

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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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.

The two-letter form of God's name can be transliterated from Hebrew into English today as *Yah*, and it has been made into the English (Anglicized) word, "Jah." In its Hebrew stand-alone form "Jah" occurs at least 49 times in the OT. It is also used frequently as a prefix and as a suffix in compound names in- and outside of the Bible. Further, it is used at least 9 times standing alone or as a part of the expression "Hallelujah" in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 this same expression ("Hallelujah") occurs. In Hebrew this expression is a combination of two words, הללו (*halelu* ["praise"]) and יה (*Yah* ["Jah"]).¹⁷⁰ In modern printed editions of the Greek text of Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 we often find Ἀλληλουϊά, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew expression given in the preceding sentence. Like the Hebrew expression, the Greek transliteration is a combination or representation of the two Hebrew words in Greek, *allelou* ("praise") and *Ia* ("Jah").

In the most ancient manuscripts of the Greek text of Revelation this expression runs together without any spaces, just like most other Greek words in these texts. So it is not clear whether *Ia* occurred as a part of a single-word expression (as in our modern "Hallelujah") or if it was in fact the second of two words that together meant, "Praise Jah!" In either case, *Ia* in Revelation 19 is an undisputed instance of the divine name either standing alone or as part of an expression that involves 'praising' the God "Jah." It is this very name (*Ia*, "Jah") that writers like Theodoret represented as the Jewish pronunciation of the divine name in contrast to the Samaritan pronunciation (see the quotation at the end of my note 67).

Lundquist does not dispute that in Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 the divine name occurs as *Ia*. His point of interest, however, is limited to "whether or not the inspired Christian writers used the

¹⁷⁰ Compare the occurrence of these words in the Hebrew of Ps 117, where we find in the first part of the verse *halelu* ("praise") followed by the Hebrew particle יהי (‘*et*), used in this case to identify the object of praise, that is, the divine name which follows it (the tetragrammaton). This string of words means exactly the same thing as the use of *haleluyah* (*halelu* + *yah*) at the end of Ps 117.

four Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton in their writing.”¹⁷¹ But, really, whether the divine name occurs in the form of the tetragrammaton (the four-letter Hebrew/Aramaic form) or some other form (such as the Greek two- or three-letter transliterations *Ia* or *Iao*, respectively), the form of the name used is not the primary issue where Jehovah’s Witnesses are concerned. The real question is simply whether *any* form of the divine name was used in the NT. Related to this is the question of how that name should be represented and used today in translations of the OT and NT.

Indeed, as noted earlier in this chapter, the tetragrammaton may really be only another way of writing the divine name as it was pronounced through other forms, such as the three-letter form *Yaho* (Hebrew) or *Iao* (Greek), or even by the two-letter form *Yah* (Hebrew) or *Ia* (Greek). Thus, again, it is not simply the Hebrew/Aramaic tetragrammaton that is of interest to Jehovah’s Witnesses and to the Christian Witnesses of Jah, but *the use of the divine name in any form*. While Lundquist’s point of interest may be more narrowly related to the presence of the actual four-letter form of the divine name in the NT (for which there is credible manuscript evidence from OT source material quoted by NT writers), and though Lundquist accepts Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 as NT texts wherein “the divine name does, in fact, occur in the Christian Scriptures,”¹⁷² he nonetheless observes and asks:

It is also interesting to note that the divine name was *not* removed from these four verses. To anyone familiar with the language background during the second and third centuries C.E., these four occurrences of the word *hallelujah* were obviously a reference to Jehovah. Why then, if there had been a heresy aimed at removing his name, were these verses overlooked?¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lynn Lundquist, *The Divine Name in the New World Translation* (Portland, OR: Word Resources, 2001), page 58.

¹⁷² Lundquist, *The Divine Name in the New World Translation*, page 57. See also, Lundquist, *The Divine Name in the New World Translation*, page 61, where Lundquist writes that “the divine name is undeniably used four times at Rev 19:1-6.”

¹⁷³ Lundquist, *The Divine Name in the New World Translation*, page 61.

I have already shown that writers of the first century CE and thereafter, such as Philo of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and the author of the "Hortatory Address to the Greeks," explicitly taught things about God's name and about naming God that are not biblical. In fact, such teachings stem from Platonic and neo-Platonic thought. It is also clear that the earliest Christian NT manuscript tradition reveals a scribal practice known as *nomina sacra* ("sacred names"), which involves the use of specially marked abbreviations that substitute for the divine name in NT quotations of the OT. I also noted earlier (see pages 80-81) that this use of *nomina sacra* is like certain Jewish scribal conventions where the divine name is similarly (but not exactly) marked or surrogated when it occurs in the OT or in related literature.

Therefore, it is undeniable that sometime prior to, during, and after the first century CE the divine name was being treated in ways that are not according to any articulated biblical teaching concerning its use and its pronunciation. The question is, did the NT writers continue or did they establish on their own some tradition concerning the use of the divine name (such as the *nomina sacra*), or did those who copied the NT begin the use of such conventions? If those who passed on the original NT writings were the first users of the *nomina sacra*, then what did the NT writers use? In this light, I again present Lundquist's question, "Why then, if there had been a heresy aimed at removing his name, were these verses [Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6] overlooked?"

The answer is actually rather simple when considered in the context of the previously explained scribal treatments, manuscript variations, and Greek (unbiblical) philosophical views concerning the use of the divine name. Then there is the different ways that the words of the expression, "Praise Jah!" were considered during the time when Revelation was written or passed along. On this latter point, it is clear that there were at least three different schools of thought about the divine name that could have affected how a Jewish or a Jewish Christian scribe viewed the name *YH* (Hebrew) or *Ia* (Greek) when associated or used with the Hebrew word (or transliterated Greek) word for "praise." Consider:

According to the tradition in one School, Hallelujah consists of two separate words and the second word or the monosyllable *jah* is the Divine name. Hence in writing it the Scribe must treat it as such, sanctify it when copying it and in case of an error must not erase it which he is allowed to do with an ordinary mistake. In harmony with this School, therefore, הללוּ *Hallu* is the imperative plural, יה *jah* the Divine name is the object, and the phrase must be translated *praise ye Jehovah*. And there can hardly be any doubt that this exhibits the primitive reading which is uniformly followed in the Authorised [*sic*] Version and in the Revised Version. According to the second School, however, Hallelujah is one inseparable word and the termination *jah* simply denotes *power, might, ...* Whilst according to the third School, Hallelujah though undivided still contains the sacred name and is, therefore, divine.¹⁷⁴

Ginsburg draws on the traditions regarding the understanding of “Hallelujah” in rabbinic thought through the Jerusalem (c. 350 CE) and Babylonian (late fourth century to early sixth century CE) Talmuds. These Talmuds contain Jewish rabbinic laws and customs found in the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), with discussions of it and debates over various rabbinic opinions. These traditions show that among religious Jews in the centuries following the writing of Revelation there were different views on the significance of the word “Hallelujah.” Revelation was not even accepted as a part of the New Testament canon until several centuries after it was written. Indeed, in the first Greek commentary on Revelation by Oecumenius (c. mid- to late-sixth or early seventh century CE), it is clear that by the time Revelation was accepted Christianity lost the biblical appreciation for the meaning of the divine name. After quoting Revelation 19:1-5, Oecumenius writes: “They were crying, [John] says, *Alleluia*. Allelulia is a Hebrew word; it means ‘Praise, laud God.’”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1966), pages 378-379.

¹⁷⁵ John N. Suggit, *Oecumenius: Commentary on the Apocalypse*, vol. 112 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), page 157.

In the preceding paragraph I wrote that by at least the time of Oecumenius, Christianity had “lost the biblical appreciation for the meaning of the divine name.” I say this here because Oecumenius substitutes “God” for “Jah” when giving the meaning of “Alleluia”! Though Jah is God (compare Revelation 19:5), the original meaning of “Hallelujah” is not “Praise God” but “Praise Jah” or “Praise Jehovah.” This is “incontestably established by the parallelism”¹⁷⁶ of OT texts such as Psalm 135:3: “Praise Jah [*halelu+yah* (יה)], for Jehovah [יהוה, *YHWH*] is good. Make melody to his name, for it is pleasant.” By the time the book of Revelation was fully accepted as part of the NT, or given serious exposition as a Christian document (such as by Oecumenius), the significance of the divine name in “Hallelujah” was lost and its meaning distorted by people like Oecumenius to mean “Praise, laud God.”

Based on all of the preceding evidence, it is no real surprise to find that Christian scribes and commentators in the centuries following the actual writing of the book of Revelation left *alleluia* in the text of Revelation 19:1-6. They simply interpreted it to mean something other than what it actually meant, effectively eliminating the divine name from the meaning of the text even though the divine name is still there. But those who “Praise Jah” in Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 are not Jewish rabbis. They are not post-biblical Christian scribes or commentators. They are “a great crowd in heaven” (verses 1 and 3). They are “the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures” (verse 4). They are yet another “great crowd” whose voice is heard by John (verse 6). They are the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah’s Witnesses who reject the traditions of men where they invalidate teachings that for good reasons are attributable to both Jah God and to Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁷⁶ Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, page 379.