulation, a kind of public

confession of what they have seen. Physiognomy rests on the belief that outer appearance

reflects inner psychological content, which means that any insincere utterance would manifest in

the speaker's outer appearance. This would prevent the one speaking with παρρησία from having

a genuine effect on the hearer's soul in Foucault's account. Someone speaking with παρρησία

renders the physiognomist powerless because of the reciprocity between thought and speech and

soul and body that παρρησία requires. When there is no dissimulation, the physiognomist loses

relevance, like the saying, "If you don't lie, you never have to remember anything."

Uses of πρόσωπον ("Face") in the Acts of the Apostles

Acts 6:8-15 describes the appearance of Stephen, one of the first-named of the Seven, before the Sanhedrin to spread the gospel to the high council that governed Jews after the Second Temple. Many of the synagogue's congregation have spread rumors about Stephen's blasphemy. Charles Talbert notes that Stephen's retort to the charges by the Sanhedrin is to accuse the accusers and their ancestors of acting against Mosaic authority.[45]

Acts 6:15 relates that "And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel" [καὶ ἀτενίσαντες εἰς αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ καθεζόμενοι ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ εἶδαν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου]. The chiastic structure of the last clause after εἶδαν with the ὡσεὶ "like" compares Stephen's appearance with that of an angel. The parallel structure of the two appearances of πρόσωπον intensifies the use a word that has many connotations in addition to its denotation of "face." This use of πρόσωπον is a likely reference to Judges 13:6:

> A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome.
>
> So I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name.
>
> וַתָּבֹא הָאִשָּׁה, וַתֹּאמֶר לְאִישָׁהּ לֵאמֹר, אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא אֵלַי, וּמַרְאֵהוּ כְּמַרְאֵה מַלְאַךְ הָאֱלֹהִים נוֹרָא מְאֹד; וְלֹא שְׁאִלְתִּיהוּ אֵי-מִזֶּה הוּא, וְאֶת-שְׁמוֹ לֹא-הִגִּיד לִי.

The Hebrew here says something closer to "his countenance [כְּמַרְאֵה] was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible [נוֹרָא מְאֹד]." Darrell Bock notes that this description is unique to

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[45] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 64.

the New Testament and that it suggests that Stephen looks like someone "inspired and in touch with God" who reflects the "touch of God's glory."[46]

If taken metonymically, τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου means that Stephen's face and bodily presence resembled that of an angel. The two substantive groups, τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ and πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου, are joined not by a verb but by the comparative adverb, ὡσεὶ, "as if," which suggests that the main verb of the sentence, εἶδαν, "they saw" may carry over for both pairs. In other words, "they saw" [εἶδαν] both "his face" [τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ] and the "face of an angel" [πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου] simultaneously. An extrapolated translation of this part of the sentence in this light might be: "All who sat in the council saw his face as though they saw the face of an angel." This is considerably different from saying Stephen had the face of an angel. Mikeal Parsons notes that many of the people sitting with the council were probably Sadducees who did not believe in the existence of angels (Acts 23:8).[47]

Haenchen agrees about this passage's depiction of Stephen, noting that Stephen's transfiguration in v. 15 demonstrates that the Holy Spirit fills Stephen for Luke, which enables Stephen to make his subsequent speech.[48] C. K. Barrett suggests that Stephen's speech might be "inspired utterance" and notes that no reactions by those seeing the face of an angel are described because they are not impressed by his beauty and dignity and are not frightened by the man opposing them.[49] Richard I. Pervo and Harold W. Attridge write that Stephen appears to have

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[46] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 274.

[47] Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 89.

[48] Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 272.

[49] Charles K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 330.

had a "meteoric career, a mission that immediately detonated an explosion."[50] Like Barrett, Pervo and Attridge also see Stephen's speech as inspired, as Stephen's transfiguration tells the reader that the subsequent speech is explosive and "holds its hearers spellbound—up to the climactic point."[51] Stephen, therefore, appeared on the early Christian scene as a rising star whose speech following the narrative introduction had a significant impact.

Richard N. Longenecker notes that Judaism frequently depicts devout men as resembling angels.[52] In his commentary on Acts (first published in Latin in 1555), French Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) writes of Stephen's appearance,

> Men do commonly in places of judgment turn their eyes toward the party arraigned, when as they look for his defense. He saith that Stephen appeared like to an angel [*visum esse similem*]; this is not spoken of his natural face [*nativa facie*], but rather of his present countenance [*praesenti vultu*]. For whereas the countenance [*facies*] of those which are arraigned useth commonly to be pale, whereas they stammer in their speech, and show other signs of fear, Luke teacheth that there was no such thing in Stephen, but that there appeared rather in him a certain majesty. For the Scripture useth sometimes to borrow a similitude of angels [*similitudine ab Angelis*] in this sense; as 1 Samuel 24:9; 2 Samuel 14:17; 2 Samuel 19:27.[53]

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[50] Richard I. Pervo and Harold W. Attridge, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 170.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," in *John and Acts*. Vol 9. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1981), 337.

[53] John Calvin, *Commentary on Acts*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1, 1585, 187; John Calvin, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 6: Comment. in Evangelia et Acta Apost. (Amsterdam: Joannem Jacobi Schipper, 1667), 51.

Calvin differentiates between Stephen's "natural face" and his "present countenance," the latter of which normally would include stammering and "signs of fear" when under interrogation. Stephen displayed no such fear and appears before the Sanhedrin with a "certain majesty."

Stephen's brief appearance in Acts depicts the comet-like arrival of one of the first Christians to speak up against the Jewish establishment. His speech is impassioned and suitably follows his angelic appearance to the Sanhedrin. Over the course of the entire Stephen narrative, Stephen is presented in the light of a *vita martyris* who is likely the first Christian martyr to die for his belief in Jesus Christ. In v. 15 he does not merely look like an angel or have the face of an angel; he is in fact already at the inception of his transfiguration and apotheosis. When the council sees that he looks like an angel to them, they are no longer looking at a man who has the face of an angel, but rather a man filled by the Holy Spirit when he faced the Sanhedrin.[54] Bruce suggests the possibility that Stephen's face resembles an angel's because Stephen foresaw his own fate as he stood before the judges.[55] Stephen had to have known that his heresy and blasphemy toward the Sanhedrin would result in his death. The ultimate irony in the book of Acts is that the Apostle Paul confesses his complicity in the death of Stephen. This is one of the first things New Testament readers learn about Paul—that he helped execute the first Christian martyr. As the traditional organization of the New Testament transitioned from the Gospels and Acts into the Pauline epistles, perhaps the death of Stephen continued to weigh heavily on the Apostle's mind as he wrote the bulk of what would become the canonical New Testament. Like the geographic movement from East to West and Stephen's spiritual transformation, Acts' brief life and contributions of Stephen reverberate through the rest of the New Testament, and it is

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[54] Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 128.

[55] Ibid., 156.

through Stephen and his story that readers of Acts really begin to understand who Paul was and who he sought to become. Darrell Bock characterizes Stephen as a key transitional figure who is the first Hellenistic Christian with his words recorded in Acts.[56]

Pharisee Saul of Tarsus encounters Jesus while traveling to Antioch and is struck blind by the vision. Ananias of Damascus answers the divine call to visit Saul to help him regain his sight:

> So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him [ἐπιθέντα αὐτῷ [τὰς] χεῖρας] said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately *something* like *fish* scales fell from his eyes [ἀπέπεσαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὡς λεπίδες], and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

The use of λεπίδες is the only New Testament appearance of the word, and here it refers to fish *scales*, although λεπίς, can refer to fish scales in Classical Greek.[57] In a somewhat tangled synecdoche, the fish scales (the part) for the fish (the whole) focuses on that which blinds Paul temporarily because of his encounter with Christ. As Mikeal Parsons notes, English monk the Venerable Bede (672/3 - 735) in his commentary on Acts 9:18 connects the scales falling from Saul's eyes with the fact that dragon's bodies were allegedly covered in scales, thereby depicting Paul as a "Leviathan-like opponent of God."[58] Shedding the scales transforms him into a human from a scaled sea monster.

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[56] Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations; Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2012), 382.

[57] Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*.

[58] Parsons, *Acts*, 132.

According to Second Sophistic physiognomist Polemon, fish are "ignorant, timid, without evil, and silent."[59] This describes the Apostle Paul instead of the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus. Tenth-century Islamic intellectual Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. 414/1023) assigns a central role in physiognomy to eyes, which likely derives from the important status placed on eyes by Polemon of Laodicea (A.D. 90-144). Al-Tawhidi writes that physiognomists "rely particularly upon the eye and claim that it is the gateway to the heart, and they fish out from its mape, colour and many other aspects too numerous to mention here most features and traits of character."[60] Beyond this brief scene in the famous "road to Damascus" sequence, there is no other canonical description of the Apostle Paul.

There is, however, a physical description of Paul in an early Christian apocryphal text entitled the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where Paul is described as

"a man small in size, bald head and crooked legs; in good health; with eyebrows that met a rather prominent nose; full of grace, for sometimes he looked man and sometimes he had the ***face of an angel***."[61]

εἶδεν δὲ τὸν Παῦλον ἐρχόμενον, ἄνδρα μικρὸν τῷ μεγέθει, ψιλὸν τῇ κεφαλῇ, ἀγκύλον ταῖς κνήμαις, εὐεκτικόν, σύνοφρυν, μικρῶς ἐπίρρινον, χάριτος πλήρη· ποτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐφαίνετο ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ποτὲ δὲ ***ἀγγέλου πρόσωπον*** εἶχεν.[62]

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[59] Polemon, "A New Edition and Translation of the Leiden Polemon," 389.

[60] Robert Hoyland, "The Islamic Background to Polemon's Treatise," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 236.

[61] J. K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 364. Emphasis added.

[62] Ricardus Adelbertus Lipsius, ed., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1891), 237. Emphasis added.

The Armenian version of the text includes that Paul had blue eyes. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* has not been dated definitively, but most scholars believe the text was composed in the late second century A.D.[63] This would place the text's authorship during the Second Sophistic and the heyday of Roman physiognomics. János Bollók and Heike Omerzu argue that physiognomy guided the description of Paul in this text.[64] If Bollók and Omerzu are correct, this suggests the early Christian author of the text was familiar with physiognomy and perhaps sought to follow the physiognomic depictions examined by Parsons, Hartsock, and Callon. Furthermore, dating the text to the second century highlights physiognomy's enduring popularity.

Paul's identity and psychology have long fascinated biblical scholars. Psychologist Cavendish Moxon in 1922 read Paul's intellectual development as indicative of the Apostle's attempts to fulfill repressed Freudian desire.[65] Robert Grant argues that the description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* reflects the first century physiognomic understanding of what a leader ought to look like.[66] Building on Grant's physiognomic reading of this description of Paul, Abraham Malherbe argues that it cannot be determined whether this description of Paul followed the precedent of physiognomy manuals and handbooks.[67] János Bollók also argues for a

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[63] James Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 357.

[64] János Bollók, "The Description of Paul in the *Acta Pauli*," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen: Pharos, 1996); Heike Omerzu, "The Portrayal of Paul's Outer Appearance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Re-Considering the Correspondence between Body and Personality in Ancient Literature," *Religion and Theology* 15, no. 3–4 (2008): 252–79.

[65] Cavendish Moxon, "Epileptic Traits in Paul of Tarsus," *The Psychoanalytic Review (1913-1957)* 9 (1922): 60–66.

[66] Robert M. Grant, "The Description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982): 1.

[67] Abraham J Malherbe, "A Physical Description of Paul," *Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1 (1986): 170–75.

physiognomic reading of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and demonstrates that

physiognomic knowledge was more widespread than modern research has suggested.[68] Bruce

Malina and Jerome Neyrey argue that while very brief, the description of the Apostle in the *Acts*

of Paul and Thecla provided more than adequate information for the ancients to know who Paul

really was.[69] Heike Omerzu argues that ancient physiognomics and the narrative arc of the *Acts*

of Paul and Thecla demonstrate that the description of Paul is not derogatory but instead

favorable in their illustration of the correspondence between Paul's "ideal" corporeal appearance

and his "ideal" apostolic qualities.[70] Enikő Békés argues that the depiction of Paul in the *Acts of*

Paul and Thecla reflects influence from physiognomy and iconic depictions of the Apostle,

arguing that physiognomy can improve collective understanding of Paul's image.[71]

 Paul's meeting eyebrows carry physiognomic significance. According to the pseudo-

Aristotelian *Physiognomics*, people with eyebrows that meet are "gloomy," which "applies to the

likeness of the affection" (οἱ δὲ συνόφρυες δυσάνιοι· ἀναφέρεται ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ πάθους

ὁμοιότητα).[72] Adamantius the Sophist (4th century A.D.) writes that the "pure" Greek race

specifically has straight legs.[73] Depicting Paul as a gloomy non-Greek reflects his ethnic

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[68] Bollók, "The Description of Paul in the *Acta Pauli*," 13.

[69] Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 100–153.

[70] Omerzu, "The Portrayal of Paul's Outer Appearance in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Re-Considering the Correspondence between Body and Personality in Ancient Literature," 268.

[71] Enikő Békés, "The Physiognomy of Apostle Paul: Between Texts and Images," in *The Body as a Mirror of the Soul: Physiognomy from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Lisa Devriese (Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2021), 55.

[72] [Aristotle], "*Physiognomics*," in *Minor Works*, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 129.

[73] Adamantius, "The Physiognomy of Adamantius the Sophist," 533.

heritage and, arguably, the tenor of parts of the Pauline epistles. The description of Paul in this text reflects influence from Greek poetics and rhetoric and the image of what an ideal leader should look like.[74]

Paul's baldness became a key characteristic in artistic representations, and ancient authors correlated hair thickness with ethical and moral physiognomic descriptions. Fourth century Christian Neo-Platonist Synesius of Cyrene (A.D. 373 – 414) wrote "A Eulogy for Baldness" in response to Greek philosopher and historian Dio Chrysostom's (A.D. 40 - 115) text "On Praise of Hair." Contra Dio, Synesius writes that a bald man need ***not*** "feel ashamed," αίσχύνεσθαι, a Greek word that carries a moral sense.[75] Also writing in the fourth century, Adamantius makes an Aristotelian distinction about hair: "The best hair is in between these, as also excessive thickness of hair is beastlike and baldness is a sign of malice and deceit. The mean of these is praiseworthy" (άρίβτη δε κόμη ή το μέβον τούτων έχονβα, ωβπερ καΐ χνκνότης τριχών άκρα &ηριώδης καΐ ψεδνότης δΐ κακοη&είας χαϊ δόλου βημεϊον, το δε τούτων 'μέβον έ&αινε τόν).[76] As Aristotle does in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Adamantius delineates between the deficiency, excess, and mean, with the mean being the ideal state for each virtue.

In contrast to Paul's unattractiveness, Acts develops a comparison of Jesus with David, whom the Books of Samuel depicted as very attractive. For instance, Acts 7:44-45 mentions Moses in a reference to Exodus 25:40 and David:

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[74] Grant, "The Description of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*."

[75] Synesius, "A Eulogy of Baldness (Calvitii Encomium)," in *The Essays and Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene: Including the Address to the Emperor Arcadius and the Political Speeches*, trans. Augustine FitzGerald, vol. 2 (London; Oxford University Press, 1930), 248; Jacques Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Omnium Ss. Patrum, Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum: Sive Latinorum, Sive Graecorum* (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1859), 1174; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Sir Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[76] Adamantius, "The Physiognomy of Adamantius the Sophist," 535.

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. Our fathers in turn received it, and they also brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations that God drove out from our fathers, until the time of David. David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.

Ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἦν τοῖς πατράσιν ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, καθὼς διετάξατο ὁ λαλῶν τῷ Μωϋσῇ ποιῆσαι αὐτὴν κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὃν ἑωράκει, ἣν καὶ εἰσήγαγον διαδεξάμενοι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν μετὰ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ κατασχέσει τῶν ἐθνῶν ὧν ἐξῶσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ προσώπου τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν ἕως τῶν ἡμερῶν Δαυίδ· ὃς εὗρεν χάριν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ᾐτήσατο εὑρεῖν σκήνωμα τῷ θεῷ Ἰακώβ. Σολομῶν δὲ οἰκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον.

V. 7:45 includes the phrase ἀπὸ προσώπου τῶν πατέρων, "before the face of our fathers." By mentioning the Old Testament patriarch Moses, Luke traces the genealogy of the Old Testament covenant through the New Testament gospel, inviting comparison between the Books of Samuel and Acts and inviting comparison between David and Jesus.

Other Old Testament references in Acts refer to faces. Acts 17:26 makes a reference to Genesis 1:2 when it relates that God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth [παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς] having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." Gen. 1:2 reads "Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep [תְהוֹם עַל-פְּנֵי]; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters [עַל-פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם]. At Gen. 1:29, God says, "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth [פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ]." Although the Hebrew word

for face, פְּנֵי, refers to surface here, its prevalence in the first verses of the first book of the Old Testament suggests its importance in Old Testament thought.

In Acts 20:25, Paul vows to disappear: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" [Καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι οὐκέτι ὄψεσθε τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ὑμεῖς πάντες ἐν οἷς διῆλθον κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν]. Paul is using synecdoche here, i.e., a part (his face) used to refer to the whole (his whole body), and although Paul does not mean to say that he will hide his face for the rest of his life, his choice to use his face as the part of his whole body suggests an element of hiding his face, i.e., his identity. The idea of hiding the face recurs at 20:38 "And they all began to weep aloud and [y]embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, 38 [z]grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship" [ἱκανὸς δὲ κλαυθμὸς ἐγένετο πάντων, καὶ ἐπιπεσόντες ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον τοῦ Παύλου κατεφίλουν αὐτόν, ὀδυνώμενοι μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ ᾧ εἰρήκει ὅτι οὐκέτι μέλλουσιν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ θεωρεῖν. προέπεμπον δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον]. In Acts, Paul appears as a persecutor of Christians and then as a convert to Christianity.

Uses of χειρ ("Hand") in the New Testament

The Koine Greek word for hand, χειρ, appears 176 times in the New Testament, most frequently in Luke (26 times) and Acts (45 times).[77] χειρ can also refer to power, handwriting, or army, and in biblical usage can be used as synecdoche, i.e., part of a whole, so it can appear as a substitute for a person or his or her activity.[78] A subset of metonymy, which suggests scale-manipulation, synecdoche means, "substitution of part for whole, genus for species, or vice

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[77] Colin Brown, "Hand," in *NIDNTT*, vol. 2, 1975, 149.

[78] Ibid., 146.

versa."[79] Therefore, the "hand of God" refers to God's supreme power and majesty in the lives

of men.[80] Related terms include δεξιά for right hand, which refers to an individual's authority

and power; in other words, to sit at someone's right hand means to possess equal power and

dignity.[81] Laying hands on another person plays a significant role in the New Testament for

empowering and commissioning.[82]

A related term is ἐπιτίθημι, which means to lay, put, place upon, put on, or to impose a

penalty.[83] It can also refer to transferring something from one place to another, giving something

to someone, or set upon and attack.[84] The New Testament is replete with references to people

laying hands on each other to heal and to arrest or punish. The dual nature of the idiom ἐπιτίθημι

χειρ, "I put a hand," suggests that χειρ has considerable metaphoric and figurative meaning in

addition to referring to an individual part of the body. Like those of πρόσωπον, χειρ's figurative

usage in the New Testament outweighs the literal usage of "hand."

Metonymic scale-manipulation is a key aspect of the hermeneutic process, as it performs

a bi-directional reduction and/or amplification to make a larger point.[85] Throughout the Old

Testament, individual people represent Israel (David) or Israel's enemies (Goliath), and the New

Testament develops a dialectical reduction of Jew, Gentile, and Christian onto individual people.

Uses of χειρ ("Hand") in the Acts of the Apostles

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[79] Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 102, 148.

[80] Brown, "Hand," 146.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 304.

[84] *BDAG*, 2000, 384.

[85] Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 102.

The first appearance of χειρ in Acts appears at 2:23: "this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" [τοῦτον τῇ ὡρισμένῃ βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον διὰ χειρὸς ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλατε]. The Greek at the end of this verse says something closer to "the hands of lawless ones killed him by crucifixion." Charles Barrett notes that the phrase διὰ χειρὸς here is meant to evoke a commercial transaction.[86] This associates lawlessness with the financial transaction that led to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus.

Verse 2:25 draws the first parallel between Christ and David: "For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord continually before me, Because He is at my right hand [δεξιῶν μού], so that I will not be shaken.'" More literally, the beginning of the direct discourse of what David said reads, "The face of the Lord was before me" because he was "at my right." The word used for right here, δεξιῶν, can refer to right as opposed to left as well as being spiritually or morally correct.[87] Luke would have meant the verse to signify that God stands at the right hand as an armed defender or advocate so the enemy will be unable to advance.[88] Placing a reference to David in the context of a brief account of Christ's crucifixion invites a comparison between David, the Old Testament king in 1 and 2 Samuel and the New Testament King of kings in Acts, and both appear in the longest books of their respective testaments. Acts 2:33-6 continues the David-Christ comparison with references to the right hand and, by extension, right thinking:

Therefore, since He has been exalted at the right hand of God [τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ], and has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this

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[86] Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 142.

[87] *BDAG*, 2000, 218.

[88] Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 145.

which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he

himself says: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand [δεξιῶν μου], Until I

make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know

for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.

Barrett notes that τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ is ambiguous, as it can be a dative of instrument (by

God's right hand) or dative of place (at or to the right hand of God).[89]

Acts 3:7 begins the motif of people laying hands on others when Peter heals the lame

man: "And grasping him by the right hand [τῆς δεξιᾶς χειρὸς], he raised him up; and

immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened." Mikeal Parsons outlines the

physiognomy of weak feet and ankles to demonstrate that the lame man in Acts 3-4 symbolizes a

negative character who is weak and passive.[90] Parsons concludes that the lame man's behavior

leads the audience to experience continuity and discontinuity from physiognomic conventions

because Luke subverts these conventions in service of Jewish eschatology.[91]

Acts 4:3 describes Peter's and John's speeches before the Sanhedrin, who "laid hands on

them and put *them* in prison" [καὶ ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἔθεντο εἰς τήρησιν]. The same

phrasing appears at Acts 5:18: "They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public prison"

[καὶ ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ ἔθεντο αὐτοὺς ἐν τηρήσει δημοσίᾳ]. Acts

4:27-30 explains the power associated with the hand of Christ:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom

You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of

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[89] Ibid., 149.

[90] Parsons, *Acts*, 57.

[91] Ibid., 59.

Israel, to do whatever Your hand [χείρ σου] and purpose predestined to occur. And now,

Lord, look at their threats, and grant *it* to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all

confidence, while You extend Your hand [χεῖρά σου] to heal, and signs and wonders take

place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.

Paul baptizes the lame man at Acts 19:5-6 and then lays his hands on him: "When they heard

this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands [χεῖρας]

upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking with tongues and

prophesying." This marks the final remedy for the disciple's shortcomings and the initiation into

the Christian community.[92]

Conclusion

When Roman statesman Cicero was assassinated in 43 B.C., his head and severed hands

were displayed on the Rostra in Rome, signifying the two most important body parts for an

orator: the face and the hands. Cicero was the rhetorician *par excellence* in Republican Rome,

and the mutilation of his body signifies the death of the Republic in the wake of the civil war in

Rome. A good orator will use his mouth, face, and hands to better persuade his audience.

Roman historiography contemporary to the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles was

very steeped in rhetorical theory, and Luke's use of the David-Christ parallel is not merely

another use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. David, the slayer of larger-than-life

enemies of the Jews, becomes the early Christian Church in Acts, a church that must slay a

different enemy by coming to terms with its Mosaic past and promise as it appears to have

manifested in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The early Christians shared their personal accounts of

what they had witnessed, and they spread their message about the gospel rhetorically and orally.

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[92] Ibid., 267.

Chapter 4: The Persistence of Physiognomy in the Middle Ages:

The *Zohar's* Version of the *Secretum Secretorum*

Introduction

After its inception in the ancient world, physiognomy remained popular in the Near Eastern cultural consciousness well into the Middle Ages when physiognomy manuals proliferated. One of the most famous medieval texts containing physiognomic theories was the *Secretum Secretorum*, the "Secret of Secrets," a pseudo-Aristotelian treatise for Aristotle's student, Alexander the Great. Many versions and imitations of the *Secretum Secretorum* appeared throughout the Middle Ages, including the version in the *Zohar*, a thirteenth-century collection of Jewish mystical writings. The first part of this chapter will provide context for the *Zohar* to argue that the *Zohar* followed contemporary medieval interest in physiognomy. The second part of this chapter will provide an account of *Zoharic* physiognomy through examples from the *Zohar's* embedded version of the "Secret of Secrets." The third part of this chapter will focus on Ezekiel's use of the term "forehead" to argue that metoposcopy has Old Testament precedent. The fourth part of this chapter will provide an account of the early modern metoposcopy of Isaac Luria. The final section of this chapter will draw conclusions about the persistence of physiognomy through metoposcopy as it relates to Jewish intellectual history**.**

Historical Context of the *Secretum*

The thirteenth century was a lively intellectual playground for the most important figures of medieval thought. Albertus Magnus (1200-1280), Roger Bacon (1220-1292), and Magnus's student, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), provided the foundation for Descartes' thinking subject of the early seventeenth century, culminating with Thomas Aquinas' theological hylomorphism, the belief that all physical substances are the sum of their component matter and the form taken

by that matter, which was based largely on Aristotle's *De anima*. Latin was the *lingua franca* for intellectual circles, and Latin translations of Aristotle were the foundation of scholastic thought. The thirteenth century was the first time that major philosophers and theologians began to comment on physiognomy in a trajectory that moves from ignorance to rejection to suspicion.[1]

Cultural Context of the *Secretum*

From the 11th through the 13th centuries, the Crusades, trade, and technology enabled cross-cultural interaction among communities from different parts of the world who spoke different languages. Lasting from approximately A.D. 1095-1291, the Crusades were conducted by the Latin West as a series of wars attempting to recover the Holy Land from Islamic control. Although Jerusalem was taken during an early Crusade, the region would see numerous separate campaigns over the course of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. The interaction between the Christian West and the Islamic East facilitated the exchange of ideas and texts, including the *Secretum Secretorum*, the first version of which was written in Arabic and then translated into Latin.

Literary Context of the *Secretum*

The *Zohar* was first publicized during a time when physiognomy was very popular. The most famous physiognomer of the Middle Ages was translator, philosopher, and astrologer, Michael Scot (1175 - c. 1232), whose *Liber physiognomia* is the third part of his three-part original work, the first two being the *Liber introductoris* and the *Liber particularis*. Scot's *Physiognomia*, the first original physiognomic treatise written in Latin, is divided into three books: the first discusses generation and birth and even looks beyond humanity, the second part discusses the semiotics of complexions, and the third part explores human anatomy and how it

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[1] Jole Agrimi, *Ingeniosa Scientia Nature: Studi sulla Fisiognomica Medievale* (Firenze: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2002), 4–5.

manifests inward characteristics. Scot was the first physiognomist who referred to physiognomy as a *scientia naturae*, as he sought to have the pseudo-science included as part of philosophy. In the prologue to his *Liber physiognomia*, Scot encourages Frederick II to promote physiognomy at court as a means to discern good from evil.

Written in Aramaic during a time when scholars, philosophers, and theologians were in the middle of a rediscovery of the works of Aristotle, the *Zohar* includes a section entitled the *Raza de-Razin,* the "Secrets of Secrets," named after the pseudo-Aristotelian text some have characterized as a "mirror for princes," i.e., a manual explaining the proper behavior of a ruler, or as a William Eamon describes it, a "handbook for medieval courtiers." [2] Many versions of the "Secrets of Secrets" included a section on physiognomy, as does the *Zohar's* version. The *Secretum's* material on physiognomy was incorporated in works by Albertus Magnus and Duns Scotus and is the primary source for physiognomic literature in the Middle Ages.[3] The *Secretum* was translated into virtually every vernacular language, including a Hebrew translation from manuscripts dating to as early as 1382.[4]

The *Secretum Secretorum* was written as a letter from Aristotle addressed to his pupil Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) following his military campaigns against the First Persian Empire. The *Secretum Secretorum* originally was written in Arabic in the ninth century and was translated into Latin in the 12th century by rabbi Yehuda Alharizi.[5] Other Latin versions of the

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[2] Moses Gaster, "The Hebrew Version of the 'Secretum Secretorum,' a Mediæval Treatise Ascribed to Aristotle: Introduction," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1908, 1067; Steven J. Williams, *The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 30; William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 49.

[3] Gaster, "The Hebrew Version of the 'Secretum Secretorum,' a Mediæval Treatise Ascribed to Aristotle: Introduction," 1069.

[4] Ibid., 1067, 1083.

Secretum appeared throughout the Middle Ages, including Latin versions by Peter d'Abano (1257-1316), Philip of Tripoli (1218-1269) and Roger Bacon (c. 1220 – c. 1292), the last of which contains a preface and glosses intended to explain the more obscure passages.[6] Moses Gaster argues that the *Secretum* enjoyed "greater popularity than any popular book of the Middle Ages."[7]

The *Zohar's Secret of Secrets*

The *Zohar* is a massive collection of writings that includes midrashic statements, homilies, and discussion of numerous other topics.[8] The Spanish rabbi and kabbalist Moses de León (c. 1240 – 1305) claims the *Zohar* was written by 2nd century tannaitic mystic Simeon Bar Yoḥai, but modern scholarship has attributed the *Zohar* to Moses de León himself.[9] According to Gershom Scholem, the *Zohar* exhibits "peculiarities of language and style" that are present throughout much of the *Zohar*, including the *Midrash He-Neelam*, the *Idroth*, the *Mishnas*, and the sections on physiognomy.[10] The *Zohar* does not include references to sources, and, in some cases, provides fantastical references to sources that do not exist.[11] Nevertheless, the *Zohar's*

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[5] Amitai I. Spitzer, "The Hebrew Translations of the *Sod Ha-Sodot* and Its Place in the Transmission of the *Sirr Al-Asrar*," in *Pseudo-Aristotle, The Secret of Secrets. Sources and Influences*, ed. W. F. Ryan and Charles B. Schmitt (London: The Warburg Institute, 1987), 35.

[6] Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 47.

[7] Gaster, "The Hebrew Version of the 'Secretum Secretorum,' a Mediæval Treatise Ascribed to Aristotle: Introduction," 1065.

[8] Hellner-Eshed Malila, "Zohar," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2007), 648.

[9] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 159.

[10] Ibid., 166.

[11] Ibid., 174.

expressed views on demonology, sorcery, and magic correlate with contemporary medieval views on those subjects.[12]

Most of the *Zohar* consists of kabbalistic Midrash on the Torah, interspersed with short statements, long expositions, and narratives about Shimon bar Yochai and his associates; it also provides weekly interpretations of the Torah.[13] Other sections include a kabbalistic interpretation of the Song of Songs; a "Book of Concealment," which provides commentary on Bereshit; "The Greater Assembly," which describes a gathering of Shimon bar Yochai and his associates who discuss Divine revelation in the *Adam Kadmon*, the "Primordial Man"; a section entitled "The Lesser Assembly," which describes the death of Simeon bar Yochai; a description of a study session conducted by Simeon bar Yochai; a section describing the seven palaces in the celestial garden of Eden; the Secret of Secrets. an anonymous text on chiromancy and physiognomy based on Exodus 18:21; "The Discourse of the Old Man," which describes an encounter with an old kabbalist named R. Yeiva; a section entitled "The Child," which discusses R. Yeiva's son; a section entitled "Head of the Academy," which describes the visionary journey taken by Simeon bar Yochai to the garden of Eden; a section entitled "The Standard of Measure," which describes the mysteries of emanation in an interpretation of the Shema; a section entitled "Secrets of the Letters," which discusses the letters of Divine Names; a section that interprets the chariot vision in Ezekiel; a section of short pieces that serve as a Mishnah to the *Zohar* itself; a section entitled "Secrets of the Torah," which focuses on the Book of

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[12] Ibid., 176.

[13] Malila, "Zohar," 648.

Genesis; and a section entitled "Concealed Midrash," which explicates the actions of patriarchs

and allegories of the fate of the soul.[14]

Imagery about faces appears throughout the *Zohar*. For example, the *Idra Rabba* ("The

Greater Assembly") section employs language that conceives of Divinity through the

perspectives of expanding, relaxing, healing, sweetening, and illuminating faces.[15] However, the

Zohar's approach to physiognomy diverges from other medieval approaches to physiognomy

because it incorporates previous Jewish esoteric traditions and a dynamic cosmic theology to

create a physiognomy calling for ethical action while still recognizing the possibilities of moral

subversion that come with reading an individual's appearance to understand their character.[16]

Most of the material in the *Zohar* focusing on physiognomy appears in a section entitled

"Secret of Secrets Of The Mysteries Of The Holy, Perfect Torah" [רזא דרזי דסתרי דאוריתא קדישתא

שלימתא], which takes its lead from Jethro's instructions to Moses about how to deliver justice

(Exodus 18:21-22):[17]

> Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth,
> those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of
> thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and
> let it be that they will bring to you every major matter, but they will judge every minor
> matter themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will carry the burden with you.

וְאַתָּה תֶחֱזֶה[a] מִכָּל־הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל יִרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים אַנְשֵׁי אֱמֶת שֹׂנְאֵי בָצַע וְשַׂמְתָּ עֲלֵהֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי[b] מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי ²¹
חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֲשָׂרֹת:
וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם בְּכָל־עֵת וְהָיָה כָּל־הַדָּבָר הַגָּדֹל יָבִיאוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְכָל־הַדָּבָר הַקָּטֹן יִשְׁפְּטוּ־הֵם וְהָקֵל מֵעָלֶיךָ וְנָשְׂאוּ אִתָּךְ: ²²

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[14] Ibid., 648–49.

[15] Melila Hellner-Eshed, *Seekers of the Face: Secrets of the Idra Rabba (the Great Assembly) of the Zohar*, trans. Raphael Dascalu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), 5.

[16] Ellen Haskell, "Countenancing God: Facial Revelation and Physiognomy in Sefer Ha-Zohar.," *Journal of Religion* 101, no. 2 (2021): 153.

[17] Nathan Wolski and Joel Hecker, trans., *Zohar: The Pritzker Editions*, vol. 12: Zoharic Compositions (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

Rabbinic tradition has focused on the use of the word, תֶּחֱזֶה, which generally means "you will

see" but can also mean "you shall behold."[18] The root, חָזָה, is etymologically related to the

Arabic word, حَزَى (ḥazā), which means "perceive with the inner vision, only" and the substantive

form, حَازِ (ḥāzin), which refers to "astronomer, astrologer."[19] As a word referring to seeing with

one's eyes, which is the most vivid sensation, it can be used to refer to any other sensation, such

as hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, as well as any spiritual or mental perception.[20] Here, the

word *teḥezeh*, you shall behold, is understood as implying that these judges should be selected

based on principles of physiognomy.

After the epigraph from Exodus, the text immediately cites Genesis 5:1 by referring to it

as the "Book תולדות אדם (*toledot adam*), of Human Features." Genesis 5:1 reads: "This is the

book of the generations of Adam. On the day when God created man, He made him in the

likeness of God" [זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בְּרֹא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם בִּדְמוּת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ:]. According to Nathan

Wolski and Joel Hecker, the word for generations, תּוֹלְדֹת, implies "marks 'generated' on a

person, as well as 'human nature, character.'"[21]

The word תּוֹלְדוֹת is a substantive derivative of יָלַד, which means "to bear, bring forth,

beget."[22] It appears 39 times in the Old Testament.[23] תּוֹלְדוֹת refers to "successive generations

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[18] *BDB*.
[19] Ibid.

[20] Paul R. Gilchrist, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

[21] Wolski and Hecker, *Zohar: The Pritzker Editions*.

[22] *BDB*.

[23] J. Schreiner, "מוֹלֶדֶת, Toledat," in *TDOT*, vol. 15, 1985, 582.

within the tribes of Israel and within the natural human bonds of affinity," as well as "the

offspring of animals" and fathering or begetting.[24] It can also refer to descendants and

successors, a family history, and "the family tree of the heaven and the earth as they were

created."[25] It appears exclusively as a plural substantive in the construct state, at times with a

pronominal suffix and generally refers to generations, birth, descendants, or history.[26] In the Old

Testament, it can refer to "what is produced or brought into being by someone, or follows

therefrom," although nowhere in Genesis does it refer to the "birth of the individual whose תּוֹלְדֹות

it introduces," except in Genesis 25:19.[27] In Gen. 2:4, it means "not the coming of heaven and

earth into existence, but the events that followed the establishment of heaven and earth."[28] In a

more nuanced rendering, it can refer to generations, genealogies, or an "account of a man and his

descendants" as well as "successive generations (in) of families"; "genealogical divisions, by

parentage"; and the "begettings of heaven and earth, i.e, account of heaven and earth and that

which proceeded from them."[29] Genealogy's significance in a hierarchal society to define the

"the ethnic obligation of mutual aid is cited increasingly by scholars interpreting Israel's

beginnings."[30] The fragmentary wisdom text 4Q418 77 2 mentions the "generations of Adam" in

the context of understanding and law.[31] The word can also refer to nature or characteristics, as in

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[24] *HALOT*, 1699.

[25] Ibid., 1700.

[26] R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., "Toledot," in *TWOT*, 1980, 380.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] *BDB*, 410.

[30] Schreiner, "מוֹלֶדֶת, Toledat," 583.

[31] Ibid., 588.

1QS 3$_{13}$ 4$_{15}$ and 4QInstr^d 77$_2$.[32] The bulk of the references in the Old Testament use the word to refer merely to begetting or bringing forth, however, so Wolski and Hecker's equation of תּוֹלֵדוֹת with nature or characteristics appears to be based only on the Qumran documents' connotation of the word in this sense.

Wolski and Hecker argue that Genesis 5:1 is a biblical indication of physiognomy because human beings are created in God's image, which means that all human physical features carry a profound meaning, and because Merkavah mystics used physiognomy to determine whether an initiate was ready to learn esoteric teachings.[33] Merkavah mysticism was an early form of Jewish esoteric thought prevalent from 100 B.C. to A.D. 1000 that produced numerous physiognomic treatises that provide considerable evidence of physiognomic and chiromantic practices.[34] Merkavah mystics speculated that they could learn from an individual's body his moral quality, socio-economic status, family, health, and future.[35] Qumran and Merkavah physiognomy were diagnostic, divinatory, and mantic, i.e., they maintained that the efficacy of physiognomy lay in religious intuition and the ability to connect with the divine intellect and not merely in mastering physiognomic diagnostics.[36]

The most extensive treatment of physiognomy, metoposcopy, and chiromancy appearing prior to the sixteenth century appears in the *Zohar*ic corpus.[37] The *Zohar* added the capacity for

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[32] David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2011), 604–5.
[33] Wolski and Hecker, *Zohar: The Pritzker Editions*.

[34] Joseph Ziegler, "On the Various Faces of Hebrew Physiognomy as a Prognostic Art in the Middle Ages," in *Unveiling the Hidden - Anticipating the Future: Divinatory Practices among Jews between Qumran and the Modern Period*, ed. Josefina Rodríguez Arribas and Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 293.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 295.

[37] Ibid., 294.

physiognomy to diagnose character traits and initiate self-healing and internal changes and corrections.[38] Although the connection between medieval Jewish physiognomy and the Greco-Roman physiognomic tradition has not been firmly established, the traces of Greco-Roman physiognomy as transferred through the *Secretum* in medieval Hebrew texts suggests that Hebrew physiognomy belongs in the sequence of non-Jewish ancient and medieval physiognomic traditions.[39] The writings of rabbi Hai ben Sherira (939-1038) and his father Sherira Gaʾon (906-c. 1006) provide a link between the physiognomic and chiromantic writings of the Merkavah mystics and the *Zohar*.[40]

The physiognomic diagnoses provided in the *Zohar's* "Secret of Secrets" are very formulaic. Here is an example of a physiognomic reading from the *Zohar's* "Secret of Secrets":

> Hair hanging, black; and there are three lines on the forehead from the right side and two from the left, not conjoined; and on the right there are three slender markings crossing over it, pathways traversing those other lines; and on the left side there are five, with a short one among them.[41]

This describes the letters *zayin* and *tsadi*, and when you find "heavy eyebrows above the eye sockets, connected to each other," this denotes

> an angry person, but not hastily so, assuaged over time. He considers himself wise, but he is not so. Head erect, always watchful, outwardly belligerent, but not in his household.

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[38] Ibid., 295.
[39] Ibid., 304–5.

[40] Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 252.

[41] Wolski and Hecker, *Zohar: The Pritzker Editions*.

He does not deign to look into the Torah. Others' words are like a burden to him, and he responds to them harshly.[42]

This diagnostic sequence—description, relationship with Hebrew alphabetical characters, and the character assessment—is characteristic of many of the physiognomical readings provided in the *Zohar*.

Many of the diagnostics lead to negative character assessments, such as this type:

If the eyebrows are separated, touching and not touching, then on the right side there will be two large lines and one small line, with two small markings intersecting them in the width; on the left side, two—one large and one small, with one small marking entering one, but not reaching the second.[43]

Such an individual

is an angry person, quick to be filled with anger, and quick for his anger to subside; belligerent in his household, not at all pleasant. Only rarely does he respond stridently to people. Looking downward, his forehead is furrowed with anger, appearing dog-like, but at once it subsides and smoothness returns. This is a person whose spirit and ambitions are driven toward business, tribute, poll-tax, or land-tax (Ezra 4:13), and through his efforts his fortunes increase—for *tsadi* has been switched for *samekh*.[44]

With the exception of the comparison with dogs, the *Zohar's* physiognomy in this instance prognosticates real world consequences for an individual's appearance.

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

Another description, "Curly hair hanging below the ears (if he is a youth, there will be one marking on his forehead and three furrows on the bridge of his nose between his eyebrows)," denotes that the individual is "is joyful, perceptive in everything. He is a deceiver, forgiving, pardoning those who draw close to him" and that "He is within the letter samekh and the letter *zayin*."[45] When this individual "gets older, they switch—*zayin* at the top and the letter *samekh* with him: then he is forgiving only within his household; he is financially successful; but not a deceiver, restraining himself from that path."[46] The description continues: "Over his left eyebrow there is one small mark—where he was struck in his youth by another person; his right eye is sealed; five furrows on the bridge of his nose extending between his eyebrows; short, curly hair on his head; crinkly eyes," which denotes that the individual is "solely in the letter *zayin*" and that he is "thoughtless—madness in his heart, feverish in his actions."[47]

Commentary on the Old Testament's use of the human face was nothing new in the Middle Ages. A century before the *Zohar's* authorship in the 1280s, Moses ben Maimon (1138–1204), conventionally known as Maimonides, included in his *Guide for the Perplexed* a chapter (I.37) focusing on the Hebrew word for face (פָּנֶה). Maimonides characterizes פָּנֶה as an "equivocal term" because of its figurative use and generally refers to the "face of all living beings" such as in Gen. 40:7.[48] It can also denote anger, according to Maimonides, such as in 1 Sam. 1:18, and it frequently refers to God's anger and wrath, such as in Lam. 4:16, Ps. 34:17, and Exod.33:14.[49] The third use Maimonides lists is "a term denoting the presence and station of

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

[48] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, ed. and trans. Shelomoh Pines, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 85.

an individual," as in Gen. 28:18, Lev. 10:3 and Job 1:11.[50] Maimonides *Guide* was originally written in Judeo-Arabic, i.e., Arabic words with the Hebrew alphabet, but a Hebrew translation was written specifically for Moses de Leon in 1264.[51]

Ezekiel's *Taw* Marks the Spot

Like the *Zohar*, Maimonides' *Guide* also includes a reading of the Book of Ezekiel, a prophetic book replete with fantastical imagery focusing on faces and foreheads. In his first vision (1:5-6), Ezekiel sees a chariot pulled by four creatures with anthropomorphic features: "And this was their appearance; they had the likeness [דְּמוּת] of a man. And every one had four faces [פָּנִים], and every one had four wings." The description of these creatures immediately becomes more fantastical (7-8):

> 7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

> 7 וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רֶגֶל יְשָׁרָהa וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כְּכַף רֶגֶל עֵגֶל וְנֹצְצִים כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלָלb 8 וידיa אָדָם מִתַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם עַל אַרְבַּעַת רִבְעֵיהֶםb אִישׁ אֶל־אֲחוֹתָה כַּנְפֵיהֶם c: 9 וּפְנֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם לְאַרְבַּעְתָּם b חֹבְרֹת אִשָּׁה אֶל־אֲחוֹתָה כַּנְפֵיהֶם לֹא־יִסַּבּוּ בְלֶכְתָּן b

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 194.

The description then focuses on the creatures' faces (10-11): "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces."

The Book of Ezekiel is notable for its frequent use of מֵצַח, the Hebrew word for "brow" and "forehead," which appears only thirteen times in the Old Testament, five of which are in Ezekiel.[52] Yahweh tells Ezekiel (3:8-9): "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces and thy forehead strong against their foreheads [וְאֶת־מִצְחֲךָ חָזָק לְעֻמַּת מִצְחָם]. As an adamant harder than flint [חָזָק מִצֹּר כְּשָׁמִיר] have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." This hardening of the forehead makes imminent Yahweh's call to Ezekiel to not fear or become terrified by the audience's rebellious reaction.[53] The heart is not pursued in this image, as the focus is on the face and forehead, which dominate God's tripartite, spell-like declaration to enable Ezekiel to outface his adversaries.[54]

Ezekiel 9:4 describes Yahweh's command to Ezekiel to go through Jerusalem and physically mark those who regret recent occurrences in Jerusalem: "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark [וְהִתְוִיתָ] upon the foreheads [עַל־מִצְחוֹת] of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." This image of a scribe searching Jerusalem for the righteous and marking a *taw* on their forehead has a long history in Jewish and Christian writings.[55] An early document that attests to this is the Damascus Document, which played a key role in the Qumran

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[52] Victor P. Hamilton, "מֵצַח," in *TWOT*, 1980, 522.

[53] Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 129.

[54] Moshe Greenberg, ed., *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 69.

[55] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 310.

community. This text claims that the moment of final judgement as described in Ezekiel 9 will repeat, and only those with the *taw* on their forehead will get salvation.[56] Paul Joyce suggests that the function of marking the forehead in Ezekiel 9 makes it clear who will perish according to absolute justice.[57] Joyce also notes that the idea that a single man would mark the foreheads of the righteous might lead the reader to expect few would be marked, but upon his return there is no indication about whether he found anyone deserving the mark.[58] Some exegetes have made connections between Ezekiel's *taw* "saving marks," such as the blood marks in Exodus 12:23 used to fend off the plague that killed Egypt's first born sons and the rosette placed on priests' foreheads in Exodus 28:28.[59]

Several early Jewish and Christian commentators wrote about Ezekiel's *taw*.[60] For example, the pseudepigraphal first century B.C. text, Psalms of Solomon (Psalm 15), alludes to Ezekiel's *taw*:

> Because God's mark of salvation is on the righteous.
> Famine, sword, and death shall be far from the righteous,
> for they will flee from the devout and pestilence from the living.
> But they will pursue sinners and overtake them,
> and those acting lawlessly will not escape the Lord's judgment.
> They will be seized as if by mercenaries,
> for the sign of destruction is right between their eyes.[61]
>
> ὅτι τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ δικαίους εἰς σωτηρίαν.
> λιμὸς καὶ ῥομφαία καὶ θάνατος ἀπὸ δικαίων μακράν φεύξονται γὰρ ὡς διωκόμενοι
> πολέμου ἀπὸ ὁσίων.

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 23.

[58] Ibid., 103.

[59] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 177.

[60] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 310–13.

[61] Robert B. Wright, ed., *The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 163, 165.

καταδιώξονται δὲ ἁμαρτωλοὺς καὶ καταλήμψονται καὶ οὐκ ἐκφεύξονται οἱ ποιοῦντες ἀνομίαν τὸ κρίμα κυρίου.
ὡς ὑπὸ πολεμίων ἐμπείρων καταλημφθήσονται τὸ γὰρ σημεῖον τῆς ἀπωλείας ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου αὐτῶν.[62]

The *taw* marked the righteous, but there is no explicit marking for the wicked. The Talmud (b. Sabb. 55a) addresses the lack of an explicit marking for the wicked: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel, Go and set a taw of ink upon the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them; and the taw of blood upon the foreheads of the wicked, that the destroying angels may have power over them."[63]

אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְגַבְרִיאֵל: לֵךְ וּרְשׁוֹם עַל מִצְחָן שֶׁל צַדִּיקִים תָּיו שֶׁל דְּיוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁלְטוּ בָּהֶם מַלְאֲכֵי חַבָּלָה. וְעַל מִצְחָם שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים תָּיו שֶׁל דָּם כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּשְׁלְטוּ בָּהֶן מַלְאֲכֵי חַבָּלָה

Ezekiel's *taw*, therefore, constitutes an affirmative inscription from the divine that contrasts with the blood on the foreheads of the enemies.

Early Christian references to Ezekiel's *taw* include those of Origen (c. 185 - c. 253), who in *Selecta in Ezechielem* enumerated three claims he heard about the significance of the *taw* marked on the forehead. In the first, he claims that he was told that the *taw*, as the last consonant of the Hebrew alphabet, proves the "perfection of those who, because of their virtue, moan and groan over the sinners among the people and suffer together with the transgressors"; in the second, he claims he was told that the *taw* is a symbol for people living according to the Law, as the word "Torah" begins with a *taw*; and in the third, he was told that the *taw* the "resembles the cross, and it predicts the mark which is to be placed on the foreheads of the Christians."[64]

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[62] Ibid., 162, 164.

[63] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 311.

[64] Ibid., 312. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι παρ' Ἕλλησι σημαίνε σθαι διὰ τῆς κάστω φωνῆς πινακίδιον γραφέως ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ. Τῶν δὲ Ἑβραίων τις ἔλεγε, τὸ καλούμενον καλαμάριον, τουτέστι κάστω. Καὶ δὸς σημεῖον. Οἱ μὲν Ἑβδομήκοντα τῷ ἐν δεδυμένῳ φασὶ τὸν ποδήρη προστετάχθαι ὑπὸ τῆς δόξης τοῦ Κυρίου, σημεῖον δοῦναι ἐπὶ τὰ μέτωπα τῶν καταστεναζόντων καὶ ὀδυνωμένων· ὁ δὲ Ἀκύλας καὶ Θεοδοτίων φασί· Σημείωσις τοῦ Θαῦ ἐπὶ τὰ

In *Against Marcion*, Tertullian (c. 155 AD - c. 220 AD) writes, "The Lord said unto me, Pass through [*Pertransi*] in the midst of the gate in the midst of Jerusalem, and set the mark [*da signum*] TAU on the foreheads [*frontibus*] of the men. For this same letter TAU of the Greeks, which is our T, has the appearance of the cross [*species crucis*], which he foresaw [*portendebat*] we should have on our foreheads in the true and catholic Jerusalem."[65] Thus, Ezekiel 9:4 led Jewish and Christian commentators to argue for the soteriological significance of marking a *taw* on an individual's forehead.

Isaac Luria's Metoposcopy

Three hundred years after the *Zohar's* composition, numerous sixteenth and seventeenth century manuals were printed about metoposcopy, a subset of physiognomy that focuses on reading an individual's character or future from the lines on their forehead. The most prominent early modern kabbalist who wrote about metoposcopy was the Syrian rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Much of what is known about Luria is from his associate rabbi Hayyim Vital (1542-1620), who wrote extensively about Luria's teachings.

Lawrence Fine argues that Luria assumed the role of "physician of the soul" who sought to "repair" souls to allow them access to the divine realm, but disciples of Lurianic kabbalah first had to repair their own souls.[66] According to Luria's teachings, ascetic piety was the only way to cleanse the soul, and Luria only initiated those whose souls were completely worthy and pure into the divine mystical techniques of sixteenth century kabbalah.[67] Among the numerous

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μέτωπα τῶν στεναζόντων καὶ τῶν κατο δυνωμένων. Πυνθανομένων δὲ τῶν Ἑβραίων εἴ τι πάτριον περὶ τοῦ Θαῦ ἔχοιεν λέγειν μάθημα, ταῦτα ἠκούσαμεν· τινὸς μὲν φάσκοντος, ὅτι τὸ Θαῦ ἐν τοῖς παρ' Ἑβραίοις κβ΄ στοιχείοις ἐστὶ τὸ τελευταῖον ὡς πρὸς τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς τάξιν γραμμάτωνα.

[65] Ibid., 313.

[66] Lawrence Fine, "The Art of Metoposcopy: A Study in Isaac Luria's Charismatic Knowledge," *AJS Review* 11, no. 1 (1986): 79.

diagnostic techniques Luria adopted for examining others' souls was his supposed ability to read Hebrew alphabetic characters in the lines on an individual's forehead.[68] This variation of the medieval divinatory art of metoposcopy became very popular in the early modern period among Christians and kabbalistic Jews, and along with similar arts such as chiromancy (palmistry) and physiognomy, metoposcopy played a role in establishing sixteenth century speculative philosophy that would remain popular until the inception of Cartesian rationalism in the seventeenth century.

Kabbalah based on Luria's theories has become known as Lurianic Kabbalah, which is based on three important events in the life of the Godhead: *zimzum*, the "contraction"; *shevirat ha-kelim*, the "breaking of the vessels"; and *tiqqun*, the "repair."[69] As Morris M. Faierstein explains, the Godhead initially "was Eyn-Sof, limitless or infinite, whose light filled all space. God's being had to be withdrawn from a space in order to allow creation to take place. He withdrew from 'Himself into Himself' in a process called *zimzum* (contraction).[70]

Recognizing letters on an individuals' forehead followed from kabbalistic views of the relationship between language and creation.[71] The Hebrew text *Sefer Yetsirah* from approximately the third to the sixth century A.D. outlines thirty-two paths of wisdom, which comprise the ten fundamental numbers and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[72] According to this text's cosmology, everything in existence comes into being through

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[67] Ibid., 81.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Morris M. Faierstein, "Introduction," in *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, ed. and trans. Morris M. Faierstein (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 27.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Fine, "The Art of Metoposcopy: A Study in Isaac Luria's Charismatic Knowledge," 83.

[72] Ibid.

combinations of the alphabetical characters through 231 gates, which are combinations of the letters into groups of two in which all letters are combined with one another.[73] Through this system, the Torah is understood as a network of "names" that signify the concentration of divine energy and power.[74] As Gershom Scholem notes, every letter "governs" a certain part of man or realm in the larger world, and although the treatise presents a theoretical cosmology, it might also have been a manual for magical practices or general principles such that the linguistic theory presented in the text correlates with a belief in the magical power of words and letters.[75]

Since Luria did not write down his teachings, most of what is known about his methodology comes from accounts written by his student, Ḥayyim Vital (1542-1620), a Syrian rabbi from Safed who provides several accounts of Luria seeing things on his forehead. For example, when Luria once asked about Vital's soul, he claimed to see 1 Samuel 9:20 written on Vital's forehead: "For whom is all Israel yearning, if not for you." [76] In another case, Luria told Vital "he saw written on my forehead the verse 'To think thoughts about making with gold' [Ex 31:4], an allusion to the sin of wasting time, which I wasted with the study of alchemy."[77] On another occasion, he saw "We have prepared a seat for Hezekiah, king of Judah" written on Vital's forehead.[78] On one Sabbath, Luria told Vital he "saw the Tetragrammaton written very brightly on my forehead and this is to teach that the name of God is called over me."[79] On

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 84.

[75] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 169.

[76] Faierstein, "Introduction," 17–18.

[77] Ḥayyim ben Joseph Vital, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, ed. and trans. Morris M. Faierstein (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 171.

[78] Ibid., 184.

another occassion, Luria saw written on Vital's forehead "Rami bar Hami and the letters *N″R* [נור]. He did not understand it until the matter was revealed to him through investigation. The matter was, as has already been explained, that the 613 sparks of the sages are found in the source of each individual Animus."[80] Vital provides the following explanation:

> Know that if a person's Animus will be completely repaired and completed, then all the sparks of this "heel" will be revealed in him and will shine in his body. They need to be revealed on his forehead in order that they should be repaired, and will be recognized there by someone whom God has given wisdom to gaze at the face. There the whole essence of the 613 sparks which are in that source of the Animus, the Spirit, or the Soul needs to be revealed on his forehead, since these 613 are the sages which are found in every source.[81]

The notion of *animus* as spirit resonates with Aristotle's *On the Soul*, which was known to medieval readers by the Latin title, *De anima*, as well as Thomas Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's text from approximately 1267–1268.

Conclusion

As physiognomy grew in popularity in the Middle Ages, most major philosophers and theologians saw the need to comment on the practice in some way. By the time of the *Zohar's* first appearance in the 1280s, physiognomy manuals were so popular that Moses de Leon apparently decided to include his imitation of the *Secretum Secretorum*. In this way, Jewish physiognomy remained a spiritual exercise that required connection with God. The Book of

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 191.

[81] Ibid., 199.

Ezekiel's focus on foreheads became Lurianic metoposcopy in the sixteenth century, and it is no

surprise that the Zohar includes a section commenting on Ezekiel.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Physiognomy and Phenomenology

Physiognomy performs three functions.

First, physiognomy is a diagnostic practice, and diagnoses tell stories. Constructed as lengthy if-then statements, they typically start with a conditional "if" phrase related to an individual's physical characteristics, which are fixed, and then proceed to the diagnoses, which are extratemporal, i.e., the associated behaviors exist in the past, present, and future. The prevalence of animal comparison in physiognomy across cultures suggests that physiognomy denotes a very strict relationship between sign and signifier (appearance and behavior) that is impossible to escape. If an animal looks like a lion, it is probably lion, and if a person resembles a lion, he likely behaves like a lion. To put it another way, if someone looks like a criminal, it is likely they are one, have been one, and will always be one. If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it is a duck.

Second, physiognomy is a hermeneutic practice, i.e., an act of interpretation, particularly in its earliest forms. Nineteenth century physiognomists attempted to codify physiognomy and phrenology as a scientific enterprise that could predict criminality and that was used to justify the racist agendas of eugenics.

Third, physiognomy is a phenomenological practice that seeks to unmask embodied consciousness. First developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), phenomenology seeks to analyze and describe consciousness to study essences without taking into consideration its psychological origins. More of a way of thinking than a movement or distinct school, phenomenology demands the "phenomenological reduction," or *epoche*, a radical change of philosophical perspective in which the phenomenologist turns away from things in themselves to

their meanings, from ontic to ontological, and from scientifically objectified meaning to embodied experience. Phenomenological philosophy is primarily concerned with the Being and meaning of beings [1]

One of the most prominent figures in *hermeneutic* phenomenology is the French philosopher, Paul Ricœur (1913-2005), whose work has become very important in biblical exegesis. In his important essay, "Existence and Hermeneutics," Ricœur outlines a "graft" of hermeneutics onto phenomenological methods by which he seeks to renew phenomenology through hermeneutics. [2] Ricœur argues that hermeneutics "involves the general problem of comprehension" from which all interpretations borrow "modes of comprehension," such as analogy, metaphor, allegory, and myth. [3]

Ricœur grounds hermeneutics in phenomenology in two ways. Ricœur calls the first of these the "short way," i.e., an "ontology of understanding," which breaks from method and "carries itself directly to the level of an ontology of finite being in order there to recover understanding, no longer as a mode of knowledge, but rather as a mode of being." [4] In other words, ontology, the study of being, subsumes understanding under the rubric of being and not knowledge. Ricœur borrows from Heidegger's Dasein here, which generally refers to being, beingness, and being-in-the-world.

Ricœur bases the second way in semantics:

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[1] Joseph J. Kockelmans, "Phenomenology," in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 664–66.

[2] Paul Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 3.

[3] Ibid., 6.

[4] Ibid.

A purely semantic elucidation remains suspended until one shows that the understanding of multivocal or symbolic expressions is a moment of self-understanding; the semantic approach thus entails a reflective approach. But the subject that interprets himself while interpreting signs is no longer the cogito, rather, he is a being who discovers, by the exegesis of his own life, that he is placed in being before he places and possesses himself."[5]

In other words, self-interpretation and self-exegesis are mediated through the ways that the signs are used in discourse because language is based on "symbolic expressions."[6] Symbolic expressions are always already bound to language and semantics:

In spite of their being grounded in different ways—in the physiognomical qualities of the cosmos, in sexual symbolism, in sensory imagery—all these symbolisms find their expression in the element of language. There is no symbolism before man speaks, even if the power of the symbol is grounded much deeper. It is in language that the cosmos, desire, and the imaginary reach expression; speech is always necessary if the world is to be recovered and made hierophany.[7]

The hierophant, the ancient seer who can reveal sacred mysteries, must practice his divinatory arts through the use of language and the sign/signifier system in order to communicate divine revelations. The physiognomer might be considered a hierophant in this sense.

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[5] Ibid., 11.

[6] Ibid., 13.

[7] Ibid.

Typology: The Old Testament in the New Testament

A recurring motif in the New Testament is the quoting, interpretation, and reinterpretation of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ posed a challenge to Mosaic Law and sought to lead believers directly to God, and in this way, the New Testament might be considered a hermeneutic for the Old Testament. One way to think about the New Testament's use of the Old Testament is through the perspective of typology.

Theological studies recognize two different meanings of typology: prospective and retrospective. Prospective typology refers to Old Testament references to a future reality, while retrospective typology is exegetical and refers to a later interpreter looking at the Old Testament and uncovering previously unseen elements. This may suggest that typology can refer to prophecy, but as David Baker argues, typology is different from prophecy: "typology is retrospective whereas prophecy is prospective."[8] Baker notes that previous (1950 and earlier) biblical scholars have used typology to refer to a promise-fulfilment relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, i.e., the Old Testament prefigures elements of the New Testament.[9] More recently, typology has come to refer to correspondence between the two testaments, but Baker argues that typology should be used to refer to a method of historical interpretation.[10] Paraphrasing Leonhard Goppelt, Baker argues that typology is more of a way of thinking and not an interpretive method with fixed rules and that its primary function is to understand the New Testament in terms of specific passages as well as theological concepts.[11]

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[8] David L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29, no. 2 (1976): 149.

[9] Ibid., 137.

[10] Ibid., 138–39.

[11] Ibid., 141.

For Baker, typology is historical biblically based: "the New Testament is both a typological fulfilment of the Old Testament salvation history and a typological prophecy of the consummation to come."[12] According to Baker, biblical terminology suggests the meanings of *example* or *pattern* for *type*.[13] In other words, the Old Testament includes types like David, the hero, savior, king, and founder of the Jewish people who also prefigures Jesus Christ, the hero, savior, king, and founder of the Christian kingdom on Earth and God's kingdom in the afterlife.

William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard explain that the "use of typology rests on the belief that God's ways of acting are consistent throughout history."[14] New Testament writers, therefore, believed that God's former actions regarding Israel as recorded in the Old Testament were "types" for what God was doing with Christ, such that the New Testament authors' reading of the Old Testament unveiled "God's typical pattern of working." [15] However, Old Testament authors did not necessarily intend more than one meaning, but rather that the Old Testament holistically had a "forward-looking" aspect that may have been unknown to its authors.[16] This means that New Testament authors perceived "divine patterns" to make "typological connections."[17] New Testament authors appropriated the Old Testament because they perceived "correspondence" between the Old Testament and their experiences with Christ; however, the meaning that the New Testament authors found in the Old Testament was not

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 146.

[14] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 261.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 262.

present in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament authors did not intend their writings to refer to future realities.[18] As Walter Kaiser explains, typology is "a historico-theological reflection on the fact that the God-ordained persons, events, institutions, and things often tended to come in clusters and repeat themselves over and over in the progress of revelation."[19]

Typology largely follows the New Testament use of the Greek word, τύπος, as in Acts 7:44: "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern [τύπον] that he had seen." The word τύπος can refer to "a mark made as the result of a blow or pressure, *mark, trace*"; "embodiment of characteristics or function of a model, *copy, image*,"; "an object formed to resemble some entity, *image, statue*"; "a kind, class, or thing that suggests a model or pattern, *form, figure, pattern*"; "the content of a document, *text, content*"; and "an archetype serving as a model, *type, pattern, model*."[20] The archetype, in other words, can be embodied phenomenologically.

Early Latin Fathers established typology as a prospective hermeneutic practice. Tertullian (155-220) denied that historical and literal interpretation was undermined by figurative interpretation as established by Philo (20 B.C. – A.D. 50), as Tertullian did not believe spiritualism and allegory were as important as the literal meaning of the Bible.[21] By contrast, Origen (185-253) believed in allegorical abstraction and ethical interpretation.[22] Two centuries after Origen, Saint Augustine (354-430) developed a compromise between the two, as he favored

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 106.

[20] *BDAG*, 1019–20.

[21] Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 30.

[22] Ibid., 36.

figural, living interpretation because his thought was too concrete for the abstractions needed for allegory.[23] Augustine also denied that the Old Testament was merely a hermetic text that requires stripping of historical and literal meaning.[24] Instead, Augustine thought of the Old Testament as pure phenomenal prophecy that saw its fruition in the Pauline epistles.[25] In the Middle Ages, these approaches would become more codified in the four senses of scripture—literal/historical, typological/figurative, moral/tropological, and anagogical/prophetic.

Like typology, physiognomy is a classification system whereby "types" of individuals are reduced to their constituent parts (appearance) so that the physiognomer can glean information about their psychology and character. The prevalence of physiognomic depictions in the New Testament suggests that its authors sought to use "models" from the Old Testament.

"It's OK. I'm a Jew too": The Books of Samuel and the Acts of the Apostles

In Darren Aronofsky's 1998 neo noir thriller, *Pi*, the main character Max is a mentally disturbed mathematician searching for patterns in the stock market. In an early scene, Max is sitting at a bar when a Hasidic Jew named Lenny Meyer sits beside him and asks his name. Max responds by giving his first name. Lenny says, "Max what?" and gets the response "Max Cohen." Lenny replies, "You're Jewish. It's OK. I'm a Jew too." Lenny then speaks with Max about Gematria, the association of Hebrew alphabetical characters with numbers, and then explains that some believe the Torah to be a numerical code sent by God that resonates with other phenomenon in nature such as the Fibonacci sequence. In the context of the Books of

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[23] Ibid., 37.

[24] Ibid., 39.

[25] Ibid.

Samuel and the Acts of the Apostles, one might imagine David meeting Jesus in the afterlife and saying to him, "It's OK. I'm a Jew too."

The books of Samuel and the Acts of the Apostles are the two longest books in their respective testaments. In addition to Jewish king David's prefiguration of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Books of Samuel and the Acts of the Apostles both include an author participant character (Samuel-Luke), bad kings (Saul-Sanhedrin), and characters with unfortunate physiognomical characteristics (Ehud-the Eunuch). While ancient physiognomy intersected with other forms of forbidden divination (palmistry, astrology), it nevertheless would have been in the consciousness of ancient authors. In outlining the history of the Jewish people, the Old Testament marks the ancient Near Eastern transition from polytheism to monotheism. But old habits die hard, and it is easy to imagine that spreading the word about Yahweh's defeat of the other gods might have allowed for some leeway in using transgressive divination practices of the polytheists in Babylon and the surrounding areas.

Although finding examples of Old Testament incorporation of physiognomy has proven somewhat challenging, the New Testament authors would have been immediately familiar with the practice if they had read any of the pagan literature contemporary to them. In this way, the New Testament's use of physiognomy sees to fruition the religious syncretism that must have occurred in the early days of Jewish history. In other words, the New Testament's authors took types from the Old Testament that were ready made for physiognomic description and provided what the Old Testament only alludes to more subtly. Physiognomy existed before the foundation of the Jewish nation and during the entire classical period and the life of Christ, and it has remained in the popular consciousness to the present day with its rediscovery in facial recognition AI and, in China, the use of AI to predict criminality. Physiognomy in this light

becomes a universal hermeneutic practice that transcends geographical, intellectual, religious, theological, and temporal boundaries. This means that physiognomy and the physiognomer are not going away anytime soon.

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