

Do We Honor Yahweh by Referring to Him as “Our God”?

Part II

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Clarification of Part One: Let’s Make One Thing Perfectly Clear!

One of the great challenges an author is faced with when writing to his audience is that of clearly communicating his thoughts - his very perspective - in such a manner that he is not misunderstood. Upon reading Part One of this study, at least one person misunderstood our intent regarding the translation of titles from one language to another, and we would like to clarify that now.

Titles may be translated from one language to another. This is a fact that is so widely recognized that we won’t even attempt to explain its validity. Names, on the other hand, are *not* translated. Instead, they are *transliterated*, which means their pronunciation is carried over from one language to the next with little variation. Although we have been subtly taught that *names* may be translated from one language to another, the truth of the matter is, they cannot, unless you want to say something like, “the name *Daniel* means ‘Elohim is Judge.’” Despite this Hebrew to English translation, no one is going to argue that we should be referring to this Hebrew prophet as *Elohim is Judge* when we speak English. Conversely, no one is going to attempt to translate into English names such as *Adolf Hitler*, *Mao-Tse-Tung*, *Osama bin Ladin*, or *Pocahontas*. Titles, however, are a different matter. For example, a *cook* is called a *cocinero* in Spanish. A *fireman* is termed a *bombero* in Spanish, and a *nurse* is considered an *enfermera*. The Spanish translations of these titles in no way resembles the English counterpart! Sometimes, though, a title can be spelled the same (or nearly the same) from one language to the next. For example, a *doctor* is *un doctor* in Spanish. *Policeman* is *policia*. *President* is *presidente*. When it comes to Yahweh’s titles, the most common ones employed in the Hebrew language are *adonai* and *elohim*. We do not deny that these titles can rightfully be translated into the English language if one so chooses, and in fact this is what June and I normally do. We usually refer to Yahweh as our *Almighty*, our *Mighty One*, or our *Sovereign*, all of which are considered accurate translations of the Hebrew title *elohim*.

As indicated by the title of our study, a controversy exists with regard to the limits to which we can go when it comes to translating *elohim* from Hebrew into English. We know that a proper translation must take into consideration the **original intent** of that Hebrew word, conveying *strength*, *might*, and *power*. All one has to do to learn the original, intended meaning of *elohim* is to look it up in a *Strong’s Concordance*. This Hebrew word is most commonly translated “god” in English, and is word #430 in *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*. This word is traced to word #410 in *Strong’s (el)*, which literally means *strength* and *mighty*. Armed with the knowledge of the original meaning of *elohim*, we come face to face with the question regarding the validity of the translation that was arbitrarily chosen by the translators of such versions as the *King James Version*. Does the translation “god” most **accurately** and **properly** reflect the intended meaning of the Hebrew word *elohim*? From where does the word “god” hail? Should the word “god” be considered a “translation” of *elohim* **or** a “transliteration” of the name of an idol? Do we honor Yahweh by referring to Him as “our God”?

Review of Part One: If We Can Properly Refer to Yahweh as “Our God,” Then Can’t We Also Refer to Him as “Our Zeus”?

In part one of our study, we shared how we, like many others, diligently researched the issue pertaining to the name we should call our Heavenly Father, and contrary to what we had been taught, we concluded that indeed His name is *Yahweh*, not God. The end result, of course, was that we rejected the error and accepted the truth. We then mentioned that a recent trend within the Yahwist Movement has been to accept a new teaching that has spread through our ranks, a teaching that is actually an *old one* resurfacing. This teaching involves recognizing “God” as an acceptable *title* for Yahweh. We addressed one of the chief arguments in support of this belief, which is as follows: Since titles originally ascribed to Yahweh (such as *baal*, *elohim* and *adonai*) were eventually converted into names of heathen deities, some believers deduce that this “paganization” of an originally pure title justifies rendering an *already-heathen* name of a false idol (*God*) as a legitimate English translation of the Hebrew title “Elohim.” As presented in part one, Yahweh identifies a false deity named *God* as an idol worshipped by those who forsake Him (Isaiah 65:11). We countered the argument listed above by stating that if we are at liberty to apply the name of this heathen deity as a title for Yahweh, then we must be equally free to apply the names of *other* deities as titles as well. We would thus be free to refer to Yahweh as “our Zeus,” “our Artemis,” “our Apollo,” and even as “our Satan.” We live in a free country. We are free to worship our Creator however we see fit, with only a few exceptions. We can pretty much obey Him however we want and we can even call Him whatever we choose. The question begging an answer, though, is, “**Does referring to Yahweh as ‘our God’ HONOR Him?**”

If you read part one, you know that our answer to the above question is an emphatic, “**No!**” Let us now proceed with part two, as we critically examine seven objections that have been presented in opposition to our conclusion.

Part II: Seven Objections Answered

Objection #1: Is “God” connected to “God”?

In defense of his position, an acquaintance within the Yahwist Movement wrote, “I still do not believe the Baal *God* of Isaiah 65:11 has anything to do with the titles used in English of Lord and God. I do not believe you have proven ‘Gad’ of this passage is the ‘gott’ of the Teutonic tribes, which influenced the English to use the title ‘God.’ ... I don’t believe you can make such a connection and successfully prove your point beyond a reasonable doubt.”¹²

Our response: What this man’s short commentary amounts to, in a nutshell, is saying, “I don’t believe *God* is in any way connected to *God*.” Does this make any sense? My dad has a saying that seems to apply to this situation: “If you can’t tell the difference, there isn’t any!” We maintain that it is unwise to take a word that is pronounced a certain way, then take another word that is pronounced identically, then arbitrarily declare, “They aren’t connected in any way!” Consider the absurdity of this situation. The man quoted above might as well say, “I know Yahweh detests *God*, but Yahweh is my God!” Would this remark make sense? No, it would not.

The man quoted above stated that he doesn’t believe one can “make such a connection” and successfully prove it “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Our contention, however, is that a truth seeker bent on serving Yahweh will not gamble on offending Him in any way. If there is any conscious recognition

of the risk that referring to Yahweh as “our God” *might* offend Him, the truth seeker will avoid doing so. Thus, the burden of proof for “making connections” versus proving that no connection can be made falls upon the man making the statement above; instead of recognizing the title *God* as a valid title because a bonafide connection with the Canaanite deity of fortune¹³ has not yet been irrefutably established by etymologists, we suggest *not* accepting the legitimacy of that title until it can be proven that there definitely *isn't* a connecting link. First and foremost, though, it is our contention that we don't *need* to make the connection, for Yahweh has already made it for us! Yahweh says that *God* is the name of a **false idol**. This sufficiently demonstrates that He would not appreciate anyone converting that name to a title, then applying it to Him! The man making the statement above needs to somehow prove that there definitely *isn't* a connection between the English “God” and the Hebrew “God.” Instead of applying “reasonable doubt” to taking the “sure way,” however, he is applying the term to go the “unsure way.” We support applying the man's “reasonable doubt” principle towards referring to Yahweh with a title *only* if the preponderance of evidence supports its having an honorable origin. In other words, the title “Almighty,” for example, has no apparent ties to heathen worship; we therefore conclude that such a title is honorably applied to Yahweh, unless someone can produce “reasonable doubt.” Can the same be said with regard to the title *God*? No, it cannot.

Some individuals rely on the conclusions of etymologists to form their conclusions as to the origin of the word *God*, even though, as stated above, Yahweh has already *told us* that God is the name of a false deity worshipped by those who “forsake Him.”¹⁴ We believe **Yahweh** is right, no matter what conclusions the etymologists reach! Relying on etymologists' conclusions as to the origin of the word *God* poses a serious problem, for even the etymologists have to admit that they are uncertain of their own conclusions. Note the following, as taken from *The New Dictionary of Theology*:

“The etymology of the English word ‘God,’ as well as of the equivalent words in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, is much disputed.”¹⁵

The Oxford English Dictionary, Volume VI, item “god,” validates the information above.¹⁶ Wilfred Funk, in his book *Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories*, even more dramatically underscores the etymologists' dilemma in tracing the origin of this word:

“The central word of all faiths is *God*, and the history of the title *God* is a tangle of guesses. The word *God* itself is related to similar words in Danish, Saxon, Old High German, Scandinavian, and other languages, and may even be related to an ancient Lithuanian word that referred to someone who practiced magic.”¹⁷

Since even the etymologists are uncertain of the validity of their own conclusions, why should we feel more inclined to accept *their* “findings” above Yahweh's? Does a “tangle of guesses” have preeminence over the very words of Almighty Yahweh? Again, Yahweh has already *told us* that *God* is the name of a false deity worshipped by those who “forsake Him.” Is Yahweh's Word not sufficient?

Objection #2: Did Yahweh Inspire the Germanic Title “Gott” at Babel?

Another gentleman, in his objection to our claim that applying the name/title “God” to Yahweh dishonors Him, proposed that Yahweh inspired *God* to be an acceptable, generic title when the Germanic languages were given at Babel. Since Yahweh inspired each new language given there, and since *God*

was a part of that “inspired Germanic language,” this must mean that Yahweh approves of this generic title. Here is what he wrote in defense of his position:

“Who, when the languages were confounded at Babel, gave the Hebrews ‘Adonai’ and ‘Elohim,’ the Arameans ‘Mare’ and ‘Alaha,’ the Greeks ‘Kurios’ and ‘Theos,’ and the Germans ‘Herr’ and ‘Gott’ to use as terms of deity? The answer ... is that Yahweh was the one who confounded the languages at Babel as He saw fit. *God* is not the only word that is used in modern English worship that sounds like the name of a pagan deity in another language.”¹⁸

Perhaps, as the man quoted above stated, it is true that *God* is not the only word employed in modern English worship that sounds like the name of a pagan deity in another language. However, so far as we know, *God* is the **only title** applied to Yahweh that not only *sounds exactly* like the name of a pagan deity in another language, but it *originated* with the name of a pagan deity in another language. To make matters worse, that “other language” just happens to be *Hebrew*, the very language of Scripture! As if to seal the matter, Yahweh Himself identifies this deity named *God* as a deity worshipped by those who **forsake Him** (Isaiah 65:11)! There are certainly other words besides “god” that sound like the names of pagan deities in other languages. We would have to scrap the entire English language if we were to disassociate each one. Out of respect for our great and majestic Heavenly Father, we do make every attempt to remove from Him titles with origins as patently heathen as the word “god.”

Of course, the logic employed by the man quoted above is this: Since Yahweh confounded the languages, and since He inspired *god* to be the word used in reference to Germanic deities, He **therefore** “must” approve of our referring to Him as “our God” in English or in German. Is it true, though, that the Germanic language can be traced all the way to Babel? No, it is not. In fact, there is absolutely no evidence that any of the several Germanic forms even **existed** prior to the birth of the Messiah. The earliest known Germanic writings only date to the third century CE, showing that these languages clearly represent a combination of a mixture of dialects between one or more languages, as well as the natural evolutionary process that any such language will experience. Consider for a moment the evolutionary nature of languages. The English we speak today, for example, would have been virtually unrecognizable to the English people of, say, 1,000 years ago. According to the *Encyclopedia International*, the “Germanic languages (formerly called the Teutonic languages), are a subgroup of the Indo-European language family. Germanic languages are usually divided into East Germanic, North Germanic, and West Germanic languages. The most important East Germanic language was Gothic, which is now extinct; no living languages belong to this sub-branch.” The article adds, “The oldest Germanic forms attested are names in the writings of Latin and Greek authors. The first extant texts are runic inscriptions of about the 3rd century A.D.”¹⁹

We thus see that even the network of Germanic languages has experienced a substantial evolutionary process, with its Gothic base having been pronounced “extinct.” With this knowledge in mind, does it seem likely or even remotely **possible** that Yahweh ordained the Germanic language at Babel along with its generic title for deity, **god/gott**? No, it does not.

But let’s go back to the dead Gothic language, from which the Germanic languages hail. According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume VI, Online Edition, 1999, item “Etymology of the Word ‘God,’” this word is derived from the Gothic root “gheu.” *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* traces the word *god* to the Indo-European *ghut*, then ultimately to the Sanskrit *hu*, which means “to invoke the gods.”²⁰ This same reference, by the way, admits to this word’s formation being “of uncertain origin,” providing yet another admission from the etymologists themselves that they really cannot be certain how

to trace the origin of the word “god.” Note, though, that even the best etymological sleuth can only succeed in tracing this word to a root (such as *hu* or *gheu*) that sounds **nothing** like “god”! This being the case, we can safely conclude that Yahweh definitely **did not** inspire “God” or even “Gott” as a generic title in any language when He confounded the languages at Babel. The closest one can possibly come in their etymological search is “gheu,” which, again, doesn’t even **sound** like “god.” Thus, even the etymologists would have to admit that it is “reaching” to find a pronunciation match between the words “gheu” and “god”! With the understanding that there really isn’t much of a match between those two words, one should be able to safely conclude that, indeed, **Yahweh is right!** You see, there **is** a match between the English name/title “God” and the Hebrew name “God”! Yahweh identifies “God” as a false deity worshipped by those who **forsake Him**. None of the ancients **ever** applied this term to Yahweh. Much later, though, a group of heathen Germanic (Teutonic) people known as the Druids were indeed found worshipping and invoking their many deities, referring to them as “gods.” Note the commentary on the origin of the word “God” as found in the *Encyclopedia International*:

“The word ‘God’ and its cognates existed in the Germanic family of languages (German *Gott*, Danish *Gud*) in pre-Christian times, and referred to that which is worshipped or invoked in sacrificial offerings. With the conversion of the Teutonic peoples to Christianity, its pre-Christian meanings were largely reshaped and absorbed into the Judeo-Christian tradition.”²¹

Truly, even if Yahweh had **not** Himself spoken against the idol *God*, we would still be faced with the sobering realization that even by etymologists’ admissions, this word hails from heathen roots.

What if Yahweh Had Not Spoken Against “God”?

Although we have just demonstrated the pronunciation “mismatch” between the words *god* and *gheu*, coupled with the fact that a **perfect match** exists with the Canaanite deity of fortune, we would like to pause for a moment to insert a brief concession: If **all** we had to go on was the etymologists’ (in)conclusions, we would be willing to acknowledge (albeit somewhat reluctantly) that “god” is an acceptable title for Yahweh, as even the Apostle Paul referred to Yahweh with the generic title *theos* in such passages as Acts 17:23 (see Objection #6 for an in-depth commentary on this Greek title). Paul evidently employed the title *theos*, even though its established association by Greeks had been directed toward the idols they worshipped. In the same way, the etymologists do not trace the English term *god* to the name of any deity, but rather to expressions and epithets used in reference to idols worshipped by Indo-European peoples. The dilemma we are faced with regarding *god*, however, is that an **alternative etymology** is in question. We maintain that it is more than just “sheer coincidence” that our English term *god* “just happens” to share the same pronunciation as the name of the Canaanite deity of fortune. We further maintain that the relationship between those two words has to be either *etymological* in nature or the result of a fiendish plot on the part of the great deceiver to cause otherwise sincere believers to unwittingly give honor to a false idol. Perhaps it is both.

Any Yahwist believer should be able to recognize that Satan does not want anyone to call upon the Creator with the name that He gave to Himself. Satan would much prefer that we call upon the Creator with the name of a **false idol**, which, as the Apostle Paul reminds us in I Corinthians 10:19-20, is not **really** an “idol” anyway, but a **demon!** Notice what he wrote:

“What do I imply, then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they offer to **demons** and not to Yahweh!” (RSV)

Obviously, then, if sacrifices offered to idols are in actual fact offered to **demons**, then if we call upon the **names** of idols we are in actual fact **calling upon** demons! We believe that most Yahwists are willing to acknowledge this, as well as the fact that Satan would prefer that we call upon these demons than to call upon the Creator by His true name. These same Yahwists, we would like to think, should similarly recognize that Satan would be willing to settle for applying the name of that false idol as a *title* for Yahweh. After all, Satan **is** known as the master of compromise, and as we will see in Objection #4, *God was considered to be the name of a demon by post-Messianic Jews!*

Even **if** etymology truly had *nothing to do* with the relationship of the English “god” vis à vis the Hebrew name “God,” we are nonetheless faced with a very colorful, yet adverse history of this word as outlined by the etymologists themselves. Consider the following background on the word “god” as found in the book *The Private Lives of English Words*:

“English preserves no more spectacular example of what etymologists call ‘ameliorization’ than the etymological development of this word, which goes back to an ancient Proto-Indo-European phrase meaning ‘enjoyer or consumer of that which has been poured forth’ (presumably wine or blood, as a sacrifice). The full phrase survives in Sanskrit as *huta-bhug*, where it was one of the epithets of Agni, the god of fire, whose name is cognate with the Latin stem from which English gets the word *ignite*. The Sanskrit *huta* ‘that which has been poured forth, the sacrifice’ is the exact cognate of the English word *God*, following localization in which the full meaning of the phrase centered in its first element, which occurred in the early Germanic ancestor of English. The Slavic branch of Indo-European reversed this choice, localizing the meaning in the second element of the phrase, and leaving the Slavic *bog* ‘God’ as the survivor.

“With what linguists call ‘connotative extension,’ the meaning became ‘Deity who enjoys the sacrifice,’ but as sacrificial offerings vanished from religious practice, that part of the meaning which had once been primary faded, leaving only the sense in use today, ‘Deity.’”²²

We thus see that either way one “links” this name/title, it is stained with the impurity of heathen worship. In addition, according to the above reference, *god* is derived from the word *huta*, two words that in no way resemble each other: another pronunciation mismatch! Anyone wishing to apply such a term to Yahweh, knowing what we have just shown to be true about the word, must simultaneously ignore or otherwise accept this title’s former association, not to mention the unlikely evolution of the word *huta* (or *gheu*) into the word *god*. Let’s not speculate with the etymologists and their “tangled guesses” regarding the origin of the word *god*, though! Trust in **Yahweh**, Who uses this word to identify a FALSE DEITY.

Objection #3: Should a Culture Redefine a Word Borrowed From Another Language?

Among the reasons listed in the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles” offering support for referring to Yahweh as “our God” is the belief that an individual can morally utter vulgar or otherwise culturally unacceptable words, so long as he or she doesn’t have unethical motives. Note the following:

“Languages, on the other hand, depend on the INTENTION and CONCEPT of the user to make them a moral issue. A word, phrase, dialect, or language can only be ‘pagan’ if the user intends to convey a ‘pagan’ idea or concept! And, even then, it would only be

immoral because of the manner the user intended to use it and NOT due to its very existence! Therefore, another individual could employ the same words, phrases, dialect, or language and not suffer any divine condemnation for his actions because his INTENTIONS are more noble!”²³

The authors go on to say, in the next paragraph of their article, “There is no such thing as a sinful sound.”²⁴

Is it true that “there is no such thing as a sinful sound”? Is this teaching found in the pages of Scripture? No, it is not. The Apostle Paul recognized the fact that there are “sinful sounds,” which is why he wrote the following in Colossians 3:8:

“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” (NIV)

Exhorting us to rid ourselves of filthy language is another way of directing us to get rid of the “sinful sounds” that might come out of our mouths. Thus, the teaching that there is no such thing as a sinful sound did not originate from the pages of Scripture. It came from men attempting to apply their own understanding to the will of the Father.

Let’s turn our attention back to the paragraph above as quoted from the article “The Truth Regarding Divine Titles.” Is it true, as they wrote, that “languages depend on the INTENTION and CONCEPT of the user to make them a moral issue”? Again, this is simply not true. While intention and concept are very important aspects within the expression of words in *any* language, there is more to consider. I’d much rather not have to ask this, but think, if you will, of a word considered a “bad word” in our culture. Can you imagine anyone familiar with the protocols of our culture who would willfully, yet **innocently**, express such a word? Can you picture such an adult sweetly voicing a “four-letter word” without having the slightest clue as to what he or she is saying? Can you then imagine how that person would react if you were to respond, “I BEG YOUR PARDON!”?

Would he or she say, “Oh, I’m sorry, but that word doesn’t have any negative implications for me”? No, such a response would not be acceptable. In the same way, it is not appropriate, much less honorable, for us to borrow the proper noun belonging to a heathen idol from another language, then incorporate that proper noun into our language as a *common noun* and redefine it as an “acceptable title” to apply to our Heavenly Father. When a culture takes a word -- a NAME -- that is already spoken against by Yahweh, then redefines that proper noun as a “perfectly acceptable title,” that culture risks undermining Yahweh’s original intent. Yahweh’s original intent was to identify by name a deity named “God” who is worshipped by those who **forsake Him**. The original intent of how Yahweh meant for His people to understand “God” has become obscured and distorted, all under the guise of the belief that “our culture allows it” or that the user can otherwise redefine that proper noun however he or she wants.

In October 2000 June and I wrote a critique of the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” in which I went into quite a bit of detail regarding “user defined” words, as promoted by the authors of the article. I related a personal experience to demonstrate how their concept of “user definition” cannot work in any society. This experience went back to my former school teaching days, when a student exhibited a proclivity for uttering aloud a certain four-letter word when things didn’t go her way. Despite my not allowing such language in my classroom, she protested, insisting (by **her** “user definition”) that there is nothing wrong with the word in question. Eventually the school principal became involved, who contacted the girl’s mother. At length, both the principal and the mother agreed that there is really

nothing wrong with speaking the word in question, but they did at least support admonishing the girl to comply with the standards of my classroom. If you would like to know the word in question, please request a copy of our critique! Our point is this: One man's "user definition" of what is acceptable versus what is not acceptable is bound to clash with another man's "user definition"! It's always best to "play it safe." In the case of Yahweh, He has already identified, defined and established **God** as the name of a false deity worshipped by those who forsake Him. **His** "definition" of **God** is all we really need. To "top it off," it is prudent to remember that if *God* is such an appropriate term, then why didn't *any* writers of Scripture *ever* apply it to Yahweh?

Objection #4: If "God" is Such a Bad Title, Then Why did Leah Give That Name to Her Son?

Although I am listing this as the fourth objection in this series of "answers to objections," the question asked in the above title usually serves as the first reproach we hear from those who object to the position we take on this issue. Those who support use of the title *god* for the Creator of the universe are often quick to justify it as not being *entirely* bad, as it is, after all, the name given to one of Yahweh's prophets, not to mention one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, some bring forth the contention that "God" was the name of one of Jacob's sons *before* it was contrived as the name of the deity of fortune. We could debate long hours over whether or not this was truly an honorable name to give one of Jacob's sons, but for those seeking the "facts of the matter," here are some things to consider:

* Regardless of whether or not "God" was the name of a son of Jacob *prior to* its being known as the name of a false deity, the fact remains that it was indeed the name of a false deity *long* before the mind of man contrived it as an acceptable name/title for the Creator of the universe. Unlike the titles "baal," "adonai," and "elohim," the title "God" *does not originate with the worship of Yahweh*. It was never a title ascribed to Him by those inspired to write what we recognize as the original Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, as we are about to see, post-Messianic Jews used this name as that of a demon.

* Leah, who gave Zilpah's son the name "God," was herself born and raised in the *very pagan household of Laban*, who himself worshipped many idols (Gen. 31:19, 30). In giving Zilpah's son his name, Leah uttered the Hebrew equivalent of "Good fortune!" (cf. Gen. 30:11, NIV, NRSV). Could it be that she was raised believing in **God**, the deity of fortune, in addition to many other such idols? Yes, this is possible, and the fact that Israelites returning to the Promised Land discovered a Canaanite city named "Baal-God" (Lord God) at the foot of Mount Hermon (Josh. 11:17) demonstrates that a deity by this name was indeed worshipped well before the Israelites' return from Egypt, and very likely well before the days of Abraham. The reference works we have consulted in our research support this premise.²⁵ According to *A Dictionary of the Bible*, the word *Gad* (pronounced *gawd*) "would seem to have been a native Canaanite word, retained by the Israelites in consequence of the tendency to polytheism which existed among them as late as the time of the Babylonian captivity...."²⁶ *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* includes the following pertinent information regarding this Canaanite idol:

"*Gad-melek*, 'Gad is king,' is an inscription on a stone found in Jerusalem, possibly due to Canaanitic influence. In Arabic the proper name Abd al-Gadd is found, certainly a deity's name (Wellhausen, *Heidentum*, p. 146). Isaac of Antioch (*Opera*, ed. Bickell, ii. 210, Giessen, 1877) reports that tables were prepared on the roofs by his countrymen for

Gadda or (pl.) *Gadde*, and he mentions a ‘demon’ *Gadlat* as belonging to the city of Beth-hur. Jacob of Sarug speaks of a female goddess of Haran named *Gadlat*, while by the plural *gadde* he means demons. It is noteworthy that both of these references fall in with what is shown by comparative religion as happening within the Semitic sphere; (1) the development of a shadowy consort corresponding in name to the male deity, and (2) in a subsequent stage of development or under another religion the degradation of both deities to the rank of demons. Post-Christian Jews, especially the rabbis, used the name as that of a demon. Temples of *Gad* were known in Syria, and Buxtorf cites a passage which speaks of an image of *Gad*. Jacob of Sarug says that ‘on the summit of the mountains they now build monasteries instead of *beit-gadde*’ (i.e., temples to Jupiter and Venus, who were identified with the deities of good luck). In late times *Gad* appears to have been so popular that his name acquired the sense of ‘genius, godhead.’”²⁷

Thus, although the deity of fortune *Gad* (pronounced *gawd* in Hebrew) isn’t mentioned by name until Isaiah 65:11, this does not mean that it was not worshipped by Laban and his household, and it is thus quite likely that Leah chose to employ this idol’s name as the name for Zilpah’s son in consequence to her having been reared in a heathen household. It is noteworthy that the above reference mentions a goddess named *Gadlat*, who coincidentally was worshipped in Haran, which just happens to be Laban’s “home town”! Also interesting is the fact that in the early stages of what is known as the “New Testament era,” post-Messianic Jews used *Gad* as the name of a demon. Today, however, we are expected by some to regard a word bearing this same pronunciation (*God*) as being “a perfectly acceptable English translation” of the Hebrew title *Elohim*. In view of where the pronunciation of this word originated, and where this word has been, we aren’t ready just yet to join that crowd.

Let’s suppose, though, that despite all the evidence to the contrary, this name *was* noble from its inception. The fact would still remain that it *later* became corrupted *before* anyone so much as dreamed of using it in reference to Yahweh. Would we thus honor Yahweh by referring to Him with a title that squares with the name of one of the tribes of Israel, yet was later attributed to a false deity? If we *must* refer to Him with a title that matches the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, why not choose one with a more blessed history and meaning, such as “Simeon,” which means “One Who hears”? Or how about “Yahweh our Issachar” (reward)? Of course, there is a reason for *why* the title “*God*” was chosen out of all the names of the other twelve tribes: It just so happens that *this name/title* dovetails with the name/title employed by nearly all the English-speaking world, Christianity and Judaism alike. It offers Yahwists better public relations with both Christians and Jews, and consequently brings in *more people*. As much as we should all want *more people* joining our ranks, we must reiterate what we mentioned earlier: We earnestly desire for ALL to come to the Messiah, but NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF TRUTH, and it certainly *does* seem to be “reaching” to determine that an appropriate title for Yahweh should come from the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, regardless of how noble that name might be! Why narrow it down to the name of one of the twelve tribes? Why not choose another “noble name” to employ in reference to Yahweh, such as “Yahweh our Abraham” or “Yahweh our Dawid”? The sheer absurdity of this logic serves to further underscore the real reason that many Yahwists have accepted “*God*” as a legitimate title for Yahweh: It is a compromise that will appeal to more believers who are simply not willing to completely come out of Babylon.

Despite what we have thus far shown to be true, some will grasp at what we believe are some unorthodox attempts to justify their desire to refer to Yahweh as their “*God*.” One man wrote, “I do not feel the argument that the word *God* is referring to the idol of fortune is based upon good etymological reasoning. One of the tribes of Israel was named *Gawd* or *God* long before the reference you refer to in

the prophets (Is. 65:11). I do not hear any rebuke coming from the word of Yahweh for Leah naming her son this name.”²⁸

Answering this man’s claim will serve to adequately summarize what we have covered in this section: 1) Leah was certainly raised in a heathen household, where her father worshipped many idols. Was one of those idols named *God*? Well, please consider the following: ***If*** Leah’s son ***was not*** named after the heathen deity ***God***, then exactly ***when*** did people begin to worship this deity? Perhaps some might believe that the deity ***God’s*** name was derived from the tribe of Israel named *God* or even from the son of Jacob himself. This is most unlikely in view of the fact that the man named *God*, along with Jacob’s other sons, went to Egypt during his lifetime to be with Joseph and escape the great famine. Certainly during the years leading up to the move to Egypt, the man named *God* did nothing spectacular or “heroic” that would have led any of the surrounding people to name a deity after him! Nevertheless, when the children of Israel returned to the Promised Land from Egypt, they stumbled across a city already named *Baal-God* (Lord God)! Therefore, if we seriously consider all the available information regarding the actual origin of the word *God*, one would have to conclude that it originated either in Canaan or in Aram. Indeed, this would seem to be the case based on the information found in *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon*, where we are informed that this deity’s name is often found in Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions.²⁹ Apparently, the word *God* is indeed a word borrowed from one of those two cultures and incorporated into the Hebrew language.

2) Regarding the man’s comment from above about Leah not receiving any rebuke from Yahweh for naming her son *God*, it was apparently a culturally accepted practice for women to name their children, and never is there a record of any rebuke for any of the names selected, although certain names were indeed changed for various reasons. Perhaps a classic example of a believer whose name was never changed, even though he was clearly named after the Roman deity Apollo, was the man named Apollos, of whom we read in certain New Testament passages (Acts 18:24-19:1, I Cor. 3:5-6, etc.) Thus we see that there is no evidence linking any Biblical personages to reproof for having named their offspring after a heathen deity, nor is there record of any special attempt to change anyone’s name upon conversion. Does this apparent freedom to name offspring any name one so chooses imply that we can take similar liberties with regard to the name or title we reserve for Yahweh? Furthermore, is there any Scriptural implication that we can pick and choose the name of ***any*** Biblical character, then appropriately render that name as a “translation” of the Hebrew title *elohim*? Finally, ***if*** this were truly a practice acceptable in the eyes of Yahweh, why would anyone want to “settle” for a name as tainted as the name *God*? Isn’t it interesting that, of the individuals who mention a preference for the title *god* because it happens to be the name of one of Jacob’s sons, none of them selected any of the ***other*** twelve tribes in their quest for an appropriate title for Yahweh? We again ask, “Why aren’t there folks out there calling upon ‘Yahweh our Dan’ or ‘Yahweh our Reuben’?” As stated earlier, we know why and so do they. Only the tribe that goes by the pronunciation “gawd” has a name whose pronunciation squares perfectly with the name/title by which the majority of English-speaking peoples today refer to the Creator, and by referring to Yahweh as “our God,” this will bring about more acceptance and consequently, more converts. The fact that “God” also just happens to be the name of a false Canaanite deity seems to be just a minor blip on their radar screens. It is amazing what impact the art of compromise has on bringing in converts, all under the guise of, “It can’t be wrong if Yahweh didn’t smite Jacob for allowing one of his sons to have that name!”

Objection #5: “But the Name ‘God’ Will be Inscribed on One of the Twelve Gates of the New Jerusalem!”

Following closely on the heels of the man's logic that *God* must be an acceptable title for Yahweh due to the fact that Yahweh did not rebuke Leah for giving Zilpah's son that name is another spin based on this same line of reasoning: As depicted in Revelation 21:12, the name *God* will be inscribed on one of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. Certainly, as those espousing this rationale insist, the fact that this name will be found inscribed on one of those twelve gates "proves" that Yahweh doesn't mind if we refer to *Him* as "our God." Again, we respond with essentially the same answer as given above: Why is it that, out of ALL those twelve tribes, certain individuals select the name "God" as an acceptable title for Yahweh? Why not "Dan" or "Zebulun"? As stated earlier, we think we know the answer! It is because they want to "go along with the crowd" (the *wrong* crowd, by the way). Thus, our point is as follows: This is a case of *honor* versus *compromise*. The English-speaking peoples of this world recognize "God" as the **name/title** of the Creator, despite its less-than-honorable origin. Certainly, if we go along with their custom, we will have more in common with them and we will offend fewer people. If one is thus more interested in attracting converts to the Faith than in outright pleasing and honoring the Heavenly Father, we can see why such an individual would pursue the promotion of *God* as an acceptable title for Yahweh.

The very fact that "God" has been identified by Yahweh Himself as a deity worshipped by those who FORSAKE Him demonstrates the dishonor appropriated to Him by those who willfully choose to refer to Him with that title. Thus, despite the fact that "God" will appear on one of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, Yahweh has not identified it as a "clean" Hebrew word. HE identifies it with the name of a Canaanite idol.

Some individuals apparently believe that the name *God's* appearance on one of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem somehow supersedes Yahweh's identifying it as the name of a deity worshipped by those who forsake Him. As for us, we can accept "God" as the name of two MEN found in Scripture. We can accept "God" as the name of a FALSE DEITY. This, however, is where we "draw the line." We cannot accept it as an appropriate title for our Almighty Heavenly Father. When it comes to titles appropriated to Yahweh, is *God* REALLY the best we can do? Is it the best we can offer up to Yahweh? To those who answer, "Yes" to that question, we can only reply that, based on all the available evidence, we beg to differ!

As we ponder the name "God" appearing on one of those twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, we need to likewise ponder all those *other* tribes whose names appear there, as well as the honor associated with each one. Indeed, it is honorable to each tribe's founding father to have his name inscribed on one of those famous gates. Yet, despite whatever honor those names may hold for the tribes they represent, at the same time we should consider a lesson from their history. Each of those twelve tribes *dishonored* Yahweh by abandoning Him, rebelling against His laws, and even causing most of mankind to either forget or otherwise trivialize His name. Whether they were from the tribe of *God* or from the tribe of *Zebulun*, they rejected Yahweh's leadership and authority. When it comes right down to it, *none* of those names represented by those twelve tribes comes even *halfway close* to deserving the designation as one of Yahweh's titles. If the best title for Yahweh we can come up with is the name of one of those twelve tribes, despite whatever wondrous magnificence they may appear to have while affixed to those twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, then we are definitely "hard up" for honorable titles! It simply escapes us as to how or why a culture could equate a man's name, no matter *who* he is, as being "important" enough to justify applying it as a *title* for the Creator of the universe.

We say this *especially* in reference to the title "God."

Objection #6: If the Greeks referred to Yahweh as their “Theos,” then why can’t we refer to Him as “our God”?

Many believe that there was a Greek deity named “Theos,” although no one has really ever been able to produce the necessary evidence to justify such a belief. Indeed, if there had been a Greek deity named *Theos*, **AND** if early believers such as the Apostle Paul really referred to Yahweh as “our Theos,” then one could make a legitimate case for referring to Yahweh as “our God,” based on the obvious parallel. Since we only have Greek manuscripts to serve as our guide, it does appear that the Apostle Paul and other believers did indeed refer to Yahweh as “our Theos.” But was *Theos* derived from the name of a Greek deity? In the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” the authors presented their case under the presumption that there was a Greek deity named *Theos*, although they did not produce any evidence in support of their claim. Their argument centered around the Apostle Paul’s famous sermon on Mars’ Hill in Athens, as recorded in Acts 17:16-31. Shown below is Acts 17:22-23:

"Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god (theos).' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you!' (New Revised Standard Version)

In the authors' commentary on this passage they astutely wrote,

"This would mean that Paul was not troubled by an inscription that employed the Greek word 'theos,' a translation of the Hebrew title 'elohim.' Since it is only logical that as he proceeded to preach the message of salvation to the people of Athens he must have continued to employ the term 'theos' (a necessity, as he was speaking Greek). Who else was the Apostle referring to by this Greek title other than to Yahweh? This fact demonstrates that as far as Paul was concerned, the Greek word 'theos' (as a common noun) was equivalent in meaning and CONCEPT to the Hebrew word 'elohim' (also a common noun), proving once again that titles can be translated from one language to another."³⁰

Our comment: We totally agree with the above commentary, for the authors at that point are correctly operating from the perspective that "theos" is nothing more than a Greek title. Unfortunately, however, they proceed to make reference to the word "theos" also being a PROPER NOUN, which so far as we have ever known, is simply not the case. Shown below is their commentary as it appears on pages 42-43 of their article:

"The Apostle's choice of words becomes even more revealing when one considers that in verse 16 we are told that Paul was distressed because the city was full of idols. Shouldn't this fact have caused the Apostle to become even more determined not to employ the Greek term 'theos'? Was Paul compromising the integrity of the evangel or the reputation of Yahweh by referring to Him by the Greek title 'theos'? Hardly! Was he then taking a big gamble and risking the possibility of being misunderstood and of having Yahweh confused with **'Theos,' the name (proper noun) of an idol** that some of these people served? Obviously, Paul did not think so!"³¹ (Emphasis ours).

We respond: Although the authors mention a Greek idol by the name of *Theos* "that some of these people served," they do not list the resource from which they gleaned their information that it was indeed the name of a Greek idol. It is true that for years we, too, tried and tried to prove that there was a Greek deity named "Theos." Unfortunately, however, we always came up empty-handed! The closest we ever came to proving "Theos" as having originally been the name of a Greek deity came from the book *The Final Reformation*, by C. J. Koster, which was republished in 1996 under the title *Come Out of Her My People*. On page 50 of this book (page 45 of the new edition), we read the following:

"And the word 'Theos'? Donaldson in his 'New Cratylus' points out that 'th' is frequently pronounced as 'Dh' in Greek, thus 'Theos' and 'Dheos' could be the same, if only in pronunciation. Further, B.C. Dietrich, *The Origin of Greek Religion*, p. 288, reveals to us a pair of deities, 'Theos' and 'Thea.' This proves that 'Theos' is not only a title, but also the name of a Greek idol."³²

The information from Koster's book seems credible on the surface, and would seem to prove that "Theos" was originally the name of a deity. However, in our drive to personally examine his resource, we visited the library and checked out a copy of the book cited by Koster as his reference: *The Origin of Greek Religion* by B.C. Dietrich. To our disappointed amazement, we discovered that C.J. Koster extrapolated from page 288 that which he wanted to use in order to justify what he wanted to prove, despite the fact that the book in NO WAY infers that "Theos" and "Thea" were the names of two idols! Let's read the actual quotation from the book, and YOU decide if it reveals a deity by the name of "Theos":

"In Eleusinian myth, which one may assume to reflect Bronze Age belief, beside the Two Goddesses another pair 'Theos' and 'Thea,' that is Pluton and Persephone, enjoyed equal prominence."³³

As one can discern from the above quotation, "Theos" and "Thea" are listed NOT as names, but as TITLES for Pluton and Persephone. We thus have yet to see any solid evidence that "Theos" was ever (in its original form) anything more than a *generic title* for any deity, much like the Hebrew "Elohim." Therefore, any attempt to infuse anyone with the idea that Paul may have been confusing Yahweh with a pagan deity's name in Acts 17 is not only unsubstantiated, but unfounded.

Objection #7: "There is no record of Yahweh ever rebuking anyone for referring to Him with a title that was originally the name of a heathen deity!"

While engaged in an otherwise pleasant conversation with a fellow Yahwist, the conversation took an abrupt turn for the worse when I explained my concern regarding the decision of several within the Yahwist Movement to regard the name/title *God* as an appropriate title for Yahweh. To my surprise, I quickly discovered that my Yahwist friend is one of those embracing this belief! In the very limited time we had to speak, I summarized most, if not all, the reasons for why we feel this title actually *dishonors* Yahweh, but I could tell my words were falling on "deaf ears." For reasons that he was apparently not willing to divulge, he was obviously not willing to abandon the title *God*. We feel that anyone who has read the history of this name (now mysteriously transformed into a *title*) should understand its less-than-illustrious origin and meaning, so this man's adamant stand in favor of its use led me to believe he has underlying reasons for not wishing to give it up, but I did not pursue them. Instead, I simply asked, "Can you show me how referring to Yahweh as "our God" *honors* Him?"

He replied, “Well, I just can’t see how it *dishonors* Him”

I felt I had already explained to him exactly “how” referring to our Creator as “our God” *does* dishonor Him, so obviously he either wasn’t listening to me or else he has no problem with referring to our Creator with a “title” that is pronounced the same as the name of the Canaanite deity of fortune ... a deity worshipped by those who *forsake Yahweh* (Isaiah 65:11). The man I spoke to obviously does not have a problem with taking that same Hebrew name, converting it to a “title,” then appropriating it to Yahweh. Clearly, he and I have very different understandings of the meaning of the word “honor.” I attempted to give him an analogy using human terminology. “Consider the English word ‘friend,’” I told him. “How would you like it if, instead of referring to you as my ‘friend,’ I were to henceforth refer to you as my ‘hitler’? Would this be considered an appropriate way to enhance our relationship?” Consider the analogy: Just as many folks are insisting that there is nothing wrong with employing the name of a detestable idol as a translation of “Elohim,” a similar case could be made for translating the Hebrew word *reya* (friend) as “hitler.” Would such a translation in any way demonstrate respect for a person with whom I would like to cultivate a relationship? We need to give Yahweh the same consideration, only on a *much higher level!*

It was at this point in our conversation when my Yahwist friend mentioned something that, at the time, threw me completely off guard. Have you ever found yourself in a disagreement wherein your opponent said something that, at the time, you were unable to answer because it “threw you for a loop”? Only later does the proper response come to you, usually long after the conversation has ended! This is what happened to me. Here is in essence what he said: “I’ll believe you if you can show me *any Scriptural examples* of anyone ever being rebuked for mixing or incorporating other languages, then referring to Yahweh with words or titles that were originally the names of deities that those foreigners worshipped.”

As it turned out, I *couldn’t* think of any Scriptural examples of anyone ever being rebuked for referring to Yahweh with any foreign titles that emanated from the names of heathen deities! I didn’t have an answer for him. Later, however, well after our conversation had ended, the answer **hit me** like a freight train plowing through a brick wall! The reason there is no record of anyone ever being rebuked for referring to Yahweh with a title that emanates from the name of a heathen idol is because *there are no precedents* of such incidents ever occurring! In other words, there is no record of *anyone* in all of Scripture referring to Yahweh with a title that can be traced to the name of a heathen deity. Since there is no record of anyone committing such an offense, there can likewise be no record of anyone ever being *reproved* for doing such a thing! Since there is no Scriptural record of such an “offense” ever having occurred, would it not be overly presumptuous of us to gamble on the “hunch” that Yahweh doesn’t mind? It thus appears that modern man has chosen to do that which none of the ancients ever *imagined* doing: Taking the name of a heathen idol, converting it to a *title*, then dubbing that title “a perfectly acceptable English translation of the Hebrew word *elohim*.” To even insinuate that this act is *not dishonorable* is, in our estimation, an insult to Almighty Yahweh.

The next morning, by the way, I gave my Yahwist friend my written response to his “challenge.” We have not heard from him since. A line from an old Simon & Garfunkel song comes to mind: “All lies and jests, still a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.” Or as the Messiah said in Matthew 13:14-15, “You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for Me to heal them.” When we are presented with a belief that conflicts with our current

understanding, it is incumbent on us to carefully, thoroughly and prayerfully investigate that belief, either proving it wrong or admitting to its truthfulness. As we alluded in our introduction to this study, we are to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The opposite of this is to *not* prove all things, and hold fast to that which we want to believe regardless of whether or not it is truthful or even honorable to Yahweh. ***Which do we choose to do?***

Putting it all together

If you have read everything we have written to this point on the subject of the title “god,” you most likely understand our basis for rejecting its use as a title for our Heavenly Father Yahweh. No matter how you trace or otherwise make any linguistic connection with this word, it is undeniably rooted in heathen worship and is therefore dishonoring to Yahweh as a title. The authors of the treatise “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles” attempt to lump “god” in with titles such as the Aramaic “mare” (pronounced *mahr-ay*) and “elah,” the Greek “theos” and “kyrios,” as well as the Hebrew “elohim,” “baal,” and “adonai.” Is there a significant characteristic that separates the title “god” from the aforementioned titles? Why do June and I meticulously ***avoid*** referring to Yahweh as “our God,” while simultaneously ***supporting*** the position taken by those who feel led to refer to Him as “our Elohim” or even “our Mare”? What is the “big deal” that makes us believe it is dishonorable to refer to Yahweh as “our God,” yet ***acceptable*** to refer to Him as “our Mare” or even “our Theos”?

The “big deal” lies in the precedents established by Yahweh in His Word. The precedents established in **Scripture**. The mistake that many have made, including the authors of “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” involves the belief that titles such as “theos” and “mare” were originally names of heathen idols before being assigned to the true Elohim, Yahweh.³⁴ As mentioned earlier in this study, there is absolutely no evidence of there ever having been a deity named “Theos,” at least not before the time of the Apostles. The same goes for the Aramaic “mare.” There is no record of there having been a deity with this name, at least not prior to its use as a title in the book of Daniel.

Can the same be said for the title “god”? No, it cannot. We have shown that this is the name of a heathen idol that Yahweh Himself literally names as being worshipped by those who ***forsake Him***. We have further demonstrated that the preponderance of the evidence indicates that this heathen deity was worshipped ***prior to*** the birth of one of its namesakes, ***Gad***, identified as one of the “twelve tribes of Israel.” This son of Jacob was named by Leah, who was herself clearly reared in the home of an idol worshipper, and we also know that Yahweh does not fire lightning bolts or otherwise send down curses on anyone in response to the names they give their children. Therefore, we can logically ascertain that Leah named Jacob’s son ***Gad*** after the deity of fortune, a deity whose worship was prominent in her native city of Haran.

The point in all this is, ***there is no Scriptural precedent wherein the Creator is ever referred to with a title that was originally the name of a heathen idol***. Instead, the reverse is true: Titles originally ascribed to Yahweh were allowed by apostate man to degenerate into names of heathen idols. Since there is no Scriptural precedent or authorization for anyone to ever refer to Yahweh with a title that was originally the name of a heathen idol, by whose authorization do we do so now?

Conclusion and Parting Comments

Ever since this topic became an issue within the Yahwist Movement, we have maintained that it boils down to ***honor*** versus ***compromise***. Given the sordid history of the word pronounced “gawd,” we

believe sincere, truth-seeking individuals should seriously question “why” they would choose to refer to the Creator of heaven and earth with such a title. We ask them, “Is this the *best* title you can come up with for our Heavenly Father?” In light of the fact that Yahweh Himself identifies and names a heathen deity named *God* that is worshipped by those who “forsake” Him, it is clear that appropriating any word in reference to Him that is pronounced the same as this heathen deity’s name *cannot* be construed as being “honorable.” As for *compromise*, the only reason we can find to explain why Yahwists would wish to retain the title *God* is to appease, attract and/or retain individuals who might otherwise not associate with the Yahwist Movement. Compromising our faith will undoubtedly result in larger numbers within our ranks, as can be demonstrated by some early believers’ willingness to adopt and otherwise transform the pagan *Saturnalia* into what is now known as Christmas. The number of believers swelled, no doubt about that! Does such compromise *really* benefit anyone, though, when all is said and done? No, it does not.

Some are not willing to regard their desire to refer to Yahweh as “our God” as being a matter of honor versus compromise. Note the following comment we received from a man after having reviewed our position on this subject:

“For me this is not an issue of honor versus compromise, but an issue of whether or not we will get hung up on an issue which has no importance to Yahueh versus being fence building Pharisees to the point we don’t ever go out there in the sinful world to persuade the lost and dying world of the validity of the third commandment, by placing this stumblingblock in front of them.”³⁵

Despite the above individual’s refusal to view this topic as being one of honor versus compromise, we maintain that he is either in “denial” or simply does not understand the seriousness of this issue. We have already explained in detail our position regarding the “honor” and the “compromise.” Unless someone can demonstrate how we are blowing things out of proportion, we stand by our claim. Any insistence to the contrary, unless it can be backed up with substantial evidence, cannot be seriously considered as valid. It is one thing to *say*, “For me this is not an issue of honor versus compromise,” but it is another to *demonstrate* the veracity of his personal conviction. The above individual furthermore states that this issue has “no importance” to Yahweh. Anyone claiming that Yahweh doesn’t care what titles we reserve for Him, in our estimation, simply does not understand what it means to honor Yahweh. Indeed, then, this truly is an issue of honor versus compromise. Let us choose to **honor Yahweh** in word, in deed, and even with the titles we use in reference to Him!

As we conclude this study, we do not feel we can adequately bring this to a close without admonishing everyone to thoroughly investigate the claims presented in this article before arriving at a conclusion. Investigate the origin of the word *God*. Investigate the true pronunciation of the original Hebrew word that **today** is commonly pronounced “gad” (as in “dad”). Finally, one would do well to conduct an in-depth study on the *meaning* of this word. This Hebrew word, according to *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, is derived from word #1464 (guwd), which means “to crowd upon, i.e., attack: - invade, overcome.” This is the Hebrew origin of this word. Does this *really* sound like a word descriptive of Yahweh? Furthermore, *Strong’s* lists word #1464 as being “akin to” word #1413 (gadad), which means “to crowd; also to gash (as if by pressing into).” Would our critics consider *this* to be an honorable origin of the word they apply as a title for our Creator? Once again, we implore our readers: Let us choose to **honor Yahweh** in word, in deed, *and* with the titles we use in reference to Him!

Bibliography

¹ We prefer not to release the name of the individual who wrote this comment, which was sent via e-mail on October 10, 2000 in response to the critique we presented on the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles.”

² From the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” 1997, by Dale George and Silvio Soto, p. 46.

³ Ibid, p. 45.

⁴ Ibid, p. 45.

⁵ In the interest of conserving space, we are focusing our attention solely on the title *god* in this article. As for the title *lord*, we personally shun this title, not necessarily because of any questionable origin, but because this is the word that translators of most English versions of the Bible chose to substitute in place of Yahweh’s name. Out of protest for what they did, June and I personally avoid applying this title to our Heavenly Father.

⁶ Most Bible dictionaries and commentaries provide corroborating agreement that the name “God” (usually spelled out as *Gad* in English, but pronounced “Gawd” in Hebrew) was in the original Hebrew text of Isaiah 65:11. For example, note the following from *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill F. Unger, 1988, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, p. 488: “**Gad.** A Canaanite deity rendered ‘Fortune’ (Isa. 65:11, see marg.); the god of good fortune, supposed to be the glorified planet Jupiter. This star is called by the Arabs ‘the greater luck’ as the star of good fortune.”

⁷ This rendering is taken from *The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English*, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, 1986, Hendrickson Publishers. All other versions leave out the original Hebrew word “husband” in their translations of this particular verse.

⁸ From *The International Bible Commentary*, F. F. Bruce, General Editor, 1986, Marshall Pickering/Zondervan Publishers, page 57.

⁹ From *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill F. Unger, 1988, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, p. 485.

¹⁰ Compare the two Hebrew spellings for yourself, using a *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. The Hebrew word for “king” is word #4428, and the name of the Ammonite deity, *Molech*, is word #4432. Both words contain the same, exact Hebrew spelling (mem, lamed, kaph).

¹¹ This information comes from the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., J. D. Douglas, Organizing Editor, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, article “Texts and Versions,” p. 1,178, where we read, “It was not until about the 7th century of our era that the Massorettes introduced a complete system of vowel-signs.”

¹² From the same e-mailed letter as mentioned in footnote #1 (see Part I). Again, this e-mail was sent after June and I presented our critique of the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” by Dale George and Silvio Soto, 1997.

¹³ Correction from Part I, wherein we listed *God* as the *Babylonian* deity of fortune. Many people, ourselves included, have been more inclined to refer to the deity of Isaiah 65:11 (*God*) as being a ***Babylonian*** deity. Indeed, this is how it is presented in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, where the word appears as word #1408 in the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary. Other reputable references, however, such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, refer to this deity as a ***Canaanite*** deity. Information gleaned from *A Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings, M.A., D.D., Volume II, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1899, article "Gad," p. 76, offers the following evidence that *God* was originally the name of a *Canaanite idol*: "As the name of Gad is not met with in Babylonian literature, it would seem to have been a native Canaanite word, retained by the Israelites in consequence of the tendency to polytheism which existed among them as late as the time of the Babylonian captivity...."

¹⁴ Regarding those who rely on etymologists' conclusions, reference is made to the following quotation, taken from pp. 44-45 of "The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles," by Dale George and Silvio Soto, 1997: "Linguistically speaking, it should be noted that we cannot definitely PROVE a *pagan connection* for either word [*god* or *lord*]. That has been tried and it has failed, as linguistic authorities which exist do not agree with our traditional contention (most linguistic scholars trace our English word *God* to the Teutonic language and not to the Babylonian deity *Gad*, and also trace *Lord* to an Old English word that meant, 'the keeper of the loaf')." Based on the above quotation, June and I maintain that the authors of "The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles," as well as those who promote such "logic," evidently place more faith in the inconclusive findings of etymologists than in the evidence provided in Yahweh's Word.

¹⁵ From *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, editors, 1988, published by Michael Glazier, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, article "God," page 423.

¹⁶ Reference is made to the following: "The ulterior etymology is disputed." Quoted from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Volume VI, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, item "god," page 639.

¹⁷ From *Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories*, Wilfred Funk, Litt. D., 1950, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, page 279.

¹⁸ The commentary displayed here was taken from two separate e-mails, sent by another fellow Yahwist on October 10 and October 12, 2000. Again, I choose to leave this man's name anonymous.

¹⁹ From the *Encyclopedia International*, Volume 7, 1972, by Grolier, Incorporated, New York, article "Germanic Languages," page 555.

²⁰ From *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, edited by C. T. Onions, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 404. This reference notes the following pertaining to the origin of the word "god": "A Cgerm. **guð*- points to IE. **ghut*-, pp. formation of uncertain origin, but prob. f. **ghu*-, repr. by Skr. *hu* invoke the gods (cf. *puru hutás* 'much invoked', as an epithet of Indra)."

²¹ From the *Encyclopedia International*, Volume 8, 1972, by Grolier, Incorporated, New York, article "God," page 52.

²² From *The Private Lives of English Words*, First Edition, by Louis G. Heller, Alexander Humez and Malcah Dror, Gale Research Company, Detroit, MI, 1984, item "God," pp. 78-79.

²³ From the article “The Truth Regarding Divine Titles,” 1997, by Dale George and Silvio Soto, p. 37.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

²⁵ The reference works we consulted agree that the deity *God* (rendered *Gad* in English translations) was most likely worshipped in Canaan prior to the birth of Zilpah’s son. From *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Volume IV, Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York, 1908, p. 418, we read the following regarding the origin of the Canaanite deity *Gad*: “The origin of the god *Gad* is in doubt. It is possible that he arose as the personification of the abstract concept of good fortune, though it must be said that this process is not usual in the Semitic sphere. None of the Old Testament passages which bear on the question are very early, unless the view of the critical school be correct which inclines to the belief that the tribe of *Gad*, like that of *Asher*, took its name from the god. The newer explanation of the composite origin of the Hebrew nation as including clans absorbed by conquest, tradition recording this fact by assigning to the clans so absorbed a humbler origin as the descendants of concubines, would make for an early origin of the deity. But these conclusions are by no means universally accepted, and the worship, even the existence, of *Gad* in strictly Canaanitic provenance earlier than the Exile rests on the two place names *Baal-gad* and *Migdal-gad* (ut. sup.)” According to *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume II, edited by James Hastings, M.A., D.D., Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1899, p. 76, “A trace of the Syr. worship of *Gad* is regarded as being indicated by the exclamation of Leah when Zilpah, her maid, bore Jacob a son (Gn 30¹¹).” This same reference adds that *Gad* was “a native Canaanite word, retained by the Israelites in consequence of the tendency to polytheism which existed among them as late as the time of the Babylonian captivity....” Finally, this reference gives the following conclusion: “Further testimony to the worship of *Gad* in Canaan is to be found in the place-names *Baal-gad* (Jos. 11¹⁷ 12⁷ 13⁵), where *Baal* was worshipped as god of fortune, and *Migdal-gad* (Jos 15³⁷), ‘the tower of *Gad*.’ The Hebrews also were so accustomed to regard the worship of *Gad* as a natural thing, that the words addressed by Esau to Isaac his father, ‘let my father arise’ (Gen 27³¹), are explained in *Bereshith Rabba*, p. 65, as an invocation to *Gada* or fortune.”

²⁶ From *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume II, edited by James Hastings, M.A., D.D., Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1899, p. 76.

²⁷ From *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Volume IV, Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York, 1908, p. 418.

²⁸ From an e-mail we received on July 16, 2000 from the same individual mentioned in footnotes #1 and #12.

²⁹ From *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon*, by Francis Brown, D.D., D.Litt., 1979, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, page 151b, word #1408, 1409.

³⁰ From the article “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” 1997, by Dale George and Silvio Soto, page 42.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 42-43.

³² From *The Final Reformation*, by C. J. Koster, 1986, Institute For Scripture Research, Republic of South Africa, p. 50.

³³ From *The Origin of Greek Religion* by B.C. Dietrich, Walter De Gruyter, publisher, Berlin, New York, 1974, page 288.

³⁴ The authors of “The Truth Regarding Inspired Titles,” 1997, by Dale George and Silvio Soto, regard the title “mare” as a **proper noun**, as evidenced from the following quotation taken from page 44: “For if the Hebrew *elohim* can be rendered by Inspiration into the Aramaic *elah* (or the Greek *theos*) and if the Hebrew *adonay* can be rendered by Inspiration into the Aramaic *mare* (or the Greek *kurios*),— despite the obvious fact that all of these words as *proper nouns* can be objected to on the grounds of paganism or perverted substitution — then on what basis could we argue that these Hebrew titles cannot be rendered and translated into English?”

The authors do not state that any of the above-mentioned titles *originated* as proper nouns employed by heathen worshippers; if they had done so, they would have been required to produce documentation of such, as our studies do not produce any evidence of these titles having originated as *proper nouns*. There is an enormous difference between a word being *transformed* into the name of an idol and a word *originating* as the name of an idol. Words like *elohim*, *mare* and *theos* **did not** originate as proper nouns. Words like *god* **did** originate as a proper noun. The only basis on which we would recognize the Scriptural authorization of ascribing to Yahweh titles that originated as names of heathen idols would be by Scriptural precedent. As there is no Scriptural precedent of anyone ever referring to Yahweh with a title that originally represented the name of a heathen idol, we reject the concept that one can “honorably” refer to Yahweh as “our God.”

³⁵ From an e-mail we received on 10/12/00 from the same individual mentioned in footnotes #1, #12 and #18.