

Linguistic analysis of translated names in the holy scriptures of Christianity: A philosophical approach

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Abstract

In the Holy Scriptures, a person's name is of great significance. The particular name of the God of Israel in the Hebrew Bible has been a topic of much discussion among scholars. This paper highlights the mistaken use of the names of even the Creator and Savior in the Bible that were not in the original Hebrew Scriptures. Charlton Laird (1973) in his 'The Miracle of Language' explained that 'the Church furthered Greek as well as Latin, the early fathers of the church wrote Greek and even as early as the seventh century Greek was being studied in England. Thus Greek words entered the English directly, as well as Latin words which were borrowed directly, and they became Latin words which mixed with French words which were borrowed directly'. This custom of admitting Greek and Latin names wholesale into English Bible resulted in replacing and disguising Hebrew names. These new names supplanted the true, original names, making the surrogate hybrids with a Grecianized flavor. Majority of world Christians has their faith on these translated names of their Creator and Savior, but not on the true name of their Creator and Savior. This paper attempts to show that man is longing for belief, but many times his belief is not the truth.

Key words: *Tetragrammaton YHWH, kyrios, Adonai, Yahshua, Yahweh, Greek Christianity, Jewish Christianity*

Introduction

The question of truth is closely associated with the general philosophical stand a scientist takes, with the way in which he answers philosophy's fundamental question. But according to Friedrich Nietzsche (1959), man is always longed for

belief, not the truth. 'In the issue of truth, the opposing nature of science and religion is manifested very clearly, for science the search for truth is one of the most important tasks, while religion turns to belief, sometimes quite openly counterpoising it to truth' (Galina and Lydia, 1985). Today Christianity is the most widespread

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religion in the world. 'It contains both Jewish elements and a number of other elements borrowed from ancient Eastern religions' (Sergei Tokarev, 1989). The Jewish religious tradition adopted in the Christian tradition was regarded for a long time as the absolute almighty truth beyond any criticism. Many freethinking scholars paid with their lives for daring to question this truth. Even today devote Jews and Christians especially Catholic and Orthodox clergy required the Bible, the main sacred book for the Jews and Christians, not as a historical source but as an object of belief and worship of unquestionable authority, a book inspired by the Holy Spirit. Biblical criticism has been traditionally divided into two: 'textual criticism that seeks to establish the original text out of the variant readings of ancient manuscripts and another criticism that focuses on identifying the author date and place of writing for each book of the Bible' (Knight, 2007).

The particular name of the God of Israel in the Hebrew Bible has been a topic of much discussion among the scholars. YHWH the Creator's Name is found in the ancient original Hebrew manuscripts, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of Hebrew manuscripts that date back 2000 years, the Name of YHWH is clearly seen. Names don't change – a fact that makes our existence in society possible. If each person we met called us by a different name, we would soon lose our identity. In the same way, the men who call Him by another name have changed God's identity. The distinctive name of the God YHWH was discontinued long before the Christian era. In the original texts, the Father and the Son were referred to as Yahweh and Yahshua.

Frederick Engels (1974), the first person to make a strictly scientific study of the historical conditions of the origin of Greek Christianity pointed out that the 'father of Christianity' was the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria who was deeply influenced by late Greek philosophy. He has a combination of Jewish national spirit and purely Greek classical education. Philo adhered to the Judean, strictly monotheistic teaching about God, but he also believed there was a holy mediator between the God and the material world – the divine Logos (Word). Divine Logos, son of God, became the central figure in Christianity – Jesus Christ (p. 483).

'Greek Christianity' can refer to the earliest development of Christianity as it moved from its Jewish matrix into the Greek cultural world of the Roman Empire. In this sense it is contrasted to Jewish or Hebrew Christianity, cultural life at the time was imbued with the Greek heritage: language, philosophy, religion, literature and political values. In the early Christian tradition 'Greek' often meant 'pagan' or 'gentile' but it refers, as well, to Christian who came to the faith from a polytheistic background as distinguished from Jewish Christianity who accepted the Messiahship of Jesus (Yahshua). Much of the New Testament and the earliest Christian patristic documents were written in the Greek language and address the Greek mind. Thus, insofar as early Christianity was a religion of conversion, it reflected its immersion in Greek language and thought (Harakas, 2007, p. 101).

Significance of the name of God in Hebrew language

Anson Rainey, (1985) a semitic linguist said that 'it should be noted that there are

many strong linguistic and epigraphic arguments in favor of Yahweh as the correct form. The anglicized form, Jehovah is a 'ghost word' based in the four consonants, YHWH with the vowels of another word, 'Adonai' meaning my lord. The Hebrew scribes of the middle ages put those vowels in to remind the reader to say Adonai rather than pronounce the sacred name'. Bruce Metzger, says that 'The word Jehovah does not accurately represent any form of the name ever used in Hebrew ... In 1518 a monk by name Petrus Galatinus combined the consonants of YHWH with the vowels of adonay, which the Massorettes intended to be read by their vocalization Adonay. Adonay was the long established practice of reading the Tetragrammation in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Synagogues.

The Jewish Encyclopedia, (1901) states that "I will be that I will be or I am that I am..." (Ex 3:14), is regarded as an imperfect. This passage is decisive for the pronunciation "Yahweh", for the etymology was undoubtedly based on the known word". The Encyclopedia Judaica (2006), further states the fact that "The true pronunciation of the name YHWH was never lost, several early Greek manuscripts of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced "Yahweh". Many early Greek Manuscripts wrote the Tetragrammation as IAUE, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew YHWH. "The personal name of the God of Israel is written in the Hebrew Bible with the four consonants YHWH and is referred to as the 'Tetragrammation'. At least until 586 BCE... this name was regularly pronounced with its proper vowels. But at least by the 3rd century BCE the pronunciation of the name YHWH was

avoided as can be seen by the use of the Greek word kyrios, "Lord" for YHWH in the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures that was begun by Greek-speaking Jews in that century.

The Encyclopedia Britanica, confirms this fact that 'Yahweh is the proper name of the God of Israel. It is composed of four consonants YHWH in Hebrew and is therefore called the Tetragrammation'.

Dictionary and Concordance of the New King James Version Bible says that Yahweh is the Covenant God of Israel. Yahweh is the original Hebrew. According to Jewish custom, because of reverence, the divine name was not to be spoken. So the Hebrew words for LORD and GOD were substituted. Where ever the words LORD and GOD appear in large letters, the original Hebrew reads YHWH. The Telugu Bible (1904) used the word *sarveswarudu* (Omnipresent) for the Tetragrammation. As people were not happy with the name commonly used for a Hindu deity, the Bible Society of India (BSI) changed it to *Yehova* in 1911, (Kishore Babu, 1995). 3.

True name of the Savior in the scripture

Why would a Jewish Savior, speaking Hebrew, be given the name Jesus Christ, which is a Greek-Latin origin English name? Sergie Tokarey, (1989) observes that 'Christianity grew out of Judean sectarianism'. The names people call the Father and Son are far different from those originally given to mankind. Furthermore, what we have now is a three-times-removed, man-made translation of the originally inspired Old and New Testaments, none of which could have contained the name "Jesus Christ". The

true name Yahshua the Hebrew-born Savior, was lost and present translated Bibles have given substitutes.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia tells of the name Jesus: In English the name Jesus is a transliteration of the Latin form "Iesus", which represents the Greek form "Iesous", of the Hebrew name "Yeshua" (Yahshua). The Septuagint generally uses the Greek form Iesous where the Hebrew text has the form Yahshua. So also the New Testament, in referring to Joshua son of Nun, calls him Jesus (Acts 7:45; Heb 4:8)". The form Jesus and Yeshua was a deliberately change from the original Name Yahshua. Rather than this name being correctly written and spoken Yahshua, containing Yahweh's powerful Name, its new form was Yeshua, meaning He will save. This new name was being used as the replacement for Yahshua's true Name by the time 3rd century, the Greek Septuagint (LXX) was beginning to be translated. The next translation of the Bible, after the LXX was the Vulgate - attributed to Jerome. In the year 383 CE, Jerome began to work on this Latin Version. He undertook the revision of the Old Testament directly from the Septuagint Version. 'In the Septuagint, the Name of Yahweh was replaced with the Greek word, Kyrios-Lord. In the Latin Vulgate, Jerome directly translated the Greek word Kyrios-Lord to the Latin word for Lord-Dominus. In the Latin Vulgate, Jerome transliterated the Greek word Iesous to the Latin, Iesus'. (Yisrayl Hawkins 2004).

Richness of Hebrew language in scriptures

Isaac Mozeson (2001), says Hebrew is the original language of mankind. Quite

comprehensive, he has many examples of word origins traced back to Hebrew. Some literary critics rave at Mozeson's bold assertions showing Hebrew to be the mother of all languages. More scholars are coming to agree that Hebrew is the original language of both the Old and some books of the New Testament. Hebrew was the language spoken by Yahweh to Adam, and the language used by the heavenly messengers conversing with mankind. Whenever the celestial beings spoke to mankind, it was to those who understood Hebrew. Nowhere do we find the angelic beings speaking in Greek, Latin, or English, but to those who knew Hebrew. In the original texts, the Father and the Son were referred to as Yahweh and Yahshua. 5.

Weakness of English language of scriptures in translation

Girdlestone, (1996) says, "The Hebrew language, though poor in some respects, e.g. in tenses, is rich in others, and probably no better language could have been selected for the purpose of preparing the way of Messiah." He points out the variety and richness of the Hebrew language and gives examples, such as seven Hebrew words rendered black in the King James Version: there are eight words translated axe, 12 words for beauty, 12 for body, 14 for dark, 18 are rendered fear, 22 for branch, 26 for cover, 42 for cut, 60 for break, 66 for bring, 74 are rendered take. It is deplorably obvious that in reading our English translation of the Bible that we are missing much of the richness and flavor of the original language. The exact shade of meaning is lost when 74 different words in Hebrew appear in English as the single word "take"!

In Christianity, *Yah* is the basic or short form of the sacred name. *Yah* is the personal name of God. The word *Hallelu Yah* Rev.19: 1-6. is the most ancient of all words of praise. It is used both on earth and in heaven to worship the Almighty. The first part of the word *hallelu* means praise or praise ye. The last part *Yah* is the name of the One being praised. *YAH* appear in other religions:

The Vedas of Hindu taught that:

Asathonama Sargama Yah
Thanasoma Jyothirma Yah
Mruthyonma Amruthangama Yah

Causes for miss-using the name of God

The name of the God Yahweh and His Son Yahshua in the Bible were profaned in three ways.

1. Translation of the Scriptures: The Bible when first given to making was inspired by Yahweh's Spirit. It was pure, holy and undefiled. Problems began when translations were made from one language to another. English Bible for example, is taken primarily from the Latin. Which was translated from the Greek and it was translated from the Hebrew, with much being lost along the way. It is like taking change from one pocket to place in another and losing some in the process. There are two methods being followed as far as the translation of the Bible is concerned.

- i. 'The traditional way of translating the Scripture' is called Literal Translation. In this method the forms are preserved irrespective of whether they convey the meaning or not.
- ii. The second method is called the

'Dynamic Equivalent Translation'. In this approach, the meaning of the text is maintained more than its forms. Most of the translations of the Bible maintained the first method even for the proper Names of the Creator and the Savior. We can translate the Bible but we can't translate the Names. Names are personal and have meaning in their own language. Personal or proper names should not be translated but we can transliterate.

2. Disobedience: Instead of bring glory and honor, Israel soon began to bring shame upon His Name through their disobedience. Under the old covenant, Israel was accused of profaning the name of Yahweh by mixing the holy with the pagan in their worship. Notice how Yahweh said to Israel. My name is profaned among the nations because of you (Romans. 2:24; Isa. 52:5)

3. Superstition: The Century Bible (1910) tells "Jews came to believe that the holy name 'Yahweh' was too scared to be used on ordinary occasions. At other times, when any one read or quoted aloud from what is called the Old Testament, the word 'Adonay' (Lord) was usually substituted for Yahweh. And similarly the LXX (Greek Septuagint Version) has "kurios", the Latin Vulgate "dominus", and the English Version "Lord" where the Hebrew has Yahweh".

Conclusion

Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, He chose first to reveal His Hebrew holy name "Yahweh" to them (Ex 3:13-15). The original Hebrew meaning of a name is often an indication of the

person's personality. Yahweh means self-existent and transcendent one. He had done a series of miraculous signs and wonders to make known the glory of his own name and to win the hearts of his chosen people (Ex: 6:7). Throughout the Holy Scriptures one can read of the importance placed on the name of Yahweh, the original Hebrew name. Yahweh gave the Ten Commandments to his people to lead their spiritual and moral life. The third commandment tells:

You do not bring the name of Yahweh your God to naught, for Yahweh does not leave the one unpunished who brings his name to naught. (Scriptures Bible Ex. 20:7.)

The Almighty God of Bible says in Isaiah 42:8 that:

I am Yahweh, that is My Name; and my glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images. (Isaiah, 42:8.)

How much more then, are missing when we deliberately remove the Heavenly Father's inspired Hebrew Name Yahweh, and call Him by some title derived from paganism? There is no reason to substitute any titles for Yahweh's Name as found in the Hebrew. Yahweh is the Mighty One of Israel in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the saints or believers are known as the "Israel of Yahweh," Galatians 6:16. Yahshua said, "I have come in my Father's Name" John 5:43.

The Name of the Father is 'Yahweh' and the Name of the Son is 'Yahshua'. 'Yah' means short form of Yahweh and 'Shua' means in Hebrew, 'Salvation'. An allusion is made in Matt.1:21 to the meaning of the

name 'Yahweh is Salvation'. According to the Bible Scriptures Salvation, the ultimate goal of Jews and Christians depends upon one's repentance by calling on the correct Name. (Joel 2:28-32, Romans 10:13, Acts 2:21). Majority of world Christians has their faith on translated names of their Creator and Savior but not on the true Hebrew names of their Creator and Savior. It is shown that man is always longing for belief, but not the truth. As some idealists see truth as a result of an agreement concluded by people, Hebrew Christianity sees truth as the Words spoken and recorded in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

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