

In the Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Greg Stafford takes up the familiar defense of subjects having to do with the use and pronunciation of the divine name, the identity of the biblical God Jah and of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as issues and questions having to do with salvation, God's sovereignty and mankind's "free will." This edition also contains discussions of several controversial issues, including questions related to abortion, a person's sexual orientation, and regarding uses of blood.

Most significantly, this book puts forth not only a defense of some the biblical teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but it also further introduces the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah's Witnesses who reject human traditions when these can be shown to contradict what is based on the best available reasons. Thus, a call is made to all Jehovah's Witnesses, to all Christians, indeed, to "every breathing thing" to bear witness to and to praise the biblical God Jah, and to acknowledge what can be shown to be true for good reasons about Jesus of Nazareth.—Psalm 150:6; Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12; Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 1:10; Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

GREG STAFFORD is also the author of *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* and of various articles and debates on biblical Christianity and the history and the beliefs of the Watchtower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses. He is a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects traditions and beliefs that are not based on the best available evidence.



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Murrieta, California

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Mailing address:

39252 Winchester Road, Suite #107-404
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Greek philosophy and the removal of the divine name from Christian writings. We have already considered some of the evidence supporting the belief that the OT Greek scriptures and the NT writings prior to and during the first century CE used a Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek form of the divine name. Earlier in this chapter I also reviewed the OT biblical teaching concerning the use of God's name, which review showed clearly that there is no legitimate basis whatsoever for refusing to use a form of the name today. In fact, in the Bible God himself everywhere uses and encourages his people to use and to make known his distinct name. But if the OT and the NT writings in the first century CE used the divine name, then why is the name not used as often or even at all in Greek OT and NT texts during and after the middle or the late second century CE by Christians?

While certain manuscripts such as P.Oxy. vii. 1007 and P.Oxy. 2745 (both considered in the previous section) show signs of the divine name's continuance in biblical literature together with other literary conventions like the *nomina sacra*, these texts appear to be in the minority. The vast majority of NT and even OT Greek texts from the second and third centuries CE onward favor use of the *nomina sacra* or complete word surrogates for the divine name. But if the NT writers did not begin such substitution practices, why did this practice develop among Christians *after* the death of the apostles?

There are good reasons to believe that at some point those who claimed to be Christian altered their copies of the LXX by removing the divine name.¹⁴⁶ This is clear from a comparison of the manuscript evidence of what is undeniably pre-Christian Jewish fragments of the LXX (many of which were reviewed above) with later Christian manuscripts (such as Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Sinaiticus). If the Christians responsible for these LXX texts removed the divine name from the Greek OT

¹⁴⁶ Compare Siegel, "The Employment of Paleo-Hebrew Characters for the Divine Names," page 160, note 4, "It was the Christians who replaced the Tetragrammaton by *kyrios*, when the Divine name written in Hebrew letters was not understood any more." See also, Kahle, "The Greek Bible and the Gospels," pages 613-621.

which they considered to be inspired,¹⁴⁷ it is not hard to understand how they could have done the same thing to those documents that early in the first or second century CE may not have been considered inspired by many of these same people.

Even if the NT documents were accepted as inspired writings by *all* second and third century CE Christian LXX users, if the OT Greek Bible was subject to alteration when it came to the divine name then removal of the divine name from the NT should not be rejected out of hand based on any similar view that may have been shared concerning the NT. We should look at the manuscript evidence that shows how the divine name was treated in what was considered to be holy scripture (that is, the Hebrew and the Greek OT). Then we can evaluate the evidence for use of the divine name in similar or in other types of documents (like the NT) that were used and preserved by the same people or by those who lived after them. Lundquist, however, has a different view, “It does not matter that the Apostles read the Tetragrammaton in their copies of the *Septuagint*.” He further reasons:

It does not even matter that the inspired writers [of the NT] quoted Hebrew Scripture verses which used the divine name. All of these things are true and verifiable. *All that matters is the word which the Christian Greek Scripture authors actually wrote under inspiration of God.* All translators must faithfully represent the exact words written by the inspired authors. If the Greek Scripture writers used the Tetragrammaton, then the divine name must be used in each of those instances. If the Greek Scripture writers used *Kyrios*, then the passage must be translated *Lord*.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ See Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint*, pages 68-94. Remarkably, Lundquist (*The Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures*, page 161) claims, “It does not matter that the Tetragrammaton in the *Septuagint* was changed during the second and third centuries C.E.” Of course, it does matter. It shows the tendency on the part of the Christians at that time to remove the divine name from biblical documents, even if the documents were believed to be the product of divine inspiration.

¹⁴⁸ Lundquist, *The Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures*, page 161. All emphasis in the above quote is original. Lundquist’s note at the end of the above quote emphasizes his point even further: “This is true even when the Hebrew Scriptures are clearly being quoted. The translator must reproduce for the English reader exactly that which the inspired author wrote.”

If Lundquist's view is correct, namely, that we should only translate what is in the *copies* that we have in our possession, the earliest of which is fifty to a hundred years or more removed from the original writing, then God or the inspired NT writers *did not follow this practice!* If Lundquist is truly intent on proving that God preserved his written word, and that we should do the same, then we should find Lundquist endorsing the Witnesses' view that the original NT documents *did* contain the divine name! Why? Again, because those who argue that the divine name was used in NT quotations of the OT are in a much better position to claim that God preserved his Word and that the NT writers 'faithfully represented the exact words written by the inspired [OT] authors', which is what Lundquist believes.

Those who claim as Lundquist does, namely, that the NT writers did not preserve God's name when quoting divine-name-containing OT texts, are arguing *against* the view that NT writers 'faithfully represented the exact words written by the inspired [OT] authors.' Lundquist, therefore, ends up in an argument not only with Jehovah's Witnesses, but also with himself, with the NT writers, and with even with God about the extent to which he would preserve his Word. That is why we find Lundquist making claims like (as quoted earlier) the "God who inspired Scripture will certainly take the necessary precautions to preserve it." Again, such a view is incompatible with Lundquist's own view that God chose to use *kyrios* in NT quotations of documents (the OT) that God is believed to have inspired. Lundquist's position regarding the use of the divine name in the NT suggests that God *did* fail to preserve what was actually written in his OT Hebrew word.

At the very least, the position adopted by Lundquist and others concerning the use of the divine name in the NT forces them to also conclude that the authors of the NT documents chose not to preserve the actual name of God from the inspired OT text in many instances. If Lundquist and others are going to suggest that God did not preserve his name from the OT to the NT, then why should we believe them when they state that God would "take the necessary precautions to preserve" what he had written in the NT? The pattern of God's acts shows that he will give us his name, and

allow others to decide whether to use it or to conceal it. In the end, the result will be the same:

Psalm 102:15-18, 21-22 (NWT)

And the nations will fear the name of Jehovah,
 And all the kings of the earth your glory.
 For Jehovah will certainly build up Zion;
 He must appear in his glory.
 He will certainly turn to the prayer of those stripped [of
 everything],
 And not despise their prayer.
 This is written for the future generation;
 And the people that is to be created will praise Jah.
 For the name of Jehovah to be declared in Zion
 And his praise in Jerusalem,
 When the peoples are collected all together,
 And the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.

Lundquist’s reasoning is flawed and he does not even appear to realize that ‘faithfully representing the exact words written by the inspired authors’ is what is in dispute. Lundquist thus begs the question when he claims that what we have in later copies of the NT, copies that have come to us complete with what appear to be novel scribal conventions (*nomina sacra*), are what “the Christian Greek Scripture authors actually wrote under inspiration of God” (from my quote of Lundquist on page 87). The manuscript evidence from before, during, and after the first century CE suggests that God allowed people to make decisions respecting what was written in the OT and in the NT, but he preserved enough evidence for us to make decisions about what he wants us to know respecting our use of and our love for his name.

There is good manuscript and other evidence supporting the belief that the divine name was removed from OT Greek texts and from the original NT documents. But there are also explicit statements and teachings from Christian authors of the second, third, and following centuries CE that tells us *why* some of these Christians chose to remove or conceal the unique name of God found in the OT. For example, the Greek apologist Justin Martyr (who died about 165 CE) taught that “Father,” “God,” “Creator,”

and “Lord” “are not names” (Greek: οὐκ ὀνόματά ἐστιν) “but appellations derived from His good deeds and functions.” Though Justin accepts the name “Jesus, as man and Saviour” as having significance,¹⁴⁹ he claims that “there is no name given” to the “Father of all, who is unbegotten” (Greek: Ὀνομα δὲ τῷ πάντων Πατρὶ θετὸν, ἀγεννήτω ὄντι, οὐκ ἔστιν).¹⁵⁰ Why does Justin assert that “there is no name given” to the Father when there is in fact a distinct name for God that occurs throughout the Hebrew and the Greek OT thousands of times? Justin explains, “For by whatever name He be called He has as His elder the person who gives Him the name.”¹⁵¹

Further, in his “Hortatory Address to the Greeks” (which may or may not be the actual work of Justin Martyr) Justin is said to have taught that “God cannot be called by any proper name, for names are given to mark out and distinguish their subject-matters, because these are many and diverse; but neither did any one exist before God who could give Him a name, nor did He Himself think it right to name Himself, seeing that He is one and unique.”¹⁵² It is clear, then, that Justin had unbiblical motivations for not using or even recognizing a distinct name for God, in spite of the fact that the Hebrew Bible makes frequent use of a name that God did in fact give to himself.—Exodus 6:3; Isaiah 42:8.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ ANF 1, page 190 (chap. 6 of Justin’s *Second Apology*).

¹⁵⁰ All of these quotations are from chap. 6 of Justin’s *Second Apology*, as translated in ANF 1, page 190. The Greek text for Justin that I am using is that of J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca* (Paris, 1857-66), vol. 6.

¹⁵¹ ANF 1, page 190 (Greek: Ὡ γὰρ ἂν καὶ ὀνόματι προσαγορεύηται, πρεσβύτερον ἔχει τὸν θέμενον τὸ ὄνομα).

¹⁵² ANF 1, page 281 (with underlining). Regardless of whether these are truly Justin’s words, they further reveal that unbiblical concepts were tied to the use of God’s name after the first century CE. Indeed, in this reference it is said that to give God a name is tantamount to a compromise of his ‘uniqueness.’ But that is precisely what having a distinct name is meant to highlight: God’s uniqueness! This quote also suggests that God did not name himself, for someone would had to have preexisted him in order to “give Him a name.” Again, the motive for not using God’s name here is clearly expressed, and it is unbiblical. Compare also Justin’s reference to God as “a God who is called by no proper name” (*First Apology*, ANF 1, page 165, chap. 10).

¹⁵³ However, Justin may have taught a baptismal rite “learned from the apostles” where “there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again ... the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe ... calling him by this name alone.” But then Justin goes on to say, “For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God, and if any

Earlier in this chapter (see note 66) I showed how Clement of Alexandria knew the divine name. Of course, knowing the name is one thing and using it is quite another. With evident influence from and an expressed interest in Plato, Clement refers to Moses’ encounter with God in a cloud of darkness (compare Exodus 19:9) and to Paul’s statements in 2 Corinthians 12:4 and in Romans 11:33 as support of his view, in harmony with “the truth-loving Plato,” that God is “beyond expression by words.”¹⁵⁴ Clement even goes so far as to say that “the truly mystic word, respecting the unbegotten and His powers, ought to be concealed.”¹⁵⁵

It is reasonable to believe that this “mystic word” is the same “mystic name of four letters” that Clement referred to earlier in his *Stromata*, quoted above in my note 66. In spite of his expressed knowledge of the “mystic name of four letters,” Clement leaves no room for doubt regarding his full appreciation for any name of God, saying that the Father of the universe “is without form and name” and that any name we might give Him is not ‘proper.’¹⁵⁶ Names are only given to God, according to Clement, so that we do not “err in other respects.”¹⁵⁷ But Clement then gives a reason similar to that of Justin (and to the author of the “Hortatory Address to the Greeks” [if it be someone other than Justin]) for not recognizing a true name for God, “Everything, then, which falls under a name, is originated, whether they will or not.”¹⁵⁸ Clement unabashedly admits, “I do not say His name”¹⁵⁹ and, again, he also explicitly taught that the name “ought to be concealed.”

Greek Christian writers like Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, as well as Greek Jews like Philo of Alexandria who lived and wrote during or after the first century CE, were clearly

one dares to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness” (ANF 1, *The First Apology of Justin*, chap. 61, page 183). So it would appear that Justin did believe “the name of God the Father” which “no one can utter” was “pronounced over him who chooses to be born again” for a special “illumination,” but which was then (apparently) never uttered again.

¹⁵⁴ ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 12, page 463.

¹⁵⁵ ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 12, page 463 (underlining added).

¹⁵⁶ ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 12, page 464.

¹⁵⁷ ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 12, page 464.

¹⁵⁸ ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 12, page 464.

¹⁵⁹ ANF 2, Book 6, chap. 18, page 519.

influenced by their Hellenistic environment. This environment included the popular beliefs of Plato and other Greek philosophers, and the writings of those who were influenced by them. For example, Philo of Alexandria (who lived and who wrote during the first century CE) taught that “God indeed needs no name,” though he did recognize “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (spoken of in Exodus 3:15) as a name in which humankind “might be able to take refuge in prayers and supplications and not be deprived of comforting hopes.”¹⁶⁰ But Philo believes “it is a logical consequence that no personal name even can be properly assigned to the truly Existent.” In explaining the words of the angel in Genesis 32:29, Philo claims that the angel refused to tell Jacob his name because names are “symbols which indicate created beings,” which symbols we should not look for “in the case of imperishable natures.”¹⁶¹

Whether Philo's Greek biblical text contained a form of the divine name, as appears to be true for all LXX manuscripts available during Philo's time, is not clear.¹⁶² What is clear is that regardless of what name may have been used in the Greek or in the Hebrew OT available to Philo, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and the writers of the other early Christian works referenced above, all of them give the same unbiblical excuses for not using the name of God: ‘what is named came into being’ or simply ‘God is unnamable.’ In this, they all contradict what the Hebrew OT and all known Greek LXX manuscripts prior to the first CE teach us about God's name.

¹⁶⁰ Philo, *On Abraham* 51 (LCL 6, page 31).

¹⁶¹ *On the Change of Names*, 11, 14 (LCL 5, pages 147, 151). In *De Deo* 1.4 Philo also writes, “For he [God] is unnamable” (see Siegert, “The Philonian Fragment *De Deo*,” page 5). See also my note 118, pages 69-70.

¹⁶² However, James Roysse, “Philo, ΚΥΡΙΟΣ, and the Tetragrammaton,” in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, vol. 3, David T. Runia, ed. (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991), pages 179-183, argues that “the manuscript evidence very strongly indicates that Philo must have read the Biblical texts with the Tetragrammaton written in paleo-Hebrew or Aramaic letters, and not translated by κύριος [Lord].” Roysse points to, among other things, Philo's statements in *On Moses* 2.114-115 and 2.132 which suggest that Philo's knowledge that the tetragrammaton has four letters came from a biblical text, namely, his own Greek version which may have used a form of the divine name with four letters.

Philo, Justin, Clement, and other early Christian writers were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, even to the point where they attempted to “derive Greek physics and philosophy from the Bible.”¹⁶³ We should therefore be careful when we consider their writings and learn to distinguish that which is biblical and that which is the result of Greek thinking that is at odds with the Bible. Though many early Christian and Jewish writers and philosophers of the first and following centuries CE knew of the divine name, and some, such as Philo, may even have had it in their Bible texts, they held to and expressed in their writings philosophical notions that clearly run contrary to what the Bible teaches. It is also possible that this same Greek philosophical thinking motivated others in the early centuries CE to use substitutes for the divine name in their writings.¹⁶⁴

Further on this point, there is evidence even in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354 CE to 430 CE) that Christians had by this time, in some measure, adopted an unbiblical understanding of certain Bible texts concerning the name and the nature of God directly from the writings of Philo. Augustine wrote the following paraphrase of Exodus 3:14 and 15:

‘First tell them [i.e. your people] that I am he who is, so that they may learn the distinction between being and non-being, and also be taught that no name at all properly describes me ... But if through their natural weakness they seek a *title*, reveal to them not only this, that I am God, but also that I am the God of the three men whose names express their excellence, God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob (*Mos.* 1.75-76).’¹⁶⁵

Philo’s teaching is not only unbiblical in that his paraphrase of the biblical account is not an accurate representation of what

¹⁶³ N.A. Dahl and Alan F. Segal, “Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God,” *JSJ* 9 (1978), page 5.

¹⁶⁴ See my note 118 above.

¹⁶⁵ As translated in David T. Runia, “Philo of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Thought,” in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, vol. 7, David T. Runia, ed. (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995), page 146 (underlining added).

Exodus 3:14 and 15 teach, but Philo even *adds* words to God's response to Moses' request for his name (as recorded in Exodus 3:13-15), namely, "There is no name whatever that can properly be assigned to me, who am the only being to whom existence belongs."¹⁶⁶ God did not say this, at least not according to any biblical text we have available today. Again, Philo added these words to the account and he taught that it was wrong to give God a name, a belief that was then adopted by post-biblical Christians. Finally, in addition to what I presented earlier Philo also wrote explicitly that we need to have "some substitute for the divine name, so that they may approach if not the fact at least the name of supreme excellence and be brought into relation with it."¹⁶⁷

Thus, there are good reasons for believing that many early Jewish and Christian writers taught that "there is no name whatever that can properly be assigned" to God, though this was in complete defiance of the words of the very same God whom these writers claim to quote and to reference.¹⁶⁸ Further, there is

¹⁶⁶ *On the Life of Moses*, 1.14.75 (underlining added).

¹⁶⁷ *On the Change of Names*, 13 (underlining added).

¹⁶⁸ Consider also the statement by Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 2.275-276) who, after referencing this same account in Exodus involving the revelation of God's name to Moses, writes that he is "forbidden to speak" God's name. But, again, the Bible nowhere 'forbids' Josephus to speak the divine name. Consider, too, the statement by Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 CE) in his *Orations* (30.17) as translated in F.W. Norris, "The Tetragrammaton in Gregory Nazianzen (Or. 30.17)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989), page 339:

The divinity is not designated by its name. And this not only the arguments [above] demonstrate but also the wise and ancient Hebrews used special characters to venerate the divine and did not allow that the name of anything inferior to God should be written with the same letters as that of "God," on the ground that the divine should not have even this in common with our things.

There does not appear to be any reason for Norris to put "God" in quotes as if Gregory is here referring at all to the letters for the word "God," and Norris himself does not appear to conclude that this is the case. Rather, he writes that the use of "special characters" here "involves the use of paleo-Hebrew characters in the Hebrew text." Yet, Gregory himself uses a Greek OT text that omits such "special characters," for shortly after making the above comments he writes, "Lord, which is also called a name of God," citing Amos 9:6 in his version of the LXX, "I am the Lord Thy God, He says, that is My name; and, The Lord is His name" (30.18, as translated in NPNF 7, page 316). The latter half of the note (δ) in NPNF relative to these comments by Gregory is correct, namely, that "in the passages quoted [Amos 9:6], had the original language been used, the Four-Lettered Name would have appeared." Or it may also have

no evidence that any of these positions regarding the use of God’s name had anything to do with any accurate representation of what the Bible teaches. In fact, the stated reasons for not using the name, for ‘concealing’ it, and/or for using “some substitute for the divine name” all constitute strong evidence that, in fact, that is what happened to God’s name in both the LXX and the NT sometime after the first century CE.

Hallelujah! It has often been said that the “Tetragrammaton was not used by the inspired Christian writers”¹⁶⁹ of the New Testament. I believe such claims are irresponsible and that they are not based on a broad enough consideration of the best available evidence. Such conclusions are in fact based almost exclusively on what we find in copies of the NT that are perhaps one hundred years or more removed from the original NT writings. Further, it is not necessary for the “Tetragrammaton” itself, the four-letter form of the Hebrew or Aramaic name for God (יהוה), to have been used in the NT in order for the divine name to have appeared. Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic forms of the three-letter (יהי or Ιαω) or the two-letter (יה or Ια) divine name could also have been used in the NT depending on what form of the name was in the OT text quoted or used by various NT writers.

When viewed in this light, even if we set aside the evidence considered earlier for the use of the divine name in the OT, and the special scribal convention of the *nomina sacra*, and the Greek philosophical reasons given by several early Christian and Jewish writers for ‘concealing’ the name of God, there are still at least four instances of God’s name in the NT. These four occurrences of the divine name are from the New Testament book of Revelation Chapter 19, in verses 1, 3, 4, 6. As noted earlier, the two-letter form of the divine name in Hebrew is today represented in square script as יה. This form of the name was used during the first and following centuries CE, and at times it was transliterated into Greek as Ια (*Ia*).

appeared if Gregory had used a Greek version like the kind that Origen describes as “more accurate” (see above, page 72).

¹⁶⁹ Lundquist, *The Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures*, page 150.