
SECTION 4

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EPILOGUE

Chapter 12: LORD, JEHOVAH, AND INSPIRATION

The issue of ••157•• inspiration underlies all that has been said in this book. If we hold a high view of the inspiration of Scripture, we must require of our translators that they faithfully reproduce exactly that which Jehovah directed the inspired authors to write.

Inspiration and the translators' obligation

We would all agree that we desire the most accurate Scripture possible. Ideally, we would read the exact words written by the inspired authors. However, because we speak modern English rather than Biblical Hebrew or Greek, there are two steps which separate today's reader from the original writings.

The first step is the reconstruction of an accurate text. As we saw in Chapter 2, this is the work of the textual critic. These men and women¹ have carefully examined ancient manuscript evidence in order to reconstruct the text of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The textual critics Wescott and Hort produced the Greek text which is used in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* of the Christian Scriptures.

The second step is the work of the translator. Today's English reader does not read the reconstructed copy of the Hebrew or Greek text. Rather, we must use an English translation of both texts.

Thus, the English reader seeking Jehovah's truths through the Bible may rightfully have two expectations. The first is that those working with the Hebrew or Greek text will produce a faithful reproduction of the writing of the original authors, and secondly, that the translators will produce a readable English translation which conveys the exact meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek text.

In no case can the reader allow either the ones working in the area of the original language text, or the translators themselves, to alter the text to suit a theological bias. To do so would be to allow the textual scholar or the translator to tamper with Jehovah's inspired writing.

An "Old Testament" application

In the first chapter we mentioned the problem of "Old Testament" translations which omit the name of God in favor of the capitalized word LORD. This is a serious omission and serves as a starting point for ••158•• our discussion.

In the case of the substitution of *LORD* for the divine name, the problem is not the fault of the textual critic. Almost all modern "Old Testament" translations today are based on Rudolph Kittel's *Biblica Hebraica*. The Hebrew Scripture portion of the *New World Translation* is based on this same text.² If the reader were to obtain a copy of the *Biblica Hebraica*, the divine name with vowel points as יהוה is readily apparent.³

So why has the divine name been eliminated in most English translations? The fault lies with the translation process. (In reality, it must be a shared fault between both the translator and the publisher.)

The 1971 *New American Standard Bible* preface under the heading "The proper Name for God" says in part,

It is inconceivable to think of spiritual matters without a proper designation for the Supreme Deity. Thus the most common name for deity is God, a translation of the original Elohim...There is

¹ Though much fewer in number, women have also been involved in the important work of textual criticism. The book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* identifies Kurt and Barbara Aland as scholars of the Greek text of the Bible (p. 59). Barbara Aland is recognized in her own right as an acclaimed textual critic.

² *New World Translation*, Reference Edition, 1984, p. 6.

³ It is a bit puzzling why F.W. Carr's antidotal book *Search for the Sacred Name* indicates great difficulty in locating Hebrew texts containing the divine name. The author owns a 1959 copy (which is a revision of the 1937 edition) of Kittel's *Biblica Hebraica*. The volume is readily available in most theological seminary libraries and book stores. The divine name is clearly reproduced throughout this text which is based on Codex Leningrad B 19^A, the same text Carr apparently traveled to Russia to examine.

yet another name which is particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH...This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name. Therefore, it was consistently pronounced and translated LORD.

It is known that for many years YHWH has been transliterated as Yahweh...However, it is felt by many who are in touch with the laity of our churches that this name conveys no religious or spiritual overtones. It is strange, uncommon, and without sufficient religious and devotional background. No amount of scholarly debate can overcome this deficiency. Hence, it was decided to avoid the use of this name in the translation proper. (page ix)

The above statement is signed "Editorial Board."

To begin with, as every Witness knows, "God" is not God's name. His personal name is represented by the Tetragrammaton. The Tetragrammaton must then be pronounced in Hebrew or translated (or transliterated) into another language.

But it is not the issue of pronunciation which is most disturbing about the above statement.

••159•• Consider what the Editorial Board is really saying.

1. First, they acknowledge that their Hebrew language text (*Biblia Hebraica*) contains YHWH in its fully identifiable form יהוה. There is no suggestion that the divine name cannot be recognized.
2. They then identify the transliterated form *Yahweh* as one that has been known for many years.
3. But now they tell us that this name conveys no religious or spiritual overtones. They say it is strange, uncommon, and without sufficient religious and devotional background. (Would the divine name be "strange," "uncommon," or with "no religious or spiritual overtones" in a Kingdom Hall? Most certainly not!)

What is the real issue in this statement? It is the affront to the inspiration of Scripture which bothers us most.

The Editorial Board has fully acknowledged that under inspiration, the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures have written the Tetragrammaton. However, because the laity would not recognize God's personal name, the Editorial Board has assumed the authority to insert a substitute word. It cannot be argued that the word *LORD* is merely an alternate pronunciation of יהוה. It is a distinctly different word than that used by the inspired writers. The word *LORD* is deliberately used by the Editorial Board (or translators, as the case may be) to replace what Jehovah himself directed the Hebrew Scripture authors to write.

It makes little difference why this decision was made. Some may defend it with a historical rationalization claiming the precedent set by the *Septuagint*, the *King James Version*, or agreement among most modern Bible versions.

The sad truth may be that Scripture translation has been swayed by marketing considerations—if the customer wants *LORD* rather than *Yahweh*, their wish will be accommodated for the sake of Bible sales.⁴

The issue at stake is very simply stated, but it has important implications. *No translator (or Editorial Board) is free to change the wording of Scripture for any reason. No reason is acceptable whether it ••160•• is the most lofty of ideals to protect a theological position or simply the desire to increase Bible sales. The translator is obligated to convey the exact meaning of the original Scripture author's writing.*

This does not mean that a translation cannot use modern language to communicate the sense of Scripture. It must also admit that the process of translation from one language to another will always

⁴ See the comments in *The Divine Name Controversy* by Firpo Carr, p. 124, which ostensibly quotes an Executive Secretary for a well known translation committee as saying,

...Jehovah is a distinctive name for God and ideally we should have used it. But we put [2.5] million dollars into this translation and a sure way of throwing that down the drain is to translate, for example, Psalm 23 as, "Yahweh is my shepherd."...It is far better to get two million to read it...and to follow the King James, than to have two thousand buy it and have the correct translation of Yahweh...It was a hard decision, and many of our translators agree [that it should be the divine name].

have areas of uncertainty. But it does mean that the *sense* of the Hebrew or Greek text must be conveyed to the reader, and that the translator is never free to deliberately alter the meaning of the original text.

The practice of using *LORD* rather than the divine name in the "Old Testament" is a long-standing English Bible tradition. The tradition's longevity, however, does not justify its continued use. It is time for modern English translators (and editors) to confront this error and make the necessary correction.⁵ *It is an affront to the inspiration of Scripture to remove the divine name and replace it with LORD.*

The New World Bible Translation Committee has appropriately used the divine name in the Hebrew Scriptures. They are to be commended for that effort.⁶

The New World Translation and the Christian Scriptures

The above "Old Testament" example is easily understood. When a translator knows the wording of the Hebrew or Greek Bible text, he is not free to change the wording in his translation to accommodate any other purpose.

May we suggest that the same requirement applies to the Christian Greek Scriptures within the *New World Translation*?

Again, we must look first at the work of the textual critic. We have already closely examined the work of Westcott and Hort. Their Greek text is the basis of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*. In no case does the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* Greek text use the Tetragrammaton. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the Greek word *Kyrios* is traced to reliable ancient Greek manuscripts in 223 of the 237 *Jehovah* references. (All but one of the remaining instances use *Theos*, but never the Tetragrammaton.) The change to *Jehovah* in the *New World Translation* Christian Greek Scriptures was made by the New ••161•• World Bible Translation Committee in contradiction to the evidence of the Greek text of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*.

It is particularly alarming to realize that this change was made on the basis of late Hebrew versions which contain the Tetragrammaton. By this choice of textual sources, *the translators show their higher regard for these relatively recent Hebrew translations than they do for the inspiration of the Christian Greek Scriptures themselves.*

We have already examined this change in other parts of the book. Nothing more needs to be said here.

Our concern in this chapter is to focus on the primary issue underlying this deliberate alteration from *Kyrios* to the Tetragrammaton. The primary issue is not that the Tetragrammaton in the *Septuagint* was changed during the second and third centuries C.E. The issue is not that the Apostles read the Tetragrammaton in their copies of the *Septuagint*. Nor is it an issue that Matthew wrote a Gospel account in Hebrew. The important issue is not how many Hebrew versions use the Tetragrammaton. Nor is the inspired writers' quotation of Hebrew Scripture verses which use the divine name even the primary issue. All of these things are true and verifiable.

The primary issue is the word which the Christian Greek Scripture authors actually wrote under inspiration of God. All translators must faithfully represent the exact words written by the inspired authors. If the Greek Scripture writers used the Tetragrammaton, then the divine name must be used in each of those instances. If the Greek Scripture writers used *Kyrios*, then the passage must be translated *Lord*.⁷

⁵ It should interest the reader to know that there is an increasing use of the divine name within evangelical churches. On occasion, one hears the "Old Testament" read publicly with the name *Yahweh* rather than *LORD*.

⁶ Some readers who might not be Witnesses may question the appropriateness of *Jehovah* as against *Yahweh*. Simply remember that *Jehovah* is an English translation (conveying meaning) while *Yahweh* is an English transliteration (substituting English letters for Hebrew characters). Either is acceptable. We translate the name of Jesus rather than transliterate it as *Iesous* with no sense of impropriety.

⁷ This is true even when the Hebrew Scriptures are clearly being quoted. The translator must reproduce for the English reader exactly that which the inspired author wrote. The work of the translator is not that of a commentator trying to explain the inspired writers' sources. If the inspired writer wrote *Kyrios* in reference to a Hebrew Scripture quotation using the divine name, the translator must render the English as *Lord*.

Conjecture concerning what may have happened cannot be used to replace evidence from ancient Scripture documents themselves. The answer to the entire debate between *Jehovah* or *Lord* in the 237 Christian Scriptures passages of the *New World Translation* will be found solely in the most reliable Greek manuscripts.

As we have documented throughout this book, *no manuscript evidence of any kind indicates that the Tetragrammaton was used in the Christian Greek Scriptures.*

A surprising parallel

The reader—whether one of Jehovah's Witnesses or one with an Evangelical persuasion—would be surprised at the parallel between the "Old Testament" example in the first part of this chapter and the ••162•• introduction of the divine name into the Christian Scriptures of the *New World Translation*.

Firpo Carr gives the following information on page 17 in his book *The Divine Name Controversy*

In 1530 William Tyndale first restored the divine name to the English text of the Bible when he published the first five books of Moses. Though Jehovah's name is used a few times Tyndale wrote the following in a note to this edition:

"Jehovah is God's name...Moreover, as oft as thou seist LORD in great letters (except there be any error in printing) it is in Hebrew Jehovah."

Thus was the start of translators substituting "LORD" or "GOD" where the Tetragrammaton occurs in Hebrew. "Jehovah" was barely used.

Tyndale's translation greatly influenced subsequent English Bible editions, including the *King James Version* first published in 1611. The continued use of *LORD* in the "Old Testament" has since been defended, in part, on the presence of *Kyrios* in the *Septuagint*.

Notice the parallel between *removing* the divine name from the "Old Testament" and *adding* the divine name to the Christian Greek Scriptures of the *New World Translation*:

1. All Hebrew texts contain יהוה rather than *Adonai*⁸; all Greek Scripture texts contain Κύριος rather than יהוה.
2. The English Bible tradition substituted *LORD* for יהוה; the New World Bible Translation Committee substituted יהוה for Κύριος.
3. The English Bible tradition justified its substitution on a Greek version (the *Septuagint*); the New World Bible Translation Committee justified its substitution on multiple Hebrew versions.
4. The translators of the "Old Testament" gave the *Septuagint* Greek version (as well as English Bible tradition) greater weight than the inspired Hebrew text when substituting *LORD* for יהוה; the New World Bible Translation Committee gave Hebrew versions greater weight than the inspired Greek Scriptures when substituting יהוה for Κύριος.

The foundation of Bible translation is neither tradition nor conjecture

"Old Testament" translators have relied on tradition (and reader response) in taking on themselves the responsibility of removing the divine name from the Hebrew Scriptures. In consequence, they have allowed the casual reader unfamiliar with the meaning of the ••163•• capitalized *LORD* notation to mistakenly understand the Hebrew Scriptures as referring to *Jesus* rather than יהוה.

The New World Bible Translation Committee has opened the possibility of dangerous sectarian abuse by adding the divine name to the Christian Scriptures. By its own admission, no manuscripts exist today which use the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Yet, on the basis of pure conjecture, the Committee is willing to take on itself the responsibility of giving Hebrew versions a higher status of inspiration than the Greek text.

All Bible translations must be based solely on verifiable Hebrew and Greek texts. This is the only way to preserve the truths which Jehovah communicated through his inspired Scripture.

⁸ As noted earlier, the Hebrew word *Adonai* appears in the Hebrew Scriptures and is appropriately translated by both the *New World Translation* and "Old Testament" Bibles as *Lord*. However, in this instance, we are talking about the almost 7,000 occurrences of יהוה in the Hebrew text.

CHAPTER SUMMARY Any purposeful omission of a verifiable word in ancient Biblical manuscripts for a translation preference demeans inspiration. Any translator can objectively evaluate ancient manuscript evidence in order to determine the inspired writers' use of a given word. If the translator or editorial board then chooses to use another word with a different meaning in its place, they have shown their disregard for inspiration. It makes little difference whether the purpose is to promote personal interests or a theological bias, the result is still a corrupted Scripture text.

We evaluated two illustrations which have produced opposite—yet erroneous—results. In the first instance, most "Old Testament" translators have disregarded the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew Scripture text and have substituted the word *LORD* because it is purportedly more widely known. *The result is a Bible which removes the identity of God even though he was named by the inspired writers.*

The second illustration is found in the Christian Scriptures of the *New World Translation*. These translators used verifiable information regarding the *Septuagint* to justify selective substitution of the divine name for *Kyrios*. This was done in spite of the best Greek manuscript evidence verifying the use of *Kyrios* to within 100 years of the original Christian Scripture writers. *The result is a Bible which adds the name of God where it was not used by the inspired writers.*