SEAN M. MCDONOUGH

# YHWH at Patmos

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
*107*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

107

Sean M. McDonough

# YHWH at Patmos

## Rev. 1:4 in its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting

Mohr Siebeck

SEAN M. MCDONOUGH, Born 1964; B.A. in History, Harvard College, 1986; Master of Divinity, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 1993; Master of Theology, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 1994; PhD, University of St. Andrews, 1997; since 1997, Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji.

*Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme*

*MacDonough, Sean M.:*
YHWH at Patmos : Rev. 1:4 in its Hellenistic and early Jewish setting / Sean M. McDonough. – Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 1999
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament : Reihe 2 ; 107)
ISBN 3-16-147055-9 978-3-16-157084-1 Unveränderte eBook-Ausgabe 2019



The book was printed by Druck Partner Rübelmann GmbH in Hemsbach on non-aging paper from Papierfabrik Schleipen and bound by Buchbinderei Schaumann in Darmstadt. Printed in Germany.

ISSN 0340-9570

# Preface

> ...Pascal used to say of those authors who always refer to their works as: 'My book, my commentary, my history, etc.,' that they sound like solid citizens with a place of their own, always talking about 'My house.' They would do better, this excellent man added, to say: 'Our book, or commentary, our history, etc.,' considering that there is usually more of other people's property in it than their own.
>
> – Sayings Attributed to Pascal, no. I; in Pascal, *Pensées* (Translated by A.J. Krailsheimer; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 355.

The present work is a revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was accepted at the University of St. Andrews in July 1997. It is my pleasure to thank those who have helped me in the task of completing the thesis and this revision.

Thanks first to my supervisor at St. Andrews, Professor Richard Bauckham. He has provided a model of careful, insightful scholarship, and his contribution to the thesis far exceeds the acknowledgments made at various points in the footnotes. I am also grateful to Professor Dr Martin Hengel, Professor Dr Otfried Hofius, and Herrn Georg Siebeck for accepting the work for publication. Dr William Horbury of Cambridge and Dr. James Davila of St. Andrews provided several helpful insights during their examination of the thesis at St. Andrews.

I am greatly indebted to the faculty and students of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, who first taught me the exegesis of Scripture; and to the faculty and students of St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, who have helped me grow further in this area. The Principal, Vice-Principal, faculty, staff, and students at the Pacific Theological College have provided a wonderful setting for the process of revision; *vinaka vakalevu* (thank you very much). Special mention may be made of Dr Gregory Beale of Gordon Conwell, who laid the foundation for my study of Revelation and kindly allowed me to look at the relevant portions of the draft of his forthcoming commentary on Revelation. Thanks also to the Department of Classics at St. Andrews for their assistance in completing this project, and in particular to Professor Stephen Halliwell, who read much of the Greek material, and Professor Harry Hine, who provided valuable insights along the way. I am also grateful to Professor Richard Sorabji of King's College, London, who took time from his schedule to offer helpful comments on Aristotle and the hellenistic philosophers; and to Dr

James Aiton of the School of Biological and Medical Sciences, St. Andrews, for technical support. Special thanks to Jeanette Little of the Pacific Theological Library for her assistance in producing the manuscript, and to Herrn Matthias Spitzner of the Mohr Siebeck production department for his help.

Much appreciated material support has come from many quarters. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom provided an Overseas Research Student Award for my studies, while St. Mary's College added a Cobb Scholarship. The congregations of St. Andrews Baptist Church and Waltham Evangelical Free Church, and friends too numerous to mention, have provided various forms of help before and during our time in Scotland and Fiji. The Colin Hemer fund of Tyndale House allowed me a very profitable week of study in Cambridge.

On the personal side, I would like to thank my parents, Robert and Dorothy McDonough, and my siblings, Lisa, Alex, and Hugh, for all their help through the years. My daughter Siobhan and my sons Patrick and Keanu have brought me much joy and have contributed in their own ways to the book. My greatest debt is to my beloved wife Ariana, who has given me incalculable support and encouragement in the completion of this work. (This is in addition to her computer skills, without which this manuscript would no doubt be languishing in the waste places of cyber-space.) Finally, it is especially appropriate given the nature of the topic at hand to give due thanks and acknowledgment to ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

March 1999
Suva, Fiji

Sean M. McDonough

# Table of Contents

# Introduction

"Grace and peace to you from the One who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev.1:4–5)." With this most unusual greeting John begins his most unusual letter.[1] The subject of our investigation is the phrase, "the One who is and who was and who is to come" – ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. It has long been recognized that this description of God is indebted to Jewish reflection on the name YHWH,[2] and in particular to reflection on the enigmatic words of Ex. 3:14, "I am who I am." Parallels in the hellenistic world have also been duly noted. But the story of how the name YHWH arrived at Patmos in the form it did is little known. We intend to tell a part of that story here.

Our emphasis will be on the understanding of the name YHWH in early Judaism,[3] and how this shaped John's formula in Rev. 1:4. We do not thereby intend to minimize the importance of the earlier Old Testament material. The burning bush of Moses will always be flickering in the background of our discussion. We may be thankful that this part of the story is fairly well known, and has been the object of intense scholarly study (see below). The later history of the name YHWH is far more obscure – but no less interesting. While it is sometimes suggested that the name fell into more or less total oblivion in the second temple era, in fact it continued to have a rich underground existence, and it occasionally made a dramatic public appearance. More than this, the question of what the name meant was a constant stimulus to creative reflection on the biblical tradition.

---

[1] For Revelation *as a letter*, see e.g. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chapter 1. John is of course transforming the traditional formula, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." See e.g. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2, etc.; cf. 1 Pet. 1:2–3; 2 Jn. 3; Jude 1–2.

[2] We will generally employ "YHWH" for the tetragrammaton. As we will see in chapter 2, the pronunciation "Yahweh" is not absolutely certain, and we would not want to privilege this vocalization.

[3] By "early Judaism" we mean Judaism in the period from the mid-second century BCE to the mid-second century CE. We will also use the designations "second temple Judaism" and "the New Testament era" to designate this same period.

None of this, of course, took place in a vacuum. During the period of our concern, Judaism and Christianity were challenged to understand and articulate their beliefs in the midst of the dominant hellenistic society. Central to this endeavor was the identity of God, and central to the identity of God was God's name. The very fact that most Jews were reluctant to state the name YHWH to outsiders was a powerful way of declaring their separation from the broader society. At the same time, they were willing to use other epithets for their God which would have made at least tolerable sense to those around them: "the God of Heaven," "the Most High," "the Lord," and so on. The engagement with Greco-Roman culture is even more evident in the interpretations offered about the meaning of the name. This becomes clearest in the LXX description of God in Ex. 3:14, "I am the one who is," and in the theological implications which were drawn from this translation. The idea that God "was, is, and will be/is to come" was likewise a response to three-times formulae or *Dreizeitenformeln* (to use Otto Weinreich's term) already present in the hellenistic world. The story of the name YHWH thus affords us a unique opportunity to explore the complex interaction of Greek, Jewish, and Christian thought in the ancient world.

## History of Research

As we have indicated, most modern commentators on Revelation recognize the importance of the name YHWH for understanding the phrase "the One who is and who was and who is to come" in Rev. 1:4. In the early part of the century, Charles, Swete, and Beckwith all included hellenistic and Jewish background material in their commentaries, and later commentators have followed suit. The most detailed treatments may now be found in the recently published commentaries by G. K. Beale and D. E. Aune.

Research on the name YHWH itself has focused on Old Testament texts and their ancient near eastern background. Not surprisingly, the MT of Ex. 3:14 has been the *crux interpretum*. D. N. Freedman and M. O'Connor provide a thorough treatment of the relevant ancient near eastern materials in their article "Yhwh" in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.[4] Also noteworthy is the scholarly but very readable discussion in T. D. Mettinger's book *In Search of God: The Message and Meaning of the Divine Names*.[5] One might also mention Martin Rose's *Jahwe: zum Streit um den alttestamentlichen Gottesnamen*, which devotes particular attention

[4] Freedman and O'Connor, "YHWH," in *TDNT* 5: 500–21.

[5] Tryggve Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Divine Names*, trans. Frederick H. Cryer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

to the relationship of YHWH to the related names Iao and Ia.[6] Ex. 3:14 itself has been well-served by scholars. Among the many commentaries, the discussion of Brevard Childs is particularly enlightening, and there are a number of important articles on the verse, including those of de Vaux, Schild, and Albrektson.[7] This is not to say that there is a firm consensus as to the original meaning of Ex. 3:14. But researchers may at least be content that the major interpretative options have received thorough discussion and critique.

The discussion of the divine name in early Judaism has been more diffuse. The most thorough treatment of the material remains vol. 2 of W. W. G. Baudissin's *Kyrios als Gottesname*.[8] The central thesis of the work – that the use of *kyrios* in the Septuagint did not derive from the *qere* of Adonai – has not been well received by scholars. It was also published long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. But neither of these points diminishes the amazing breadth of material contained in the volume, or the sharpness of his observations. A. Marmorstein assembles an impressive array of Jewish texts concerning the use of the tetragrammaton in his opening essay in the volume *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*.[9] The problem for modern scholars is that Marmorstein is extremely generous in what he considers to be valid evidence for second temple practice. A somewhat more critical discussion may be found in E. E. Urbach's *The Sages*.[10] G. H. Parke-Taylor's *Yahweh: The Divine Name in the Bible* contains an extensive survey of the divine name in early Judaism and Christianity, in addition to a helpful overview of the Old Testament and ancient near eastern materials.[11]

Two of the most useful recent discussions are J. E. Fossum's *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, and C. T. R. Hayward's *Divine Name*

---

[6] Martin Rose, *Jahwe* (Theologische Studien 122, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978).

[7] Brevard Childs, *Exodus* (London: SCM Press, 1974); R. de Vaux, "The Revelation of the Divine Name YHWH" in *Proclamation and Presence* (London: SCM Press, 1970): pp.51ff,; E. Schild, "On Exodus 3:14 – I am that I am," *VT* 4 (1954): 296–302; Bertil Albrektson, "On the Syntax of אהיה אשר אהיה in Exodus 3:14," in *Words and Meanings*, eds. Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 15–28.

[8] Wolf W. G. Baudissin, *Kyrios als Gottesname* 4 vols. (Giessen: Alfred Topelmann, 1929).

[9] A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (London: Oxford, 1927).

[10] E.E. Urbach, *The Sages*, trans. Israel Abrahams 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975).

[11] G.H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975).

*and Presence: The Memra.*[12] Fossum's work is quite wide ranging, as one can see from the subtitle – *Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origins of Gnosticism*. Strictly speaking, the implications for early Christianity lie more with christology than theology *per se*, which is our chief concern. We must also point out that Fossum includes in his analysis some material whose relevance to the New Testament era might well be questioned (e.g. the Samaritan texts). Despite these caveats, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* is indispensable for the study of the divine name. Fossum's research is extremely thorough, and he provides crucial insights on several important points. As we will see below, his recognition that the tetragrammaton should be connected with the "let it be!" of the creation narrative is foundational for understanding the interpretation of the divine name in early Judaism. Hayward presents a more balanced, if less detailed, survey of the same material in his work. Its distinctive contribution is the close attention paid to the use of *Memra* in the Targums, and its relationship to the tetragrammaton. Hayward makes a strong case that the *Memra* represents God's אהיה, his name for himself, and that this name signifies not merely God's existence, but his merciful presence with his people. God says, אהיה, "I am there!," and his people respond, יהיה, "He is there!"[13]

Another important study of the Targums is M. McNamara's *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, which includes an extensive investigation of the Jewish background to our text in Rev. 1:4.[14] Scholars had long recognized a connection between the Targums and Rev. 1:4, but McNamara was the first to devote considerable attention to their relationship. He pays less attention, however, to the use of *Dreizeitenformeln* in Greco-Roman literature. For this we may turn to O. Weinreich's article "Aion in Eleusis," and W. C. van Unnik's "A Formula Describing Prophecy."[15] Between them they cover most of the *Dreizeitenformeln* in the ancient world.

Finally, a word may be said concerning the literature on the Septuagint translation of Ex. 3:14, "I am the one who is," which is a major theme of the present work. Despite the immense significance of this translation, it

---

[12] Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985); Robert (C.T.R.) Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* (Totowa, NJ: Allanhead, Osmun, and Co., 1981).

[13] Hayward's basic argument is ably complemented by P. Vermes' article, "Buber's Understanding of the Divine Name Related to Bible, Targum, and Midrash," *JJS* 24 (1973): 147–66.

[14] M. J. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum* Analecta Biblica 27 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966).

[15] Otto Weinreich, "Aion in Eleusis," *ARW* 19 (1919): 174–90; W.C. van Unnik, "A Formula Describing Prophecy," *NTS* 9 (1962): 86–94.

has received little attention in comparison with the Hebrew text of Ex. 3:14 and later rabbinic traditions. The LXX version is ignored by most commentators on Exodus.[16] Exceptions do exist. W. Wevers makes some very helpful comments in his *LXX: Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, as do A. Le Boulluec and P. Sandevoir in *La Bible d'Alexandrie: L'Exode*.[17] But the nature of these works makes it impossible for them to pursue the issues at length. We may be thankful that the concept of "Being" in Greco-Roman thought has received more extensive coverage. Most noteworthy is the work of J. Whittaker, who has pursued this theme in a number of articles and monographs.[18]

## Plan and Goal of the Present Study

We begin by examining material from the Greco-Roman world (chapter 1). We do not wish to imply by this that hellenistic philosophy or religion was the *fons et origo* of Jewish and Christian reflection on the name. The consideration is practical. It is assumed that most readers of this study will have at least a basic acquaintance with Old Testament history and theology, but that the Greek and Latin texts will be less familiar. For this reason we will also include in our survey material which considerably pre-dates the New Testament period. We begin with a brief discussion of divine etymologies in the Greco-Roman world, and follow this with two extended sections on Being and the *Dreizeitenformeln*.

With this background information in hand, we proceed in chapter 2 to look at the use of the name YHWH in early Judaism. In addition to technical questions concerning how the name was written and pronounced, we attempt to establish when the name was used by Jews, and why its use was so restricted in the second temple period.

---

[16] Although Childs does not defend the LXX translation *per se*, he recognizes the legitimacy of drawing implications about the Being of God from the verse (pp.84–7). Writers of Old Testament theologies seem particularly offended by the translation; see, e.g., the comments by Preuß and von Rad, cited below (chapter 3) in our discussion of the Septuagint rendering of Ex. 3:14.

[17] Wevers, *LXX: Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* Septuagint and Cognate Studies 30 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Alain Le Boulluec and Pierre Sandevoir, *La Bible d'Alexandrie: L'Exode* (Paris: Cerf, 1989).

[18] See his works: "Ammonius on the Delphic E," *CQ* n.s. 19 (1969): 185–92; "The 'Eternity' of the Platonic Forms," *Phronesis* 13 (1968): 131–44; *God, Time, Being. Symbolae Osloenses* Fasc. Supp. 23 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971); "Moses Atticizing," *Phoenix* 21 (1967): 196–201; "Seneca, Ep. 58.17," *Symbolae Osloenses* 50 (1975): 143–48; "Plutarch, Platonism, and Christianity," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, eds. H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus (London: Variorum, 1981): 50–63.

In chapter 3, we move on to the interpretation of the name. Here we make a distinction between the general "significance" of the name and its specific "meaning" in the sense of etymology (real or imagined). Such a distinction, if a bit artificial, is nonetheless necessary. "The Name" could stand for all the attributes and activities of the God of Israel, and so a full estimate of its significance is impossible. There is more than enough material to examine concerning the supposed meaning of the name. While most explanations of YHWH are variations on the etymology, "He is" (and perhaps, "He causes to be"), this etymology was unpacked by Jewish and Christian writers in a variety of ways.

We conclude in chapter 4 by examining the formula "the one who is and who was and who is to come" in the book of Revelation. We first attempt to assess to what extent John is indebted to his Jewish and Greek predecessors, and to what extent he is making his own theological contribution. We then note how John employs the formula (and variations upon it) throughout his work.

It is hoped that this investigation will give us a deeper appreciation of the theological message of the book of Revelation. The importance of Rev. 1:4, however, extends beyond the small circle of specialists in the Apocalypse. For it is a particularly striking case study in influence in early Judaism and Christianity. Scholars often speak of Greek "influence" on Judaism, or Jewish "influence" on Christianity. But influence can imply many different things. It may sometimes, for instance, convey the idea of an unwilling, or unwitting, acceptance of alien ideas in order to make up for some deficiency in one's own faith. We will see that such a model is singularly inappropriate for the subtle interplay of Greek, Jewish, and Christian ideas which eventually led to John's formula "the One who is and who was and who is to come."

## Methodology

Our investigation is primarily historical in nature. We will attempt to trace the development of the Jewish and Greek traditions which impinge on the study of Rev. 1:4, and then see how John adapted these traditions for his own purposes. In terms of contemporary scholarship, we would hope to make a contribution to the growing body of literature concerning the relationship of Jews and Christians to their hellenistic milieu. Naturally, the question of the name and identity of God has important theological, philosophical, and sociological implications. This study may provide a stimulus for further research in these areas.

Chapter 1

# Greco-Roman Material

The impact of Hellenism upon Judaism has been well documented, particularly in recent years. While crucial questions remain as to the extent of Greek influence upon the Jews, no one would dispute the importance of this cultural and religious encounter. The matter of the divine name is no exception. The name was indeed shrouded in secrecy, but this very secrecy may have been engendered by the pressures put upon Jewish identity by the dominant hellenistic culture. As for the meaning of the name, it was almost inevitable that a God who declared, "I am who I am," would at some point run up against Greek definitions of ultimate reality.

This survey of Greek and Roman literature is not intended to nullify Jewish contributions to theology. On the contrary, only by fully exploring the Greek background can we fully appreciate the creativity and intellectual power of the Jewish response to the hellenistic world. At the same time, we cannot simply portray the Greeks as the villains, threatening to taint the ancestral Jewish faith with their abstract philosophizing. The relationship was far more complex.

We begin by examining Greek etymologies of divine names. After this, we turn our attention to the question of Being in Greek philosophy. This is of prime importance for understanding the LXX translation of Ex. 3:14 and the subsequent use of ὁ ὤν in Jewish and Christian literature. We conclude with a survey of the *Dreizeitenformel* in Greek literature. The "was, is, will be" motif was prevalent in all kinds of Greek literature, and its importance for our text in Revelation is self-evident.

## Etymology

The Jews were not alone in the ancient world in seeking to elucidate the meaning of the name of their deity. In the Babylonian epic of creation, for instance, the god Marduk is praised with fifty names. Of these, writes William Hallo, "...nos. 2–4 represent transparently 'unscientific' etymologies

based on the syllabic or logographic orthography of the name..."[1] The Greeks were equally adept at such word-play. This was not always done with complete seriousness, nor was it believed that a particular etymology was the only true or valid one. Many thinkers probably viewed them as pedagogical tools rather than as historically verifiable pieces of data.

Nonetheless, divine etymologies were a common feature of the religious landscape from (at least) Hesiod onwards. They play a crucial role in the *Theogony*, particularly for the older deities like Night, Heaven, Earth, etc.[2] As time went on, such interpretations were pressed into the service of philosophy. We may take Plutarch as an example. In the *De Iside et Osiride* he informs us that the name of Isis' temple, the Iseion, "clearly offers recognition and knowledge of that which is (εἴδησιν τοῦ ὄντος); for it is called the Iseion to indicate that we shall know that which is (εἰσομένων τὸ ὄν) if we approach the sanctuaries of the goddess with reason and reverence" (352a). In the *De E ap. Delphos*, Plutarch's mentor Ammonius draws lessons about the unity of God from the name of the Delphic god, Apollo. He takes it to mean "not many" – ἀ-πολλοί.[3] This etymology has many parallels in the ancient world and may be Pythagorean in origin.[4]

One of the most commonly adduced etymologies was that which explained Zeus/Dios as "he through whom all things have life." Pherecydes, a sixth century figure "on the borderline between myth and philosophy,"[5] began his *Theogony* with, "Zas (=Zeus) and Chronos always existed (ἦσαν

---

[1] Hallo, "Scurrilous Etymologies," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, eds. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), p.768.

[2] Cf. Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp.68–9. One may also note the etymological significance of the names of the Muses, ll. 77ff.; Aphrodite/Cytherea, ll.195ff.; and the Titans, ll. 207ff.

[3] *De E* 393b; cf. 388f. See *Plutarque: Sur l'E de Delphes*, ed. and trans. by Robert Flacelière, Annales de l'Université de Lyon (Paris: Société d'Édition *Les Belles Lettres*, 1941), p.84 n. It is worth noting that even a relatively minor god such as Proteus could take on a new importance based on etymology. In an admittedly late Orphic hymn, Proteus is described as πρωτογενῆ, πάσης φύσεως ἀρχὰς ὃς ἔδηνεν. This seems to derive from the interpretation of his name as "the First." (For text see Apostolos N. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977, p.120); cf. van Unnik, "Formula," p.92. Athanassakis (vii–viii) believes the hymns date from the first four centuries of the Christian era, perhaps from the second half of the third century. He concurs with Nilsson (cited in van Unnik,p.92 n) that they are likely from Asia Minor.)

[4] See John Whittaker, "Ammonius on the Delphic E," *CQ* n.s. 19 (1969): 187.

[5] W.K.C. Guthrie *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962–78), 1: 29 n; cf. G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Second Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; henceforth, *KRS.*), pp.50ff.

ἀεὶ) and Chthonie..."[6] W. Jaeger suggests quite plausibly that Pherecydes is employing an etymology in which Zas = "he who liveth."[7] We may also compare a portion of the Orphic "Rhapsodic" Theogony,[8] which reads:

> Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος
> Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ'ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται (φρ.168, Κερν)
>
> Zeus became first, Zeus of the bright lightning last.
> Zeus is head, Zeus middle, and from Zeus all things have their being.[9]

While this ancient text is not an etymology *per se*, the sentiment is close to the view of Zeus presented by later writers, particularly the Stoic Cleanthes.[10] (The second line also bears comparison with Plato's *Laws* 715e ff., see below.)

The first literary evidence outside of Pherecydes we possess for an etymology connecting Zeus and Life comes in Plato's *Cratylus* 396a. In the course of a discussion concerning the names of the gods, Socrates explains the meaning of Zeus in the following way: Ἀτεχνῶς γάρ ἐστιν οἷον

---

[6] *KRS*, p.56. Compare the similar account (also in *KRS*, p.56) of Damascius Ζάντα μὲν εἶναι ἀεὶ καὶ Χρόνον καὶ Χθονίαν τὰς τρεῖς ἀρχάς. That Pherecydes should have already worked out an abstract notion of Time (Chronos) at this point in history is surprising, but it is possible. See *KRS*, p.57.

[7] Rather than simply employing Zas to emphasize the ζα–, an intensive prefix, as suggested by *KRS*, p.57.

[8] The fragment (in Otto Kern, ed. *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1922)) is from Porphyry, ap. Eusebius, but it also appears in the "Derveni Theogony," an ancient papyrus containing an Orphic theogony (close enough to the Rhapsodic for our purposes) with philosophizing commentary. The papyrus itself may be as early as the fourth century BCE, and the commentary appears to be pre-Socratic. See M.L. West *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.75–82; 108–110. A provisional transcript may be found in "Der Orphische Papyrus von Derveni," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 47 (1982), following p.300.

[9] Translation in W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1952), p.140. He provides a translation of the metrical fragments of the "Rhapsodic Theogony" on pp. 137 ff.

[10] The original meaning of this portion of the poem may be traced to particular points of Orphic belief. In the Rhapsodic theogony, the first god to be born is Phanes (also called Protogonos, among other names), who becomes creator of the world. Zeus – having already escaped being eaten by Kronos – eventually swallows Phanes, and with him, the created order as well. Zeus then brings this forth in a new creation. The mention of "first and last," thus appears to refer to the fact that Zeus is the *last*-born of Kronos, yet he is also *first*-born in that he alone did not require "re-birth" after Kronos' swallowing of his children. The second line we have cited seems an obvious allusion to Zeus' role as "second creator." For detailed summaries, see West, pp.70–75,91; Guthrie, pp.78–83. With reference to Zeus' swallowing of the creation, note also fr. 167: "...all that was then in being and all that was to come to pass, all was there, and mingled like streams in the belly of Zeus." Trans. in Guthrie, p.81.

λόγος τὸ τοῦ Διὸς ὄνομα.[11] This λόγος may be divided into two parts: Ζῆνα and Δία.[12] The two elements taken together give an accurate picture of the nature of God: he is the one "through whom (δι' ὅν) all beings have life (ζῆν)."[13] Plato no doubt draws upon commonly known etymologies throughout the *Cratylus*, and this may be one such traditional reading. In any case, this reading of Zeus' name appealed to the "philosophically tinged piety" of hellenistic times.[14] Variations of it appear in Chryssipus,[15] (cf. the account of the Stoics in Diogenes Laertes),[16] the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*,[17] and, most notably for us, in the Letter of Aristeas 16[18]and (in abbreviated form) Josephus, *Ant.* 12:22.[19] There are evident similarities between this etymology for Zeus; the LXX understanding of YHWH as "the one who is"; and Jewish traditions which take YHWH as "the one who causes to be." We will examine the relationship between these later.

---

[11] Text in *Platon: Oeuvres Complètes* Vol. 5, part 2, ed. Louis Méridier (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les belles lettres," 1931). Méridier gives "En effet le nom de Zeus est à proprement parler comme une définition;" H.N. Fowler takes οἷον λόγος as "like a sentence" (Plato, *Cratylus*, LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: Wm. Heinemann, 1926).

[12] These correspond to the declension of Zeus as nom. Ζεύς, gen. Διός, thought to be derived from *Ζήν and *Δίς respectively. I have followed Plato in giving the accusative forms, since they best suit his purported etymology.

[13] 396b: Συμβαίνει οὖν ὀρθῶς ὀνομάζεσθαι οὗτος ὁ θεὸς εἶναι, δι' ὃν ζῆν ἀεὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῶσιν ὑπάρχει...

[14] For the phrase in quotation marks see D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.138.

[15] Ap. Philodemus περὶ εὐσεβείας 12: Δία μὲν γάρ φασι δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα, Ζῆνα δὲ καλοῦσι παῤ ὅσον τοῦ ζῆν αἴτιός ἐστιν ἢ διὰ τοῦ ζῆν κεχώρηκεν; cf. a similar remark in Stobaeus *ecl.* 1.1.26. Texts in A.B. Cook, *Zeus* 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914–40) 1: 29 n.

[16] Diogenes Laertes 7.147, on Zeno. The text is identical to that found in Philodemus περὶ εὐσεβείας 12, quoted above.

[17] Ps-Arist. *De Mundo* 401a: καλοῦμεν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ Δία, παραλλήλως χρώμενοι τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, ὡς κἂν εἰ λέγοιμεν δι' ὃν ζῶμεν. Text in Aristotle, *On the Cosmos*,trans. D.J. Furley, LCL (London: Wm. Heinemann/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

[18] "They (sc. the Jews) worship the same God...though we call him by different names, such as Zeus or Dis. This name was very appropriately bestowed upon him by our first ancestors, in order to signify that *He through whom all things are endowed with life and come into being* (δι' ὃν ζωοποιοῦνται τὰ πάντα καὶ γίνεται), is necessarily the ruler and lord of the Universe." (italics mine; Ep. Arist. 15/16.) Text and translation in Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. John Bowden; 2 vols (London: SCM, 1974), 1: 264. Cf. Hengel's comments on p.265.

[19] In his account of the LXX translation, Josephus too has Aristeas say that God is called Zeus (Ζῆνα) because he breathes life (ζῆν) into all things.

# Index of Sources

## Old Testament

## Apocrypha



## Pseudepigrapha

## New Testament

## Dead Sea Scrolls

## Rabbinical Literature

### Mishnah



### Talmud, Babylonian

## Talmud, Jerusalem



## Tosefta



## Targums

## Other Works

# Ancient Authors

## Plutarch



## Proclus



## Protagoras



## Ps-Aristotle



## Ps-Clementine Homilies



## Scholia in Lucanum



## Scriptores Historiae Augustae



## Seneca

# Index of Modern Authors

# Index of Subjects

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## *Alphabetical Index of the First and Second Series*

*Anderson, Paul N.:* The Christology of the Fourth Gospel. 1996. *Volume II/78.*
*Appold, Mark L.:* The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel. 1976. *Volume II/1.*
*Arnold, Clinton E.:* The Colossian Syncretism. 1995. *Volume II/77.*
*Avemarie, Friedrich* and *Hermann Lichtenberger* (Ed.): Bund und Tora. 1996. *Volume 92.*
*Bachmann, Michael:* Sünder oder Übertreter. 1992. *Volume 59.*
*Baker, William R.:* Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James. 1995. *Volume II/68.*
*Balla, Peter:* Challenges to New Testament Theology. 1997. *Volume II/95.*
*Bammel, Ernst:* Judaica. Volume I 1986. *Volume 37* – Volume II 1997. *Volume 91.*
*Bash, Anthony:* Ambassadors for Christ. 1997. *Volume II/92.*
*Bauernfeind, Otto:* Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte. 1980. *Volume 22.*
*Bayer, Hans Friedrich:* Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection. 1986. *Volume II/20.*
*Bell, Richard H.:* Provoked to Jealousy. 1994. *Volume II/63.*
– No One Seeks for God. 1998. *Volume 106.*
*Bergman, Jan:* siehe *Kieffer, René*
*Betz, Otto:* Jesus, der Messias Israels. 1987. *Volume 42.*
– Jesus, der Herr der Kirche. 1990. *Volume 52.*
*Beyschlag, Karlmann:* Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis. 1974. *Volume 16.*
*Bittner, Wolfgang J.:* Jesu Zeichen im Johannesevangelium. 1987. *Volume II/26.*
*Bjerkelund, Carl J.:* Tauta Egeneto. 1987. *Volume 40.*
*Blackburn, Barry Lee:* Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions. 1991. *Volume II/40.*
*Bock, Darrell L.:* Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus. 1998. *Volume II/106.*
*Bockmuehl, Markus N.A.:* Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity. 1990. *Volume II/36.*
*Böhlig, Alexander:* Gnosis und Synkretismus. Teil 1 1989. *Volume 47* – Teil 2 1989. *Volume 48.*
*Böttrich, Christfried:* Weltweisheit – Menschheitsethik – Urkult. 1992. *Volume II/50.*
*Bolyki, János:* Jesu Tischgemeinschaften. 1997. *Volume II/96.*
*Büchli, Jörg:* Der Poimandres – ein paganisiertes Evangelium. 1987. *Volume II/27.*
*Bühner, Jan A.:* Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium. 1977. *Volume II/2.*
*Burchard, Christoph:* Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth. 1965. *Volume 8.*
– Studien zur Theologie, Sprache und Umwelt des Neuen Testaments. Ed. by D. Sänger. 1998. *Volume 107.*
*Cancik, Hubert* (Ed.): Markus-Philologie. 1984. *Volume 33.*
*Capes, David B.:* Old Testament Yaweh Texts in Paul's Christology. 1992. *Volume II/47.*
*Caragounis, Chrys C.:* The Son of Man. 1986. *Volume 38.*
– siehe *Fridrichsen, Anton.*
*Carleton Paget, James:* The Epistle of Barnabas. 1994. *Volume II/64.*
*Ciampa, Roy E.:* The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2. 1998. *Volume II/102.*
*Crump, David:* Jesus the Intercessor. 1992. *Volume II/49.*
*Deines, Roland:* Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit. 1993. *Volume II/52.*
– Die Pharisäer. 1997. *Volume 101.*
*Dietzfelbinger, Christian:* Der Abschied des Kommenden. 1997. *Volume 95.*
*Dobbeler, Axel von:* Glaube als Teilhabe. 1987. *Volume II/22.*
*Du Toit, David S.:* Theios Anthropos. 1997. *Volume II/91.*
*Dunn , James D.G* (Ed.): Jews and Christians. 1992. *Volume 66.*
– Paul and the Mosaic Law. 1996. *Volume 89.*
*Ebertz, Michael N.:* Das Charisma des Gekreuzigten. 1987. *Volume 45.*
*Eckstein, Hans-Joachim:* Der Begriff Syneidesis bei Paulus. 1983. *Volume II/10.*
– Verheißung und Gesetz. 1996. *Volume 86.*
*Ego, Beate:* Im Himmel wie auf Erden. 1989. *Volume II/34.*
*Eisen, Ute E.:* siehe *Paulsen, Henning.*
*Ellis, E. Earle:* Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity. 1978. *Volume 18.*
– The Old Testament in Early Christianity. 1991. *Volume 54.*
*Ennulat, Andreas:* Die 'Minor Agreements'. 1994. *Volume II/62.*
*Ensor, Peter W.:* Jesus and His 'Works'. 1996. *Volume II/85.*
*Eskola, Timo:* Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology. 1998. *Volume II/100.*

*Rüger, Hans Peter:* Die Weisheitsschrift aus der Kairoer Geniza. 1991. *Volume 53.*
*Sänger, Dieter:* Antikes Judentum und die Mysterien. 1980. *Volume II/5.*
– Die Verkündigung des Gekreuzigten und Israel. 1994. *Volume 75.*
– siehe *Burchard, Christoph.*
*Salzmann, Jorg Christian:* Lehren und Ermahnen. 1994. *Volume II/59.*
*Sandnes, Karl Olav:* Paul – One of the Prophets? 1991. *Volume II/43.*
*Sato, Migaku:* Q und Prophetie. 1988. *Volume II/29.*
*Schaper, Joachim:* Eschatology in the Greek Psalter. 1995. *Volume II/76.*
*Schimanowski, Gottfried:* Weisheit und Messias. 1985. *Volume II/17.*
*Schlichting, Günter:* Ein jüdisches Leben Jesu. 1982. *Volume 24.*
*Schnabel, Eckhard J.:* Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul. 1985. *Volume II/16.*
*Schutter, William L.:* Hermeneutic and Composition in I Peter. 1989. *Volume II/30.*
*Schwartz, Daniel R.:* Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity. 1992. *Volume 60.*
*Schwemer, Anna Maria:* siehe *Hengel, Martin*
*Scott, James M.:* Adoption as Sons of God. 1992. *Volume II/48.*
– Paul and the Nations. 1995. *Volume 84.*
*Siegert, Folker:* Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten. Teil I 1980. *Volume 20* – Teil II 1992. *Volume 61.*
– Nag-Hammadi-Register. 1982. *Volume 26.*
– Argumentation bei Paulus. 1985. *Volume 34.*
– Philon von Alexandrien. 1988. *Volume 46.*
*Simon, Marcel:* Le christianisme antique et son contexte religieux I/II. 1981. *Volume 23.*
*Snodgrass, Klyne:* The Parable of the Wicked Tenants. 1983. *Volume 27.*
*Söding, Thomas:* Das Wort vom Kreuz. 1997. *Volume 93.*
– siehe *Thüsing, Wilhelm.*
*Sommer, Urs:* Die Passionsgeschichte des Markusevangeliums. 1993. *Volume II/58.*
*Souček, Josef B.:* siehe *Pokorný, Petr.*
*Spangenberg, Volker:* Herrlichkeit des Neuen Bundes. 1993. *Volume II/55.*
*Speyer, Wolfgang:* Frühes Christentum im antiken Strahlungsfeld. 1989. *Volume 50.*
*Stadelmann, Helge:* Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter. 1980. *Volume II/6.*
*Stettler, Hanna:* Die Christologie der Pastoralbriefe. 1998. *Volume II/105.*
*Strobel, August:* Die Stunde der Wahrheit. 1980. *Volume 21.*
*Stuckenbruck, Loren T.:* Angel Veneration and Christology. 1995. *Volume II/70.*
*Stuhlmacher, Peter* (Ed.): Das Evangelium und die Evangelien. 1983. *Volume 28.*
*Sung, Chong-Hyon:* Vergebung der Sünden. 1993. *Volume II/57.*
*Tajra, Harry W.:* The Trial of St. Paul. 1989. *Volume II/35.*
– The Martyrdom of St.Paul. 1994. *Volume II/67.*
*Theißen, Gerd:* Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums. 1979, $^{3}$1989. *Volume 19.*
*Theobald, Michael:* siehe *Mußner, Franz.*
*Thornton, Claus-Jürgen:* Der Zeuge des Zeugen. 1991. *Volume 56.*
*Thüsing, Wilhelm:* Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie. Ed. by Thomas Söding. 1995. *Volume 82.*
*Treloar, Geoffrey R.:* Lightfoot the Historian. 1998. *Volume II/103.*
*Tsuji, Manabu:* Glaube zwischen Vollkommenheit und Verweltlichung. 1997. *Volume II/93.*
*Twelftree, Graham H.:* Jesus the Exorcist. 1993. *Volume II/54.*
*Visotzky, Burton L.:* Fathers of the World. 1995. *Volume 80.*
*Wagener, Ulrike:* Die Ordnung des „Hauses Gottes". 1994. *Volume II/65.*
*Walter, Nikolaus:* Praeparatio Evangelica. Ed. by Wolfgang Kraus and Florian Wilk. 1997. *Volume 98.*
*Wander, Bernd:* Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten. 1998. *Volume 104.*
*Watts, Rikki:* Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark. 1997. *Volume II/88.*
*Wedderburn, A.J.M.:* Baptism and Resurrection. 1987. *Volume 44.*
*Wegner, Uwe:* Der Hauptmann von Kafarnaum. 1985. *Volume II/14.*
*Welck, Christian:* Erzählte 'Zeichen'. 1994. *Volume II/69.*
*Wilk, Florian:* siehe *Walter, Nikolaus.*
*Wilson, Walter T.:* Love without Pretense. 1991. *Volume II/46.*
*Zimmermann, Alfred E.:* Die urchristlichen Lehrer. 1984, $^{2}$1988. *Volume II/12.*
*Zimmermann, Johannes:* Messianische Texte aus Qumran. 1998. *Volume II/104.*

*For a complete catalogue please write to the publisher*
*Mohr Siebeck, P.O.Box 2040, D–72010 Tübingen, Germany*
*Up-to-date information on the internet at http://www.mohr.de*