

The Sacred Name (Nomina Sacra)

(How Jesus became Yahweh)

(When quoting scriptures, from the Rotherham Emphasized Bible New Testament, I will substitute the Hebrew words Yahoshua (yeh-ho-shoo'- ah) for Jesus, Yahweh and Elohim for God and the LORD and ruah for pneuma (spirit).)

The First Commandment given from the mouth of Yahweh, from Mount Sinai was, "I, am YAHWEH thy Elohim,—who have brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servants:— Thou shalt not have other gods, besides me. Thou shalt not make to thee an image, or any form..." (Ex. 20:2-4).¹ YAHWEH, was the one and only sacred name for the Hebrews. The Gentile (polytheists) Christian Church added many sacred names to the scriptures, according to their Greek manuscripts. The early Greek-Christian manuscripts leave a well documented trail explaining the formation of this idolatry, in contrast to the early Jewish-Christian manuscripts, which maintain only one sacred name, which is YAHWEH. This practice can help to explain how, in the Christian Church, Jesus, the Only-Begotten Son of Yahweh, of whom we have thousands of images, came to replaced YAHWEH, his God and Father, as being GOD, thereby breaking YAHWEH'S first and second commandments? How did this happen? As saith the scriptures, "An enemy, hath, done this..." (Mt. 13:28)!

Excerpts, pages 199 to 254, from the book, 'Encountering the Manuscripts,' by Philip Comfort, will document this historical corruption of the scriptures, resulting in the practice of polytheism in the Christian Church. Philip Comfort, an expert in manuscripts, did not write, 'Encountering the Manuscripts,' to illustrate polytheism but on the contrary, he is a firm believer in the Trinity and other false man-made doctrines. For example, he states, "The Jews have always had great respect for the name of God, and so have Christians. Both revere the same God, but they know him by different names; this means they recognize different revelations of his person. The Jews call God by the names El, Elohim, and Adonai. And above all, they recognize God as Yahweh, the I AM WHO I AM, but they dare not utter this name or even write it in full. The Christians recognize God as Creator, Lord, and Father. And above all, they recognize God as Jesus. This is where Jews and Christians divide. The Jews believe that Yahweh has always been the eternal, divine, transcendent God. Christians believe that Yahweh became incarnate; he is Jesus (Yahweh the Savior), the Christ, the Son of God, even God himself. The same reverential respect that Jews give to Yahweh, Christians give to Jesus. Christians, however, take great delight in uttering his name. Just read the New Testament, and you will see how often the early Christians called upon the name of Jesus."² This statement, which the majority of the Christian Churches believe, reveals his blindness and deception to the Word of Yahweh.

¹ Hear, O Israel: Yahweh, is our Elohim,—Yahweh is one. Thou shalt therefore love Yahweh thy Elohim,—with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deu. 6:4-5). Yahoshua answered—The chief is: Hear! O Israel,—Yahweh is our Elohim, is, one Yahweh; Therefore shalt thou love Yahweh thy Elohim, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,—and with all thy mind; and with all thy strength. (Mk. 12:29-30)

² pg. 206-207

Yahweh's people were a unique people. They only had One God and he had no Image. Psalm 115 gives a response to the polytheistic heathens, concerning the Hebrews uniqueness; "Wherefore should the nations say, Pray where is their God? When, our God, is in the heavens, Whatsoever he pleased, hath he done. Their idols, are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men" (Ps. 115:2-4). The nations like to see their gods but they could not see Israel's God. Even Israel, many times, desired to have a god or gods they could see, such as when they instructed Aaron to make them a molten calf (Ex. 32:4). Moses warned the children of Israel by saying, "When Yahweh thy God shall bring thee into the land which thou art going in to possess, and shall clear away many nations from before thee...thou shalt not solemnise with them a covenant, neither shalt thou shew them favour; neither shalt thou intermarry with them,—thy daughter, shalt thou not give unto his son, nor, his daughter, shalt thou take for thy son; for he will turn aside thy son from following me, and they will serve other gods..." (Deu. 7:1-4). Polytheism, it appears, has always been a temptation for mankind. Even King Solomon committed this sin by building shrines for the gods of his wives (1 Kg. 11). It is easy to see the cravings for images, such as the image of the Virgin Mary and the image of Jesus. Images in themselves are not a problem but when the individuals that the images represent are prayed to or are called, GOD, then we have a problem.

The practice of polytheism begins to be seen in the Greek-Christian manuscripts. The Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts have no sacred name. Yahweh³ is used over 6,800 times and is printed according to the Hebrew alphabet. In the Greek era, 250 BC through AD, the Hebrew Bible (Masoretic Text, Tanakh) began to be copied into the Greek language. This practice began the formation of the tetragrammaton. (Tetragrammaton means, tetra = four and gramma = a letter of the alphabet or four consonants, YHWH.) Philip Comforts states, "In the written Hebrew text, however, the name remained written as YHWH. Jewish scribes, from ancient times, took great care in writing this sacred name in just this way. Generation after generation of Jewish scribes even formed the letters exactly the same—in paleo-Hebrew script—even when the rest of Hebrew handwriting changed throughout the ages. They believed that the ancient formation of the letters dated to the time when Moses himself first wrote them. Several of the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts (produced between the first century BC and the first century AD) show the paleo-Hebrew script for the Tetragrammaton.

When the Jews started to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, they persisted in using the Hebrew Tetragrammaton wherever the name Yahweh appeared. This means that the Jewish scribe switched from Greek to Hebrew whenever he came to the sacred name, and then he would write it in an allotted space from right to left (as is done in writing Hebrew). This can be seen, for example, in P. Oxyrhynchus 3522 (first century AD), which preserves a portion of Job (42 : 11-12). The scribe wrote first in Greek, then in Hebrew, when he copied the divine name. In the space allotted, he wrote from right to left,

³ יהוה 03068

fitting in the Tetragrammaton (in paleo-Hebrew script) between the Greek words. It can also be seen in the Habakkuk manuscript from Kirbet Mird, as well as in the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8HevXIIgr). Scribes purposely left a space open for the Tetragrammaton and then filled it in with the Tetragrammaton in paleo-Hebrew letters. In Papyrus Fouad 266 (Deuteronomy, first century BC), the Greek scribe left open large spaces for the Tetragrammaton, each of which is indicated by a raised dot on each side of the space. The Tetragrammaton YHWH was added later (perhaps by a different scribe).

According to Origen (in his commentary On Psalms, 2:2), the Tetragrammaton was still written in paleo-Hebrew letters in Aquila's Greek translation of the Old Testament, produced in the first or second century AD. It is also likely that the original translators of the Septuagint used the Hebrew Tetragrammaton for YHWH, although later copies of the Septuagint show that scribes started to use kurios (Greek for Lord) as a surrogate. We know that Jews substituted Adonai (meaning "Lord") for YHWH when they read the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew text. It is also likely that they substituted kurios (the Greek form for "Lord" kurios) when they were reading the Greek text to a Greek-speaking audience. Origen (in his commentary on Psalms 2:2) tells us of both practices. Examples of kurios used for Yahweh can be found in the writings of Philo and in the Wisdom of Solomon (see 1:1, 7, 9; 2:13). Josephus remarked that the early Jews refused to call the emperor kurios because they regarded it as a name reserved for God (Jewish War 7.10.1).

In short, Greek-speaking Jews both wrote and spoke kurios in place of YHWH. As such, the written name kurios took on a whole new aura of significance. When Jews became Christians, they heard and/or read kurios in Old Testament texts, knowing that it was a substitute for YHWH, a special graphic form for the divine name. Knowing this, it could have dawned on some early Jewish-Christian scribe and/or a Gentile Christian scribe familiar with the special orthography, while making a copy of an Old Testament Greek text or putting together several Old Testament messianic proof texts (called "testimonia"), to come up with a special way of writing the divine name kurios in Greek. The result was KC, a contracted form, using the first and last letters of kurios... (See Appendix A)

In conclusion, it must be noted that though inspired by the Tetragrammaton, the written form of the Christian nomen sacrum for "Lord" was a unique creation. Nowhere did the Jews use an over-bar⁴ for the sacred name. And in no way did the Christian writers simply imitate the consonantal form of YHWH; otherwise, they would have written KPC.

⁴ Over-bar. After the scribe wrote the suspended or contracted form, he would place an over-bar over the entire name, as in IC . It is quite likely that the placing of the overbar was a carryover from the way scribes wrote documents; scribes everywhere had a habit of using the overbar to signal an abbreviation. This was especially common for the use of numerals, which would be written as IA for eleven, IB for twelve, etc. The over- bar stroked above the word was a signal to the reader that the word could not be pronounced as written. The reader would have to know what the coded form signified in order to read it correctly.' Placing an overbar over the contracted or suspended nomen sacrum also helped the oral reader in working his or her way through script= continuum (words running into one another, as was common in ancient Greek texts).

However, not one early Greek Christian manuscript has the name written in this way; all manuscripts exhibit the two-letter KC (see discussion below under "Lord")."⁵

"The nomina sacra are also present in Greek Old Testament manuscripts and other Christian writings produced by Christians. One of the main reasons we know that the Old Testament manuscripts are Christian manuscripts and not Jewish is the presence of nomina sacra in the text. Significantly, not one copy of the Greek Old Testament found at Qumran has these nomina sacra because this was a Jewish, not a Christian community. Jews never wrote nomina sacra the way Christians did; the Jews did things differently for one divine name and one divine name only: Yahweh. Jewish scribes would frequently write this in its Hebrew contracted form (even in paleo-Hebrew letters) and then continue on with the Greek text. Christians used KYPIOC (kurios = Lord) in place of Yahweh (YHWH) and wrote it in nomen sacrum form. Many Greek Old Testament manuscripts produced by Christians display this nomen sacrum. This can be seen in all six second-century Greek Old Testament manuscripts noted above."⁶

"Harry Gamble, following G. Howard, reconstructed a similar scenario for the creation of the nomina sacra: The ability to set off the divine name in Christian manuscripts of Septuagintal texts, not by continuing to write it in Hebrew as Jews did but in some other way, must have occurred early to Greek-speaking Christian scribes copying Jewish manuscripts. The contracted forms of theos and kurios probably derive, as G. Howard supposes, from Gentile Christians who, lacking the support of the Jewish tradition for retaining the Tetragram in (Greek) Christian copies of Jewish texts, adopted instead clearly designated contractions of Greek equivalents "out of deference to the Jewish Christians, to mark the sacredness of the divine name which stood behind these surrogates. The principle, used at first with respect to texts of Jewish scripture, would have been extended under Christological warrants to the further names, Jesus and Christ, in Christian documents."⁷ As can be viewed from above and below, polytheistic Greek-Christians, not knowing YAHWEH, began to insert their religious system of multiple gods into the scriptures by inventing sacred names for God, Christ, Lord, Spirit, Jesus etc. etc.

"A phenomenon occurred when the books of the New Testament were written, published, and distributed in the first century. Either the writers themselves or the very earliest copyists used a special written form for the divine names. Instead of writing out in full (in plene) the Greek words kurios (Lord), Iesous (Jesus), Christos (Christ), theos (God), and pneuma (Spirit), the writers and/or scribes wrote these words in special abbreviated (or contracted) forms. Today very few know about this, even those who read the Greek New Testament, because the nomina sacra (sacred names) are not replicated in any fashion in printed editions of the Greek New Testament. If a student is going to know the

⁵ pg. 208-211

⁶ pg. 202

⁷ pg. 210

manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, the student should be able to recognize the nomina sacra and appreciate their significance...Anyone who reads the ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament is struck by the phenomenon: the names kurios (Lord), Iesous (Jesus), Christos (Christ), and theos (God) are written in this unique fashion. These four titles are the primary and most primitive divine names to be written in a special way; they can be seen in all the earliest Greek manuscripts. Another early divine name written in a special way is pneuma (Spirit); it may be as early as the other four or it could have been developed slightly later. These specially written names are called nomina sacra, meaning "sacred names" (the singular is nomen sacrum). The inventor of the term nomina sacra was L. Traube. The nomina sacra for Lord, Jesus, Christ, God, and Spirit are present in all extant second-century New Testament manuscripts where one or more of these nomina sacra are extant."⁸

"Making a name a nomen sacrum desecularized the term, lifting it to sacred status. For example, scribes could differentiate between "the Lord" and "lord"/"sir"/"master" by writing KC or KTPIOC (plene), and they could distinguish between "Spirit" (the divine Spirit) and "spirit" (the human spirit) by writing the first as a nomen sacrum and any other kind of spirit as pneuma (in plene). The term pneuma in ordinary, secular Greek meant "wind," "breath," or "spirit." Writing it as a nomen sacrum signaled that this was the divine Spirit. Scribes also uplifted the ordinary terms "cross" and "crucify" by making them nomina sacra. In this written form, they signaled Jesus' cross and crucifixion, the means by which all Christians are saved from sin."⁹

"A few other terms may have been written as nomina sacra in the original writings or, at least, in the very earliest copies the Greek words for "cross" (stauros) and "crucify" (stauromccii) were written as nomina sacra. I say this because these words were written as nomina sacra in the earliest New Testament manuscripts. In due course two other divine names began to appear as nomina sacra: Father and Son. "Father" was contracted by using the first letter and last letter of IATHP as IIP, and Son (YIOC) was contracted as YC,. These two divine names were sometimes written out in full (plene) and sometimes written as nomina sacra in the early manuscripts. And sometimes there was discrepancy within the same manuscript. Thus, we can tell that these two titles were probably not written as nomina sacra in the original manuscripts but were a later development. Beginning in the second and third centuries some other titles were treated as nomina sacra—namely, "Son of Man," "Israel," "Jerusalem," and "Christian." In the fourth century, a few manuscripts (such as the well-known Codex Sinaiticus) display "mother," "David," and "Savior" as nomina sacra. Most of these will be discussed later."¹⁰

⁸ pg. 199-200

⁹ pg. 204

¹⁰ pg. 203-204

"Sometime in the first century, someone (or some group) created a system that was followed thereafter. When one studies the extant Christian manuscripts, a general chronological evolution of which names were written as nomina sacra and which were not emerges. First, the name Kurios (Lord) was chosen and/or Iesous (Jesus). These two were soon followed by Christos (Christ), theos (God), and pneuma (Spirit). These five were primary nomina sacra by the beginning of the second century. The noun for "cross" and the verb for "crucify" were also dignified as nomina sacra by the beginning of the second century. From the beginning of the second century and into the third, other names were experimented with: anthropos (man), Pater (Father), Hutos (Son), Ierousalem (Jerusalem), Israel (Israel), and ouranos (heaven). Some scribes treated them as a nomen sacrum; others did not. Some scribes in the same manuscript treated them both as nomina sacra and not as such. By the time we get to the fourth century, some experimentation is still going on (as in Codex Sinaiticus), but—for the most part—there seems to be a conscious effort to limit the nomina sacra to Lord, Jesus, Christ, and God, as in Codex Vaticanus."¹¹

The corruption seems to go as follows: The latter-day Hebrews, because of a superstition, would not speak the name of YAHWEH, but would rather speak Adonai [Lord], which is code for YAHWEH. The Hebrew text was then translated into Greek, which turned YAHWEH, which had been turned into Adonai [Lord] by the Hebrews, into kurios (The Hebrew word, Adonai, being turned into the Greek word, Kurios). Yahoshua, who was called kurios, to the Greek speaker, then became the Creator because the Creator was called kurios in the Greek Old Testament. Scriptures such as Psalm 110:1, read in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) by the Greeks, reads as follows, "The kurios said to my kurios, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The Hebrew text actually reads, "The declaration of Yahweh to my Lord [adon]—Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool." Michael Servetus (1509-1553), who knew Hebrew, who was burned at the stake by Calvin because he did not believe in the Trinity, stated, "But because of the poverty of the Greek in divine names...nor would they have caused us so much trouble had the Greeks learned Hebrew."¹²

The Hebrew Christians, which were all of the apostles, knew YAHWEH, and they also knew the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh, because it was prophesied in Psalms 2:7. The Hebrew scriptures were read in their synagogues. When Peter was asked by Yahoshua, Who do you say I am, Peter did not say, YAHWEH, as Gentile Christians would later confess, but rather, "Thou, art the Messiah, the Son of the Living Elohim" (Mt. 16:16)! Paul would have to remind the Gentile Christians in Corinthian that there is only One God: "Concerning, then, the eating of idol-sacrifices, we are aware—that an idol is, nothing, in the world, and that, none, is God save one. For, if indeed there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or upon earth,—as indeed there are gods many and lords many, to us, there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and, we, for him; and one Lord Jesus Christ,

¹¹ pg. 205-206

¹² On the Errors of the Trinity By Michael Serveto (A Spaniard of Aragon) Written in 1531

through whom are all things, and, we, through him" (1 Cor. 8:4-6). The so-called, 'Founding Fathers,' of the Christian Church were Gentiles who became Christians. Very few, if any, could read the Hebrew scriptures. By them reading the corrupted Greek manuscripts, Old and New Testament, the kurios written in their Greek Old Testament must also be the kurios presented in their Greek New Testament. We have the same problem today. Seminaries major in Greek and minor, if at all, in Hebrew. They study theology not Yahwehology. The Bibles they study and read from are based on, kurios, 'The Lord,' and not YAHWEH, which is why the Rotherham Emphasized Bible is so very important. If you asked any of them what Lord, John the Immerser was referring to when he stated, "A voice of one crying aloud—In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, straight, be making his paths," they would say Jesus but the prophet Isaiah wrote, "A voice of one crying!—In the desert, prepare ye the way of Yahweh,—Make smooth, in the waste plain, a highway for our God" (Is. 40:3).

Conclusion

Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), stated in his conclusion of his book, "St. Luke, in his history of the first planting of the gospel, after the recital of the miraculous cure wrought by Paul and Barnabas, at Lystra, upon a man who had been a cripple from his birth, proceeds thus in his narrative, "And, a certain man in Lystra, impotent in his feet, was sitting,—lame from his mother's womb, who never had walked. This man, hearkened unto Paul, as he was speaking,—who, looking steadfastly at him, and seeing he had faith to be made well, Said, with a loud voice—Stand up on thy feet, erect! And he sprang up, and began to walk about. And, the multitudes, seeing what Paul had done, lifted up their voice, in the speech of Lycaonia—The gods, made like unto men, have come down unto us! And they went on to call Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercury, seeing that, he, was the leader of discourse. Also, the priest of the Jupiter that was before the city, bringing bulls and garlands unto the gates, with the multitudes, would have offered sacrifice. But the apostles Barnabas and Paul, hearing of it, rending asunder their own mantles, sprang forward amidst the multitude, crying aloud, and saying—Men! Why, these things, are ye doing? We also, of like nature with you, are men, bringing you the good news, that from these vain things, ye should be turning unto a living God:—Who made heaven and the earth and the sea and all things therein;

From what has been delivered in the preceding pages from the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ, we cannot entertain a doubt, but that if he had been in the same situation with these two apostles, he would have acted the part they did, and with the same fervent zeal, have forbidden the priest and people offering incense to himself, and would have told them, that he was a man like themselves, who claimed no divine honors from them, but, that there was one living and true God, the creator and author of all things, whom he came to make known to them.

It has most strangely fallen out, that the two things, against which this heavenly teacher [Yahoshua] would seem to have used particular and sufficient precaution to guard followers, I mean the deifying and worship of himself and his mother Mary; should have been the grand errors and corruptions, which sprung up early, and infected all his followers, except the Jewish Christians and their descendants; and which have been now for many ages, and still continue to be the characteristic distinction of most of the great and flourishing churches of the Christian world.

That such defection from the worship of the one living and true God, when once set on foot and established, should remain for ages, is not at all to be wondered at. For the bulk of mankind have always been prone to embrace a sensible object of worship, especially to worship men like themselves; as it has something familiar in it, requires less attention of mind, and creates less disturbance within, than the idea of an awful invisible being ever present with them. And where the civil power is called in to give its sanction to any religious system whatsoever, and rewards annexed to the professors of it, with fines and discouragements to those who dissent, truth stands but an ill chance to get an hearing, should she be haply on the other side; and what is thus once wrong, is likely so to continue."¹³

¹³ Theophilus Lindsey, Two dissertations. 1. On the preface to st. John's Gospel. 2. On praying to Jesus Christ.; pg. 126-128 (Written in 1779)

Appendix A

The Nomina Sacra

Anyone who reads the ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament is struck by the phenomenon: the names *kurios* (Lord), *Iēsous* (Jesus), *Christos* (Christ), and *theos* (God) are written in this unique fashion. These four titles are the primary and most primitive divine names to be written in a special way; they can be seen in all the earliest Greek manuscripts.¹ Another early divine name written in a special way is *pneuma* (Spirit); it may be as early as the other four or it could have been developed slightly later. These specially written names are called *nomina sacra*, meaning “sacred names” (the singular is *nomen sacrum*). The inventor of the term *nomina sacra* was L. Traube. After his study on the *nomina sacra*, the most thorough study was done by A. H. R. E. Paap.²

Scattered across the pages of nearly every extant Greek New Testament manuscript can be seen the following *nomina sacra*:

$\overline{\text{K}}\overline{\text{C}}$ for $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (*Kurios*) = Lord

$\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{H}}$ or $\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{H}}\overline{\text{C}}$ for $\iota\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ (*Iēsous*) = Jesus

$\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{P}}$ or $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{C}}$ or $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{C}}$ for $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (*Christos*) = Christ

$\overline{\Theta}\overline{\text{C}}$ for $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ (*theos*) = God

$\overline{\Pi}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{A}}$ for $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ (*pneuma*) = Spirit