A delightful mediaeval silver priest’s ring was found recently at Hinton Blewett in fields some way behind my own house in Somerset, where much of this chapter was written. The ring has a rectangular section, on the outside of which are the letters AGLA, with each letter divided by a cross pattée. The charm is an acronym of the Hebrew ‘ata gibor le’olam ‘adonai (Thou art mighty forever, O Lord), four words from the Second Blessing of the Jewish Shemoneh ‘Esreh, and was used to prevent fever. (Joachim, as we have seen, observed that Adonai was used as much by Christians as by “Hebrews.”) The British Museum has a more famous ring found much earlier in Coventry Park in 1802, which has inscribed within the shank ‘Vulnera quinqu’ dei sunt medicina mei, pia crux et passio xpi sint medicina michi. Iasper Melchior Baltasar ananyzapta tetragrammaton.’ Here we have mention of “Tetragrammaton.” A similar but fuller formula appears in a 15th-century “Charme for wyked Wych”: “in nomine Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti Amen…. + α + g + I + α + Tetragrammaton + Alpha + Ω…. “There are many such items attesting to little more than the place of


3 *Expositio...in Apocalysim* (Francisci Bindoni ac Maphei Pasini, Venice, 1527), 35b.


“Tetragrammaton” within the group of religiously or magically powerful words. Another 15th-century charm in the East Midlands dialect evokes, amid some 100 names, "... Tetragrammaton...alpha et oo...ego sum qui sum...". In this material, evidently, the word “Tetragrammaton” itself is in question: it has lost all connection with yhwh.

The use of divine names (or vestiges thereof) in exorcism was not uncommon in mediaeval medicine. One example calls for “Tetragrammaton” (not the Tetragrammaton) to be written upon the hands of the possessed, “Emanuel” on the back of his neck, “Saba’oth” on his chest, and “Agla” on his forehead. "item ad eiciendum daemonum de corpora hominis scribe in manu dextra et in manu sinistra Tetragrammaton; in collo in parte posteriori Emanuel, in pectore suo a parte anteriori Sabaoth, et in fronte Agla." A charm for fever is written: te + tra + gra + ma + ton. Other names of signs of the zodiac are punctuated by + on + 9. The 13th-century Inglesby Arncliffe Crucifix from Hambleton in North Yorkshire contained a parchment with an exorcism formula beginning “Agla, In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.” The four Evangelists are then evoked: “Agla, Matthew, Agla Mark, Agla, Luke... etc.” Then: “Agla, the virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ and the great names of God, + a + g + I + a + on + tetra + gramaton + sabaoth + adonai + and all names.” Agla occurs again several times subsequently. One notices here the interesting use of the Greek on (The Existing One) from Exodus 3, used as a divine name here as it commonly is in Byzantine art. There are also some traces of the use of “Tetragrammaton” in runic texts.

6 D.C. Skemer, Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages (State College, Pa., 2006), discusses amulets, particularly in the 13th to 15th centuries, stressing continuities with what went before. He describes a printed amuletic text, similar to that quoted above, but enhanced with a graphic configuration on p. 167.
9 Ms. Sloane 962 f 38r.