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New Insight into the
SACRED NAMES
of God

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Much controversy has arisen over the name of God. Some claim that only the Hebrew names of God may be used -- any other name in any other language, they claim, is rank paganism! Even the name "God" is considered idolatrous worship, and "Jesus" is claimed to be a corruption of the pagan god "Zeus"!

What is the real truth?

What IS God's true name? How vital and crucial is it that we say His name correctly? Why is there so much disagreement over this matter? What is the ONLY "name" by which we may be **SAVED**?

Let's look into this issue, once and for all!

Chapter One

Why All the Uproar Over God's Name?

There are untold numbers of “gods” in the world, worshipped by different peoples around the world -- gods of stick and stone, wooden carved figures, and even gods of metal and plastic. But, according to the Scriptures, there is only one true God, who is the God of Creation, the One who made the entire Universe -- the God of “Israel”!

Who is this God? What is His name? Is it wrong to call Him “God,” or “Almighty God,” when we speak of Him?

And what about the One called the “Messiah” – the Saviour, Redeemer, and Son of God, often called “Jesus Christ”? Is that a “pagan” appellation? Does the name “Jesus” derive from a pagan God? Does the word “God” come from the Hebrew word “Gad,” meaning the “god of fortune” or “good luck”?

A few years ago, our Church group was observing the Feast of Tabernacles in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and a brother came up to me with a huge “Bible” in his hands, showing me that the author or “translator” only used the supposed *Hebrew* name for God – “Yahweh.” He claimed that we should only use that name when speaking of God, and “Yahshua” when speaking of the Son of God. He was rather adamant, but did not press the issue, so we agreed more or less to disagree.

A few months later, however, I received a shocking letter from another man who had attended our Festival observance for the first time, and who seemed to be a fine person, eager to learn. But his 20 page letter opened with vile accusations, in which he belittled me for worshipping “god” and pagan deities, because I used the words “God” and “Jesus Christ” at times, although I also used the Hebrew names for God and Christ as well – I often use both! His letter dripped with self-righteous accusations, bitterness, and spiritual “put downs.” It amazed me so much, as I had never thought ill of the person, that I knew I could never reach such an embittered, hostile mind, and so I regretfully put the letter where it belonged – in the “circular file” (waste basket).

How strange it seems to me that many of those who believe in the “sacred names” of God claim those who use God’s “name” or “title” in any language but Hebrew are worshipping IDOLS and committing IDOLATRY! They can be very adamant, and point to a lot of Scriptures which tell us to praise God’s “NAME,” exalt His “name,” and “remember His name” – and then claim that means we must pronounce it “just so” and use only the HEBREW name, usually some variation of “Yahweh”!

Let me point out that I DO use the Hebrew name for God OFTEN when I pray, speak to others about God, and when I conduct Bible studies. However, I do not use His Hebrew name *exclusively!* In this booklet, I will attempt to show you why, and what the Word of God says we ought to do.

How Important Are the "Sacred Names" of God?

The “Sacred Names” movement stresses that we should only use the Hebrew names for “God,” and “Jesus.” They claim the correct names for “God” are names like Yahweh and Yehoshuah, or Yeshuah, or similar spellings. They claim the English word “God” is pagan and say we should not use *substitutes* for the Hebrew original. Also, they claim “Jesus” is pagan and derives from the Greek God “Zeus.”

Is this truth or fiction?

From time to time I receive letters from well-meaning and sincere individuals who assure me that I am wrong, and sinning, in using the names “God,” “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “Lord” in reference to the Father and the Messiah. People have insisted that these words are pagan in derivation and that we should only use the HEBREW names for the Creator and His Anointed One. Is this true?

Interestingly, the “Holy Names” people cannot seem to agree among themselves, either, as to the exact spelling and pronunciation of the Divine Names! The names for Jesus vary from “Yeshua,” “Yashua,” “Yehoshua,” and the names for the YHVH rang from “Jehovah,” “Yahweh,” “Yahvah,” and so forth.

These people often agree that “Sunday” observance is pagan, and the holidays of Easter and Christmas are pagan -- but that is not all. They insist that the very English words for “God” and “Jesus” are also pagan and idolatrous!

The Sacred Names movement itself began in the late 1930s as an offshoot of the Church of God, Seventh Day church. Their main focus is the use of the Hebrew name for God. Interestly, among the proponents of this teaching there are at least 38 variations of how they spell and pronounce God’s Hebrew “name”! The name of Jesus is transliterated as “Yahshua,” but again – there are at least 55 variations on this name’s spelling and pronunciation among the

Sacred Names groups!

Doesn't this fact strongly suggest that something is wrong with this idea, at its very foundation? The Scriptures tell us, "God is NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION!" (I Cor.14:33). Yet here we find massive confusion! What is the source of confusion – who sows confusion among God's people? "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (James 3:16, NKJV). "This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, *demonic*" (Jas.3:15).

Is "GOD" a Pagan Title?

Jacob O. Meyer, one of the chief exponents of the Sacred Name movement, insists that the name 'God' was the name of a pagan deity. One such verse he cites is Joshua 12:7 where we read of a Canaanite valley called 'Baal Gad,' which Meyer would interpret as "Lord God." The same place is mentioned in Joshua 13:5 and 11:17. Baal Gad was a valley west of Mount Hermon. However, Strong's Concordance shows that the word "Gad" may mean "fortune" as well as "troop." Says Strong's, "fortune, troop, in the sense of distributing" (#1408-9). It is true that this name or title was also used for a pagan god, "the god of fortune." Isaiah 65:11 may refer to the pagan god "fortune" (Gad). But let's not put the cart before the horse!

Does this prove the very English word "God" is pagan in derivation? Not at all! One of the twelve sons of Jacob, and one of the twelve tribes of Israel, was named "Gad" also. "Then Leah said, A troop comes! So she called his name Gad" (Gen.30:11). Thus his name was literally, "Troop," or "Fortune."

It is also a fact that one of God's own prophets was named "Gad" (II Sam.22:5; 24:11, etc.). A river or valley in Israel was also named "Gad" (II Sam.24:5).

Obviously, the meaning is simply "troop" or "fortune." Then the pagans took this name and applied it to their god of "fortune" or "good luck." Although pagans later misused the name, that does not make the original word or name pagan or idolatrous!

Nowhere in the Bible does God say it is wrong to take this name into our mouths or to speak it! Mere similarity between names in different languages proves nothing at all. Such things are often mere coincidence.

In the Bible, the term "Elohim" is used as the name of the true God in many places, such as Genesis 1:1. However, this term is also translated "god" in reference to pagan idols in many places, also. Does the fact that this term sometimes applies to PAGAN DEITIES mean that its usage for the true God is wrong? If so, then the Bible itself calls the true God by a pagan title over 2,500 times in the Old Testament. And if the Greek word "Theos," translated "God" in the New Testament, is also pagan, then the Bible once again ignores this and uses "Theos" in

reference to the Father over 1,000 times! We will study into these names for God later. But suffice it to say for now that “Sacred Names Only” people when faced with the fact that the Scriptures contain these words for God then go one step further and throw up their hands and exclaim that the Scriptures themselves then must have become perverted, corrupted, and changed in some vast “conspiracy”!

Research shows there is no etymological relationship between the Germanic word “God” and the Semitic word “Gad.” The fact that they sound similar is mere coincidence. Wrote Charles Tennyson Turner (1808-1879), “There is beauty in the name appropriated by the Saxon nations to the Deity, unequaled except by his most venerated Hebrew appellation. They call him ‘God,’ which is literally ‘The Good.’ The same word thus signifying the Deity and his most endearing quality” (quoted by Lothar Kahn, ed., *God: What People Have Said about Him*).

Those who claim “Jehovah” is the right name for God are also in for a surprise. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* points out, “The reading Jehovah is a comparatively recent invention. Jehovah is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo the 10th's Confessor, Peter Galatin, who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius Drusius. Van de Driesche, who lived between 1550 and 1616, was the first to ascribe to Peter Galatin the use of Jehovah, and this view has been taken since his day” (VII, p.88).

The Basic Issue

The bottom line according to the Sacred Names Only groups is that it is wrong to use “substitutes” for the Hebrew name for God, the Tetragrammaton or YHVH, which they contend should be pronounced “Yahweh” or something similar. Many of them even exclude the use of El, Elohim, or any other name or title for God used in the Scriptures.

However, the Bible itself frequently uses the name El and Elohim for God. Even though these titles are also used for pagan gods, since God INSPIRED their usage to designate HIM, this fact alone proves it is not wrong to use these names, titles, or designations for the true God! Biblical usage alone destroys this teaching of the Sacred Names Only movement. This fact alone renders the Sacred Names contention baseless and void.

Notice the example of Jesus Christ, our Saviour Himself!

When Jesus Himself was on the stake, and cried out to God, He used the *Aramaic* language, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani” (Matt.27:46), which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Notice! The Messiah Himself did NOT use the Hebrew name “Yahweh” or “Yahveh” at this heart-rending moment! He addressed God the Father in the Aramaic, and used the term “El,” which is the singular for Elohim! It is the same word for God as the Hebrew “El,” often used in the Bible, and simply means “God.” Since Jesus set us an example, that we should follow in His steps (I Pet.2:21, I John 2:6), it is not wrong for us also to

use *substitute* words or expressions for “God,” and we do not need to always address God by His proper name!

Is The Name “Jesus” Pagan?

What about the name “Jesus”? Does this name come from the Greek Zeus, the chief of the pagan pantheon of gods on Mount Olympus? Does the use of “Jesus” give unwitting homage to Zeus, the Greek form of Baal? Unfortunately, at least for the sake of the “sacred names” people, there is absolutely no historical evidence or etymological documentation for this novel theory. Again, look at the basic facts. God caused *most of the New Testament* to be written in the GREEK language, and in every case God inspired the apostles to use the GREEK words for “God” (*Theos*) and “Jesus” (*Iesus*). If God did not intend for us to use these forms of His name and the Messiah's name, He would not have inspired His apostles to use them. Furthermore, God PRESERVED His New Testament record IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE as well!

All the first century writings of the church fathers show “Jesus” -- the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua” or “Yeshua” -- to have been commonly used. This was not a “great conspiracy.” In Daniel 1:6-7 Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were given Babylonian names, which, unlike the name Jesus, did come from pagan deities -- and these Babylonian names were the names by which they are Scripturally known (Dan.4:13-30). Thus it is not wrong to use names transcribed into other languages.

When Paul was addressing the men of Athens, he said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD [Greek word Theos]. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God [Theos] who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands” (Acts 17:22-24).

Paul did not say his “God” was different from their “Theos.” Rather, he said he was introducing to them their own “unknown Theos” -- as the true God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. Paul did not introduce here the Hebrew names for God and Christ! But if the Sacred Names people are right, then why didn't he? Why would he have kept this “truth” from them? No, he spoke to them in their own language, and used their own terms and titles for the deity. This is something we should all bear in mind. The bottom line then is -- the Biblical example is -- that it is all right to use conventional names or titles for God in the various languages of the world. It is not necessary to always use the Hebrew names for God!

Other names used for the true God in the Bible are El, Eloah, Elyon, Shaddai, Adon, Adonai, Adonim. El is God the Omnipotent. Eloah is essentially the living God. Elyon is the “most high God.” Shaddai is “the Almighty.” Adon is the “Lord” as ruler in the earth. Adonai is the Lord in relation to the earth, carrying out His blessings. Adonim carries all the previous

connotations of Adon and Adonai, only to a greater and higher degree, seeing God more especially as owner and proprietor of the earth. It is not wrong to use any of these names for God.

The Original “Conspiracy Theory”

Today we hear a lot about various “conspiracy theories.” To get around the fact that the entire New Testament was written and preserved in the Greek language poses a fatal problem for the Sacred Names Only theory of “Hebrew only” names for God. How do they get around this major obstacle?

Sacred Names people claim that the New Testament was *originally* written in the Hebrew language! Isn’t that convenient? The only problem with this claim is that there is simply NO EVIDENCE to back it up! No historical evidence whatsoever!

If the original manuscripts of the New Testament were written in *Greek*, their whole theory would dissolve into thin air – it would be smashed into random atoms – “smithereens.” Unfortunately for them, although some scholars will grant that Hebrew or Aramaic sources may have been used for the gospels and book of Revelation few would accept such an idea for the epistles of Paul, which were written in Greek to people living in Greek cities where Greek was the common language.

To get around this enormous problem for their theory, the Sacred Names people are persistent and ingenious, however. Rather than admit that their theory has “holes” in it which cannot be cemented over, they therefore claim that even if Paul did write in Greek, he must have originally used the Hebrew names for God. Since there is no evidence or documentation for this, they claim that later “paganized” editors of the New Testament manuscripts must have deliberately REMOVED the Hebrew names and substituted the Greek names we find in all the ancient manuscripts, and which were copied from generation to generation.

To construct such a vast, wide “conspiracy” when there is no proof to back it up shows to what extremes Sacred Names Only people have gone to perpetuate and cling to their absurd and tenuous theory. When there is no evidence to back up a theory, then we should conclude that there is something wrong with the theory – not invent excuses for the missing evidence!

To believe this actually happened, of course, leads to another problem – it means we must also believe that *God did not PROTECT His Word from immense contamination and corruption!*

Unfortunately, this whole theory would indicate that Almighty God was completely UNABLE to preserve His Word ACCURATELY, and that He allowed man to tamper with, twist, edit, and rewrite portions of Holy Word, and make deletions and substitutions.

Is God able not only to inspire the writing of His Word, but also to keep His Word INTACT? To PRESERVE and PROTECT His Word from corruption?

The apostle Paul declared, “ALL Scripture [including the names of God and Christ!] is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim.3:16-17).

Jesus Himself said, “Thy word is TRUTH” (John 17:17), and “the Scripture CANNOT BE BROKEN” (John 10:35). If God allowed wholesale, massive substitution of words and names and titles in the Scriptures, then they would no longer be “truth” or “unbroken.” But Almighty God has preserved His Word intact, whole, and reliable! As Peter wrote, we are born “not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides FOREVER” (I Peter 1:23). Peter then quotes from Isaiah, “But the WORD of the Lord endures forever” (verse 25).

Was God able to protect His Word from thieving vandals and massive conspiracies? Will we believe the WORD of God? Or the hare-brained conspiracy theories of men? Which will you believe? Where will you place your faith?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For even if there are so-called gods [*theoia*, plural of *theos*], whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many gods [*theoia*] and many lords), yet for us there is but one God [*Theos*], the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (I Cor.8:5-6). In this passage Paul clearly contrasts the pagan “gods” and the true “God.” He identified “Theos” as the “Father.” Paul uses the definite article “the” in describing this true “God” as “the Father,” thus distinguishing Him from all the pagan deities.

Since Sacred Names people generally use the name “Yashua” to refer to Jesus, and believe to do otherwise is SIN, they simply insist as an article of faith that early Christians could not have used the Greek name *Iesous* for the Messiah. They claim, therefore, that all of the instances where *Iesous* appears in the texts of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament must be the work of wicked men who crept in and altered the Word of God -- later editors and redactors. *This is obviously CIRCULAR REASONING – assuming to be true that which you are attempting to prove to be true.*

Since the substitution of “Theos” (God), “Kurios” (Lord) and *Iesous* (Jesus) would have been such a massive undertaking, *a wide and powerful conspiracy must be postulated*, in order to be entirely successful in erasing the original names from all copies of the texts and even from the oldest manuscripts! Yet, history records no example or the slightest evidence of such tampering. Nor is there evidence of any historical witnesses raising their voices in objection to such serious editorial changes in the Scriptures by scribes or monks. Such a massive conspiracy would hardly

have escaped the attention of the early church fathers, the Jews, or early historians -- yet there is absolutely *no mention* of such a conspiratorial undertaking.

Could such a conspiracy have been that completely successful, as to remove every single vestige of evidence? Or is the whole thing a massive pipe dream? The absence of evidence, and the thundering *silence* speaks volumes. The whole idea itself rings of a modern “conspiracy” to deny the simple truth that it is all right to use “substitute” names for God in the various languages of the earth!

Certainly, such a massive and sweeping alteration of New Testament documents would have been witnessed, challenged, and written about somewhere! But there is complete silence, in Europe, Africa and Asia. None of the Church fathers seemed privy to such an attempt. And, of course, if such tampering occurred to all the NAMES for God and the Messiah, in the New Testament, this brings up the question, what else did the “conspirators” change and get away with?

Needless to say, such a theory completely denies God's ability to PRESERVE HIS WORD through the centuries unchanged and still inspired! Yet Jesus Christ declared: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but MY WORDS WILL NEVER PASS AWAY” (Matt.24:35).

Whom will we believe? Jesus Christ?

Or the Sacred Names Only people?

Chapter Two

Did Jesus and the Apostles Speak Greek?

Several sects and churches claim that Jesus Christ and the apostles only spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, and that the original monographs of the New Testament were all written in Hebrew, and later translated into Greek. They consider Greek to be a pagan language. What is the real truth of the matter? Did Jesus speak Greek?

This question of course goes right to the heart of the matter.

The September-October 1992 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* contains several fascinating articles which bear heavily on the questions posed for this book. For centuries, scholars have believed -- assumed -- that very few Jews of the first century spoke Greek. They have believed, and taught, that ancient Judea was a “backwater” area of the Roman Empire, and the people were ignorant as a whole of the Greek language, although it is admitted that Greek was the “lingua franca” and “language of commerce” throughout the Roman Empire.

Today, however, new archaeological discoveries have undermined the speculations of scholars and brought into clear light the fact that Greek was well known among the Jews, especially the priesthood, leadership class, and the merchant class. In particular, Greek was well understood in “Galilee of the Gentiles,” the region where Jesus Christ of Nazareth was raised, and grew up as a young lad. There is no doubt, therefore, that Jesus and the original apostles all spoke Greek commonly, as a “second language.”

Evidence from Caiaphas' Tomb

First, let us explore the recent findings in Jerusalem of the actual tomb of Caiaphas, the high priest who condemned Christ. Astonishing as it seems, the burial cave of the Caiaphas family -- the family of one of the priests who presided at the trial of Jesus -- was found, in Jerusalem, by “accident.” Workers building a water park in 1990 accidentally uncovered an ancient burial cave, underneath what is now a stretch of road in Jerusalem's Peace Forest. The surrounding area was used as an ancient necropolis during the late Second Temple period (first century B.C.-first century A.D.).

In the burial cave, archaeologists found twelve ossuaries, including one decorated with

two six-petaled rosettes within concentric circles. The bone box displays a fluted column on a stepped base and topped by an Ionic capital. Inscriptions on two of the ossuaries found here indicate that this was the burial chamber of the Caiaphas family, and one of the ossuaries may well have contained the bones of the high priest who handed Jesus Christ over to the Romans and Pontius Pilate, after interrogating Him (see Matt.26:57-68).

Writes Zvi Grenhut, archaeologist involved in the discovery and identification of the site, “Reburial in ossuaries appears mainly at the end of the first century B.C.E. and in the first century C.E. Reburial in an ossuary was rare in Jewish tombs after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.” The archaeologist continues:

“But the most exceptional and significant finds were the two ossuaries that, for the first time in an archaeological context, contained a form of the name Qafa', or Caiaphas, a name known to us from both the New Testament and from the first century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus . . . Suffice it to say that the form(s) of the name Caiaphas inscribed on these ossuaries is probably the same as that of the well-known family of high priests, one of whom presided at Jesus' trial” (“Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family,” BAR, Sept.-Oct. 1992, p.32-35).

One of the ossuaries is simply inscribed “Qafa” (ka-FA). On one the name is more complete – “Yehosef bar Qayafa” and “Yehosef bar Qafa” (Joseph son of Caiaphas). The ossuary with the more complete forms of the name is the most beautiful one, decorated with a rare and intricate pattern. Says Greenhut:

“There is no doubt that this ossuary is special. Its elaborate decoration must have something to do with the name(s) inscribed on it. Could this be the ossuary of the high priest who presided at Jesus' trial?

“Inside this ossuary, we found bones from six different people: two infants, a child between two and five, a young boy between 13 and 18, an adult woman -- and a male of about 60 years!” (ibid., p.35).

Very few of the people mentioned in the pages of the Bible have been proved to have existed by means of archaeological evidence. Therefore, the discovery of the name of Caiaphas, the high priest who lived in Jesus' time, is of astonishing and paramount importance. It verifies a vital element of the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ -- the very existence of the high priest who was the head of the Sanhedrin at that very time. Though the New Testament refers to the high priest by the single name “Caiaphas,” the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus refers to him as “Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the high priesthood.”

“A person named Joseph with the nickname Caiaphas was the high priest in Jerusalem between 18 and 36 C.E.,” writes Ronny Reich, in a companion article in the same issue of BAR (see “Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes,” p.41). In the New Testament he is simply called “Caiaphas” (Matt.26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49, 18:13-14,24,28; Acts 4:6)

Most Jewish Funerary Inscriptions in GREEK

In the next article in the same issue of *Biblical Archaeological Review*, the author, Pieter W. Van Der Horst, points out that no less than 1,600 Jewish epitaphs -- funerary inscriptions -- are extant from ancient Palestine dating from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D. The geographical spread of these inscriptions reveal that Jews were living all over the world at that time, especially the Roman period. In other words, when Jesus' brother James said in Acts 15, "Moses has been preached in every city for generations past and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (v.21), he was simply stating the truth. Peter, in his first sermon, enumerates a list of the countries from which Jews came to worship on that first Pentecost of the newly formed Christian Church (Acts 2:9-11).

Van Der Horst goes on:

"One of the most surprising facts about these funerary inscriptions is that most of them are IN GREEK -- approximately 70 percent; about 12 percent are in Latin; and only 18 percent are in Hebrew or Aramaic.

"These figures are even more instructive if we break them down between Palestine and the Diaspora. Naturally in Palestine we would expect more Hebrew and Aramaic and less Greek. This is true, but *not to any great extent. Even in Palestine approximately TWO-THIRDS of these inscriptions are in GREEK.*

"APPARENTLY FOR A GREAT PART OF THE JEWISH POPULATION THE DAILY LANGUAGE WAS GREEK, EVEN IN PALESTINE. This is impressive testimony to the impact of Hellenistic culture on Jews in their mother country, to say nothing of the Diaspora.

*"In Jerusalem itself about 40 PERCENT of the Jewish inscriptions from the first century period (before 70 C.E.) ARE IN GREEK. We may assume that most Jewish Jerusalemites who saw the inscriptions *in situ* were able to read them"* ("Jewish Funerary Inscriptions -- Most Are in Greek," Pieter W. Van Der Horst, *BAR*, Sept.-Oct.1992, p.48).

These are shocking statements to all who have believed, and taught, that the Jews as a whole were ignorant of Greek during the time of Christ! Obviously, Judea was not a "backwater" and "boorish" part of the Roman Empire, but a most sophisticated and cultivated part. In fact, the Jewish Temple was acknowledged to have been the finest building structure throughout the whole Empire! The Jewish people, because of their widespread dispersion in the Empire, for business and commercial purposes, mainly, spoke Greek rather fluently -- and this knowledge and usage of Greek was also common throughout Judea, as this new "funerary inscription" evidence attests!

This really should not be surprising at all. The Greek influence in Judea had grown very significantly since the days of Alexander the Great, circa 330 B.C. By the time of Antiochus

Epiphanes, circa 168-165 B.C., Hellenism had become very strong, and many of the high priests had become “Hellenists,” leading to the Maccabean revolt. In successive generations, the Greek influence never abated, particularly among the business, commercial and priestly crowd. Many of the priests, being Sadducees, were greatly influenced by Greek culture and contact.

Writes Van Der Horst further:

“The great rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish oral law) in about 200 C.E., was buried in Beth She-arim; the majority of pious Jews who wanted to be buried with him at Beth She-arim had their funerary inscriptions written in Greek.

“This is not to say Hebrew and Aramaic ever died out completely as languages for the Jews. Especially in the eastern Diaspora, Jews continued to speak a emitic language. *But IN THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES OF THE COMMON ERA, exactly the period when rabbinic literature was being written in Hebrew and Aramaic, A MAJORITY OF THE JEWS IN PALESTINE and the western Diaspora SPOKE GREEK*” (*ibid.*, p.48-54).

All of this is very interesting, of course. But what about Jesus Christ, and the disciples? Did Jesus also use Greek, commonly, in speaking to the people of Judea? For centuries, theologians and scholars have assumed that He only spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. However, this assumption now seems to be far off the mark!

Jesus and the Disciples Spoke Greek!

Another article in the very same issue of *BAR* discusses this very issue. The author, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, points out that there is no doubt Jesus spoke Aramaic. He shows that although a form of Aramaic was “the dominant language, it was not the only language spoken in Palestine at that time.” He continues:

“The Dead Sea scrolls reveal that a TRILINGUALISM EXISTED IN PALESTINE in the first and second century of the Christian era. In addition to Aramaic, some Jews also spoke Hebrew or Greek -- or both. Different levels of Jewish society, different kinds of religious training and other factors may have determined who spoke what” (“Did Jesus Speak Greek?”, same issue of *BAR*, p.58).

During the Babylonian captivity, many Jews came to use Aramaic as their first language, a sister language closely akin to Hebrew. Although Hebrew continued in use in the Temple, and the emerging synagogues, Aramaic was the common language of the people during the time of Christ. The majority of the people apparently did not fully understand Hebrew, for the custom arose to have an Aramaic translation read of the Hebrew Scriptures, following the reading in Hebrew, in all the synagogues. These readings and interpretations were done by a person called the *meturgeman*. In time, they were written down and were called *targumin*.

But what about Greek? Says Fitzmyer:

“Greek, of course, was in widespread use in the Roman empire at this time. Even the Romans spoke Greek, as inscriptions in Rome and elsewhere attest. *It is hardly surprising, therefore, that GREEK WAS ALSO IN COMMON USE AMONG THE JEWS OF PALESTINE.* The Hellenization of Palestine began even before the fourth-century B.C. conquest by Alexander the Great. Hellenistic culture among the Jews of Palestine spread more quickly after Alexander's conquest, especially when the country was ruled by the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV Epiphanes (second century B.C.), and later under certain Jewish Hasmonean and Herodian kings” (p.59).

A reference to Greek-speaking Jews is found clearly in the book of Acts. In Acts 6:1 certain early Christians in Jerusalem are spoken of as being “Hellenists.” The King James Version says, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians (*Hellenistai*) against the Hebrews (*Hebraioi*), because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration” (Acts 6:1). Who were these Hellenists or “Greeks”? The term applies to Greek-speaking Jews, in whose synagogues Greek was spoken, and where undoubtedly the Septuagint Scriptures were commonly used. This is verified in Acts 9:29 where we read: “And he (Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul) spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians . . .” The “Grecians” or “Hellenists” were the Greek-speaking Jews, who had their own synagogues, even in Jerusalem.

Says Fitzmyer:

“Such *Hellenistai* may have spoken very little, if any, Hebrew or Aramaic. This is suggested by a reference in Philippians 3:5 where Paul stoutly refers to himself as ‘a Hebrew of the Hebrews.’ Paul also spoke Greek. Thus *Hellenistai* as C. F. D. Moule has suggested probably is the designation of those Jerusalem Jews or Jewish Christians who habitually spoke only Greek (and for that reason were more affected by Hellenistic culture), whereas *Hebraioi* designated those Greek-speaking Jews and Jewish Christians who also spoke a Semitic language, probably Aramaic, which they normally used” (*ibid.*, p.60).

What about Jesus Christ, and the apostles? Did they, too, commonly speak Greek as a “second language”?

“The answer is almost certainly yes. The more difficult question, however, is whether he taught in Greek. Are any of the sayings of Jesus that are preserved for us only in Greek nevertheless in the original language in which he uttered them?

“That Aramaic was the language Jesus normally used for both conversation and teaching seems clear. Most New Testament scholars would agree with this. But did he also speak Greek? The evidence already recounted for the use of Greek in first-century Palestine provides the background for an answer to this question.

But there are more specific indications in the Gospels themselves.

“All four Gospels depict Jesus conversing with Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea, at the time of his trial (Mark 15:2-5; Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-38). Even if we allow for obvious literary embellishment of these accounts, *there can be little doubt that Jesus and Pilate did engage in some kind of conversation . . .* In what language did Jesus and Pilate converse? There is no mention of an interpreter. Since there is little likelihood that Pilate, a Roman, would have been able to speak either Aramaic or Hebrew, *the obvious answer is that JESUS SPOKE GREEK at his trial before Pilate”* (p.61).

Similarly, when Jesus conversed with the Roman centurion, a commander of a troop of Roman soldiers, the centurion most likely did not speak Aramaic or Hebrew. It is most likely that Jesus conversed with him in Greek, the common language of the time throughout the Roman empire (see Matt.8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10; John 4:46-53). A royal official of Rome, in the service of Herod Antipas, a Gentile, would most likely have spoken with Jesus in Greek.

In addition, we find that Jesus journeyed to the pagan area of Tyre and Sidon, where He spoke with a Syro-Phoenician woman. The Gospel of Mark identifies this woman as *Hellenes*, meaning a "Greek" (Mark 7:26). The probability is, therefore, that Jesus spoke to her in Greek.

Even more remarkable, however, is the account in John 12, where we are told: “And there were *certain Greeks among them* that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:20-21). These men were Greeks, and undoubtedly spoke Greek, which Philip clearly understood, having grown up in the region of Galilee, the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt.4:15) -- a place of commerce and international trade, where Greek would have been the normal language of business.

Having grown up in Galilee, it is evident that Jesus and His disciples must have spoken Greek, whenever it suited their purpose to do so.

Declares Fitzmyer:

“Moreover, these specific instances in which Jesus apparently spoke Greek are consistent with his Galilean background. In Matthew 4:15, this area is referred to as ‘Galilee of the Gentiles.’ Growing up and living in this area, Jesus would have had to speak some Greek. Nazareth was a mere hour’s walk to Sepphoris and in the vicinity of other cities of the Decapolis. Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, was built by Herod Antipas; the population there, too, was far more bilingual than in Jerusalem.

“Coming from such an area, JESUS would NO DOUBT HAVE SHARED THIS DOUBLE LINGUISTIC HERITAGE. Reared in an area where many inhabitants

were GREEK-SPEAKING GENTILES, Jesus, the ‘carpenter’ (tekon, Mark 6:3), like Joseph, his foster-father (Matthew 13:55), would have had to deal with them in GREEK. **Jesus was not an illiterate peasant and did not come from the lowest stratum of Palestinian society; he was a skilled craftsman.** He is said to have had a house in Capernaum (Mark 2:15). He would naturally have conducted business in Greek with gentiles in Nazareth and neighboring Sepphoris” (*ibid.*).

Did Jesus also, therefore, teach in Greek? Were many of His parables and saying actually uttered in the Greek language? If the answer is yes, as A. W. Argyle says, “We may have direct access to the original utterances of our Lord and not only to a translation of them.”

The Language of Jesus

In the time of Christ, three languages figured prominently in the lives of the people of Judaea -- the common language of Aramaic, the language of Hebrew, used in the synagogues, and the Greek language -- which was commonly spoken and understood throughout the Roman Empire.

Some Aramaic words and expressions are preserved in the Gospels, such as *Talitha cum*, which means, “Little girl, get up!” (Mark 5:41). Also, *Abba* (“Father”; Mark 14:36; Gal.4:6; Rom.8:15); *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me”; Mark 15:34); *Cephas* (“Peter”; John 1:42); *Mammon* (“Wealth”; Matt.6:24, RSV); *Raca* (“Fool”; Matt.5:22, RSV). In fact, we can be specific and say that Jesus spoke a Galilean version of “western Aramaic,” which differed from that which was spoken in Jerusalem (Matt.26:73; compare Acts 2:7).

Jesus could also read and speak Hebrew. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has proved that Hebrew was used quite extensively in certain circles, especially for religious purposes. Jesus stood up and read the Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20), showing He could also read and speak Hebrew. Some Hebrew words are also preserved in the gospels, such as, *Ephphatha* (“Be opened”; Mark 7:34); *Amen* (“Amen”: Matt.5:26; Mark 14:30, RSV).

Writes Robert H. Stein, in *Jesus The Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ:*

“The third major language spoken in Palestine was Greek. The impact of Alexander the Great’s conquests in the fourth century B.C. resulted in the Mediterranean’s being a ‘Greek sea’ in Jesus’ day. In the third century Jews in Egypt could no longer read the Scriptures in Hebrew, so they began to translated them into Greek. This famous translation became known as the Septuagint (LXX). Jesus, who was reared in ‘Galilee, of the Gentiles,’ lived only three or four miles from the thriving Greek city of Sepphoris. There may even have been times when he and his father worked in this rapidly growing metropolitan city, which served as the capital city of Herod Antipas until A.D. 26,

when he moved the capital to Tiberias” (Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ, Robert H. Stein, InterVarsity Press, 1996, p.87).

Stein further tells us that the existence of “Hellenists” in the early Church (Acts 6:1-6) implies that from the beginning of the Church, there were Greek speaking Jewish Christians in the Church. The term “Hellenists” suggests their language was Greek, rather than their cultural or philosophical outlook. Remember, these were Jewish *Christians* whose primary language was Greek -- they were not Greek *philosophers* or their followers, but followers of the Messiah Yeshua -- Christ Jesus.

Stein goes on to explain, further:

“Two of Jesus’ disciples were even known by their Greek names: Andrew and Philip. In addition, there are several incidents in Jesus’ ministry when he spoke to people who knew neither Aramaic nor Hebrew. Thus unless a translator was present (though none is ever mentioned), their conversations probably took place in the Greek language. Probably Jesus spoke Greek during the following occasions: *the visit to Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis (Mark 7:31ff), the conversation with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; compare especially 7:26) and the trial before Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:2-15; compare also Jesus’ conversation with the ‘Greeks’ in John 12:20-36)*” (p.87, emphasis mine).

The fact that Jesus Christ – Yeshua -- and His disciples *all knew and spoke Greek*, as a “third language,” in addition to Aramaic and Hebrew, is also indicated and supported by the fact that all the gospels and epistles of the New Testament are written and preserved in the Greek language.

Stop and think! *No early Christian documents are extant in Aramaic! ALL the earliest New Testament documents and fragments are in Greek!* Papias, a second-century bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor stated that Matthew had put together the “sayings” of Jesus in the Hebrew dialect, Aramaic. But other than statements that Matthew’s gospel was originally written in Hebrew, all other New Testament manuscripts that we possess are *Greek* manuscripts, and as far back as we go, *Greek* is the language of the New Testament! Strange, isn’t it, that *not one manuscript in Aramaic or Hebrew* predates the Greek? We will discuss this amazing fact and its significance in the next chapter!

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that some of the disciples of Christ had Greek names -- Andrew, Philip, Simon (a Grecized form of the Hebrew *Simon*), Levi/Matthew, a tax collector. It is possible that many Greek terms preserved in the New Testament may be there because they were originally uttered in Greek. One such word is “Sanhedron,” which comes from the Greek *synedrion*. It is of Greek, not Hebrew, derivation, and was the common term used for the Jewish high court.

A word often used by Jesus, “hypocrite,” in describing the Pharisees and Sadducees,

comes from the Greek word *hypokrites*, a compound word with the Greek preposition *hypo* for “under” and *krites*, meaning “judgment.” This form is wholly lacking in Semitic languages. The word *hypokrites* basically means, “one who answers” (i.e., one who always has an answer, or excuse), but came to mean over time not only “expounder” or “interpreter,” but “orator,” “actor,” “stage actor, or one who spoke from behind a dramatic mask on stage. From this it came to mean “pretender,” “dissembler.” But this Greek word, so familiar in the denunciations of Christ, has no counterpart in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Additional Evidence Piles Up

In an article in the appendix of *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*, Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, write:

“The language milieu of first-century Palestine has more than a passing interest for the reader of the gospels. It involves the question of what languages Jesus spoke and indirectly may have implications for one’s view of the origin and integrity of the gospels as historical documents. For instance, on the assumption that the language exclusively, or at least primarily, spoken by Jesus was Aramaic, it has been commonplace to argue that the closer the language and style of the gospels to the language and style of Aramaic, the greater the presumption for authenticity. Conversely, it has often been argued that the absence of Semitisms creates a presumption against authenticity.

“What has been the state of the debate? Almost certainly Latin was not in common use in Palestine, for conquest by the Roman armies had not involved conquest by the Latin language. Stemming from Alexander the Great’s conquests in the fourth century B.C. and the subsequent Hellenistic movement, Greek had already been established as the lingua franca, and the conquests of Rome made no significant change. What was the use of Greek in Palestine in the time of Christ? Was it a language of culture and commerce for an elite few, or was it also used by the common people? And if it was used by more than the elite, how extensive was that use? Or was Aramaic the language of almost universal usage by the masses? A view commonly held since the Middle Ages is that beginning with the Babylonian exile, Hebrew gradually ceased to exist as a living language and that among Jewish people Aramaic became the language of everyday discourse. But did Hebrew really cease to be a living language; did it come to be only the religious vernacular of Jewish scholars? Advocates for the dominance of any of these three languages in Palestine have not been lacking, and cogent arguments have been made for the common usage of all three languages among Jews in first century Palestine.

“Perhaps this in itself should have alerted the advocates of the different viewpoints to the possibility that *all three languages were in fact in common use*. Robert H. Gundry has persuasively argued that this was the situation, and his work has been supplemented by that of Philip Edgcumbe Hughes” (page 300, emphasis added).

Mark this well! All *three* languages were in *COMMON USAGE* in Judea during the time

of Christ? That is precisely the conclusion that modern scholarly research has come to in this on-going debate! The scholars continue, declaring:

“Recently discovered archaeological data have done much to resolve the problem. Ossuaries, receptacles in which the bones of the dead were placed, often have writing on them. It is to be expected that in the presence of death the languages used would be those in which people customarily thought and spoke. Gundry briefly surveys ossuary finds in Palestine from the period in question and concludes that all three languages appear on them in roughly equal proportions.

“This evidence for the currency of all three languages is further strengthened by discoveries coming from excavations in caves around the Dead Sea. In his two expeditions to the ‘Cave of Letters,’ Yigael Yadin and his associates unearthed some fifteen letters and more than forty other papyrus documents such as contracts and receipts. These date from the last years of the first century to the time of Bar Kokhba’s revolt in A.D. 132-135. The cave appears to have been the hiding place of Bar Kokhba and his guerrilla band, and the documents are apparently representative of their routine correspondence on everyday and military matters. *All three languages -- Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic -- are represented in both the correspondence and miscellaneous documents. These men were not academicians. That they understood and used these languages strongly suggests their use among the people of Palestine generally.* It appears that Hebrew was not confined to the scholars of Judea, and that Greek was not merely the language of commerce and culture. Apparently both were in *common usage* along with Aramaic, and therefore *Jesus might easily have used any one of the three.*”

The evidence from archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls seems impressive and conclusive enough. However, the article goes on to show that even the gospels themselves show that the original disciples of Christ undoubtedly were familiar with and commonly used the Greek language -- the “lingua franca” or “universal language” of the world at that time.

The article continues:

“Impartial examination of the gospels seems to confirm that this was indeed the language environment of Jesus’ day. Based on extensive research in Old Testament quotation material shared by Matthew and the other synoptic writers, Robert Gundry concludes that the modes of citation in these quotations reflects the trilingual situation evidenced in the archaeological data. The presence of Semitisms in the Greek of the gospels does not necessarily indicate that a Semitic language (Aramaic or Hebrew) was used exclusively in first-century Palestine. *In polylingual areas, languages tend to interpenetrate one another in their vocabulary and manner of expression;* the Septuagint, for example, is full of Semitic forms of expression. This widespread polylingualism would have influenced powerfully the type of Greek spoken in Palestine. *The fact that Greek had been imported into an originally Semitic language milieu also gives reason to expect that the Greek spoken there reflected Semitic idiom and thought patterns.*

“But the gospels and Acts offer more positive evidence for the common currency of Greek in Christ's day and among those whom he taught. Two of the twelve disciples, Andrew and Philip, had *Greek names*. John 12:20-23 *strongly suggest that Philip, Andrew, and Jesus understood and spoke Greek*. Peter, the foremost among the twelve, bears not only Hebrew and Aramaic names (Simon and Cephas) but also is referred to by his *Greek name (Peter)*. *It is also likely that this same Peter spoke Greek to Cornelius's household in Acts 10 and wrote in Greek the two letters bearing his name*. That a Galilean fisherman would have a Greek name and speak and write Greek testifies to the fact that those with little formal education were competent in that language as well. In the Greek text of John 21 Jesus uses *two different Greek words for love and for taking care of the flock*, and Peter uses two different words for know. *None of these pairs, however, can be reproduced in Hebrew or Aramaic; this was apparently a conversation originally carried on in Greek*. Also, the *play on the Greek words petra and petros in Matthew 16:18 cannot be reproduced in Hebrew or Aramaic and is best explained as occurring in a discussion originally carried on in Greek*. In all likelihood, Jesus' conversations with the Syrophoenician woman, the Roman centurion, and Pilate were in Greek. Stephen (Acts 7) and James (Acts 15) quote from the Septuagint, thus giving evidence of their facility in the Greek language” (*ibid.*, pages 301-302).

This fascinating discovery destroys -- it literally demolishes -- the cherished ideas and conclusions of the “holy names” groups, who contend that the apostles and Yeshua did not know Greek or understood it very poorly. Unfortunately for the Sacred Names Only being human, they concocted and formulated their theories and conclusions BEFORE this new knowledge was discovered! They should not have leaped to such conclusions on the limited, faulty, fragmentary data available to them fifty or sixty years ago. Now that new knowledge on these matters is available, will they REPENT AND CHANGE?

That question each one of us will have to answer for ourselves, either now, or before the judgment seat of Christ!

Pride prevents many people from facing facts and repenting of error. They do not want to “lose face” before their membership. They don’t want to part with their “respect” and “authority” in the eyes of their followers. But it is far better to repent of error, as soon as it is discovered, and cleanse oneself, than to deny it, and continue on in self-denial, heading straight for the cliff of disaster! By foolishly following the ideas that were generated by students and scholars of a century and more ago, and by misinterpreting the data available then, and misunderstanding the reason for the presence of “Hebrewisms” in the New Testament Greek, they are rushing pell mell for the cliff, and are in danger of plunging over it like lemmings to the suicidal rocks in the swirling waters below!

Declare Thomas and Gundry further:

“Apparently, then, *Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic were all commonly spoken and understood among the Palestinian Jews of Jesus' day*. To determine precise proportions and use is not possible, and perhaps one language tended to predominate in one

area more than the others. But it was a mixed language milieu. *Almost certainly Jesus spoke in all three languages, and evidences for this exist in the gospels themselves*” (pages 302-303).

When it is realized that Jesus Christ and the apostles all spoke Greek, and grew up in a Greek-speaking area of ancient Judea -- the sea of Galilee region -- it becomes obvious that the entire *basis* of the “holy names” people in rejecting the Greek language, and even the common Greek equivalent names for “Messiah,” “God,” and “Lord,” rests on nothing more than quicksand. Quicksand is a pitiful foundation for any spiritual construction!

Those who build on quicksand will reap the consequences. But those who build on solid rock will have a safe and secure foundation which will enable their edifice to stand. As Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, said so plainly:

“Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them*, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt.7:24-27).

What about your house? What about your beliefs? What are they built on?

What Languages Did Jesus Really Speak?

For years “holy names” sects and groups have argued that Jesus and the disciples only spoke Aramaic and/or Hebrew, and did not speak Greek. They have regarded Greek as a pagan language and claim that only the “elite” in ancient Judea understood and spoke Greek. Therefore, they conclude, the original New Testament *must* have been written in Hebrew, and that such originals would have expressed the names of the Messiah and God only in the Hebrew language. In this manner, using this human reasoning, they reject the Greek names of Christ and God the Father.

But the Word of God says: “There is a way that *seems right* to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of *death*” (Prov.14:12; 16:25). What may seem “right” to certain men may well be the way of ERROR which leads to DEATH!

Thousands of people sadly have been persuaded by this argument into believing that we must use only the “Hebrew” names for God and Christ, and all other names, in other languages, including Greek, are of *pagan origin!* Isn’t it about time we do as the apostle Paul exhorts us to do, and begin to “PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess.5:21)?

Before jumping to conclusions, let us carefully sift through all the facts. Before rushing to judgement on such an important subject, let's take our time to study this matter in full. Surely we would be doing ourselves a great injustice, if we leap to erroneous conclusions and allow ourselves to become DECEIVED on such a vital matter!

So who are you going to believe? False prophets and teachers masquerading as saints and men of God? Or the TRUTH? Do you love the truth of God? Or will spiritual pride be your downfall?

Of course, the fact that God preserved the entirety of the New Testament in *the Greek language* seems to give some of these people "fits." They claim Greek is just another *pagan* language, and that using such names as *Iesous* translated "Jesus," and *Theos* translated "God" are just as bad as worshipping Baal, Zeus, Astarte, Adonis or Nimrod!

Peter wrote that the word of God "liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet.1:23). The word of God, which He inspired to be preserved, is in all essential and crucial respects, inspired and correctly preserved, to all generations. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "ALL SCRIPTURE" -- and that includes the NAMES AND TITLES USED FOR GOD, in both the Old and New Testaments -- "IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD [Greek, "God-breathed"], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for CORRECTION, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim.3:16).

The Tower of Babel

Wouldn't it seem awfully strange that if God only intended all mankind to use only the Hebrew names of God and the Messiah, that He Himself divided all mankind into many language groups at the tower of Babel? Wouldn't it also seem strange that this same God, who created mankind, and later gave him different languages (Gen.11), required that in order to receive salvation one would have to know, and pronounce "correctly," the Hebrew name of God and Christ -- and that *ONLY the Hebrew pronunciation would save anybody*

What kind of God would that be? Generations of man have come and gone, and even the Jews say today that they have forgotten exactly how to pronounce the YHVH or Tetragrammaton of the Old Testament name of God! Have whole generations of mankind, and even generations of the CHURCH OF GOD, down through history, PERISHED and been doomed to Hell, the awful blaze of Gehenna -- simply because they did not know and could not pronounce the Hebrew names for God and Christ?

Shame on those who believe such folly!

Chapter Three

Was the New Testament Originally Written in Greek or Hebrew?

In what language was the New Testament originally written? Greek? or Hebrew? or Aramaic? Does it make any difference? Is our modern Greek New Testament a forgery and a fraud, foisted upon an ignorant world by clever and devious religious charlatans of the fourth and fifth centuries?

Why is our modern New Testament written in Greek?

If Almighty God only wanted us to use the HEBREW names for God, then we would expect that the writers of the New Testament would have inserted the Hebrew names for God whenever they mentioned Him! But they do not do so. Instead, throughout the New Testament they use the Greek forms of God's names and titles. They call God *Theos* instead of *Elohim*.

The Evidence of Preservation Itself

Furthermore, even if some parts of the New Testament were written in Hebrew (such as the gospel of Matthew), as some suggest, isn't it amazing that God did not preserve those manuscripts -- instead He chose to preserve His New Testament Scriptures in the GREEK LANGUAGE, with the Greek forms of His name and titles!

Not one book of the New Testament has been preserved in Hebrew -- only in Greek. This is prima facie evidence that it is NOT wrong to use the forms of God's name as they would translate from the Hebrew or Greek.

Those who insist on using only the Hebrew names of God are straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel! Nowhere does the Bible tell us that it is wrong to use the names of God in Aramaic, Greek, or any other language of the earth.

Since Almighty God has preserved the New Testament Scriptures in the Greek language, and many if not all of them were originally written in Greek, it is obvious that God Himself INSPIRED the usage of Greek to write and to maintain and preserve HIS HOLY WORD!

Therefore, it is self-evident that the Greek forms of God's names and titles are perfectly all right for us to use, and translations of those forms and names into other languages, including English.

Earliest New Testament Fragments in GREEK!

Scholars have long denied the veracity of the New Testament Scriptures, claiming that the earliest gospels were not eye-witness accounts of Christ and His life, but were written some one hundred years afterward, or about the middle of the second century, and were based on hearsay, myth, fable, and oral stories which had been passed down. Thus many scholars have regarded the very words of Christ, as recorded in the gospels, as “suspect.”

Astonishing as it may seem, however, bits of papyrus in an Oxford University library puts the lie to this cherished theory of unbelieving, skeptical scholars! Three scraps of text of the gospel of Matthew, *inscribed in Greek*, have traditionally been believed to have been written in the late second century. But German papyrus expert Carsten Thiede has published a paper arguing that these fragments kept at Oxford's Magdalen College *very likely represent an actual EYE WITNESS ACCOUNT of the life of Jesus!*

The London Times reported that the evidence on an early form of writing paper was a potentially “important breakthrough in biblical scholarship, on a level with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947” (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec.25, 1994, “Gospel Fragments in Britain May Be Contemporary Account of Life of Jesus Christ,” p.A42).

Some scholars have questioned the accuracy of the New Testament as historical, believing that the earliest texts were written long after the actual events described. However, careful new analysis by Professor Thiede has dated the fragments to the middle of the first century, thereby indicating that they are evidence that *the Matthew Gospel was written only a generation after the crucifixion, or even earlier!*

Says William Tuohy of the *Los Angeles Times*, “Parts of the New Testament may have been *written by men who actually knew Christ*, rather than authors recounting a 2nd-Century version of an oral tradition.”

The Magdalen fragments have been at the Oxford college since 1901. Little work has been done on them since 1953 when they were last edited by biblical scholars. But earlier this year, Thiede visited Oxford and inspected the papyrus. He concluded,

“The Magdalen fragment now appears to belong to a style of handwriting that was current in the 1st Century A.D., and that slowly petered out around the mid-1st Century. Even a hesitant approach to questions of dating would therefore seem to justify a date in the 1st Century, about 100 years earlier than previously thought.”

The lines on the fragments are from Matthew 26 and include the oldest written reference

to Mary Magdalene and the betrayal of Christ by Judas. This fragment, written soon after the death of Christ, in the first century, is written in the *Greek language*, putting in the trash compacter once and for all the notion that the apostles did not speak or write Greek!

This new discovery by Professor Carsten Thiede, a papyrus expert, will provoke controversy among scholars, but it is strong evidence that the gospel accounts regarding the life of Jesus Christ are accurate, and reliable historical documents.

The Magdalene fragment from the Gospel of Matthew has been identified as coming from a document dated to the middle of the first century A.D. -- during the very lives of the apostles! This fragment, written in *GREEK*, could even be a fragment from an original monograph written by the apostle Matthew himself! This amazing new discovery is powerful evidence, obviously, that the writer, the apostle Matthew, was very familiar with the Greek language and was capable of writing intelligently in it.

Luke the Beloved Physician

Luke the physician, who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, was a highly trained physician who evidently was trained in his craft at Alexandria, Egypt. He addresses his gospel to the "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3), as he does also the book of Acts (Acts 1:1). Theophilus, from his name, was undoubtedly a Greek. The gospel of Luke and book of Acts were undoubtedly written by Luke in the Greek language.

Says the *New Bible Dictionary*: "It is generally admitted that Luke is the most literary author of the New Testament. His prologue proves that he was able to write in irreproachable, pure, literary Greek" (p.758). He was a Gentile. Says this same source, "From the literary style of Luke and Acts, and from the character of the contents of the books, *it is clear that Luke was a well-educated Greek.*"

This evidence, of course, provides further proof that God does not take exception to the Greek forms of His name and titles. He inspired Luke to use the Greek language! And Luke was *writing primarily for the Greek-speaking, Gentile world!*

The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He spoke Greek fluently, and used it continually as he went throughout the Roman world preaching the gospel. Only when he was in Judea, and Jerusalem, did he generally use Hebrew (Acts 22:2). In writing his epistles to the churches throughout the region -- Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi -- undoubtedly he also wrote in the Greek language. There is no evidence whatsoever that he originally used Hebrew names for God instead of the Greek forms, as they have been preserved through the centuries.

The Language of the New Testament

Did God Himself inspire the New Testament to be written and preserved in the Greek language, instead of Hebrew? What was the original language of the books of the New Testament?

The “History of the Church from Christ to Constantine,” by Eusebius, provides us with greater insight into the writing of the New Testament. Eusebius records that after Peter first went to Rome, and preached the gospel there, that the people were so enthusiastic that they wanted a written record of the gospel he preached. Writes Eusebius:

“So brightly shone the light of true religion on the minds of Peter’s hearers that, not satisfied with a single hearing or with the oral teaching of the divine message, they resorted to appeals of every kind to induce Mark (whose gospel we have), as he was a follower of Peter, to leave them in WRITING a summary of the instruction they had received by word of mouth, nor did they let him go until they had persuaded him, and thus became responsible for the writing of what is known as the Gospel according to Mark” (p.88).

This occurred in Rome. The request was made by Romans. The language Mark wrote in was Greek, which was commonly understood by all learned Romans, as Greek was the universal language of that time.

Eusebius tells us more about the original writing of the gospels. “Matthew,” he records, “had begun by preaching to Hebrews; and when he made up his mind to go to others too, he committed his own gospel to writing IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE, so that for those with whom he was no longer present the gap left by his departure was filled by what he wrote. And when Mark and Luke had published their gospels, John, we are told, who hitherto had relied entirely on the spoken word, finally took to writing for the following reason. The three gospels already written were in general circulation and copies had come into John’s hands. He welcomed them, we are told, and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked that the narrative only lacked the story of what Christ had done first of all at the beginning of His mission” (p.132).

It is obvious that Mark, Luke and John, therefore, were written in Greek. John’s headquarters, at this time, was undoubtedly Ephesus, where he finally died. Ephesus was in the middle of a Greek-speaking region, and John was writing for the entire Church, not just the Jews at Jerusalem.

Eusebius quotes Irenaeus also concerning the writing of the gospels, as follows:

“Matthew published a written gospel for the Hebrews in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their passing, Mark

also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. Lastly, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant back on His breast, once more set forth the gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia” (p.210).

Obviously these three gospels were written in Greek, as their audience was Greek-speaking, and only the gospel of Matthew is singled out as having been written in Hebrew!

Irenaeus is also quoted by Eusebius concerning the writing of the book of Revelation, and the mysterious number “666,” the number of the Antichrist. Irenaeus declared:

“Such then is the case: this number is found in all good and early copies and confirmed by the very people who saw John face to face, and reason teaches us that the number of the Beast’s name is shown according to GREEK numerical usage by the letters in it. . . .” (p.211).

The fact that the numerical letters adding up to “666” are reported to have been in the Greek language, in this passage, is further evidence that even the book of Revelation was originally written in Greek.

The Books and the Parchments

The distinguished scholar F. F. Bruce, in “The Books and the Parchments,” tells us that Greek was undoubtedly the language of the New Testament. He asserts,

“Although Aramaic appears to have been the common language of our Lord and of the earliest Christians, *it is not the language of the New Testament. . . .*

“The language most appropriate for the propagation of this message would naturally be one that was *most widely known throughout all the nations*, and this language lay ready to hand. It was the Greek language, which, at the time when the gospel began to be proclaimed among all the nations, was a THOROUGHLY INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE, spoken not only around the Aegean shores but all over the Eastern Mediterranean and in other areas too. Greek was no strange tongue to the apostolic church even in the days when it was confined to Jerusalem, for the membership of the primitive Jerusalem church included Greek-speaking Jews as well as Aramaic-speaking Jews. These Greek-speaking Jewish Christians (or Hellenists) are mentioned in Acts 6:1, where we read that they complained of the unequal attention paid to the widows of their group by contrast with those of the Hebrews or Aramaic-speaking Jews. To remedy this situation seven men were appointed to take charge of it, and it is noteworthy that (to judge by their names) all seven were Greek-speaking” (p.49).

Bruce discusses the differences in style of writing in the Greek language that are found in

the New Testament books. He declares:

“Paul, we may say, comes roughly half-way between the vernacular and more literary styles. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the First Epistle of Peter are true literary works, and much of their vocabulary is to be understood by the aid of a classical lexicon rather than one which draws upon non-literary sources. The Gospels contain more really vernacular Greek, as we might expect, since they report so much conversation by ordinary people. This is true even of Luke's Gospel. Luke himself was master of a fine literary literary style, as appears from the first four verses of his Gospel, but in both Gospel and Acts he adapts his style to the characters and scenes that he portrays” (p.55-56).

All scholars of repute, today, admit that the original language of the New Testament was Greek, although the writers sometimes drew upon Hebraisms to be translated into the Greek.

Says the *New Bible Dictionary*: “The language in which the New Testament documents have been preserved is the ‘common Greek’ (koine), which was the lingua franca of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean lands in Roman times” (p.713).

This same authority adds:

“Having thus summarized the general characteristics of New Testament Greek, we may give a brief characterization of each individual author. Mark is written in the Greek of the common man. . . . Matthew and Luke each utilize the Markan text, but each corrects his solecisms, and prunes his style. . . . Matthew's own style is less distinguished than that of Luke -- he writes a grammatical Greek, sober but cultivated, yet with some marked Septuagintisms; Luke is capable of achieving momentarily great heights of style in the Attic tradition, but lacks the power to sustain these; he lapses at length back to the style of his sources or to a very humble koine. . . .

“Paul writes a forceful Greek, with noticeable developments in style between his earliest and his latest Epistles. . . . James and I Peter both show close acquaintance with classical style, although in the former some very ‘Jewish’ Greek may also be seen. The Johannine Epistles are closely similar to the Gospels in language. . . . Jude and II Peter both display a highly tortuous and involved Greek. . . . The Apocalypse, as we have indicated, is sui generis in language and style: its vigour, power, and success, though a tour de force, cannot be denied” (p.715-716).

There is no evidence at all to suppose that the New Testament was originally written in anything but ancient Greek! Concludes the *New Bible Dictionary*, “In summary, we may state that the Greek of the New Testament is known to us today as a language ‘understood of the people,’ and that it was used with varying degrees of stylistic attainment, but with one impetus and vigour, to express in these documents a message which at any rate for its preachers was continuous with that of the Old Testament Scriptures -- a message of a living God, concerned for man's right relation with Himself, providing of Himself the means of reconciliation.”

The cumulative total of the evidence all shows that Almighty God INSPIRED Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the rest of the writers of the New Testament -- even including Peter and James – to write all their gospels and epistles IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE! Only Matthew's gospel was apparently written first in Hebrew or Aramaic. The other New Testament writers, in using the Greek language, also used the GREEK FORMS of God's name, and the name of Jesus Christ, repeatedly and consistently! Clearly, therefore, God Himself does not disapprove of His name being translated into different human languages!

It is a spurious, specious argument to claim that the New Testament *had* to have been written in Hebrew, and *had* to contain only the Hebrew names for God, simply based on a person's personal "belief" – with NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER to support that belief!

All the evidence of the manuscripts points otherwise.

Those who deny that the Old Testament faithfully preserves the knowledge of God's name, and who claim the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, utilizing the Hebrew names for God, have no evidence or proof whatsoever to back up their claims. Should we then believe them? Should we take their speculations as "fact"? Of course not!

As we have seen, all the evidence indicates that not only did Jesus Christ and the apostles speak in Greek as a common language of their society, in their day, but the earliest New Testament documents, dated from the first century itself, also prove that the New Testament was as a whole originally written in the Greek language!

The apostle Paul carefully cautions and exhorts true Christians, "*PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good*" (I Thess.5:21). The Greek word for "prove" here is *dokimazo* and means, "prove, examine, put to the test, try." It is the same word used when Paul exhorts us, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one EXAMINE ["prove"] his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal.6:3-4). It is the same word used in Luke 14:19 where we read of a man saying, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to TEST ["prove"] them."

Put the writings of the Sacred Names Only crowd to the acid test. Compare what they claim with the evidence of history, and the Word of God itself! Don't allow yourself to be taken in by their specious claims.

Rather, let's "all come to the unity of the faith and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Ephesians 4:13-14, NKJV).

But Why Use Greek?

Why did God use Greek, to preserve the New Testament, instead of Hebrew? I suspect it is because of this very problem we are discussing! God says the gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK” (Rom.1:16). Furthermore, Isaiah the prophet, who lived about 800 B.C., prophesied:

“Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and ANOTHER TONGUE [LANGUAGE] will he speak to this people” (Isaiah 28:11).

Here God inspired His prophet to state categorically that He would speak to His people in “ANOTHER” language. Obviously, this meant a language other than Hebrew. Why would God do this?

Why should it be thought a think remarkable that God, in His infinite wisdom, would use GREEK, “another tongue,” or language, to write the New Testament, to show that language itself is not holy, or to be worshipped, and to show that national, spiritual, or linguistic PRIDE and arrogance are not of God, but of the Devil?

Historically, the Jews have been proud -- proud of the fact that they have been entrusted with the oracles, words, of God, to preserve, and interpret (Rom.3:1-2). This pride caused a division between them and Gentiles around them -- an “enmity” (Eph.2:15). This “enmity” was due to the many laws and customs the Jews developed which in some cases appeared to be racially motivated, and seemed to show a “holier than thou” attitude (Isa.65:5). This enmity was compounded on both sides, as the Jews hated the Romans who were ruling over them, and the Romans hated the Jews because of their “different ways,” their stubbornness, and latent hostility. The scorn and distrust was mutual. It created a “barrier” between Jews and Gentiles.

However, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came to break down this artificial barrier, to remove it, as Paul wrote:

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made OF BOTH ONE, and hath *broken down the middle wall of partition between us*; having abolished in his flesh THE ENMITY, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [Greek, *dogmas* -- Jewish and Gentile laws and customs based on racial pride and superiority, contrary to God's

laws and commandments!]; for to make in himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making PEACE; and that he might reconcile BOTH unto God in one body by the cross, having SLAIN THE ENMITY thereby” (Eph. 2:11-16).

Christ has reconciled both Jew and Greek, Jews and Gentiles, making all ONE IN CHRIST! So, as Paul also wrote, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal.3:27-28).

Perhaps to show there is no respect of persons with God, that that Jews are not better than other people, even though they were given the laws of God to preserve and protect, God decided to use the Greek language for the New Testament, and its writing and preservation!

This would show, therefore, that God doesn't care whether we address Him, in our speech and in our prayers, in the Greek language, or some other language of the world, or in the Hebrew language! MERE SYLLABLES THEMSELVES ARE NOT “HOLY”! It is the thought, meaning, and significance BEHIND the syllables, the Name, that is the vitally important thing!

Some people falsely believe that merely by invoking the name of God, the sacred “Tetragrammaton,” they become somehow “holier,” more righteous, and more powerful spiritually. It gives them a sense of superiority to others, whom they regard as “ignorant.” But righteousness does not consist in the way we pronounce names or words, but in actual deeds of kindness and good works – believing in Christ, the Messiah, and following Him, living like Him, and keeping the commandments of God.

No Respect of Persons with God

“There is no respect of persons with God” (Rom.2:11). God has called Jews and Greeks to His truth. He called many to His Word using the Hebrew language. Others He called using the Greek Scriptures, including the Greek Septuagint which was commonly used by the Greek speaking world during the time of Christ, and which Jesus and the apostles themselves OFTEN quoted from!

And in our day, today, God has used many other languages and translations of His Word to call people to His Truth! He used English, and English-language Bibles, to call MOST of us, today, who are in His Church! English is, in many respects, a fine, wonderful language, rich with meaning, definitions, nuances of thought and expression. God has used English, the language of Ephraim, the leading tribe of the “lost tribes” of Israel -- to preserve and protect His Word, today!

I hope sincerely that these truths, some of them no doubt being new truths, to many of

you, will cause you to rethink your concepts about the names of God, and the purposes of language, and I hope you will see that there is far more to knowing God than merely esoteric pronunciation of a few mere vocal sounds.

To think that mere articulation of a few syllables will gain your entrance into the kingdom of God is to grossly misrepresent the true God of heaven and earth and His character and love!

Those who adhere to the mystical belief that mere syllables will save them, if pronounced correctly, are on the verge of believing in and practicing WITCHCRAFT! This is nothing more than a form of “linguistic superstition.”

Says one Messianic Jewish scholar, Dr. Daniel Botkin, publisher of the “Gates of Eden” newsletter, on this “Sacred Names Only” and “linguistic superstition” matter:

“In these Sacred Name Only groups (hereafter SNO), I have witnessed some adherents using the Name in a lighthearted manner in casual conversation, even while joking around. However, my main complaint against the SNO movement is not the use or non-use of the Name per se, but the fact that their linguistic superstition about ‘God’ and ‘Lord’ unnecessarily separates brethren from one another. Their linguistic superstition discredits SNO advocates and gives Christians and Jews an excuse to reject everything else that is being restored through the Messianic movement -- the Sabbath, the Feasts, the dietary laws, etc. Paul warned Timothy about teachers who are continually ‘doting about *questions and strifes of words*, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings [suspicions]’ (1 Timothy 6:4). I cannot think of a more accurate description of the SNO movement which has been driven by linguistic superstition since its inception.

“Linguistic superstition is the belief that saying certain ‘negative’ words will produce negative results, and saying certain ‘positive’ words in just the right way will produce positive results. This sort of belief system is most apparent in occult magic. Practitioners of occult magic believe that certain words have an inherent power or force within them which can be harnessed and utilized when the words are pronounced in a precise, prescribed manner. The seven sons of Sceva believed this. When they saw Paul doing miracles in the name of Yeshua, they tried to cast out a demon by saying, ‘We adjure you by Yeshua whom Paul preacheth.’ The demon in the man replied, ‘Yeshua I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then, the man leaped on them and gave them a good beating (Acts 19:13-16).

“You would think that Bible Believers would know better than to get entangled in linguistic superstition. Sadly, that is not the case. We have seen linguistic superstition manifested by some Christians in the ‘Word of faith’/‘positive confession’ movement. Now, we are seeing linguistic superstition of another sort being manifested in the Sacred Name Only movement. . . .”

Strifes over words and arguments over syllables – is this the focus God intends us to have? God’s desire from us isn’t self-righteous religion. As Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees of His own day, “Woe to you scribes and Pharsees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith” (Matt.23:23). “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!” (verse 24).

Dr. Botkin continues:

“Hard-core SNO proponents are afraid to utter the words ‘God’ or ‘Lord’ when referring to the Creator. They insist that He must be addressed by His Hebrew Name. Most SNO literature gives a reader the impression that knowing the correct pronunciation of God’s Hebrew name is more important than knowing God Himself.

“Much of what I have read in SNO literature is dangerously close to the occult thinking that existed in first-century Gnosticism. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (pg. 27) says this: ‘Heretical Gnostic systems combined magic and astrology with the Bible. The Hebrew name of God, IAO [*the Greek transliteration of YHWH*], fascinated sorcerers by its vowels, always crucial in ancient magic.’

“Like first-century Gnostic sorcerers, many SNO believers seem equally fascinated by the Hebrew name of God, and have made a fetish out of the Sacred Name. This in itself is not sorcery, of course, but it is a step in that direction. *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*, a translation which has greatly influenced the SNO movement, says in its introduction that ‘the name Yahweh has some inherent meaning of great force’ and speaks of ‘some self-evident force’ contained in the Sacred Name (pg. 26,28). This sort of thinking can lead to linguistic superstition and worse. . . .

“The SNO movement has produced a mixture of good and bad fruit: on the positive side, it has done a lot to help people see that the Sabbath, the Feasts, and the dietary laws are still valid for New Covenant Believers--on the negative side, it has spawned a lot of rotten fruit. Does the good fruit outweigh the rotten fruit or vice versa? We will let God be the Judge of that. We do not wish to judge, but to warn against the poison of rotten fruit” (*Gates of Eden*, Daniel Botkin, “Linguistic Superstition and the Sacred Name Only Movement,” December 2001).

Dr. Daniel Botkin, publisher of *Gates of Eden*, a very informative newsletter, goes on to pinpoint some of the most egregious errors in the Sacred Name Only movement. He asserts:

“Some minor errors in a person’s thinking can be relatively harmless. Unfortunately, some of the errors in the SNO movement are not harmless. The proof of this statement is in the rotten fruit the movement has borne. This unhealthy fruit is primarily a glaring lack of love for the brethren. We all know the importance of loving one’s neighbor as one’s self; we know that the fruit of the Spirit is love; we know about I Corinthians 13. Yet if it were not for a few loving SNO friends whom I know personally, I would have to conclude from SNO literature that SNO believers *hate* the brethren. And I have been reading SNO literature regularly since the mid-1980s.

“Indeed, many SNO proponents do not even consider the brethren their brethren. Christians who do not use the Hebrew names are often regarded as lost at best and as devil worshipers at worst. One large SNO organization printed these words in a newsletter last August: ‘Christianity calls “God’s” Son by the name “Jesus.” Thus, those worshipping “this son” are committing spiritual adultery!!’ This is from one of the more tolerant SNO organizations. Other SNO writers have flatly stated that Christians who use the words ‘God,’ ‘Lord,’ and ‘Jesus Christ’ are actually worshipping Satan” (*ibid.*).

Certainly, one discerns a distinctly non-Christian, ungodly, extremely judgmental attitude on the part of those who indulge this “Sacred Names Only” fantasy! Could it be that they themselves are the ones who have been deceived and seduced by that wicked old serpent, called the dragon, the devil, and Satan?

The important thing in God's sight is not whether we pronounce the syllables and consonants of His name in some precise manner. But rather, whether we love Him with all our heart, mind and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. As Jesus Christ said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Praise God – His truth is so wonderful, and simple! There is no need for magical formulas, witchcraft, occult symbols, or mystical pronunciations! As Micah the prophet declared, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Chapter Four

The Name of God Revealed!

In the book of Genesis we read, “In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth” (Gen.1:1). The original word translated “God” in this verse is “Elohim” in the Hebrew. In the time of Abraham, God appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless” (Gen.17:1). In this verse God reveals Himself to Abraham the patriarch by the name of “El Shaddai” in the original Hebrew. Translated into English, it means “God Almighty.” “El” is a shortened form of “Elohim,” and “Shaddai” means “all mighty, all powerful” in Hebrew.

However, when God began to call Moses to bring His people out of captivity in Egypt, He revealed Himself to Moses by an altogether different name. Notice! When Moses went over to investigate a mysterious burning bush that would not burn up, God said to him, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). This is the same word for God used in Genesis 1:1, *Elohim*.

Is *Elohim* God's actual name? The Scriptures often use the word *Elohim* to refer to the true God, the Creator, the Almighty God. But this same word is also used in other places where it is used of “gods,” false gods, pagan deities, and is also translated sometimes as “judge,” “judges,” or even “angels.” Literally, it simply describes the essence of “might” or “power” as applied to individuals, whether the true God, idols, angels, or human magistrates or judges. It means, “that which is strong.” Thus the term *Elohim* is not used as the literal “name” of God, for there are many kinds of “elohim,” including false gods. It is a generic term, and sometimes refers to the true God, and at other times to pagan gods. In English, we differentiate between the two by spelling “God” with a capital “G” and “gods” with a small “g.” In Hebrew, there is no such manner of distinguishing between the two, and context supplies the correct rendition.

God Has Many Names

The Scriptures show that God Almighty has many names. In fact, in rabbinical thought, it is stated that God’s Name is the entire “Torah” – it spells the long form of His Name. Since one’s name represents one’s total character, in God’s sight, this would be true. In fact, one could even say that God’s Name is His entire WORD – from the first word of Genesis to the last word of the book of Revelation!

Among God's names are *Elohim*, a uni-plural word, usually translated "God" in the English, but which literally means, in Hebrew, "The Mighty Ones." Its singular form is *El*, meaning, "God," or "Mighty One."

The word is similar to the Hebrew *cherub* and *cherubim*. The cherubim were a high ranking order of angels whom God created (Ezek.1, 10). There were at least four of them, that we know of, which guard and transport the throne of God in heaven, two of them stretching their wings over the mercy seat (Exodus 25:18-20). The word "cherub" is singular, but the plural form is "cherubim." Even so, we have "El," and "Elohim."

However, as God is ONE, the plural form *Elohim* shows God as a Family, or as a perfect UNITY-- one in purpose, thought, mind, spirit, totality!

The Shema of Israel says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut.6:4). Or, "The LORD our God, the LORD is ONE." The Hebrew word for "one" is *echad*. It means a perfect UNITY. For example, God told Adam and Eve, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be ONE [*echad*] flesh" (Gen.2:24). They become united, in God's sight, as ONE FLESH, a perfect unity. But GOD is "One" in perfect body, soul and SPIRIT -- a divine UNITY.

Interestingly, in Hebrew, the numerical value of the word for "one" and the numerical value of the word "love" are *one and the same!* Thus "perfect love" is perfect "unity" or "oneness" in God's sight!

Jesus Himself alluded to this truth. He prayed to the Father, with these words,

"That they all may be ONE; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US . . . And the glory which thou hast gavest me I have given them; that they may be ONE, *EVEN AS WE ARE ONE*: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be MADE PERFECT IN ONE . . ." (John 17:21-23).

Notice these very profound words, which express the true UNITY of God. There is NO DIVISION, no rivalry, no schism, no splitting off, NO COMPETITION, no pulling apart, in the body of God, but there is PERFECT UNITY -- ONENESS!

Now let's turn to the place where God -- *Elohim* -- identifies himself to Moses. Although there is evidence that the patriarchs also knew God by this name, in the book of Genesis, it is evident that Israel lost the knowledge of God's name while in slavery to the Egyptians for two hundred years and more. By the time of the Exodus, they had lost the knowledge of the true Sabbath, and when the weekly cycle occurs (Exodus 16), and God had to reveal His Sabbath to them once again. They had become mired in Egyptian customs and pagan rites and beliefs, and the knowledge of the true God had become dim in their eyes.

Therefore, during this time of apostasy and slavery, God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in Sinai. When God began speaking to Moses, He said, “I am God [Elohim] of thy father, the God [Elohim] of Abraham, the God [Elohim] of Isaac, and the God [Elohim] of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). Moses, knowing that the term *Elohim* meant “God,” and was more a title, than a distinct name, as there are many “gods” including pagan gods, then asked God:

“Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, *What is his name?* what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM [Hebrew, *EHEYEH asher EHEYEH*]: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (verses 13-14). God continues, “The LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers . . . hath sent me unto you: THIS IS MY NAME FOR EVER, and this is my memorial to all generations” (Exodus 3:15).

In these verses, when God says “I AM THAT I AM,” He is saying to Moses, according to the Septuagint, “*I am he who exists.*” The Syriac, Persic, and Chaldee preserve the original words without a gloss. The Arabic paraphrases them, “The Eternal, who passes not away.”

The Targum of Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum paraphrase the words: “He who spake, and the world was; who spake, and all things existed.” The original words, Adam Clarke points out, signify “*I will be what I will be.*” The words seem to suggest the eternity of God, and His self-existence, His absolute independence and complete control and power.

When God says, “This is my name for ever,” He is referring to the expression in verse 13, “The LORD [YHVH] God.” This, in the Hebrew, is a compilation of the two names YHVH and *Elohim*. This is the name by which God had been known from the creation of the world (Genesis 2:4). The pagan, heathen nations corrupted this name into their own forms, such as Jao, Jeve, Jove, Jupiter.

In Exodus 3, however, Moses goes on to say to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” (Exo.3:13). God responded, saying:

“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

God went on, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob -- has sent me to you.’ THIS IS MY NAME FOREVER, the name by which I am to be REMEMBERED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION” (Exodus 3:15).

The Hebrew word here translated “LORD” is actually the word “YHVH” – in Hebrew it is **יהוה** -- called the Tetragrammaton. It is composed of the four vowel-consonants Y-H-V-H and is usually translated as “LORD,” in capital letters, in most English translations. The Moffatt translation, however, renders it, “The Eternal.” The God of the Scriptures says that THIS NAME is the real, personal, definitive name by which He is to be remembered. There are many “gods” in the world, but only one true “God.” His name is YHVH -- not Jupiter, Zeus, Baal, Tammuz, Thor, Odin, or any other of the names of the pagan gods!

But how should this original, true name of the One and Only True God be pronounced?

What do the letters YHVH in Hebrew signify? In this passage of Scripture God Himself defines the name, saying it means, “I AM WHO I AM,” or the great “I AM.” This expression gives the essence of the meaning of the name. God is the One who “Is,” the “Self-existent One,” the One who supremely “Is What He Is” or “Is Who He Is.” He was, is, and always will be, the “I AM.” He will be what He will be, do what He will do. He is the independent, self-existent One, who owes His existence to no one else. Thus He stands alone and apart from all other objects, beings, or persons called “god.” He alone is the “I AM WHO I AM.”

The NAME of the True God

Says the *Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* of this name,

“**יהוה** *Jehova*, pr. name of the supreme God **האלהים** amongst the Hebrews. The later Hebrews, for some centuries before the time of Christ, either misled by a false interpretation of certain laws (Ex.20:7; Lev.24:11), or else following some old superstition, regarded this name as so very holy, that it might not even be pronounced . . . Whenever, therefore, this nomen tetragrammaton occurred in the sacred text . . . they were accustomed to substitute for it **אדני** [Adonai], and thus the vowels of the noun **אדני** [Adonai] are in the Masoretic text placed under the four letters **יהוה** [YHVH] . . . This custom was already in vogue in the days of the LXX translators . . .” (p.337).

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* adds the following information:

“YAHVEH. 1. The Word. **Yahveh is the most probable transliteration of the ancient Hebrew name for God.** It is frequently, especially among German scholars, written Jahweh, Jahveh, Jahve or Yahweh; but these forms call either for the German pronunciation of j as y, or of w as v, or both. The oldest traditions as to the pronunciation of the name Yahveh are found in the church fathers. Of these, Clement of Alexandria (about 215 C.E.; *Stromata* 5, 6:34) writes Iasuai = Iaove [Yahveh], while Theodoret (about 386-457 C.E. . .) gives IaBe [Yahbeh] as the Samaritan pronunciation and 'Ia [Yah] as that of the Jews . . .” (p.584).

This authority adds, “That the divine name was frequently shortened is clear from the occurrence of the short form Yah, which frequently occurs at the end of Hebrew personal names, such as Elijah and Jeremiah, and in the word Hallelujah; Yah also occurs a few times independently, as in Ex.15:2; Isa.12:2;Ps.68:5; 118:14.”

In the light of these and other facts, says the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, the first syllable of the divine name was clearly “Ya,” or ‘Yah,” and the only possible uncertainty would involve the second syllable.

“Was the name originally Yah, Yahu, Yaho or Yahveh? . . . the reading [YHVH] IS VERY OLD, being found in line 18 of the Moabite Stone, the inscription of King Mesha of Moab, written in the 9th century B.C.E. This goes far toward establishing the priority of the four-lettered name (Tetragrammaton). IT IS THE OLDEST KNOWN DATABLE INDEPENDENT OCCURRENCE OF THE DIVINE NAME” (ibid.).

The Torah: A Modern Commentary, adds that:

“**Overwhelming scholarly opinion** holds that יהוה [YHVH] was in Moses' time pronounced יהוה (Yahveh). There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah (יה) which may represent the original from which Yahveh was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription” (p.426).

The name “El” is applied to God 217 times in the Old Testament. It is the general Semitic term for a god. It most probably comes from a root meaning “to be strong.” The use of *El* as a divine name is confined almost entirely to poetry; otherwise, it occurs generally in the generic sense rather than as a proper name. The term “ha-el” means “the true God,” while “eli” means “my God,” “el’abicha” means “the God of thy fathers,” and “ha-el hakadosh,” “the holy God.”

The name *Elohim* occurs 2,570 times in the Bible, and is found with two principal meanings -- as a designation for heathen gods in general, and as a name for God.

The Tetragrammaton, or four-lettered Name, YHVH, occurs 6,823 times, and is by far the most frequent name of God used in the Scriptures. The Samaritans pronounced it as *Iabe* [Yah-bey] and Origen transcribes it as *Iae*, both pointing to an original vocalization of *Yahveh*. The “v” and “b” sounds are very similar in Hebrew.

These names and titles for God were known by the ancient world. The knowledge of the Tetragrammaton was known to mankind as early as the second generation after Adam. Speaking of that period of history, the book of Genesis relates, “At that time men began to call on the

NAME of the LORD [YHVH]” (Gen.4:26). The first usage of the name for God in the Scriptures occurs in Genesis 2:4 – “When the LORD [YHVH] God made the earth and the heavens . . . the LORD [YHVH] God formed the man from the dust of the ground . . .”

The name Yahveh occurs frequently in the book of Genesis, proving that this name WAS KNOWN to the world before the Flood, and before the time of Moses! Although Moses was the author of the book of Genesis, it is obvious that he used many historical records that came down from the pre-Flood world, and from the time of the patriarchs. God inspired him to write Genesis as a record of the ancient world and God's dealings with it. If God had not revealed His name Yahveh to that world, then Moses would not have used it in the book of Genesis.

Says the *New Dictionary of the Bible*:

“Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only ‘name’ of God. In Genesis wherever the word sem (‘name’) is associated with the divine being that name is Yahweh. When Abraham or Isaac built an altar ‘he called on the name of Yahweh’ (Gen.12:8, 13:4, 26:25).

“In particular, Yahweh was the God of the Patriarchs, and we read of ‘Yahweh the God (Elohim) of Abraham’ and then of Isaac and finally ‘Yahweh, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,’ concerning which Elohim says, ‘this is my name for ever’ (Exo.3:15). Yahweh, therefore, in contrast to Elohim, is a PROPER NOUN, the name of a Person, though that Person is divine. As such, it has its own ideological setting: it presents God as a Person, and so brings Him into relationship with other, human, personalities. It brings God near to man, and He speaks to the Patriarchs as one friend to another” (p.478).

God's Name More Fully Defined

Says the *Critical-Experimental Commentary*, “I AM THAT I AM. God here proclaims his name to Moses by an expansion of the title Jehovah, or Jahve.” (However, there was no letter ‘J’ amongst the Hebrews, and the first letter should be our ‘Y.’ Thus, ‘Yehovah,’ or ‘Yahveh,’ would be more correct, for us today.)

Again, the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* tells us:

“YAHVEH. 1. The Word. **Yahveh is the most probable transliteration of the ancient Hebrew name for God.** It is frequently, especially among German scholars, written Jahweh, Jahveh, Jahve or Yahweh; but these forms call either for the German pronunciation of *j* as *y*, or of *w* as *v*, or both. The oldest traditions as to the pronunciation of the name Yahveh are found in the church fathers. Of these, Clement of Alexandria (about 215 C.E.; *Stromata* 5, 6:34) writes *Iasuai* = *Ioove* [Yahveh], while Theodoret (about 386-457 C.E.; *Qttastio 15 in Ex.*) gives *IaBe* [Yahbeh] as the Samaritan pronun-

ciation and *Ia* [Yah] as that of the Jews (cf. also Epiphanius, *Adversus haereticos* 40:5, who also has *IaBe*. The earliest post-Biblical Hebrew reading of the name known to us is יהביה, which is found in an old incantation bowl from the 6th or 7th century C.E. (Mongomery, J.A., in *Museum Journal* of the University of Pennsylvania, 1910, pp.28-30). **This was evidently VOCALIZED AS YAHBEH . . .**" (p.584).

The Askenazi Jews, who migrated through Russia and Europe, and settled in Germany and other regions of Europe, tend to use the letter "v" for the final consonant of God's name. When many commentaries, or authors, refer to *Yahweh*, we need to remember that they have been heavily influenced by the German "w" which sounds like an English "v." The "w" should be pronounced as a "v" just as in the word "Volkswagen," which in German is literally, "Volks VAGON."

Says the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, once again:

"In the light of these facts, it is clear that the first syllable of the name was Ya-, and the only possible uncertainty attaches to the second syllable. Was the name originally Yah, Yahu, Yaho or Yahveh? If the original pronunciation was Yahveh, then Yahu is most easily explained as a contraction . . . In this case the old form Yahveh and the new form Yahu continued side by side. If Yah or Yahu was original, then YAHVEH is a later theologizing expansion.

"However, the reading יהוה [Yahveh] is very old, being found in line 18 of the Moabite Stone, the inscription of King Mesha of Moab, written in the 9th century B.C.E. This goes far to establishing the priority of the FOUR-LETTERED NAME (Tetragrammaton). It is the oldest known datable independent occurrence of the divine name. . . . Unfortunately, the Moabite form, being unvocalized, gives us no help in pronunciation. **The prevailing opinion is in favor of the reading YAHVEH**, but even this is open to some question. . . ." (*The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Yahveh," p.584-585).

In another article, "God, Names of," this same authority goes on to elaborate on the names of God as found in the Scriptures. We read:

"The Tetragrammaton or Four-Lettered Name (יהוה), which occurs 6,823 times, is by far the most frequent name of God in the Bible. It is now pronounced *Adonai*; but the church father Theodoret records that the Samaritans pronounced it *IaBe*, and Origen transcribes it as *Iae*, both pointing to an original vocalization **YAHVEH**" (p.6).

Another authority, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, edited by W. Gunther Plaut, and published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, tells us more about this name of God. Commenting on the pronunciation of the name, it says:

“A large literature exists which deals with the proper pronunciation of the Name as well as its etymology, and much of this is of a highly technical nature. The following represents a brief summary:

“VOCALIZATION. How the Name was originally vocalized is no longer certain. Its pronunciation was in time restricted to the Temple service, then to the High Priest intoning it on the Day of Atonement, and after after the destruction of the Temple it received a substitute pronunciation both for the reading of Scripture and for its use in prayer.

“The Masoretes who vocalized the Hebrew texts took the vowels from the word Adonai and put them with YHVH to remind the reader not to pronounce the Name but to substitute Adonai. . . .

“OVERWHELMING SCHOLARLY OPINION HOLDS THAT YHVH WAS IN MOSES' TIME PRONOUNCED YAHVEH. There is also a shorter form of the Name, Yah, which may represent the original form from which **YAHVEH** was expanded or may, contrariwise, be a contraction of the longer ascription. . . .” (p.425-426).

Judging by the available evidence at hand, it seems most probable and likely that the correct pronunciation of the divine name represented by the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, is simply YAHVEH.

Although the name Yahveh was known to the patriarchs, and men before the Flood, it was not fully comprehended or understood. After God had called Moses, and sent him to Pharaoh, with His message to let His people go, and Pharaoh obstinately refused to listen, Moses himself complained to God, “Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all” (Exo.5:23).

God replied to Moses: “‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of the country.’ God also said to Moses, ‘I am the LORD [Yahveh]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name The LORD [Yahveh] I did not make myself known to them’” (Exo.6:1-3).

The Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). It does not contradict itself. God was known to the patriarchs by the name Yahveh, as Genesis clearly shows.

What, then, does God mean here in this verse?

Let us continue, reading this statement in context. God goes on, telling Moses, “I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I

have REMEMBERED my covenant. Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD [Yahveh], and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will FREE you from being slaves to them, and I will REDEEM you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. THEN YOU WILL KNOW that I am the LORD [Yahveh] your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD [Yahveh]’” (Exo.6:4-8).

Obviously, the patriarchs were not totally ignorant of the name Yahveh. But also obviously God had not revealed to them the FULL IMPLICATIONS or MEANING of the name Yahveh! They did not know Him as the One who would RESCUE His people, FREE them from slavery, and REDEEM them from tyranny and oppression! This aspect of His Name could only be comprehended by the generation of Israelites who would experience and see the intervening God Yahveh IN ACTION, destroying Egypt and its people and power, and rescuing them and bringing them through the Red Sea waters by a divine miracle, and providing for them in the wilderness by His supernatural, divine power!

In a sense, the patriarchs knew of God as “Yahveh” by name -- but not by the insight provided by personal, deep EXPERIENCE! Thus God, Yahveh, made Himself KNOWN to His people, and to the Egyptians, more and more as He poured out each plague upon Egypt. Each time they got a new respect for His power and authority. When God smote the waters of Egypt so they became blood, He said to them, “By this you will KNOW that I am the LORD [Yahveh]” (Exo.7:17. See also Exodus 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 11:7; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 8, 12; 18:11). Each time God specifically intervened for His people, He revealed more intimately and more powerfully HIS NAME and its meaning and attributes.

Says The Torah: A Modern Commentary,

“Moses and the people had since patriarchal days known the name YHVH as God's name, but in the centuries since then this knowledge had hardly been more than a customary appellation. At the first revelation, at the bush, Moses is charged with his mission but -- despite being provided with access to the divine name Ehyeh -- he does not come radically closer to the essence of the God he seeks to know. Now, however, after his first trials and failures, Moses confronts the Deity again, and this time God reveals His name more fully, which is to say that Moses glimpses the Divine more clearly than before” (pgs.424- 425).

This authority goes on, “Moses, however, begins to see God in a new light: He is faithful, merciful, and compassionate; He remembers His people and -- this is most important -- He will redeem them because He will be shown to be superior to all the powers in heaven and on earth. Beside Him, as the second commandment will state specifically, there is none else, and any adoration of other gods will therefore be an idolatrous enterprise, useless for the nations and

illegitimate for Israel” (*ibid.*).

Is the Correct Pronunciation Known Today?

Can we really know *how* to correctly pronounce God’s name, today? There is much diversity of opinion on this question. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* states, however, “The truth pronunciation of the name YHVH was never lost” (vol.7, page 680).

The Jews by the second century of the present era had largely become a non-Hebrew speaking people. Therefore the Jewish scribes devised a number of vowel symbols which they placed below and above Hebrew letters to show how the word or letters were to be pronounced.

For centuries, however, the Jews had not in general pronounced the name of God, due to superstition and rabbinic rulings. It was an attempt to prevent people committing blasphemy by using the name inappropriately. The downside of this ruling, however, is that most Jews did forget how to pronounce the name, and much confusion exists even today.

How, then, can we know how it should be pronounced? Is “Yahveh” [Yah as in fah and Vay, as in way stay, play, with a “long a” sound, and with a hard “v”] the correct way? Or should it be more like “Yah-way” with a “w” sound?

This may seem like a minor matter, and perhaps it is not the most important thing in the world. However, since so many “scholars” and unbelievers, and sacred name sects and cults *insist* on pronouncing the name “Yahweh” with a “w” sound, I believe this pronunciation is most likely wrong inferior to “Yahveh” with a “v” sound. Here are unassailable facts.

Clement of Alexandria, one of the early ante-Nicean fathers who lived in the second century of the present era, declared that the sacred name of God was pronounced *Iaove* and *Iaovai* (the “v” being pronounced like an English “v”). Origen, of the early third century, gives the form *Yah-ay*. Theodoret, supported by Epiphanius, states that the Samaritans of that time – the fifth century of the modern era – pronounced the sacred name as *IaBe*. Epiphanius declares this was the pronunciation of an early Christian sect (probably the Nazarenes).

In the English language, these words would be pronounced as YABAY, or YABEH – VERY SIMILAR TO “YAHVAY.” The “b” and “v” sounds are very much alike.

The existing remnant of the Samaritans claimed they still knew the correct pronunciation of the divine name even in 1689 A.D. A letter from a Samaritan high priest in 1820 contains a benediction containing the sacred name. And the son of a Samaritan high priest in Jerusalem in 1904-5 pronounced the sacred name as “Yahwe” and “Yahu.” Concludes scholar G. J. Thierry from the Samaritan evidence:

“But the Samaritans have preserved the OLD PRONUNCIATION OF GOD’S NAME, which the Jews too had used in older times, but which they have dropped. So *YABAI and YABE probably maintain the old Israelitic tradition which the Jews themselves lost*”(OTS, vol.5, p.36).

Thus the Samaritan form of the holy name of God agrees completely with the other ancient sources, including the early Church fathers!

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word **עֵוָה** (*auah* or *auvah*) is found in II Kings 18:34, and here the word is translated in the Septuagint (LXX) by the Greek letters *aBa*, showing that the Hebrew “vav” was translated into the Greek by the letter “B” or “beta.” Again, this would make the Hebrew name for God to be pronounced with the “vav” having a hard “v” or “b” sound, as in Yah-veh or Yah-beh.”

It is a well known fact that the the ancient Greek letter “b” (beta) carried the pronunciation of the Latin “v” as opposed to the English “b.” For example, the Latin name of the Gothic tribe of the Vandals, was “Vandali.” The Greek name for the same tribe was the “Bandilous.” Therefore, this evidence suggests that the name of God in Hebrew would be pronounced “Yah-vey” or “Yah-bey” rather than “Yahweh.”

When the evidence is all considered, therefore, I believe the best pronunciation of the sacred name of God – known as the Tetragrammaton – is simply “YAH-VAY” or “YAH-VEY.” This is supported by the modern Israeli pronunciation of the Hebrew letter “vav,” also. The Ashkenazi Hebrews in modern Hebrew pronounce the letter “vav” with a “v” sound.

A Simple Proof for Those Who Truly Want to Know

What the original pronunciation of God's Name, the Tetragrammaton, boils down to, then, is simply a matter of basic phonetics -- the pronunciation laws of consonants and syllables. The fact is, the three English letters u, v, and w, all come from the original Hebrew letter “vav.” As I have shown, in Hebrew the consonant “vav” can be pronounced either like a u, w, or a v. The key to its original and basic usage and pronunciation, then, must be determined by phonetic rules. As the “vav” without any additional vowel pointing is considered the “v” (“vee”) sound in Hebrew, that would appear to be the original and basic pronunciation.

A simple illustration of this is the very first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1, where we read in Hebrew, “Bereshith bara Elohim vet ha shamayim **va** et ha erez.” In English, this translates as “Bereshith [In the beginning] bara [created] Elohim [God] et [not translated] ha shamayim [the heavens] **va** [and] et [not translated] ha erez [the earth].” Now here is the simple Hebrew conjunction “v” which in English represents the word “and.” Now if we try to say this Hebrew word as some suggest the name of God must be pronounced, as a “w” sound, it is very difficult to do so. Phonetically, a “wa” or “wu” sound in this verse for “va” would be swallowed

up -- it is weak phonetically. But the “va” sound -- which sounds much like a “ba” -- has more force and stands alone, independently. In this case, I believe the “v” sound is much more appropriate, simply from a phonetics point of view. This would seem to be true for everywhere the “vav” is used as the Hebrew conjunction “and,” “yet,” “but,” “nor,” etc.

But regardless of these matters, is it really necessary that people pronounce the name of God “just right” in order to be saved? If so, then thousands and even millions of Christians who lived and died in the Middle Ages, never having understood the exact Hebrew pronunciation of God’s name would have died in vain -- including John Tyndale, an English scholar in the Middle Ages who translated the Bible into English, laying the foundation for the later King James Version – a man who was martyred for the Word of God’s sake!

God’s Spirit is not the spirit of extremism or fanaticism. Rather, God has given us the spirit “of power, and of love, and of a SOUND MIND” (II Tim.1:6-7). Let's strive to have a BALANCED, SOUND-MINDED approach to this subject. Those who insist on using only the Hebrew names of God are straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel! Nowhere does the Bible tell us that it is wrong to use the names of God in Aramaic, Greek, or any other language of the earth.

On the other hand, however, there is rich meaning and significance in the original Hebrew names and titles of God. They are very important, and we should know them and use them, whenever it seems appropriate and desirable to do so. The proper name of God in the Old Testament is *Yahveh*, and it does have a special meaning and significance that we should always remember. It is very good to use this name, when addressing God in Prayer, and when speaking of Him. But to do so exclusively, all the time, is not required or necessary. We will discuss this more later in this booklet.

Chapter Five

The Name of God Hidden

Although the divine name of God was clearly commonplace in usage during Biblical times, by the first century the Name was only used in the holy Temple. The High Priest uttered it quietly on the Day of Atonement. However, the common people were commanded by the Pharisees to never speak the divine name.

According to the Talmud, after the time of Simon the Just, even the cohen gadol – the high priest – stopped using the divine name in the blessings (b.Yoma 49b). In the Second Temple, the name was used again, but only in the Temple. The Mishnah states: “In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written but in the provinces, with a euphemism” (m.Sotah 7:6; b.Sotah 38b; M. Tamid 7:2).

Josephus mentions the ban on using the holy name of God. He wrote, of Moses at the burning bush:

“Moses having now seen and heard these wonders that assured him of the truth of these promises of God, had no room left him to disbelieve them: he entreated Him to grant him that power when he should be in Egypt; and besought Him to vouchsafe him the knowledge of His own name; and, since he had heard and seen Him, that He would also tell him His name, that when he offered sacrifice he might invoke Him by such His name in his oblations. Whereupon God declared to him His holy name, which had never been discovered to men before; concerning which it is not lawful for me to say anymore” (*Antiquities*, bk.2, chap.12, part 4).

By “not lawful” Josephus meant that laws had been issued by rabbinical leaders forbidding the usage of the divine name. The ban seems to have been nearly universal by the first century.

After the Temple’s destruction in 70 A.D., however, the Pharisees banned the usage of the Name completely. The new teaching was that the name was to be “hidden” and “kept secret” (b.Pes. 50a; b.Kidd. 71a).

Where did they obtain this idea? Very likely, from Babylon! One of the ancient Babylonian beliefs was the “ineffability” of divine names – the Babylonians had a superstition that using using divine names would lead to dreadful consequences. So out of fear, the people did not use divine names, lest something happen to them.

Today, Jews still follow this pagan custom, by omitting the “o” from “God,” resulting in “G-d,” and from “Lord,” leaving “L-rd.” Instead of vocalizing God’s Name, they now use the replacement term “Ha Shem,” meaning, “The Name.”

Is this how we should really show reverence and worship and respect for our Creator and heavenly Father?

Rabbis went so far, the Talmud says, that they declared everything must be done to mask the name of YHVH from ever being invoked (Tamid 7:2; Sota 7:6). This led to the Massoretes of the 8th century adding vowel points under the YHVH letters, causing readers to mispronounce the divine Name. They substituted the vowel points for “Adonai,” or “Lord.” In some places, they even substituted “Adonai” for “YHVH” in the text itself!

Despite these efforts, however, the true pronunciation of the divine Name is known, today. Says Rabbi Yeshayahu Heiliczer, in “The Divine Name”:

“The Peshitta is an Aramaic text of the Bible used by Aramaic speaking Assyrians, Syrians, and Chaldeans. These Aramaic speaking peoples became Christianized in the first century C.E. By the fourth century (long before the Masorites of the ninth century) these people created written vowels for the Aramaic text. When they added vowels to names that begin with part of the divine name they got names like *Yahushaphat* rather than *Yehoshaphat*. They did not do the substitution of the vowels from the word *Eloah* as the Masorites later did, but correctly used the prefix *Yah* and *Yahu*.

“*The evidence is enormous. The texts, the translations, the recent discoveries are almost overwhelming.* But it is interesting to note that the other alternative, that is, continuing the pagan superstition of ineffability and breaking the third commandment by bringing His name to naught is supported only by that -- superstition -- and some twisted idea that mispronouncing His name or refusing to use His name or purposely misspelling His name is somehow showing respect.

“If you think that this clears up the question, there is much more evidence on this question -- especially archaeological evidence. But it is clear when examining the many sources that the pronunciation of *yud-hey-vuv-hey* can be recovered as *Yahuveh*, which can be correctly abbreviated as *Yahveh*, *Yahu* or *Yah*. This is attested to by the Yahwitic names of the Masoretic text, the *Peshitta* Aramaic and the *Marashu* texts. The true pronunciation of *yud-hey-vuv-hey* is also preserved in ancient transliterations of the name written in Egyptian Hieroglyphics, cuneiform and Greek, all of which had written vowels.

“The restoration of the use of the name of *Yahveh* with its correct pronunciation is as prophetically significant as the restoration of the true religion of *Yahshua*, that is, *Torah* observant Messianic Judaism. Such a restoration of the name of *Yahveh* to His people is promised in scripture:

“ ‘For then will I turn to the people a pure language, That they may call upon the name of *Yahveh*’ (Zeph. 3:9).

“ ‘Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know my name is *Yahveh*’ (Jer.16:21).

“ ‘Therefore my people shall know my name’ (Is. 52:6).

“We are living in wonderful times, as *Yahshua* tells us, ‘You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of *Yahveh*”’ (Mt. 23:39).”

Rabbi Heiliczzer was asked why some believers spell the Name YHWH instead of YHVH. Should we use a “w” or a “v” sound? His own answer was that both sounds are incorporated in the vav (or waw) of yud-heh-vav (waw)-heh. To one person's ear the sound may be more like a “v” and to another the sound may be more like a “w.” He said either *Yahuveh* or *Yahuweh* or the shortened forms of *Yahveh* and *Yahweh* would be correct.

Incredibly, one religious sect, in Texas known as the “House of Yahweh,” has now even discarded the name “Yahweh,” and instead simply refers to God as “Ha Shem,” meaning, “The Name.” They apparently have accepted the position of Orthodox and Conservative Jews, today, who refuse to utter the name of God because they are fearful of misusing or blaspheming the divine name.

HOW To Worship God

However, the truth is that God WANTS us to use His Name -- properly, reverently, and worshipfully. It is not a name which we should cringe before, in terror and fear. It is a name by which we should REVERENCE AND WORSHIP the Most High God! Therefore, we should not be afraid to speak the name of God, and to use it, so long as we are very respectful. However, we should always and only use it with respect, reverence, and love -- in true worship.

We should strive to remain as faithful to the original Name as we possibly can, with the knowledge we have today. This means, if we use the Tetragrammaton, in worship, or speech, we should use YAHVEH -- pronounced Yaw-vay).

I believe it is very important for us to understand this truth. Why does God reveal these things to us? Because we are living in the end of this age, and the time for these truths to be restored has come!

Restoration of God's Name

Yeshua said of the one coming in His name, to blaze the way, announcing His coming, that, "Elijah is coming first and will *restore* all things" (Matt.17:11). He implied as well that "Elijah" would not be recognized! (same verse). Among those things to be restored is the knowledge of the NAME of the Mighty GOD!

It is certainly not wrong for us to USE the name of God, today, in worship and adoration of the Divine Creator and Holy One of Israel. We should not abuse this knowledge, or begin to take God's name for granted. Nor should we use it "in vain," or to no good use or purpose (Exodus 20:7).

Those who use God's name foolishly, jokingly, or in banter and unimportant matters, will be held accountable. God says on the one hand, "You shall not take the name of the LORD [Yahveh] your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exo.20:7, NKJV).

But on the other hand, David says, "I will DECLARE YOUR NAME to my brethren" (Psalm 22:22). David declares, "Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name" (Psalm 29:2). He says, "Let those also who LOVE your name be joyful in You" (Psalm 5:11).

David declares, "I will praise the LORD . . . and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High" (Psalm 7:17). "I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High" (Psalm 9:2).

A "name" expresses the character, qualities, and intrinsic nature of a person or individual. God's Names tell us just who and what He is, and define for us His very character and nature. It is, therefore, very important that we should know them, and use them, in Greek and Hebrew, and their English translations. God's Name represents WHO AND WHAT HE IS -- not a magical "formula" to perform magical "tricks."

Let us therefore worship the Most High God, *Yahveh*, as He Himself directs and commands. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

King David declares: "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name. . . Glory ye in his holy name" (Psalm 105:1-3).

The Psalmist exhorts: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the NAME of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised" (Psalm 113:1-3).

Isaiah the prophet declares: “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord YHVH [YAHVEH] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD [Yahveh], *call upon his NAME*, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his NAME is exalted” (Isaiah 12:2-4).

Almighty God declares: “I am the LORD [YAHVEH]: that is my name” (Isa.42:8). “As for our redeemer, the LORD [Yahveh] of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel” (Isa.47:4). “But I am the LORD [Yahveh] thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the LORD [YHVH] of hosts is his name” (Isa.51:15).

God thunders: “Therefore my people shall *KNOW MY NAME*: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I” (Isa.52:6). “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the *name* of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer” (Isa.56:6-7).

We read in the book of Acts: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the *name* of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:22; see also Rom.10:13). And the prophet Joel declares: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD [YHVH -- *Yahveh*] shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call” (Joel 2:32).

Knowledge to Be Increased

When I was first converted, largely through reading the New Testament, in the English language, I worshiped God and Jesus Christ by those very names. I knew no other names for either of them. I knew God the Father as “God,” “Lord,” “Almighty God,” and also as “Father.” I knew Jesus Christ by that name, as well as His titles “Saviour,” “Redeemer,” “Lord,” and “Master.”

Years later I learned some basic Hebrew, and studied the subject further. I learned the Hebrew names for “God,” such as “Elohim,” and learned the so-called “Jehovah titles” for God, as revealed in the Old Testament -- and then learned that the word “Jehovah” itself is incorrect. As I grew in knowledge, I came to the point where I thought that the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, was “Yahweh.” Eventually I learned that “Yahveh” would be preferred.

But as Daniel the prophet was told, “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the *time of the end*; many shall run to and fro, and *knowledge shall be increased*” (Daniel 12:4). Daniel was also told, that during the END time, “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, *but the WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND*” (Dan.12:10).

God is now revealing His true NAME to the END-TIME SAINTS! As we learn His name, we should USE it as we worship Him, pray to Him, and praise and glorify HIS NAME! As Jesus Christ said, “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, *Hallowed be Your NAME . . .*” (Matthew 6:9).

The *Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* says of this name: “pr. name of the supreme God amongst the Hebrews. The later Hebrews, for some centuries before the time of Christ, either *misled by a false interpretation of certain laws* (Ex.20:7; Lev.24:11), or *else following some old superstition, regarded this name as so very holy, that it might not even be pronounced. . .* Whenever, therefore, this nomen tetragrammaton occurred in the sacred text . . . they were accustomed to substitute for it [Adonai], and thus the vowels of the noun [Adonai] are in the Masoretic text placed under the four letters [YHVH] . . . This custom was already in vogue in the days of the LXX translators . . .”

What a shame! God means for us to USE His name in a HOLY, godly, pure, and reverential manner – to WORSHIP HIM with all our hearts, mind, soul, and strength!

Every day we should pray, without substitution of any other names, proper name of God. We should remember the Shema, as God commanded:

“Hear, O Israel, YAHVEH our God, YAHVEH is One!
You shall love YAHVEH your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these
words which I command you this day shall be in your
heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children”
(Deut.6:4-7).

Early Hebrew Predated Phoenician

Some think that the early Hebrew alphabet did not have a “w.” However the Hebrew letter “vav” could be used as a sound for an English “v,” “u,” or “w,” depending on the word. The early Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet had a “w,” and some think this was the original Hebrew sound for “vav,” calling it “waw.” However, the *Phoenician* period of history followed the period of Moses by about 500 years. Moses led Israel out of Egypt about 1491 B.C. The apogee of the Phoenician period was from about 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C., from the time of David and Solomon till the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Therefore, the Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet was developed at least 500 years *after* Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible! Thus the Phoenician “w” came at least 500 years too late and could not have been the source for the vowel-consonant sound Moses used for the “vav” in the Tetragrammaton.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* states under the heading “The Earliest Alphabets”:

“The Semites [Hebrews] who lived in Syria and Palestine, knew something of the Egyptian writing system. They worked out an alphabetic writing sometime between 1500 [the time of Moses] and 1000 BC. They used signs to show the consonants of syllables, just as the Egyptians did. But historians can find no instances where the Semites borrowed the characters from Egyptian writing. THEY INVENTED THEIR OWN SET OF CHARACTERS to stand for the consonants in their language. *The oldest Semitic alphabet comes from the SINAI peninsula*” (“Alphabet,” vol.1, page 367).

But of course! This oldest Semitic alphabet was that used by the children of Israel when they were captives of Pharaoh, and when they came out of Egypt through the SINAI peninsula! This occurred between 1491 and 1441 B.C. The Israelites invented their OWN alphabet, and did not borrow from the Egyptians -- and the Phoenician alphabet had not yet been developed.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* continues, concerning the Phoenicians:

“The Phoenicians, who lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, developed a system of 22 signs about 1,000 B.C. Their alphabet was structurally related to Semitic and Egyptian, with signs for consonant sounds, not vowel sounds.”

However, Biblical chronology plainly shows that Moses and Israel left Egypt 500 years before the Phoenician alphabet was developed! And since Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, obviously the Hebrew alphabet preceded the Phoenician.

According to Archbishop Ussher’s chronology, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt occurred in 1491 B.C. Ussher based his chronology on both history and internal Biblical evidence. It is highly reliable. This would have been at the END of the “Middle Kingdom” of Egypt. Unfortunately, modern Egyptologists place the end of the Middle Kingdom, which was destroyed in great catastrophe, roughly 500 years too early in their attempts to reconstruct Egyptian history of the period. Emmanuel Velikovsky's *Ages in Chaos* provides historical support for the proper relationship of Egyptian and Israelite histories for the period in question. The Middle Kingdom of Egypt actually ended in a fiery holocaust, caused by the plagues of God upon the Egyptians. For the historical proof of this, read my article “Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?”

A Small Sect in Texas

It seems strange, therefore, to read the amazing assertions of a small sect in Texas called the “House of Yahweh,” which claims without citing any proof that the letter “v” is not an

original Hebrew letter! (Technically, of course, the Hebrew equivalent of “v” was the “vav”!) In fact, the House of Yahweh claims that the letter “v” and the “v” sound were not known in any language prior to the 1200s A.D., and that this letter developed first among the German people!

In a personal letter to a friend, this sect wrote, “. . . the letter v and its current pronunciation was not known in any language until no earlier than the 1200’s of this current era (A.D.), and . . . this particular letter and its pronunciation developed first among the Germanic peoples . . .” Says this sect, “the letter v and its pronunciation was UNKNOWN to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin speaking peoples in the days of the apostles” (emphasis mine). This, however, is straining at a gnat. The sound of the letter “v” was incorporated in the Hebrew “vav.”

Says the *World Book Encyclopedia*,

“V is the 22nd letter of our alphabet. *It came from a letter used by the Semites, who once lived in Syria and Palestine. They called the letter waw [or vav], their word for hook*” (“V” vol. 20, p.199).

The *World Book* points out that the Egyptians used the symbol of a supporting pole, about 3,000 B.C., and the Semites adopted the symbol and called it “waw” or “vav.” The Phoenicians also adopted it about 1,000 B.C.; the Greeks changed it about 600 B.C., calling it “upsilon.” The Romans, about A.D. 114, gave the “V” its capital form. The small letter “v” was developed during the A.D. 500s from Roman writing. It changed slightly in the 800s, and by the 1500s had the form we use today.

Where does this leave us, then? The “v” sound was a part of ancient Hebrew! Those who say otherwise are false teachers – false “prophets”!

Yeshua the Messiah warned, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. *Therefore by their fruits you will know them*” (Matt.7:15-20).

To know and understand the truth of God, we must carefully evaluate the evidence – all the facts that bear on the subject. We must be careful to “prove all things,” as the apostle Paul declared, and “hold fast that which is good” (I Thess.5:21). There are many false prophets in the world, especially in these “latter times” and “last days.” They upset the faith of some, and bewitch the minds of others. They are generally acting like bona fide “sheep” – true teachers of God’s word – but when we look under their cloak, beneath their “skin,” we find the heart and mind of a wolf – a spiritual predator – who seeks to “feed” on the true sheep of God.

Yeshua said we would “know them by their fruits.” We must *NEVER* allow them to

carry us away with their divisive doctrines and false, clever reasonings, which would lead us astray from the pure word of God – His precious TRUTH!

The apostle Peter warns, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the *way of truth* will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” (II Peter 2:1-3, NKJV).

John declares, “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds*” (II John 8-11).

Jude also warns us: “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots [“stains” or “hidden reefs”] in your love feasts [they even observe God’s Festivals!], while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about [along] by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 10-13).

Jude clearly characterizes them: “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage” (verse 16).

The Sacred Names Only teachings have led many astray, and deceived many. It is a sad thing to watch. We need to beware of their pernicious doctrines.

As our Messiah and Saviour warned us --

Beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing!

Chapter Six

Are "Jesus" and "God" Pagan Names?

What about the name "Jesus"? Does this name come from the Greek Zeus, the chief of the pagan pantheon of gods on Mount Olympus? Does the use of "Jesus" give unwitting homage to Zeus, the Greek form of Baal?

Unfortunately, at least for the sake of the Sacred Names Only people, there is absolutely no historical evidence or etymological documentation for this belief.

God caused *the New Testament* to be written in the Greek language, and in every case God inspired the apostles to use the Greek words for "God" (*Theos*) and "Jesus" (*Iesous*). If God did not intend for us to use these forms of Jesus' name, He would not have inspired His apostles to use them.

All the first century writings of the church fathers show *Iesous* -- "Jesus" -- the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua" or "Yeshua" -- to have been commonly used. This was not a "great *invisible* conspiracy." This is a sad story of the tail wagging the dog.

It is amazing to me how so many people can get so strung out over just a few syllables! There is undoubtedly a mystery and a power in the true Hebrew personal name for God -- *Yahveh* -- when used by a righteous man of God.

As James declared: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas.5:16). This same power is carried over in the New Testament in the meaning and authority of the name "Jesus" or "Yeshua" -- when used by one of His saints, servants, true ministers and prophets! (See Acts 2:38; 4:17-18; 4:10-12; 9:14-15; 16:3; Eph.1:21, 5:20; Phil.2:9-10; I John 3:23.)

The Origin of the Greek Name for Jesus – Iesous

It is a sad fact that some claim to be offended if one even speaks the name “Jesus.” Others use the names “Jesus” and “Yeshua” interchangeably, as we do at Triumph Prophetic Ministries. So what is the origin of the Greek name Iesous (“Jesus”)?

Is the name “Jesus” really of pagan origin? Although some claim Jesus is pagan because they believe it is a derivation of Greek god, Zeus, this is an appalling error. A careful study of Greek grammar, or Hebrew to Greek transliteration, shows there is no factual basis for this belief.

Almost 300 years before the birth of Christ, the Jewish translators of the Septuagint were commissioned to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek for Ptolemy's library at Alexandria. They had great difficulty when it came down to transliterating Hebrew proper names into Greek names. Unlike Hebrew to English transliteration, which is easier because English offers most of the same sounds of Hebrew, Hebrew to Greek transliteration is not so easy. Yet many of our Biblical names in English actually come from Greek transliterations of Hebrew names, such as “Moses,” “Phineas,” and ‘Caiaphas.’

The original name of the Messiah is “Yeshua,” and this Hebrew name, when translated into Greek, is “Iesous.”

How do we get from Yeshua to Iesous (pronounced *Ee-ay-sooce*)?

When transliterating the Hebrew “Yeshua” to Greek:

The י (“yod” or “ye”) becomes Ιη (“iota-eta” – “ye” or “ee-ay,”) in the Koine or Attic dialect of Greek.

The ש (“shin” or “sh”) becomes σ (“sigma” – “s” [there is no “sh” sound in Greek]).

The ו (“vav” or “u”) becomes ου (“omicron-epsilon” – “oo”).

Since this is a masculine name, it is necessary for a final sigma to be placed at the end of the word to distinguish that the name is masculine. Greek grammar rules require that ה *ayin* (“ah”) sound be dropped.

Therefore, in converting the Hebrew to Greek, “Yeshua” -- **ישוע** -- becomes the name *Iesous*, pronounced either *Ye-sooce* or *Ee-ay-sooce*.

This same name – *Iesous* -- is used for the title of the Book of *Joshua* in the Septagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament. It is the actual name of Joshua, in Greek. Therefore, this fact is clear and solid PROOF that *Iesous* is not a name of pagan origin, but rather *is indeed* a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Yeshua. Joshua is another version of Yeshua. *Iesous* is also the Greek transliteration of Yehoshua (יהושע) as demonstrated by the Septuagint.

In Old English, *Iesous* was rendered *Iesus* (pronounced *Yesus*, which is very close to Yeshua. However, it was spelled with a beginning letter “J,” which at the time had a “Y” sound. Later, when the “J” began to have a harder sound in English, the name became “Jesus.”

Clearly, then, the Greek name *Iesous* from whence we derive the name “Jesus” is not pagan; it is simply the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Yeshua*, and the English transliteration of the Greek *Iesous*, which is *Iesus*, over time became “Jesus.”

Those who believe that “Jesus” is another deity and declare that they “reject Jesus” need to carefully re-examine what they are saying and just who they are rejecting! In “rejecting Jesus,” they could in fact be rejecting the TRUE MESSIAH whom the Father sent into the world! There is the true “Jesus” of whom Paul preached; and there is a pagan false “Jesus,” who is a paganized counterfeit of the true Jesus/Yeshua! Paul warned the Corinthians, “For if he who comes preaches *another Jesus whom we have not preached*” (II Cor.11:4). That is the long-haired, paganized “Jesus” who represents modern Christendom, who “did away” with His Father’s commandments, and who masquerades as the true Christ – but whose teachings are light-years away from the truth Biblical teachings of Christ!

“Jesus” and Gematria

There is certainly much misinformation out in the public realm regarding the sacred names. I have no objection to using them, and often do. But some “fanatics” go overboard and teach things they ought not. For example, I was once challenged in a letter with this question:

“Why, though you know the name of our sacred Messiah Yeshua, and of the heavenly Father Yahweh, do you not regularly use these names? Did you know that ‘Jesus’ comes from the name ‘Zeus,’ and that ‘God’ comes from the Assyrian deity ‘Gaud’?”

As we have already shown, it is simply not true that “Jesus” is a derivative of “Zeus.” “Jesus” simply comes from the Greek *Iesous* which is the Greek equivalent or transliteration of the Hebrew “Yeshua.” The New Testament was written in Greek, and God Himself inspired the Hebrew names for Himself and Christ to be translated into Greek. Jesus and the apostles all spoke Greek. It was commonly spoken in the “Galilee of the Gentiles,” where they all grew up and had their occupations as young men.

Some go so far as to claim that “Jesus” in the Greek language adds up to the number of the beast, “666.” This is simply not so. In the fascinating book *The Pattern and the Prophecy, God's Great Code*, James Harrison declares:

“The most important word in the life of any Christian is **JESUS**. The most important word in the Bible is **JESUS**. Remarkably, Joseph and Mary did not even choose it . . . If gematria is to have any deep meaning at all, it must begin with this Most Holy Name. Using the original Greek from the Gospels, let us find the *number value* of His name:

I	E	S	O	U	S	
10	8	200	70	400	200	= 888

“. . . If 7 is the number of completeness of a list, then 8 begins a *new* list.

“To learn how and where the Bible displays this relationship of *renewal* and *rebirth*, read the following examples . . .

“The Ark contained 8 souls: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. When these 8 stepped out of the Ark onto a new world, they had to start a new order and regenerate all life on earth.

“The Jewish ritual act of circumcision had to be done on the 8th day . . .

“Aeneas, a paralytic, was healed in Jesus’ name and rose out of his bed after 8 years (Acts 9:33-35).

“Jesus’ brilliant transformation took place 8 days after the first announcement of His future suffering. Exactly three disciples witnessed this showing of the glory to be at the Second Coming.

“The entire Bible details 8 resurrections, distinct from our Lord’s and His saints: 3 in the Old Testament (I Kings 17, II Kings 4 and 13); 3 in the Gospels (Matthew 9, Luke 7, John 11); 2 in Acts (9 and 20).”

The number eight, in the Scriptures, means “a new beginning.” The eighth day of Passover, the Jews tell us, is Pentecost, and the “Eighth Day” is a separate Feast day joined at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles. Far from being pagan, therefore, the Greek name for Jesus, “Iesous,” is HOLY and very significant, spiritually!

E. W. Bullinger in his remarkable book *Number in Scripture* also explores the significance of the number “8” and the gematria of the name of “Jesus.” He points out that “8” is the number associated with resurrection and regeneration, and the beginning of a new era or order. He also points out that “8” is the first cubic number, the cube of “2” – 2 X 2 X 2 = 8. He writes, “So here, in the first cube, we see something of transcendent perfection indicated, something, the length and breadth and height of which are equal. This significance of the cube is

seen in the fact that the ‘Holy of Holies,’ both in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, were cubes. In the Tabernacle it was a cube of 10 cubits. In the Temple it was a cube of 20 cubits. In Rev.20, the New Jerusalem is to be a cube of 12,000 furlongs” (p.201).

The name of “Jesus” seems to also have this cube aspect, as it is 8-8-8 – 3 “8”s!

Says Bullinger,

“Eight is the dominical number, for everywhere it has to do with the LORD.

“It is the number of His name, IESOUS, Jesus: --

I	=	10
E	=	8
S	=	200
O	=	70
U	=	400
S	=	<u>200</u>
		888

“It is the number stamped upon the Old Testament, the number of its books in all the MSS, being 3 X 4 (28)” (page 203).

Bullinger points out, further, that the Greek name *Xristos*, “Christ,” is also a multiple of the number “8.” It is 1480 (8 X 185). Likewise, *Kurios*, ‘Lord,’ equals 800 in gematria (8 x 100). “Our Lord” is 1768 (8 X 221). “Saviour” is 1408 (8 squared X 32). “Emmanuel” is 25600 (8 squared X 50). “Messiah” is 656 (8 x 82). “Son” is 880 (8 X 110).

Declares Bullinger, “All this speaks to us, if we have ‘ears to hear,’ that ‘God hath glorified His Son Jesus’” (p.204). How clear that even in the Greek language, the name of Jesus Christ – *Iesous* -- has powerful, amazing significance!

The Word “God”

Also, the word “God” is not pagan as some assume. As the English dictionary says, “any of various beings conceived of as supernatural and immortal . . . God, in monotheistic religions, the creator and ruler of the universe” (*Webster’s New Dictionary and Thesaurus*). By definition, anything that is worshipped would be termed a “god.” When we think of the true God, however, a distinction is made by using the capital “G.” Says the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “God, the common Teutonic word for a personal object of religious worship. It is thus, like the Greek *theos* . . .”

I could add, it is like the Hebrew *El* or *Elohim*. This word is normally translated “God” in English. It literally means, “the mighty ones,” and is used *in the Bible* not only for the True

God, but *also* for “angels,” “judges,” as well as for pagan, heathen “gods,” etc. -- that is, it is a word used for both the TRUE God, and for pagan gods, because it is a *generic or general term*, which can apply to all of the above, depending on context. The encyclopedia goes on:

“It is thus, like the Gr. *theos* and Lat. *deus*, applied to all those superhuman beings of the heathen mythologies who exercise power over nature and man and are often identified with some particular sphere of activity . . . The word ‘god,’ on the conversion of the Teutonic race to Christianity, was adopted as the name of the one Supreme Being, the Creator of the universe. . . the old Teutonic type of the word is neuter . . . in the Christian applications it becomes masculine . . . ‘God’ is a word common to all Teutonic languages. In Gothic it is *Guth*; Dutch has the same form as English; Danish and Swedish have *Gud*; German *Gott*. According to the *New English Dictionary*, the original may be found in two Aryan roots, both of the form *gheu*, one of which means ‘to invoke,’ the other ‘to pour’; the last is used of sacrificial offerings. The word would thus mean the object either of religious invocation or of religious worship by sacrifice.”

It is no more wrong to use “God” for the true God, than it would be to use *Elohim* for the true God, which the Bible does *literally HUNDREDS OF TIMES throughout the Old Testament*.

Ironically, there are groups which even claim that the names or titles *El*, *Elohim*, *El Shaddai*, and *Adonai* and related terms are also pagan in origin and should not be used. This claim is a patent absurdity! The Bible itself, throughout the Old Testament, preserved by the Jews, as the “oracles of God” (Rom.3:1-3), uses these words or titles for God thousands of times.

Was God's Word not preserved accurately? The apostle Peter wrote, “but the word of the Lord *endures forever*” (I Pet.1:25, NRSV). David wrote in the Psalms, “Thy word is *very pure*: therefore thy servant loveth it” (Psalm 119:140). Solomon wrote: “*Every word of God is pure*” (Prov.30:5). The inspired words of God *include the names and titles* of God, including *Elohim*, *El*, *Adonai*, etc.

Writes Dr. Daniel Botkin on this matter:

“SNO [Sacred Names Only] believers reject the English words *God and Lord* because these are words which, when not capitalized, can refer to pagan gods and to human lords. SNO believers think it is disrespectful at best or Satan worship at worst to refer to the Creator by these generic titles. However, the Hebrew equivalents of these two words, *elohim* and *adonai*, are also generic words that often refer to false pagan gods and to human lords. Yet the Creator refers to Himself as *elohim* and *adonai* hundreds of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. If He is not offended by the generic titles in Hebrew, why should He be offended by the equivalent generic titles in English? English even has the added advantage of capitalizing the G- or the L- to distinguish the true Creator from the false pagan gods and the human lords. If the Creator is offended by generic titles, wouldn't He be more offended by the uncapitalizable *elohim and adonai* than He would be by a capitalized *God and Lord*?

“SNO supporters imagine a linguistic connection between the English God and Hebrew *Gad* (‘luck, fortune’). Because the pronunciations of these two words are very similar, they claim that ‘God’ is the god of good luck. However, the fact that two words in different languages sound the same is not proof that the two words are cognates. On the contrary, such is usually not the case. For example, Spanish *con* (‘with’) has no connection to English *cone*; German *nein* (‘no’) has no connection to English *nine*; Hebrew *ki* (‘because’) has no connection to English *key*; *Yiddishteller* (‘plate’) has no connection to English *teller*; Russian *tut* (‘here’) has no connection to English *toot*, etc., etc. . . .”

Says Dr. Botkin, further:

“SNO believers avoid even using the Hebrew *Adonai* because of its similarity to the Greek god Adonis. Some refuse to *transliterate Adonai*, even though Scripture uses the word over 200 times to refer to the Creator. I have even seen one SNO Bible that *translated Adonai* as ‘Yahweh.’ This is not honest translation; it is deliberately misrepresenting what the Hebrew Scripture really says. . . .”

“If They Borrow It, We Can't Use It?”

“The Hebrew Bible refers to the Creator as *Adonai* over 200 times. It is linguistic superstition to avoid a word that the Hebrew Bible freely uses. Yes, it is possible that the Greeks borrowed the Hebrew *Adonai* to refer to their god Adonis. So what? We know that Yahweh is the true Adonai/Elohim/Lord/God. The fact that pagans were to say that their gods are ‘good’ and ‘strong,’ would SNO believers feel a need to avoid these two adjectives and use different synonymous adjectives such as ‘beneficent’ and ‘powerful’?”

“Most SNO literature substitutes *Mighty One* and *Master* for *God* and *Lord*. However, the terms *mighty one* and *master* are every bit as generic as *god* and *lord*. This is evident even in SNO literature, which refers to false gods as ‘mighty ones,’ the only difference being capital letters. *This is not spiritual progress; it is simply re-inventing the wheel*” (“Linguistic Superstition and the Sacred Names Only Movement,” *Gates of Eden*, Dec., 2001, emphasis on last sentence mine).

Isn't it about time we really got our balance on these matters? It is no more wrong to use the terms “God” and “Jesus” to refer to the Almighty, and to the Messiah, than it is to speak English! God forbid that we should allow ourselves to be stuck in a spiritual rut, and waste time trying to “re-invent the wheel.”

Says Dr. Botkin:

“The New Testament (Brit HaDashah), by its glaring silence on the ‘Name’ issue, also refutes SNO teaching. If avoiding generic titles and using the Hebrew names is so vital to one's salvation and spirituality, why do the New Testament writers consistently refer to God by the generic Greek titles *Theos* and *Kurios* (words which can also refer to pagan gods and to human lords)? And why do they consistently refer to the Messiah by the Greek form of His name, *Iesous Xristos*? The New Testament writers could have written the Hebrew characters into the Greek script, but there is no solid evidence that

they did any such thing. They used *Theos* and *Kurios*, just as the Hebrew Scriptures use *Elohim* and *Adonai*.

“It is very important to note this: *Even when they were directly quoting Old Testament Scripture, the New Testament writers used generic Greek titles as substitutes for the Sacred Name.* Many Old Testament verses which contain the Sacred Name are quoted in the New Testament, yet the Sacred Name itself never once appears in the New Testament. A generic title is substituted every single time. If the New Testament is to have any bearing whatsoever on our theology, we cannot ignore the fact that the New Testament writers used generic titles as substitutes for the Sacred Name.”

Lies and deceptions, however, die hard. Sacred Name Only groups quote Scriptures like Joel 2:32, “Everyone who calls on the name of YHVH will be saved,” and then interpret that verse to say that one cannot call out to God and be saved without the knowledge of using that very name itself – YHVH! However, it is much more reasonable to believe that the prophet Joel was simply telling us that to be saved, we must cry out to the true God, who IS “Yahveh,” or YHVH. That is God’s NAME – but Joel is not saying that we must literally pronounce His “name” – he means that we must call upon that God, the Creator. As scholar David Bivin writes, the expression “the name of YHVH” is probably just a synonym for “YHVH,” a way of avoiding speaking of God too familiarly or directly.

Dr. David Bivin is the Director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Dr. Bivin goes on, in an article titled “The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles,” in *Jerusalem Perspective* (Nov.-Dec. 1991 issue), to explain:

“Another ‘sacred name’ proof-text is Psalms 9:10, ‘Those who know your name will trust in you.’ This passage appears to these teachers to indicate that people cannot trust in God unless they know how to properly pronounce His name. Again, however, ‘your name’ is most likely a way of avoiding the more direct ‘you.’

“Another text put forward in support of those who teach the importance of ‘preserving the Sacred Name’ is, ‘How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship’ (Jer. 23:26-27). The conclusion reached on the basis of this passage is that forgetting God’s name is a horrible sin. In reality, however, the passage would be better translated as ‘They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget me.’

“ ‘The name of YHVH’ can be the equivalent of ‘YHVH.’ and ‘your name’ can be a synonym for ‘you.’ This is proven by parallel passages in Scripture in which the identical expression appears, once with ‘name’ and once without. For example, Zephaniah 3:12 reads, ‘those who take refuge in the name YHVH,’ but Psalms 5:11 has ‘those who take refuge in you.’

“A similar Hebraic expression, ‘call his name,’ appears in the New Testament (Luke 1:13,31) and is usually translated literally: ‘you shall call his name John,’ ‘you shall call his name Jesus.’ While this is beautiful idiomatic Hebrew, in English one would say simply, ‘you shall call him John/Jesus.’ The word ‘name’ disappears from such Hebrew idioms in good English translations.”

Dr. Bivin points out that every “Sacred Name” proponent he knows of also teaches that the name of “Jesus” is incorrect, and that the name should be pronounced as ‘Yahshua,’ claiming that the first part of this name – “Yah” – comes from the Old Testament Hebrew name of God -- “Yahveh” – and that the second part, “shua,” is the Hebrew word for “savior.” Thus they claim His name really means “Yahweh-Savior.” This, however, is simply human reasoning and speculation. Says Dr. Bivin:

“The attempt to establish a linguistic link between Yahweh, the supposed original pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, and Yeshua, the Hebrew form of Jesus’ name, is rooted in misunderstanding. The initial syllable of (*yeSHUa*, Jesus) is not *yah* but *ye*. Yeshua is an abbreviation of the earlier (*yehoSHUa*, Joshua). *YehoSHUa* apparently was first shortened to *YoSHUa* as Hebrew speakers began to drop their ‘h’s; and then, because the Hebrew language has an aversion to the ‘o’ vowel being immediately followed by the ‘u’ vowel, the first syllable was reduced from *yo* to *ye*.

“By the end of the biblical period the name *YeSHUa* already had begun to replace *YehoSHUa*. Joshua the son of Nun is himself once referred to as ‘*YeSHUa* the son of Nun’ (Nehemiah 8: 17). The form *yeSHUa* (transliterated ‘Jeshua’ in English versions of the Bible) appears twenty-nine times in Scripture, twenty-seven times in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and once each in 1 and 2 Chronicles. (All four books are dated to 400-450 B.C) Only once in 1 Chronicles 7:27, does the form *YehoSHUa* appear in these same books.

“The claim that one is in error unless one uses solely ‘Yahweh’ when referring to God is a form of legalism. The use of correct formulas and correct pronunciations is very important in magic rites, but not in one’s relationship with the God of Israel, who is ‘compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness’ (Exodus 34:6).

“The theology of the ‘sacred name’ teachers is a good example of the way overly literal translations of Bible passages are apt to influence us in wrong directions. In this case numerous Scripture texts taken at face value have combined to produce a misguided approach that is more concerned with God’s name and its proper or original pronunciation than with God Himself” (*Jerusalem Perspective*, Nov.-Dec. 1991).

The New “Gnostics”!

Very well put! Modern “Sacred Names Only” groups have fallen into the devil’s trap of deception by combining the worst forms of legalism with a form of magical superstition regarding the holy name of God. They have fallen from “grace,” and into a pit of legalistic mumbo-jumbo and pronunciation folly, and their error has compounded itself, causing them to

reject the plain and simple truth of Scripture and to manufacture extreme theories and misguided explanations and to imagine vast conspiracy schemes by the ancients to hide, cover up, suppress and remove the supposed “original” names of God and Christ from both Old and New Testament texts. They could be called “the New Gnostics.” What awesome imaginations they have! And yet – no proof whatsoever.

As Paul wrote to the Galatians, I warn the NEW “Galatians,” those who have fallen for the errors of the “new Gnostics” -- the Sacred Names Only sects: “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a *different gospel [message], with is not [entirely] another*; but there are some who trouble you and want to *pervert* the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, *let him be accursed* (Greek, *anathema*). As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal.1:6-9, NKJV).

These modern Sacred Name Only teachers are nothing more than a modern edition of the false teachers who were bewitching the Galatians with their false representations! Paul goes on, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the *works of the law* [or, by pronouncing the divine name in a certain legalistic way?], or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain?” (Gal.3:1-4).

Paul warns the Galatians – and the same warning applies to all those who have been beguiled and bewitched by the seductive false message of the Sacred Names Only teachers – “Stand fast therefore in the LIBERTY by which Christ has made us free [free from these legalistic entanglements], and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal.5:1). One of the major problem in Paul’s day was those who wanted to become circumcised, and come under the entire Jewish system of laws, including rabbinical decisions and religious edicts (see Gal.2:1-10; Acts 15:1-19). The problem today, with many of God’s people, is the seductive siren song of sacred names proponents and advocates, with their misguided misinterpretations of Scripture, history, and conspiracy theories.

May God help us not to fall for these erroneous doctrines and false teachings!

As Paul wrote to Timothy, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and *arguments over words*, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, *useless wranglings* of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself” (I Tim.6:3-5, NKJV).

Chapter Seven

Final Facts and Fallacies

In this concluding chapter, there are several points that “Sacred Name Only” proponents bring up that I feel should be dealt with, before ending this matter. Many of these were brought up in a recent letter I received. I will answer the crucial questions and comments which were mentioned, to help settle this matter – completely.

“The False Pen of the Scribe”

Sacred Names Only groups often point to Jeremiah 8:8 in their attempts to cast aspersions on the Jewish scribes who, they claim, changed the name of God in the Scriptures, causing people to go astray and forget the name of God.

We read in this verse, “Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood” (NKJV). It is true that after the return from Babylon, at some point the Jewish scribes and rabbis began to teach the people not to use the holy name of God, “Yahveh,” in conversation, or even at all, lest they commit blasphemy. Gradually as we have seen in this book, they stopped using the holy name completely – and most Jews even forgot it! Otherwise, there would be no controversy today over how to pronounce the “ineffable Name” – it would be well known!

However, verse 9 of this passage goes on, “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have?”

Jeremiah was rebuking the scribes of his own day, for their rejection of the word of God, their false teachings, which led the people into Sabbath breaking and idolatry – the two major sins of the people of Judah which led to the Babylonian captivity! He was also rebuking them for their covetousness and immorality (verse 10).

Of course, this prophecy could also refer to the scribes since that time, and, in principle, even religious scribes – writers and authors -- and teachers, today! This passage condemns ALL FALSE TEACHING – whether it is those who write claiming God’s Laws are abolished, who preach the pre-tribulation rapture theory, the immortality of the soul, an ever-burning hell fire,

those who claim the Sabbath is abolished, that Christians should observe pagan festivals “baptized” into the professing church -- such as Christmas, Easter, or Halloween -- and all other false doctrines.

As to the word of God, however, this passage does not state that the Jewish scribes or Massorettes tampered or flagrantly rewrote Scripture. Surely, they made some mistakes, due to their religious prejudices, as can be shown by a careful comparison of the Massoretic texts with the Septuagint scrolls discovered amongst the Dead Sea scrolls. Nevertheless, we can know that for all important purposes, we do have the accurate Word of God copied down through the ages, both Old and New Testaments.

The Oracles of God Have Been Preserved

The apostle Paul wrote, “What advantage then hath the JEW? . . . Much every way: CHIEFLY, BECAUSE THAT UNTO *THEM* WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD” (Rom.3:1-2). Notice! This important responsibility of PRESERVING GOD'S WORD was given to the JEWISH authorities – not to some religious sect in Missouri, Pennsylvania, or Texas! Part of the task of preserving the WORD of God would logically be the task also of preserving the NAME of God! Therefore, when seeking to understand the NAME of God and its proper pronunciation, we should by all rights check *first* with the Jewish rabbis and authorities -- not some sect in Texas!

Says F. F. Bruce, a renown and respected Biblical scholar, in *The Canon of Scripture*:

“Which form of the Old Testament text is canonical? *If the question is put to orthodox Jews, their answer is not in doubt: it is the traditional form, the Masoretic text of the Hebrew scriptures.* And many scholars, Jews and Gentiles alike, will agree that, of all the extant varieties of text, *the Masoretic is most reliable. . . . no rival variety of Hebrew text . . . can hold a candle to it*” (p.284-285).

The Jewish transcribers of the Old Testament were extremely scrupulous and punctilious in their copying the Scriptures. The Talmudists (from 100 to 500 A.D.) had a very intricate system for transcribing synagogue scrolls. The scrolls had to be written on the skins of clean animals; every skin had to contain a certain number of columns; each column had to be no less than 48 or more than 60 lines, with a breadth of 30 letters; the whole copy had to be first lined; if three words were written without a line, it is worthless; the ink had to be black, from a definite recipe; only authentic originals or “exemplars” could be copied, from which the transcriber could not deviate in the least; no word or letter, not even a yod, could be written from memory; between every consonant the space of a hair or thread had to intervene; the copyist had to sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, and not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink; and if a king spoke to him while writing that name, he was to take no notice of

him. Rolls where these regulations were not followed were condemned to be buried in the ground or burned, or banished to the schools to be used as reading books (see *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, p.56-57).

The Talmudists were so convinced that when they finished transcribing a manuscript they had an exact duplicate that they would give the new copy *equal authority with the old*. When a manuscript had been copied with the exactitude prescribed by the Talmud, and had been duly verified, it was accepted as authentic and regarded as being of equal value with any other copy. *Age gave no advantage to a manuscript*, but rather was a disadvantage since it could become defaced or damaged by the effects of time and circumstance. A damaged or imperfect copy was at once condemned as unfit for use.

Please take note: Accuracy of a manuscript or copy has nothing whatever to do with its AGE! In fact, age could be looked upon as a disadvantage, because old copies could become smudged, defaced, torn, worn, or damaged by use or the elements. Therefore, the Jews regarded the newest copies just as authentic as any other, since they were copied so perfectly!

The Masoretes, from “massora” meaning “Tradition,” from 500 to 900 A.D., were given the responsibility of copying and maintaining the Scriptures. They went at the task with a holy awe and devotion. They were incredibly well disciplined and treated the texts with the greatest imaginable reverence and devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal slips. They even counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book; they pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch, and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible, and counted virtually everything countable. They numbered the verses, letters and words of each book; they calculated the middle letter and middle word of each. Thus they maintained the Scriptures with an amazing degree of accuracy and perfection!

Thus the JEWS accurately preserved and transcribed the Word of God, just as He has commanded them to! In the process, they also maintained and preserved the HEBREW ALPHABET, and the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew letters, including the “vav” of the Tetragrammaton! They PRESERVED the Name of the MOST HIGH GOD!

Says archaeologist Sir Frederick Kenyon, of the inordinate lengths the Massoretes went to copy accurately the Word of God,

“These trivialities . . . had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, of the Law should pass away or be lost.”

When we consider the enormity of this task, and its faithful, painstaking completion, how can we believe that the Jews were so careless and negligent that they foolishly LOST the very pronunciation of the Name of the Most High God!

Paul reminds us, in Romans, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to *them* was committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:1-4).

In other words, even if unfaithful scribes had certain prejudices and made certain changes, like substituting the vowel points for “Adonai” when they came to the holy Tetragrammaton in the text, these changes are well documented in history, and do not make the Word of God of no effect. As Paul said, even if every scribe were a “liar,” God’s Word is still true – their sins have not made the faithfulness of the Word of God of no power – God has still preserved His Word, even by using unbelieving scribes to transmit it from generation to generation. The incredible accuracy of the Massoretes and other scribes, with the Word of God, has been well documented. In the cases where they have made a few “alterations,” it is generally well known and does not make the Word of God ineffectual. God’s Word has still been preserved down through the ages!

The Scribes and Pharisees

Regarding the “scribes,” Yeshua Himself declared, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not according to their works” (Matt.23:2).

Notice that He did not condemn them for tampering with the Word of God – rather, He upheld their office, so long as they taught the people from the Torah, the Word of God. He said for His followers to do as the scribes and Pharisees taught from the Scriptures, but not to follow their human-devised “traditions” such as their false teachings on the washing of hands and neglecting parents (see Matt.15:1-12). Their traditions and teachings sometimes contradicted the Word of God. In these cases, they were blameworthy. But that did not mean that they had not copied the Scriptures themselves accurately, at that time. If they had, don’t you think Christ would have reproved and rebuked them for such an egregious sin? Yet when we read a catalogue of their sins in Matthew 23, He mentioned nothing about tampering with or rewriting the Scriptures!

“Make My People Forget My Name”

Another passage Sacred Names Only advocates take out of context, is found in Jeremiah 23:27, where God rebukes the religious leaders “who try to make My people forget my name.” Again, what is the context here? This chapter is a scathing rebuke to all the false prophets

among the people. God rebukes them all, saying, “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.” In other words, they appointed themselves to the ministry, even though God had not called them. God goes on, “I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel” – if they had taught the TRUTH of God, and His Word – “and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings” (Jer.21:21-22, NKJV).

God goes on to rebuke them because they have not faithfully preached His Word. Of course, we have the same problems among us today – unfaithful ministers who do not faithfully teach God’s Truth! God declares, “I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy *lies in My name*, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the *deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people FORGET MY NAME by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, AS their fathers forgot My name for Baal*” (Jer.23:25-27).

This passage is not focusing on forgetting the literal “name” of God, but forgetting God *Himself*, by turning to pagan doctrines, beliefs, and false gods!

These were false dreamers who proclaimed lies and the deceits of their own hearts. They were trying to turn people aside from following the true ways of God. By false pagan teachings, they were attempting to turn the people to serve other gods, and thereby “forget” the true God! They were doing this, AS their fathers had forgotten God’s true name for “Baal” – that is, they turned from worshipping Yahveh, the LORD, the God of Israel, to worshipping Baal, the chief of the pagan gods!

What’s In a “Name”?

This brings up a very important point. When we talk about somebody’s name, we need to understand that a “name” means much more than just a certain combination of vowels and consonants. A person’s NAME refers to the totality of a person – what he IS, what he represents – his power, prestige, authority, reputation, position. God names people what they ARE – Abraham means “father of the people,” “Israel” means “champion of God,” or “prince of God,” or “prevailer with God.”

The Hebrew word for “name” is *shem*, and means “an appellation, as a mark or memorial of individuality; by implication, *honor, authority, character*—name, renown, report” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, #8034). Therefore, to cause people to forget God’s name means to make them forget His honor, authority, character, renown, report, just Who He is and what He represents. It is not the precise, exact pronunciation that is the issue, but the whole idea of WHO IS GOD – HIS IDENTITY – HIS CHARACTER!

Just who is “God,” the “Lord,” the Great Holy One of Israel? Just who is “YAHVEH,” who reveals Himself to Moses? We read in Exodus 34, that the LORD descended to Mount Sinai, and revealed Himself:

“Now the LORD [Yahveh] descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and *proclaimed the name of the LORD*” (Exo. 34:5).

How did He do this? By proclaiming His attributes! Notice:

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, The LORD [Yahveh], the LORD God [Yahveh Elohim], merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:5-7).

This truth is brought out in the ritual of baptism. Yeshua said His disciples are to go into the world and baptize all repentant believers, those who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior and who repent of their sins. He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt.28:19-20).

We are literally baptized “into” the name of God, or the LORD. The name “Yahveh” is the FAMILY NAME of God. At present, there are two “Persons” in that Name – the Father and the Son, the Logos, or Messiah (see John 1:1-3). God is a Family. The Father and the Son created all things, together (Col.1:14-17; Heb.1:1-4). When we are baptized, we receive a portion of God’s Holy Spirit, thus inducting us into the FAMILY OF GOD, where He becomes our Father and Jesus Christ becomes our Elder Brother, the captain of our salvation, and our High Priest (Heb.2:10-17).

The Holy Spirit is the power of God in action, His literal Spirit which fills the Universe (see Luke 1:35). It is the power and substance of God which begat Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary (Matt.1:18, 20). It is not a separate “Person” in the Godhead. Otherwise we would have a conflict – since the Holy Spirit begat Christ in the womb of Mary, it if were a Person, it would be the “Father” of Christ! Of course, that is not possible. God the “Father” is the Father of Christ – the Holy Spirit was His essence, His seed, which He implanted in Mary’s womb to conceive the One who would be the Christ.

When a person is baptized for the remission of their sins, they receive God’s Spirit as a begettal, becoming God’s children (Acts 5:32; Eph.1:13-14). Therefore we literally become sons

and daughters of the Almighty (II Cor.6:17-18). We enter God's FAMILY! As Paul declared, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is NAMED" (Ephesians 3:14-15).

Thus as followers of the Messiah, we bear God's NAME, as His children!

But when we are baptized, that baptism ceremony is performed "*in the name of Jesus Christ,*" or "Yeshua the Messiah" (Acts 2:38). What does that mean? It means we are baptized BY HIS AUTHORITY! Thus a person's name clearly represents His power, authority, position, office and legal responsibility.

To forget God's name, therefore, means to forget His power, His authority, His teaching, and His office – who He is and what He represents – His totality of being, truth, and Word. It does not simply mean to forget the exact pronunciation of a certain set of vowels and consonants!

The Real Issue

God is not "hung up" on "name" issues regarding exact pronunciation. What He is really concerned about is OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDMENTS – HIS WORD AND TEACHINGS – which are the way of LIFE! He does not desire "lip service," but true and godly worship and obedience from the heart!

As Micah the prophet wrote, "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). And as John wrote, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22). And as Christ Himself declared: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

God is concerned about the totality of our worship – that we worship Him from the heart, in Spirit and in truth – according to His Word – and our striving to learn of Him and keep His commandments, which He ordained for our good. It is certainly good that we learn to speak the name of God, as correctly as we can, in Hebrew – but it is not the most important thing! God is more concerned with righteous worship and reverence – obedience to His commandments, statutes, and judgments – than He is about pronunciation of syllables.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge [including the sacred name!], and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but

have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up [arrogant]; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil [keeps no accounts of evil]; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. . . . And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (I Cor.13:1-13, NKJV).

What God really wants from us is true worship from the heart, based on love of God and our fellow man. True obedience to His commandments must be motivated by love – expressed in action, deeds, and truth. As the apostle James wrote, “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17, NKJV).

“Give Glory to My Name”

God says in Malachi, “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give *glory to My name*, says the LORD of hosts, I will send a *curse* upon you, and I will *curse your blessings*. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart” (Malachi 2:1-2).

What does God mean by “give glory to My name”? How do we do that? The answer is, **BY OBEYING HIM** – worshipping Him in spirit and in truth! God was rebuking the priests in Malachi’s day because they had forsaken His true worship – they had departed from His laws!

Notice! Further down in this same chapter, God says to these priests – who represent a **TYPE** of modern ministers, preachers, and rabbis, today – “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the **LAW** from his mouth. For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. *But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to STUMBLE at the law.* You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts. Therefore I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people, *because you have not kept my ways but have shown PARTIALITY in the law*” (Malachi 2:7-9).

Yes, let us give glory to God’s Name – by obeying Him, keeping His commandments, which are based on **LOVE** – love for God, and love for our neighbor!

His Name doesn’t just mean a certain set of vowels – it means the totality of His Person and **ALL** that He represents – His office, His attributes, His essence, His authority, His very Being, His **WHOLENESS**. God desires that we be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the *width and length and depth and height* – *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge*; that you may be **FILLED** with all the **FULLNESS OF GOD**” (Ephesians 3:16-19, NKJV).

Like Christmas and Easter?

Some Sacred Names Only advocates also compare substituting other names like Jesus, God, and Christ for the Hebrew names of God with replacing God's commanded annual Holy Days with the holidays of Christmas, Easter, and Halloween.

But is this a fair comparison? That is hardly the same thing.

Notice! Superficially they may *seem* similar, but there is a major difference – *God Himself inspired the generic substitution of His names and titles in the Scriptures preserved for us in the Old and New Testaments!* On the other hand, His Word nowhere endorses Christmas or Easter, or pagan holidays. Rather, God's Word expressly condemns the observance of pagan holidays masquerading or adopted as "Christian."

God declares, specifically, "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way [the way of the heathen, or how pagans worship their gods]; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; *you shall not add to it nor take away from it*" (Deut.12:31-32).

Jeremiah specifically rebukes the practice of cutting down Christmas trees, setting them upright, and decorating them, as a way to worship the true God. He writes, "Do not learn the ways of the Gentiles . . . For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good" (Jer.10:1-5).

How can we compare the generic use of God's name, in different languages, with blatant pagan practices and customs? God Himself inspired the use of His name and titles in the Greek language in the New Testament!

The substitutions God permits are names which are derived from the original Hebrew and Greek names. Therefore, these names are not based on pagan names at all.

Those who claim the English names for God and Christ are pagan in origin have put the cart in front of the horse. That is, they have got it *backwards!* It was the pagans who often copied the titles or names of God, in Scripture, and then adapted them to use for certain of their pagan gods! The Word of God uses "Adonai" for "Lord" in the Old Testament, preserved, authentic Scriptures. The Greeks worshipped their god known as "Adonis," which very likely came from "Adonai." This does not mean it is wrong for us to use the word "Adonai," however. Just because pagans corrupt a name or "borrow" it for their own gods does not mean we cannot

use the original name in our worship of the true God. Likewise, pagan gods go by such names as “El,” “Elohim,” etc., which they borrowed from the true worship of the true God, and then applied these terms to their own pantheon of gods. This does not obviate the use of these names and titles for God, however, because the Scriptures themselves use them. God Himself inspired their usage in His Scriptures!

“Lies and Worthless Things”

Some believe and claim that Jeremiah 16:19 shows that everything the *Jews* inherited were nothing but lies and worthless things, implying that they changed the name of God and true worship. Is that true? As we have seen, the Jews certainly did make mistakes, and Christ rebuked the religious leaders of His day for their hypocrisy and false teachings (Matt.23 is a powerful case in point). But is this what Jeremiah 16:19 is talking about? Let’s see!

“The *Gentiles* shall come to You from the ends of the earth, and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthless and unprofitable things. Will a man make gods for himself which are not gods?’” (Jer.16:19-20).

Notice! This passage is not talking about the Jews at all – it is discussing *Gentiles!* It is the Gentiles who have inherited lies and worthless things from their fathers and forefathers. What sort of things? IDOLATROUS THINGS – lies which led them to worship idols, and false gods! That is what this passage is showing us.

On the other hand, the Jews preserved the oracles of GOD down through the generations (Rom.3:1-4), and the Torah and temple services (Rom.9:4). These most certainly were not “lies,” and “worthless things”!

“No Other Name Under Heaven”

Sacred Names Only people often use Acts 4:12 to show that we must use the sacred names of God, or we cannot be saved. Peter and John had just performed an amazing miracle of healing of a lame man at the Temple Gate. The people gathered around, amazed. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:

“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is *no other name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12, NKJV).

I would point out to Sacred Names Only advocates that this original passage, written by Luke, as a continuation from the gospel of Luke, was written in GREEK – *there is NO evidence whatsoever that it was written in Hebrew!* The “only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved,” therefore, is the very name Peter used – IESOUS XRISTOS in the Greek language, in which Peter was speaking – the commonly used language of the day! Luke recorded the event and Peter’s words in the Greek language. He used the name *Iesous Xristos*. In modern English, that would be “Jesus Christ.” Certainly, there is no proof here that we must use the Hebrew name “Yeshua HaMoshiach.” Of course, it would not be wrong to do so, either.

Acts 4:12, therefore, is often taken out of context by Sacred Names proponents. Again, we must understand that it is not the syllables that are important here. A person’s “name” represents their power, prestige, office, reputation, authority. Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He is our Saviour and Redeemer. This passage of Scripture simply means that there is salvation through no other person’s office, power, or authority. Not the Pope of Rome, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Billy Graham, or any one else! Only through the office and person of Yeshua the Messiah – Jesus the Christ – can we be saved. This verse does not in any way support the magical, mystical pronunciation of a particular “name” but means that none can be saved OTHER THAN THROUGH THE MESSIAH AND HIS OFFICE.

“The Key of Knowledge”

Sacred Names people sometimes even quote Luke 11:52, attempting to bolster their theory. They claim that the “key of knowledge,” referred to here, is the knowledge of God’s holy name. Is that possibly true? Let’s read the passage for ourselves. Luke declares: “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

What is the “key of knowledge”? It is simply the knowledge of God’s Word. That is, *the knowledge of GOD is the key to salvation!* Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). Thus the “key” of knowledge is the “fear of the LORD.” “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate,” God says (Prov.8:13).

The “key of knowledge” does not refer specifically to the holy name of God, but to the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, His truth, His Word. As Hosea wrote, “My people are destroyed for lack of *knowledge*. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest to Me; because you have forgotten the LAW of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hos.4:6). This is referring to the “knowledge of God” – the revelation of God – the Scriptures!

How have Jewish rabbis, and how do modern Christian ministers, obstruct people from entering the Kingdom of God? By their *false teachings* and all their erroneous *traditions* and

practices which were and are contrary to God's revelation (His divine Word). Jesus declared: "But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt.23:13). He told His followers, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt.16:6). The same can be said for the vast majority of modern "Christian" pastors, churches, and rabbis.

The Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day rejected the knowledge of the true Messiah, His identity, called Him a false prophet, and nullified true Sabbath observance by adding so many man-made rules it became a "yoke of bondage." Today, many ministers of the "gospel" do the same thing – many ministers deny the virgin birth of Christ, deny His second coming, engage in pagan holiday observances, and rebuke people when they seek true Biblical knowledge and teaching.

To say the "key of knowledge" specifically refers to how we should pronounce the holy names of God and avoid using substitutes is a far stretch -- jumping to conclusions and leaping to assumptions which are totally unproven.

"A Purified Language"

Personally, assuredly, I have nothing against exalting, praising, extolling, revering, lauding, and calling on the NAME of the Most High God – Elohim, El, Eloah, Yahveh -- I do so in my prayers, every day. And I often use His name in Bible Studies, and in written articles. However, I do not do so *exclusively*, because in writing and speaking to people, I am writing and speaking in ENGLISH, and using ENGLISH translations of the Bible. Therefore, I use BOTH – the Hebrew and the English.

Obviously, when Paul spoke and wrote to the Gentiles in Rome, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Philippi, and elsewhere, the New Testament documents prove that he used GREEK, including the Greek words for the Father and Christ – Kurios, Xristos, Iesous, Theos.

So why don't Holy Names Only advocates admit these facts, leave it at that, and get on with life? To stumble over the "holy names" issue is to fall flat on one's spiritual face. How can we make progress in overcoming our human nature, rooting out the pride of life and lusts of the flesh and evil inclinations – if we are stuck on the sacred names issue? It reminds me of Brer Rabbit and the "tar baby" – a trap set by Brer Fox to capture the rabbit! Brer rabbit saw the tar baby alongside the road, said "Howdy," and the fake tar baby said nothing in reply. Growing angry, Brer Rabbit struck the tar baby, and his hand was stuck. He kicked it, and his foot was stuck. Brer Fox came up, laughing, and exclaimed how he was now going to make rabbit stew out of Brer Rabbit!

If we allow Satan or his ministers to get us “stuck” on this sacred names “only” issue, then we are in grave danger of becoming part of Satan’s “sheep stew”!

When the Messiah returns from heaven, we know that He will restore to the world a “pure language.” I believe this will be a purified Hebrew. There is much advantage to using the Hebrew language. It is the original language of the Old Testament Scriptures.

At the coming of the Messiah, God says, “For then I will restore to the peoples *a pure language* [margin, Heb., “lip”], that they may all call upon the name of the LORD [Yahveh], to serve Him with one accord.”

At that time, we will ALL use one language. But that time has not yet come. The restoration is not yet complete. Today, the world is still filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of languages, dialects, and tongues. So, until that time does come, we must reach out to people IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE, with which they are familiar, and speak the things of God to them, communicating with them with words which they can understand.

Until the Messiah comes, however, we should remember that although it is perfectly all right to use God’s name in the various languages of mankind, nevertheless, we should also use His Hebrew names and titles, as we draw close to Him in prayer and Bible Study, and in discussions among God’s people. God says His name, Yahveh, is a “memorial to all generations” (Exo.3:15). We should not slight it, ignore it, or forget it. We should use it in our prayers, Bible Study, and in speaking with others, who understand it, and know it.

To the masses, however, who do not know it, we should communicate the things of God in the same way that the early church and apostles did – using proper and godly “substitutes” – that is, their names and titles in each language which refer properly to God, Christ, the Lord, Creator, Sustainer, Father, Ruler, Ever-living One, Most High, Most Holy, etc. And when we can, when they are ready to receive the deeper things of God’s Word and His truth, we should also introduce the Hebrew names for God – Yahveh, Elohim, El Eloah, Yeshua.

Beware of False Teachers!

I hope and pray that this book and the knowledge revealed in it will be a profound blessing and encouragement to all you readers. I trust and pray that it will help you to gain much better insight into the Holy Names of God and what they mean for us; and that it will help protect and safeguard all God’s people from current heresies and superstitions surrounding the Divine Name of God.

God’s Word is filled with exhortations for His people to be on their guard against deceivers, false teachers, and wolves in sheep’s clothing. We must remain critically alert, all our senses active, vigilant and watchful – lest we lose out on our salvation.

The apostle Paul wrote of this type of false teacher and deceiver, “For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was” (II Tim.3:6-9, NKJV).

Some have already begun to “turn their ears away from the truth,” and have been “turned aside to fables” (II Tim.4:4).

Rather than fall for this load of modern imitation pseudo-scholarship, and crack-pot theology, and weird doctrinal posturing, let us do as the *Modern Language Bible* has it, “Live in harmony with others; do not aspire to eminence, but associate yourselves with humble people; do not be conceited” (Rom.12:16).

As Paul declared in I Corinthians, “If anyone fancies he knows anything, he does not yet understand as he should; but if anyone loves God, that person is known by Him” (v.2).

Do we understand? Many make an “idol” out of the supposed exact pronunciation of the “vowels” of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton and even avoid using names and titles of God that are *EVEN USED IN INSPIRED SCRIPTURE!* Such foolishness is wearying to God, who seeks that we learn that the bottom line of His divine Law is that we learn to love Him, and show it by our fruits; and that we learn to love our neighbor, as ourselves!

Knowledge is important. For lack of true knowledge, God says, His people are destroyed (Hos.4:6). Those who reject true knowledge will themselves be rejected by God! False teaching is a short-cut to DEATH!

We must make sure that our knowledge is “right knowledge” – that it is the TRUTH. We must not allow ourselves to be led astray by shoddy scholarship, clever manipulation, and outright lies, distortion and deception!

Paul goes on to say, “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and I have not charity [genuine love], I am nothing” (I Cor.13:2).

The knowledge of God's true name and its Hebrew pronunciation is a wonderful thing. But it is not the key to salvation. The love of God is the key to our salvation.

As the apostle John wrote, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:4). Obedience to God’s commandments is the way to eternal life!

What did Jesus Christ – Yeshua the Messiah – tell the young rich man who came to Him, asking, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

He answered him saying: “But if you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matt.19:17).

May Almighty God help us all to *understand* what really counts with Him!

“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’”

“Moreover God said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: “The LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. *This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations*” (Exo.3:14-15, NKJV).