

Chapter 10: REMOVAL OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON FROM EARLY GREEK MANUSCRIPTS

The New ••119•• World Bible Translation Committee believed that the Tetragrammaton was used by the original Greek Scripture writers, but then removed by scribes and copyists by the fourth century. *This possibility requires careful scrutiny inasmuch as verification of the Tetragrammaton's removal is the sole condition justifying restoration of **Jehovah's** name to the Christian Scriptures.*

This chapter considers the textual evidence which will confirm or refute the claim that the Tetragrammaton was removed from the original Greek Christian Scripture manuscripts.

Needless to say, a description of the Tetragrammaton's removal is not found in the writings of the Christian Scriptures themselves for the obvious reason that an altered text would not report the process of its own corruption. Rather, the issue of removal will be resolved through an examination of historical and textual material bearing on the original Greek manuscripts. The reader must also be aware that this chapter addresses the presence of the Tetragrammaton only in the Christian Greek Scriptures and not in the *Septuagint*.

The position of the Watch Tower Society

By way of introduction, the teaching of the Watch Tower Society is summarized in this quotation from the *New World Translation Reference Edition*, 1984, page 1564:

Matthew made more than a hundred quotations from the inspired Hebrew Scriptures. Where these quotations included the divine name he would have been obligated faithfully to include the Tetragrammaton in his Hebrew Gospel account. When the Gospel of Matthew was translated into Greek, the Tetragrammaton was left untranslated within the Greek text according to the practice of that time.

Sometime during the second or third century C.E. the scribes removed the Tetragrammaton from both the Septuagint and the Christian Greek Scriptures and replaced it with *Ky'ri-os*, "Lord" or *The-os*, "God."

[Quoting George Howard] "In the following pages we will set forth a theory that the divine name, יהוה (and possibly abbreviation of it), was originally written in the N[ew] T[estament] quotation of and allusions to the O[ld] T[estament] and that in the course of time ••120•• it was replaced mainly with the surrogate $\kappa\varsigma$ [abbreviation for *Ky'ri-os*, "Lord"]."

We concur with the above, with this exception: We do not consider this view a "theory," rather, a presentation of the facts of history as to the transmission of Bible manuscripts.

Defining the search for the Tetragrammaton

Irrespective of one's view regarding the existence of the Tetragrammaton in the original Christian Greek Scriptures, a study exploring its presence should evaluate six specific issues.

These six topics are given in descending order of importance. If the first statement can be substantiated, the remaining evidence is merely corroborative. If it cannot be substantiated, each of the descending statements must give appropriate degrees of confirming evidence.¹

1. The majority of the earliest extant Christian Scripture manuscripts should show the Tetragrammaton or a reasonable derivative embedded in the Greek text.
2. Early and abundant extant manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures should show evidence of the Tetragrammaton's removal.

¹ The first statement would establish the Tetragrammaton as a reality in the Christian Greek Scriptures with no other supporting evidence needed. In its absence, the second would give strong evidence of its original existence. The third and fourth statements are natural consequences which must be observable had the original Scriptures been so radically changed in the second or third century. The fifth statement is merely corroborative if we hold the Greek manuscripts of the Greek Scriptures to be those which are inspired of God. The sixth is simply a practical concern which addresses geographical diversity. In no case, however, can later evidence alone establish the Tetragrammaton's presence if substantial indication is not attestable in early manuscripts.

3. The writings of the early church fathers should record a debate ensuing from the Tetragrammaton's removal.
4. Early non-canonical writings should include reference to the Tetragrammaton.
5. The Tetragrammaton should be identifiable in Christian Scriptures written in the Hebrew language during the apostolic or early church era.
6. The geography of the area establishes the setting to be considered in the Tetragrammaton's removal.

Christian Greek Scriptures which use the Tetragrammaton must be substantiated

The Watch Tower Society teaches that the original Christian Greek Scriptures used the Tetragrammaton in the 237 instances in ••121•• which the name *Jehovah* has been inserted into the *New World Translation*. If this is true, one of two conditions *must* exist, and preferably *both* should be true for appropriate verification.

1. The majority of the earliest extant Christian Scripture manuscripts should show the Tetragrammaton or a reasonable derivative embedded in the Greek text.

Our previous discussions of the inspiration of Scripture and its inerrancy is based on an important premise. *For any portion of Scripture to be accepted as authoritative, it must be verified by authentic, ancient manuscripts.* We cannot validate the original words of Scripture on any basis other than the most exacting manuscript study. Were we to allow mere speculation to dictate the words of the text, the door would be opened to a plethora of *sectarian Bibles* of all types. If the Tetragrammaton was used in the original writings of the apostolic authors, we must be able to find the Hebrew letters יהוה² embedded² in the earliest extant copies of these Greek manuscripts. There is no other source of information or tradition which can take precedence over the earliest and most accurate Greek copies of the Christian Scriptures.

The reader must be aware that there are no extant Greek manuscripts which contain the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures. We can appropriately require the same degree of evidence for the Tetragrammaton which we demand for any other correction of variants in the Greek text. In the absence of a single occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in any of the 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts of the Greek Christian Scriptures, we can conclude that all discussion of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures is mere speculation.³

Furthermore, neither is there any evidence of Greek lettering used as a substitution for the Hebrew letters יהוה. No Christian Greek Scripture manuscripts are reported by the Watch Tower Society to contain a derivative such as the Greek letters ΠΙΠΙ (PIPI) which *are* found in certain copies of the *Septuagint* and Origen's *Hexapla*.

Finally, as we close this first topic dealing with the presumed removal of the Tetragrammaton from the Christian Greek Scriptures, ••122•• we must be reminded of an essential reality. *Within the Greek text used today, whether this be the Westcott and Hort text used in the **Kingdom Interlinear Translation**, or the **United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament**, there is not a single instance of a word which has been reinstated to the Greek text without textual support in ancient Greek manuscripts.* Could the Hebrew letters יהוה represent the first and only case in which this is permissible?

2. Early and abundant extant manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures should show evidence of the Tetragrammaton's removal.

No originals of the Greek Scripture writings remain. For that reason, all evidence for the content of the Greek Scriptures comes from subsequent and successive copies.

Irrespective of the word used by the original writers in these 237 instances, the word would be

² *Embedment* precisely expresses this Hebrew word's placement into a Greek text. It would not be a *translation* because it would be an exact importation of the Hebrew word, including its meaning and orthography, into the Greek text. The upper-case Greek letters ΠΙΠΙ (PIPI) would be a *graphic symbol* of the Hebrew name of God.

³ Of the total 5,000 whole or partial Christian Greek Scripture manuscripts which are known to exist, the Watch Tower Society does not identify a single document in which the Tetragrammaton was used.

formidably established in the manuscripts after the first 30 or more years of the Christian church.⁴ Because of the great travel distances between churches and their individual need for manuscripts, many copies of the originals came into existence in this brief time interval. There is no basis for accurately estimating the number of copies which were in circulation 30 years later. However, considering the fact that the church was dispersed by severe persecution, that rapid church growth was experienced, and that both congregation- and privately-held copies were in use, the numbers must have been in the hundreds, if not thousands, of individual copies for each book within this short period of time.

Presuming now that the passages containing the Hebrew word יהוה were changed to Κύριος, what would have needed to occur? In the first place, it would have been impossible to gather *all* existing manuscripts containing יהוה for destruction at a single time. There would simply have been too many manuscripts with too wide a distribution for this to take place. Initially, only a few manuscripts in selected locations could have been destroyed. Willful destruction of manuscripts would have been even more difficult because many Christians had preserved them through perilous times of persecution and personal risk.

Thus, what is called a *textual variant* would have resulted rather than an abrupt and complete change. That is, there would have ••123•• emerged a mix of manuscripts with some using יהוה and others using Κύριος.⁵ As time went on, assuming a consensus among a strong element advocating the heresy, a larger percentage of manuscripts would have now contained the variant form Κύριος. However, because of the resistance to alterations and the diversity of geographical location, copies containing the original יהוה would have remained in circulation.

There are examples of manuscript longevity which we have already seen. Jerome, who died in 420 C.E., reports having personally used Matthew's Hebrew Gospel. Needless to say, this document (or copies of it) was available for at least 300 years after its writing.

Therefore, if יהוה was altered to Κύριος, we would expect to see a progressive change wherein older documents contained the original, while newer copies contained the variant.⁶ The distribution would have been further commingled because more recent copies would have occasionally been made from older documents, and יהוה would have randomly reappeared.

However, the change would not always have been as simple as going from יהוה to Κύριος. Because the Christian Greek Scriptures were primarily circulated in Gentile territory, we would expect to see variants prompted by language confusion rather than theological bias. Thus, we would probably find early variants with a form of derived Greek lettering such as the ΠΙΠΙ (PIPI) variant found in the *Septuagint*, or the Greek phonetic reproduction ΙΑΩ (YAW). Further, if the original יהוה had been corrupted, it would not have *universally* changed to Κύριος. We would expect to find a variety of Greek words which could have been traced back to the יהוה source, but which would have differed from the Greek word chosen in other manuscripts. For that reason, in each of these 237 references, we would find a *variety* of Greek words in extant manuscripts rather than the single word Κύριος.

Consequently, we would expect a change of the Tetragrammaton to *Kyrios* in the second and third centuries to leave identifiable manuscript evidence. Even if all copies containing the Tetragrammaton itself were lost, significant evidences of the alteration would remain in extant Greek manuscripts.

The Watch Tower Society teaches that prior to the copying of any manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures which are known today, ••124•• the Tetragrammaton was changed to *Kyrios* by copyists and scribes. This argument encounters a formidable obstacle. The rapidity and completeness of

⁴ We have stated 30 years as an absolute minimum time simply because the Apostle John wrote at least 30 years after the first manuscripts of Matthew and Paul were circulated. Most certainly, at least John's epistles would have reflected a warning if the early use of the Tetragrammaton had been altered in his lifetime. The reader must understand, however, that both the 30 year period of time and the presupposition that John would have commented on the alteration are outside of any verifiable data available.

⁵ In actuality, there would also be a mix expected *within* a single manuscript. Not all of the 237 passages would be uniformly altered in each manuscript.

⁶ Because subsequent users of a manuscript frequently made corrections, we would also expect to find a small number of manuscripts in which the Tetragrammaton was overwritten with *Kyrios* or a Greek substitution for the divine name.

such a change would have been unprecedented. The *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* amply establishes that Greek manuscripts of the fourth century (300 C.E. and later) carried only the word *Kyrios* with no reference to the Tetragrammaton. In the book "*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*" (p. 313), several examples of leading papyrus manuscripts are cited which move the date of known uses of *Kyrios* even closer to apostolic times. As we saw in the last chapter, P⁴⁷ includes four passages from Revelation 9:10-17:2 which are translated as *Jehovah* in the *New World Translation*. This manuscript was copied by 300 C.E. The book of Revelation was written by John about 96 C.E. so that these four uses of *Kyrios* are verified to within 204 years of the original writing.

Another manuscript from the third or fourth century identified as P⁷² contains 12 *Kyrios* passages translated as *Jehovah* in the *New World Translation*. This manuscript, which contains Jude and 1 and 2 Peter, was copied between 201 and 399 C.E.

A third manuscript which the Watch Tower Society uses as a reference, is identified as P⁶⁶. It contains five *Kyrios* passages which are translated in the *New World Translation* as *Jehovah*. This manuscript is identified as *circa* 200 C.E. Since these five passages come from the Gospel of John (which was written about 98 C.E.), these copies were made approximately 102 years after the original writing.⁷ The inescapable truth is that, as early as 102 to not more than 204 years from the writing of the Christian Greek Scriptures, we have substantial evidence that the Christian church fully accepted *Kyrios* (Lord) as the appropriate word in these passages.

According to the information published by the Watch Tower Society, it is left entirely to speculation as to how the original Greek Christian Scriptures could have been written using the Tetragrammaton, and then to have been so completely changed within a mere 102 to 240 years, leaving no trace of the corruption. (That is, to use the best dates available to us, John probably wrote Revelation in 96 C.E. and his Gospel in 98 C.E. Paul's last epistles were written in 61 C.E.) That leaves a period of time between 98 and 200 C.E. in which the entire heresy would have needed to arise, altered all documents which have remained today, altered all documents of which we have copies today, and so completely established itself as the corrupted theology that there was no surviving written debate between the church fathers. Yet the book "*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*," moves the dates even closer together when it says,

...but discoveries of older Bible manuscripts during the past few decades take the Greek text back as far as about the year 125 C.E., just a couple of decades short of the death of the apostle John about 100 C.E. These manuscript evidences provide strong assurance that we now have a dependable Greek text in refined form (p. 319).

That a heresy of such radical proportions could have swept the entire Roman Empire during the short period between even 96 and 300 C.E., and that it could have been so complete as to remove all traces of the change, is difficult to imagine. Could we then imagine that it happened "just a couple of decades" after the death of the apostle John?

Early non-biblical writings must reflect the controversy

The early non-biblical writings of the church consisted of commentaries and polemics of numerous church writers as well as non-canonical *devotional* writings. We would expect these two important sources to mention the presence of the Tetragrammaton within the original apostolic writings.

3. The writings of the early church fathers should record a debate ensuing from the Tetragrammaton's removal.

The development of the church was marked by writing. In many cases, this writing was in the form of letters or epistles. (The Christian Greek Scriptures owe much to letter writing. The Gospel of Luke, the book of Acts, all of Paul's writings, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and the three epistles of John are all addressed as letters to churches or individuals. Even the book of Revelation is addressed to "the seven congregations that are in the [district of] Asia." [Revelation 1:4.]

By the second century, however, the writing of letters of instruction as well as considerably longer works of philosophy and theology became an accepted part of the new church. A significant amount of

⁷ Refer to the footnote section of Appendix A for this information.

that writing has been preserved for us today.⁸

In 325 C.E. the First Council of Nicaea was convened. For our purposes, the content of that council is not important. However, the writings of the church fathers⁹ are categorized on the basis of this ••126•• council. A group called the Ante-Nicene fathers wrote before 325 C.E.¹⁰ *The writers before 325 C.E. can be considered to be reliable reporters of the theological debates following the establishment of the early church between 100 and 325 C.E., though we would in no way be obligated to accept their individual points of view.* (The writings of the early church fathers are widely recognized by the Watch Tower Society. The testimony of Jerome regarding Matthew's Hebrew Gospel, the work and commentary of Origen concerning the *Septuagint*, and the reluctance of the Jews to pronounce the divine name are examples of information reported by the Ante-Nicene writers. A cursory glance through *Aid to Bible Understanding* shows numerous quotations from both secular and Christian writers of that era. Examples abound from Tacitus and Josephus [cf. page 317], Origen [cf. page 456], Jerome [cf. page 520], Irenaeus, Africanus, and Eusebius [cf. page 640], Augustine [cf. page 671], and many others.)¹¹

Through these writings, much is known about the early church and the world in which it existed. It is reasonable to assume that the importance of any issue in the life of the early church would be displayed by the amount of contemporary material written.

Before going further, we need to understand the amount of written material and subject matter of these writers. The author evaluated a standard encyclopedic reference which is available in most large public libraries. The nine-volume set is entitled, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and is published by Charles Scribners' Sons. These volumes contain writings by men living in the Common Era. Among them were Justin Martyr (who lived from 110 to 165),¹² Irenaeus (120 to 202), Polycarp (? to 155), Tatian (a student of Justin), Theophilus (? to ?; one book was known to be written in 181), Tertullian (150 to 220), and many others.

These nine volumes make an important contribution to the study of the Tetragrammaton. First, notice that these men typically wrote within 20 to 120 years of the original writing of the Greek Scriptures. ••127•• (Polycarp was actually a student of the Apostle John.) These men would certainly have been aware of a heresy as great as a corruption of the Tetragrammaton to *Kyrios*. This would have been particularly true if this alteration had caused them to recognize Jesus as having possessed the essential nature of Jehovah himself (by using *Kyrios* as an all-inclusive term) rather than having been a created being (by distinguishing between *Kyrios* and יהוה).

Secondly, the volume of their writings gives us an idea of the probability of mentioning such a heresy. The nine-volume set to which we have referred has a total of 5,433 pages of translated material. (Indices and biographical material were not included in this count.) With some 1,000 words per page, these writers have given us approximately 5,400,000 words. For the sake of comparison, the 1984 reference edition of the *New World Translation* has 1,494 Scripture pages with approximately 750 words per page. Consequently, there are about 1,120,000 words in the entire *New World Translation Bible*. Therefore, *the writings of the church fathers between the apostolic period and 325 C.E. represented in this encyclopedic set alone amount to the equivalent of approximately five complete Bibles.* There are other known writings which are not included in these volumes such as the extensive *Commentaries* by Origen. Certainly, in this many pages, the heresy of the Tetragrammaton's removal would have been mentioned.

⁸ All the writings of the early church fathers were transmitted to us today in the same manner as the Christian Greek Scriptures. That is, we have only copied materials, never original writings.

⁹ The term *church fathers* is universally used to describe the leaders of the early church period who are known through their writings. The entire range of theological persuasion is represented within this group.

¹⁰ *Ante-Nicene* simply means, "Before the Nicene council," which was convened in 325 C.E. This is a simple chronological classification of the writers rather than a statement of their theological position. The writings of the church fathers are divided by the time of writing into *Ante-Nicene*, *Nicene*, and *Post-Nicene*.

¹¹ Examples of this familiarity with the writings of the church fathers and secular authors from the era are common in readily available publications as well. For example, see the reference to Josephus' writings on page 11 in the *Watchtower* magazine, April 15, 1996.

¹² Most birth and death dates for these writers are approximations.

By way of example, one section of these nine volumes was evaluated. An important early writer named Irenaeus wrote a book (it was actually a scroll) in the second century entitled *Against Heresies*. This work has 258 pages in the English translation. Conveniently, the publisher of this nine-volume set included a comprehensive Scripture index for each volume. Thus, reference to a particular Scripture passage cited by any of the church fathers can be located. Consequently, some of the pertinent 237 *Jehovah* passages were located in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* to ascertain his awareness of the presumed substitution of *Kyrios* for the Tetragrammaton. No indication was found that Irenaeus expressed concern with the presumed change in the verses he quoted. Instead, he quoted these verses with full acceptance of the word *Lord*.¹³

••128•• The following citations give examples of Irenaeus' work. The Scripture paraphrases and brief commentary by Irenaeus in the left-hand column are from *Against Heresies* as translated into English and published in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* by Charles Scribners' Sons, copyright 1899. In the right-hand column the verse which Irenaeus cited is quoted from the *New World Translation*.

*Against Heresies**New World Translation*

The **Lord** then, exposing him [the devil] in his true character, says, "Depart, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."
(Vol. 1, p. 549)

Then Jesus said to him: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is **Jehovah** your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'"
(Matthew 4:10 *NWT*)

For in no other way could we have learned the things of God, unless our Master, existing as the Word, had become man. For no other being had the power of revealing to us the things of the Father, except His own proper Word. For what other person "knew the mind of the **Lord**," or who else "has become His counselor?"
(Vol. 1, p. 526)

For "who has come to know **Jehovah's** mind, or who has become his counselor?"
(Romans 11:34 *NWT*)

Then again Matthew, when speaking of the angel, says, "The angel of the **Lord** appeared to Joseph in sleep."
(Vol. 1, p. 422)

But after he had thought these things over, look! **Jehovah's** angel appeared to him in a dream.
(Matthew 1:20 *NWT*)

¹³ The volume used for this study was in *English* not Greek. (A search for a Greek copy proved futile.) Therefore, we can only assume that *Kyrios* or its equivalent was used. (For complete substantiation of *Kyrios* in Greek, see the preceding comments regarding *First Clement*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache*.) However, our objective at this point is to discern any comment by Irenaeus as to the impropriety of a word substitution for the Tetragrammaton. He makes no such comments. Rather, he uses the passages as they appear in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* and adds no comments regarding an alleged Tetragrammaton corruption.

When he says in the Epistle to the Galatians: "...Even as Abraham believed **God** and it was accounted unto him for righteousness."
(Vol. 1, p. 492)¹⁴

Just as Abraham "put faith in **Jehovah** and it was counted to him as righteousness."
(Galatians 3:6 NWT)

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For Peter said "...For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the **Lord** always before my face."
(Vol. 1, p. 430)

For David says respecting him, "I had **Jehovah** constantly before my eyes."
(Acts 2:25 NWT)

Irenaeus indicates no awareness that copyists and scribes conspired to remove the divine name from the Christian Greek Scriptures, even in those instances where the *New World Translation* inserts the name of Jehovah.¹⁵ Thus, a man writing a mere 50 years after the death of the Apostle John was content with Jesus' title *Kyrios* for the same passages which the translators of the *New World Translation* believe were altered from the Tetragrammaton by carelessness or fraud.

4. Early non-canonical writings should include reference to the Tetragrammaton.

Numerous early *devotional* writings are available from the first century. An interesting example is the *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*. This epistle is regarded as a genuine writing of the Apostle Paul's companion Clement who is mentioned at Philippians 4:3.¹⁶ The epistle was written sometime between 75 and 110 C.E., with the greater probability that it was written shortly after 100 C.E. Therefore, Clement's use of either the Tetragrammaton or *Kyrios* would reflect both the practice of the first century church, and presumably that of Paul himself. (Based on the date of this epistle, this assertion would be true of at least the practice of the early church even if the author was not the companion of the Apostle Paul.)

Clement universally used *Kyrios* as the designation for Jesus when he referred to him as *Lord*. However, he also frequently quoted (or ••130•• alluded to) Hebrew Scripture references in which the *New World Translation* inserted *Jehovah*. The following quotations from the *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*¹⁷ are taken from the book entitled *The Apostolic Fathers*,¹⁸ which gives the Greek text with an English translation. Where Clement used a word which was translated into English as *Lord*, the actual Greek word will be shown parenthetically. The chapter- and verse designation within *First Clement* precedes the quotation. The Hebrew Scripture reference is given following the quotation. The Hebrew Scripture verse is quoted from the *New World Translation* in the right-hand column.

¹⁴ This is an interesting example of agreement. Irenaeus and the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* both use *God* (theos), whereas the *New World Translation* uses *Jehovah*.

¹⁵ We believe this to be an accurate portrayal of Irenaeus' work. However, the few brief quotations we are able to give in this limited space are far from comprehensive. The reader would do well to evaluate these citations for himself in a local library. In this way, entire sections can be checked for content.

¹⁶ The historical and textual evidence strongly attributes the authorship of the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* to Paul's companion. We will accept the author as this Clement. On the other hand, the reader should understand that the biblical Clement is not accepted unequivocally among all historians as the true author. Further background on the book and author is abundantly available in the preface material to this epistle. A so-called *Second Epistle of Clement* is generally regarded as being the work of another (and later) author rather than Clement himself. Therefore, only the first epistle can be relied upon for our purposes here.

¹⁷ This is not to be confused with the canonical book of 1 Corinthians.

¹⁸ Published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., copyright 1912. The English translator is Kirsopp Lake. The following information on pages 143-144 of this book regarding the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache* is also taken from *The Apostolic Fathers*.

*First Clement**New World Translation*

1 Clement 8:2 And even the Master of the universe himself spoke with an oath concerning repentance; "For as I live, said the **Lord** (κύριος), I do not desire the death of the sinner so much as his repentance." (Ezek. 33:11)

Say to them, "As I am alive," is the utterance of the **Lord Jehovah**, "I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way." (Ezek. 33:11)

1 Clement 8:4 "Come and let us reason together, saith the **Lord** (κύριος): and if your sins be as crimson, I will make them white as snow..." (Isa. 1:18)

"Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us," says **Jehovah**. "Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow..." (Isa. 1:18)

1 Clement 13:5 "I know assuredly that the **Lord God** (κύριος ὁ θεός) is delivering to you this land..." (Josh. 2:9)

"I do know that **Jehovah** will certainly give you the land..." (Josh. 2:9)

1 Clement 15:5-6 "May the **Lord** (κύριος) destroy all the deceitful lips . . . Now will I arise, saith the **Lord** (κύριος), I will place him in safety." (Ps. 12:3, 5)

"Jehovah will cut off all smooth lips... I shall at this time arise," says **Jehovah**. "I shall put [him] in safety..." (Ps. 12:3, 5)

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1 Clement 16:2-3 For it says, "Lord (Κύριε), who has believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the **Lord** (κυρίου) revealed?" (Isa. 53:1)

"Who has put faith in the thing heard by us? And as for the arm of **Jehovah**, to whom has it been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1)

In no case did Clement use the Tetragrammaton in his Epistle to the Corinthians. Thus, we know that Clement—a first century leader of the church and presumably a disciple and companion of the Apostle Paul—consistently used *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton when quoting the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁹

We are left with the conclusion that either Clement—notwithstanding his probable leadership role in the first century church and his association with the Apostle Paul—was a heretic because he abandoned the use of the Tetragrammaton, or that the Gentile first century church did indeed use *Kyrios* in their Greek Scriptures.

Was Clement alone, or did others follow his use of *Kyrios* when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures?

We find a similar pattern among other writers of the time. Another epistle from the end of the first century or early part of the second is called the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Though this epistle is

¹⁹ In addition to the 5 passages from the Hebrew Scriptures given above, Clement also quoted 17 verses using *Kyrios* in which the *New World Translation* uses *Jehovah* (Ex. 32:31; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 32:9; Ps. 22:6-8; Ps. 24:1; Ps. 32:2; Ps. 32:10; Ps. 34:11, 15, 16, 17; Ps. 69:31; Ps. 118:20; Prov. 3:12; Prov. 20:27; Isa. 6:3; and Isa. 40:10). Clement quoted two additional verses which the *New World Translation* renders as *Jah* (Ps. 118:18 and 19).

traditionally held to be a work of Paul's companion, Barnabas, it most certainly is not an authentic work of this man. Nonetheless, it was held in high esteem by the early church. At this point we are not debating inspiration. Our only concern is whether *Kyrios* or the Tetragrammaton was used in these early writings when the Hebrew Scriptures were quoted. Again, the *Epistle of Barnabas* followed the same pattern as *First Clement*. The writer of the epistle quoted Isaiah 1:11 as saying:

"What is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the **Lord** (κύριος). "I am full of burnt offerings..." (Barnabas 2:4)

••132•• This same verse is given in the *New World Translation* as,

"Of what benefit to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" says **Jehovah**. "I have had enough of whole burnt offerings..." (Isaiah 1:11 NWT)

Many similar example are found in this epistle where verses such as Psalm 118:24, Jeremiah 7:2, Isaiah 1:10, Isaiah 45:1, and Deuteronomy 5:11 are quoted using the Greek word *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton. We have used a single example because of the need for brevity. However, the reader is encouraged to study the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache* mentioned below for himself.

A similar pattern of using *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton is found in a document called the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. This writing comes from the first half of the second century. It was written as the teachings of the 12 disciples of Christ, however, the anonymous author did not claim that it was written by them. Again, we are not referring to the *Didache* because it has any merit as Scripture. However, it does reflect the understanding and practice of the early church. The *Didache* quoted Hebrew Scripture passages using *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton in a manner similar to *First Clement* and *Barnabas*.

The question might be asked, "In this grand heresy of the Tetragrammaton's removal, could *all* the writings of the church fathers have been altered?" As we will see in the final discussion of geography in this chapter, the enormity of the task would have made alteration of the writings of these men impossible. *A second, but more formidable objection, however, would have been the foresight necessary to anticipate such an undertaking. The need to change the writings of the church fathers so a future generation would not know of the heresy would never have occurred to a group of copyists in the second or third century. After all, if it had been a theological controversy, contemporaries would have been aware of it. It is totally unreasonable to think that such a concerted effort would have been made to recopy vast quantities of manuscripts in order to hide a controversy which was already common knowledge. Even more, it would be ludicrous to think that these scribes and copyists could have planned such an undertaking solely for the purpose of beguiling future generations of scholars!*

From this brief examination of early church non-canonical devotional writings we find that the writers never used יהוה in Hebrew Scripture citations which contain the Tetragrammaton.

5. The Tetragrammaton should be identifiable in Christian Scriptures written in the Hebrew language during the early church era.

••133•• We have already evaluated the J² reference identified as the *Shem-Tob Matthew* in Chapter 5. In that chapter we recognized the important contribution George Howard has made in a tentative identification of this manuscript as a recension of an original Hebrew Gospel written by Matthew himself. We hope that further work will be done on this important subject. In the mean time, with all due caution pending further textual study, we will acknowledge Howard's work as the best example available of the presumably lost Hebrew *Matthew* which was reported by Jerome.

In this chapter, we are evaluating six issues which merit exploration in order to discern the Tetragrammaton's presence in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Inasmuch as the Watch Tower Society cites the presence of the Tetragrammaton in Matthew's Hebrew Gospel as evidence for the restoration of *Jehovah* in the Christian Scriptures, we must turn to the *Shem-Tob Matthew* for evaluation.

In Chapter 5, we discovered that the *Shem-Tob Matthew* does not, in fact, use the Tetragrammaton. Rather, it uses the surrogate ה (for יהוה, which means "The Name") as a circumlocution replacing the Tetragrammaton (יהוה). This does not mean that Matthew himself may

not have used the Hebrew letters יהוה.²⁰ It merely means that any indication that he did so is now lost.

Inasmuch as J² is the only potential extant Hebrew language Gospel or Epistle from the apostolic era, we must conclude this heading by acknowledging that the Tetragrammaton is not presently identifiable in *any* Christian Scriptures written in the Hebrew language during the apostolic or early church era. The single extant manuscript cited, however, used a surrogate for a circumlocution meaning "The Name."

Removal of the Tetragrammaton must reflect the setting in which it occurred

••134•• This last topic is not a major issue since many manuscript anomalies may fall outside of expected parameters. Therefore, this topic does not bear heavy weight, but it must be considered because any removal of the Tetragrammaton from the written Christian Scriptures would have occurred in a physical context.

6. The geography of the area establishes the setting to be considered in the Tetragrammaton's removal.

To this point in the book, our study has focused on the manuscripts themselves. We will now consider a practical matter in the *preservation* of these manuscripts. A cursory evaluation of the earliest manuscripts and the geographical locations where they were found will reveal an obvious relationship between climatic conditions and manuscript preservation. As we have already seen, the common writing material in the first century was papyrus. It was made in Egypt from reeds and exported throughout the Roman empire. Papyrus was a fragile material and did not survive in the cold, wet climates of the early Gentile church.²¹ The oldest known Christian Greek manuscripts have almost always come from warm, dry climates. For this reason, the oldest surviving Greek Scripture manuscripts have largely come from northern Africa and the Sinai peninsula.

The papyrus fragments of the Chester Beatty collections (P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶, and P⁴⁷) came from this area. As mentioned earlier, they have been dated *circa* 200 C.E.

All of this has an important bearing on our discussion of the presumed removal of the Tetragrammaton from the original writings. Even though Christianity spread quickly in the Roman world (which included parts of the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa), there is a significance to both the geographical and cultural isolation of northern Africa. The early church in Africa developed a unique character and experienced the rise of its own church leaders. It did not necessarily duplicate the ecclesiastical perceptions and events of the church in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia Minor.

Consider what the presumed removal of the Tetragrammaton implies. It requires that the early church in Africa understood and ••135•• acted upon the distinction between *Kύριος* and יהוה in their Scriptures. (This is true unless it could be argued that the African church was not a *true* church because they did not know God's name as *Jehovah*. However, because of the early date of the establishment of the church in Africa, that argument would require that the Tetragrammaton was lost in the lifetime of the Apostles!) It then requires that this distinction was lost in the African church with no mention in the surviving biblical and non-canonical writings which have survived to today. Further, it requires

²⁰ We need to be careful, however, that we not too quickly assume that Matthew would have used the Tetragrammaton because he was a Jew writing to fellow Jews. In fact, Matthew was the only gospel writer who used a circumlocution for the word "God" in the expression "kingdom of God." (Matthew used the circumlocution "kingdom of the heavens" 32 times. He used the expression "kingdom of God" only four times [12:28, 19:24, 21:31, and 21:43] and the expression "kingdom of my Father" [26:29] once.) The other three Gospels, which were addressed to Gentiles, used the same expression without the circumlocution as the "kingdom of God." (Parallel passages most clearly show this difference between the Gospel writers' use of the "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of the heavens." See Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20, Matthew 13:31 with Luke 13:19, and others.) In reference to this expression, "the kingdom of God," we see that Matthew tended to *avoid* using the word "God" presumably because he was writing to Jews.

²¹ Parchment (animal skin) was used long before the time of Christ. However, the Egyptian trade in less costly papyrus assured this less durable material's predominant place as the common writing material until the third or fourth century. The oldest manuscripts from Europe and Asia have survived on parchment (also known as vellum) because of its greater durability.

that this unprecedented change took place so quickly that יהוה came to Africa and was then lost a mere 104 years after the Apostle John wrote!

More than anything else, however, the loss of the Tetragrammaton would require us to believe that this divisive heresy could have been orchestrated so thoroughly that *all traces of the original teaching of the Apostles could have been eliminated from three continents by 200 C.E.*

CHAPTER SUMMARY. We have considered six topics in our query concerning the presumed loss of the Tetragrammaton from the original Greek Scripture writings. Each of these topics has been influenced in some way by our current understanding of textual and historical evidences which have become available since the late 1940's.

1. There are no known Christian Greek Scripture manuscripts which use the Tetragrammaton. Yet there are 5,000 extant manuscripts which use *Kyrios*, with the oldest reliably dated between 201 and 300 C.E. This fact alone represents an insurmountable obstacle to the inclusion of the Tetragrammaton into current translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures.
2. No textual change of the Christian Greek Scriptures could happen universally and instantaneously. Any change in which Κύριος would have been substituted for יהוה would have left a mix of early manuscripts showing both forms. Further, such a change would have left variants in the Greek wording representing parallel but not exact substitutions.
3. An alteration in the Christian Greek Scriptures from יהוה to Κύριος would have had a profound influence on the theology of the first century church. Had these 237 references been changed from the Tetragrammaton to *Kyrios*, the understanding of the persons of Jehovah and Jesus would have been radically altered. It is inconceivable that such an extreme change could have occurred with ••136•• no objection on the part of the early church writers and no championing of divergent views by its proponents.

The frequent issues of heresies and controversies which surfaced in the early history of the church are known today because of the literary exchanges made in the writings of the church fathers. (In many cases, the writings of both the heretical faction and the defenders of the faith are represented.) Thus, the debates of the Gnostics, Nominalists, Donatists, Marcionists, Manichaeans, the Arian controversy, and many others are well known and documented for us today. Yet in all of this, a debate concerning the removal of the Tetragrammaton was never once addressed.²² Most certainly, considering the magnitude of the supposed alteration, it would have been mentioned had it occurred.

4. There are numerous early church writings apart from Scripture. These non-canonical Greek writings frequently quoted passages from the Hebrew Scripture. There is no evidence that the writings of the earliest church era used the Tetragrammaton in these quotations. Rather, these writings freely used the Greek word *Kyrios* when quoting or alluding to Hebrew Scripture passages. The earliest of these writings would have been no more than 10 to 30 years after the last Gospel was written. It is inconceivable that within 10 to 30 years of the final writing of Scripture these corrupted writings could have freely circulated in the early church if they contained a heresy as serious as the misrepresentation of the nature of Jesus.
5. There is the possibility of an original Christian Scripture gospel written in Hebrew which remains from the apostolic era. This *Shem-Tob Matthew* used the surrogate ה (for השם, which means "The Name") as a circumlocution. If Matthew used the Hebrew letters יהוה, any indication that he did so is now lost.
6. The geographical spread of the early church mitigates against a uniform heresy which could expunge all written evidence of an earlier teaching without any trace.

²² Considering their massive contents, the author has done only a cursory reading in these volumes. However, this statement can be made based on the *lack of evidence* given by the Watch Tower Society. It is safe to assume that evidence in the writings of the church fathers describing the removal of the Tetragrammaton, were it available, would have quickly been brought to the attention of their readers. As previously noted, the book *Aid to Bible Understanding* frequently cites the writings of the church fathers. It is obvious that the editors were conversant with the majority of these early works.