The New Testament κύριος problem and how the Old Testament speeches can help solve it

The New Testament (NT) κύριος problem forms part of a larger interconnected network of challenges, which has the divine name Yhwh as the epicentre. To put it plainly, if the term κύριος is an equivalent for the divine name Yhwh and if the term κύριος in the Yhwh sense is applied to Jesus, the implication is that Jesus is put on par with Yhwh. This problem therefore, forms part of a matrix of interconnected issues in a constant push and pull relation. There is no easy way to address this problem, but one must start somewhere. This study will attempt to introduce, illustrate and explain the complexity of the NT κύριος problem to contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem and to appreciate its intricacies. The aim is therefore to illustrate the intricacy of the problem by showing where the NT κύριος problem might have originated and how it evolved. These intricacies will then be pulled into a singular focus made possible by the explicit κύριος citations. These citations, in turn, will be categorised as Theos, Davidic and Jesus speeches and analysed in an attempt to contribute to a possible solution.

Introduction

The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was one of the biggest undertakings of its kind. It would have been impossible to accomplish such a mammoth task without some of the best minds the ancient Mediterranean society had to offer. They had to be competent on so many levels, skilled in various disciplines and had to have the ability to solve problems. But nothing could have prepared them for the translation of the divine name of a Hebrew deity; the most sacred linguistic characters the Hebrew language ever produced, the Tetragrammaton. Translating such a significant and religious sensitive Hebrew term turned out to be one of the biggest obstacles they faced because translating this term, by definition, is a sacrilege act. To be sure, the translation of the Tetragrammaton by default implied that the divine name is stripped of its sacred status. In fact, the mere idea to translate the divine name must have been regarded as preposterous. If this did not cause translation fever amongst the scribes, then the prohibition to utter the divine name, presumably from the third century BCE onwards, must have caused some sleepless nights. To add to this, the copying of the Hebrew Scriptures during this period produced their sacred status. In fact, the mere idea to translate the divine name must have been regarded as preposterous. If this did not cause translation fever amongst the scribes, then the prohibition to utter the divine name, presumably from the third century BCE onwards, must have caused some sleepless nights. To add to this, the copying of the Hebrew Scriptures during this period produced multiple Hebrew terms and scribal practises to avoid uttering the divine name. All things considered, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek demanded nerves of steel and all the beer Alexandria had to offer.

The New Testament (NT) κύριος problem is therefore not an isolated issue. It forms part of a much larger interconnected network of challenges, which has the divine name, πατὴρ (hereafter transcribed Yhwh) as the epicentre. The NT κύριος problem is pertinent for the NT and fundamental for its theology and Christology. To put it plainly, if the term κύριος is an equivalent for the divine name Yhwh; and if the term κύριος in the Yhwh sense is applied to Jesus, the implication is that Jesus is put on par with Yhwh. If translating the term Yhwh was a preposterous idea, equating Jesus with Yhwh is nothing short of blasphemy; punishable by death. To reiterate, the κύριος problem is not confined to the NT, it forms part of a matrix of interconnected issues in a constant push and pull relation. There is no easy way to address this problem, but one must...
start somewhere. This study will attempt to introduce, illustrate and explain the complexity of the NT κύριος problem to contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem and to appreciate its intricacies. The aim is therefore to illustrate the intricacy of the problem by showing where the NT κύριος problem might have originated and how it evolved. These intricacies will then be pulled into a singular focus made possible by the explicit κύριος citations. These citations, in turn, will be categorised as Theo’s, David’s and Jesus’ speeches and analysed in an attempt to contribute to a possible solution.

Defining the problem

A question that petitions to be answered is whether a κύριος problem is not just an illusion. Is the so-called κύριος problem not the result of a cultural disconnection and misunderstanding of ancient texts, concepts and social contexts? Is this not a case of postulating a problem onto ancient Hebrew and Greek texts because of sociocultural and religious estrangement? The manuscript evidence, however, will reveal that a κύριος problem is not only plausible but a scribal reality. The NT κύριος problem is both conceptual and linguistical in nature; conceptually, it is a matter of who Jesus was perceived to be predominately in relation to a Hebrew deity, and albeit to a lesser extent, the Emperor as dominus. Linguistically speaking, it is a culmination brought about by the complexities of all the Hebrew and Aramaic terms used to reference a Hebrew deity and finding a suitable Greek equivalent in translating these terms.1 A few assumptions are made that form the basis for the NT κύριος problem:

1. a prohibition was in place from the third century BCE onwards prohibiting the pronunciation of the name for the Hebrew deity, Yhwh (cf. Tov 2020:49)
2. the rule of thumb is that the term κύριος is a suitable Greek equivalent for the Hebrew term יהוה
3. the term κύριος in the sense of Yhwh, as a divine name, is not applied to Jesus, irrespective of its ambiguity.3

These assumptions are problematic for primarily three reasons; firstly, there is no manuscript evidence of an uncontracted κύριος term as an equivalent representation of יהוה from the third century BCE to second century CE. Certainly, the evidence only

1. Tov (2020:47–58) is of the view that κύριος is a standard equivalent for יהוה, which is a straightforward linguistic equation κύριος = יהוה. 48. Tov, also puts forward a counter scenario; suggesting that Masoretic Qere perpetuum is a later Hebrew retroversion of the LXX equivalent, קוריס. According to this version, this equivalent is not a straightforward linguistic one, but “involves the theological rendering of the name of the God of Israel with a Greek noun designating the ‘master of the Universe,’” p. 49; cf. Bousset (1970:129).

2. Baudissen (2016:11–12), suggested in the light of the Hexapla and in particular Aquila and Theodotion, that the term κύριος was the preferred term.

3. Cf. Bousset (1970:125–128), like many others, acknowledged the complexity surrounding the use of the term κύριος as a title for Jesus. He wrote that the introduction and extensive use of the title without a first personal pronoun as attested in the Pauline literature marked a rapid development in Christianity; a development which saw that the absolute κύριος is applied to Jesus, a designation reserved for the ‘exalted One’ and not the historical Jesus. He goes on to say the expectation was, within Hebraic Judaism at least, to use the term κύριος for a Hebrew deity who is ‘Kurios of the kings’ and ‘Kurios of heaven’. This implies that the significant transition from the divine name ‘Yahwe’ to the divine name ‘Lord’ did not take place in the region of Hebraic Judaism but is rather a peculiarity of Jewish Hellenism. Therefore, the use of κύριος for Jesus in the religious sense, is only conceivable on the soil of Hellenistic, p. 128.

4. A practice whereby important religious and significant terms are abbreviated. Hurtado (2006:96), writes that ‘the nomina sacra are so familiar a feature of Christian manuscripts that papyrologists often take the presence of these forms as sufficient to identify a fragment of a manuscript as indicating its probable Christian provenance’; Heath (2010:517), states that the nomina sacra are the frequent abbreviations of certain words in early Christian manuscripts. Tuckett (2003:431–458), suggested that יהוה (P. Rylands Gk [Greek papyri] 457), considered as one of the oldest text fragments of the NT, did not have the distinctive Christian abbreviations. He claimed that it may have significant ramifications upon widely held views about this scribal practise. This was later successfully rebutted by Hurtado (2003:1–14).

5. Rösel (2007:411–428), aptly responded to the problem whether the Masoretic wordlist of the tетragrammaton as Adonai (אֲדָוָּנָי) or as shemah (שְָָם) was a scribal later addition. In the second assumption is correct, reading ‘Lord’ is to be regarded as a later tradition, 411. He is aware of the complexity when he observes that the tетragrammaton is vocalised as Elohim when used with קְרִים, 412. He also notes that the holem-dot is not written although Elohim should be read, after which he concludes that qere of יהוה is יהוה, not קְרִים, p. 413. Van Bekkum (2006:9–15), wrote that creation and name (either by the power of the name of God or by combining letters to names) were considered as parts of formative processes by which God succeeded to bring the world and its

An interconnected web of textual problems

The history leading up to the formation of the Jesus movement and the production of written material relating to Jesus as the central figure of this movement, reveals an intriguing web of interconnected issues all contributing to what is referred to here as the NT κύριος problem. What the study wants to convey with this idea of an interconnected web is that no issue, irrespective of when it occurred in history or where and how it is situated in the process (conceptualisation, transmission and translation), ever reach a static state; they remain fluid and ever-evolving. Think of it as a circular web with lines cutting across; forming nodes (connections) where they cut across the circular lines. These nodes represent a κύριος problem and when you address a certain problem (pushing and pulling the node), the entire web is impacted. The nodes closest to the one being pushed and pulled will be affected the most. Here are some of these nodes, of which only a few will be discussed in detail:

1. a Hebraic concept of Yhwh
2. transmission of the term in the Hebrew tradition
3. the translation of the term into Greek
4. transmission of the term in the Greek tradition
5. a Hellenistic/Graeco–Roman concept of the term κύριος
6. the theology and kyriology of the NT; using the term κύριος for Jesus.

A Hebraic concept of Yhwh

It is beyond the scope of this study to responsibly deal with the term יהוה as it is conceptualised in the Hebrew Scripture.
What can be said at this point is that the Hebrew concept of a deity, within its ancient near Eastern context, was not as homogeneous as often suggested. The evidence suggests a more differentiated and nuanced picture of how a Hebrew deity was conceptualised. The Hebrew Scriptures demonstrate different phases of how ancient Israel's religion developed, characterised by polytheism, monotheism and henotheism, none of which reached a static state. These phases of development testify to variations, differentiations, fluctuations, and inconsistencies. The different nuances in how ancient Israel perceived a deity, particularly their deity, to be and how they called upon such a deity, is under appreciated. For example, an El as a significant element of Elohim named and referred to as El Shaddai and Yhwh, both being a type of El. The concept of a primordial deity (El) and Yhwh becoming the significant El for the Hebrew people augments the complexity factor. In other words, El is the primordial substance of what constitutes an Elohim, in some instances referred to as El Shaddai; while Yhwh is a type of El that became the Elohim of ancient Israel. The variety and potential scope of deity concepts offered by the Hebrew text contributed significantly to transmission of these concepts in the Hebrew tradition. This is not to suggest that Yhwh is not pivotal and central for ancient Israel religion, but a conceptual variation of a Hebrew deity should be considered as a possibility. The transmission of the term Yhwh seems to support such.

Transmission of the Yhwh term in the Hebrew tradition

The destruction of the temple in 587 BCE had a devastating impact on ancient Israel, but the subsequent edict of Cyrus, king of Persia, in 539 BCE, which saw the elite return to the province of Yehud created renewed hope to restore and rebuild the temple and the city that cradled it, namely Jerusalem. The ambition of king Philip II of Macedonia, would in due course shatter this renewed hope as illustrated by the brutal war for Judean religious identity and independence, which came to be known as the Maccabean revolt during the second century BCE. Philip II’s son, Alexander III of Macadeon, took over the reins after he (Philip II) was assassinated in 336 BCE. Alexander was subsequently awarded generalship of Greece and used this authority to embark on an unprecedented military campaign through Asia and northeast Africa where he created one of the largest empires of the ancient world. This saw his father’s Panhellenic project to lead the Greeks in the conquest of Persia come to fruition. After the sudden death of Alexander in 323 BCE, his kingdom was divided amongst his generals who fought for control over the empire. This infighting caused the empire to be divided into several different kingdoms. The political uncertainty, among other factors, were the impetus for different religious sects to form and for ‘the Hebrew people’ to re-evaluate their religious and political identity as affirmed and shaped by the Hebrew Scriptures, or more specific, the Torah. A need arose to preserve the Hebrew Scriptures by making various copies presumably from the third century BCE onwards. It is postulated that during the same period, pronouncing the ‘sacred name’ of the Hebrew deity, Yhwh, was prohibited. The manuscript evidence seems to support these postulations; they attest to manifold possibilities in rendering ‘the name’ as demonstrated by the manuscript extracts from Qumran of which the ‘Community Role’ (IQS) will be referenced first.

Sectarian manuscripts

IQS (community role) 12. In Figure 1, line 14 it is shaded where the scribe uses four dots when referring to Yhwh. He writes that whilst Israel was in the desert (indicative of the...
second person pronoun ‘you’ (in line 12) they abandoned the way of ‘Ywhw’ (shaded in Figure 1, line 13), followed by an Isaiah 40:3 quotation in line 14. The use of four dots\(^20\) (1QS 8.14) for the reproduction of Ywhw is not repeated elsewhere in the community role,\(^21\) and the use of the term פֶּהַלְכָּה in line 13 as a rendition for Ywhw is a hapaxlegomena.\(^22\) In fact, the use of the four dots to reproduce a Hebrew deity is not common among texts found in the Judean desert. The so-called ‘War Scroll’ (1QM) makes no reference to a Hebrew deity using any equivalent term for Ywhw. What is a unique characteristic in 1QM is the dominant use of הָאָדָם in referencing a Hebrew deity.\(^23\) The scribal practice used to reproduce Ywhw appears to be somewhat different in the temple scroll (11Q19).

11Q10 (temple scroll)\(^24\): In Figure 2, the name of the Hebrew deity, Ywhw, is rendered using square Hebrew script as can be seen in lines 13 and 14.\(^25\) This scribal practise dominates this manuscript; as a matter of fact, it dominates most of the documents found in the Judean desert.\(^26\) Tov (2004:207) listed a dicolon (:) used throughout 4QRP\(^6\) (4Q364) and the uncommon and uncertain use of different colours of ink for אדָם elsewhere in the community role,\(^27\) (1QS 8.14) for the reproduction of Ywhw is not repeated in line 13 as a rendition for Ywhw is a hapaxlegomena.\(^28\) In fact, the use of the four dots to reproduce a Hebrew deity is not common among texts found in the Judean desert. The so-called ‘War Scroll’ (1QM) makes no reference to a Hebrew deity using any equivalent term for Ywhw. What is a unique characteristic in 1QM is the dominant use of הָאָדָם in referencing a Hebrew deity.\(^29\) The scribal practice used to reproduce Ywhw appears to be somewhat different in the temple scroll (11Q19).

20.Stegemann (1969:152), named this Tetraouncta: According to Tov (2004), the four dots in texts written in the square script represent the Tetragrammaton in eight nonbiblical and biblical texts written in the Qumran scribal practice, as well as in four additional Qumran texts (in one: strokes) and XKhv/ScEschat Hymn (XKhv/Se 6) \(2\) \(7\) (four diagonal strokes).

21.This includes the fragments of at least 10 additional copies (AQ255–264 and SQ11). There is a reference to הָאָדָם in 1QS 5.8, but because of its fragmentary nature the literary context is difficult to reconstruct. Seven other texts also attest to the four dots, 1QS\(^m\); 4QSur\(^a\); 4QJon (4Q176); 4QTanh\(^h\) (4Q176); 4Qap, parakalms (4Q382); 4QParalgetic C (4Q462); \(4Q^t\) (4Q524); not written in the Qumran scribal practice: four strokes in 4QMEN of People (4Q206); 4QapSib (4Q2196); 4QHistorical A (4Q248); 4Qap pišzet (4Q3931); cf. Tov (2004:206).

22.The reconstruction of AQ258 6.7 also reads הָאָדָם but it was obviously reconstructed as such based on 1QS 8.14.

23.1QM 10.4, 7; 18.4 are the exceptions; cf. Tov (2004:224–225). He states that in some instances the Tetragrammaton was replaced by ה (e.g. 4QpRah; 4QHos); in 1SQ\(^m\)עֶבְרָי replaces הוהי. He further states that the preponderance of ה in the sectarian writings (pesharim, Hodayot, prayers, blessings, Rules) as opposed to the rare use of the Tetragrammaton in these writings provide ample evidence of this avoidance, especially in 1QS and 2QPF. Rösel (2007:413), also observed the predominance of ה in a Hebrew deity.

24.See The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls, viewed 31 March 2020, from http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/temple for an overview of the scroll and its characteristics.

25.Cf. 11Q19 14.0, 7, 8.

26.11Q19, 14.7, 15:13; 16:4, 5, 10; 17:12, 13, 16; 18:13, 14; 19:11; 20.0, 14; 21.3, 8, 10, 16; 22.8, 14; 23.3, 24, 24:9; 25.4, 13; 28.6; 34.14; 39.9; 44.15; 45.1; 54.12, 13; 55.9, 56.0; 61.3; 63.7 in 11Q19 48.7–10; 53.8; 54.16; 55.0, 14; 60.21; 61.0; 63.8; 67.7. The manuscript produces the fixed construct הָאָדָם יִתְנַחְמוּ הָתוֹלַדְתֵי. Stegemann (1969:157), suggests that the Tetraouncta preceded the writing of the divine name in square characters.

27.Cf. Tov (2004). Rösel (2007:414), suggest that reading ‘God’ for the tetragrammaton was the normal custom at Qumran. For a list of manuscripts where the Tetragrammaton was written in palaeo-Hebrew characters, and Table 2 where the divine name and El are written in square characters in Texts written according to the Qumran scribal practices, Tov (2004:227–230).

28.Tov (2004:225). He provides valuable data and insight into the use of palaeo-Hebrew and square Hebrew characters in combination. See also Table 1 in Tov (2004:227–228), for a list of manuscripts where the Tetragrammaton was written in palaeo-Hebrew characters, and Table 2 where the divine name and El are written in square Characters in Texts written according to the Qumran scribal practices, Tov (2004:227–230).

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for the divine names are closely connected to the Qumran scribal practise, and that no Hebrew texts of a non-sectarian nature or those clearly not written in the Qumran scribal practice containing any of the aforementioned scribal systems for the writing of the divine names have been preserved (Tov 2004:207–208).

A reasonable observation is that there were no standardised scribal practices adopted by scribes of the sectarian manuscripts when it came to the reproduction of the divine name, Ywhw. Reproducing the term remained a religious sensitive matter, often reflecting reverence for, and fear of, uttering the divine name. The הוהי was considered so sacred that it was not written with regular characters.\(^27\) The challenges posed by the sacred divine name, Ywhw, was certainly not limited to the sectarian or non-biblical manuscripts but proved to be equally challenging for the scribes who copied the biblical content.

Biblical manuscripts

1QpHab (Hab 2:16–20): There were a few manuscripts from the Judean desert written in square and palaeo-Hebrew script. The finds from Qumran and Masada include several forms of writing in palaeo-Hebrew characters. Tov (2004:207–208) characterised them as follows:

1. Individual letters (scribal markings)
2. Divine names
3. Texts written entirely in palaeo-Hebrew characters (Tov 2004:224).

The peculiar use of palaeo-Hebrew script\(^28\) to reproduce Ywhw was not as uncommon as one might think. According to Tov (2004:225) the writing in palaeo-Hebrew characters probably ensured the non-erasure of the divine name.\(^29\) The extract from 1QpHab (commentary on Habakkuk) in Figure 3

Source: The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls, n.d., ‘The Community Rule’, viewed 31 March 2020, from http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/community

FIGURE 1: 1QS, line 11–18 (Community Role).

FIGURE 2: 11Q19, line 12–16 (Temple scroll).
is but one illustration. In fact, this scribal practise was not limited to manuscripts written in square Hebrew script, but also influenced manuscripts written in Greek. The Nahal Hever finds (manuscripts dated to 50 BCE–50 CE) consistent use of palaeo-Hebrew script without exception (see Figure 4 as illustration).

8HevXIIgr (Hab 2:16–20): Returning to the challenge faced by scribes in rendering the name of the Hebrew deity, no other manuscript illustrates the complexity more than the ‘Large Isaiah Scroll’ (1QIsa a) (See Nagel 2012:173–191), Figure 5.

1QIsa a (Is 3:15–18): In Figure 5, at the end of line 20 (Is 3:15), the manuscript reads Yhwh with a superscript reading Adonaj. In line 24 (Is 3:17) the manuscript reads Adonaj with a superscript reading Yhwh, and the direct opposite is again found in line 25 (Is 3:18) reading Yhwh with a superscript Adonaj. What apparently caused the confusion is brought about by the Qere and Ketib tradition; what ought to be written and read, respectively, which is obviously not limited to 1QIsa a but can be observed elsewhere (cf. Tov 2020:49).

In Figure 6, a redactor inserted four dots above Adonaj, presumably indicating that this is what ought to be read, but the term יהוה was meant.

The three manuscript extracts are only revealing the tip of the iceberg. The data from the Judean desert finds are overwhelming. An apparent inference is that like the non-biblical manuscripts, here too there was no standardised scribal system on how one should render the ‘name’ of the Hebrew deity. These illustrations produce not less than five terms used to render the divine name Yhwh:

1. square Hebrew characters
2. palaeo-Hebrew characters
3. four dots
4. Adonaj
5. the term יהוה.

To confirm, these are not the only possibilities, but it sufficiently illustrates the scribal variety with the reproduction of the divine name, Yhwh. These reproductions also created fertile soil for unearthing numerous complex challenges for the Greek translators of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Translating the term יהוה with a Greek ‘equivalent’

The array of possible renderings of Yhwh within the Hebrew frame of reference must have caused endless translation nightmares for the scribes responsible for translating the Hebrew Scriptures. What follows are a few illustrations revealing some of the challenges faced by the Greek
translators when an attempt was made to translate the term יהוה. The first illustration is Deuteronomy 3:17–26.

The inconsistency and confusion in translating יהוה particularly when used in combination with סיום is presented in Table 1 is evident. The term Yhwh is rendered in the Greek idiom using three different terms or combinations of terms: ο θεός, κυρίος, and κύριος. In the Hebrew text tradition remained consistent in using the square Hebrew characters to signal Yhwh. In the case of Deuteronomy 3:24, papyri 963 renders as היהי יי, whereas codex Sinaiacus only reads tekst. It was not uncommon to translate both κυρίος and θεός with the term κύριος, keeping in mind that in all cases the data reveal a contracted form of the term. Another on-point illustration is Isaiah 28:16.

**1QIsaa (Is 28:16)**

In the case of Isaiah 28:16 (Figure 7) the text reads Yhwh in square Hebrew characters with a superscript Adonaj, which is characteristic of the 1QIsaa scroll as indicated earlier. In Codex Leningradensis, the superscript presumably found its way into the text for it to read יהוה אדני, whereas Codex Sinaiacus reading a single κύριος. The point of contention is whether the term κύριος is an equivalent for the superscript Adonaj or Yhwh. The Hexapla recension read an additional κυριος, the Lukian recension attest to a plus reading θεος. A similar type of issue is present in Isaiah 28:22; in 1QIsaa it reads יהוה but in the MT it reads קרבו הר in but in this case the Greek text tradition reads. In the latter it seems as if Adonaj found its way outside of the text. Another striking case is found in Lamentations 1:14–17.

**4QLam (4Q111), (Lm 1:14–17)**

In the short space of a few lines of text (Table 2) it is unclear which terms represent what and whom. It is uncertain whether θεος is a substitute for יהוה or if it simply means ‘master’. Codex S uses κυριος throughout, avoiding duplication in Lamentations 1:17. These examples are not the exception but are so frequent that one could even define it as the rule. In summary, it is uncertain if and to what extent the term κύριος was used to translate Yhwh. Moreover, when Yhwh was used in combination with Elohim or Adonai, or both, the Greek text tradition in part adopted a practise of conflating it to a single term in various instances. One should therefore be cautious when postulating the idea that the term θεος is a Greek equivalent for Elohim and the term κύριος for Yhwh; it is far more complex and nuanced than that.

A few postulations should be in order at this point:

1. Linguistically speaking, the term κύριος might be an equivalent Greek term for יהוה, but semantically, conceptually it is not Yhwh; it is a phonetic representation of the divine name.
2. Kyrios is therefore not a type of El as Yhwh is one.
3. Kyrios is not a name of a Hebrew deity, but a term used to translate the Hebrew term יהוה.
4. Kyrios represents a quality of a Theos as appose to a type.
5. It is therefore to be expected that finding a Greek equivalent for the divine name was not an easy matter, as is evident from the Greek manuscript data.

**Transmission of the term κύριος in the Greek tradition**

It is somewhat artificial to draw a distinction between ‘translation’ and ‘transmission’, as if an ‘original’ source and target text are available. Nevertheless, the aim here is to show how the term יהוה is rendered by the oldest Greek manuscripts testifying to ‘biblical’ content. By becoming aware of the variant possibilities, it will reveal how it contributes to the NT κύριος problem. These manuscripts are Papyrus Rylands 458, 4Q122 (4Q LXXDeut), 7Q1 (7Q1 LXXEx), 7Q2 (7QLXXEpJer) and 4Q121 (4Q LXXNum). Unfortunately, none of them offer any data on how the term יהוה was rendered. Manuscript 4QLXXDeut, however, does present an unusual open space in

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**Table 1: Deuteronomy 3:17–26.**

| Reference | 4Q31 | Papyri 693 | Codex S |
|-----------|------|------------|---------|
| Deuteronomy 3:20a | | | |
| Deuteronomy 3:20b | | | |
| Deuteronomy 3:21a | | | |
| Deuteronomy 3:21b | | | |
| Deuteronomy 3:24 | | | |

Note: Deuteronomy and Deuteronony refer to 4QDeut and 4QDeut respectively. The and are used to index different fragments. Manuscripts 71 + 619 read a at the first instance, whereas the first hand of Codex B read o ε with others varying between κυριος 630 630 and εκε 630c.

**Table 2: Lamentations 1:14–17.**

| Reference | 4QLam | MT | Codex S |
|-----------|-------|----|---------|
| Lamentations 1:14 | | | |
| Lamentations 1:15 | | | |
| Lamentations 1:17 | | | |

MT, Masoretic Text.

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**FIGURE 7: 1QIsaa**, col. 22 (Is 28:16).

**TABLE 2: Lamentations 1:14–17.**

| Reference | 4QLam | MT | Codex S |
|-----------|-------|----|---------|
| Lamentations 1:14 | | | |
| Lamentations 1:15 | | | |
| Lamentations 1:17 | | | |

MT, Masoretic Text.

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**Source: The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls, n.d., ‘The Great Isaiah Scroll’, viewed 31 March 2020, from http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/Isaiah**
are four rendering possibilities for Yhwh:

1. palaeo-Hebrew characters
2. ΙΑΩ
3. open space
4. square Hebrew characters. 43

The transmission of the term יהוה in the Hebrew tradition, the translation of Yhwh with the term κύριος, and the subsequent reproducing and transmission of the latter term opens an array of possibilities on how to render the divine name. The κύριος problem is multilayered, multifaceted and complex problem with no easy solution. To add to all of this, the use of the term κύριος in Hellenistic specific Graeco–Roman literature offers another dimension to the κύριος problem.

A Hellenistic/Graeco–Roman concept of the term κύριος 44

It should be stated upfront that a general Graeco–Roman concept underlying the term κύριος is deliberately underplayed. The reason is because of the view held that such a concept does not contribute significantly enough to the NT κύριος problem, but for the sake of perspective, the study will briefly allude to some Graeco–Roman sources.

Pliny the Younger’s letter to Emperor Trajan after a visit to Bithynia in 112 CE is insightful. The reason for this letter was to report on how Christians conduct themselves, he wrote:

They maintained, however, that the amount of their fault or error had been this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god.

Pliny’s understanding of what qualifies and defines a ritual to be one ‘as if it is dedicated to a god’ made the Christian’s habit of singing hymns dedicated to Christ guilty of treason. This issue is further amplified in the sense that, according to Pliny’s investigator, some who claimed to be Christians, denied it later: ‘All these too both worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ’. The issue for Pliny is that Christ is venerated and worshipped as a god, as opposed to venerating the Emperor and pray to the ‘traditional’ Roman gods. This, of course, resulted in certain punishment, according to the response from Trajan, should they not deny Christ and worship their (Roman) deities. From this vantage point there is no other dominus (κύριος) other than the Emperor. The term κύριος was also used when reference is made to Graeco–Roman deities. In three text fragments relating to a banquet invitation hosted by the god Sarapis is a good illustration. Nikephoros extends an invitation: δειπνησαι εις κυριου του κυριου Σαραπιδος εν το λογχο ‘to dine in banquet with the lord Sarapis in birth-house’. Herais also extends an invite: δειπνησαι εις το οικο του Σαραπιδου κυριου του κυριου Σαραπιδος ‘to dine in the house of Sarapis in banquet of the lord Sarapis’, and καλει σε ο θεος εις...
κλείνην γεινο(μεν) (μενην) εν τω Θοηρειω αυριον’ The god (Sarapis) calls you to a banquet held in the Thoereion tomorrow’ (Horsley 1984:6–9). In both instances the κύριος terms are used to refer to Sarapis and is uncomplicatedly written out in full.

A document testifying to the repayment of loan states:

1. δευτέρου καὶ ἱκοστοῦ ἔτους θεοῦ Η استراتيجية[45].
2. ὃ ἐστὶ πρῶτον ἔτος Ἀντωνίνου Καίσαρος... A P .Oxy 98 (11.5 × 10 cm, 141–142 CE), 1898, in Grenfell and Hunt (eds. 1898:160); cf. P .Oxy 492, line 34 (the deification of emperor Nerva), and P .Oxy 483, line 14 referring to emperor Trajan as κύριος and to deified Augusti in line 21. On a statue base (41–54 CE, Sardis) it reads: Τιβεριον Καισαρα θεον Σεβαστον τον αυτοκρατορα... ‘Tiberius Caesar god Augustus, the imperator’. See Llewellyn (2002:37); cf. A roman milestone (a notice of construction or repair roadwork), late first century refers to deified Vespasian ‘divi Vespasiani’ referred to later on in the text as Ἀθτοκρατωρ Καισαρ Θεου [OR] επαυσω[νθ] θο[ς] [Δομιτιανος].

3. τοῦ κυρίου [In the 27th year of the deification of Hadrian which is in the first year of emperor Antoninus’ lordship.]

Interestingly noted here, is the θεοῦ of Hadrian and the τοῦ κυρίου of Antoninus; the distinction is a deceased emperor (Hadrian) as opposed to the ruling emperor (Antoninus). The fluidness in the use of these terms could have been that in a Graeco–Roman context accounting for a ‘sacred name’ was not necessary, and that these terms were not influenced by the nomina sacra scribal practise. Pfeiffer’s (2012:139–141) distinction between ‘Imperial cult’ and ‘Emperor worship’ is helpful at this juncture. He writes (in relation to the divine cult of the emperor being nothing more than an aspect of emperor worship): ‘…distinction of status between respective beings, rather than a distinction between their respective natures’.[46] Gradel (2002:26) concluded: ‘the worshipped emperor was not a god in an ‘absolute sense’, but he had a divine status…in relation to the worshippers’. This enlightens the notion of the distinction between the terms θεός and κύριος.[47]

The theology and kyriology of the New Testament

The NT κύριος problem draws a matrix of complexities into a focused singularity. The explicit Old Testament citations are one such singularity, to be sure of those citations attest to the term κύριος. The exegetical and hermeneutical reworking of the citations not only simultaneously contribute to the complexity of the problem, but also hold solution potential. Inferred from the cursory data covered under Section Transmission of the term κύριος in the Greek tradition, it is fair to say that the term κύριος found in the NT contains conceptual elements drawn from a general Hellenistic, Graeco–Roman context, but the true complexity of the matter is because it has an equation potential for the term Yhwh. This makes the NT Kyrios problem a theologically intricate one, with implications for the Christology and kyriology[48] of the New Testament. The crux of the problem revolves around the sacred name Yhwh used for the Hebrew deity; the term κύριος used as a potential Greek equivalent, and the term κύριος used as reference to Jesus. The NT κύριος problem is also an exegetical and hermeneutical one; it is an inter and intertextual matter producing questions such as ‘Should the use of the term κύριος in the citation be interpreted as referring to Yhwh?’; ‘What is meant when Jesus is referred to as Kyrios?’; ‘To what extent is the term κύριος re-interpreted in the NT?’; ‘Was it even possible to put Jesus on par with Yhwh?’

46.Pfeiffer (2012:139–141), makes an important distinction between ‘Imperial Cult’ (honour reserved for the gods) and ‘Emperor Worship’ (worship given to mortals). Gradel (2002:26), aptly worded this distinction (in terms of the divine cult of the emperor being nothing more than an aspect of emperor worship) as ‘distinction of status between respective beings, rather than a distinction between their respective natures’.

47.Gradel, Emperor Worship, p. 29.

48. See also Mark 1:1 (Is 40:3); 11:9 (Ps 118:25); 12:11 (Ps 118:22); 12:26 (Ex 3:6); 12:29–30 (Dt 6:5); Mark 12:10 (Ps 110:1); Jh 12:13 (Ex 23:40), 38 (Is 53:3).

49.This is a term which has its origins in my PhD research.
Answers to these questions and a solution to the NT κύριος problem will be sought with the help of the Theos’, David’s and Jesus’ speeches; to be clear, the explicit κύριος citations found in:

1. Theos’ speech (Heb 1:10a [Ps 101:26a]; Acts 2:20–21 [Jl 2:31–32])
2. David’s speech (Acts 2:25b [Ps 15:8a]; Mark 12:36 and Acts 2:34b [Ps 109:1a])
3. Jesus’ speech (Mk 12:29b–30a [Dt 6:4c–5]).

Theos’ speech

Hebrews 1:10a (Ps 101:26a): The reason for showing the manuscripts here (Figures 10–12) is to prove the use of *nomina sacra* scribal practice. Codex S (Ps 101:26a) does not read any κύριος term, but it was added by a later redactor as a superscript (see the red block as indicated on the manuscript directly above). The Hebrews 1:10a section (Table 3) of codex S does account for a contracted κύριος term; the same applies to ₯₉₉₉₄₆.

Hebrews 1:1–14 attest to a plethora of Old Testament citations, carefully and strategically structured in an attempt to affirm the identity of the son and to acknowledge his authority by allowing Theos to speak through the Hebrew Scriptures. The reason for showing the manuscripts here (Figures 10–12) is to prove the use of *nomina sacra* scribal practice. Codex S (Ps 101:26a) does not read any κύριος term, but it was added by a later redactor as a superscript (see the red block as indicated on the manuscript directly above). The Hebrews 1:10a section (Table 3) of codex S does account for a contracted κύριος term; the same applies to ₯₉₉₉₉₄₆. Hebrews 1:1–14 attest to a plethora of Old Testament citations, carefully and strategically structured in an attempt to affirm the identity of the son and to acknowledge his authority by allowing Theos to speak through the Hebrew Scriptures. The reason for showing the manuscripts here (Figures 10–12) is to prove the use of *nomina sacra* scribal practice. Codex S (Ps 101:26a) does not read any κύριος term, but it was added by a later redactor as a superscript (see the red block as indicated on the manuscript directly above). The Hebrews 1:10a section (Table 3) of codex S does account for a contracted κύριος term; the same applies to ₯₉₉₉₉₄₆. Hebrews 1:1–14 attest to a plethora of Old Testament citations, carefully and strategically structured in an attempt to affirm the identity of the son and to acknowledge his authority by allowing Theos to speak through the Hebrew Scriptures.

50. The theological effect and significance of this citation has been worked out in more detail in Nagel (2019:557–584).
51. Steyn (2009:341–359), noted that the LXX versions of these Psalms open up the possibility for a Christological interpretation, 341. Steyn (2010:82), also wrote that the third pair of quotations, Ps 44:7–8 (Heb 1:8–9) and Ps 101:26–28 (Heb 1:10–12) in the catena (with no traces in the tradition of such an existing combination prior to Hebrews), both deal with the theme of the eternal reign of the Son who is addressed as ‘God’ (if θεὸς is taken as a vocative in this instance).
52. Steyn (2010:82), is of the opinion that the Son is being addressed as θεὸς in Hebrews 1:8 and κύριος in Hebrews 1:10. 53. It is interesting to note that both references to the term κύριος introduce two possible additions; verses 13–23 and verses 26–29 respectively, both defined as hymnic sections; cf. Steyn (2010:103–104).

Source: The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, n.d., viewed 31 March 2020, from http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P46

**FIGURE 10:** Papyri 46 (Heb 1:8–12).

**FIGURE 11:** Codex Sinaiticus (Heb 1:8–12).

Intertextually speaking the Psalmist calls upon κύριος in the vocative case, to listen to his prayer (Ps 101:2). In Psalms 101:13 κύριος is again referenced using the vocative case; here the scribe affirms that κύριος remains κύριος through all the ages of time. The vocative use in Psalms 101:26a, κύριος is recognised as the one who laid the foundation of the earth, from the very beginning, whereas Psalms 101:26b acknowledges the fact that it is because of the works of his (kurios’) hands that the heavens exist. 53. Conceptually, there should be little doubt that the κύριος of Psalms 101:26 is the θεὸς of Genesis 1:1 and 2:4b (cf. Steyn 2010:110–111). From an

http://www.hts.org.za
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In Hebrews 1:8b it is said about the son that his (second person, personal pronoun) throne is οὐ κατ’ ἀρχας and therefore it is a throne forever and that his (implying the son’s) kingdom is a lawlessness (Heb 1:9a). The second person speech in Hebrews 1:8b does not refer to the son. What seems to be more plausible is that the author did not think in Hebrews 1:8–9 (Ps 44:7–8) and Hebrews 1:10–12 (Ps 101:26–28) interchangeably. If this is the case, then the vocative use of the term κύριος can only refer to the son, but does it? The suggestion here is that the σὺ in Hebrews 1:10a, to be sure the vocative use of the term κύριος refers to θεὸς as supported by the connection drawn in the source text (Ps 101). The reason for this suggestion is that whilst Psalm 44:7–8 (Heb 1:8–9) is addressed to the king (κύριος) cf. Ps 44:12 in relation to θεὸς, Psalm 101 (Heb 1:10–12) is a prayer directed at κύριος as in Yhwh. What does the author achieve with such a reading? How does it contribute to establishing the authority of the son? The answer is that in Hebrews 1:8–9 the kingship of the son in relation to θεὸς is brought into focus, so much so that the son’s throne is θεὸς. But in Hebrews 1:10–12, the κύριος as in Yhwh, is brought into play. The author had to account for the fact that his readers might have understood σὺ κατ’ ἀρχας, κύριος, as referring to the son, but it is even more likely that the Yhwh characterisation of θεὸς is preferred as the more appropriate reading for a Hellenic–Judaic audience. If Hebrews 1:10–12 awoke a sense of ambiguity, it would have been laid to rest with the citation taken from Psalm 109:1 (Heb 1:13b). In Hebrews 1:13a, the author returns to the topic of angels, asking whether Theos has ever said to the angels to κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ‘to be seated on my right hand’ (Heb 1:13b). It is noteworthy that μου by implication refers to Theos in this case, which begs the question why is it not possible to interpret the σὺ in σὺ κατ’ ἀρχας, κύριος (Heb 1:10a) as also referring to Theos? On the one hand the citation in Hebrews 1:10–12 (Ps 101:26–28) exemplifies the κύριος problem, but on the other hand it offers theological perspectives necessary to find an amicable solution.

Acts 2:20–21 (Joel 3:4–5a): The manuscript data appear intact, with no alternatives suggested for the term κύριος, but this does not suggest that all is what it seems, it might just be a matter of scribal ‘cover-up’. Be it as it may, the literary ‘κύριος’ context does not disappoint in offering support to the κύριος problem. The events that would unfold in Acts 2:20–21 begins with Acts 1:6 when those who gathered around him addressed Jesus by using the term κύριε. They wanted to know whether the time has come for the kingdom of Israel to be revealed. They kept referring to Jesus by using the term κύριος even after Jesus ascended into heaven (cf. Acts 1:9–11). His followers also referred to his earthly ministry with the phrase οὗ κύριος Ἰησοῦς (cf. Acts 1:21). It did not end here, they prayed to him, calling upon him as κύριε (Acts 1:24). The second chapter of Acts introduce the ‘day of Pentecost’ followed by Peter’s first speech in Acts 2:14–40. It is within this context that the Joel 3:1–5 citation is implemented, of which Joel 3:4–5a (Acts 2:20–21) is of interest (cf. Table 4).

There is no obvious reason why one should not interpret the two κύριος references in Acts 2:20–21 as referring to the same entity as the term κύριος in Acts 1:6, 21 and 24, hence, Jesus. This raises two questions. The first is whether the author was cognisance of the fact that the term κύριος in Acts 2:20–21...
TABLE 4: Acts 2:20–21 (Jl 3:4–5a).

| Acts 2:20–21 | Joel 3:4–5a |
|-------------|-------------|
| NA**        | NN4        |
| Codex S     | Codex S     |
| διό όνομα (ονομα) | δυναμος (ονομα) |
| μετατραφθησαι | μετατραφθησαι |
| ο λος (ος) | εις αιμα πριν ελθειν |
| εις σκοτος | εις σκοτος |
| και ο σεληνη | και η σεληνη |
| εις αιμα, πριν ελθειν | εις αιμα πριν ελθειν |
| ημεραν κυριου | ημεραν κυριου |
| το ονομα κυριου | το ονομα κυριου |
| το ημεραν κυριου | το ημεραν κυριου |
| την μεγαλη και επιφανει | την μεγαλη και επιφανει |
| εις σκοτος | εις σκοτος |
| το ονομα κυριου | το ονομα κυριου |
| σωθησεται | σωθησεται |
| σωθησεται | σωθησεται |

NA, Nestle-Aland. NN4 does not account for these verses and a corrector S1 ‘omitted’ επιφανη and εσται πας · ος.

60. Blumhoffer (2016:499–516), certainly seems to think so. He is of the opinion that Luke did not receive a text with the ‘changes’ compared with the Septuagint. What Blumhoffer (2016:502), is after, is the deeper logic behind Luke’s editorial moves, he wrote: ‘these echoes suggest that Luke has quietly and intentionally evoked a correspondence between Old Testament prophecy and the Day of Pentecost in Acts.’

61. Cf. Matthew 22:44b; Luke 20:42b and Hebrews 1:13b.

as the divine name; the Hebrew text reads יְהֹוָהִּ יִשְׁמָעֵל ‘in the name Yhwh’. The power of submission is to do it in the name, the ‘divine name’. In Joel the term κυριος becomes a title of someone with a significant name, and this name is interpreted in Acts 2:20–21 as Jesus. The term κυριος in Acts 2:20–21 (Joel 3:4–5) is not a reference to Yhwh, but to a lord with a meaningful name, reinterpreted as Jesus. The Thesos’ speeches make it extremely difficult to interpret the use of the κυριος term in Hebrews 1:10a and Acts 2:20–21 as referring to Yhwh. It helps to get rid of the ambiguity and by doing so contributes to finding a solution to the NT κυριος problem.

David’s speech

Acts 2:25b (Ps 15:8a): The inverse dualistic (solution–problem) nature of the κυριος problem has been highlighted by way of the so-called Thesos’ speeches, but does David’s speeches also hold solution potential? In Acts 2:25a, the introductory formula Δαυὶδ γὰρ λέγει εἰς αὐτόν ‘David says about him’ introduces a citation taken from Psalms 15:8–11; Psalm 15 is a stele inscription pertaining to David submitting himself to Kyrios and by implication Yhwh. It is doubtful if the author wanted his readers to hear that David is saying something about Yhwh; he probably wanted them to hear what the ‘great’ king David said about Jesus as the Kyrios. The author interprets David’s foresight as referring to the resurrection of Χριστος (cf. Acts 2:31).60 In Psalm 15 the Psalmist addresses Kyrios as in Yhwh throughout, but the author of Acts extracted verse 8–15 to serve his purpose of prophetic foresight (cf. Ps 15:8), the resurrection of the devoted one (cf. Ps 15:10), in this case Christ (cf. Acts 2:31). The Psalm, however, speaks of the devoted or pious one, such as king David, whose soul will not be abandoned by Kyrios to Hades. How are these linguistic ‘transfigurations’ and ‘transformations’ of κυριος from being Yhwh to κυριος as in Jesus the Messiah and David being the pious one to the one who speaks in the third person possible? This reimagination is made possible by the reference to the pious one in Psalms 15:10, introducing the Psalms 15:8–11 citation as Davidic speech, the term κυριος in its accusative form and the literary context of Acts 2:17–28; both the Joel 3:1–5 and Psalms 15:8–11 citation form part of Peter’s first speech. The term κυριος in Acts 2:25b (Table 5) should be interpreted as the same κυριος term in Acts 2:20 and 21, namely Jesus, the Messiah.

Mark 12:36a and Acts 2:34b (Ps 109:1a): The citation in Acts 2:34b in Table 6 follows the same trajectory as Acts 2:25b; the uttering of the term κυριος is placed on the lips of David. These words reflect Psalms 109:1a and is also introduced in Mark 12:36b61. One can deduce at least two text traditions from the data, the one reading the first κυριος term with and without a

60.Trull (2004:432–448), remarks that Acts 2:22–36 is Peter’s Christological argument, which includes the attestation of Jesus through his earthly works. He goes on to say that it was impossible for Jesus to remain dead because David had prophesied that the Messiah would rise, this is the reason for the Psalms 16:8–11 citation, according to him.

61.Cf. Matthew 22:44b; Luke 20:42b and Hebrews 1:13b.
definite article. The reason for this is to draw a distinction between the first and second κύριος term; the first is a reference to Yhwh and the second to a king. In the case of Mark 12:36 the author as Jesus argued against the notion that the Messiah is the son of David. Jesus’ argument is that how can the Messiah be the son of David if David himself calls κύριος, κύριος (cf. Mk 12:37). The problem with such an argument is as follows:

1. In Psalm 109 context it is not David speaking, but the Psalmist.
2. The first κύριος refers to Yhwh, whereas the second κύριος refers to David (Ps 109:1a).
3. The direct speech in Psalms 109:1b is that of a κύριος in terms of Yhwh.

It is therefore not David calling κύριος, κύριος but the Psalmist who refers to κύριος (as in Yhwh, the first κύριος term) as κύριος who in turn calls David, the Psalmist’s κύριος, κύριος. Said differently, the one who speaks in Psalm 109:1a is κύριος in the sense of Yhwh, and the one who Yhwh is saying something about is also κύριος in terms of David as king. This is written by the Psalmist who allows Yhwh to say something about the Psalmist’s king. In the Lukan version, David is speaking in the ‘book of the Psalms’ about the Messiah being the κύριος. It is clear from the Psalm 109:1b citation that the Synoptic Gospels differentiate between the term κύριος (second term) used for the Messiah and the term κύριος used as equivalent for Yhwh (first occurrence). In the context of Psalm 109 the second κύριος is an appellative, signifying authority and rule. The right hand in this case is reserved for king David, but it is reinterpreted in the NT as reserved for the Messiah or the son. The ultimate objective is to counter the argument that the Messiah is just another ruler of Israel from the lineage of king David. In the case of Hebrews 1:3b the authoritative position of the son (sitting at the right hand) is set off against the inferior position of the angels. The difference is that in the latter case it is Theros who speaks and not David. To reiterate, by placing the words of Psalms 109:1a on the lips of king David implies that the author understood the first κύριος as an equivalent for Yhwh, whilst the second κύριος term is interpreted as the authoritative position of the Messiah, namely at the right hand of Yhwh. The duplication of the term κύριος complicated the matter, but this duplication allows one to infer that the sacred thrust of the ‘name’ Yhwh got lost in translation. A more appropriate translation for ἐνώπιον (Ps 110:1b), is κύριος δεσπότης. Be it as it may, the NT authors succeeded in convincing their audience of the authoritative position of the Messiah at the right hand of Kyrios as in Yhwh, elevating his position as more authoritative than king David.

The version in Acts 2:34b has no interest in addressing the Messiah being the son of David issue, but the aim is to support Acts 2:31; the foreseeing of David, even though David did not ascend into heaven he still knew that εἶπαν [ὁ] κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου κάθως ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ‘Kyrios said to my Kyrios sit on my right hand’. The words in Acts 2:36 summarise the author’s intent: ἀσφαλῶς ὑπὸ γυναικέων πᾶς ós ὁ Ἰσραήλ οὖτε καὶ κύριον αὐτῶν καὶ χριστονίσεως ὃ δόξης, τόδε τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐκατορμίσατε. ‘Therefore, the house of Israel should undoubtedly know that Theros made him both Kyrios as in ‘authoritative figure’ and ‘Messiah’ as in divine liberator, this is Jesus whom you have crucified’. In summary, the solution to the κύριος problem offered here is the reinterpretation of Psalms 109:1b. To be sure, allowing David to speak and because of his speech the use of the κύριος term in Psalms 109:1b in relation to Yhwh and Jesus is cleared of any indistinctness.

**Jesus’ speech**

**Mark 12:29b–30a (Dt 6:4c–5):** The Greek text tradition once again appears to be intact, with minor variations in the Greek tradition (Table 7). In the case of Mark 12:28–30, scribes came up to Jesus to ask him what is the first commandment of them all? The Markan Jesus then responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4a–5. There is no clearer evidence, at least in the mind, that both Jesus and the author conceptually distinguishes himself from the one and only κύριος ὁ θεός in the sense of Yhwh, the one and only Elohim of Israel. Earlier in the narrative (cf. Mk 12:18–27) some Sadducees came to Jesus, to challenge him on the resurrection. He responded to them by quoting from the book of Moses (Ex 6:15), which says that Theros is the Theros of the Patriarchs, the Theros of the living, not the dead. The fact that Deuteronomy 6:4b–5 is cited by Jesus simplifies the κύριος problem. There are no discrepancies, uncertainties or clarifications needed; the content cited is a living tradition, which Jesus simply repeats, as one does as a law-abiding Judean. Deuteronomy 5–6, amongst other text, were part of Hebrew texts on vellum placed in a small leather box called a phylactery, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law. These texts were recited repeatedly and would have been known of by heart. It is against this backdrop that one should interpret Jesus’ response. He (Jesus) is merely reciting this morning prayer that the Yhwh, the Theros of Israel is the one and only Kyrios. The second reference to the term κύριος is to emphasise the

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63.Cf. Matthew 22:43.
64.Cf. Luke 20:41.
65.Hebrews 1:13b.
TABLE 7: Mark 12:28b–30a (Dt 6:4c–5).

| Mark 12:28b–30a | Deuteronomy 6:4c–5 |
|------------------|---------------------|
| NA** | Codex S | Codex S | Not available |
| δικόνου, λογαριά | κύριον τὸν θεόν σου | κυριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν | κυριος ὁ θεός ἡμῶν |
| κύριος | κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν | κυριος ὁ θεος | κυριος ὁ θεος |
| κύριος εἰς ἑστιν | κυριος εἰς ἑστιν(ν) | κυριος εἰς ἑστιν | κυριος εἰς ἑστιν(ν) |
| καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου | - | - | - |

Note: 32.XHev/SePhyl, frg. 1 does not read the first instance of κυριος; contra 4Q130 Phyl C, frg. 1. It seems to be likely that 4Q115 Phyl H, frg 1a, 4Q140 Phyl M and 8Q3 Phyl frg. 4 read the κυριος term, but it is uncertain because of the quality of the manuscript. The Chester Beatty Papryi 963 is unreadable at this point, but it too attests to the nomina sacra scribal practice when it comes to the term κυριος.

The explicit κυριος citations in combination with the introductory formulae characterised as Thesos’. David’s and Jesus’ speech is the most effective way to determine whether referring to Jesus as κυριος is meant in the Yhwh sense or not. These speeches and the content placed on the lips of Thesos, David and Jesus, respectively, cleared the NT κυριος problem from any ambiguity or vagueness.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that there is no decisive and final solution for the NT κυριος problem. In fact, there will never be a single solution for this multilayered and interconnected problem. The only option is to keep on addressing every single aspect of the κυριος problem against a multilayered complex background. The NT κυριος problem, should therefore never just be a NT problem, it will always be a NT – Old Greek (LXX) problem. This is precisely what the study set out to illustrate. In addition to illustrating the interwoven complexity and intricacies of the problem, the study also draws these multilayered complexities into a singular focus, namely the explicit κυριος citations. To be precise, those cited content were placed on the lips of Thesos, David and Jesus, which the study refers to as speeches. The study shows that these respective speeches amplify the problem whilst taking a step towards a possible solution. The best possible inference to draw when arguing from the vantage point of these speeches is that (1) the term κυριος as an equivalent for Theos is a theological rendering designating ‘master of the universe,’ and (2) the articulated κυριος, the absolute form is ascribed to Jesus not in the Yhwh sense, but is reinterpreted to mean the ‘master of the NT universe. What these speeches have revealed is that Yhwh as in κυριος is still the Theos of Israel who is κυριος as in the ultimate master and ruler overall, and that Jesus becomes the κυριος, embodies the κυριος and rules as master of the NT world and beyond. When the term κυριος was used as a potential equivalent for Yhwh, the divine name for a Hebrew deity was stripped of its sacred character and lost the credentials of having a ‘divine name’. The term κυριος on the lips of Thesos, David and Jesus is a humble, non-deliberate attempt to make ‘the name’ divine again; it reignites its sacred character. By ascribing this κυριος to Jesus, makes Jesus the new ‘divine’ name.

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The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this research article.

Author’s contributions

P.N. is the sole author of this research article.

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Disclaimer

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