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THE FACTS ABOUT 'USING SACRED NAMES'

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THIS ARTICLE

There are 31 sub-headings to this article. To give you some idea regarding how this topic is covered, I will here list these 31 sub-headings. They are as follows.

- 1) The Real Issue
- 2) Books that are Used to Support the Use of Sacred Names
- 3) Dr. Trimm's Basic Line of Reasoning
- 4) Was Hebrew the Common Language of the Jews?
- 5) The Evidence of Josephus
- 6) What the Catholic "Church Fathers" Tell Us
- 7) Did the Apostle Paul Know Greek?
- 8) Are the Greek N.T. Books "Anti-Semitic"?
- 9) Does Bad Greek Grammar Prove Aramaic Originals?
- 10) What About Hebrew Idiomatic Expressions in the N.T.?
- 11) Did Paul Write His Letters in Aramaic or in Hebrew?
- 12) Two Hebrew Language Versions of Matthew's Gospel
- 13) The Old Syriac Aramaic Version of the Four Gospels
- 14) The Peshitta Aramaic Version of the N.T.
- 15) The Crawford Ms Aramaic Version of Revelation
- 16) O.T. Quotes in the Semitic N.T.
- 17) A Summary of What Has Been Covered Thus Far
- 18) What is a Name?
- 19) The Evidence of the O.T.
- 20) The Evidence of the N.T.

- 21) Does a Name "Identify" or does it "Describe"?
- 22) The Purpose of God's Names
- 23) The Name YHWH
- 24) Was the Correct Pronunciation of YHWH Lost?
- 25) The Hebrew Word for "Messiah"
- 26) The Word "Messiah" in the N.T.
- 27) Called "Christians" Rather Than "Messians"
- 28) Acts 4:12 Examined
- 29) What About the Hebrew Language Original of Matthew's Gospel?
- 30) The Problem with the Focus on "Sacred Names"
- 31) Should You Refer to "Our Elder Brother" in Your Prayers?

Over the past several years a number of people have asked me to write an article about the use of "sacred names" that some people have become involved with. For me this has never been an issue, because back in the late 60's I read the article Dr. Hoeh had written for the October 1965 PLAIN TRUTH magazine entitled "THE UNKNOWN GOD". In that article Dr. Hoeh showed very clearly and very logically why we should not get involved with using sacred names. The logic Dr. Hoeh had used in that article was sound and it would be hard to improve on it; so I saw no point in just rehashing what Dr. Hoeh had already explained 35 years earlier.

But since then I have heard some people using the name "Jehovah" and others using the name "Yahweh", and in some messages sent to me people have used the name "Y'shua" to refer to Jesus Christ. Others, in writing to me, always omit the vowel "o" whenever they write the word "God", inserting the underline character in place of the vowel (i.e. "G_d"). Also some people have referred to supposed "proof" in various books for why we should use sacred names. I now have one of these books in my possession.

So I feel I should address the subject now. While my approach will be different from Dr. Hoeh's article, you will no doubt recognize in the latter part of this article a number of the points that I will present as having been previously addressed by Dr. Hoeh. I have had much of the approach I will use in the latter part of this article underlying my thinking on this subject for the past three decades, since learning the facts about this subject back at college; and rather than constantly refer back to Dr. Hoeh's article I will acknowledge his article as foundational to my thinking up front. So if you DO see any points of similarity with Dr. Hoeh's article, please understand that I am not claiming to be the first one to come up with that line of reasoning. To date I have not read or heard anything else written by other people against the use of sacred names; I have only read Dr. Hoeh's article.

If you have never read Dr. Hoeh's article on "THE UNKNOWN GOD", it would be worth your while to obtain a copy and to read it for yourself.

Right, now let's get down to the topic at hand. To start with, we need to understand "the trunk of the tree" in this whole question. Mr. Armstrong would repeatedly take every issue back to the most basic points,

"the trunk of the tree" as he would call it. So let's very clearly understand the REAL issue with this whole question of sacred names.

THE REAL ISSUE

There are now many people who want to use Hebrew-sounding names for God and for Jesus Christ. Some misunderstand Scriptures like Acts 4:12, while others feel that "new discoveries" have shown by what names we should address God. Acts 4:12 reads:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN given among men, WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED. (Acts 4:12 AV)

Some people feel that this Scripture requires them to use God's Hebrew-language names whenever they refer to God. Later we'll examine this Scripture in detail. And others feel that the name "Jesus Christ" is not right for us to use.

So here is something to keep in mind:

IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE whether people want to use "Jehovah" or whether they want to write "G_d" or whether they want to use "Yahweh" or "Y'shua" or "Yahveh" or any other Hebrew-sounding word when they refer to God the Father and to Jesus Christ ... THE TRUNK OF THE TREE IS ALWAYS EXACTLY THE SAME!

So take careful note of this, because many of the people involved with these various sacred names will try to obscure this basic foundational premise. They will put up any number of distracting peripheral issues to avoid focussing on this most basic foundational issue. But none of those peripheral issues, no matter how interesting they may sound, can replace the most basic foundational premise of all.

THAT BASIC FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE IS THIS:

THEY MUST CONVINCING YOU THAT THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN HEBREW, AND THAT THE GREEK MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE NOTHING MORE THAN TRANSLATIONS FROM THOSE "ORIGINAL" HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS FOR ALL OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT!

Can you understand this?

You see, IF God did indeed inspire the New Testament to originally be written IN GREEK, THEN it proves beyond any shadow of doubt that God APPROVES of the Hebrew words like "Elohim" and "Yahweh" and "Adonai", etc. to be translated into Greek by words like "theos" and "kurios". And then it also shows very clearly that God approves of the Hebrew name "Joshua" to be translated into Greek as "Jesus". And it proves beyond doubt that God approves of the word "Christ" to be used in reference to His Son. So IF it can be demonstrated that God approves of His "names" being translated from Hebrew into even one other language, THEN that destroys ALL justifications for insisting that, when we are speaking in the English language, we must use Hebrew-sounding names for God.

So never let anyone distract you from this most basic point of all: that in order to justify the use of sacred names it MUST (!) be proved that the whole New Testament was originally inspired by God to be written down in Hebrew, thereby maintaining the identical Hebrew words for God that were used throughout the whole Old Testament.

THAT IS THE TRUNK OF THE TREE FOR THE USE OF SACRED NAMES!

Every other point is secondary to this question. And while (supposed) Hebrew-language originals for all of the books of the New Testament do not automatically sanction the use of sacred names, by contrast, Greek-language originals for the books of the New Testament, EVEN FOR ONLY SOME OF THEM, automatically prove that God APPROVES of the names for God the Father and for Jesus Christ to be freely translated into Greek.

If God inspired even one book of the New Testament, with the words "theos" and "kurios" and "Jesus" and "Christ" in it, to be originally recorded in Greek, then there is no justification for rejecting the use of the words "Jesus Christ" and "God". Then the foundation for using sacred names would be destroyed.

So was the entire New Testament originally written in Hebrew or was a part of it originally written in Greek? Or was all of it written in Greek? Let's examine this question now.

BOOKS THAT ARE USED TO SUPPORT THE USE OF SACRED NAMES

I have in my possession a book entitled "THE SEMITIC ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT", written by Dr. James Scott Trimm, and copyrighted in 1996. I have the second edition. Dr. Trimm's area of speciality is the Aramaic language and he is, amongst other things, on the Board of Directors of "The ARAMAIC Bible Society".

The opening statement of this book, in the "INTRODUCTION" on page 5, reads:

"The purpose of this book is to establish a Semitic rather than a Greek origin for the New Testament."

This opening statement tells us that he is only going to present things that will further his stated purpose. Any evidence that contradicts his stated purpose he will simply not present to us. He does NOT have the objective goal of establishing which language was used, be it Hebrew or Greek or Aramaic, which would indicate that he is open to ANY evidence for any of these languages to have been the originally used language. He is ONLY interested in "evidence" that will support "a Semitic origin". This bias is exposed in his opening statement.

Dr. Trimm has done a great deal of research to back up his presentation. Besides quoting from the historian Josephus, the Talmud, various ones of the Catholic "church fathers" and various encyclopaedias, Dr. Trimm also quotes from and refers to over 19 specific books by various writers in order to support the thesis in his opening statement.

I will here list these 19 main works that Dr. Trimm quotes from and refers to. My reason for listing all of these books is as follows:

While I myself do not currently have the opportunity to check all of THESE particular works myself, we can be sure of one thing. Whatever GOOD arguments any of those 19 books contain that would further Dr. Trimm's case, we can be absolutely sure that Dr. Trimm has incorporated them into his presentation. There is no way that he would possibly have omitted to use any powerful argument in favour of a Semitic origin for the New Testament found in any of these books, and instead only quoted less-convincing arguments from these books. He has thoroughly examined those works because he is convinced they further his position. So my position is as follows:

There is no need for me to evaluate any of these 19 books myself for possible evidence in favour of sacred names (Dr. Trimm also refers to Jesus Christ as "Y'shua") or for evidence in favour of a Semitic origin of the New Testament, because Dr. Trimm has already done that for me. IF what he has presented from these 19 books does NOT present any positive evidence to support his position, THEN it is also unlikely that any other quotations from those works would provide any better evidence. The only thing a personal evaluation of those works by me could achieve is to expose OTHER quotations from these works that would in fact weaken Dr. Trimm's position by presenting facts he had chosen not to present. Having studied Dr. Trimm's 77-page book extremely carefully and meticulously, I am quite willing to forego the opportunity of finding things in those books that would weaken Dr. Trimm's case. What he has presented from those books already gives me sufficient information.

I mention this because I don't want people writing to me and saying: "Have you read THIS book or THAT book, because THERE you will find the evidence in favour of sacred names". That just doesn't work. If Dr. Trimm didn't present that information when he clearly examined those books, THEN that is because Dr. Trimm himself realized that it would not further his cause.

The 19 books Dr. Trimm has consulted and from most of which he quotes (in addition to the other sources I listed above) are these, starting with the oldest publication dates:

- 1) REMAINS OF A VERY ANCIENT RECENSION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS IN SYRIAC by William Cureton, 1858 ("recension" = a CRITICAL REVISION of a text)
- 2) THE OLD SYRIAC ELEMENT IN THE TEXT OF CODEX BEZAE by Frederic Henry Chase, 1893
- 3) A TRANSLATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM THE SYRIAC OF THE SINAITIC PALMPSET (sic) by Agnes Smith Lewis, 1894
- 4) THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN IN A SYRIAC VERSION HITHERTO UNKNOWN by John Gwynn, 1897
- 5) THE COMPOSITION AND DATE OF ACTS by Charles Cutler Torrey, published in 1916
- 6) OUR TRANSLATED GOSPELS also by C. C. Torrey, published in 1936
- 7) DOCUMENTS OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH also by C. C. Torrey, published in 1941
- 8) THE POETRY OF OUR LORD by Charles Fox Burney, 1925
- 9) AN OLD HEBREW TEXT OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL by Hugh Schonfield, 1927
- 10) THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF THE APOCALYPSE by R.B.Y. Scott, 1928
- 11) STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE GOSPEL TEXT IN SYRIAC by Arthur Voobus, 1951
- 12) HANDBOOK TO THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, 1951
- 13) THE SEMITISMS OF ACTS by Max Wilcox, 1965
- 14) THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by Bruce M. Metzger, 1968
- 15) THE ARAMAIC ORIGIN OF THE FOUR GOSPELS by Frank Zimmerman, 1979

16) UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF JESUS by David Bivin & Roy Blizzard Jr., 1984

17) THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW ACCORDING TO A PRIMITIVE HEBREW TEXT by George Howard, 1987

18) THE SACRED NAME by R. Clover, published in 1989 by "Qadesh La Yahweh Press"

19) AN ARAMAIC APPROACH TO THE GOSPELS AND ACTS by Matthew Black, no date for the publication is given

[Comment: Under #3 the word "Palmpset" should be "Palimpsest", a word that means "Writing material like a parchment or a tablet that is used one or more times AFTER EARLIER WRITING HAS BEEN ERASED"! The word is formed from the Greek "palin" (again) + "psen" (to scrape). This always produces LOW QUALITY manuscripts.]

Most of these books are very scholarly works. In most cases the authors themselves were not involved in any "sacred names" churches. With the publication dates stretching from 1858 up to 1989, and with Dr. Trimm himself writing his book in 1996, it would be fair enough to say that these sources quoted by Dr. Trimm pretty well cover the information available to scholarship in biblical research for this particular question. Most of these works are not emotional appeals to the readers, but the factual observations of scholars, though obviously coupled with the personal interpretations these scholars have attached to the facts they have discovered or have become aware of.

So here is what I will now do. I will carefully examine all of the claims and assertions Dr. Trimm has presented in his book. This means I will cover all of the evidence he has presented not only from the above 19 books, but also from Josephus and from the various encyclopaedias he has consulted, from the Talmud and also from various Catholic "church fathers". While there are now other books available that make basically the SAME CLAIMS that Dr. Trimm has presented, it should be noted that the points those books attempt to make basically employ the SAME LINE OF REASONING that Dr. Trimm has used. If I can show that Dr. Trimm's main points are flawed, then the same is likely to hold true for other works that use the same line of reasoning from the same set of facts. I say this because I have no desire to examine OTHER books that are nothing more than a rehash of the points that Dr. Trimm has already attempted to make.

After that I will cover some of the things that were covered by Dr. Hoeh more than three decades ago. So now let's look at Dr. Trimm's evidence for a "Semitic origin of the New Testament". But also keep one point in mind:

In order for Dr. Trimm to justify referring to Jesus Christ as "Y'shua" it is absolutely imperative for him to show that the entire New Testament was originally written "in a Semitic language". If the New Testament was originally written in Greek, his foundation has been destroyed. Thus there is a great deal at stake for Dr. Trimm himself.

DR. TRIMM'S BASIC LINE OF REASONING

Dr. Trimm has taken the following approach in his work:

1) In Chapter 1 he attempts to show that the language of the Jews in the first century was NOT Aramaic but Hebrew. He argues against the Jews having basically lost the Hebrew language by the first century. Note carefully that here he argues AGAINST ARAMAIC having become the common language of the Jews by the first century. He also argues against the Jews of that time having any understanding of the Greek language.

2) He opens Chapter 2 with the claim that he has demonstrated that "Hebrew AND ARAMAIC were languages of Jews living in Israel in the first century". He does not seem to realize that this opening statement actually contradicts the argument he presented in the previous chapter. He then proposes that he will prove that the New Testament was originally written in these TWO languages ... Hebrew AND Aramaic. He then presents historical statements about two specific books of the New Testament (i.e. Matthew's Gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews) that appear to indicate they were originally written in HEBREW. At no stage does he present any evidence for any of the other 25 books of the New Testament. He also does not present any evidence that any books of the New Testament were originally written IN ARAMAIC! He further claims that the Apostle Paul did not really know Greek.

3) In Chapter 3 he argues about the "Semitic origin" of Paul's epistles, arguing that Paul would not have written in any other language than Hebrew or Aramaic.

4) In Chapter 4 he argues at length from two HEBREW versions of the gospel of Matthew, claiming that they had been kept "a secret". These two Hebrew versions of Matthew tie in with Chapter 2, where he had presented historical references for a Hebrew version of Matthew. He reasons from these texts to try to prove that they represent THE ORIGINAL for the gospel of Matthew, and that the Greek version of Matthew is only a translation from these Hebrew "originals".

5) In Chapter 5 he reasons from "the Old Syriac Aramaic Version of the Four Gospels", asserting "ORIGINALITY" of this text over the Greek Gospels. He does this by reasoning from various words that are used in the Aramaic text and comparing them to the corresponding Greek words in the Greek text. It does not seem to occur to him that IF the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew (as he argued in the previous chapter) THEN this "Old Syriac Aramaic" version of the four gospels OBVIOUSLY cannot represent "originality" for the Gospel of Matthew ... it can't be original in BOTH languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, at the same time.

6) In Chapter 6 he reasons from the Peshitta Aramaic Version of the New Testament. He also claims "ORIGINALITY" for the New Testament portion of the Peshitta over the Greek language gospel accounts. So the "Peshitta" Aramaic Version, which differs from the "Old Syriac Aramaic Version", is also supposedly an "original" text. So differing texts for the same books of the New Testament can supposedly both represent "originals"?

7) In Chapter 7 he discusses the Crawford Manuscript, which contains "a UNIQUE VERSION of Revelation", claiming "priority" of this version over the Greek text of Revelation. This manuscript differs from the Old Syriac and also from the Peshitta, giving us a third choice of text in the Aramaic language. This one too is claimed to be superior to the Greek text of Revelation.

8) In Chapter 8 he argues from Old Testament quotes and how these are presented in the Aramaic New Testament when compared to how they appear in the Greek language New Testament. His argument is that the Aramaic Peshitta could not have been a translation from the Greek, but must have been the original, and that the Greek texts must have been translated from these Aramaic language texts.

9) In Chapter 9 he then refers to "textual criticism" of the New Testament with the implication that the Aramaic versions underlie the Greek versions.

His conclusion is then that "a collation of ancient texts of both the Semitic and Greek New Testament have produced SUPERIOR READINGS IN BOTH LANGUAGE TYPES", meaning that the frequently edited and revised Aramaic versions now available are "superior" to what may have been "the originals". His concluding paragraph for the whole book starts with this sentence:

"THEREFORE, the New Testament WAS FIRST WRITTEN IN HEBREW/ARAMAIC AND THEN TRANSLATED INTO GREEK, then Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic and the European languages." (my own emphasis)

That is a brief overview of Dr. Trimm's book.

We should note the following points:

1) For the two books of Matthew and Hebrews Dr. Trimm first claims that they were originally written in the Hebrew language and only later translated into Greek. This claim is supported by quotations from the Catholic "church fathers". Later he also claims Aramaic language originals for these same books.

2) For the other 25 books of the New Testament Dr. Trimm does not at any stage attempt to claim any HEBREW language originals. For those 25 books he really claims ARAMAIC language originals, since the only supposed evidence he presents in this regard consists of ARAMAIC texts! This claim is, however, consistently hidden behind the term "SEMITIC LANGUAGE ORIGINALS", and it is only a careful examination of his whole book that will expose this claim of: perhaps 2 books in Hebrew and the other 25 books certainly in Aramaic. Yet no evidence is ever presented for these other 25 books.

Now let's look at the things that are presented in this book more closely.

WAS HEBREW THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF THE JEWS?

In Chapter 1 Dr. Trimm writes regarding the Jews of the first century A.D.:

"Some scholars have proposed that the Jews lost their Hebrew language, replacing it with Aramaic during the Babylonian captivity. THE ERROR OF THIS POSITION BECOMES OBVIOUS. The Jewish people had spent 400 years in captivity in Egypt yet they did not stop speaking Hebrew and begin speaking Egyptian, why should they exchange Hebrew for Aramaic after only seventy years in Babylonian captivity? Upon return from the Babylonian captivity it was realized that A SMALL MINORITY could not speak "the language of Judah" [in a footnote Dr. Trimm claims this means 'Hebrew as opposed to Aramaic'] so drastic measures were taken to abolish these marriages and MAINTAIN THE PURITY of the JEWISH people and LANGUAGE. One final evidence rests in the fact that the post-captivity books (Zech., Hag., Mal., Neh., Ezra, and Esther) are WRITTEN IN HEBREW RATHER THAN ARAMAIC." (pages 6-7, my emphasis)

The intent of the above paragraph is to show that the Jews during the first century A.D. were supposedly speaking HEBREW RATHER THAN ARAMAIC as their first language.

But this claim is simply not in accordance with the facts!

Here is a quotation from the Jewish Talmud, Soncino Edition, together with the corresponding footnote, which contradicts Dr. Trimm's claims. [COMMENT: Numbers in the text of the quotation refer to the footnotes.]

Now, he who maintains that remuneration is for the teaching of accentuation, — why does he reject the view that it is for acting as guardian? — He reasons: Do daughters then need guarding?⁴ And he who maintains that the fee is for guardianship, — why does he reject the view that it is for teaching accents? — He holds that accents are also Biblical;⁵ for R. Ika b. Abin said in the name of R. Hananel in Rab's name: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF, And they read in the book,

in the law of God, distinctly, and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading?6 'They read in the book, it, the law of God,' refers to Scripture; 'DISTINCTLY,' TO TARGUM;7 'and they gave the sense', to the division of sentences; 'so that they understood the reading,' to the accentuation; others say, to the masoroth.8 (Mas. Nedarim 37b)

Footnote 7 to the above:

(7) TARGUM, 'TRANSLATION', GENERALLY REFERS TO THE ARAMAIC TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE. In Mishnaic phraseology it might refer to A TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW OR THE BIBLE INTO ANY LANGUAGE, (v. J. Kid. 59a, where it denotes a Greek version of Aquila; Meg. II, 1; Shab. 115a), but the word Targum by itself was restricted to the Aramaic version of the Bible. THIS ARAMAIC TRANSLATION WAS PUBLICALLY READ IN THE SYNAGOGUE, ALONG WITH THE ORIGINAL TEXT, AND RULES FOR READING IT WERE FORMULATED (v. Meg. II, 1; Tosef. Meg. II, V). THIS PRACTICE WAS AN ANCIENT INSTITUTION, DATING BACK TO THE SECOND TEMPLE, AND ACCORDING TO RAB, GOING BACK TO EZRA, v. J.E., XII, p. 57. (my emphasis)

END OF QUOTATION FROM THE TALMUD!

Here are some comments about this quotation:

The statement "And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading" is a reference to Nehemiah 8:8, where the priest Ezra was reading God's Word to the people on the Day of Trumpets. The context is thus clearly in the 400's B.C. when Ezra and Nehemiah were in Jerusalem. That was approximately 80 to 100 years after the Jews had first returned from Babylon.

The Jews understand this Scripture to refer to "the Targum" being read, which footnote 7 explains is a term for "the ARAMAIC translation of the Old Testament". And the practice of this Aramaic translation being read in the synagogues goes back all the way to Ezra, according to Rab, a highly respected Jewish authority.

So the point is this:

IF the Jews at Ezra's time were still speaking Hebrew as their first language, THEN they would not have been reading Aramaic translations in the synagogues. THE REASON for the existence of "Targums" (Aramaic language version of the Hebrew Scriptures) was because the people were now speaking Aramaic! There was no such thing as a desire to "maintain the purity of the Jewish language", as Dr. Trimm has asserted. However, IF the Jews really had been concerned about "maintaining THE PURITY of the Jewish language", meaning the HEBREW language, THEN Dr. Trimm is actually shooting himself in the foot ... because it would mean that Aramaic was definitely "OUT" and all appeals to ARAMAIC language sources would be anathema ... they would defile "the purity" of Hebrew, as Dr. Trimm implies. Note again his use of the phrase "RATHER THAN ARAMAIC"!

His statement about the post-captivity books being written in Hebrew is only partly correct. It is a well-known fact that 4 chapters of the Book of Ezra (i.e. Ezra 4-7) are in fact written IN ARAMAIC! But even MORE significant is that one book, that was written mostly DURING the exile, also has 5 chapters written in Aramaic. That is the Book of Daniel, where chapters 2-6 are written in Aramaic!

Those chapters were NOT written "in a foreign language" for the Jews! They were written in Aramaic BECAUSE the people were by then speaking Aramaic! In this regard we should examine Nehemiah

13:24, which Dr. Trimm claims refers to the Hebrew language. Here is this verse ...

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and COULD NOT SPEAK IN THE JEWS' LANGUAGE, but according to the language of each people. (Nehemiah 13:24 AV)

When Ezra had already written chapters 4-7 of his book in Aramaic, and when it was necessary to read chapters 2-6 of the prophet Daniel in Aramaic, thereby setting the precedent for producing "the Targum" (translating ALL the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic), you cannot infer that at the very same time as Ezra wrote in Aramaic, Nehemiah was somehow trying to pressure people to speak Hebrew, to retain "the purity of the Hebrew language". The children referred to in this verse could only speak the speech of Ashdod instead of Aramaic. Keep in mind that Nehemiah himself OBVIOUSLY spoke Aramaic fluently as his first language, because he was "the cupbearer", a very high government official, to the Aramaic-speaking Persian king Artaxerxes (see Neh. 1:11-2:2).

On a totally different front, but at the very same time in history, THE NAMES OF THE MONTHS in the Jewish calendar PROVE that Aramaic was the language the Jews used from the time they returned from Babylon. All of the names of the months in the Jewish calendar are ARAMAIC! The Hebrew language name for the first month had been "Abib", but after the captivity the Jews changed that to the Aramaic language Babylonian name "Nisan" (from the Babylonian month named "Nisanu"). The 9th month was given the Aramaic name "Kislev" (or "Chisleu" in Neh. 1:1), from the Babylonian name "Kislimu" for that month. Hebrew names for the months were totally dropped from Ezra's time onwards, because there was a change in language. Here are some examples from the "post-captivity books" Nehemiah and Esther.

Notice ...

And it came to pass in THE MONTH NISAN, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that* wine *was* before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence. (Nehemiah 2:1 AV)

In the first month, that *is*, THE MONTH NISAN, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth *month*, that *is*, the month Adar. (Esther 3:7 AV)

The change from "Abib" to "Nisan" records the change of the spoken language from Hebrew to Aramaic, and these Scriptures show that this happened in the 400's B.C..

Now notice some quotations from the Talmud that also show that it was acceptable to translate the Scriptures into any other language, but specifically the Greek language is mentioned.

MISHNAH. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOOKS [OF THE SCRIPTURE]²⁷ AND TEFILLIN AND MEZUZAH²⁸ SAVE THAT THE BOOKS MAY BE WRITTEN IN ANY LANGUAGE²⁹ WHEREAS TEFILLIN AND MEZUZAH²⁸ MAY BE WRITTEN ONLY IN ASSYRIAN.³⁰ R. SIMEON B. GAMALIEL SAYS THAT BOOKS [OF THE SCRIPTURE] ALSO WERE PERMITTED [BY THE SAGES] TO BE WRITTEN ONLY IN GREEK.

BOOKS MAY BE WRITTEN IN ANY LANGUAGE. The following seems to conflict with this: '[A Scriptural scroll containing] a Hebrew text written³³ in Aramaic or an Aramaic text written in Hebrew,³⁴ or [either] in Hebraic script,³⁵ does not defile the hands;³⁶ [it does not do so] until it

is written in Assyrian script upon a scroll and in ink'! — Raba replied: There is no contradiction; (Mas. Megilah 8b) (my emphasis)

The Footnotes for the above:

(27) This means apparently, scrolls of the Scriptural books.

(28) V. Glos.

(29) Apparently what is meant is that official translations for use in the synagogue may be made IN ANY LANGUAGE. We know actually of two such — THE ARAMAIC TRANSLATION known as Targum Onkelos, and THE GREEK TRANSLATION of Aquilas made under the supervision of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua.

(30) 'Assyrian is used as the equivalent of HEBREW WRITTEN IN THE SQUARE CHARACTERS used for religious writings. This script was called 'Assyrian', the reason being that it came into common use after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile; v. Sanh. 21b, Sonc. ed. pp. 119ff and notes.

(33) I.e., translated into.

(34) E.g., the Chaldaic parts of Daniel and Ezra.

(35) The ancient Hebrew script (as found e.g., in the Siloam and Moabite inscriptions and old Jewish coins, and in modified form in Samaritan writing) which was in common use before the Exile. V. Sanh. *ibid.*

(36) Whereas the Mishnah seems to imply that they do.

END OF QUOTATION FROM THE TALMUD.

Note the following points:

Footnote 34 refers to the parts of the books of Daniel and Ezra that were originally written in Aramaic, also at times referred to as "Chaldaic". Obviously both Daniel and Ezra were fluent in Aramaic.

The statement that "the books may be written in any language", with footnote 29 attached to it, shows that in some synagogues official translations into Aramaic and also into Greek were being used. This OBVIOUSLY implies that this was for the benefit of Jews who would be speaking those languages ... Aramaic and Greek. And it also implies that those same Jews were not really able to speak Hebrew, because then no such translations would have been needed. And that certainly included synagogues in Palestine. The Greek translations would only have been made considerably later than the Aramaic translations.

Consider that ALL the Jews who inhabited Judea in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah had returned from the Babylonian captivity. They had ALL previously lived in the Aramaic speaking Babylonian empire and then in the Aramaic speaking Medo-Persian empire. Like Daniel and like Ezra they had ALL learned to speak Aramaic fluently. So when they rebuilt the Temple and Jerusalem there were no Jews at all whose "first language" was still Hebrew, though there certainly would have been those who ALSO still had a complete knowledge and understanding of Hebrew. But the transition from Hebrew to Aramaic AS THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE had been a very easy one for them to make, because the two languages are reasonably closely related.

Notice another quotation from the Talmud.

Tefillin and mezuzahs are to be written only in Assyrian, but OUR RABBIS ALLOWED THEM TO BE WRITTEN IN GREEK ALSO'.¹² But is it not written, and they shall be? I must say therefore, 'Scrolls of the Scripture may be written in any language, and our Rabbis permitted them to be written in Greek'.¹³ They permitted! This would imply that the First Tanna forbade it! What I must say therefore is, 'Our Rabbis permitted them to be written only in Greek'. And it goes on to state, 'R. Judah said: When our teachers permitted Greek, they permitted it only for a scroll of the Torah'.¹⁴ (Mas. Megilah 9a) (my emphasis)

Footnotes for the above:

(12) The quotation is here interrupted.

(13) The quotation is again interrupted.

(14) Thus R. Judah forbade other books of the Scripture to be written save in the original language.

END OF QUOTATION FROM THE TALMUD.

This quotation again shows that it is well-known amongst Jewish scholars that the Old Testament had been translated into Greek and was being used. And keep in mind that people did not own personal private copies of the Old Testament, like we do today. All the copies that were made (be they copies in the Hebrew language, or be they translations into Aramaic and Greek) were for the explicit purpose of being used in religious services in the synagogues.

Jesus Christ throughout His ministry spoke to people in the Aramaic language. What we have recorded for us in the Greek language of the four gospels was in fact spoken by Jesus Christ in Aramaic. Occasionally a few Aramaic words are preserved, together with a translation of these words. In our English language versions of the Bible we see these in the two languages of Aramaic and English. In the Greek text of the New Testament these appear in the two languages of Aramaic and Greek ... and it is only the Greek language part that is translated into English for us, while the Aramaic part is left in Aramaic even in our English translations.

In Matthew 27:46 and in Mark 15:34 we have recorded the last words Jesus Christ spoke before He died on the stake. This is a quotation from Psalm 22:1.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46 AV)

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mark 15:34 AV)

Notice that the quotation in Matthew reads "Eli" where Mark's quotation reads "Eloi". Recall that we have already referred to the Gospel of Matthew very possibly having first been written in Hebrew. The word "Eli" is in the Hebrew language, whereas the word "Eloi" is in the Aramaic language. The word "lama" (meaning "why") is identical in both, Hebrew and Aramaic. But the word "sabachthani" is very clearly an ARAMAIC word! The Hebrew word used in Psalm 22:1 is in fact "azbethani".

The point is this: THE LAST WORDS Jesus Christ spoke before dying for our sins were IN THE

ARAMAIC LANGUAGE! The gospel writers chose to record them in the language in which Jesus Christ spoke them, before giving us the translation of these words. The use of the Aramaic word "sabachthani" in both gospel accounts makes clear that Jesus Christ was speaking in Aramaic! With Matthew's gospel having been written in Hebrew which did not include any vowel pointings (they were only invented much later), it is easy to see how this was later translated into Greek as if it was the Hebrew word "Eli". With Mark's account being first written in Greek, Mark right away correctly transliterated the Aramaic word as "Eloi".

Now the fact that Psalm 22:1 was originally inspired in Hebrew, and yet Jesus Christ chose to quote it in Aramaic, shows us that Jesus Christ was in the habit of speaking Aramaic. It was the language in which He expressed Himself spontaneously at the moment of His greatest suffering.

Notice also one other point. The fact that Matthew and Mark both quote these words by Jesus Christ in Aramaic AND THEN PROVIDE A TRANSLATION proves beyond any doubt that both of them were writing in a language DIFFERENT FROM ARAMAIC! Had either Matthew or Mark been writing in Aramaic, THEN that particular writer (or both of them!) would not have used the expression "THAT IS TO SAY" (Matthew) or "WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED" (Mark)! They would not have written the same content of Christ's words TWICE in the same one language! Had they written in Aramaic, then in the translation into Greek we would NOT find the Aramaic words! If the WHOLE book was being translated from Aramaic into another language, THEN every single Aramaic word in that book would have been translated into the other language and no Aramaic language quotations from Jesus Christ would have been left untranslated.

Now IN THE ARAMAIC VERSION Mark 15:34 is a faithful translation from the Greek text, because it also contains the expression "which is, being interpreted". That expression in the Aramaic text PROVES that it must have been translated from the Greek. Now the fact that Matthew's account contains the expression "that is to say" means that Matthew also was not writing in Aramaic ... he had to be writing in either Hebrew or in Greek. Later we'll see an admission from Dr. Trimm that certain Aramaic texts are "clearly a translation from the Greek".

Other Aramaic words found in our English language translations include "Aceldama" in Acts 1:19 and "Tabitha" (Acts 9:36). [Comment: The Aramaic word "Tabitha" means "Dorcas" in Greek and "Doe" in English.]

We should also recognize that when the language "Hebrew" is mentioned in the gospel accounts, it is commonly, though not necessarily always, a reference to Aramaic! The Greek word "Hebraisti" really means "the language of the Hebrew people". We would be inclined to simply ASSUME that this means the Hebrew language, but that would not always be correct. Notice how this word "Hebraisti" is used in the Gospel of John.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market* a pool, which is called IN THE HEBREW TONGUE (Hebraisti) BETHESDA, having five porches. (John 5:2 AV)

The word "Bethesda" is in fact an Aramaic word meaning "house of mercy".

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but IN THE HEBREW (Hebraisti), GABBATHA. (John 19:13 AV)

The word "Gabbatha" is in fact an Aramaic word meaning "elevated" or "a platform".

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called IN THE HEBREW (Hebraisti) GOLGOTHA: (John 19:17 AV)

The word "Golgotha" is in fact an Aramaic word meaning "skull".

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in HEBREW (Hebraisti), *and* GREEK (Hellenisti), *and* LATIN (Romaisti). (John 19:20 AV).

Now every other time that John has used the word "Hebraisti" in his gospel account, it always refers to words that are in fact Aramaic. Within the preceding 7 verses John twice used "Hebraisti" to refer to Aramaic language words. The three languages in which Pontius Pilate put a title on the stake were Aramaic and Greek and Latin. All of the local population of Jews understood at least one of the two first languages (Aramaic and Greek), and Latin was Pilate's own first language, the official language of Rome.

When the writers of the New Testament wanted to distinguish Hebrew from Aramaic, then they used a slightly different word. Where they used "Hebraisti" to refer to the Aramaic language, they used the word "Hebrais" to refer to the Hebrew language. Thus, after there had been an uproar in Jerusalem and the chief captain had arrested Paul, Paul requested the opportunity to address the people. Paul then raised his hands to get the people to be quiet so that he could speak. Then we are told the following:

And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* IN THE HEBREW TONGUE (Hebrais), saying, (Acts 21:40 AV)

Had Paul spoken in the language they (both, the writer of Acts and also the audience) were anticipating, there would have been no occasion to make any reference to which language he was speaking in. Hebrew ("Hebrais") is here specifically mentioned because it was NOT the normal everyday language that Paul spoke and that people there spoke. Notice the next two verses ...

Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake IN THE HEBREW TONGUE (Hebrais) to them, they kept THE MORE SILENCE: and he saith,) (Acts 22:1-2 AV)

Now WHY did Paul choose to here speak in Hebrew? Well, that was because a thorough working knowledge of Hebrew was a distinguishing trademark of any biblical scholar, and especially of the Pharisees, as we will see explained later in a quotation from Josephus. By choosing to speak in Hebrew, Paul was AUTOMATICALLY signalling to all the people that he was thoroughly trained in the Scriptures.

Furthermore, Paul was applying a principle that he explained to the Corinthians. Notice ...

And UNTO THE JEWS I BECAME AS A JEW, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; (1 Corinthians 9:20 AV)

This should explain why Paul spoke Hebrew here, and also why he wrote (very likely) the letter to the

Jews (Hebrews) in the Hebrew language. Matthew, in writing his Gospel account to the Jews, followed the same principle. Anyway ...

The crowd had already fallen silent to let him speak. So WHY did they fall "the more silent"? Well, that was because, while most of the common people could no longer SPEAK Hebrew, they nevertheless could still understand a great deal provided it was spoken clearly and distinctly. It was the same for them as it is for you. If you took a couple of years of a foreign language in high school or in college, only to promptly ignore it after you had achieved the minimum grade required ... IF you then meet someone who would speak that foreign language slowly and distinctly to you, you might still be able to follow a certain amount of the conversation. In countries with two or more recognized languages (e.g. Belgium, Switzerland, South Africa, Mauritius, India, much of Africa, etc.) this would be even more so the case. For example, here in South Africa we have very many people who cannot speak Afrikaans (a language that developed from Dutch), and many more who could perhaps speak Afrikaans to some degree but would feel extremely uncomfortable trying to do so ... yet they may understand a great deal of Afrikaans when it is spoken by other people and when they hear it on the radio or on TV. When the two languages involved are somewhat similar, as is the case with Hebrew and Aramaic or with Afrikaans and Dutch, then the understanding of the language that is not normally spoken, but is closely related, would be even greater.

So it is not a matter of the Jews no longer understanding Hebrew, because it was still being used in many or even most synagogues every week. It is just that it wasn't their normal everyday language.

This should suffice to show that Dr. Trimm's assertion that Aramaic had not replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of the Jews is clearly in conflict with the evidence that is available. It is clearly in conflict with what the Jews themselves, in the Talmud, tell us.

So the following statement in Dr. Trimm's book is clearly incorrect:

"During the first century, HEBREW remained the language of the Jews living in Judah and to a lesser extent in Galilee." (Page 7)

That also applies to this statement:

"Jews at this time did not speak Greek, in fact one tradition had it that it was better to feed ones children swine than to teach them the Greek language. It was only with the permission of authorities that a young official could learn Greek, and then, solely for the purpose of political discourse on the National level." (Page 7)

No proof is offered for this supposed "tradition". Where did Dr. Trimm find this "tradition"? The claim that "official permission" was required in order to learn Greek is ridiculous. Even men who were "mighty in the Scriptures" might be fluent in Greek ... like a Jew named "APOLLOS", who had been born in Alexandria, Egypt (Acts 18:24). "Apollos" was as Greek a name as you could wish for. Another Jew had the thoroughly Latin name "Aquila" (the Latin word for "eagle"), as we see in Acts 18:2. And while these two men (Apollos and Aquila) were not born in Judea, they were clearly Jews and they clearly had a religious interest ... yet both of them would have spoken other languages besides Aramaic as well.

But consider one other point:

Dr. Trimm is saying that ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL Jews conducted political discourse in the Greek language! Now WHY would Jews possibly use Greek for political discourse, if hardly any other Jews

could speak Greek? WHY would they not conduct their political discourse on the national level in Hebrew? Put into modern terminology, was it not a case that if a young man wanted to become a theologian, THEN he had to study Hebrew, but if he wanted to make a career in politics, THEN he had to be fluent in Greek? The choice between theology and politics also implies that there were going to be far more people that understood Greek than Hebrew ... politicians have to be able to communicate much more with people than theologians have to communicate with people.

Consider this reference to the early Church in Acts 6:1.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of THE GRECIANS (Hellenistes) against THE HEBREWS (Hebraios), because THEIR WIDOWS were neglected in the daily ministrations (Greek "diakonia"). (Acts 6:1 AV)

Recall that this was before Cornelius or any other non-Israelites came into the Church. At this point ALL the members of the Church were racial Jews! The term "the Grecians" is a reference to JEWS WHO WERE GREEK SPEAKING! And the term "the Hebrews" is a reference to JEWS WHO SPOKE ARAMAIC! But all of them were Jews!

Now one cannot just pass this off by claiming that these Greek speaking Jews ("Grecians") were "out-of-towners", Jews from other countries, BECAUSE these Greek speaking Jews had THEIR OWN WIDOWS RIGHT THERE WITH THEM IN JERUSALEM! This is not speaking about Greek speaking Jews whose widowed family members might have lived in Alexandria or in Ephesus or in Crete or in Corinth ... no, the widows that were being neglected also lived RIGHT THERE IN JERUSALEM! The "daily ministrations" (helping with food, etc.) applied to the area of Jerusalem. The implication here is that the Church provided help in the form of food to needy people like widows ... and the widows from Greek speaking Jewish families were being discriminated against when compared to the widows from Aramaic speaking Jewish families. The prejudices evidenced here in the Church simply mirrored the prejudices that were extant in the society around them.

So while those in Jewish society who were Aramaic speaking may have had prejudices against those Jews who were Greek speaking, it nevertheless shows that there was a distinct sector of Jewish society that was Greek speaking, and they were referred to as "Grecians". They are the ones who would have read the Greek version of the title that Pontius Pilate put on the stake on which Jesus Christ died (John 19:19-20). The fact that Pilate included a Greek language inscription shows that Greek was a language a considerable number of people would have been able to read ... Pilate knew that the stake would be up for no longer than a day or so, thus he had not been thinking of posterity when he chose the three languages for this inscription. Pilate had been thinking of people who might read it within the next 24 hours! Pilate therefore KNEW that a considerable number of people there would have been able to read Greek.

Consider also Acts 6:9.

Then there arose certain of THE SYNAGOGUE, which is called *the synagogue* OF THE LIBERTINES, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. (Acts 6:9 AV)

All the people being spoken about in this verse were JEWS ... Cyrenian Jews and Alexandrian Jews and Cilician Jews. These were all Jews who spoke at least one other language in addition to Aramaic. But notice the reference to "the SYNAGOGUE of the Libertines". This is a reference to a congregation who conducted the services at their particular synagogue, right in Jerusalem, in a language other than

Hebrew. What distinguished them from the other synagogues around Jerusalem was not that they had different doctrines, but that they used a different language for their services (i.e. Latin or Greek or Aramaic?).

Without doubt there were many Jews who could speak Greek. This is further explained in the following section.

So let's look at the next point in Dr. Trimm's book.

THE EVIDENCE OF JOSEPHUS

Dr. Trimm claims on page 8:

"Josephus gives us A POINT-BLANK statement regarding the language of his people during his time:

'I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understanding the elements of the Greek language although I have for so long accustomed myself to speak our own language, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness: FOR OUR NATION DOES NOT ENCOURAGE THOSE THAT LEARN THE LANGUAGES OF MANY NATIONS. (Josephus; Ant.20:11:2)' " (page 8, my emphasis)

Dr. Trimm has concluded his quotation from Josephus with a period, implying the end of the sentence. As it stands, this quotation certainly seems to support Dr. Trimm's position. But there is just one small problem: Dr. Trimm stopped the quotation in the middle of a sentence! Now when the WHOLE sentence and the sentences following this statement are quoted, then it presents a totally different picture!

Here is a more complete version of this same quotation:

"For those of my own nation freely acknowledge that I far exceed them in the learning belonging to Jews; I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of THE GREEK LANGUAGE, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness; for our nation does not encourage THOSE THAT LEARN THE LANGUAGES OF MANY NATIONS, and so adorn their discourses with the smoothness of their periods; BECAUSE THEY LOOK UPON THIS SORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AS COMMON, NOT ONLY TO ALL SORTS OF FREE-MEN, BUT TO AS MANY OF THE SERVANTS AS PLEASE TO LEARN THEM. But they give him the testimony of being a wise man who is fully acquainted with our laws, and is able to interpret their meaning; on which account, as there have been many who have done their endeavors with great patience to obtain this learning, there have yet hardly been so many as two or three that have succeeded therein, who were immediately well rewarded for their pains." (From "THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS" by William Whiston, Translator, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XX, Chapter XI, Section 2, page 1265 of "Ages Digital Library")

Josephus in fact gives us THE REASON why learning Greek was not "encouraged" (and that is not the same as "forbidden"!). This reason shows that his statement applied to a very small segment of society. Josephus said: THEY, meaning fellow-Pharisees, have a disdain for such a "COMMON" achievement as "learning Greek". Learning Greek was for COMMON people, for free-men and for servants (or slaves). The expression "free-men and servants" covered the vast majority of the whole Jewish population at that time!

Recall that the word "Pharisee" meant: one who SEPARATES himself from the common people! At the time of Christ's ministry there were about three million Jews living in Palestine. Of these only about 6,000 (that's one-fifth of one percent!) were Pharisees, with another approximately 4,000 being Sadducees and around 4,000 Essenes, plus some smaller religious groupings (Zealots, Herodians, etc.). There were thus perhaps 20,000 very "religious" people and about 2,980,000 (obviously rounded off) "COMMON" people and servants in the area of Palestine.

It is not that those 2,980,000 people were necessarily irreligious. They were just "nominally religious" as far as the Pharisees were concerned; somewhat like the millions of people today who are "nominally Christians" but make no or very little effort to actually live by every Word of God, though they may still observe various religious customs and traditions.

The latter part of the quotation from Josephus also makes clear that the study of Hebrew was for the purpose of learning the Scriptures and "our laws", and that this was in fact very hard work, and that few succeeded as well as Josephus (humility wasn't Josephus' strongest attribute). But this latter part of the quotation should make clear that this kind of study of Hebrew wasn't for the common people. They would rather learn Greek.

Because the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing, there was a constant stream of Jews from outside of Palestine into Jerusalem, bringing their languages with them. The account of the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 makes quite clear that there were Jews who spoke a dozen or more different languages, in addition to Aramaic. Notice Acts 2:8-11 ...

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. (Acts 2:8-11 AV)

These people were ALL Jews, and they all very likely spoke Aramaic. But all of them also spoke THE LOCAL LANGUAGES of the areas they were from, including ... Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia (the Roman province), Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete and Arabia. This was an enormous variety of languages that was represented in Jerusalem at one specific point in time. OBVIOUSLY there would also have been many "local Jews" from Judea who would have been able to communicate with various ones of these strangers in their own languages. This should put Josephus' comment about "our nation does not encourage" the learning of a foreign language into a better perspective ... the COMMON (meaning non-Pharisee) people would willingly learn a foreign language, but the Pharisees had a strong bias against this.

In the first century A.D. the Hebrew language was to the Jews of Palestine somewhat like Latin was to the masses of people in Europe during the Middle Ages. While the clergy plus all educated men learned Latin (the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible ruled supreme without any competition in Europe for about 1000 years), and while church services were conducted in Latin, for the common people in Europe Latin was a dead language, and they didn't speak it, even if the regular church services exposed them to a fair amount of Latin. And those who didn't understand Latin were looked down on as common and as uneducated. And even as there was some similarity between Hebrew and Aramaic, so there was some similarity between Latin and Italian, and to a lesser degree French and Spanish. But Latin was nonetheless a different language. And Hebrew is likewise a different language from Aramaic, no matter that they have a common origin.

Anyway, the complete quotation from Josephus shows that Greek was a language for the common

people and for servants. So Dr. Trimm's presentation of the abbreviated quotation from Josephus is somewhat misleading.

Let's now examine the next major area of "proof" presented by Dr. Trimm, the evidence of the Catholic "church fathers".

WHAT THE CATHOLIC "CHURCH FATHERS" TELL US

Dr. Trimm states the following:

"ALL of the "Church Fathers", both East and West, testified to the Semitic origin of at least the Book of Matthew, as the following quotes demonstrate." (page 11, my emphasis)

He then presents the following quotations:

"Papias (150-170 C.E.) : "MATTHEW composed the words in the HEBREW dialect, and each translated as he was able." (page 11)

"Ireneus (170 C.E.) : MATTHEW also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews IN THEIR OWN DIALECT." (page 12)

"Origen (c. 210 C.E.) : The first [Gospel] is written according to MATTHEW ... who ... wrote it in HEBREW." (page 12)

"Eusebius (c. 315 C.E.) : MATTHEW also, having first proclaimed the Gospel in HEBREW, ... committed it to writing in his native tongue ..." (page 12)

"Pantaenus ... penetrated as far as India, where it is reported that he found the Gospel according to MATTHEW ... and left them the writing of Matthew in HEBREW letters." (page 12)

"Epiphanius (370 C.E.) : They [the Nazarenes] have the Gospel according to MATTHEW quite complete in HEBREW, for this Gospel is certainly still preserved among them as it was first written, in Hebrew letters." (page 13)

"Jerome (382 C.E.) : MATTHEW ... composed a Gospel ... in the HEBREW language" (page 13)

"Pantaenus found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve emissaries, had there [India] preached the advent of Y'shua [Comment: Jerome actually wrote "Jesus" and not "Y'shua" as Dr. Trimm here quotes!] the Messiah according to the Gospel of MATTHEW, which was written in HEBREW letters" (page 14)

"Isho'dad (850 C.E.) : His [MATTHEW's] book was in existence in Caesarea of Palestine, and everyone acknowledges that he wrote it with his hands in HEBREW" (page 14)

"Clement of Alexandria (150 - 212 C.E.) : ... the Epistle to the HEBREWS he asserts was written by Paul, to the Hebrews, in the HEBREW tongue; but it was carefully translated by Luke, and published among the Greeks." (page 14)

"Eusebius (315 C.E.) : For as Paul had addressed the HEBREWS IN THE LANGUAGE OF HIS

COUNTRY; some say that the evangelist Luke, others that Clement, translated the epistle."
(page 15) (all my emphasis)

END OF QUOTATIONS.

There are several things to notice here. First of all, it is not true that "ALL" the so-called "church fathers" testified to the "Semitic origin" of the Gospel of Matthew. I have a copy of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers", the "Nicene Fathers" and the "Post-Nicene Fathers" in electronic format. Those 37 volumes together amount to over 40,800 pages of text. And there are assuredly far more "church fathers" than the ones Dr. Trimm quoted. And they don't all testify about the Book of Matthew having been written in Hebrew.

Next, his statement that they all testified to a "SEMITIC" origin of the Book of Matthew is somewhat misleading. He wishes to include in this term the language "ARAMAIC"! However, it is an undisputed fact that NONE of the so-called "church fathers" in any way state or imply an ARAMAIC LANGUAGE ORIGIN for the Book of Matthew! The only "church fathers" who comment about the origin of the Book of Matthew at all, state unequivocally that it was written IN HEBREW! There is no evidence for any "Aramaic" language original of the Book of Matthew, or any other N.T. book for that matter.

Even as Paul, when he wanted to get the attention of the Jews in Acts 21:40, spoke in Hebrew, so likewise Matthew when WRITING to Jews, apparently wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. For the same reason Paul may have written his epistle to the Hebrews (i.e. to Jews) in the Hebrew language. By the first century A.D. the Hebrew language had been replaced by Aramaic in every area except in the matter of religion. Religion was the last stronghold of the Hebrew language. Using Hebrew for a religious message to Aramaic-speaking Jews was a way of trying to overcome almost automatic prejudices and biases against any "new religious ideas". Hearing Hebrew in a religious context gave Jews the opportunity to still have a certain feeling of exclusivity (at least until their attention had been gotten).

The quotations Dr. Trimm has presented are all limited to TWO books of the New Testament. There simply are no such quotations available for any of the other 25 books of the New Testament ... I know, because I have done repeated computer-searches through those 40,800 pages.

Dr. Trimm has presented a quotation from Jerome, the man who produced the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible. The quotation shows that Jerome states that Matthew wrote his Book in Hebrew. The intention is to infer Hebrew language (or "Semitic") originals for all the books of the New Testament. So here is a quotation from Jerome that Dr. Trimm did NOT present. It is from "PREFACES TO THE VULGATE VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT" and is a part of the Preface to the Gospels. The quotation is somewhat long to convey some of the context.

"I am willing to let that be the true translation which had apostolic approval. I AM NOW SPEAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY COMPOSED IN GREEK, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE WORK OF MATTHEW THE APOSTLE, WHO WAS THE FIRST TO COMMIT TO WRITING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND WHO PUBLISHED HIS WORK IN JUDAEA IN HEBREW CHARACTERS. We must confess that as we have it in our language it is marked by discrepancies, and now that the stream is distributed into different channels we must go back to the fountainhead. I pass over those manuscripts which are associated with the names of Lucian and Hesychius, and the authority of which is perversely maintained by a handful of disputatious persons. It is obvious that these writers could not amend anything in the Old Testament after the labors of the Seventy; and it was useless to correct the new, FOR VERSIONS OF SCRIPTURE WHICH ALREADY EXIST IN THE LANGUAGES OF MANY NATIONS SHOW THAT THEIR ADDITIONS ARE FALSE. I therefore promise in this short Preface the four Gospels only, which are to be taken in the following order, Matthew, Mark Luke,

and John, as they have been revised by a comparison of the Greek manuscripts. Only early ones have been used." (Page 1020, Post Nicene Series 2, Volume 6, addressed to Pope Damasus, A.D. 383, my emphasis)

So IF anyone is going to quote Jerome in an effort to establish "a Semitic origin" for all of the books of the New Testament, THEN they should also state that Jerome very clearly said: "THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY COMPOSED IN GREEK ..." with the exception of Matthew (and possibly also Hebrews). So Jerome implied that AT LEAST 25 books (the quote would actually imply 26) were composed in Greek.

Was Dr. Trimm aware of this statement by Jerome? Would he dismiss it as unimportant or as unreliable? He seems to like all the other statements that he has presented from the so-called "church fathers".

Consider the following:

Later in his book Dr. Trimm tries to cast doubts over the testimony of these "church fathers" when he writes:

"Yet, it must be commented that most Church Fathers, even while knowledgeable of the Hebrew/Aramaic origins of the New Testament, were under pressure to conform to a Greek a priori position in order to hold their influence in the Roman Church." (page 73)

THIS CLAIM IS CLEARLY WITHOUT ANY FOUNDATION!

When those same so-called "church fathers" were quite willing to freely acknowledge the Hebrew language origins of the Book of Matthew and even of the Book of Hebrews, THERE WAS NO REASON AND NO PRESSURE OF ANY KIND to not equally freely acknowledge Hebrew language originals for any of the other 25 books of the New Testament ... had they been aware of such material. Furthermore, if some of them were willing to acknowledge the Book of Matthew, WHY wouldn't some other "Church fathers" have acknowledged such books as "Mark" or "Luke" or "John" or "Acts" or "Romans", etc.? WHY are they so consistent in just mentioning the two books of Matthew and Hebrews?

The "pressure" they were supposedly under is contrived, since some of them were ALREADY ANYWAY considered to be heretics by some of their own contemporaries. So what pressure could it possibly have created to own up to any other Hebrew language originals they may have been aware of?

Note also that by Jerome's time the New Testament had already been translated into "the languages of MANY NATIONS". So it is not really surprising IF some other language translations perhaps go as far back as the 400's A.D. ... since Jerome tells us of their existence. Great antiquity is no proof at all for "originality", a word Dr. Trimm uses a great deal.

So, to summarize this point: the so-called "church fathers" readily acknowledge Hebrew language originals for the Book of Matthew and even the Epistle to the Hebrews, but clearly claim or imply Greek language originals for the other 25 books. The claim that they hid the "Semitic" origin of these other 25 books is totally without substance.

Let's look at the next area in Dr. Trimm's approach.

DID THE APOSTLE PAUL KNOW GREEK?

On page 17 Dr. Trimm states the following:

"Since Paul himself was at one time an adamant Pharisee, HE ALMOST CERTAINLY DID NOT KNOW GREEK with any proficiency. There is a great deal of REAL EVIDENCE to indicate that this was precisely the case." (page 17, my emphasis)

We have seen already that Josephus, also a Pharisee, had a very good knowledge of Greek, although he admitted to speaking it with a Jewish accent. It is not logical to determine how many languages any person was able to speak when there is nothing more to go on than the person's present or past religious affiliation.

As it happens, Paul plainly told the GREEK speaking Corinthians that he could speak MORE foreign languages than any of them.

I thank my God, I SPEAK WITH tongues (Greek "glossa" meaning "LANGUAGES") MORE THAN YE ALL: (1 Corinthians 14:18 AV)

Could Paul possibly have made a statement like this to the Corinthians when they could just turn around and say: "What do you mean Paul ... you can't even speak Greek?" That just doesn't make sense.

When God called Paul, God told Ananias the following:

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name BEFORE THE GENTILES (Greek "ethnos", meaning "NATIONS"), and KINGS, and the children of Israel: (Acts 9:15 AV)

God clearly intended for Paul to effectively COMMUNICATE with the kings and the people from various different nations. Towards that end God gave Paul the gift of being able to speak more languages than most people. It is ridiculous to infer that this apostle to the non-Israelite nations, who stated that he could speak many languages, in a world where Greek was the lingua franca, was somehow unable to speak Greek with any proficiency. That just doesn't wash.

Notice what we are told in Acts chapter 21 ...

And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, CANST THOU SPEAK GREEK? (Acts 21:37 AV)

The next verse shows that the chief captain had assumed that Paul was an Egyptian. What happened in verse 37 is that Paul had addressed the chief captain IN GREEK. This had surprised the chief captain to the point of asking: "oh, do YOU also speak Greek?" This verse shows that Paul had spoken in Greek to this man.

Dr. Trimm further states:

"Paul also states that his epistles were written with his own hand, showing that NO DICTATION TOOK PLACE (1.Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; 2Thess 3:17; Philemon 1:19; 1Tim 3:14; Gal 1:20; etc., etc.)" (page 17, my emphasis)

THIS STATEMENT IS NOT CORRECT EITHER!

THERE ARE ONLY TWO LETTERS which Paul unequivocally states as having written himself. One is the very short letter to Philemon; and the other is the letter to the Galatians ... and this latter is mentioned in a verse that Dr. Trimm did not even choose to state. It is Galatians 6:11.

Ye see HOW LARGE A LETTER I HAVE WRITTEN UNTO YOU WITH MINE OWN HAND.
(Galatians 6:11 AV)

The point about this statement is that it is actually one of Paul's SHORTER letters! Romans, first and second Corinthians and Hebrews are all considerably longer than Galatians. Next, this is the only statement where Paul says that he has written "A LETTER" with his own hand!

Recall that in this same letter Paul had earlier already hinted at a problem with his own eyesight, when he said ...

Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, YE WOULD HAVE PLUCKED OUT YOUR OWN EYES, AND HAVE GIVEN THEM TO ME.
(Galatians 4:15 AV)

So Paul's reference to writing "a LARGE letter" was not a reference to the letter being LONG, but to Paul's writing being in a large style, typical for people who have visual problems.

The fact that this is one of only two letters Paul clearly states as having written with his own hand, implies that the other letters were dictated and written by a scribe, a common practice at the time. And that would especially be the case for anyone with eye problems.

Let's look at the verses Dr. Trimm has referenced.

THE SALUTATION of *me* Paul WITH MINE OWN HAND. (1 Corinthians 16:21 AV)

Here Paul only claims to have written ONE SENTENCE (this sentence in 1.Cor 16:21) with his own hand. He says nothing here about the whole letter. However, the fact that he only wrote "the salutation" himself obviously implies that someone else wrote the rest of this epistle.

THE SALUTATION BY THE HAND OF ME PAUL. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you.
Amen. (Colossians 4:18 AV)

Again, all that Paul himself wrote was Col 4:18; the rest was written by a scribe.

THE SALUTATION OF PAUL WITH MINE OWN HAND, WHICH IS THE TOKEN IN EVERY EPISTLE: SO I WRITE. (2 Thessalonians 3:17 AV)

Here Paul makes clear what he is doing. He dictates his epistles (except for Philemon and Galatians) and then AT THE END writes a short sentence with his own hand. That short "salutation" is the mark of authenticity, like the signature we put at the end of a typed document, that the epistle was indeed from the Apostle Paul.

Consider: IF Paul was writing the entire text of every epistle himself, then this statement wouldn't make any sense. How would that final sentence stand out from all the other sentences Paul had written in the whole epistle? It only stood out as a token of identity that it was from Paul BECAUSE this was the only sentence in his own handwriting, like a signature.

I PAUL HAVE WRITTEN *IT* WITH MINE OWN HAND, I will repay *it*: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. (Philemon 1:19 AV)

This short epistle of 25 verses was also written by Paul himself.

These things WRITE I UNTO THEE, hoping to come unto thee shortly: (1 Timothy 3:14 AV)

Here Paul is simply saying that this was HIS letter to Timothy, irrespective of who the scribe may have been. Paul's specific reference to "with my own hand" is NOT included here, and so Paul is not speaking about doing the actual writing himself.

Now the things WHICH I WRITE UNTO YOU, behold, before God, I lie not. (Galatians 1:20 AV)

Again, this statement taken by itself does NOT mean that Paul was necessarily doing the actual writing himself. And Paul himself recognized this. That is precisely why later in this same letter (in 6:11 as we saw above) Paul used the expression "WITH MY OWN HAND".

And that concludes all the references Dr. Trimm provided. There aren't really any "etc., etc.'s", as he implied. So Dr. Trimm's motivation for this claim, which the facts show to be in error, seems to be as follows: FIRST he asserts that Paul couldn't speak Greek and wasn't proficient in writing it. AND THEN he asserts that Paul wrote all of his own epistles. THEREFORE his epistles (supposedly) couldn't possibly have been written in Greek.

So the argument is flawed on two counts. Paul was VERY proficient in Greek, and he dictated most of his epistles for a scribe to write down. Then he would add his signature statement at the end.

Let's look at the next point.

ARE THE GREEK N.T. BOOKS "ANTI-SEMITIC"?

Dr. Trimm writes:

"In the West, Gentile Christianity sought to distance itself from Judaism and Jewish customs. The Greek text BEGAN TO BE FAVORED over the Semitic text and many Semitic writings were subsequently destroyed. By 325 C.E. ANTI-SEMITISM and the priority given in the West to the Greek Scriptures had solidified." (page 20, my emphasis)

Here Dr. Trimm has mixed two things that don't really go together. It is true that in the West there was a drive by the false church to get rid of everything "Jewish", though Catholic scholars like Jerome continued to go to Palestine and examine the Hebrew O.T. Scriptures there up into the 380's A.D.. But there is no proof that "accepting the Greek language New Testament Scriptures" had anything to do with "anti-Semitism". There were no Hebrew language originals for any books of the N.T. other than Matthew and Hebrews. And there is no evidence that ANY of the books of the N.T. were originally inspired in the

Aramaic language.

Dr. Trimm has done nothing to substantiate this claim regarding the acceptance of the Greek texts supposedly being just another symptom of anti-Semitism.

It also doesn't fit in with what he states in his "Conclusions" later on. There he writes:

"Admittedly, it is well conceived that A COLLATION OF ANCIENT TEXTS OF BOTH THE SEMITIC AND GREEK NEW TESTAMENT HAVE PRODUCED SUPERIOR READINGS IN BOTH LANGUAGE TYPES." (page 72, my emphasis)

Now IF acceptance of the Greek texts is supposedly a symptom of anti-Semitism, then HOW could such a discriminating thing possibly contribute towards producing A SUPERIOR READING in Hebrew and in Aramaic? "A collation of ancient texts" means "a bringing together of ancient texts". He is saying that the Greek texts should take the Aramaic texts into account, and the Aramaic texts should take the Greek texts into account.

The aim of this statement on page 72 is clearly to gain some acceptance for the Aramaic texts.

However, consider what Dr. Trimm is proposing:

- 1) He claims ORIGINALITY for the Aramaic texts, though they differ amongst themselves.
- 2) The (supposed) Greek translations of these (supposed) original Aramaic texts were an expression of anti-Semitism. And IF anti-Semitism was the motivation behind producing the Greek texts, THEN the Greek texts are obviously not going to be very good or very reliable.
- 3) But then Dr. Trimm suggests that the Aramaic texts (supposedly the originals) can be upgraded to "superior readings" by taking these anti-Semitic Greek texts into consideration.
- 4) This implies that SYNCRETISM produces a superior religious perspective, taking "the best" from each set of texts. The religion of the Samaritans is a good example of syncretism.

As far as anti-Semitism is concerned: there is not one shred of evidence that the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in any way evidence "anti-Semitism". "To the Jew first ..." and "what advantage has the Jew ... MUCH in every way ..." in the Greek manuscripts certainly don't hint at anti-Semitism. For any claim of anti-Semitism to warrant consideration, there would have to be SOME evidence of anti-Semitism SOMEWHERE in these Greek texts, and which would very clearly NOT be present in the Aramaic texts. Without such evidence the assertion of anti-Semitism being connected with accepting the Greek texts must be rejected.

Let's look at the next point.

DOES BAD GREEK GRAMMAR PROVE ARAMAIC ORIGINALS?

Dr. Trimm states the following:

"It has long been recognized that the New Testament is written in very poor Greek grammar, but very good Semitic grammar. ... A number of scholars have shown in detail the Semitic grammar imbedded in the Greek New Testament books." (page 21)

He also quotes one scholar who speaks about the Greek text of the Book of Revelation in terms of "major offenses against Greek grammar" and "linguistic anarchy" and "the grammatical monstrosities of the book".

Dr. Trimm implies that these grammatical errors prove that the Greek text could not have been the original, but must have been translated from an Aramaic original.

This is also not sound reasoning.

Here is the situation:

The writers of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude) were ALL Aramaic speaking Jews, with the possible exception of Luke. Not only that, but Jesus Christ had spoken in Aramaic throughout His ministry. So yes, THEIR THINKING PROCESSES were obviously very much in tune with Aramaic grammatical constructions.

I can speak German fluently. But sometimes I say things in German with an English grammatical construction. My mother, on the other hand, will frequently say things in English with a German grammatical construction. It is not unusual at all for people who have learned a second language to sometimes employ the grammatical construction of the one language when they are speaking the other language.

So what do grammatical mistakes in the Greek text of the New Testament tell us? If anything, grammatical mistakes in the Greek text, with an indication that those mistakes can be led back to grammatical constructions employed in the Aramaic language, tell us that the writers of those Greek texts were obviously MORE familiar with Aramaic than with Greek. And that PERFECTLY fits all of the writers of the books of the New Testament.

Keep in mind also that Jesus Christ had spoken to them in Aramaic. Those were the words of the Son of God! Is there really a problem if those writers chose to LITERALLY translate the words of Jesus Christ into Greek ... even if that meant at times ignoring what would be considered "good grammar" in Greek? What is more important: writing in beautiful grammar OR faithfully translating into Greek EXACTLY what Jesus Christ had said, and in the process sometimes even disregarding "good grammar"?

Consider the alternative. IF the writers of the New Testament had all originally written their books in Aramaic, what would happen if someone wanted to have those books available in the Greek language? Why, they would obviously be translated into Greek BY NATIVE GREEK SPEAKERS, of whom there were large numbers in the Church (in Corinth, Ephesus, etc.), and the text would be rendered into PERFECT Greek grammar. The job of translating an (supposed) Aramaic language original into Greek would NOT be left up to someone who only had a limited knowledge of Greek ... when the entire congregation would have known that the original was in Aramaic. In such a situation the native Greek speakers would OBVIOUSLY have become involved.

So grammatical mistakes in the Greek text, with a leaning towards Aramaic grammatical constructions, are a strong indication that the books were indeed written IN GREEK by the Aramaic speaking Mark and Luke and John and Paul and James and Peter and Jude (making allowance for Matthew to have first been written in Hebrew). The alternative is to assume that the translations into Greek were undertaken by people who were incompetent in Greek, and that just doesn't seem feasible. WHY would people, who clearly knew that their knowledge of Greek was obviously limited, attempt to undertake A TRANSLATION into a language in which they lacked competency?

Let's move to the next point.

WHAT ABOUT HEBREW IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE N.T.?

On page 23 Dr. Trimm writes:

"Another evidence for a Semitic background for the New Testament is THE ABUNDANCE OF SEMITIC IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS in the New Testament text. Idiomatic expressions are phrases whose literal meanings are nonsense, but which have special meanings in a particular language." (pages 23-24, my emphasis)

Certainly there are many Semitic idiomatic expressions. After all, Jesus Christ throughout His ministry was SPEAKING in Aramaic. And all the writers spoke Aramaic fluently. The Semitic BACKGROUND of the New Testament is not questioned at all. But such a "background" does not mean that therefore the books had to be WRITTEN in Aramaic! Obviously the gospel accounts will contain very many Aramaic idioms ... when Jesus Christ spoke in Aramaic, He did not use Greek idiomatic expressions, and it would have been very inappropriate for Matthew or Mark or Luke or John to AT THEIR OWN DISCRETION exchange Jesus Christ's Aramaic idioms for the corresponding Greek idioms. It would not have been "the Word of GOD" that they would have preserved, but simply a human interpretation, a sort of commentary. And that was not what God had called them to do.

It is very clear that the vast majority of "Semitic idiomatic expressions" are found in the four gospel accounts. This is also true for "Semitic poetry" ... it too is found mostly in the gospels or in quotations from the Old Testament.

Semitic idiomatic expressions make clear that Jesus Christ was indeed speaking in Aramaic throughout His ministry. And those Semitic idiomatic expressions have been PRESERVED in most languages into which the New Testament has been translated. That is required of "faithful" translations. And the same was required of the original writers when they wrote down these things in the Greek language.

It is to be expected that the Greek language original manuscripts would contain many Semitic idiomatic expressions, and that they would also contain examples of Semitic forms of poetry.

Let's move on to the next point.

DID PAUL WRITE HIS LETTERS IN ARAMAIC OR IN HEBREW?

We have already examined Dr. Trimm's claims that Paul supposedly couldn't speak Greek and that he also supposedly wrote all of his own letters himself (thus theoretically eliminating the possibility of Paul dictating in Aramaic which a learned scribe might then have translated and written directly in Greek).

Dr. Trimm now writes:

"The common wisdom of textual origins has always been that the Pauline epistles were FIRST WRITTEN IN GREEK. This position is held by many, despite the fact that two "church fathers" admitted the Semitic origin of at least one of Paul's Epistles and one (Jerome) admits to the Semitic origin OF MOST, IF NOT ALL, of Paul's Epistles. 83" (page 28, my emphasis)

Footnote 83 reads: "As noted in the previous chapter, also see in this chapter in the subheading 'The Audience and Purpose of the Pauline Epistles'." (page 28)

There are a number of things to comment on here.

For a start, Dr. Trimm is actually not willing to present a precise quotation from Jerome that would show the Semitic origin of most of Paul's letters. The footnote is VERY EVASIVE. In the previous chapter Dr. Trimm lists the following references to Jerome:

- Footnote 37a on page 13 = Jerome; Lives of Illustrious Men 3
- Footnote 37b on page 14 = Jerome; De Vir. 3:36
- Footnote 52 on page 18 = Jerome; Of Illustrious Men 3
- Footnote 55 on page 19 = Jerome; De Vir. 3:36
- Footnote 65 on page 23 = Jerome; Com on Mt. 23:35

These are the only references Dr. Trimm provides for Jerome in the previous chapter. What you might not immediately realize is that THE FIRST 4 OF THESE QUOTES ARE IN FACT FROM THE SAME BOOK, with each quotation being presented twice; thus there are only TWO separate quotations from Jerome, together with a comment from Jerome regarding Matthew 23:35. Jerome wrote a book entitled in Latin "DE VIRIS ILLUSTRIBUS", which translated into English reads "OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN" (or "LIVES of Illustrious Men"). "De Vir." is simply the abbreviation for "De Viris Illustribus". Jerome's work "LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN" is a brief discussion (each one of these is called "a chapter") of 135 different individuals. Number 1 on this list is "Simon Peter" and number 135 is "Jerome the presbyter". In this list number 3 is "Matthew, surnamed Levi". And number 36 in this list is "Pantaenus, a philosopher of the stoic school". These 135 "chapters" are all quite short, so that all 135 chapters take up only about 50 pages of printed text.

Thus Dr. Trimm really ought to have listed all 4 of those quotations as coming from the same source. Footnote 37a should be "Of Illustrious Men 3", footnote 37b should be "Of Illustrious Men 36", footnote 52 should again be "Of Illustrious Men 3, and footnote 55 should again be "Of Illustrious Men 36". That would certainly simplify the task of anyone interested in verifying these quotations.

Next, footnotes 37a and 52 are references to "Chapter 3" which is devoted to Matthew, and which chapter is only 13 lines in length ... it is a very brief "chapter" indeed. Both references refer to THE SAME THING! They are not different references at all. Footnote 65 is about a comment that Jerome makes about Matthew 23:35, thus Matthew's writings again.

Footnote 37b and footnote 55 also both refer to THE SAME THING! They refer to "Chapter 36" which is 11 lines in length. Dr. Trimm has simply twice quoted the same reference from the section devoted to Pantaenus, which refers to Matthew's Gospel having been written "in Hebrew letters".

But now here is a clear discrepancy between what Dr. Trimm quotes and what I have found the actual text to be regarding footnote 37a.

Dr. Trimm presents his quotation as follows:

"I ALSO WAS ALLOWED by the Nazarenes who use this volume in the Syrian city of Borea TO COPY IT. In which is to be remarked that, wherever the evangelist ... makes use of the testimonies of the Old Scripture, he does not follow the authority of the seventy translators [the Greek Septuagint], but that of the Hebrew." (Page 13, exactly as presented by Dr. Trimm, except for my emphasis.)

And here is the text I have found, as it is presented on page 729 of volume 3 of the Second Series of "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers", edited by Philip Schaff and presented by Ages Software:

"I have also had the opportunity of HAVING THE VOLUME DESCRIBED TO ME by the Nazarenes of Beroea, a city of Syria, who use it. In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person of our Lord the Savior quotes the testimony of the Old Testament he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Wherefore these two forms exist "Out of Egypt have I called my son," and "for he shall be called a Nazarene."

The slight differences in wording can be accounted for in being different translations from the Latin text into English. But it is interesting that Dr. Trimm quotes Jerome as saying that the Nazarenes allowed him TO COPY THE HEBREW LANGUAGE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW. The translation edited by Philip Schaff, on the other hand, MAKES NO SUCH CLAIM! In it Jerome only states that he had this volume DESCRIBED TO HIM!

There is a considerable difference in these two quotations. I have not been able to find any source that would verify Dr. Trimm's version of this quotation, as he has made no attempt to tell his readers which English language edition of Jerome's works he is quoting from. But the significance is as follows:

Philip Schaff's edition simply states that Jerome himself had NOT SEEN such a Hebrew manuscript, but HAD IT DESCRIBED TO HIM, and he was TOLD that they (the Nazarenes) "use it". But Dr. Trimm's quotation goes MUCH FURTHER! His quotation claims that the Nazarenes ALLOWED JEROME TO MAKE A COPY OF THIS HEBREW MANUSCRIPT! This obviously infers that Jerome himself therefore also SAW this Hebrew copy.

Clearly both quotations cannot be correct! It should be noted that Dr. Trimm's quotation provides a ready explanation for the existence of further Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew ... they would probably be copies of the copy Jerome (supposedly) made and took back to Rome. But his quotation is at variance with the only version of this quotation that I have been able to find!

This discrepancy does demand an explanation.

So the point is this:

ALL FIVE REFERENCES TO JEROME IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER REFER EXCLUSIVELY TO MATTHEW!

Dr. Trimm does have a reference to the Book of Hebrews in the previous chapter, but that is not to Jerome, but to "Clement of Alexandria", which is referred to by Eusebius in his "Eccl. History". It is footnote 39 on page 14. What the quotation from Eusebius, who is quoting Clement of Alexandria, says is this:

"... the Epistle to the Hebrews he asserts was written by Paul, to the Hebrews, in the Hebrew tongue; but that it was carefully translated by Luke, and published among the Greeks." (on page 14 of Dr. Trimm's book)

The section under the subheading in Dr. Trimm's book entitled "THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE OF THE PAULINE EPISTLES" covers less than two pages ... and there are no quotations from or references

to Jerome, as Footnote 83 on page 28 seems to imply.

THUS:

Dr. Trimm has not provided a single reference, directly or indirectly, that supports his statement that ... "Jerome admits to the Semitic origin OF MOST, IF NOT ALL, of Paul's Epistles"! The fact is that Jerome doesn't "admit" anything of the kind! As already quoted earlier, Jerome said very directly in the Preface to the Gospels in the Latin Vulgate version:

"I am willing to let that be the true translation which had apostolic approval. I am now speaking of the New Testament. THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY COMPOSED IN GREEK, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE WORK OF MATTHEW THE APOSTLE, who was the first to commit to writing the Gospel of Christ, and who published his work in Judaea in Hebrew characters."

This presents an obvious conflict! Jerome could not on the one hand say that the New Testament, with the exception of Matthew, was COMPOSED IN GREEK ... and then also somehow "admit" that MOST, if not all, of Paul's Epistles were composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, which is what Dr. Trimm is insinuating. Dr. Trimm has not presented any quotations to support his claims. WHERE does Jerome "admit" to the Semitic origin of MOST of Paul's epistles?

Thus far Dr. Trimm has not provided any evidence against the "common wisdom" that Paul's letters were indeed FIRST written in Greek (with perhaps the exception of Hebrews).

Referring to Philippians 3:5 Dr. Trimm writes:

"When Paul calls himself a 'Hebrew' he is claiming to be a non-Hellenist, and when he calls himself a 'Hebrew of the Hebrews' he is CLAIMING TO BE STRONGLY NON-HELLENIST."
(page 29, my emphasis)

This claim is also not correct. In Philippians 3 Paul is VERY CLEARLY speaking about his physical racial background, and not "cultural or LINGUISTIC" background, as Dr. Trimm asserts. In verse 4 Paul is speaking about trusting in THE FLESH! In verse 5 he is speaking about CIRCUMCISION, a fleshly act. His racial descent is of the "stock" of Israel and of the "tribe" of Benjamin, thus making him "a Hebrew of the Hebrews". A couple of verses later Paul calls all of these things "DUNG" (verse 8), hardly something to equate with taking a strong stance against some other culture or language!

If Paul was really trying to say he was "strongly non-Hellenist" then WHY would he have said the following in Romans 1:14.

I AM DEBTOR both TO THE GREEKS, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. (Romans 1:14 AV)

Would anyone who was "strongly non-Hellenist" ever freely say: "I am A DEBTOR to the Greeks" ... I OWE something to the Greeks? Hardly! This statement by Paul here in Romans 1:14 again shows that Dr. Trimm's claim is not correct.

In Acts 20 Paul called together the elders from Ephesus (verse 17) and then he told them:

TESTIFYING BOTH TO THE JEWS, AND ALSO TO THE GREEKS, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:21 AV)

When Paul claimed to have "testified" to the Greeks, that was OBVIOUSLY in the Greek language! He didn't testify to the Greeks through some "interpreter". He spoke to them directly in their own language.

As far as "culture and languages" are concerned, recall Paul's approach in 1.Cor. 9:22 ...

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I AM MADE ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN, that I might by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22 AV)

To imply that in this letter to Greek speaking Philippians Paul was trying to offend them by taking a hostile stance towards the Greek language is utterly without substance. Recall that Timothy, one of Paul's chief assistants was half Greek (Acts 16:1-3), and that Titus, who had been made a minister by Paul, was a full Greek (Galatians 2:3). Claiming a strongly non-Hellenist stance for Philippians 3:5 also is not compatible with Romans 10:12 ("for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek") and with Galatians 3:28 ("there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus").

Dr. Trimm then also reasons from Paul using Semitic idiomatic expressions. OF COURSE PAUL USED SEMITIC IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS! I WOULD NOT EXPECT ANYTHING ELSE! But Paul ALSO showed that he was very familiar with Greek authors, which means he must at some stage have read their works.

In Acts 17:28 we read:

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; AS CERTAIN ALSO OF YOUR OWN POETS HAVE SAID, For we are also his offspring. (Acts 17:28 AV)

Here Paul was quoting the Greek poet Aratus who had lived around 270 B.C.

Notice also 1.Corinthians 15:33.

Be not deceived: EVIL COMMUNICATIONS CORRUPT GOOD MANNERS. (1 Corinthians 15:33 AV)

This is a quotation from the Athenian poet Meander.

Notice also Titus 1:12.

One of themselves, *even* A PROPHET OF THEIR OWN, SAID, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. (Titus 1:12 AV)

Paul was here quoting from the Cretian poet Epiminides, who had lived around 600 B.C..

These quotations from Greek authors and poets show quite clearly that Paul READ GREEK FLUENTLY and that he had studied Greek literature to a considerable extent! To be able to recall these quotations from totally different men is like someone today quoting from William Shakespeare and also from

Bernard Shaw and also from Charles Dickens ... it shows a wide exposure to the literature Paul was quoting from.

Paul quoted these Greek authors to the men of Athens (Acts 17:28), to a congregation of the Church of God (1.Cor. 15:33) and to a minister of the Church (Titus 1:12). OBVIOUSLY Paul was very capable of writing in Greek.

So let's notice that Dr. Trimm has not presented ANY evidence for Paul supposedly having written in Hebrew or in Aramaic. He has ONLY REASONED towards this end. And that reasoning has not been sound and it has not been in agreement with the Scriptures themselves.

Let's move on to the next point.

TWO HEBREW LANGUAGE VERSIONS OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Next Dr. Trimm speaks about two Hebrew language copies of the Gospel of Matthew. The first one is the "DuTillet" version which Jean DuTillet took from Rome to France in 1553. The second one is the "Shem Tob" version. There are several copies of this "Shem Tob" extant, dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries, though the original autograph made around 1380 has been lost.

Dr. Trimm freely acknowledges that "these two Hebrew versions of Matthew date ONLY TO THE MIDDLE AGES" (page 36). He then asserts the following:

"Now extensive evidence that the Hebrew of the Shem Tob text UNDERLIES OUR GREEK TEXT has ALREADY been offered in great detail by George Howard." (page 37, my emphasis)

Preceding this statement are a mere two short paragraphs plus two quotations of about ten lines between them from George Howard's book, since Dr. Trimm started his section titled "THE SHEM TOB HEBREW MATTHEW" on page 36. This should make clear that by the "EXTENSIVE EVIDENCE" Dr. Trimm means nothing other than the ten lines devoted to the two quotations from George Howard. So let's look at those quotations. Dr. Trimm starts his first quotation from Howard in the middle of a sentence, leaving us totally in the dark as to what the subject of that sentence really is.

Here is what Dr. Trimm presents from what George Howard had written:

"... an old substratum to the Hebrew Matthew in Shem Tob is a prior composition, not a translation. THE OLD SUBSTRATUM, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO A SERIES OF REVISIONS SO THAT THE PRESENT TEXT OF SHEM-TOB REPRESENTS THE ORIGINAL ONLY IN AN IMPURE FORM." (This is the quotation in its entirety as Dr. Trimm has presented it from page 223 of George Howard's book, only the emphasis is mine; this is on page 36 of Dr. Trimm's book)

This quotation is immediately followed by one from page 225 of George Howard's book (thus two pages later than the above quote, and not in the same context) in which George Howard states that : "IT MIGHT APPEAR from the linguistic and sociological background to early Christianity and the nature of SOME theological tendencies in Shem-Tob's Matthew that the Hebrew text served as a model for the Greek. The present writer [i.e. George Howard himself] is, in fact, inclined to that position." (This is also the entire quotation that Dr. Trimm has presented, but again with my emphasis.)

So here are some comments. First of all, George Howard reached this conclusion by nothing more than

"linguistic comparisons" and his own personal assessment of the theological tendencies that he had determined for early Christianity. Next, while George Howard, the scholar, is very cautious in presenting his assessment, using words like "IT MIGHT APPEAR ..." and "the nature of SOME theological tendencies" in the Shem Tob text ... , Dr. Trimm, on the other hand, does not hesitate to claim: "EXTENSIVE EVIDENCE has already been offered IN GREAT DETAIL". I simply cannot see extensive evidence offered in great detail in those two short and incomplete quotations from George Howard.

Further, note carefully that George Howard freely acknowledged that the only Shem Tob text available had clearly undergone A SERIES OF REVISIONS! George Howard thus also acknowledged that the Shem Tob text existed ONLY IN AN IMPURE FORM!

So how much credibility are we expected to give to a text which is KNOWN to be "impure" and which is KNOWN to have undergone "A SERIES of revisions"?

These two quotations that Dr. Trimm has presented from George Howard SURELY destroy any possible credibility we might have been inclined to extend to this Shem Tob text!?! And those quotations represent the strongest evidence Dr. Trimm could find in George Howard's book, since I don't believe that Dr. Trimm was intentionally shooting himself in the foot.

Regarding the DuTillet version, Dr. Trimm quotes from Hugh Schonfield's book and states:

"Schonfield writes: ... CERTAIN LINGUISTIC PROOFS ... SEEM TO SHOW that the Hebrew text [DuTillet] underlies the Greek, and that CERTAIN RENDERINGS IN THE GREEK MAY BE DUE to a misread Hebrew original." (page 35-36; This is also the entire quotation that Dr. Trimm has presented, but again with my emphasis. The two omissions are as Dr. Trimm has presented them.)

Notice again that "certain linguistic proofs ... SEEM TO SHOW" that this text supposedly underlies the Greek text; and that certain renderings in the Greek "MAY BE DUE" to a misread Hebrew original. That leaves a great deal of scope for other possibilities.

These quotations really represent "the bottom line" from the scholars who examined these texts very meticulously. Any further arguments based on Shem Tob and on DuTillet are immaterial, since they cannot in any way negate these candid admissions by the great scholars who have studied these manuscripts. Arguments about "words" that are used or not used cannot do away with these facts. The scholars do NOT claim "originality" for these manuscripts, as does Dr. Trimm. So while the Gospel of Matthew MAY perhaps have first been written in Hebrew, there isn't a single Hebrew manuscript of Matthew's Gospel extant that would substantiate this position. There isn't a single Hebrew language Ms we could look to for originality over the Greek text of Matthew.

So let's move on to the next point.

THE OLD SYRIAC ARAMAIC VERSION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Dr. Trimm next refers to two ARAMAIC language manuscripts of the four gospels, supposedly dating back to the fourth century (that's when Jerome lived, who said: "versions of Scripture which ALREADY exist in the languages of MANY nations"). One was discovered in 1842 and the other in 1892. Let's look at the later one first.

In 1892 Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis discovered the "CODEX SYRUS SINAITICUS", which is also catalogued as "Ms. Sinai Syriac No. 30", at the 6th century St. Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai.

Now when you hear "St. Catherine's Monastery", it might just ring a bell if you have done any historical research in the past. That is the exact same place where FORTY EIGHT YEARS EARLIER the Codex Sinaiticus, a copy of the New Testament in Greek, had been found. Mrs. Smith Lewis published a translation of this Syriac text herself two years later, in 1894. So, as with Dr. Trimm himself, Aramaic was also her special area of study.

By way of background, the CODEX SINAITICUS was found in 1844 by Lobegott Friedrich Konstantin von Tischendorf (he was 29 years old at the time and he died 30 years later) ON THE RUBBISH DUMP at St. Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai. It had been thrown out by the monks because of its terribly poor quality. It contains nearly all of the New Testament ... but in many places anywhere from 10 to 40 words are dropped THROUGH SHEER CARELESSNESS by the scribe (easy to do for a careless scribe, as there were no spaces on the lines, with words running into one another). Because of this it is of an abominable quality. On every page of this Ms there are corrections and revisions, often by as many as 10 different people. These corrections have been dated to the 6th and the 7th centuries. SINAITICUS also contains "The Shepherd of Hermes" and "Epistle of Barnabas" (the Epistle of Barnabas is an attack on Judaism), obvious forgeries pretending to be inspired Scripture.

[COMMENT: Don't become confused by the similarities in names. The "Codex Sinaiticus" refers to the Greek language Ms Tischendorf discovered in 1844; the "Codex Syrus Sinaiticus" refers to the Aramaic language Ms Mrs. Smith Lewis discovered 48 years later at the same location. "Ms" stands for "manuscript".]

One of the immediate problems with this "Codex Sinaiticus" is that it is supposedly from the 4th century, which is 200 years before the monastery of St Catherine was even founded. So when the monastery was FIRST built someone (supposedly) gave it a 200 year old manuscript of the New Testament in Greek. The "corrections" found on every page of this Ms are dated to after this monastery had been founded.

While the Codex Sinaiticus is very old, it is also of a SHOCKING quality! It does not reflect an accurate and faithful copy of the New Testament ... not when it has been REVISED by more than ten different people and not when it includes such obviously fake books as "The Shepherd of Hermes" and "the Epistle of Barnabas"!

Almost 50 years later another "UNIQUE" manuscript was found at this same monastery. Why didn't Tischendorf find it 48 years earlier? He OBVIOUSLY had had access to the library and to all the manuscripts at that monastery. Had it been ADDED to the "rubbish dump" by that time? Or had it just miraculously "appeared" in the monastery's library, when it hadn't been there 48 years earlier? Anyway, Mrs. Smith Lewis "discovered" this Ms in 1892.

Dr. Trimm discusses this "Codex Syrus Sinaiticus" in Chapter 5, starting on page 46. He is careful to not tell us anything about this manuscript in the whole chapter, not even in a Footnote. It is only in Chapter 9, on page 68 that Dr. Trimm presents a quotation from Bruce M. Metzger's book which refers to this manuscript. But he presents a spelling mistake in the quotation which obscures an important detail. The quotation reads: "... and that its best representative is the Sinaitic Syriac palimpsest [or Old Syriac Codex Syrus Sinaiticus]."

This is the first and only direct reference to Mrs. Smith Lewis' manuscript. But there is no word "palimpsest". The word actually is "palimpsest". Two pages later, on page 70, Dr. Trimm has Footnote 167, which reads "A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest; Agnes Smith Lewis; 1894". Again he has misspelled the word "Palimpsest".

The importance of this is that you won't find the words "palimpsest" and "palimpsest" in your dictionary. But

you will find "PALIMPSEST" which means:

"Writing material as a parchment or tablet USED ONE OR MORE TIMES AFTER EARLIER WRITING HAS BEEN ERASED."

Do you grasp what this "Codex Syrus Sinaiticus" manuscript really is?? It is a manuscript that was totally erased, and over which something completely new was written! So Dr. Trimm's claim that this is a FOURTH CENTURY manuscript is ridiculous! The original text on this parchment was ERASED! The monks at "St. Catherine's Monastery" knew western scholars wanted ANCIENT manuscripts (Tischendorf had been their best customer thus far), so they wrote a new text on this OLD parchment and waited for the next western scholar who was willing to buy it from them. The monks at "St. Catherine's" were looking for the 1890's equivalent of "a quick buck"! In other words, it is a recent document that was written on an old medium. No wonder that most scholars have refused to take Codex Syrus Sinaiticus seriously.

The word "Palimpsest" is the most important word in the whole title of Mrs. Smith Lewis' book. When a scribe has to resort to "scaping off the ink of a previous manuscript" in order to create a totally new manuscript on an old medium, then the questions arise: WHAT was scraped off? What was SO IMPORTANT about the new text that replaced the scaped off old text? WHO was this produced for? Any scribe going to these lengths to produce a "new" manuscript must surely have a specific customer in mind? Only texts that were unimportant were ever scraped off to make way for a new text. Serious religious texts were generally written on new parchments rather than on palimpsest parchments.

Maybe it's just me, but I am extremely suspicious of ANYTHING that comes from "St. Catherine's Monastery". The Codex Sinaiticus originating from there is just of such a shocking and abominable quality.

We should note that Dr. Trimm is very careful not to tell us directly ANYTHING about the quality and content of this Aramaic language Codex SYRUS Sinaiticus. He lists its discovery by Mrs. Smith Lewis on page 46 of his book, and then never quotes anything from it. No quotations from this Aramaic language Ms are presented to the reader. Only the one reference TO this manuscript by Bruce Metzger is presented by Dr. Trimm. I can only conclude that therefore the content of this Ms must be of an equally shocking quality to the Ms Tischendorf had discovered at the same location 48 years earlier. What other conclusions can we possibly draw from Dr. Trimm's total silence about the content and the quality of this Aramaic language codex, after he himself has specifically drawn our attention to this "relatively unknown fact" (page 46)?

Moving on to the other manuscript, Dr. William Cureton discovered his Aramaic manuscript in 1842 (that's two years before Tischendorf discovered his Ms) at a monastery at the Naton Lakes Valley in Egypt. His manuscript is known as "the Cureton" and as "Codex Syrus Curetonianus" and is catalogued in the British Museum.

Anyway, Dr. Trimm does NOT provide any quotations for either of these two manuscripts that are meaningful. He does, however, present this statement from Dr. William Cureton, quoting in full from Dr. Trimm's work:

"... this Gospel of St. Matthew appears at least to be BUILT UPON THE ORIGINAL ARAMAIC TEXT which was the work of the Apostle himself." (page 46, my emphasis)

This is quoted from Dr. Cureton's 1858 book "Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels

in Syriac". As I mentioned earlier, the word "recension" means: A CRITICAL REVISION of a text". So Dr. Cureton is acknowledging that his manuscript is nothing more than "A CRITICAL REVISION" of the four Gospels. Anything that is "a revision" obviously does not reflect "THE ORIGINAL"!

All that Dr. Cureton claimed was that his text represented A REVISION of an original text. Dr. Cureton also implied that that original was in the ARAMAIC language. However, earlier we looked at claims that the Gospel of Matthew had ORIGINALLY been written in Hebrew! You can't have it both ways! IF the original copy of Matthew was written in Hebrew, THEN it could not also have originally been written in Aramaic. Aramaic and Hebrew are two distinct languages, even as Spanish and Portuguese are two distinct languages and even as Dutch and Afrikaans are two distinct languages. So by appealing to BOTH languages as "originals" (i.e. Hebrew AND Aramaic), Dr. Trimm is actually destroying his own argument ... he can't have it both ways.

Anyway, Dr. Trimm then continues to argue about ARAMAIC WORDS "which seem to have been misread in the Greek Text" (page 47). We'll look at just one example of this "striving about words", and that is found in Matthew 22:37, which is a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:5.

Matthew 22:37 reads:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and WITH ALL THY MIND. (Matthew 22:37 AV)

However, the passage from which this is quoted reads:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and WITH ALL THY MIGHT. (Deuteronomy 6:5 AV)

So it says "might" in the Old Testament Hebrew and it says "mind" in the New Testament Greek. This is typical of the examples Dr. Trimm has used in an attempt to try to prove his point, using this example about Deuteronomy 6:5 twice (on pages 38 and 47) and using the example of Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3 three times (on pages 37 and 47 and 64).

The point about Deut. 6:5 is this: the O.T. Hebrew does not really have a word for "MIND"! And so when you see the word "mind" in English translations of the O.T., it is invariably a rendering of the words "nephesh" (meaning "soul") or "peh" (meaning "mouth") or "ruwach" (meaning "spirit") or "leb" and "lebab" (both meaning "heart"). But there is no word in the O.T. Hebrew that specifically means "mind".

Now when you come to the N.T. Greek, then we actually DO have one word that specifically means "mind", and that is the word "nous", and also the word "dianoia" ("dianoia" is formed from "dia" and "nous").

Furthermore, Deut. 6:5 does not use the normal Hebrew words for "strength", because the Hebrew words that are usually translated as "strength" are "koach" and "own" and "chozeq" ... but NONE of these words that really mean "strength" are used in Deut. 6:5. Instead, in Deut. 6:5 the Hebrew word "me'od" is used. This word "me'od" really means: "exceedingly much", "abundance", "muchness", and only by extension does it mean "might" or "strength".

Thus Deuteronomy 6:5 really says:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy "exceedingly muchness".

But that would obviously be rather poor English (which would prove that I surely must have first written this in some other language, right?). And so the translators felt the best way to render this into English would be to use the word "MIGHT"! However, "might" is not really the best way to translate the Hebrew word "me'od" in this passage.

When we look at the WHOLE VERSE, it should be fairly clear that THE INTENT of Deuteronomy 6:5 was to refer to putting our MINDS into our relationship with God. So while with all your "mind" is NOT a perfect translation of the regular Hebrew words translated as "might" in the Old Testament, it IS in agreement with the basic INTENT of the Hebrew word "me'od"! The reference in Deut. 6:5 to love God with all our "might" OBVIOUSLY was not a reference to using our MUSCLES in arms and legs and chest and back to somehow "love" God! It was intended to be a reference to what the word "mind" stands for, but expressed in a language that did not have a word for "mind". "Dianoia" is in fact a very good Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word "me'od" in this context.

To in Matthew 22:37 have translated "me'od" into Greek as the equivalent of "MIGHT", referring to PHYSICAL power, would in fact have been to miss the intent of Deuteronomy 6:5 to some degree.

Anyway, it is arguing about words like this ("might" in the Hebrew text of Deut. 6:5 as opposed to "mind" in the Greek text of Matt. 22:37, but retained as "might" in the Aramaic texts) that Dr. Trimm employs in an effort to claim "originality" for these ARAMAIC language manuscripts of the Gospels, even though earlier he has already claimed such originality for the Hebrew language manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew.

Let's move to the next point.

THE PESHITTA ARAMAIC VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Dr. Trimm opens his discussion of the Peshitta text by claiming that its birth "... looms beyond the horizon of antiquity" (page 55).

He then states:

"Although one tradition has the Tenach portion of the Peshitta being translated AT THE TIME OF SOLOMON at the request of Hiram ...". (page 55, my emphasis)

By way of explanation: the Jews refer to the whole Old Testament as "the Tanach" and in Aramaic this is known as "the Tenach". Solomon lived in the 900's B.C.. Now the reference to this "tradition" is ridiculous when we consider that LARGE PORTIONS of "the Tanach" had not even been written by the time of Solomon! That includes the books of Kings and Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Minor Prophets, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Lamentations.

How can anyone POSSIBLY claim that "the Tanach" was translated into Aramaic BEFORE about half of the Tanach had even been written? To even quote this "tradition" is misleading. What purpose can such a claim possibly serve? It should warn us that other "traditions" are likely to be equally questionable.

Dr. Trimm then refers to something recorded by Josephus, an incident that took place during the reign of Emperor Claudius Caesar, who reigned from 41 - 54 A.D.. He then writes:

"It was probably at this time that the Peshitta Tenach was born." (page 55)

That would place the translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic for the text of the Peshitta in the 50's A.D., roughly twenty years after the Church had started on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and a full 900 years after "the tradition" he referred to earlier. By this time Paul had already written his earliest letters. And it certainly shows HOW UNRELIABLE these "traditions" are.

Dr. Trimm's next statement is as follows:

"The New Testament portion of the Peshitta was added to the Peshitta Tenach IN THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN CENTURIES. ... The Peshitta must predate the Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries, since none of these groups would have adopted their rival's version." (page 55, my emphasis)

This puts things into a better perspective. Dr. Trimm is saying that the N.T. portion of the Peshitta must have been completed before the latter part of the 300's A.D.. Here he has nothing but his own reasoning of: BECAUSE none of those groups would have accepted a rival's version. This reasoning may well be flawed, and the N.T. portion of the Peshitta could in fact have been translated even later. But, for argument's sake, let's accept the latter 300's A.D. as the date when the N.T. part of the Peshitta was produced. That leaves a great deal of scope for the Peshitta N.T. to have been written from 200 - 250 years after the Greek New Testament had in fact been written ... with John writing the last book of the New Testament (the Book of Revelation) in the 90's A.D.. Clearly, by Dr. Trimm's own admission here, the text of the Peshitta, which could have been created as late as the early 300's A.D., CANNOT possibly be "an original". And so Dr. Trimm's concluding sentence in his discussion of the Peshitta reads as follows:

"Thus, we may conclude that AT LEAST THE ANCESTOR OF THE ARAMAIC TEXT FOUND IN THE PESHITTA New Testament underlies our present Greek text." (page 57, my emphasis)

If the Peshitta N.T. text has "an ancestor", this is an acknowledgement that it is NOT an original. It has been in some ways CHANGED from its "ancestor". The Greek text of the N.T. doesn't really have any "ancestor" ... it was completed 200 years before the Peshitta N.T. even came into existence. And there is nothing at all to indicate that "the ancestor" of the Peshitta N.T. was not in fact THE GREEK TEXT ... with some careless translation errors having crept into the Aramaic text.

Dr. Trimm's whole argument and approach here is to appeal for some acceptance for the Peshitta text, which is very understandable coming from someone who is a Director of the Aramaic Bible Society.

What Dr. Trimm has done in this section is REASON from words that appear in the ARAMAIC text of a few verses (i.e. Romans 5:7; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Acts 8:27; Acts 11:28; Ephesians 3:1; Romans 13:8; Ephesians 6:11; Hebrews 2:15 and Hebrews 11:1 to be exact). He reasons that in the first five of these verses the ARAMAIC word must be the right one and that it was then mistranslated into Greek. For the last four verses in that 9-verse list he claims that "wordplays which exist in the Aramaic text" (page 56) are further evidence of the originality of the Peshitta text "OVER" the Greek text.

This claim is obviously extremely weak, requiring considerable mental gymnastics for those who accept it. But what Dr. Trimm does not seem to realize is this:

IF his claims were really true, that the Greek text we have actually has the Aramaic Peshitta underlying it, THEN that would mean that for a period of 200 years or more (i.e. from when the N.T. books were

written until the Peshitta came together in the early 300's A.D.) THERE WAS NO FAITHFUL PRESERVATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ... until the admittedly "impure" and frequently "critically revised" (the meaning of "recension" in the title of Dr. Cureton's book) Aramaic language versions came along to provide (supposedly) a foundation for our present Greek text of the N.T..

Dr. Trimm has NOTHING to cover the period from 100 A.D. to about 300 A.D.! Nothing ... no manuscripts that REFER to earlier copies ... no knowledge of whether the original books really were in Hebrew OR in Aramaic ... nothing other than the scant references from the so-called "church fathers" that mention the two books of Matthew and Hebrews as having been originally written IN HEBREW ... but no reference to ANY book having supposedly originally been written in Aramaic.

Hebrew and Aramaic are distinct different languages! And someone who can understand the one language can NOT automatically understand the other language. This is tacitly acknowledged by the Bible Society in Jerusalem producing A TRANSLATION of the Aramaic text into the Hebrew language. Twice Dr. Trimm references this book (see footnote 123 on page 51, and footnote 144 on page 55) entitled:

"The New Covenant Peshitta Aramaic Text WITH A HEBREW TRANSLATION"

Yes, the Aramaic text needs to be TRANSLATED into Hebrew if a person who knows Hebrew but not Aramaic is supposed to read it. The two languages may have a common origin (like Dutch and Afrikaans, and like Spanish and Portuguese), but they ARE nevertheless different. And Dr. Trimm is constantly trying to convince us to view those two languages as if they were the same. They are not the same!

Let's move on to the next point.

THE CRAWFORD MANUSCRIPT ARAMAIC VERSION OF REVELATION

The origin of this manuscript is totally unknown. All that is known is that around 1860 the Earl of Crawford purchased it from an unknown source. The completely hidden origins of this manuscript must immediately make it somewhat suspect. The suspicion should be heightened when we then find out that this manuscript contains some rather "unique" readings, meaning readings that are not found in other manuscripts.

The Crawford Ms contains "a complete Peshitta text supplemented by the extra-Peshitta epistles [footnote 146 explains that this means 2.Peter, 2.John, 3.John and Jude] AND THIS UNIQUE VERSION OF REVELATION. 147" (page 59, my emphasis)

Footnote 147 then explains: "The other Aramaic Revelation which appears IN MOST MANUSCRIPTS is entirely different and IS CLEARLY A TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK." (page 59, my emphasis)

That tiny footnote is most revealing. Do you grasp the significance? Dr. Trimm is here ADMITTING that "THE OTHER" (meaning there is only one major other version) Aramaic version of Revelation, apart from this "unique", and thus rather dubious, Crawford text, is "CLEARLY (note!) A TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK"!

Understand that Dr. Trimm would not have volunteered this information if it wasn't for his desire to establish some special status for this "unique" Aramaic text in the Crawford Ms.. But it should tell us that

many OTHER books of the Aramaic N.T. must surely ALSO be "clearly translations from the Greek". It doesn't make sense to have ONE book in the Aramaic N.T. "clearly" translated from the Greek, but the other 26 books are somehow "clearly" from some source documents other than Greek! There is a heavy reliance by Dr. Trimm in his presentation on the fact that the vast majority of his readers will OBVIOUSLY not be able to check out for themselves any of the Aramaic translations ... the vast majority of people simply cannot read Aramaic, and must therefore rely implicitly on whatever verses Dr. Trimm presents. We have no way of checking out the Aramaic text of OTHER VERSES, which might contradict Dr. Trimm's arguments, for ourselves.

There is a very vital lesson in this almost incidental candid admission in footnote 147. And that is this:

REGARDING ESTABLISHING WHICH LANGUAGE WAS THE ORIGINAL FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT: NEVER BE IMPRESSED, LET ALONE CONVINCED, BY ARGUMENTS ABOUT HOW CERTAIN "WORDS" ARE TRANSLATED IN ONE LANGUAGE AS OPPOSED TO ANOTHER LANGUAGE!

It should be very clear from footnote 147 that for every verse that can be presented to claim that "the Greek is really a translation from the Aramaic", another verse, or five or ten verses, can be presented to show that "the Aramaic is CLEARLY a translation from the Greek"! For a start, there are over 400 verses in the Book of Revelation alone to choose from.

Dr. Trimm then presents a quotation from John Gwynn's 1897 book:

"Two or three ... are PLAUSIBLE readings; and might well be judged worthy of adoption. IF THERE WERE ANY GROUND FOR SUPPOSING the Apocalypse to have been originally written, or to be BASED ON a document written, in an ARAMAIC IDIOM." (page 59, the entire quote including the ellipsis is as presented by Dr. Trimm, except for my emphasis)

So John Gwynn, who studied this Crawford text, concluded that "TWO OR THREE" are "PLAUSIBLE readings" ... in a book of over 400 verses! In other words, John Gwynn felt that two or three "unique" renderings made sense TO HIM! The obvious implication is that ALL THE OTHER "UNIQUE" RENDERINGS were NOT PLAUSIBLE to John Gwynn. So what does that say for this "unique version"? Furthermore, this also exposes the thinking of textual critics. Their criterion is not "was it divinely inspired?". Their criterion is only "is it plausible?".

Next, notice that John Gwynn's second sentence is concluded with a period, implying the end of the sentence. HOWEVER, THIS IS GRAMMATICALLY AN INCOMPLETE SENTENCE! I cannot believe that John Gwynn, a scholar, would have written such an incomplete sentence. Look at this statement again:

"IF there were any ground for supposing the Apocalypse to have been originally written, or to be based on a document written, in an Aramaic idiom."

This sentence is incomplete! There is nothing to counterbalance the thought introduced by the word "IF". The sentence lacks a conclusion to the "if". Yet Dr. Trimm has presented this as a complete sentence. Clearly there was some conclusion that John Gwynn presented in his book, which Dr. Trimm chose to leave out. WHY? Is this the same approach as he used with the quotation from Josephus, where he also placed the period in the middle of a sentence, thereby inferring a different meaning to Josephus' statement about "our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations" from the meaning Josephus himself intended? I cannot believe that a scholar like John Gwynn would have

resorted to such "linguistic anarchy" (see page 22 of Dr. Trimm's book) as is evidenced in this particular sentence.

Notice also that John Gwynn said: "IF THERE WERE ANY GROUND FOR SUPPOSING ...". That is a highly speculative thought. John Gwynn has NOT asserted any grounds for such a supposition. And as a scholar he most certainly wouldn't have made such an assertion ... not when he could only find two or three "plausible readings" in a book of over 400 verses.

Anyway, Dr. Trimm then argues for "the priority of the Crawford text of Revelation OVER THE GREEK TEXT" (page 60, my emphasis). He does this by again arguing about ambiguous Aramaic words that are supposedly mistranslated in the Greek language version.

He does not address the obvious question:

Since this Crawford Ms contains "a complete Peshitta text", including at least four of the General Epistles, WHY is there nothing "UNIQUE" about ANY of the other books in this Crawford Ms? Furthermore, WHY does Dr. Trimm refer to "2.Peter, 2.John, 3.John and Jude" as "EXTRA-Peshitta epistles"? Does he mean that the regular Peshitta does NOT contain these General Epistles? He never presents ANY quotations from ANY of the General Epistles. WHY NOT? The only implication I can see in his reference to these books being "EXTRA-Peshitta epistles" is that the regular Peshitta does not include these books. That OBVIOUSLY lessens any credibility we might have been inclined to extend to the Peshitta ... if it clearly lacks a number of New Testament books! [Comment: In the 1905 edition of the Syriac Peshitta New Testament these books have all been included.]

Anyway, the comments from John Gwynn, the scholar who had carefully examined this Crawford Ms make clear that it must contain far more IMPLAUSIBLE readings than the two or three readings John Gwynn found to be "plausible".

Let's move on to the next point.

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES IN THE SEMITIC NEW TESTAMENT

To start with, by "Semitic N.T." he really only means "the ARAMAIC N.T.", since the only examples he presents are O.T. quotations as they appear in the ARAMAIC N.T.. He does not presents any quotations from the New Testament in the Hebrew language.

The arguments presented are just so much "striving about words", which sounds very much like what Paul warned Timothy against ...

Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord THAT THEY STRIVE NOT ABOUT WORDS TO NO PROFIT, *BUT* TO THE SUBVERTING OF THE HEARERS. (2 Timothy 2:14 AV)

All of the examples are meaningless ... they don't achieve anything and they don't add anything to the text we have. However, in the process Dr. Trimm does admit that the text of the Peshitta is OF A HYBRID NATURE! Notice ...

"Thus, this quote IN THE PESHITTA VERSION of Hebrews [he is referring to Hebrews 10:5-7] is A HYBRID TEXT sometimes (sic) agreeing with the LXX against the Masoretic Text and Peshitta Old Testament, and sometimes agreeing with the Peshitta Old Testament against both the LXX

and the Masoretic Text. In fact THIS HYBRID NATURE looks just like what such a quote might be expected to look like, in light of THE HYBRID TEXTS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS." (page 63, my emphasis)

So even here Dr. Trimm acknowledges "the hybrid nature" of the Peshitta N.T. (in this case the Book of Hebrews). His statement here shows just how "hybrid" this Peshitta text really is ... sometimes agreeing with one source and at other times agreeing with a different source. As acknowledged earlier, this Peshitta N.T. only came about in the early 300's A.D., by which time Jerome tells us that versions of Scripture already existed "in THE LANGUAGES OF MANY NATIONS" ... so the hybrid nature of the Peshitta is very easy to explain in this light.

And that basically covers Dr. Trimm's book "THE SEMITIC ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT". Before looking at something else, it might be worthwhile to summarize what we have covered thus far.

A SUMMARY OF WHAT WE HAVE COVERED THUS FAR

- 1) Many different groups are now using "sacred names" when they speak about God the Father and about Jesus Christ. These names are all basically "Semitic" in origin; i.e. they attempt to use either Hebrew or Aramaic words to refer to God.
- 2) In order for them to justify using such Hebrew names for God, they have to reject that God originally inspired the New Testament to be written in Greek. Original Greek manuscripts with the words "theos" (God) and "kurios" (Lord) and "Jesus Christ" in them would remove all justifications for insisting on using words like "Jehovah" and "Yahweh" and "Yashua" and "Y'shua", etc..
- 3) The focus on "what is the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew YHWH", etc. is a way of deflecting the attention away from THE REAL "TRUNK OF THE TREE" in this matter. Any questions and debates about "the correct pronunciation" ONLY become an issue if it can first be proved that the New Testament was in fact originally inspired to be written in the Hebrew language. But if THAT cannot be proved, THEN there is no justification for debates about "the correct names for God and for Jesus Christ".
- 4) Hebrew and Aramaic are two distinct and separate languages which use a common written alphabet. To us non-Hebrew speakers they may seem the same. But that is not the case, any more than Spanish and Portuguese are the same language simply because they also use a common alphabet in writing. Dutch and Afrikaans are also languages from a common source that employ a common alphabet, but they are nevertheless two distinct languages.
- 5) However, since the "evidence" available to them is scanty at best, therefore those who want to use "sacred names" are quite willing to gloss over the differences between Hebrew and Aramaic and to pool their resources in order to build up a common volume of "evidence" for their cause ... those who want HEBREW sacred names are quite willing to accept "evidence" from an Aramaic language source, and those who want ARAMAIC sacred names (e.g. Dr. Trimm) are quite willing to accept "evidence" from a Hebrew language source. Pooling their "evidence" can only increase the arguments in favour of both positions.
- 6) So in carefully examining Dr. Trimm's book about the "Semitic" origin of the New Testament, I am in fact addressing the most basic premise for any use of "sacred names". While it is not his stated intention to substantiate the use of sacred names, Dr. Trimm nevertheless simply MUST prove that the New Testament was written in a Semitic language in order to justify his continued use of the word "Y'shua".
- 7) I have listed all of the major books from which Dr. Trimm has quoted to support his position. It is safe to say that Dr. Trimm has used the most cogent arguments in favour of his position that can be found in

any of these books, which span almost 150 years in their dates of publication. Thus it is pointless for anyone else to appeal to any of THESE books as further support for the use of sacred names.

8) We saw that Dr. Trimm's opening argument that HEBREW rather than Aramaic was the language of the Jews in Palestine in the first century is flawed. It is contradicted by quotations from the Jewish Talmud. It is hard to understand why he argued against Aramaic being the main language of the Jews at that time, when for the rest of the book he himself takes the position that Aramaic was indeed the language of the Jews living in Israel? Also Jesus Christ's last words, spoken in Aramaic, make very clear that He conducted His entire ministry in the Aramaic language and not in Hebrew.

9) We saw from quotations from the Talmud that it was acceptable to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into other languages for official use in synagogues for people who did not understand Hebrew. Aramaic and Greek are specifically mentioned in the Talmud as languages into which the Hebrew Scriptures had been translated ... obviously to meet a need.

10) We noted that parts of two books of the O.T. were written in the Aramaic language. Those Aramaic language sections are found in Daniel and in Ezra.

11) We examined the quotation from Josephus regarding "not encouraging those that learn the languages of many nations", and we found that Dr. Trimm had stopped his quotation in the middle of a sentence. Had he presented Josephus' whole sentence on this topic, it would have totally changed the meaning of the quotation.

12) We saw that the expression "the Grecians" in Acts 6:1 is a clear reference to Greek speaking Jews in the area of Jerusalem. So there certainly was a segment of Jewish society that had become Greek speaking by the first century. And some of them had come into God's Church on that Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This also contradicts what Dr. Trimm asserted.

13) We also examined the evidence of the so-called "church fathers" that was presented by Dr. Trimm. We found that those "church fathers" attest to ONLY TWO books of the New Testament as having originally been written in Hebrew. They are totally silent about the other 25 books of the New Testament, as far as supposed "Hebrew language originals" are concerned. And never is there even a hint or a suggestion from these "church fathers" that any originals might possibly have been written in Aramaic, a position Dr. Trimm argues for throughout his book.

14) We did see a quotation from Jerome, which was not quoted by Dr. Trimm, that states very plainly that all the books of the New Testament (apart from Matthew, and possibly Hebrews) were **ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN GREEK**.

15) We also saw a discrepancy between the quotation from Jerome that Dr. Trimm presents and the one we are able to access. Dr. Trimm quotes Jerome as saying that the Boreans allowed him to COPY their Hebrew language manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew. The version of the same quotation from Jerome that we have access to only says that Jerome had this Hebrew Ms of Matthew's Gospel DESCRIBED to him, implying that he himself never saw it, let alone made a copy of it. Both versions of the exact same quotation obviously cannot be correct. I have no reason to doubt the correctness of the quotation available to me in electronic format. Thus this discrepancy needs to be clarified further.

16) We examined Dr. Trimm's claim that the Apostle Paul almost certainly could not speak Greek. This claim has to be wrong in view of Paul claiming to be able to speak more languages than any of the people in the Church at Corinth, where Greek was obviously the #1 language. We also saw that Paul's quotations from divers Greek authors show an obvious familiarity with Greek literature and culture.

17) We also examined Dr. Trimm's claim that the acceptance of the Greek version of the New Testament was just another aspect of anti-Semitism, and found that there was no evidence of any kind to support this claim.

18) We further examined Dr. Trimm's claims that instances of bad grammar in Greek, which are at the same time good grammar in Aramaic, are an indication of the originals having been in Hebrew or Aramaic. We found that these instances simply indicate that the authors were Aramaic in their thinking, which is true for all the writers of the books of the New Testament, and that mistakes of this nature are very understandable when people are writing in their second or third language. Further, since Jesus Christ during His ministry SPOKE in Aramaic, it is inevitable that faithful translations of His words and parables into Greek would at times result in Aramaic grammatical constructions in some of the sentences in the gospel accounts.

19) We looked at Dr. Trimm's claims about the use of Semitic idioms in the New Testament. Again, all that such Semitic idioms in the Greek language accounts demonstrate is that the writers faithfully translated each Aramaic idiom literally, as Jesus Christ had spoken them in Aramaic. This should set the standard for translations of the Word of God into ANY language ... it is to be a faithful LITERAL translation, rather than an "interpretation" into the idiomatic use of the other language. First translate faithfully and LITERALLY, and then explain the idioms that are used in the original language. Never presume to "interpret" idioms into the text of the Word of God in another language. That's the principle of Nehemiah 8:8.

20) We also looked at Dr. Trimm's claim that Paul wrote all of his own letters without employing the help of a scribe, and that Paul certainly would not have written in any language other than Hebrew or Aramaic. Dr. Trimm would have us believe that Paul wrote his letters to Greek speaking non-Jews in Corinth and in Ephesus and in Galatia and in Philippi and in Colossae in the Hebrew or Aramaic languages, expecting any local Jews in those congregations to take care of then translating Paul's letters for the non-Jews in those congregations. Such an approach would obviously IMMEDIATELY have told the Greek speaking members of the Church in these Greek speaking areas of the world that they were only second class members of the Church, totally dependent on the esoteric Jewish members, if any, in those local congregations to faithfully translate Paul's letters to them. They would always have had to contact Paul through a mediator who would translate for them. These claims also are not supported by the facts.

21) We then examined the evidence Dr. Trimm presented from two Hebrew language copies of the Gospel of Matthew. We saw that both of these versions only date to the Middle Ages, and that the scholar George Howard stated that the text of one of them only represented the original "in an IMPURE form" and that it had undergone "a series of revisions". These admissions mean that the text is useless as far as establishing "originality" is concerned.

22) By far the overwhelming majority of examples Dr. Trimm cites in his book to make his points come from the Book of Matthew. Since we freely and readily acknowledge that THIS book was very likely first written in Hebrew, it follows that all of these examples that are intended to show a Hebrew origin for the WHOLE New Testament do NOTHING AT ALL to support Dr. Trimm's claims for the other 25 books of the New Testament.

23) We saw that Dr. Trimm uses the example of Matthew 4:4 and Deut. 8:3 THREE TIMES (on pages 37, 47 and 64), making an issue over whether the correct word is "Lord" or "God". The fact that he feels the need to use this argument three times throughout his book, indicates that Dr. Trimm feels this example represents "a major proof" for his position. To me this is just so much "striving about words to no profit but to the subverting of the hearers" (2.Tim. 2:14).

24) We examined Dr. Trimm's references to "the Cureton", a 4th century Aramaic language manuscript of the Four Gospels that was discovered by Dr. Cureton in 1842. We saw that Dr. Cureton himself referred to this text as A CRITICAL REVISION ("a recension") of what must have been the earlier text. We also noted that Dr. Trimm's claims for ORIGINALITY of this Aramaic text stand in open conflict with his earlier claim of originality for the Hebrew language version of Matthew. Matthew cannot be "original" in both those languages.

25) We also examined Dr. Trimm's reference to Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis' Codex Syrus Sinaiticus, discovered in 1892 at the rather notorious "St. Catherine's Monastery" in Sinai. Apart from telling us when Mrs. Smith Lewis discovered this manuscript there, Dr. Trimm tells us nothing more about this document and does not present any quotations that refer to it, that might be construed as supporting his case. So when he tells us NOTHING about this Codex Syrus Sinaiticus, it should tell us that he found NOTHING pertaining to this manuscript that would have strengthened his argument. If anything, his complete silence about the content and quality of this manuscript implies it is also of a shocking quality, like the Codex Sinaiticus discovered at the same monastery 48 years earlier. Such a shocking quality would be fully compatible with this manuscript only being a "palimpsest".

26) Dr. Trimm also twice presents Matthew 22:37 and Deut. 6:5 (on pages 38 and 47) to try and prove an Aramaic or Hebrew original for the Gospel of Matthew. Apart from the fact that we have ALREADY freely acknowledged the possibility for a Hebrew language original for Matthew, Dr. Trimm's argument about a conflict between "strength" in Deut. 6:5 and "mind" in Matt. 22:37 shows a lack of understanding. We saw that biblical Hebrew does not have a specific word for "mind", but that the whole tenor of the verse makes very clear that "mind" is in fact the best way to render this word into New Testament Greek in this verse.

27) We also examined Dr. Trimm's claims for the Aramaic language Peshitta New Testament. Dr. Trimm's own statements that this Peshitta New Testament came about at least before various debates in the 4th and 5th centuries make clear that the Peshitta N.T. was only translated about 200 years or more after the New Testament had been completed. Jerome tells us that by the time Dr. Trimm himself acknowledges for this Peshitta, the New Testament had already been translated into MANY different languages, easily explaining the existence of an Aramaic translation that may indeed go back to the 4th century.

28) We also looked at Dr. Trimm's claims for the Crawford Aramaic language Ms, and specifically the "unique" version of Revelation contained in this Ms. We saw that in the process of discussing THIS "unique" version of the Book of Revelation, Dr. Trimm actually admitted that "THE OTHER Aramaic Revelation ... IS CLEARLY A TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK". This unintentional admission should tell us that various other books in the Aramaic New Testament are surely ALSO "clearly a translation from the Greek".

29) We also saw that John Gwynn, the scholar who examined this Crawford Ms in the 1890's, stated that in this Book of Revelation, consisting of over 400 verses, he had found "two or three plausible readings that might well be judged worthy of adoption". That doesn't say much for the other 397-plus verses of this book as they are found in the Crawford Ms. John Gwynn also very clearly indicated that it was a speculation that the Apocalypse (another name for Revelation) was originally written in Aramaic.

30) We also saw that Dr. Trimm has presented a quotation from John Gwynn that is in fact an incomplete sentence, yet Dr. Trimm has presented it as a complete sentence. There is clearly a missing part to the sentence that Dr. Trimm quotes on page 59. Would the missing part of that sentence change the whole meaning? This situation needs to be cleared up.

31) We saw that on page 63 Dr. Trimm acknowledged that both, the Peshitta text of the Book of

Hebrews and also the Dead Sea Scrolls were "HYBRID" texts. That tells us that neither one is reliable. How can we possibly even entertain any arguments regarding "originality" about any text that is admitted to be a "hybrid"?

32) It should be noted that the Peshitta text differs from the Old Syriac text and that the Crawford Ms differs from both of these. So we have three different texts in the Aramaic language, which all differ from the other two, yet Dr. Trimm claims "originality" for all three of these. That is simply not possible.

33) It should be noted very clearly that Dr. Trimm argues for all of the books of the New Testament to originally have been written in TWO DISTINCT AND SEPARATE LANGUAGES ... Hebrew and Aramaic. His constant effort to lump these two different languages together under the word "Semitic" cannot hide the fact that they are distinct and different languages. Roumanian, Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese are all "ROMANCE" languages, all being derived from a Latin origin, but they are all different languages. The "GERMANIC" languages include English, German, Dutch, Afrikaans, Flemish, Frisian, the Scandinavian languages and Gothic, but they are all different and distinct languages. The same is true for the "Semitic" languages of Hebrew and Aramaic ... they are different languages. That is precisely why the Bible Society of Jerusalem in 1986 produced A HEBREW TRANSLATION of the ARAMAIC TEXT of the Peshitta ... the one language needs to be TRANSLATED into the other, even when there are many similar and identical words in both languages ... just like a book in the Dutch language would need to be TRANSLATED into German and Afrikaans and English in order for people speaking those languages to be able to read it with understanding.

34) While he appeals for "Semitic" language originals throughout his book, Dr. Trimm has done NOTHING AT ALL to show why, where or how such "Semitic" language originals possibly have any impact on any doctrinal understanding in any area of religion. It doesn't change anything in any area ... EXCEPT THAT IT PROVIDES A JUSTIFICATION FOR USING "SACRED NAMES"!!

His proposed ideas don't change the Sabbath, or the Holy Days, or tithing, or what animals are "clean" for human food, or when Jesus Christ will return, or what God's plan is regarding the millennium and beyond, or what events will happen before Christ returns, or how we are to treat our spouses and our children and our "neighbours", or what the fruits of the Holy Spirit are, or how we are to deal with negative emotions, or what sin is, or what God's kingdom will be like, or what the works of the flesh are, or the importance of faith, or what godly love is, or what is really meant by repentance and by conversion, or who Jesus Christ is and what His position will be, or what the Bible really teaches about "a hell fire", or what God's nature really is, etc. ... IT CHANGES NOTHING AT ALL! It does not expand or enhance our understanding of anything that is of any significance.

What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether Matthew 4:4 reads "God" or "Lord"? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether Matthew 22:37 reads "might" or "mind"? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether or not you realize that Matthew 10:39 is a good example of parallelism, a form of Hebrew poetry? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose if there is a grammatical mistake in the Greek text of Revelation 17:4? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether Matthew 5:48 reads "perfect" or "sincere"? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether Luke 8:27 reads "city" or "province"? What difference does it really make to your understanding of God's will and God's purpose whether Luke 2:1 reads "all the world" or "all the land"? What difference do ANY of these examples (and all the others in this book are just like them) really make ... except that they have an appeal to INTELLECTUAL VANITY?

ALL OF THESE EXAMPLES ARE JUST SO MUCH FOOLISHNESS AND STRIVING ABOUT

WORDS TO NO PROFIT BUT TO THE SUBVERTING OF THE HEARERS (see 2.Timothy 2:14).

With the issue about "sacred names" we are dealing precisely with what Paul stated here ... that those who hear these arguments about words end up being overthrown. The Greek word here translated as "the subverting" is "KATASTROPHE" ... it is indeed "a catastrophe" when people are taken in by such arguments about words to no profit. Note that the ONLY thing such changed words can achieve is that they can "subvert" people ... but they don't add anything to the real understanding of what it is that God wants us to believe and do and practice.

35) Now consider the following point. Do you really believe that Paul would have written to the GREEK minister Titus, while quoting the Greek language author Epiminides in Titus 1:12, in the HEBREW language, or even in the Aramaic language? Do you really believe that Paul would have written to the Greek speaking minister Philemon in the Hebrew language, or even in the Aramaic language? Timothy had a Greek father and had always lived in a Greek speaking community until he met Paul ... do you really think that Paul would have tried to communicate with Timothy in the Hebrew language? Do you really believe that Luke, who wrote his Gospel and also the Book of Acts for the Greek speaking Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), wrote to Theophilus in Hebrew, or even in Aramaic? These books (Titus, Philemon, two letters to Timothy, Luke and Acts) were written specifically to Greek speaking individuals by writers (Paul and Luke) who wanted to communicate directly with these individuals. When the Apostle John specifically addressed the Book of Revelation "to the seven (GREEK SPEAKING!) churches in (the province of) Asia" (Rev. 1:4), do you really believe that he would have written to them in Hebrew or Aramaic? When Paul wrote letters to the obviously Greek speaking congregations in Corinth and in Ephesus and in Philippi do you really believe he would have written to them in Hebrew or in Aramaic? When Paul wrote his whole letter to the Galatians with the explicit purpose of warning them against JEWISH influences (i.e. against those who were "of the circumcision") do you really believe he wrote this letter in Hebrew or in Aramaic to a people who understood neither Hebrew nor Aramaic?

When you clearly understand that Paul OBVIOUSLY was fluent in Greek and very familiar with Greek literature, then the only option is that Paul wrote at least all of these books in the Greek language.

In view of this large number of errors and weaknesses in Dr. Trimm's arguments for "a Semitic origin" of all of the books of the New Testament, his position must be clearly and unequivocally rejected. He has not proved his thesis at all. Rather, a careful examination of all of his arguments has revealed how flimsy and how tenuous are the supposed "proofs" that are put forward for the most basic and foundational premise of using "sacred names" ... that the whole New Testament was supposedly first written in Hebrew and/or Aramaic. Recognizing all of these flaws in the arguments that are put forward has certainly strengthened "the common wisdom", that the bulk of the New Testament was indeed first written in Greek.

So much for an examination of the material presented by Dr. Trimm in his book. Let's now move on to some other things.

WHAT IS "A NAME"?

Webster's Dictionary tells us that "a name" is "A WORD CONSTITUTING THE DISTINCTIVE DESIGNATION OF A PERSON OR THING". Our "names" identify us and distinguish us from other people. Most names are common to many different people, and so we today commonly employ a combination of two or three names, perhaps even with additional designations (e.g. "Snr.", "Jnr.", etc.), to distinguish one person from everybody else. In many cases that still does not guarantee a unique identity; thus there have been many people named "John Smith", and even "John B. Smith" and even "John B. Smith Jnr.". But such combinations of names are generally still fairly effective in correctly identifying most people in their particular environments.

Now it is true that long ago all names had real meanings. Thus the name "John" is derived from the Hebrew name transliterated as "Yohanan" and which meant "God has graced"; the name "Smith" meant "a worker in metals"; etc.. But today most names are not chosen for a certain meaning they may have, though that is still a consideration with some parents when they must choose names for their children. Today many names are chosen because they are currently "fashionable"; or they are the names of people who are for one reason or another famous; or because they "sound good" to the parents.

In our world, if you have an English language name, then that will always be your name, no matter where you may go and no matter what language you may speak. So if your name was "John Smith", then you would always prefer to be known as "John Smith" anywhere on earth, rather than as "God has graced the man who works in metals", or a translation of this into any other language. You would prefer "the correct sound" of your name over "the correct meaning" of your name. Thus, if you were to move to Germany, then your name would not suddenly be "Johannes Schmidt"; your name would still be "John Smith" whether you moved to Germany or to France or Spain or China. Furthermore, there is a great chance that most people today named "Smith" really have nothing at all to do with "working in metals". Today the bearers of most names have nothing at all to do with what those names actually mean.

If "John Smith" were to move to China, then to the local people there his name would be nothing more than "a sound-bite", a phonetic expression of a number of letters in the alphabet arranged in a particular sequence. Nobody there would associate the name "John" with "God has graced" and the name "Smith" with "a worker in metals". People, on hearing a person's name, do not immediately start to think of that person in terms of what their name may mean; they simply try to commit "the sound-bite" that constitutes the person's name to memory.

That's the way things are in the world we live in today. And it is not surprising if we today are inclined to think of names in ways in which WE are accustomed to think about names.

But that is not the way things were when God was working with people in Old Testament times. In Old Testament times a name NEVER was simply "a sound-bite"! EVERY name had a specific meaning. In biblical times changing a person's name was AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT A CHANGE IN DESTINY FOR THAT PERSON!

Think about this statement for a while.

God called the first man "Adam", which means "red earth" BECAUSE God had created Adam out of red clay. Until Adam had faced some testing his destiny was still undecided. My speculation (which doesn't really make a difference one way or the other) is that IF Adam had passed that first test (resisting Satan and not eating the forbidden fruit), THEN God would have CHANGED Adam's name and given him "A NEW NAME"! I say this because that is precisely what God did after certain individuals passed certain tests, or even while they were still in the process of positively dealing with certain tests from God.

Thus:

After God had been working with the man "Abram" for a number of years, God changed his name to "ABRAHAM" to indicate his destiny of becoming "a father of many nations" (see Genesis 17:5).

At the same occasion God changed the name of Abraham's wife from "Sarai" to "SARAH", which means "princess", to indicate her destiny of becoming a mother of kings (see Genesis 17:15-16).

When the man Jacob had passed a crucial test before God, God changed his name to "ISRAEL", to indicate his changed destiny of being "a prince with God" (see Genesis 32:27-28).

Everyone who will be in the first resurrection will be given "a new name" (Revelation 2:17) to indicate the new destiny all those in the first resurrection will be introduced to. Similarly, Jesus Christ Himself will at that very point in time receive "A NEW NAME" (Revelation 3:12) because Jesus Christ Himself will be embarking on a totally new phase of HIS existence. THAT PARTICULAR "new name" will ALSO be conferred on ALL those in the first resurrection.

But those in the first resurrection will ALSO have one of the "names" of God the Father conferred upon them (Rev. 3:12), and they will ALSO have the name of "New Jerusalem" conferred upon them.

So notice carefully:

Those in the first resurrection will have four (or more?) NAMES conferred upon them. These four names are:

A) "A new name" which will indicate THEIR NEW STATUS in the presence of God.

B) One of the names of "God the Father", which I would take to mean the Family name "God".

C) "Jesus Christ's NEW name", which would indicate PARTICIPATION with Jesus Christ in what HE will be doing during the millennium.

D) The name "New Jerusalem" to indicate PERMANENT CITIZENSHIP of that city; permanent residence there as opposed to "visitor status" for the rest of the spirit Family of God.

Now is one of those four names going to be MORE IMPORTANT than the other three names? No! The many (at least four) names that individuals will be given in the first resurrection will not be in competition with one another. Most names will identify either the individual's destiny or area of activity or the then inherent nature of the person. But the names don't compete for priority. And MANY names will be common to many individuals, because many individuals will then have the same eternal destiny. This is also where "the new song" that only those in the first resurrection will be able to sing (see Rev. 14:3) ties in ... that song has to do with the specific destiny of those in the first resurrection, and which will not apply to others who later join the Family.

The Bible also reveals a number of different names for Satan. These include: Satan (meaning Adversary), devil (meaning Slanderer), a great red dragon, that old serpent, Abaddon and Apollyon (the last two both meaning "the one who is destined to be driven away"). Why has God given Satan so many names ... wouldn't one name have been enough? God has given a number of names to Satan because each name reveals additional information about this being we know mostly by the name "Satan". Each name serves a specific purpose.

But notice something about these last two names for Satan.

And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the HEBREW tongue *is* ABADDON, but in the GREEK tongue hath *his* name APOLLYON.
(Revelation 9:11 AV)

Here God inspired this name for Satan to be TRANSLATED into another language! Why?

When you consider the etymology of the Hebrew word "Abaddon" (which is actually already a Greek version of the Hebrew word involved) and of the Greek word "Apollyon", then you find that THE MEANINGS of both these words are IDENTICAL! The Hebrew verb "abad" literally means "to lose, to

drive away", which is what the Greek verb "apollumi" (from which Apollyon is formed) means. And the fate of the Azazel goat (Lev. 16:8) perfectly pictures the meaning of both, the Hebrew word "Abaddon" and the Greek word "Apollyon".

But the point to notice is this:

With a change in language from Hebrew to Greek God wanted THE MEANING rather than "the sound-bite" preserved. With ANY name the meaning is by far the most important thing with God. THAT is why God will CHANGE names of people when the meaning of the old name no longer applies. And if the old meaning still DOES apply but a new dimension has been ADDED to an individual's destiny, then God will give additional names without removing the ones that are still valid. That is how individuals end up with many names.

This is also precisely WHY the Bible nowhere reveals what Satan's ORIGINAL name had been! The point is: Satan's original name no longer applies and therefore THAT NAME is as though it had never been ... God has ALREADY PERMANENTLY BLOTTED OUT SATAN'S ORIGINAL NAME! And therefore God does not want you or me or anyone else to know what Satan's original name had been! If God were to tell us what he has blotted out, THEN it obviously has not been blotted out at all ... not if God has ensured that what He has blotted out has in fact been recorded in the Bible for posterity!

It is an insult and an affront to God and to Jesus Christ; it is in fact BLASPHEMY to in Isaiah 14:12 translate the Hebrew word "heylel" into the Latin word LUCIFER, implying that Satan, the ultimate adversary of Almighty God, had been given the name "Lightbringer" by God Himself ... when the Apostle Peter in fact gives the EXACT, and I mean 100% exact, same name of LUCIFER to Jesus Christ in 2.Peter 1:19 (except that Peter used the Greek word "Phosphoros" which is 100% identical to the Latin word Lucifer). A few years ago I had a friendly argument with a well-known minister in UCG, who insisted on defending Satan's right to the name "Lucifer" having been his previous name ... and I cannot help people who do not understand that God BLOTS OUT everything that may have been good about those who turn away and rebel against God. When the righteous turns away from righteousness, then "all his righteousness shall not be remembered" (Ezekiel 33:13; Ezekiel 3:20). In other words, any good he may have done shall be AS THOUGH IT HAD NEVER BEEN (like Obadiah 1:16). There is simply no way that God would anywhere in the Bible give us some past "lofty name" for the being that is God's greatest enemy. Whatever Satan's original name was, as far as God is concerned "it shall not be remembered".

So much for Satan and his names.

"Sound-bites" mean NOTHING at all to God!!

If you think that the great God of this whole universe desires to be identified by the phonetic sound of a specific word, or group of words, in a specific human language of this present evil world ... THEN YOU ARE THINKING LIKE A MODERN MAN AND NOT LIKE GOD!

Let's continue.

In many cases the Bible very clearly gives the meaning of a name (Adam, Abraham, Sarah, Israel, etc.). In those cases there is really no need to translate the names into other languages, because the meanings are known. At other times, while every name does have a specific meaning, there is no particular significance attached to the person's name ... there is no particular focus on the meaning of that name. And so there is really no need to have the name translated into other languages. Thus, there is really no need to translate names like David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Ezekiel, Jehoshaphat, etc., and they are retained in their Hebrew form.

But in some cases, as we saw in Revelation 9:11, it is important to God for the meaning of a name to be translated. Also, as already mentioned earlier in this paper, the Aramaic name Tabitha was translated into Greek as Dorcas (Acts 9:36). Similarly, in Acts 13:8 the name "Elymas" is translated into Greek as "Magos", which in Greek meant both, "a sorcerer or magician" and also "a wise man" (from the premise that you must be wise if you are a magician). It was again important enough to translate this man's name.

So we see that SOME names have been translated for us into another language, while the majority of names that appear in the Bible are not translated into another language ... they are retained as "adapted sound-bites". In the New Testament we find the Greek forms for many Hebrew names, but in the Greek language these Greek forms do not have anything to do with the actual meaning of the original Hebrew words ... in Greek they are nothing more than "sound-bites".

So the question arises:

Does God give us ANY indication whether or not He approves of HIS NAMES being translated into other languages, or does God INSIST on the correct "sound-bite"? Does He insist on His name always being retained in the Hebrew language?

The answer to this question is: YES, God very clearly gives us an answer to this question on TWO fronts ... in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Earlier we already saw that the Old Testament was written in TWO distinct languages: Daniel chapters 2-6 and Ezra chapters 4-7 were originally written in Aramaic and all the rest of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Hebrew was the original language used, and those 9 chapters in Aramaic were only written towards the end of the Old Testament period.

The very first word in the Bible that is ever translated as "God" (used in Genesis 1:1) is "ELOHIM". It is THE PLURAL of the Hebrew word "ELOAH". A shortened form of this word is "EL".

The word "ELOAH" means "A MIGHTY ONE". The plural "ELOHIM" means "THE MIGHTY ONES". When it is intended to be used in conjunction with another word (e.g. "Shaddai"), then the word "Eloah" is usually shortened to "EL" ... thus "EL-SHADDAI".

Now "Eloah" is used 57 times in the Old Testament. It is used 52 times to refer to the true God. And it is used 5 times to refer to PAGAN "gods"!

The Plural "Elohim" is used 2606 times in the Old Testament. Of those it is used 2346 times to refer to the true God, 244 times it is used to refer to PAGAN "gods", 2 times it is even used to refer to PAGAN "goddesses", and the remaining 14 times it is translated in a number of different ways.

The shortened form "El" is used 245 times in the Old Testament. Of those it is translated as "God" in reference to the true God 213 times. It is also used 16 times to refer to PAGAN "gods" and one time it is translated as "idols".

So all three of these Hebrew words for "God" are clearly used for BOTH, the true God and also for pagan idols and so-called pagan "gods".

But these words are not used in the 9 chapters that were written in Aramaic. In those 9 chapters an ARAMAIC TRANSLATION of these words is used.

The Aramaic translation of the singular Hebrew "Eloah" is "ELAH".

Now in those 9 chapters the Aramaic word "Elah" is used 95 times. It is used 79 times to refer to the true God and 16 times to refer to PAGAN "gods".

So we see TWO distinct things here.

First of all, the same Hebrew words are used to refer to the true God and to pagan false "gods". Why is this so? Why did God even allow these words to be used for pagan "gods"? They are used in the Bible for pagan "gods" because God is concerned primarily with THE MEANING of these words! So when the pagans ATTRIBUTED, albeit wrongly so, the attributes that really belong to the TRUE God to their pagan deities, THEN the only way to unambiguously convey this was to use the exact same words to describe these pagan "gods". The pagans in their own minds gave the exact same status to their pagan "gods" as is the status that really belongs to the true God. This is conveyed by these names for the true God ALSO being used for pagan deities.

Secondly, the 9 chapters that were written in Aramaic make quite clear, beyond any doubt, that these names for God were TRANSLATED into another language for the purpose of retaining THE MEANING of these names! The Aramaic "Elah" is assuredly not the same "sound-bite" as either of the Hebrew words "Eloah" or "Elohim". "Elah" is in effect the exact Aramaic translation for the Hebrew "Eloah". And in this Aramaic section we again see that the same word is used for both, the true God and for pagan "gods". "Elah" is assuredly NOT a Hebrew language word! It is a translation into the Aramaic language which was being used at the time of Ezra.

Consider that English and Dutch are two distinct languages, but the English word "God" is identical to the Dutch word "God". But if you were to look at a Dutch translation of the Bible, you would not assume that Dutch is almost the same as the English language, simply because the word "God" is identical in both languages. Likewise, simply because to you the difference between the Hebrew "Eloah" and the Aramaic "Elah" may seem to be hardly worth noting, that does not mean that the languages are "almost the same" ... they are not! And here we see that God clearly approved of Daniel and Ezra translating His name "Eloah" into the Aramaic language.

The use of "Elah" PROVES that it is acceptable to God, yes, even necessary, that we translate His names into whatever language we may be speaking, ensuring that THE MEANING is retained in the process of translation.

Let's now look at the New Testament.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We have seen that Paul spoke Greek and was familiar with Greek literature and even stated that he was a debtor to the Greeks. We saw that he wrote to several individual men who were Greek speaking, and he also wrote to several congregations that were clearly Greek speaking.

We further saw that the evidence of the Catholic "church fathers" asserts that all of the N.T. (apart from possibly Matthew and Hebrews) was written in the Greek language. We saw that the only N.T. books that are ever claimed to have first been written in Hebrew are Matthew and Hebrews. We saw that nowhere in the historical records is there ever a hint that ANY of the N.T. books were originally written in Aramaic.

While there are two manuscripts of the Book of Matthew in the Hebrew language, they are acknowledged to be in an "impure form" and they date only to the Middle Ages. Apart from these two

Hebrew manuscripts THERE ARE NO HEBREW COPIES OF ANY OF THE OTHER 26 BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT!

So IF God had wanted the New Testament to be preserved in the Hebrew language, then we have to acknowledge that IT HAS BEEN LOST! It doesn't exist anywhere!

Now IF we want to claim that God WANTED the New Testament to be preserved in the Aramaic language, thereby departing from the Hebrew language, then we should ask:

WHY would God possibly have insisted on the ARAMAIC language? What is so special about that particular language? IF God was going to depart from Hebrew anyway, WHY would He possibly have limited His Word to Aramaic in a world that was dominated by the Greek language?

We should also ask the question:

Would THE ONLY REASON that God (supposedly) chose to have His N.T. Word preserved in the Aramaic language be SO THAT HIS NAMES WOULD ONLY BE TRANSLATED INTO ARAMAIC AND NOT INTO ANY OTHER LANGUAGE? Is there ANY other reason for God to select the Aramaic language as a vehicle of preservation in a world that was dominated by the Greek language?

Furthermore, IF God had wanted the New Testament to be preserved in the Aramaic language, then we would again have to acknowledge that IT HAS BEEN LOST! The only Aramaic language versions available anywhere are impure critical revisions of some lost earlier texts, versions that only came into existence about 200 years AFTER the N.T. was concluded, and during which 200 years the Greek version was in regular use. The Crawford Ms with its two or three "plausible readings" amongst 400 verses doesn't even warrant mentioning.

The only correct possibility is that the books of the N.T. (with the possible exception of Matthew and Hebrews) were indeed first written in the Greek language. There is no evidence for any other option. No way would Paul, who was indebted to the Greeks, have written to Titus and to Philemon in any language other than Greek! And if Paul wrote to INDIVIDUALS who were Greek speaking in Greek, then he would obviously also have written in Greek to CONGREGATIONS that were Greek speaking. He clearly said that he had testified to the Greeks.

And as with the O.T. example of the names of God being translated into Aramaic, so we have the unavoidable conclusion that God inspired the writers of the New Testament to use the Greek word "theos" for "God" (Hebrew El and Eloah and Elohim) and the Greek word "Kurios" for "Lord" (Hebrew YHVH).

Consider this: Even the Greek manuscripts have preserved SOME Aramaic words right in the context of the Greek language text (e.g. Mark 15:34). So there is no reason to suppose that the writers could not ALSO have included "the sacred names" right in the context of the Greek text, if that is what God had wanted. But there aren't any Hebrew or Aramaic language names for God in any New Testament books (with the exception of the two Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew).

Now consider another question.

DOES A NAME "IDENTIFY" OR DOES IT "DESCRIBE"?

We in our Western world today use names to identify individuals. We want a name to pinpoint one

specific individual person as opposed to the rest of humanity. Towards that end we try to form reasonably unique combinations of names, and this is supplemented by such things as "identity numbers" or "social security numbers" ... so that we can establish an absolutely unique identity for every person in the country. In the process of selecting a relatively "unique" combination of names for a baby, to differentiate that person from everyone else in that immediate environment, THE MEANING of the names we select does not stand in any relationship to the person to whom these names are actually given.

Here are some examples to illustrate this.

1) If we give the name "Sarah" to a girl-baby, we may even know that this name means "princess", but that does not mean that this baby-girl ever has the remotest chance of becoming a princess. The name has a nice meaning, but it has nothing to do with reality in the life of that child.

2) If Mr. Black has a son who will also be named "Black", then that does not mean that the son is in fact "black". It is just a name without the actual meaning ever coming into consideration.

3) If parents decide to give their child the name "Washington" or "Jefferson", it does not mean that the child ever had any connection to the original Washington or Jefferson.

4) If a child is given the name "Homer" it does not mean that the child has any connection to the ancient Greek poet by that name.

5) If a girl is given the name "Eve" it does not mean that she will be "the mother of all living".

6) If a girl is given the name "Phyllis" (from the Greek for "green leaf") it does not mean that she has anything at all to do with "green leaves".

7) A man named "Siegfried" has nothing to do with "victorious peace", which is what this name means.

8) A man named "Randolph" (meaning "shield wolf") is unlikely to ever have anything to do with wolves.

9) A girl named "Eunice" (meaning "bringing happy victory") isn't necessarily ever connected to any "victory" that is or was achieved.

10) Someone named "Abrahamson" isn't necessarily in any way connected as a son to the original "Abraham". It is just a name. etc., etc.

The point is this:

We use names to IDENTIFY people, to differentiate them from everyone else. But we IGNORE THE MEANINGS that those names may actually have. This is true even when we actually know the meanings of the names we give. The meanings may be noble and pleasant ... BUT THEY ARE DIVORCED FROM REALITY!

So a name identifies a specific person, but the meaning of that person's name does NOT necessarily DESCRIBE that person! All of Mr. Brown's children will also have the name "Brown", even though the colour "brown" may not be connected to them in any way.

As parents we give names to our children that are pleasant, noble in meaning, lofty and virtuous. And we may know the meanings those names have. But we have no way of ensuring that the lofty ideals incorporated into those names will ever have anything to do with reality in that child's life.

THEY ARE JUST "NAMES", THAT'S ALL!

So here is the point to consider:

When the actual meaning of a name does not stand in any relationship to reality in that person's life, THEN there is no reason to ever translate that name into another language! The name is just "an identification tag" for that person. Translating the name into another language would imply that the meaning of the name was actually in some way significant in that person's life.

Now the same was true in biblical times. With a small number of individuals the meanings of their names were actually very significant. But for the vast, vast majority of people in biblical times their names were just "names", without the meanings inherent in those names in any way featuring in their lives. Yes, those meanings may indeed have been very impressive and significant, but they didn't feature in their lives.

As far as choosing "lofty names" is concerned, recall that very early in human history people began to incorporate GOD'S NAME into their own names, as we are told in Genesis 4:26.

And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then BEGAN MEN TO CALL UPON (or: call themselves by) THE NAME OF THE LORD. (Genesis 4:26 AV)

This seems to be a reference to people starting to use God's name as a part of their own names. The first recorded case is "Mahalaleel" which means "praise of God" (Genesis 5:12), who was born in the year 395 after the creation of Adam. Many Hebrew names now include a name of God as a part of the person's name (e.g. Ezekiel, Nathaniel, Jonathan, Isaiah, Michael, etc.).

In most cases, in biblical times even as today, the names were just pleasant decorative identification tags. In most cases the meanings inherent in those names were unrelated to the lives of the people. And therefore there was also never a need for translating the meanings of those names into other languages, when those meanings didn't really apply in the first place.

Obviously there are exceptions, but the exceptions only constitute a small minority of the people who lived in biblical times.

However, with God things are different!

With the two members of the God Family none of their names have ever been "divorced from reality". None of God's names were simply nice "sound-bites" with a wishful lofty ideal attached to them. No, every single name that applies to God the Father and to Jesus Christ is intended to convey a specific meaning or message ... and if necessary that needs to be translated into whatever language people may be speaking so that THE MEANING of those names is clearly conveyed.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S NAMES

It may come as a surprise to many people, but THE PRIMARY PURPOSE for all of God's names in the Old Testament is NOT TO IDENTIFY A SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL!

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR ALL OF GOD'S NAMES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS TO DESCRIBE THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE INDIVIDUAL, WITHOUT REGARD FOR WHETHER IT IS SPEAKING ABOUT GOD THE FATHER OR ABOUT JESUS CHRIST!

In this regard "God's names" are different from "our names" ... our names focus on identifying someone first of all, and in the process largely ignoring the meaning that the names may have; God's names focus first of all on the meaning inherent in those names and ensuring that those meanings are indeed rightly attributed to the God Being that is speaking or is being spoken about, without spelling out too clearly which of the two God Beings (God the Father or Jesus Christ) is really meant in that particular case.

Put another way:

NONE OF THE NAMES OF GOD THAT ARE MENTIONED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ARE INTENDED TO SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFY THE ONE GOD BEING AS OPPOSED TO THE OTHER!

True, some of those names are used more frequently for the One than for the Other. But NONE of those names (excluding a name like Melchizedek) apply exclusively to the One and not to the Other. This is different from what we would expect. It is always the context that makes clear which of the two God Beings is being spoken about, rather than the Hebrew "name" that is used in that verse.

Consider this: we have already seen that those in the first resurrection will, amongst other things, receive "Christ's new name" as well as "one of the names of the Father". This means that both, God the Father and also Jesus Christ will SHARE THEIR NAMES with those in the first resurrection. Don't you think that they also share their names with each other?

We need to get away from our modern idea that the primary purpose of a name is to pinpoint the identity of one specific individual as opposed to all other people. With God the primary purpose of names is to describe attributes that apply to the owners of those names. And since God the Father and Jesus Christ share all the same attributes, therefore they also share all the same names (we'll talk about an exception to this later), even as they are willing to share their names with us in the resurrection.

Webster's definition of "a name" as "a word constituting the distinctive designation of a person or thing" is aimed at distinguishing one individual from another. God's use of names is aimed at highlighting attributes, abilities and characteristics, **IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THAT ACHIEVES A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS OR NOT!**

If you can understand this last statement, then you should be well on the way to also understanding statements like:

I am the LORD, and THERE IS NONE ELSE, THERE IS NO GOD (ELOHIM) BESIDE ME: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: (Isaiah 45:5 AV)

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and THERE IS NO GOD ELSE BESIDE ME; a just God and a Saviour; THERE IS NONE BESIDE ME. (Isaiah 45:21 AV)

You see, the names God revealed in the Old Testament were not intended to emphasize any distinctions between the two God Beings, though a few of God's servants would have become aware of there being two God Beings. Whenever Jesus Christ spoke, He was ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS speaking for both of Them, irrespective of whether He used the singular verb or the plural verb. He was the Spokesman for both of Them, and of His own will He said NOTHING. John 12:49 has always applied to Jesus Christ ...

For I HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF MYSELF; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. (John 12:49 AV)

It is only in New Testament times that Jesus Christ came TO REVEAL THE FATHER (Matt. 11:27). This statement all by itself should tell us that in Old Testament times the distinction between these two God Beings was intentionally somewhat blurred for people in general. The distinction between the two God Beings was intentionally not spelled out at that time.

Let's look at the Old Testament.

In the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, God is introduced as the plural ELOHIM! The very opening statement of the Book introduces us to THE MIGHTY ONES, plural. From the rest of the Bible we know that there are in fact TWO "Mighty Ones" ... God the Father and Jesus Christ. But the point is this:

The opening statement of the Bible already OBSCURES any distinction between these two Beings. They are pictured as acting in harmony and in unity. And exactly how many of them there are is not even revealed at the start of the Book. Obviously, the New Testament gives us more information about this event. But Genesis 1:1 already tells us that together God the Father and Jesus Christ make up "ELOHIM".

Therefore the singular "ELOAH" (a Mighty One) must obviously apply to both of them. God the Father is ELOAH and Jesus Christ is also ELOAH. And therefore the abbreviated form EL must also apply to both of them.

So the three words Elohim, Eloah and El apply to both, God the Father and Jesus Christ. In any given passage these words could be used to refer to the One or the Other.

Later we'll look at the word YHWH (usually translated as LORD or as Lord) in more detail. But for now let's just note that this word YHWH is mostly used to refer to Jesus Christ. However, at times YHWH (which means "the Eternal") is also used to refer to God the Father, as for example in Psalm 110.

The LORD (YHWH) said unto my Lord (Adoni), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (Psalm 110:1 AV)

David is in this verse saying:

"God the Father (YHWH) said unto Jesus Christ (Adoni), sit you at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

So this means that the name YHWH must also apply to both, God the Father and Jesus Christ. And in a sense that should be self-evident, since the meaning of YHWH applies to both of them. [Comment: The fact that Jesus Christ is also YHWH all by itself proves that He has always existed with the Father, otherwise He could not be "The Ever-Living One", "The Eternal", YHWH! In the resurrection we will individually become "Eloah" or collectively "Elohim" (Mighty Ones), but we will NOT become YHWH, because we do not have an eternal past ... we have not ALWAYS existed.]

The word "Adoni" which is used in Psalm 110:1 for Jesus Christ means "Lord, master, owner". All these attributes obviously apply to God the Father just as much as they do to Jesus Christ. However, in view of the fact that Adoni is a word on a somewhat lower level than the word YHWH, and the fact that Adoni is

used far more frequently for human beings (over 300 times) than it is used for God (31 times), therefore it is not generally suitable to refer to the Father. Compared to YHWH the title Adoni is on a lower level.

Other names of God in the Old Testament are all based on the names we have looked at. Some combine with "EL", while others combine with YHWH. And since EL and YHWH apply to both God Beings, it follows that any combination of names in which either word is used will also be a valid title for both of them, even if it may not actually be used for both of them.

Consider even a specialized title like "FATHER". This title is explained in the New Testament to belong to God the Father. Yet even this title is once applied to Jesus Christ, in Isaiah 9:6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 AV)

Surely God the Father is "The Everlasting Father", yet here this title is applied to Jesus Christ. Is it that God the Father in some ways also shares THIS name or title with Jesus Christ?

We have basically looked at all the main names and titles applied to God in the Old Testament, and it seems to me that none of these names are reserved exclusively for the One God Being as opposed to the Other. They share their names with each other and Revelation 3:12 shows that they will also share some of their names with those in the first resurrection. "Sharing" is probably the best one-word description of God's nature. And this "sharing" does not just cover all the things that God owns (Romans 8:17 = heirs of God), it even incorporates sharing His very existence, expressed in sharing His names (names standing for attributes).

Anyway, with this background now consider this scenario:

If you, a New Testament Christian with all the understanding that is made available to us in the New Testament, were to write a letter to God, and you started the letter with the words: "Our Almighty ELOAH" or with the words "Our Almighty EL" or with the words "Our Almighty YHWH" or with the words "O Yahweh" ... would God actually know whether you are addressing God the Father or whether you are addressing Jesus Christ? HOW would God know ... since all of these names apply to both of them? [You could apply the same picture to praying.]

The focus in the Old Testament is always on attributes rather than on individual and unique identity. None of these names of God UNIQUELY describe the One in contrast to the Other. This is in effect acknowledged by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Notice what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 11.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; NEITHER KNOWETH ANY MAN THE FATHER, save the Son, and *he* TO WHOMSOEVER THE SON WILL REVEAL *HIM*. (Matthew 11:27 AV)

People in general (excepting servants of God like David, etc.) did not know about the Father because throughout the Old Testament the distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ was intentionally kept vague and somewhat obscured. We can look in hindsight with a certain amount of understanding revealed to us through the New Testament, but for those living at the time the distinction between the two Beings was not very clear. That's why the Jews insist on "ONE" God, in spite of knowing that Elohim

is a plural word.

Now why did Christ say that "no man knows the Son" when the Jews in Old Testament times DID know the name "YHWH"? And why did Christ say that "no man knows the Father" when the Jews in Old Testament times DID know the names "YHWH" and "Elohim", etc.? Can we not see that Jesus Christ is saying that NO MAN (without special revelation from God) knows either God the Father or Jesus Christ EVEN IF THEY DO KNOW THE "CORRECT" NAMES OF "YHWH" and "ELOHIM" and "JESUS" and "CHRIST" ... because the correct "sound-bites" of those Hebrew names were known in Old Testament times and the correct names for Jesus Christ are known today, but knowing the "correct" names or the correct "sound-bites" is not enough!?!

Part of that intentional obscurity was due to the same "names" being used almost interchangeably for both God Beings. You just couldn't tie names down like you can on our human level ... and that's confusing for us in our desire to pinpoint identities.

There is only one set of names or titles that God the Father and Jesus Christ do not share! And that is names and titles that specifically refer to their relationship to one another. This includes names and titles like "Son, Father, High Priest, Melchizedek".

We saw that Jesus Christ is called "a Father" in Isaiah 9:6. The reason for this title is made clear in the Book of Hebrews which quotes Isaiah 8:18. Notice ...

In Hebrews 2:9 Paul is speaking about Jesus Christ. He wrote: "But we see Jesus ...". The following verses all speak about Jesus Christ in the form of Paul putting together various quotations from different books of the Old Testament. Then Paul wrote in verse 13 ...

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I AND THE CHILDREN WHICH GOD HATH GIVEN ME. (Hebrews 2:13 AV)

Paul here quoted Isaiah 8:18 in reference to Jesus Christ. It is ten verses later (Isa. 9:6) that we find the reference to Jesus Christ being "The Everlasting Father". The context in Hebrews shows that Jesus Christ is being "given" these children by God the Father. So the title "Father" always needs to be understood in the exact context in which it is presented. While Jesus Christ will in a sense be "a Father" to the "children" that will be produced for God's Family during the millennium, Jesus Christ is never "a Father" when the focus is His relationship to God the Father ... in THAT context Jesus Christ is always pictured as a Son.

Furthermore, in Isaiah 8:18 the word used for God the Father is YHWH, and without this N.T. quotation by Paul we might be inclined to think that Isaiah 8:18 is speaking about Jesus Christ "giving the children". However, Paul's quotation of this in Hebrews 2:13 shows that the YHWH in Isaiah 8:18 is another reference to God the Father and not to Jesus Christ.

Anyway, it should be fairly clear that with God names and titles are used primarily to describe attributes and only after that to highlight a unique identity. This should also explain WHY with God every individual has MANY names. You see, when names are used to describe attributes, then it takes many names to describe many different attributes. MOST attributes will be shared by ALL the members of God's spirit Family, and therefore most names will also be shared by all the members of the Family. The attribute of being in the first resurrection will be reflected in names given to all those in the first resurrection ... and those who join the Family of God later will not have those particular names. The attribute of having ALWAYS existed is only shared by God the Father and Jesus Christ ... and so these two will share one or more names that will not be given to anyone else (e.g. YHWH). The relationship these two (God the

Father and Jesus Christ) have to one another will provide unique identities to both of them ... so they have at least one name each that is unique from the other one. Those names will also make them unique from the whole rest of the Family of God.

Notice these verses in Revelation chapter 19.

His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had A NAME written, THAT NO MAN KNEW, BUT HE HIMSELF. (Revelation 19:12 AV)

And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD. (Revelation 19:13 AV)

And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh A NAME WRITTEN, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:16 AV)

These verses speak about THREE different names for Jesus Christ: one name that nobody else knows at that point in time, a second name that is "the Word of God", and a third name that is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". These are in addition to all the other names He also has. We should be able to see that the last two names describe attributes that uniquely apply to Jesus Christ ("the Word of God" and "King of Kings and Lord of Lords") ... so these two names are obviously not the ones He will share with us in the first resurrection, because those terms simply don't apply to us.

Notice also Revelation 3:1 ...

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that THOU HAST A NAME THAT THOU LIVEST, AND ART DEAD. (Revelation 3:1 AV)

This Scripture again makes clear that God uses "a name" to describe A CONDITION!

Similarly, in Revelation 17:3 we see the following:

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, FULL OF NAMES OF BLASPHEMY, having seven heads and ten horns. (Revelation 17:3 AV)

Here "names" are clearly used to describe ATTRIBUTES. This "beast" has lots of names, showing that there are many, many ways in which blasphemy is expressed.

Let me put it like this. The numbers I will give here will certainly be incorrect, but they should help to convey THE CONCEPT.

God the Father and Jesus Christ will both have 50 different names, of which 47 names are common to both of them. Those in the first resurrection will have 30 different names, of which 27 names will be common to all those in the first resurrection, and 25 of those names will be common with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. Those who come out of the millennium and out of the period allocated to the second resurrection will have 20 names, 17 of which will be common to everyone from those two periods of time, and 15 of which will be common with God the Father and Jesus Christ. As the process of eternity unfolds for the whole Family of God, more names will be added to individuals or groups of individuals

within the Family as certain goals are attained for the Family. No names will ever be blotted out, but more names may very possibly be added in the future.

The figures in the above paragraph are obviously incorrect! But can you see the concept? With God, names identify characteristics and attributes and status and positions. The more attributes an individual has, the more names He will also have. And there will be SOME attribute that will make every single member of the Family of God UNIQUE from every other member of the Family, and that attribute will be reflected in one name being unique for that individual, even if ten or twenty or more other names are shared with other individuals. This is obviously a totally different approach to "names" from our use of names today.

As another consideration in this regard look at 1.John 4:8.

He that loveth not KNOWETH NOT GOD; for God is love. (1 John 4:8 AV)

Whether or not such an individual "KNOWS" the correct names or "sound-bites" does not even enter the picture here! People who don't have real godly love simply do not know God ... irrespective of whether or not they know such "sound-bites" as: God, God the Father, Jesus Christ, Jehovah, El, Eloah, Elohim, El-Shaddai, Yahweh, Yahveh, Yeshua, Y'shua, etc.! The criterion John spelled out in this verse for "knowing God" has nothing at all to do with knowing the correct names. God will even say to some of those who actually had the correct "sound-bites" for His names "I KNOW YOU NOT" ... see Matthew 25:12 and Luke 13:25-27.

But now let's look at the Hebrew name YHWH

THE NAME "YHWH"

The name YHWH is used more often in the Old Testament than any other name for God, being used over 6500 times.

We have already seen that it is used for BOTH members of the God Family. This means that it is not the exclusive name of either the God the Father or of Jesus Christ.

Notice Exodus chapter 6.

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the LORD (Hebrew YHWH): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH (Hebrew YHWH) was I not known to them. (Exodus 6:2-3 AV)

In these verses the name YHWH is used twice. The first time it is translated as "LORD" and the second time it is translated as "JEHOVAH".

It is pretty well known that "Jehovah" is NOT the correct pronunciation of the word YHWH. The name "Jehovah" is in fact the very first of the "sacred names" that people have come up with. For a start, the article "Jehovah" on page 88 of volume VII of the Jewish Encyclopedia states the following:

"'Jehovah' is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo X's Confessor, Peter Galatin ... who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius ... But it seems that even before Galatin, the name 'Jehovah' had been in common use ... It is found in Raymond Martin's 'Pugio Fidei,' written in 1270."

The Jews recognize that this pronunciation of YHWH did not come from them; it came from the Catholic Church. Using the name "Jehovah" links the user to the Catholic Church, as it has come down to our times through the Catholic Church. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses used to acknowledge in the Preface to their translation of the Bible the following:

"While inclining to view the pronunciation 'Yahweh' as the more correct way, WE HAVE RETAINED THE FORM 'JEHOVAH' BECAUSE OF PEOPLE'S FAMILIARITY WITH IT SINCE THE 14TH CENTURY". (page 25, my emphasis)

Note that this candid admission has been removed from the Preface of the more recent editions of their Bibles, because they found that people used their edition of the Bible to show up the incorrectness of the pronunciation "Jehovah". It also clearly revealed their link to the Catholic Church, by holding fast to this Catholic tradition. So this statement is not found in more recent editions.

Pope Leo X was pope from March 1513 until December 1521, during the time of Martin Luther. That was about 250 years after Martin's work "Pugio Fidei". The Jehovah's Witnesses themselves lead the name "Jehovah" back into the 1300's ... to somewhere between Martin's book and Pope Leo X.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, published in New York in 1941, states in volume 6, on pages 54-55 in the article "JEHOVAH":

"JEHOVAH, AN ERRONEOUS PRONUNCIATION OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON, or four-lettered name of God, made up of the Hebrew letters Yod He Vav He. According to Bible scholars, the proper pronunciation of this name was Jahveh. As early as Bible times, however, in obedience to the provision of the Third Commandment that forbids taking the name of God in vain, this name was never pronounced except once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement in the Temple at Jerusalem. ... When vowels were later added to the Hebrew consonants in order to facilitate reading by the masses, the pronunciation of the letters Yod He Vav He was indicated by adding the vowels of the word Adonai to the four letters of the Tetragrammaton. JEWS UNDERSTOOD THIS INDICATED PRONUNCIATION ... (Hebrew letters) was, and IS, ALWAYS PRONOUNCED ADONAI. But in the Middle Ages certain Christian theologians (the first known is Raymond Martin in 1270) copying the voweled tetragrammaton in transliteration, spelled it out to read JeHoVaH. The word "Jehovah", therefore, is a misreading for which there is no warrant and which makes no sense in Hebrew." (article was written by Isaac Landman, my emphasis)

This is a somewhat longer quotation, but it does give us some information. The Encyclopedia Judaica article "God, Names of" (volume 7, page 680) adds:

"At least until the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. this name was regularly pronounced with its proper vowels, as is clear from the Lachish Letters, written shortly before that date."

Later the same article points out:

"In the early middle ages ... the vowel points for 'Adonai' with one variation ... were used for YHWH, thus producing the form YeHoWaH. WHEN CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS OF EUROPE FIRST BEGAN TO STUDY HEBREW, THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS REALLY

MEANT, AND THEY INTRODUCED THE HYBRID NAME "JEHOVAH"." (my emphasis)

This should suffice to show that "Jehovah" is nothing but a hybrid invention of Catholic theologians in the Middle Ages who did not realize that the Jews had added totally artificial vowels to the Tetragrammaton with the clear intention that they would never pronounce that word correctly. They would see the word YHWH with the vowel points for Adonai and then they would always read "Adonai".

In a sense I have done something very similar, but in reverse, with the Tetragrammaton myself for the past 30 years or so. Whenever I see the English language translation of this name rendered as "LORD" (which the Jews will acknowledge is really the meaning of the word "Adonai" and not of YHWH) I actually read "ETERNAL"! This is something I picked up from Mr. Armstrong.

So let's get this straight:

1. The Jews erroneously believed that they should never even pronounce the word YHWH.
2. This belief was definitely only introduced after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., but I suspect that it was really only after the death of Ezra in the 400's B.C., when the whole Old Testament had been completed. However, the exact timing makes no difference.
3. So whenever the text read YHWH, they would say the word "Adonai".
4. LATER vowel points were invented and added to the whole O.T., to make reading easier.
5. In keeping with the custom of saying "Adonai" when they saw YHWH, they therefore added the vowels for Adonai to the letters YHWH, but with one alteration for the first of those three vowels.
6. Then Catholic scholars came along and learned Hebrew. But they did not know WHY the Jews had added these specific vowels to the word YHWH.
7. So these Catholic scholars simply transliterated the whole word with those vowels that pointed to the word "Adonai" and they came up with the transliterated form YeHoWaH.
8. In German the letter "J" is pronounced like the letter "Y" in English, and the letter "V" is in German pronounced much like the English "W". Thus German speaking theologians transliterated YeHoWaH into "Jehovah", pronouncing this "J" just like the English "Y".
9. Now the Jews knew that YHWH means "The Eternal, The Self-Existent One", and that "Adonai" means "Lord, Ruler". Adonai is also frequently used in the Old Testament to refer to human beings. But the Jews had in effect attached the meaning of "Adonai" to the word YHWH by adding the vowels for "Adonai" to the word YHWH.
10. In this error the early translators of the Bible into English copied the Jews! So when they translated this word YHWH into English, they translated it as "LORD" rather than as "ETERNAL" or "EVER LIVING ONE".
11. "LORD" is a correct translation for "Adonai" but it is not a correct translation for YHWH. Yet "LORD" has almost universally been accepted as a translation for YHWH. Since "Lord" is one of the names used for God in the Old Testament, it is not a major problem, but neither is it really accurate. Obviously, the Jews are in full agreement with YHWH being translated into English as "Lord" because they themselves have also attached the meaning of "Adonai" to the word YHWH.

12. So when I read "ETERNAL" every time I see the word "LORD" in the Bible, I am simply restoring the correct meaning of YHWH to every place where it was incorrectly translated into English by the meaning of "Adonai".

13. In New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages containing the word YHWH, this is mostly translated as "kurios" (meaning "Lord"), but occasionally it is also translated as "theos" (meaning "God") as in Hebrews 2:13. I mention this to point out that, while I personally prefer to read "ETERNAL" for those places where YHWH is used, I do not believe it is a problem if others read "Lord" for those same places ... since that is how the Hebrew word YHWH is rendered in the N.T. Greek. We need to beware of splitting hairs.

14. In Psalm 110:1 the two Hebrew words YHWH and "Adoni" are used. In Matthew 22:44 BOTH of these Hebrew words are translated by the Greek word "kurios" ... the Greek text reading: " the KURIOS said to my KURIOS ...". So here the word "Kurios" is actually used to refer to God the Father! And the Greek word "Kurios" really has the meaning of the Hebrew word "Adonai".

15. What this all tells me is this: God is not really all that concerned about which of His names we use when we address Him! So God revealed a range of names for Himself in the Old Testament, all of which applied to both God Beings. In the New Testament the Greek language only had a limited range of words available to convey these concepts ... there are really only two Greek words that are suitable to apply to God (i.e. theos and kurios). And we see that the Greek word "kurios" (i.e. "Lord") is typically a translation for YHWH, but sometimes YHWH is translated by "theos". So I take this to mean that it is equally acceptable to God for us to address Him as "God" or as "Lord".

16. The key in this is the meaning we attach to the word "God". In English the word "God" is used to refer to the supreme Deity who is the Creator and Ruler of all things. The word "Lord" refers to a Ruler who has power and authority. Both these words convey respect and submission to the one being addressed. So both words are acceptable forms of address to God.

17. Anyway, in the New Testament Jesus Christ made clear that we are to address God as "OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN" (Matt. 6:9). Matthew 6:9 tells me that God does not want us to use ANY Hebrew-sounding name when we pray to Him ... we are to address Him as "our Father", in whatever language we happen to speak fluently as our language of first choice.

18. And since God the Father, the supreme authority, is to be addressed with a meaningful term in our own language, it follows that God also does not insist on Hebrew-sounding names for Jesus Christ.

Let's now look at another question.

WAS THE CORRECT PRONUNCIATION OF YHWH LOST?

Some groups that use sacred names insist that the correct pronunciation of YHWH was never really lost. Is that correct? Or was it indeed lost? What is the evidence?

Here is another quotation from the Encyclopedia Judaica, volume 7, also from the article "GOD, NAMES OF" on page 680.

"THE TRUE PRONUNCIATION of the name YHWH WAS NEVER LOST. Several early Greek writers of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced "Yahweh". This is confirmed, at least for the vowel of the first syllable of the name, by the shorter form Yah, which is sometimes used in poetry (e.g., Ex. 15:2) and the -yahu or -yah that serves as the final syllable

of very many Hebrew names." (my emphasis)

Notice something very interesting here. Here we have a JEWISH encyclopedia and they assert that the pronunciation of the word YHWH in THEIR language of Hebrew was never lost. And what do they offer as proof to substantiate this claim? That their own people preserved the correct pronunciation? NO! Their only "proof" really is an appeal to the CATHOLIC "church fathers". This is a candid admission that THEY THEMSELVES (i.e. the Jewish community) do not have ANY EVIDENCE that the correct pronunciation of a specific word in THEIR OWN LANGUAGE was actually preserved. This means that the Jews themselves cannot even tell you THE SOURCE of this information ... whether these Catholic "church fathers" got this information from the main Jewish community or whether they got it from some extreme fanatical group like the Essenes or whether they even got it from NON-JEWISH people like the Samaritans. The Jews simply don't know WHERE these Catholic "church fathers" got their information from. This is obviously a MUCH WEAKER "PROOF" than if the Jews were able to say: "the correct pronunciation was never lost because we know that WE ourselves have correctly preserved it."

Next, the New Bible Dictionary, published in 1972 by Inter-Varsity Press in London, states the following on page 478 in the article "GOD, NAMES OF":

"The pronunciation of Yahweh is indicated by transliterations of the name into Greek in early Christian literature, in the form 'iaoue' (Clement of Alexandria) or 'iabe' (Theodoret; by this time Gk. b had the pronunciation of v)."

Now notice what Josephus had to say about 100 years before Clement of Alexandria. This is from "Antiquities of the Jews", Book 2, Chapter 12, section 4:

4. Moses having now seen and heard these wonders that assured him of the truth of these promises of God, had no room left him to disbelieve them: he entreated him to grant him that power when he should be in Egypt; and besought him to vouchsafe him the knowledge of his own name; and since he had heard and seen him, that he would also tell him his name, that when he offered sacrifice he might invoke him by such his name in his oblations. Whereupon God declared to him HIS HOLY NAME, which had never been discovered to men before; CONCERNING WHICH IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR ME TO SAY ANY MORE. (my emphasis)

Josephus himself had been a High Priest. He very clearly was not going to divulge the correct pronunciation of the word YHWH. So who would have been able to tell Clement or Theodoret or Origen this correct pronunciation 100 or more years later? We'll see the answer in a little while.

Here is what is recorded by Clement of Alexandria in Book 5, Chapter 6 (on page 906 of Volume 2 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection in the Ages Software Collection):

Again, there is the veil of the entrance into the holy of holies. Four pillars there are, the sign of the sacred tetrad of the ancient covenants. Further, the mystic name of four letters which was affixed to those alone to whom the adytum was accessible, is called Jave, which is interpreted, "Who is and shall be." The name of God, too, among the Greeks contains four letters.

By "adytum" Clement is referring to "the Holy of Holies" in the Temple. This was accessible only to the High Priest once a year. So Clement says: "... the mystic name of four letters, which was available only to the High Priest, is called JAVE". The letter J was the same as the letter I, and could be pronounced either way (pronouncing the "J" like the English "Y"). So Clement said that "the mystic name" (meaning

YHWH) was "IAVE" or "YAVE". Note that Clement is referring specifically to the High Priest, and there had not been any High Priests for the 100 years preceding his writing of this statement. [Comment: The New Bible Dictionary may have gotten mixed up and accidentally attributed this quote to Theodoret, as we see here that Clement of Alexandria also stated this, and I have not been able to find this quote in Theodoret's writings.]

And here is another quotation from THE UNIVERSAL JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, published in New York in 1941, volume 5, page 6, article "GOD, NAMES OF":

"The Tetragrammaton or Four-Lettered Name (YHWH), which occurs 6,823 times, is by far the most frequent name of God in the Bible. It is now pronounced 'adonai'; but the church father Theodoret records that THE SAMARITANS pronounced it as 'labe', and Origen transcribes it as 'lae', both pointing to an original vocalization 'yahveh'." (my emphasis)

Note again that this JEWISH reference work also relies totally on what the Catholic "church fathers" have recorded. The Jews themselves have no records of any kind that the correct pronunciation was preserved. It should be quite clear that this claim that the pronunciation was never lost is not based on anyone ever hearing anyone else actually SPEAK the word out loud and distinctly. There is no record from anyone who ever heard the word YHWH. Note also the statement that these records from Theodoret and Origen "POINT TO" a vocalization of "yahveh". "Pointing to" something is not really the same as clearly spelling out the correct vocalization.

So the claim that the true pronunciation was never lost is based on two things:

- 1) A reasoning out process for the first syllable "Yah", because this has been preserved as a part of other words. That seems plausible enough.
- 2) The evidence of the Catholic so-called "church fathers" Clement of Alexandria (he lived from 153 - 217 A.D.) and Origen (he lived from about 185 - 254 A.D) and Theodoret (he lived from about 386 - 453 A.D.).

Thus:

There is no evidence that the pronunciation was actually preserved in spoken form! No one who was prepared to write down the exact pronunciation (i.e. Clement of Alexandria, Theodoret and Origen) actually ever heard someone SAY this word in their presence. The only one who COULD have heard the word spoken or even said the word himself is Josephus, who had been a High Priest ... and Josephus was not about to reveal the correct pronunciation, as is evident from the above quotation from his book.

So we only have the statements of CATHOLIC (not Jewish!) authors, who themselves did not really agree with one another and none of whom actually ever heard a Hebrew speaking Jew utter this word YHWH with its correct pronunciation! So this is what we have:

- 1) Josephus (around 80 A.D.) makes clear that he as a High Priest was not about to divulge the correct pronunciation to anyone.
- 2) Clement of Alexandria (around 200 A.D.) is reputed to have stated it is "IAOUE", though in the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection he is actually shown as giving the form "YAVE".
- 3) Origen (around 230 A.D.) is reputed to have stated the name as "IAE".

4) Theodoret (around 430 A.D.) is shown as stating that THE SAMARITANS used the name "IAVE" or "YAVE".

5) The immediately obvious thing is that the forms IAOUÉ - IAVE - IAE are all different, albeit not in major ways. But they ARE different. WHY is that?

6) That is because these three "church fathers" got their information from different sources. If one of these three versions is right, then the two others must be wrong. It should tell us that none of their sources had ever really HEARD an informed person pronounce the word YHWH, and they were simply going on reports from others who also had never heard an informed person pronounce this word.

7) However, Theodoret reveals something the other writers did not mention. This so-called "preserved" pronunciation came from THE SAMARITANS! This means that the so-called "preserved" pronunciation comes from THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE AND NOT FROM THE HEBREW LANGUAGE!

And once you think about it, that really should have been obvious all along, right?

Here is the situation:

Most Jews in the first century A.D. would never in their lives have heard the word YHWH pronounced. The pronunciation as "Adonai" was fully entrenched. The High Priests saw themselves as the custodians of God's name, and they were not about to ever reveal the true pronunciation to anyone ... as the quotation from Josephus makes quite clear. The Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., a good 100 years before Clement of Alexandria ever wrote his books. And after the destruction of the Temple there was no occasion in the year when anyone in Jewish society, from the High Priest on down, would ever have had a reason for pronouncing YHWH correctly ... IF he had in fact still had a knowledge of that correct pronunciation. And certainly, no Jew who had that kind of esoteric information was about to divulge it to some non-Israelite or other.

So exactly where would men like Clement and Origen have come across this information? Why, from the Samaritans up north of the Jews. Theodoret then also acknowledges the Samaritans as the source of this pronunciation.

Now never forget that Hebrew and Aramaic are two different languages, which in their SPELLING have a large number of words in common, but they may even then still differ in their pronunciations ... like some words that have the same spelling in Spanish and in Portuguese (or in English and in Dutch, or in Dutch and in German, etc.) but still have a different way of pronouncing these words that are spelled identically. Hebrew and Aramaic also have many words that are spelled very differently in these two languages. Earlier we saw that the equivalent Hebrew word for the Aramaic word "sabachthani" is "azbethani". Consider also that there was a change in pronunciation of the one word for "my God" in the move from Hebrew to Aramaic ... the pronunciation of the Hebrew word "Eli" changed to "Eloi" in Aramaic. That is documented in the New Testament in the Scriptures we looked at earlier. So what assurance do we have that the pronunciation of YHWH was not also changed in the move from Hebrew to the Aramaic speaking Samaritans (since the Aramaic speaking JEWS were not about to correctly pronounce YHWH)?

There is never an up-front guarantee that words are going to be pronounced identically in Hebrew and in Aramaic. They really are different languages!

So when we keep these two facts in mind --- that the pronunciations preserved by the Catholic "church fathers" show some variations amongst themselves, and that ANY preserved pronunciation of YHWH, accurate or inaccurate, MUST have come from the Aramaic speaking SAMARITANS up north --- THEN

it should be clear that THE HEBREW LANGUAGE pronunciation of the word YHWH was not preserved! Men like Josephus made sure of that!

And as far as getting ANY religious information from the Samaritans is concerned, we should always keep the words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman in mind ...

YE WORSHIP YE KNOW NOT WHAT: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.
(John 4:22 AV)

We saw earlier that the name "Eloah" was translated into Aramaic with a change in pronunciation. But we have no example of YHWH being translated into Aramaic in the Bible. Now I am not saying that it is wrong to translate YHWH into Aramaic. Not at all! IF YOU ARE ARAMAIC SPEAKING then it is certainly right and proper to translate the Hebrew names into meaningful words in your own language.

BUT THAT JUST ILLUSTRATES THE POINT!

If it is indeed acceptable to translate any and all of God's names into Aramaic for Aramaic speaking people, THEN it is equally acceptable to translate all of God's names into English for English speaking people, into Greek for Greek speaking people, and into Spanish for Spanish speaking people.

With the zealous protection by the priests of the correct pronunciation of YHWH and with the dedicated secrecy by the small group that would have been in the know, THE ONLY OPTION for what has been "preserved" as the correct pronunciation has to be the Aramaic language version of YHWH. And that just isn't Hebrew!

So the "evidence" preserved by the co-called Catholic "church fathers" does not really prove a correct and accurate HEBREW LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION of the word YHWH! Unless some REAL evidence is available, we must conclude that the Hebrew language pronunciation of YHWH has indeed been lost, even if an Aramaic language pronunciation has been preserved. But that would involve A TRANSLATION from one language (Hebrew) into another language (Aramaic). And that would prove that it is perfectly acceptable to translate God's names into any other language as well.

We might also consider one more point. Earlier we looked at Revelation 17:3, which speaks about "the woman on the scarlet coloured beast". The point about this verse is that this "beast", which is controlled by "the woman", is FULL OF NAMES OF BLASPHEMY! Is it just a coincidence that BOTH forms of transliterating the name YHWH are led back to THE CATHOLIC CHURCH? Neither form is actually led back to the Jews, whose language Hebrew had been. It was CATHOLIC theologians who came up with the name "Jehovah", and it was CATHOLIC theologians who recorded the words on which the vocalization "Yahweh" is based. So the only option for those who wish to in some way transliterate and vocalize the Hebrew name YHWH is to accept one of the options the Catholic Church has made available. NO OPTION was actually made available by the Jews themselves. [Jewish opinions rely on Catholic records.] Worldwide "Jehovah" has found the greater acceptance of the two options. But for those who object to "Jehovah", the Catholic Church has provided the alternative of "Yahweh" through Clement and Theodoret and Origen recording a Samaritan pronunciation. And it was also the Catholic Church that gave the world the name "Lucifer" as Satan's supposed previous name. What was that about "full of names of blasphemy"? What other "names" has "that woman" foisted upon a deceived world (Rev. 12:9)?

It is my personal belief that the correct HEBREW pronunciation of YHWH has indeed been lost. In this regard God's statement in Jeremiah 23 applies here.

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart; WHICH THINK TO CAUSE MY PEOPLE TO FORGET MY NAME by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. (Jeremiah 23:25-27 AV)

The correct pronunciation of YHWH was still known AND USED in the days when Jeremiah recorded this statement. Even this verse itself implies that God's name was still known at that time. It was false prophets who came up with the idea that you are supposed to read "Adonai" whenever you see the word YHWH. That idea found total acceptance amongst the Jews. So it was left to the Samaritans, who according to Jesus Christ Himself know not what they worship, to preserve THEIR pronunciation of this word. And so the correct pronunciation has been forgotten or lost. However, THE MEANING of this particular name, used by both, God the Father and Jesus Christ, has not been lost. That meaning is well known. It means "the Ever Living One", or "the Eternal". And THAT is important for us in God's Church today to understand.

Let's now look at another point.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR "MESSIAH"

In our English translations of the O.T. we find the word "MESSIAH" in two consecutive verses in Daniel chapter 9.

Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto THE MESSIAH the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall MESSIAH be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:25-26 AV)

The Hebrew word here translated "Messiah" is the noun "mashiyach", which is formed from the verb "mashach", which means "TO ANOINT". So the noun "mashiyach" literally means "THE ANOINTED ONE".

So exactly who is "the Messiah"? Who in the Old Testament is the "mashiyach"?

The noun "mashiyach" is used 39 times in the Old Testament, but ONLY TWICE is it used to refer to Jesus Christ! The other 37 times this noun is used to refer to human beings! For example, the first time this noun is ever used is in Leviticus chapter 4 ...

If the priest THAT IS ANOINTED (mashiyach = "that is messiah") do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering. (Leviticus 4:3 AV)

Here the High Priest is referred to as "messiah".

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S ANOINTED (mashiyach = "messiah") *is* before him. (1 Samuel 16:6 AV)

Here Samuel thought that Jesse's oldest son Eliab was God's "messiah".

And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S ANOINTED (mashiyach = "messiah"), to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD. (1 Samuel 24:6 AV)

Here David referred to King Saul as God's "messiah".

But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S ANOINTED (mashiyach = "messiah")? (2 Samuel 19:21 AV)

Here Abishai referred to David as God's "messiah".

These examples should suffice to illustrate that the Hebrew word for "messiah" is used 37 times for men like kings and priests, and only twice for Jesus Christ (though a few of those 37 places may actually also be references to Jesus Christ, thereby increasing the number for Jesus Christ somewhat). Once again this illustrates that God is concerned primarily with the meaning of a word. So the Hebrew word for "Messiah" is not at all used exclusively for Jesus Christ. It is not a title that is reserved for Jesus Christ, but rather a descriptive term that can apply to anyone who is "anointed" for a specific office. And it is used FREQUENTLY to refer to human beings who had been "anointed" ... kings and High Priests.

Now let's look at the New Testament.

THE WORD "MESSIAH" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Notice the following two verses.

He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found THE MESSIAS (in Greek text = Messias), which is, being interpreted, THE CHRIST (in Greek text = Christos). (John 1:41 AV)

The woman saith unto him, I know that MESSIAS (in Greek text = Messias) cometh, which is CALLED CHRIST(in Greek text = Christos): when he is come, he will tell us all things. (John 4:25 AV)

These are the only two verses in the New Testament where this word "Messias" is used in the Greek text. Now consider the following:

In the Greek text of these two verses it says "Messias", which the KJV translators left untranslated in the English text. But "Messias" is NOT A GREEK WORD! It is only the Greek form of the HEBREW word "Mashiyach", but it has no meaning in Greek. It is just a Greek form of the Hebrew word that means "the Anointed One".

In Greek the verb for "to anoint" is "chrio" and the Greek for "the Anointed One" is the adjective "Christos". So here is what we see in these verses.

1.) When Andrew came to his brother Simon Peter, Andrew used A HEBREW WORD, the word "Mashiyach", to refer to Jesus Christ.

2) John, in writing this gospel account, adds the explanatory comment "WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED ...". This very clearly shows that John was writing in a language different from Hebrew. If ALL of John 1:41 had been written in Hebrew, THEN John would not have written the phrase "WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED ...". So these two verses PROVE that the Gospel of John could not have been first written in the Hebrew language, because the whole verses, every word in them, would have been translated into Greek. And the word "Messias" would not be there.

3) These two verses do NOT contain any Hebrew SPEAKING ... there are no whole sentences in the Hebrew language. It is just the one single Hebrew word (Mashiyach, which is transliterated by John into the Greek alphabet as Messias) that is used in both verses. Andrew and Peter were speaking Aramaic, as was Jesus Christ during His whole ministry. But the Hebrew word "Mashiyach" had been retained as a title in the Aramaic language (somewhat like the Latin name "Caesar" being retained as a title in German as "Kaiser" and in Russian as "Tsar"). This use as a title is quite clear from Andrew's usage of "we have found THE Messiah", obviously expecting his brother Simon Peter to understand that he was referring to one specific man, to whom this title applied.

4) The Samaritan woman in John 4:25 was speaking Aramaic! The Samaritans simply did not speak Hebrew! However, she was certainly also familiar with the Hebrew language TITLE "Mashiyach" that the Samaritans possibly also used in reference to the Messiah. But whereas in John 1:41 John added the editorial explanation ("which is, being interpreted ...") when he wrote down this account, here in John 4:25 the Samaritan woman herself OFFERED THE GREEK LANGUAGE TRANSLATION "Christos" for this Hebrew title. This verse shows THE WOMAN HERSELF presenting this title in TWO languages!

5) Now consider this carefully: There was really no need for her to translate the Hebrew word "Mashiyach" into Aramaic! Yes, "Mashiyach" was a Hebrew language word, but EVERYBODY WHO SPOKE ARAMAIC, in Judea and in Samaria, fully accepted this Hebrew language title as a part of the Aramaic vocabulary (like people today fully accepting the French title "MONSIEUR Mitterand" without feeling the need to say "which is to say MISTER Mitterand" ... I don't here mean to imply any parallels in the meanings of "Mashiyach" and "mister"). Many titles are easily recognized across different language barriers. And the Samaritan woman here would NOT have translated the Hebrew word "Mashiyach" into Aramaic for Jesus Christ's benefit.

6) For the Samaritans their second language was GREEK! For many Samaritans Greek would even have been their first language. Hebrew was NEVER a language they got involved with! Samaria was also a part of the Greek language sphere of influence. The Samaritans did not have the bias against Greek that had been initiated amongst SOME religious Jews 200 years earlier with the Maccabean revolts. Most Samaritans would very likely have been fluent in Greek, the language of the empire, as well as being fluent in Aramaic.

7) The only possibility here is that the woman herself provided the title in the GREEK language. She would have said: "... Mashiyach ... which is called Christos". Any religious Jews or Samaritans, who were Greek speaking, would have thought of the Messiah in terms of "Christos", which has the 100% EXACT same meaning as "Mashiyach". And the Samaritan woman would have been equally familiar with the Greek language title as she would have been with the Hebrew language title ... and so she presented them both here in this verse.

8) Our English language translators have done exactly the same thing in retaining titles from another language. They coined the English word "Messiah" without really translating the Hebrew word into English; and they coined the English word "Christ" without really translating the Greek word into English.

9) So John, in writing his gospel account in the Greek language, presented the woman's reference to "Mashiyach" in the Greek transliterated form "Messias", and he left her reference to "Christos"

unchanged, as this was already a Greek word. The English language translators translated this whole verse into English EXCEPT for TWO words ... they left the Greek version of "Mashiyach" (i.e. Messiah) unchanged, and then they also simply anglicized the Greek word "Christos" into "Christ".

10) When we very carefully consider these two verses (John 1:41 and John 4:25), then it should become clear that this Gospel of John simply could not originally have been written in either the Hebrew language or the Aramaic language. The references to "the Anointed One" in TWO different languages in both of these verses rule out Hebrew and Aramaic as the original language for this gospel. The only possibility is that this gospel was FIRST written in the Greek language.

And THAT makes very clear that the words "theos" and "kurios" and "Jesus" and "Christ" are the ones that God inspired the Apostle John to use in reference to God the Father and to Jesus Christ. And that eliminates any rationale for using "sacred names".

But let's continue in the New Testament.

CALLED "CHRISTIANS" RATHER THAN "MESSIANS"

We have seen that in two places in his gospel account John used the Greek form "Messias" of the Hebrew word "Mashiyach". Now IF it was wrong to translate the meaning of "Messiah" into Greek, THEN John could have used this Greek form "Messias" throughout his gospel account, rather than "Christos". He clearly had this word "Messias" available to use. There are other examples where the Hebrew word was simply turned into a Greek word ... e.g. the Hebrew word "shabbath" was turned into the Greek word "sabbaton", which is used 68 times in the New Testament. John really did not have to resort to using the Greek word "Christos" at all if that had indeed been wrong! So let's examine John's usage of these words in his writings.

The Apostle John uses the adjective "christos" 21 times in his gospel account, as well as 11 times in the Book of Revelation, as well as 14 times in his first two epistles. So John used the word "Messias" twice in his writings and the word "Christos" 46 times. In both instances where John used the word "Messias" it is immediately translated into Greek, so that the word "Messias" never appears without THE MEANING being immediately translated for us into Greek ... once by John himself and once by the Samaritan woman herself. The Apostle John clearly used the word "christos" in preference to the word "messias".

Now did the members of the Church after Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 refer to Jesus Christ as "Mashiyach" (or "Messias" in Greek) or did they refer to Jesus Christ as "Christos"? IF they would have talked about "Mashiyach" THEN outsiders would have called them "MESSIANS" (meaning "followers of Messiah"); and IF they would have talked about "Christ" THEN outsiders would have called them "CHRISTIANS" (meaning "followers of Christos").

So notice the following Scriptures:

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And THE DISCIPLES WERE CALLED CHRISTIANS FIRST IN ANTIOCH. (Acts 11:26 AV)

Do you grasp the significance of this verse?

This is the very first "local congregation" of God's Church that the Apostle Paul ever became a part of! Barnabas had gone to Tarsus to bring Paul back to Antioch to assist him with the ministry there. And Paul's first local congregation is where outsiders started to refer to church members as "followers of

CHRISTOS", rather than referring to them as "followers of Messias". They were called "Christians".

Had the members of the Church in Antioch used the word "Mashiyach" in reference to Jesus Christ, they would NOT have been called "Christians". As it is, the name coined in Antioch stuck. That's why Acts 11:26 says that there they were FIRST referred to as "Christians", implying this name was then later also used elsewhere.

Many years later Paul, after he had been arrested, appeared before King Agrippa. To Agrippa Paul said: "I know you are an expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" (Acts 26:2-3). Then Paul explained his situation and also about Jesus Christ. At the end of Paul's explanation, which had been very plausible and persuasive, King Agrippa responded as follows:

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be A CHRISTIAN (Greek "Christianos"). (Acts 26:28 AV)

So here is a king who is, according to Paul, very familiar with Jewish customs and ways. Clearly, Agrippa already KNEW there were some people who were referred to as "Christians", rather than as "Messias". Paul had only used the word "Jesus" twice (in verses 9 and 15) and the word "Christ" once (in verse 23), yet Agrippa knew about "Christians". Certainly he knew about "Christians" because the Church had by then existed in Jerusalem for over two decades, and as someone familiar with all the religious groupings amongst the Jews he would also have known about these "Christians".

King Agrippa's reference here to "Christians" rather than to "Messias" should make clear that the Church had become identified with the GREEK language name "Christians" rather than with the Hebrew language name "Messias". Also, in verse 23 Paul had used the word "Christos" and not the word "Messias" in reference to Jesus Christ.

That CHRIST (Greek Christos) should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:23 AV)

John's Gospel makes clear that Paul COULD have used the word "Mashiyach" here, which Luke would then have transliterated into Greek as "Messias". But Paul chose to use the Greek translation "Christos".

Likewise the Apostle Peter towards the end of his life, in writing his first epistle, chose to use the Greek word "Christianos" rather than the (potential) Hebrew language derived word "Messias".

If ye be reproached for the name of CHRIST (Christos), happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. (1 Peter 4:14 AV)

Yet if *any man suffer* AS A CHRISTIAN (Christianos), let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (1 Peter 4:16 AV)

Furthermore, in the New Testament, where we saw that the Hebrew origin word "Messias" is used twice, the Greek word "Christos" is used 530 times in 459 different verses. So the word "Christ" is used overwhelmingly in preference to "Messias". And there is one more point to notice in this regard:

Where in the Old Testament the Hebrew word "mashiyach" was used for kings and for priests that had been "anointed", in addition to being used for Jesus Christ, the New Testament Greek translation

"Christos" is used EXCLUSIVELY to refer to Jesus Christ. There are 123 references to the "high priest" or the "chief priest" but never is the word "anointed one" (Greek "Christos") applied to any of them. In the New Testament "Christos" ("the anointed One") is only used for Jesus Christ.

Clearly the New Testament writers used the word "Christos" as a title exclusively for Jesus Christ. The reason they chose this title is because the meaning of this Greek word is 100% the same as the meaning of the Old Testament Hebrew word "Mashiyach". It is the meaning that is important to God, not "the sound-bite".

Now let's look at Acts 4:12.

ACTS 4:12 EXAMINED

The situation in Acts chapter 4 was as follows: Peter and John had been arrested the previous evening. By then the Church in Jerusalem had grown to 5000 strong (Acts 4:4) ... and these two men represented the top leadership of this new religious group. So the top Jewish rulers and elders were gathered to question Peter and John, because they could not deny the miraculous healing that had taken place (Acts 3:6-10).

So Peter under inspiration (Acts 4:8) said in verse 10:

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that BY THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. (Acts 4:10 AV)

Earlier we examined the point that Luke wrote the Book of Acts in the Greek language to the Greek speaking Theophilus (Acts 1:1). However, even in writing this book in Greek, Luke could STILL have used the word "Messias". Now Peter would certainly have spoken in Aramaic to these assembled Jewish leaders. And when they spoke Aramaic, the Jews very likely still used the Hebrew version of biblical names. So Peter very likely said ... : "by the name of Joshua Mashiyach", which Luke COULD have written in Greek as: "by the name of Jesus MESSIAS", even as John recorded the word "Messias" in John 1:41.

Had Luke done that, it might have indicated a desire to retain the Hebrew version of the title for "the Anointed One". However, Luke clearly TRANSLATED Peter's very likely reference to "Joshua Mashiyach" INTO GREEK as "Jesus Christos". Peter has already spelled out exactly who he is speaking about ... the man they had crucified. [The Hebrew form for "Joshua" would have been "Jehoshua".]

Now let's see verse 12.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12 AV)

The name Peter means is the one he had mentioned two verses earlier. Yes, Peter most likely was speaking Aramaic to those assembled leaders ... but God chose to preserve Peter's words ONLY IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE! And Luke's choice of the word "Christos" over the word "Messias" shows that God preserved the GREEK TRANSLATION of the title "the Anointed One", rather than just the Greek form of the Hebrew word.

NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES GOD EVER GIVE US THE INDICATION THAT ANY NAMES FOR GOD THE FATHER OR FOR JESUS CHRIST MUST AT ALL COSTS BE PRESERVED AS HEBREW LANGUAGE "SOUND-BITES"!

Rather, we see repeated examples of God's names being translated. In the Old Testament we see translations into the Aramaic language, which nobody even attempts to deny. And in the New Testament we see translations into the Greek language. And the overwhelming preference in the Greek New Testament for the word "Christos" over the word "Messias" shows that God INTENDED for the names for God to be translated into whatever language people would be speaking, so that the names are meaningful in that language as opposed to mere phonetic sounds.

Now let's look at another question.

WHAT ABOUT THE HEBREW LANGUAGE ORIGINAL OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL?

Earlier we looked at historical records from the Catholic "church fathers" that indicate Matthew's Gospel and perhaps even the Epistle to the Hebrews were originally written in Hebrew? So why don't we use the Hebrew manuscripts for these two books?

Well, for a start we don't have ANY copy of the Letter to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language. We only have the Greek copies of this book, from which translations were made into other languages including Aramaic. Dr. Trimm himself has acknowledged on page 63 of his book that the Peshitta version of Hebrews is a hybrid text. So the only option is to assume that God INTENDED for the Greek language translation of the Letter to the Hebrews to be preserved for us ... because there is no Hebrew language manuscript for this epistle available.

The reason for why Paul would have written this letter in Hebrew is very understandable; it would have been to counter any bias against his own person and, as he told the Corinthians, "unto the Jews I became AS A JEW" (1.Cor. 9:20). But also recall that towards the end of his life he instructed Timothy to bring him the books he himself had written. Notice ...

The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, BRING *WITH THEE*, AND THE BOOKS, *BUT* ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS. (2 Timothy 4:13 AV)

Paul wanted Timothy to bring him copies of all the books he himself had written, some of them on parchments. Paul's purpose was to look through AND EDIT anything that he, the author, wanted to now change, realizing that he was nearing the end of his life. Clement of Alexandria reports that Luke made an accurate translation into Greek of Paul's Hebrew language version of the Letter to the Hebrews. I would expect that at this time Paul himself checked through all of his own epistles, including Luke's translation into Greek. Paul would not have hesitated, I believe, to make any alterations or corrections to the Greek language text of his own letter, had he felt the need to do so. Paul was using the opportunity to put his own final stamp of approval on all of his own writings.

As far as the Gospel of Matthew is concerned, the only Hebrew language manuscripts available (DuTillet and Shem Tob) are both only from the Middle Ages. Shem Tob is admitted to be in an impure form and as having undergone a series of revisions. When George Howard first thoroughly examined DuTillet he concluded that it was a translation from the Greek (Footnote 92 on page 35 of Dr. Trimm's book), though he later changed his mind to thinking DuTillet must be A REVISION of some earlier and unknown Hebrew language text. Either way, both these Hebrew language texts of Matthew are clearly not original. So we do not have any Hebrew text for the Gospel of Matthew that we can look to. Again, God clearly intended the Greek language version of Matthew's Gospel to be preserved.

Consider this:

By the time we get to the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, THE FOCUS is clearly on the Greek speaking world! John wrote this book to "the seven churches which are in (the province of) Asia" (Revelation 1:4). This was not written to people who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic; it was written to people who spoke GREEK! No way would John have written in Hebrew or in Aramaic to people in Ephesus and in Smyrna and in Pergamos and in Thyatira and in Sardis and in Philadelphia and in Laodicea. John himself was at that time on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9), where Greek was the common language. This focus towards the Greek speaking world by the end of the New Testament should show us that Greek was going to be the medium of preservation for the New Testament.

Thus, even though two books of the New Testament may indeed have first been written in the Hebrew language, there is no indication anywhere that God wanted a Hebrew language version of these two books or of any others for that matter, to be preserved ... because there are no reliable Hebrew language manuscripts of ANY of the books of the New Testament extant anywhere.

So there is really no evidence anywhere, neither in the historical records that have been preserved, nor in the manuscripts that have been preserved, nor in the internal evidence of the New Testament itself, that would support the use of "sacred names". So why do people even get involved with "sacred names"?

THE PROBLEM WITH THE FOCUS ON "SACRED NAMES"

For people who become involved with "sacred names" the name itself becomes an idol! That supposedly correct "sound-bite" becomes the all-important thing. For the Jehovah's Witnesses the word "Jehovah" becomes the most important issue. For other "sacred names" groups the name "Yahweh" or "Yahveh" or "Yeshua" or "Y'shua", etc. becomes the focal point of their religion.

Never mind that the writers of the New Testament freely translated the names for deity into the Greek language; never mind that Jesus Christ specifically instructs us to pray to "the FATHER" rather than to "Yahweh", etc.; never mind that Paul also specifically instructs us to avoid striving about words to no profit (2.Tim. 2:14); never mind that the Jews themselves CERTAINLY did not preserve the correct pronunciation of YHWH; never mind that at least 25 of the 27 books comprising the New Testament were originally written in Greek; never mind that Aramaic doesn't feature ANYWHERE as far as "originals" for the books of the New Testament are concerned; never mind that all of the Scriptures presented as proof for supposed "Semitic language originals" amount to bickering about totally inconsequential issues, showing that the ONLY reason for arguing for supposed "Semitic language originals" is to provide a justification for using "sacred names" AND NOTHING ELSE ... for some people using the "correct" sacred names for God and Christ become the most important issue of their religion.

I believe that the "sacred names" are a form of idolatry. I believe there is a great danger that those "sacred names" are a part of "the names of blasphemy" with which "the beast" in Revelation 17:3 is covered. To those who insist on using "sacred names" I will say the same that Jesus Christ said to the Samaritan woman: you worship you know not what (John 4:22).

It follows that I feel extremely uncomfortable when people send me messages with greetings in the name of "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" or "Y'shua", etc.. Those names have the same effect on me as if someone was sending me greetings in the name of Allah or Buddha. I don't like receiving messages with those "sacred names". Yes, IF YOUR MOTHER TONGUE IS HEBREW, by all means go ahead and use the Hebrew language names of God ... but only when you are speaking Hebrew. IF YOUR MOTHER TONGUE IS ARAMAIC, by all means go ahead and use the Aramaic language names of God ... but only when you are speaking Aramaic. But if you are speaking English, then don't use some Hebrew language

"sound-bites". And please don't include any "sacred names" in any message which you may write to me.

There is, I believe, one more form of speaking about God that some people indulge in when they pray, and even at times in their conversations, that needs to be addressed. It is not really a matter of "sacred names" but it does tie in here, I believe, because it involves speaking about God. This form I believe is a form of PRESUMPTUOUSNESS! I am referring to people who insist on using phrases like "OUR ELDER BROTHER" to refer to Jesus Christ in their prayers, be it in public prayers or be it in private prayers.

SHOULD YOU REFER TO "OUR ELDER BROTHER" IN YOUR PRAYERS?

We in God's Church often mirror the general attitudes that are extant in the society around us. Until the last half century or so interactions between people were rather formal and stiff. People did not dare to become too familiar with someone in the way they addressed them, unless such familiarity was clearly invited by the other party. People were rigidly addressed as "Mr." and as "Mrs.", rather than by their first names.

Today the world is a much more casual place, and I personally prefer this by a long shot. I don't really care for all this "formality". I much prefer being addressed in an informal way rather than as "Mr. Nelte". But there is one area in my life where I am very careful not to become too casual or too familiar ... and that is when I speak TO God in prayer and when I speak ABOUT God in my conversations or sermons.

As the world around us has shaken off formalities and become more and more casual and familiar with other people, so some of us in God's Church have become a bit more familiar with Almighty God and with His Son Jesus Christ. At first, a couple of decades ago, I would just very, very occasionally hear someone in an opening or closing prayer actually refer to God the Father as "Dad" or refer to Jesus Christ as "our Elder Brother at Your right hand". I'd hear references like that perhaps once every two or three years. Thankfully the idea of referring to God the Father as "Dad" never did catch on, and I have only heard people use that perhaps five times in over 20 years. But the idea of, in prayer to God, referring to "our Elder Brother" has been used by a number of people in my presence, which bothers me because it always sounds so incredibly presumptuous. And I have noticed this becoming more common than it was ten or twenty years ago.

Let me mention one piece of advice:

DON'T EVER BECOME TOO FAMILIAR WITH GOD!

Consider the following.

For a start, how did Aaron address his kid-brother Moses? As "MY LORD"!

And Aaron said, Let not the anger of MY LORD (Hebrew adonai) wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are set* on mischief. (Exodus 32:22 AV)

And Aaron said unto Moses, ALAS, MY LORD (Hebrew adonai), I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. (Numbers 12:11 AV)

Shouldn't Aaron have said: "let not the anger of my younger brother wax hot" and "alas my younger brother, I beseech you ..."? Had Aaron addressed Moses like that, which theoretically he was entitled to do, he would very likely have received a totally different response. Why? Because THE WAY he addressed Moses already conveyed an attitude, even before he said whatever else he wanted to say.

And THE WAY you and I speak about God and about Jesus Christ already conveys an attitude before we say anything else to God. And we need to beware of EVER conveying an attitude of familiarity with God.

Those people who have followed someone else's bad example of referring to Jesus Christ in prayer to God as "our Elder Brother" ... would you also address Jesus Christ as "Brother Jesus"? Because those two are basically the same thing! If you use the one form of speaking about Jesus Christ, you are in effect sanctioning the other. But if you, at this point in time, would not dare to address Jesus Christ as "Brother Jesus", then you also should not speak about "OUR ELDER BROTHER".

How did James, the younger half-brother of Jesus Christ speak about Christ? Surely, if anyone ever had the right to speak about "our elder brother", it was James. So how did he handle this matter? Did he call himself "the servant of God and of my Elder Brother Jesus Christ"? No, he didn't!

James, A SERVANT OF GOD AND OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. (James 1:1 AV)

How about the following statements from this half-brother of Jesus Christ.

Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which OUR ELDER BROTHER hath promised to them that love him. (James 1:12 AV)

My brethren, have not the faith of OUR ELDER BROTHER Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. (James 2:1 AV)

Humble yourselves in the sight of OUR ELDER BROTHER, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:10 AV)

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of OUR ELDER BROTHER: (James 5:14 AV)

As you can see, I have just replaced the word "Lord" in these verses with the expression "our Elder Brother". Can you see that it just doesn't convey the same attitude as does the word "Lord"? Notice especially James 4:10. HUMBLING OURSELVES doesn't really go along with elevating ourselves in our prayers to the status of Christ's "brothers". If you are a minister, would you ever anoint a sick person "in the name of our Elder Brother"? I don't believe that would convey the right respect for Jesus Christ.

WHY do people tell you that someone famous is "their brother" or "their second cousin"? To impress you, that's all! We all do that at times, right? Beware that the expression ("idle words"?) "our Elder Brother" is not used from the exact same motivation as when we tell our friends that someone famous is our son's brother-in-law.

Jesus Christ very clearly and unambiguously instructed us to pray IN HIS NAME (John 14:13-14; John 15:16; John 16:23-24; etc.). That "name" is Jesus Christ! It is not "our Elder Brother". We already looked at Acts 4:10 ...

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. (Acts 4:10 AV)

You can translate the words "Jesus Christ" into any language you like, but no translation ever comes out as "our Elder Brother" ... it always comes out as "Jesus Christ".

Notice what Jesus Christ said to His disciples.

But be not ye called Rabbi: for ONE IS YOUR MASTER, *even* Christ; and ALL YE ARE BRETHREN. (Matthew 23:8 AV)

The instruction here is quite clear: ALL OF US are brethren, and Jesus Christ is THE MASTER for all of us. That's not quite the same picture as "OUR Elder Brother".

It's one thing for Jesus Christ to refer to us as "my brethren", thereby elevating us to a higher status than all those people who are not "his brethren". It is another thing altogether for us to turn this around and to elevate ourselves by referring to Him as "our Elder Brother".

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of THESE MY BRETHREN, ye have done *it* unto me. (Matthew 25:40 AV)

How about a servant of God who actually used the word "brother" for a fellow believer but used the form of address "Lord" to refer to Jesus Christ?

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, BROTHER SAUL, THE LORD, *even* JESUS, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9:17 AV)

Do you think the thought even crossed Ananias' mind to refer to "the Lord Jesus" as "OUR ELDER BROTHER"? I don't believe so!

How about another half-brother of Jesus Christ's?

Jude, THE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST, and BROTHER OF JAMES, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called: (Jude 1:1 AV)

Notice what we have here. Like James, Jude also calls himself "a servant" (Greek *doulos* = slave) of Jesus Christ. And he identifies himself as "a brother of James".

So here we have:

A) Two men who were both half-brothers to Jesus Christ, and both are extremely careful to not even hint at any "brotherly" relationship to Jesus Christ. Instead, both identify themselves as "slaves" of Jesus Christ, a status that is open to all Christians.

B) People in God's Church today who, without so much as giving it a second thought, casually speak about "our Elder Brother Jesus Christ".

Consider further: Peter and John and Matthew spent three-and-one-half years with Jesus Christ in person, James and Jude had lived in the same house with Christ for many years, Paul was personally

taught by Jesus Christ as one "out of season" for several years ... didn't all of these men KNOW that Jesus Christ is our "Elder Brother"? WHY don't ANY of them speak as freely about "OUR Elder Brother" in their writings as some men in the Church today do in their public prayers?

The principle of Luke 14 is something we should keep in mind.

But when thou art bidden, go and SIT DOWN IN THE LOWEST ROOM; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, GO UP HIGHER: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 14:10-11 AV)

Let's identify ourselves as His servants rather than as "His younger brothers and sisters". Then Jesus Christ can say to us: "Go up higher MY BRETHREN".

Never confuse what Jesus Christ calls us with what we are to call Him! If Christ happens to call us by some term, that does not mean we are supposed to call Him by the same term! We are not dealing with one of our peers when we are dealing with Jesus Christ, and the forms of address between Jesus Christ and us are NOT based on RECIPROCITY! For us to indulge in reciprocity (since Christ has called US His "brethren", therefore it must be okay for us to call HIM "our elder brother") in this regard is presumptuous!

Notice what Jesus Christ said:

YE CALL ME MASTER AND LORD: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:13-14 AV)

Isn't this clear enough? We are to call Him "Lord and Master", not "our Elder Brother"!

A little later in the same context Jesus Christ said:

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. (John 15:15 AV)

So at the one and same occasion Jesus Christ said that HE calls us "friends" and that we do well when WE call Him "Lord and Master". Notice also that Jesus Christ did NOT say: "henceforth I have called you BRETHREN"! He said: "henceforth I have called you FRIENDS".

That is an immense honour, for us to be called "friends" by Jesus Christ. HOWEVER, even after that none of the writers of any of the books of the New Testament (and Peter and John and Matthew were present when Christ said those very words!) ever dared to describe himself as "A FRIEND of Jesus Christ's". Check Matthew's Gospel and the four books John wrote and the two books Peter wrote ... none of these men ever called themselves "Christ's personal friends" when they wrote to the Church.

Abraham was called "the Friend of God" (James 2:23), but that does not mean that Abraham ever in his whole life turned this around to say "the Eternal, my Friend". It is our presumptuous world that wants us to apply reciprocity to statements like that, but that's not how things work before God. Abraham did not pray to "my Friend, the Eternal".

One thing I have noticed is that those men who I saw and heard referring to God as "Dad" in a closing prayer at Church services, and those who on a regular basis liked to throw the expression "our Elder Brother" into their prayers are mostly no longer around. They don't seem to be a part of the Church of God any more.

So beware of presumptuousness towards God, and don't in your prayers or in your conversations refer to Jesus Christ as "OUR Elder Brother". Wait until Christ Himself says to you: "friend, move up higher".

Enough said on this point.

After examining all the things I have covered in this paper, I am convinced that God expects those of us who speak English to use the terms "God the Father" and "Our Father" and "Jesus Christ" in speaking about the two members of the God Family.

Frank W. Nelte