

When the scribes ceased to pronounce the sacred name, they adopted the custom, when they came to the four consonants in the Bible, of simply saying "the name," and this custom lasted for a time. Eventually, however, it was replaced by the custom of saying *adonai*, the Hebrew word for "my Lord." The Jews who made the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek followed this custom, using the Greek word for "Lord".

When, eventually, vowel marks were introduced into Hebrew manuscripts, the vowels of *adonai* were placed on the consonants *YHWH*, since the readers always said *adonai* instead of attempting to pronounce the sacred name. It is thought that an early Christian translator, unfamiliar with this practice, may have read the Hebrew word as he found it in the manuscript, and thus have formed the word Jehovah by combining the vowels of *adonai* with the consonants of the original name. Because of this very reasonable suggestion of its origin, most scholars are quite convinced that the form "Jehovah" is not a correct representation of the original name.

Whether this is true or not, it remains a fact that we do not know how the original name was pronounced. This does not impress me as particularly important, since we really do not know exactly how any ancient name was pronounced. Our modern form is always only a representation, not an exact reproduction. Pronunciation is constantly changing, and there is no way of knowing exactly how people talked, before the invention of phonographs and tape recorders. I have heard it said that if we were to hear George Washington speak today, we would understand hardly anything that he said, since pronunciation is always gradually changing. I do not know whether it changes quite so fast as that or not.

Today no one can say with absolute certainty that the name was not pronounced "Jehovah," although it seems unlikely. There is a good possibility that the pronunciation of it was somewhat like "Yahweh," but no one can be at all sure. After all, this latter form rests largely upon a theory of etymology that may or may not be correct.

Since, prior to the emergence of the cult known as Jehovah's Witnesses, the form Jehovah was nearly always used in what I would consider as a rather devotional environment, while the form Yahweh is used so constantly by critics who do not accept