

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.

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# Jehovah's Witnesses Defended

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AN ANSWER  
TO SCHOLARS  
AND CRITICS

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GREG STAFFORD



Murrieta, California



“This is the third time I am coming to you. ‘At the mouth of two or three witnesses what is said will be validated.’—2 Corinthians 13:1.

Though the NWT Committee may have gone too far in using the divine name in the NT (since a number of such passages could very well apply to someone other than to Jah of the OT), the NWT Committee certainly has done more than any other Bible translation when it comes to explaining the importance of using the divine name. It also uses the divine name in at least 79 but possibly in as many as 93 or even 154 NT texts where there are in fact very good reasons to use it.

## The Meaning of God’s Name

*What do names tell us?* Really, though, even if we were to find a manuscript of the New Testament containing the divine name (that is, other than the form *Ia* used in Revelation 19), would most Bible translators today use it? After all, no one disputes the appearance of the divine name in the OT nearly 7,000 times. Yet, consider how few modern translations give the divine name its rightful place there. As we have already discussed, the fact that we may no longer know the original pronunciation of the divine name used by Moses and others is not a good reason to avoid using the name altogether. Nowhere does the Bible say that ancient Hebrew names, including God’s name, must be pronounced in one specific way. In short, *there is no legitimate, scriptural reason to avoid using some form of the divine name found in the Hebrew Scriptures.*

When it comes to making known the name of God that appears thousands of times in the OT, Dr. Robert Countess criticizes Jehovah’s Witnesses’ use of John 17:6, 26, believing that these two scriptures are understood by the Witnesses to mean that Jesus restored the true pronunciation of the divine name.<sup>185</sup> But such is not the case. While Jehovah’s Witnesses do believe that Jesus’ words here involve the *use* of the divine name, they also believe that by using a form of this name Jesus was “revealing the Person it represents ... enabling persons to know or experience

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<sup>185</sup> Countess, *The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New Testament*, pages 31-32.

what God's name stands for (Mt 11:27; Joh 1:14, 18; 17:6-12)."<sup>186</sup>

The word "name" is used in the Bible to refer to the character of a person (for example, Deuteronomy 22:14, 19; Ruth 4:11; Nehemiah 9:10 ['reputation']; Job 18:17; Ecclesiastes 7:1). But it is also quite regularly used in reference to the actual name of someone, such as when reference is made to 'calling on the name of Jehovah' (compare Genesis 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 16:13; 21:33; and many others). Regarding the former use of the word "name," consider 1 Samuel 25:25 where Abigail pleads with David: "Please do not let my lord set his heart upon this good-for-nothing man Nabal [meaning, 'senselessness'], for, *as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and senselessness is with him*" (emphasis added). This account shows a clear difference but also a close association between the actual name of a person and the person's character.

It is likely that a difference existed between the northern and southern dialects of the ancient Jewish nation,<sup>187</sup> such that

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<sup>186</sup> *Insight on the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), page 72. In this publication, on page 467, we are also told: "When Jesus Christ was on earth, he 'made his Father's name manifest' to his disciples. (Joh 17:6, 26) Although having earlier known that name and being familiar with God's activities as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, these disciples came to know Jehovah in a far better and grander way through the One who is 'in the bosom position with the Father' (Joh 1:18)."

<sup>187</sup> Millard, "YW and YHW," page 312, argues as follows:

In order to deal with the problem of variation between *yw* and *yhw* as initial elements of Hebrew names in the Old Testament, an equally detailed study of the final elements *yh*, *yhw*, *yw* is needed, embracing both the Biblical and epigraphic records. ... The opposition *-yh* : *-yhw* may be no more than scribal inconsistency. ... The seals bearing names ending in *yw* and *yhw* are so similar in form and style of lettering to those bearing names commencing with the same elements that it would be impossible to adopt a higher date for one group than for the other.

In view of this variation it is possible that the divine name was pronounced differently in the northern kingdom than it was in the southern kingdom. If such a difference did exist then this would further suggest that there was no singularly precise way to pronounce the divine name even in ancient times, but that location and dialect produced acceptable variations in its pronunciation. Thus, no one today could rightly be faulted for using a less-than-precise pronunciation as language, dialect, location, and time have similarly affected our pronunciation. As long as we base our pronunciation on the best available evidence, whatever pronunciation we use in our native language should be acceptable.

“Nabal” could have had a dignified meaning in one dialect and a negative association in another. The dignified meaning was no doubt intended by his parents, for they likely would not have named their son “senselessness”! When his personality became manifest, however, his wife used the other, more derogatory meaning of his name in reference to him.<sup>188</sup> This is but one example in the Hebrew Scriptures where the meaning of a person’s name is directly linked with his or her character. But the name itself is crucial to the understanding of the person’s character, and it still exists separately as an actual name.

If God’s own revelation of the meaning of his name is also directly related to his character, then would it not be a careless and horrible mistake to conclude that Jesus could have made his Father’s name (his character) known without using the very name that is bound together with his Father’s character? Jesus’ use of the word “name” in verses like John 17:6 can no more be limited to character (that is, apart from a knowledge of a person’s actual name) than a reference to Jesus’ own “name” (his character) could be made without a knowledge of his God-given name, which name itself reveals what kind of person he is or would become, namely, one who ‘saves his people from their sins.’—Matthew 1:21.

Countess believes that since there is no record in the NT of Jesus’ accusers citing his use of the divine name as blasphemy then that means Jesus did not use the divine name.<sup>189</sup> If true, then this argument from silence would only apply to those occasions where Jesus taught in the presence of those seeking to condemn him. But as William Arnold points out: “The mere utterance of the name, apart from perjury, cursing, or blasphemy, was indeed at no time a criminal offense; but it soon came to be considered a

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<sup>188</sup> In a similar vein, we may note that the word “Satan” may not have been the name given to this spirit being by Jah before Satan deceived Eve (Gen 3:1-5). Either this came to be his name after his actions made it a fit description of his character and disposition as a “resister,” or it was his name all along and it simply took on a new meaning after he ‘resisted’ Jah’s will and purpose.

<sup>189</sup> Countess, *The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ New Testament*, page 31.

ritual sin, punishable by God though not by man.”<sup>190</sup> Arnold's observations are consistent with the information presented on pages 4-7 of this chapter, namely, that there is no clearly stated biblical law or established ancient practice by the Jews in general prior to 200 CE, against the use of the divine name in worship or in social situations with others. There are only biblical laws and, hence, potentially only a general Jewish practice against certain *misuses* of the name. Any other prohibition concerning the use of the divine name does not have any explicit biblical support.

Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christian Witnesses of Jah believe that Jesus not only used his Father's name when quoting the OT text where the divine name occurs (for example, in Luke 4:17-18), but we also believe that he made known God's character by his use of the name when teaching about Jah. For example, Jesus made it plain that the Father was doing his works through the Son (John 14:10) thereby causing his own purposes to be fulfilled in connection with his anointed one (Luke 4:18-21). As David confronted the God-dishonoring Goliath “with the name of Jehovah of armies,” so Jesus “came in the name of [his] Father,”

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<sup>190</sup> William R. Arnold, “The Divine Name in Exodus iii. 14,” *JBL* 24 (1905), page 135. In this same article, in his notes 33 and 34, Arnold observes:

According to *b. Aboda Zara* 17 *b*, under Roman rule in the second century A.D. Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion was burned at the stake, his wife executed, and his daughter condemned to a life of shame, for no other cause than that the Rabbi had pronounced the ineffable name in public hearing. But the ground alleged for the outrage is rejected even by those who accept as historical all the other details of the Talmudic story. ... In Mishna, *Berachoth*, ix. 5, there is no talk of the utterance of the word יהוה [Jehovah]. The question there is merely whether one shall or shall not use the divine name in ordinary salutation.

In *Sanhedrin* 7.5 we are told, “*He who blasphemes is liable only when he will have fully pronounced the divine Name*” (Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1988], page 597 [emphasis added]). Of course, this by no means establishes that an inaccurate understanding of Lev 24:11 (see above, page 5, note 7) would have been used by Jesus' enemies in the first century CE. Additionally, *Sotah* 7.6 informs us, “In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written but in the provinces, with a euphemism.” This seems to imply the preservation of an accepted pronunciation of the divine name, and it specifically indicates its use by the priests. Of course, this cannot be considered definitive in terms of establishing the use of the divine name in the first century CE. But it does show that even the compilers of the Mishnah (200 CE) acknowledged that the priests pronounced the divine name “as it is written.”

bringing the good news of God’s kingdom and hope for all mankind.—Luke 4:43; John 5:43.

To suggest that Jesus came “in the name of [his] Father” without ever using the Father’s name, a name that is found in the OT nearly 7,000 times and that occurred in the biblical text that Jesus read to others, is not a suggestion that is based on the best available evidence. The character of a person is connected with that person’s name, and so where one is made known (either the character or the actual name of the person) the other is also revealed.

***What meaning is associated with the divine name in the Bible?*** It is often believed that the tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, is related to the Hebrew verb “to be,” which is הָיָה (*hayah*). Such a view is usually presented with the belief that while the tetragrammaton contains the Hebrew letter *waw* (ו), originally so did the Hebrew verb *hayah* (which would be *hawah* [הוה]). Later, however, the *waw* was “replaced by a ך [yod] in the verb היה [*hayah*] with which the [divine] name is connected—a change that took place long before the time of Moses.”<sup>191</sup> But it may also be the case that the tetragrammaton is not related etymologically to the verb *hay/wah*, at all. God’s name can still be filled with meaning without having to derive its meaning from a particular Hebrew verb.

Nevertheless, some scholars and others still believe that the name of God, the tetragrammaton, is derived from the Hebrew verb *hayah* which is used, for example, in Exodus 3:14. Here, together with verse 13, Moses speaks to God with the words: “Suppose I am now come to the sons of Israel and I do say to them, ‘The God of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they do say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” Jehovah then responds to Moses with the Hebrew expression, *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* (NWT: “I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be”). The Greek translation often referred to as the Septuagint or LXX

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<sup>191</sup> Raymond Abba, “The Divine Name Yahweh,” *JBL* 80.4 (December, 1961), page 322.

renders this expression with the words, *ego eimi ho on* (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν ["I am the Being (the *ho on*)" or "I am the One who is"]).

It is understandable, therefore, why some early and late writers on the subject of God's name have connected its meaning with the verbal ideas expressed in Exodus 3:14. In this light, consider again what was presented earlier (page 43, note 66) in connection with the meaning and the pronunciation of the divine name from the writings of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 220 CE): "Further, the mystic name of four letters which was affixed to those alone to whom the adytum was accessible, is called Jave [Ἰαοὺ, *Iaou*], which is interpreted, 'Who is and shall be' [ὁ ὄν καὶ ὁ ἐσόμενος, *ho on kai ho esomenos*]." <sup>192</sup>

Whether or not the divine name means "who is and who shall be" because it is derived from the same verb used in the Hebrew of Exodus 3:14 or because Jah's response to Moses closely relates his name to the expression *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* (a variation of which is given by Clement that seems to be related to both the Hebrew and the Greek texts of Exodus 3:14), is impossible to know for a certainty. The divine name could mean "who is and who shall be" simply because that is one of the meanings that God himself gave to his name when he spoke to Moses in Exodus 3. As Harris observes:

Why base anything on the expression, "I will be what I will be," whether it is *hiphil* or *qal* or imperfect or participle (as some have suggested), if the Name may not have any etymological connection with the verb anyhow? We ought to be delivered at last from the endless debate as to whether the name means "be," "create," "will be," "will become," "will be present," etc. It may mean none of these things. . . . As to the meaning, the Name is explained in the entire Old Testament. He is creator, redeemer, sovereign, holy, a God of love, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and much more. The Name is explained by the attributes of God revealed in his Word. <sup>193</sup>

<sup>192</sup> *The Stromata*, ANF 2, Book 5, chap. 6, page 452.

<sup>193</sup> Harris, "The Pronunciation of the Tetragram," pages 222-223. See Buchanan, "Some Unfinished Business with the Dead Sea Scrolls," pages 417-418, and especially the discussion on pages 12-20 of Barry J. Beitzel, "Exodus 3:14 and the Divine Name:

Those attributes certainly include what is said to Moses in Exodus 3:14, but there it is not certain that this is because of any derivation of the tetragrammaton or any form of the divine name from the verb *hayah*, which is the verb from which *’ehyeh* (in this context, likely something along the lines of “I will be”) derives. It is enough to know that the things that are said about Jah in the OT are what we should associate with the use of his name, even if we do not know what it is that the name means etymologically. But since what is said in Exodus 3:14 is so powerfully connected with the meaning of God’s name and with the revelation of his person to the people of Israel, let us look closer at the meaning of *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* before concluding this chapter.

***The translation and the meaning of Exodus 3:14.*** We have already introduced this text, the question by Moses, and the response by Jah, which response we then compared in both Hebrew (*’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh*) and in the Greek LXX (*ego eimi ho on*). With this in mind, the following questions naturally arise: What is the meaning of the Hebrew expression? Is the LXX reading an accurate representation of the meaning of the Hebrew expression? What does the Greek translation mean?

Instead of looking outside of the text and going beyond its historical and grammatical contexts, our “primary understanding of Exodus 3:14 should come, rather, from a contextual understanding of the passage as well as from an analysis of the meaning and usage of the Hebrew term הָיָה [*hayah*, ‘to be (exist)’ or ‘to come to be’<sup>194</sup>] and its imperfect form הִיְיָהוּ [‘*ehyeh*].”<sup>195</sup> The immediate

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A Case of Biblical Paronomasia,” *Trinity Journal* 1 NS (1980), where Beitzel refers to the “veritable kaleidoscope of etymological speculation” ranging from a Sumerian, Egyptian, Akkadian, Indo-European, Hurrian, and other language etymologies (page 12). Beitzel also notes that attempts to associate the tetragrammaton with the verb *hayah* involve “a hypothetical antique verb” *hawah*, which does not occur in any “West Semitic languages which antedate the Mosaic era” (pages 15, 16). “Paronomasia” involves a play on words of one sort or another.

<sup>194</sup> Abba, “The Divine Name Yahweh,” page 328, note 62, cites the view of A.B. Davidson, namely, that *hayah* “corresponds not to εἶναι [*einai*, ‘to be’ or ‘to exist’] but to γίνεσθαι [*ginesthai*, ‘to become’ or ‘to come to be’],” meaning that “the expression ‘I will be’ is an historical formula referring, not to the nature of God, but to what he will show himself to be to his covenant people.” M.F. Burnyeat, “Platonism in the Bible: Numenius of Apamea on *Exodus* and Eternity,” in *The Revelation of the*

and the broader contexts of Exodus 3:14 help us appreciate how we can understand the use of *'ehyeh* in this text. Gianotti writes:

God's manifestation to Israel is yet future at the time of the burning bush incident. This יהוה [ *'ehyeh*] is God's promise that He will redeem the children of Israel. The people were in great need. They needed not so much to know the facts about God's character or that He was simply a covenant God present in their time of need, but to be reassured that this God would meet them in their time of need, proving true His character and promises. This in fact constitutes what God promised Moses in Exodus 3:12, namely, that God would be present and working on Moses' behalf in the difficult task ahead. Surely nothing less would have encouraged Moses to go. ... Whatever the situation or need (in particular, the redemption from Egypt, but also future needs) God will "become" the solution to that need.<sup>196</sup>

Many Trinitarians have connected the translation of the first *'ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14 by *ego eimi* in the LXX with the use of *ego eimi* in the NT by Jesus (for example, in John 8:58). Their arguments on this and related points will be considered in Chapter 3. Here it is enough simply to note that the context of Exodus 3:14 "hardly warrants the suggestion that ἐγώ εἰμι [*ego eimi*] functions alone as the divine name, since here it is not alone (compare Exod. 6.7; 7.5; 20.1[2])."<sup>197</sup> Again, the LXX reads, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (*ego*

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*Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity*, George H. van Kooten, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), page 147, note 27, refers to an interesting "variant translation given by Hippolytus [c. 170-235 CE] in his account of a self-styled Gnostic sect, the Naasenes: γίνομαι ὃ θέλω καὶ εἰμι ὃ εἰμί [*ginomai ho thelo kai eimi ho eimi*, 'I will become who/what I choose/will and I am who/what I am'] ... The first clause comes close to 'I will be what I will be', which knowledgeable colleagues tell me is the meaning of the original."

<sup>195</sup> Charles Gianotti, "The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH," *BSac* 39 (January-March 1985), page 42.

<sup>196</sup> Gianotti, "The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH," page 46.

<sup>197</sup> Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), page 85. See also J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), page 67, who observes:

The argument that has continued for two millennia over the translation of that verse in the Septuagint [Ex 3:14] and over the part it has played in the English translation 'I

*eimi ho on*, “I am the Being” or “I am the One who is”), identifying God as the *ho on*, not as the *ego eimi*.

There are good reasons, however, for rejecting the LXX’s rendering as an accurate representation of the Semitic thought conveyed by *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14, which thought is in the NWT expressed as, “I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.” The translation found in many other English versions assumes a present meaning for *’ehyeh ’asher ’ehyeh* that is not well founded. As Charles Gianotti points out, a present reading such as “I am that I am” is “unjustified in light of the imperfect form, אֶהְיֶה [’ehyeh], used in Exodus 3:14.” Gianotti also notes Bernhardt’s observation that the imperfect form of this verb never has present meaning but that, for this, the perfect form is used. Gianotti concludes: “Significantly, most interpreters translate אֶהְיֶה in Exodus 3:12 as future (i.e., ‘I will be [אֶהְיֶה] with you’). Yet, two verses later, why should not the same translation suffice?”<sup>198</sup>

Another way of looking at the meaning of the Hebrew text, one that also considers the reading of the LXX and the infrequent but possible present meaning of *’ehyeh* is as follows:

The form of the verb that is nowadays called in Hebrew ‘imperfect’ or ‘future’ could signify any tense, past, present, and future, and this is how it was already understood in the first centuries CE in *Shemot* or *Exodus Rabba* 3.6 by Rabbi Isaac who said: ‘God said to Moses: Tell them that I am now what I always was and always will be’; for this reason the word אֶהְיֶה [*’ehyeh*] is written three times.<sup>199</sup>

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am what I am’ or ‘I am that I am’ has surely confirmed the charge that ‘I am’ is not a proper translation for a Hebrew imperfect. ... In view of the strong emphasis in the early verses of the chapter upon Yahweh’s keeping of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the second imperfect could be a repetition of this great truth. ... a statement of Yahweh’s faithfulness so brief as to be amazing and so meaningful as to be inspiring.

<sup>198</sup> Gianotti, “The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH,” page 42. I should point out, however, as does Gianotti (page 50, note 32), that Bernhardt “admits to a possibility of a present tense rendering in Ruth 2:13, but agrees that otherwise the meaning is always future.” I would add to Ruth 2:13 the possibility of a present meaning for *’ehyeh* in Job 12:4 and Job 17:6.

<sup>199</sup> Wout Jac. van Bekkum, “What’s in the Divine Name? Exodus 3 in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition,” in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives*

Whether this was the understanding of the Hebrew word *'ehyeh* or the meaning of the expression *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* in the first century CE or earlier by Jews and by early Christians there is an interesting potential parallel to a similar understanding of the Judeo-Christian God in Revelation 1:4. Here the NWT reads (together with verse 5):

May YOU have undeserved kindness and peace from “The One who is [ὁ ὢν, *ho on*] and who was [ὁ ἦν, *ho en*] and who is coming [ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *ho erkhomenos*],” and from the seven spirits that are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, “the Faithful Witness,” “The firstborn from the dead,” and “The Ruler of the kings of the earth.”

In addition to the verbal concepts of ‘being,’ ‘having been,’ and ‘coming,’ which are similar in at least two respects to the verbal concepts that Clement of Alexandria associated with the divine name (again, ‘who is and who shall be’ [ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐσόμενος, *ho on kai ho esomenos*]), what is also interesting about Revelation 1:4 is the fact that, as it reads in our present collection of Greek manuscripts, it requires that we take the nominatives translated “the one who is,” “the one who was,” and “the one who is coming” as objects of a preposition (ἀπὸ, *apo* [“from”]). On the other hand, the prepositional objects “Jesus Christ” and “the seven spirits” are in the expected genitive case. As Shaw points out, “I think we would be hard pressed to find many nominatives used as objects of prepositions, since this is esp[ecially] harsh grammatically.”<sup>200</sup>

What is more, each of the genitives “Jesus Christ” and “the seven spirits” *have modifiers!* In other words, the genitive case “Jesus Christ” is the object of the preposition “from,” as is the genitive case object “the seven spirits.” “Genitive” in this case means simply the common grammatical form that objects of this preposition take in Greek. But both of them are modified further

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from *Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity*, George H. van Kooten, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), page 7.

<sup>200</sup> Shaw, “The Earliest Non-mystical Jewish Use of Ἰαω,” page 173, note 87.

by “the Faithful Witness,” “the firstborn from the dead,” and “the Ruler of the kings of the earth” (for “Jesus Christ”). “The seven spirits” are modified by the relative clause “that are before his throne.” In this light, Shaw appropriately asks, “Isn’t it likely then that the first instance originally had something comparable?”<sup>201</sup>

“Something comparable” in this case would have to be either a genitive case object of the preposition “from” (such as the word “God” [Greek: θεοῦ or τοῦ θεοῦ]) or “a tetragram in ‘Aramaic’ or paleo-Hebrew script or an instance of Iαω”!<sup>202</sup> If “God” originally stood as the genitive object of “from,” then it is not clear why it was removed. But based on the treatment of the divine name in Christian copies of the LXX and (possibly) the NT, it is easy to see how the divine name could also have stood as the object of “from” in Revelation 1:4, and then later the name was removed leaving the nominatives “the one who is,” “the one who was,” and “the one who is coming” as the objects of the preposition. This is very strange indeed, because based on the grammatical structure of the text these nominatives should more appropriately be modifiers of another object (such as the divine name, or even “God” or “Lord”), similar to what we see in this very text with “Jesus Christ” and with “the seven spirits.”

Thus, we not only find in Revelation 1:4 a further association of meaning for the name of God that is similar to what we read in Exodus 3:14 and in early writers such as Clement of Alexandria, but we have grammatical evidence for yet another occurrence of the divine name in the NT, this time apart from any quotation of an OT divine-name-containing text. Why, though, do we find *ho on* (“the one who is”) used both as an apparent translation of *’ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14 and associated with God or with the name of God in Revelation 1:4, 8, when *’ehyeh* by most accounts and according to regular usage means “I will be”?

It should be remembered that the LXX was not the only Greek translation completed by Jews and available for use during the first and following centuries CE. For example, in the

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<sup>201</sup> Shaw, “The Earliest Non-mystical Jewish Use of Iαω,” page 172.

<sup>202</sup> Shaw, “The Earliest Non-mystical Jewish Use of Iαω,” page 173.

translation of Aquila (followed by Theodotion) we do not find *ho on* as a translation of *'ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14, but rather ἔσομαι ὅς ἐσομαι (*esomai hos esomai*, “I will be what/who I will be”)! As I noted earlier, this is the same verb used by Clement of Alexandria (in addition to *ho on*) when explaining the meaning of the divine name. So it is right that we ask which translation is correct, or which is a more accurate representation of the Hebrew text.

The translations of Aquila and Theodotion certainly seem to follow more closely the structure of the Hebrew text, in that there is a clearer correspondence between the two *'ehyehs* and the relatives *'asher* and *hos*, whereas there is no relative in the LXX reading. It may have been that the LXX translators were simply “faced with making sense out of a sentence which would be a tautology [to a Greek mind] if rendered literally.”<sup>203</sup> It should be remembered, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, that during the time the LXX was translated in the early third century BCE the Jews in many respects had become thoroughly Hellenized. Gianotti explains:

It is relatively easy to imagine the backslidden Jews, a few hundred years after the Exile, having lost touch with the character and nature of their God YHWH. In such a condition

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<sup>203</sup> John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (SBLSCS 30; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), page 33. Arnold, “The Divine Name in Exodus iii. 14,” pages 126-127, writes: “The Greek rendering of אֶהְיֶה [‘ehyeh] ὁ ὢν [*ho on*], introduces a concept as foreign to the Hebrew mind as it is to the Hebrew verb. ... Thus the Hebrew for *I am that I am* is not אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה [‘ehyeh ‘asher ‘ehyeh], nor does it differ from that clause only in the matter of the tense of the verb. A nominal instead of a verbal sentence is required. The Hebrew for *I am that I am* is אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי [‘ani ‘asher ‘ani], just as *I am he* is אֲנִי הוּא [‘ani hu]. The Imperfect אֶהְיֶה [‘ehyeh] can only [or, more accurately, almost always seems to] mean *I am in the act of becoming*, or *I will become*, or *I will be* ... In no way can it be rendered *I am*. ... אֶהְיֶה [‘ehyeh] in this sentence can only mean *I will be* or *become (something)* ... Not merely the most natural, then, but the necessary construction of אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה [‘ehyeh ‘asher ‘ehyeh], is *I will be what I will be*. So much for the literal meaning of the Hebrew clause.” Before Arnold, S.R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, 3d. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), page 43, sec. 38, note 1, showed his preference for the translation, “I will be that I will be.”

they would have been influenced by a popular view of the nature of deity as propagated in their environment.<sup>204</sup>

Rather than look solely to the LXX translation of Exodus 3:14 for meaning of the divine name, we should consider its historical context, give attention to the likely meaning of the Hebrew text, evaluate other Greek translations and understandings of it (such as those given by Aquila, Theodotion, and Clement of Alexandria), and then look to the rest of the Bible to give us a more complete understanding of the name, as we appear to have in Revelation 1:4, 8. If we do this, then our understanding of Jah’s name will be one that is not only more accurate, but it will be one that brings us closer to the one whose name has been kept from so many for far too long, and for no good reasons at all.

If the divine name was removed from Revelation 1:4, for which a grammatical argument can be made, then it may be that what is there said about God as the *ho on* was also influenced by the same philosophy that appears to have infected the LXX translators of Exodus 3:14. Such thinking is likely also what led to a later Trinitarian view of the biblical “one God,” a view that, as I will show in Chapter 2, is not based on any good reasons, just as the refusal to use or to pronounce the name of the biblical God are also practiced today without any good reasons at all.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has been written to defend the use of “Jehovah” by Jehovah’s Witnesses and others, and to show that there are no legitimate reasons whatsoever for anyone who expresses faith in

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<sup>204</sup> Gianotti, “The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH,” page 43. Alexander MacWhorter, “Jehovah Considered as a Memorial Name,” *BSac* 14 (1857), page 111, with direct reference to Exodus 3:14 asks, “May not the Septuagint have given us, instead of the historical YAHVEH, God of the Scriptures, the philosophical Θεός, or ‘God,’ of Plato, and the school of Alexandria?” Also, L.M. Pákozdy, “I shall be that which I shall be,” *BT* 7.4 (October 1956), page 147, observes, “The translation ‘I am that I am’ is weakened by its very origin which appears in the LXX and betrays obviously the influence of Hellenistic philosophy of religion with its central idea of the deity as the absolutely independent Being.”

the biblical God, to at the same, time fail or refuse to pronounce or use his name. The best available evidence shows that “Jehovah” is not the result of a scribal application of vowel points from the Hebrew word for “Lord” to the tetragrammaton, the four-letter form of the divine name (יהוה [YHWH]). The best evidence for the pronunciation of the divine name shows us that “Yahweh” is an inaccurate transliteration based on very weak evidence relating to a reported Samaritan pronunciation preserved through Greek sources that explicitly contrasts it with the reported Jewish pronunciation (in Greek, *Ia*), which comes from the two-letter form of the divine name in Hebrew, *Yah* (יה [YH]). In English this form is Anglicized as “Jah.”

“Jah” is both a stand-alone name for the biblical God and it is used as part of other proper names in- and outside of the Bible. “Jah” also appears in the Greek text of Revelation 19 four times as part of the expression, “Praise Jah!” The Christian Witnesses of Jah accept “Jah” as the least disputed form and pronunciation of all forms of the divine name. But the pronunciations “Jehovah” and “Jaho,” and even certain variations of these forms, are also appropriate for they are also based on good reasons. Though there are always certain limitations when it comes to representing one or more letters or sounds from one language into another, exact correspondence between names in Hebrew, Greek, or in other languages is not something the Bible itself requires of those who would praise God’s name. The best available evidence is enough, and when it is considered then “Yahweh” does not measure up in any meaningful way to the forms *Ye/aho/uwah*, *Ye/aho/u*, or *Yah*. These forms are appropriately represented in English, respectively, as “Jehovah” (or “Jehovah,” “Jahovah” or “Jahuvah”), “Jaho” (or “Jehu,” “Jeho” or “Jahu”), and “Jah.”

While “Jah” clearly represents a unique name of the biblical God, the four-letter form of the divine name represented frequently today as “Jehovah,” in English, may also simply be another way of representing the three-letter form of the divine name that occurs as part of biblical names and which stands alone in ancient Aramaic, Jewish papyri. The three-letter form of the divine name (יה [YHW]) is also represented in ancient historical and biblical texts by the Greek transliteration *Iao*, which is itself used in several early

historical, onomastic, and other sources as the name of the Jewish God. Further, Jerome (see page 41, note 63) wrote that the four-letter form of the divine name is properly pronounced as “Iaho,” which corresponds to the Greek transliteration *Iao* and to the three-letter Hebrew/Aramaic form of the divine name. But since today “Jaho” is not as well represented as “Jehovah” or “Jah,” it is time to give it a more enduring place among the possible pronunciations of the biblical God’s name, based as it is on good, if not the best, available evidence.

Use of the divine name in the text of the Bible is incontestable when it comes to the OT, and there are good reasons for believing that the NT writers used the divine name when they quoted OT divine-name-containing texts, and possibly even when they did not (Revelation 1:4). God’s name is definitely used four times in Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6. Its apparent replacement by Christian scribes with sacred name abbreviations known as *nomina sacra* (for example,  $\overline{\kappa\zeta}$ , for the Greek word for “Lord”) is consistent with the use of similar, apparently Jewish abbreviations (like the double *yod* in P.Oxy. vii. 1007 with a line through it [ $\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{Y}}$ ]). Yet, both surrogates avoid use of the name in a manner consistent with Greek philosophical beliefs found in Philo, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and others, all of whom present unbiblical views about God and his name.—Psalm 44:20.

Though there are no good reasons supporting non-use of a form of the divine name in translations of the OT, many today still argue that (Revelation 19 aside) the earliest available NT manuscripts are in fact the best available evidence, and they support the use of “Lord” or “God” (whether abbreviated sacredly or not) in the NT today. But this belief often ignores significant historical facts regarding the use and subsequent removal of the divine name from Greek OT texts sometime after the first century CE. The evidence shows that this took place during the very same time when the earliest available NT documents were being copied and transmitted. This makes the earlier Greek OT manuscript evidence available today, *better* for use in determining what the original NT writers actually used. There are good reasons for believing that those individuals or groups who surrogated the divine name in later OT Greek texts did the same thing (at least for

OT quotations) to the NT, all of which was apparently done for the same Greek philosophical reasons. But these are not good reasons for believing that the NT writers themselves began or continued a practice of surrogating the divine name when quoting OT divine-name-containing texts. Further, few if any translators today use anything like the sacred name abbreviations used in the earliest available NT manuscripts.

The NWT uses “Jehovah” not only in the OT but also in the NT in 237 instances. Some of these NT uses of the divine name do not have very good reasons supporting them, and in many of them it is not clear whether “Jehovah” of the OT is in fact the intended referent (for example, 1 Corinthians 7:17). Thus, the NWT Committee has gone too far in its use of the divine name in the NT. However, the NWT Committee has done far more than any other Bible translation when it comes to explaining the importance of using the divine name. It also uses the divine name in at least 79 and possibly even in as many as 93 or even 154 NT texts where there are good reasons to use it.

The meaning of God's name has also been clouded, in part because the name itself has been “concealed” in many respects from mankind by those who should have known better. While there are many meanings and attributes associated with the biblical God and with his name, the idea of ‘becoming’ something toward those who are his people, particularly in their time of need, is taught in the account involving Moses and Jah in Exodus 3:14. This idea also appears to be expressed in the verbs that communicate God's having ‘been,’ his ‘being,’ and his ‘coming’ to his people in Revelation 1:4, 8. It is just such texts that give hope to those who worship Jah today apart from the traditions of men, traditions that invalidate Jah's Word, traditions that hide his name, and traditions that obscure the meaning of his name.—Mark 7:13.

But it is not only the use, pronunciation, and meaning of the name that has been controversial for no good reasons, for more than a couple thousand years. Indeed, the identity, even the very nature of Jah God has been misrepresented by many scholars and critics of Jehovah's Witnesses for far too long. So as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, as a Christian Witness of Jah, I now turn to a defense of the biblical God Jah's nature and his identity.