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Translating Κύριος after 600 Years of "the Lord's" Faithful Service

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Abstract

Much of Western Christianity continues to follow late medieval translation practices in translating *yahweh* and *kurios*. Since then, mainstream usage of "Lord" has slumped and evolved, with the little remaining usage often carrying a distinctly sinister connotation. The deep attachment to "Lord" within Christianity constitutes a second problem: although it creates methodological inconsistency, its historical super-sanctified status is likely the reason the terminology seems so impervious to change. Septuagint data highlight a further problem for sustaining "the LORD/Lord," since doing so creates a grammatical mismatch with *kurios* (with regard to the definite article). These three problems call for reassessment of the ongoing suitability of "Lord" in English Bible translation and for a more context-driven methodology. This is defined and applied in a range of New Testament contexts for the purposes of demonstrating feasibility (rather than finality).

Keywords

English Bible translation, Lord, *kurios*, Yahweh, authority, deference, NIV, language evolution, sociolinguistics, Septuagint

It is difficult to imagine Christian faith and practice without "lordship" language. We find "the Lord" throughout the Bible, Christian songs, Sunday school classes, and devotional resources, dominating anglophone Christianity. And yet, using the old deferential expression "thank you, my lord" would probably appear odd to most people today, even to Christians, as it would be an entirely inappropriate use of register.

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To understand this incongruity, three fundamental problems require consideration. Outside of Christian religious language, we no longer use "Lord/lord"[1] as the Greeks used κύριος (*kurios*), an authority term that we will examine later. Second, the usage problem goes largely unnoticed within the Christian community, and we need to identify the primary reasons. Third, recent Septuagint (LXX)[2] research highlights a grammatical mismatch between "the Lord" and κύριος.

These three problems—usage, awareness, and grammar—point cumulatively to all "lordship" language being overdue for reassessment in English Bible translation in particular.[3] This article will analyze these before addressing ways in which "lordship" language could evolve. This is an ambitious, but necessary, objective, not only if we are to render κύριος (and other biblical terms of authority) in a more meaningful way for our time, but also to improve how Bible translation serves the church at large. In this way a contribution can be made to the discussion of how to convey faithfully and meaningfully that biblical sense of authority. Although it appears in such rich depth in the Bible, authority has become something of an alien concept to today's generation. Rethinking how to translate authority terms could therefore also play a small part in responding to this wider issue.

A usage problem

The first of our three problems concerns usage. The following observations point to the contradiction between principles of translation and the practice of maintaining traditional terminology:

(1) Modern translations are usually explicit about their methodological principle of taking context into account in their choice of target language terms and grammar. Nearly all translation committees would agree, in varying degrees, that translations should avoid word-for-word dependency, stripped of contextual meaning. The Committee on Bible Translation for NIV states that "accurate communication of the meaning of the biblical authors demands *constant* regard for *varied* contextual uses of words and idioms."[4] Eugene Nida offers an excellent rationale for this: "The relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (1964, 159).

[1] Hereafter I will refer simply to "Lord" rather than "Lord/lord."
[2] The Septuagint, abbreviated LXX, was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the first into any other language.
[3] The purview is wider, however, since English terminological and methodological choices have provided stable references for Bible translations in other languages (see Ellingworth 1990, 346).
[4] Preface to the 2011 edition (emphasis mine).

If such an equivalence is successful it could be considered more (not less) faithful than a more formal equivalence.

(2) Strong reliance by modern translations on "Lord" is maintained. The total number of biblical instances of "Lord" is in the mid-to-high 7,000s in many English versions, translating various Hebrew and Greek terms without contextual variation.[5] In NIV we may even observe some supplementary instances of "Lord" through expressions like "the Lord's people" (reasons for such a strong attachment will be addressed presently).

(3) "Lord" usage in English has changed (quantitatively and qualitatively). Even if we assume that "Lord" provided a good and consistent equivalence in the fourteenth century when John Wycliffe used it, indicators suggest substantially different usage of the word today, both quantitatively (how much we use the term) and qualitatively (how we use the term).

If the current usage of "Lord" has indeed shifted from medieval usage to distort the relationship between the receptors and the message, then a clear contradiction emerges between principle and practice in modern translations. We turn now to the indicators that reinforce the general impression of some significant shift in the usage of "Lord."

Evidence of changes in "Lord" usage

We can perform initial probes using various independent metrics. First, we can track the trajectory of a word's usage in books via Google's Ngram service. Figure 1 shows the history of "Lord" traced back to 1600, when the term accounted for approximately 0.12% of published words. That may seem small, but by 2008, the frequency had dropped to one-tenth of that figure.

Figure 2 charts the use of "Lord" over a more recent period, alongside a few other authority titles: "God," "King," "President," "Sir," "Master," "Leader" and "Duke." "Lord" appears as just one among many authority options, new or old.

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[5] God was usually known in Hebrew by his personal name, יהוה (Yahweh), which I count at 6,877 occurrences (including the shortened form יה). Except in the vocative, these are systematically translated "the LORD" by NIV and other mainstream translations, following a centuries-old tradition that can be dated back to Tyndale and Luther's translations in and around the 1530s, with Tyndale using "LORde" (in Genesis) and Luther "HERR(N)" (although we know that "Lord" translations had already been around significantly before that, e.g., Wycliffe in the late fourteenth century). When all the human "lords" of the Old Testament, the divine "Lord" translations for אדני *'adonai* (and occasionally for אלהים *'elohim*), and the 600-odd occurrences of "Lord" in the New Testament (largely as a title for Jesus) are added to that tally, a total in the high 7,000s is reached remarkably quickly. Paratext and other Bible software yield a count of 7,870 individual instances of "Lord" in NIV.

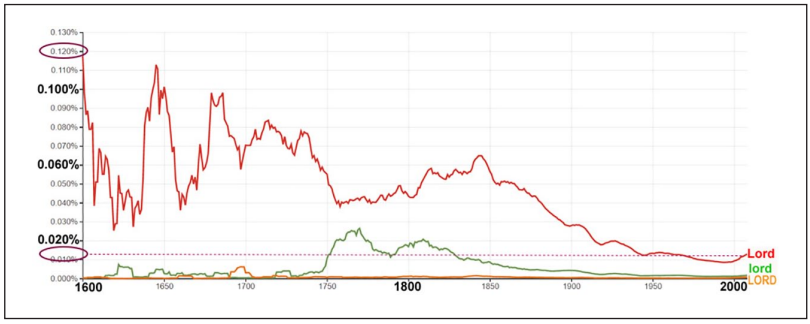

Figure 1. Percentage of the word "Lord" in publications 1600–2008.
Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams.

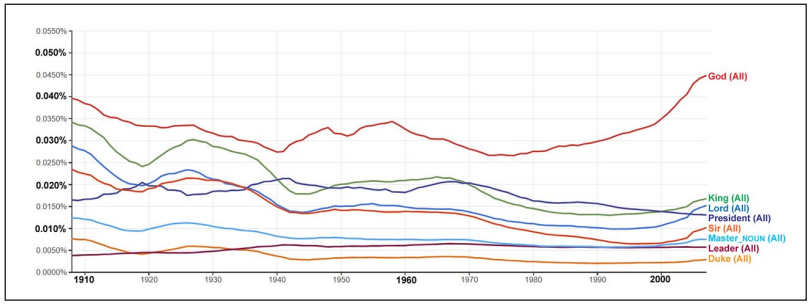

Figure 2. Percentage of a sample of authority terms in publications 1908–2008.
Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams.

Of course, usage in books provides a limited view on general usage. A second more up-to-date and broader source provides a list of the top 5,000 words from a balanced pool of 450 million word instances from all types of publications.[6] Table 1 highlights the ranked frequency of a few authority terms within this list of the 5,000 most commonly used words.

The lowest frequency from a similar selection of authority terms is "god," with "boss," "king," and "commander" sharing similar rankings. "President" and "leader" are used with remarkably high frequency. "Lord" and "duke," however, fail to make this list of the top 5,000 English published words.

For a third metric, let us turn to the news, which is a decent indicator of contemporary usage. Figure 3 depicts a recent number of hits per authority term from the Google News service.

[6] See wordfrequency.info.

Table 1. Rankings in frequency of use of a selection of authority terms

Word	Ranking
(the)	(1st)
president	304th
leader	464th
boss	2344th
king	2359th
commander	2376th
god	3302nd

Notice where the emphases lie and do not lie.[7] While "Lord" and "Duke" are clearly very old terms and enjoy comparatively low usage today, the numbers indicate that their use nonetheless continues.

It is interesting to compare the French-speaking Christian community's equally cherished *Seigneur*. Performing a similar search in Google Actualités shows even lower usage in French compared to English, illustrated in Figure 4.

French data indicate the term *Seigneur* has all but vanished in contemporary usage:[8] just 237,000 total search results relative to the tens and hundreds of millions of results for other authority titles, even for *Maître* (Master). These indicators point to a serious decline in usage of the term "Lord."

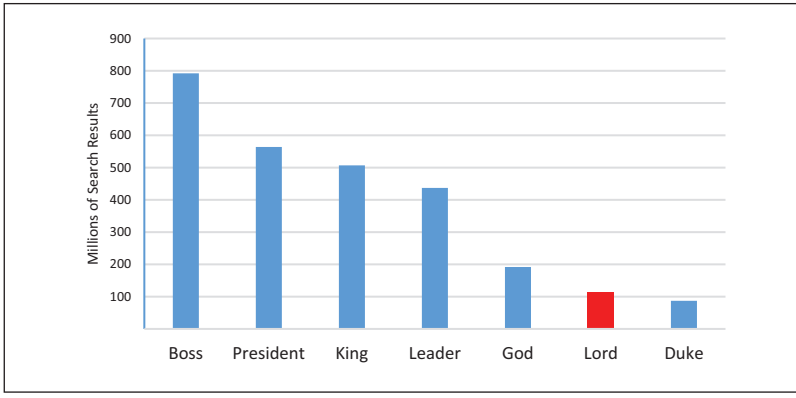

Figure 3. Google News hits per authority term.

[7] A search of the CNN news service provides "Lord"/"King" differences that are similarly dramatic.

[8] Of course, it could be argued its shadow remains in the contraction *monsieur* of *mon seigneur*.

Figure 4. Google Actualités hits per authority term in French.

What about the evolution of the scope and meaning of "Lord"? One Bible translation consultant underscores a serious issue here: "the formulation 'the LORD' has meaning only in relation to the source language…. It thus flagrantly infringes the most basic principle of functional equivalence translation" (Ellingworth 1990, 349). Another approach is to ask, how has "Lord" evolved during the 600-year history of English biblical translation? A brief return to the news search reveals its current profile: antiquated British political titles, perhaps resigning over Brexit, or references to a cricket ground named "Lords." Disturbingly, much popular usage seems to focus on dark fantasy and sci-fi characters, including Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter*, Darth Vader (Dark Lord of the Sith) in *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and the evil Lord Business in *The Lego Movie*. Worse, this corresponds to real life, where references to drug lords, war lords, and overlords are in ready supply. Where, then, are the positive or simply generic references to "Lord" as deference to authority?

To conclude, modern usage as derived from independent metrics shows us a severely reduced *and* evolved usage of "Lord." In other words, the usage problem is twofold, affecting the term both quantitatively and qualitatively. On the modest survival of the term, should we not also be asking, how much is dependent on evil characters? Or skewed by an overladen Christian book market?

These results point to three phenomena which cannot all co-exist:

1. Dynamic Bible translation goal of functional equivalence
2. Reinforcement of "lordship" language in Bible translations
3. Evolution of "Lord" usage.

If options (1) and (2) alone were true, translations such as NIV could be correctly reflecting a widespread use of "Lord" today for all forms of deference, respect, and authority. Assuming only options (1) and (3), translations would apply the term "Lord" sparingly (as in Eugene Peterson's translation, *The Message*). If options (2) and (3) alone were true, the discrepancy between contemporary usage of "Lord" and the biblical usage of the source term κύριος would be permissible because such translations are not aiming for "dynamic equivalence."

Which of these options needs to be discarded in order to resolve this dilemma? The first point poses no problem (and any compromise would risk the entire *raison d'être* of functional equivalence). The third point is a simple sociolinguistic observation out of our control. Only the reinforcement of "lordship" language (2) affords room for the necessary compromise, namely to rethink the tradition that "Lord" still communicates the ideas of deference and respect contained in the source languages.

So, why is no one addressing this usage problem in Bible translation and asking why "lordship" language continues to be reinforced? Why is "Lord" exempt from the principles of functional equivalence?

A problem of holy preservation

"Lord" is certainly resilient within Christianity. What might be shielding it from reassessment? Various factors coalesce over time, but one principle overshadows the rest: **the desire to preserve that which is holy**, both generally and specifically.

General holy preservation

If something is perceived by a person or a community to be holy, then there is a responsibility to respect, uphold, celebrate, and *preserve* it. One of many examples is the Islamic perception of the Qur'an: every Arabic word is considered a divine, literal God-utterance. Some of classical Arabic's grammar is even defined by that perception.

In Christianity, the idea of holy preservation is also very strong. In the wake of the Reformation, the Catholic Church was under pressure to re-establish its biblical legitimacy and apostolic origins. As a result, "the Annnales Ecclesiastici of Cesare Baronio—[were organized into] 14,000

columns of text in support of a two-word thesis: semper eadem—*ever the same*" (Ditchfield 1995, 6; emphasis mine).

"Ever the same" means "do not touch!" That is what history teaches us about perceptions of sanctity. This same attitude is reflected in some self-sanctifying biblical texts themselves, such as:

> If anyone adds anything . . . God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. (Rev 22.18-19 NIV)

Specific holy preservation

Ideas of holiness and its preservation undergird terminological resilience within translation and faith communities. However, there was a historical phenomenon that assured that the word "Lord" received an even greater sanctified status, demanding its preservation in particular.

Very early on, Christians adopted a method of writing certain words to provide a visual representation of their holy status; these words are known as "nomina sacra" (holy names). Such words were contracted so that only the first and last letters remained, and a line scored above them for visual emphasis (see Figure 5). In our oldest extant manuscripts this was done for just three or four words (including κύριος), but its use expanded to encompass fifteen or so hyper-sanctified Christian words. Further, this scribal practice was sustained in Latin, Coptic, Slavonic, and Armenian Scripture translations. In Latin, for instance, *DN̄S* was written instead of *dominus*. Throughout Christendom, scribes used this convention thousands of times over.[9]

What was the thinking behind nomina sacra? Larry Hurtado highlights a visual, devotional aspect: "The nomina sacra were intended to register religious devotion *visually*. They are textual phenomena with an iconographic

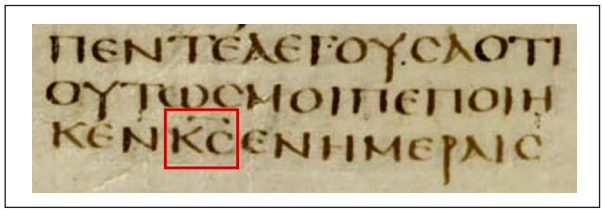

Figure 5. The nomen sacrum ΚΣ as used in Luke 1.25 is the contraction of κύριος in this fourth-century manuscript. Source: www.codexsinaiticus.org.

[9] If the number of surviving manuscripts is situated around 20,000, the number of Christian nomina sacra ever written down must exceed all imagination, given our ignorance regarding the total number of manuscripts produced.

function" (Hurtado 2003, 627; emphasis mine). Christian scribes thus wrote nomina sacra for 1,500 years as part of their devotional practice to celebrate, enforce, and sanctify the authority of God and Christ.

Confronted with such an extended holy history, subsequent Bible translation projects have had the same desire to preserve. Once established, translated terms have thus proven slow or even completely resistant to change, as we see with "Lord" (and *Seigneur*), even while the target language continues evolving. This effect is so powerful that it still influences translation committees, including those aiming for functional equivalence. Thus, the usage issues of such a central term as "Lord" remain unnoticed, and its use is at best justified with an appeal to "a long tradition."[10]

A grammatical problem

A third problem with the English term concerns a grammatical misalignment between "the Lord" and κύριος.

The LXX displays a peculiar practice at the heart of its translation of יהוה (Yahweh).[11] The chosen term, κύριος, is missing the Greek article in certain parts of the canon.[12]

Since this practice of omitting the article before κύριος is only partially documented, more data are needed to understand it. The results in Figure 6 thus present for the first time a statistical summary of all translations of the Tetragrammaton in LXX Greek.[13]

The following points summarize the situation of articulation versus non-articulation:

- Number of instances of יהוה and יה classified: 6,877.
- Number of glosses of יהוה to Greek κύριος in nominative and genitive: 4,867; article omission was observed in 4,705 instances (96.7%).
- The book of Job is a clear outlier.
- Even when factoring in the accusative and dative cases, 5,243 times out of 5,913 (88.7 %), κύριος lacks the article.[14]

[10] The German study Bible edition of GuNB, *Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch mit Erklärungen und Bildern* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society 1983) justifies "der HERR" precisely this way in its glossary; NIV is similar. See Ellingworth 1990, 348.

[11] (The Greek word Tetragrammaton means "four letters.") God's name in Hebrew, *yhwh* (probably pronounced Yahweh), has traditionally been translated into English as "LORD" (Jobes and Silva 2015, 374).

[12] See, for example, Perkins 2008; Pietersma 1984; Rösel 2007; Tov 2008; Wevers 2001.

[13] See Joosten 2013, especially 25, for a discussion of Koine Greek as it is used in the LXX.

[14] Aside from the total number of instances classified, these figures exclude LXX Job (Iob). The discrepancy between the number of direct translations of יהוה as κύριος, κυρίου, κύριον, and κυρίῳ, and the total number of יהוה occurrences referenced in the study is explained by the excluded thirty-one translations in Job, the 367 Greek vocative translations as κύριε (*kurie*), and instances where the critical LXX text varies from the Hebrew.

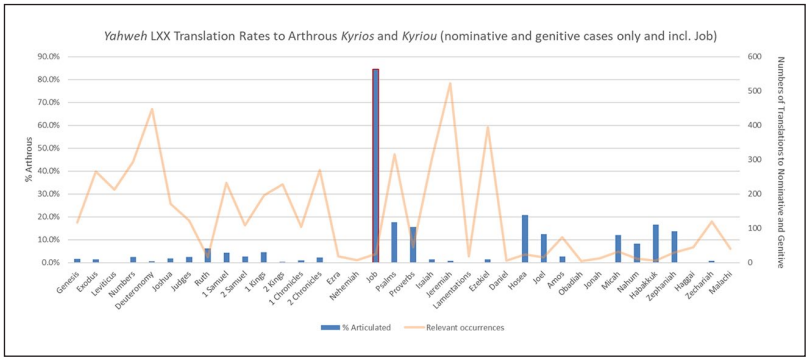

Figure 6. Translations of יהוה as ὁ κύριος and τοῦ κυρίου (nominative and genitive cases only and including the book of Job).

Apart from Job (where the translator normally used the article with κύριος), the article was regularly omitted (some contexts require the article for a proper name for reasons internal to LXX Koine Greek [Perkins 2008, 19]).[15] The exception of Job powerfully demonstrates the otherwise general rule.

These results permit us to affirm, first, that the practice of article omission is not limited to certain portions of the Greek Old Testament but is demonstrable throughout the LXX (with the notable exception of Job). This is a remarkable result, especially because most translations in English (and other languages with long Christian traditions) are obligated to add the definite article before "Lord."[16]

Second, despite some fluctuation in Greek practices on names, this marked omission has already been shown to cause κύριος to function as a proper name.[17] We can therefore postulate that with anarthrous κύριος,

[15] Translations into the nominative and genitive constitute approximately 83% of instances of יהוה to κύριος translations overall. LXX Deuteronomy (Deuteronomion) is consistent in article omission across all cases, suggesting an innovative role of the anarthrous κύριος solution for translating the Tetragrammaton. This translator applied the article just six out of 336 times for the nominative and not once for the 188 genitive occurrences, the 38 accusative occurrences, or the 36 dative occurrences.

[16] Even modern Greek translations are affected; see below.

[17] During the presentation of this article at BT Conference 2019, ILC, Dallas, this assertion was called into question during the Q&A due to the known practice of adding articles to some Greek names. Perkins (2008), Pietersma (1984, 93), and others are clear that article omission was to convey a personal name in this instance. Perkins states: "The Greek translator of Exodus normally glossed יהוה as κύριος, thus making it the equivalent of יהוה and requiring it to function as a proper name"; and "this general lack of articulation when κύριος represents the Tetragram reflects the translator's Hebrew Vorlage. *It is also consistent with how this translator treats proper names.* . . .

Greek-speaking Jews were able to preserve the characteristic of a divine proper name.

In light of this analysis, "Lord" might not be a suitable translation for יהוה, because "Lord" in English usually requires the definite article, while in the LXX's Koine Greek, κύριος clearly did not. So how did this initial effort to preserve the character of God's proper name become lost?

Explaining the loss of God's name

Before any historical analysis, we must note that the function of the Tetragrammaton cannot have been entirely lost in English. In English-speaking Christianity, "the Lord" is perceived as the epicenter, as *home*, with devotion, authority, and even affection. Enough of the original symbolic function, perhaps as a core psychosocial "anchor" (Edwards 2009, 2, 55) of faith, *has* seeped through for it to have survived so long, and under the scrutiny of so many skilled, highly motivated translators. There may even be some special-case proper name nuance accorded by the tradition, with "the LORD" being "close to one of those 'descriptive titles for God . . . which often become essentially names'" (Ellingworth 1990, 349, citing LN 1:138). But this in no way undermines the data, which demand both explanation and response.

To explain the history of the loss of God's name, grammatically at least, remember that several centuries separate those first Hebrew–Greek translators from Jerome,[18] whose fourth-century Latin translation became the authoritative basis for the Catholic Bible. His context was different from that of the LXX translators and Hebrew writers in almost every respect: cultural, social, linguistic, historical, geological/geographical, and religious. We do not know what Jerome and other Latin translators, within their linguistic context, may have thought about the thousands of

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A comparison with the Greek translation of Judith (R. Hanhart, ed., *Judith* [Septuaginta 8.4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979]), for example, reveals a similar situation. Where κύριος refers to a human authority (that is, Nebuchadnezzar or Holofernes), the translator normally used an arthrous form. This parallels the use of articulated κύριος forms in Exodus 21–23 to render Hebrew terms signifying human owners and masters, and husbands. However, in the vast majority of cases in Judith where κύριος identifies Israel's God the term is anarthrous" (Perkins 2008, 17 and n. 4, emphasis mine). We can therefore deduce that, while the question posed was valid, we cannot lose sight of the fact that (1) translators assimilated a pattern from Pentateuch translations where proper names were anarthrous and (2) this practice also serves to assign a divine referent. In other words, we have all the characteristics of a *divine personal name*. In further support of (1) I would add that translations of אדני (*'adonai*) as κύριος are frequently anarthrous with respect to Yahweh and yet arthrous with respect to human masters.

[18] The work of Jerome was also closely preceded by other Latin translations known collectively as Vetus Latina (Old Latin).

unarticulated κύριος they found in the Greek (Jerome certainly also consulted Hebrew texts for revisions). Perhaps they were indifferent, since both κύριος and ὁ κύριος are adequately rendered by *dominus*—Latin does not use articles.

Centuries later, when medieval Bible translators like Guyart des Moulins[19] and John Wycliffe[20] oversaw ground-breaking translations into European languages, they seem to have been unaware of the grammar issue. Since these translations used the highly venerated and widely prevalent Latin Vulgate as their source text, they simply saw *dominus* (or *DN̄S*).

Later, during the Reformation, European translations flourished, with many embracing articular titles as Tetragrammaton translations: e.g., Luther (*der HERR*); old Welsh (*yr ARGLWYDD*); and Olivétan, the first French translator to propose the innovation of *l'Eternel* (the Eternal) for God's name.

It seems possible, then, that the Latin rendering *dominus* (or *DN̄S*) for κύριος is key to solving the puzzle of the grammatical loss of God's personal name. The biblical lingua franca transitioned from one where articles (or the lack of them) were significant for designating a noun as a personal name (LXX Greek), to one where articles were not significant for this task (Latin). Much later, translation proceeded into languages where articles again play a significant role in determining the status of nouns as names. However, the lack of article with the Tetragrammaton had by now been forgotten: The medieval translators generally searched for equivalents to *dominus*, seemingly unaware of the personal character that their ancient predecessors had preserved through article omission. This would have a lasting impact on Bible translation from the Reformation onward.

Modern Greek translations bear extraordinary witness to this reconstruction. Perhaps regretting or embarrassed by the apparent "lack" of articles preceding κύριος in the LXX (especially in light of the weighty European tradition of articular titles), these modern Greek translators have "corrected" this "lack" (see Table 2).

These thousands of "corrections," however, are in direct opposition to the goals of those earlier Greek translators: to preserve the proper name status of יהוה. Indeed, just as for the LXX translator of Job, for medieval translators like des Moulins and Wycliffe, for Reformation translators like Luther and Olivétan, and for many others, this significant subtlety preserved in the initial translation of the Hebrew texts has been largely lost. The probable

[19] Des Moulins is credited with producing the first known translation into French in the late thirteenth century, the *Bible Historiale*. Beautifully produced and preserved, it can be consulted online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/.

[20] Wycliffe's translations were produced in the late fourteenth century.

Table 2. LXX, Modern Greek, and English versions of Leviticus 24.22

LXX	ἐγώ εἰμι (*ego eimi*)		κύριος	ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (*ho theos humôn*)
Modern Greek (FPB)	εγώ είμαι	ο	Κύριος	ο Θεός σας (*ho theos sas*)
English (multiple)	I am	the	LORD	your God

cause, as we have said, is the transition of Bible translation through Latin, which has no articles.

We have seen three issues raised by giving "the Lord" such a prominent role in modern Bible translation: its usage, its resilience, and its grammar. It is time to reassess. How can we become less dependent on a "lordship" discourse?

Representing κύριος contextually

We must allow translation of κύριος to follow the principle of communicating contextual meaning, a principle affirmed by many modern translations. Considering the resilience of "Lord," however, it is equally essential to continue discussion of the problems with relevant parties. All parties must be given the insight that we can do better by steering away from the impossibility of attempting simply to *re*translate "Lord," and toward a better context-driven method that is already known, trusted, and applied. It is better because it both reflects the diverse range of meaning of κύριος and engages comparable English deference mechanisms.

Defining the scope of κύριος

David Capes clarifies the scope of κύριος:

> Like the Hebrew word *'ādôn*, the Greek word *kyrios* is employed with regard to divine and human referents. In Greco-Roman antiquity the word was used in various ways: . . . as polite address; toward masters or owners of property including slaves, houses, businesses, or land; to express the divinity of rulers; and to the gods. The same patterns of usage are reflected in the New Testament. (Capes 2018, 7)[21]

[21] The sources given by Capes are as follows: Epictetus, *Diatribai* (*Dissertationes*); P. Giss, *Griechische Papyri im Museum des oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins zu Giessen*, ed. O. Eger, E. Kornemann, and P. M. Meyer (Leipzig, 1910–1912); Aristotle, *Politica* (*Politics*); P.Oxy, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, ed. B. P. Grenfell et al. (73 vols.; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1898–2009); *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. August Boeckh (4 vols.; Berlin, 1828–1877); Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*. Capes could also have specified the nuance of deference to other heavenly beings such as

The Hellenistic patterns of usage of κύριος are mirrored in the New Testament. Whether the referent was human or divine, the context religious or practical, κύριος signaled deference of some form. With such a broad array of potential usage, a host of accompanying signals were also necessary to clarify the specific nature of that deference.

Target language deference

The usage of "Lord" in English may have undergone changes, but deference to authority and politeness remain key sociological phenomena. The fact that there is no one way of expressing them in English should not be concerning. Instead, the options should lead translators to look for means of conveying deference according to each context.

While sociolinguists have variously summarized the phenomenon of expressing deference, the approach of Brown and Levinson (1987) remains a benchmark. Their approach is generally applicable: deference conveys that the hearer is of a higher social status than the speaker, by the speaker either humbling themselves or raising up the hearer.[22] Deference and politeness can also involve strategies for avoiding or softening what are referred to as FTAs, "Face-Threatening Acts."

As with language, social negotiations are naturally and steadily changing. In the 1980s, sociolinguistics focused on generalized terms of address for strangers like "sir" and "madam," personal pronouns like *tu/vous* in French, expressions of modesty ("with all due respect"), regret, or self-effacement such as "It's not much, I'm afraid," and even hesitancy and high vocal pitch. Nonverbal deference is also a subject of research,[23] but more is needed to understand its expression on social media, especially with new means of nonverbal communication such as emojis and memes. However, we now need a new understanding of how early twenty-first-century authors reintegrate these various social mechanisms into their narratives. We need clearer overviews of how target cultures defer and how they record that deference textually.

Increased insight will lead English translation to employ multiple forms of deference expression with greater sensitivity and precision.

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to the angels; see Acts 10.4 and Rev 7.14. Furthermore, focusing on the parallels between Hellenistic culture and the New Testament may have caused some further types of deference implied by κύριος to be side-lined, such as that expressed by a wife toward her husband (see 1 Pet 3.6).

[22] A New Testament example is John the Baptist's statement, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3.30).

[23] Cultural differences regarding eye contact is a research need here; see Akechi et al. 2013.

The textual options we can develop for κύριος will be less flattening than "Lord" has been, by using the context-sensitive approaches already adopted elsewhere.[24]

An example methodology

In order to delineate such a proposal, I follow Nida's notion that languages differ in the way they segment ideas, and thus look for terminological types of deference that may emerge in ten classic "Lord" translation scenarios. Grounded in the observations I have summarized, the following scenarios exemplify a range of context-driven options for κύριος for each scenario (from Bainbridge 2018–2020).

Translation scenarios for "Lord"

1. Reflecting the Tetragrammaton: Representing the Tetragrammaton in translation has been a difficult task for OT translators, and "cuts across all the categories normally used to distinguish between types of Bible translation" (Ellingworth 1990, 346). Our aim of demonstrating the feasibility of context-driven approaches leads us to ask, does the representation under consideration reflect the choices of the first Bible translators? In the first to third centuries B.C., we have seen how the LXX translators represented the Tetragrammaton;[25] why should we not also aim to identify an authority term containing the character of both name and title? This could be the path to minimal distortion.

In his translation *The Message*, Eugene Peterson (who was also concerned about the suitability of "Lord") provides a simple and elegant solution: "GOD." "God" is already both a divine name and a title in

[24] The translation of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (*hoi Ioudaioi*) is an example of a more sensitive approach adopted by modern Bible translations. See the survey by Ellingworth 1998, 128–29.

[25] The pre-Christian Greek form of the Tetragrammaton is a subject of debate. What is certain is that Hellenistic Judaism knew a variety of textual practices. However, one point is frequently marginalized: for mid-first-century authors to explicitly associate the Tetragrammaton with the κύριος Jesus (e.g., Rom 10.9, 13) requires pre-established widespread familiarity with κύριος as a Tetragrammaton vessel. If it was pre-established, then its existence cannot depend on the emergence of Christianity. Given the necessarily small or even tiny numbers of the earliest Christian communities in the 50s A.D. when our first NT witness to κύριος for the Tetragrammaton appears (1 Corinthians seems to be the first of these), and the mammoth undertaking of the LXX, there is simply no time or reason for the emerging Jewish-Christian sect to have come up with such an impressive rewrite of the Greek Scriptures they read. In fact, they would have most certainly felt the same compulsion as other Jews to preserve that which is holy, so the motivation would have likely run in the opposite direction.

English, and as such is "the most common and natural proper name for God" (in English) while "'the LORD'/'the Lord' is a secondary or substitute name if used absolutely, and a title if qualified" (Ellingworth 1990, 349–50).[26] It is readily understood and frequently used in wider English-speaking society. Meanwhile, "GOD" (all capitals) for English Bible readers preserves the established Christian tradition of visually assigning sacredness.

In the New Testament, Peterson persists in using "God" for many instances of κύριος, and in this he is not alone. Several other translations represent what they consider to be clear references in NT Greek to the Tetragrammaton. In one well-known French translation (DRB), the translators used asterisks to indicate such references: **Seigneur*.[27] In Spanish, the *Nueva Traducción Viviente* (NTV) places *el* SEÑOR in small capital letters when the New Testament cites an OT passage that translates the Tetragrammaton. Czech and Basque Bible translations distinguish between "the Lord" applied to God and to Christ (Ellingworth 1990, 350 n. 11); Vasileiadis and Gordon retrace other versions over the centuries that endeavored to indicate use of the Tetragrammaton in the New Testament (Vasileiadis and Gordon 2019, 7–10).[28] With so much precedent, we can no longer dismiss the reflection of the Tetragrammaton in the New Testament as unusual, nor can we consider efforts to mark this presence as particularly novel.

We do, however, need to define some criteria for identifying these occurrences of κύριος. There are at least four such criteria, and we should require that several coincide to maximize our confidence in the inference (frequently all four are met):

1. Is the κύριος occurrence part of a LXX citation containing a representation of the Tetragrammaton?
2. Is the κύριος occurrence part of a phraseological unit associated with the Tetragrammaton (especially in the genitive: the name, hand, house, way, angel, day of κύριος)?
3. Does the κύριος occurrence omit the article?
4. Is the passage discussing or illustrated by an OT context?

[26] Ellingworth also concludes, after a "simplest" solution of transliterating יהוה to "Yahweh," that a "general solution would be to translate both YHWH and Elohim as 'God,' with an appropriate glossary note" (350).

[27] The translators responsible for this innovative approach may have been William Joseph Lowe and Pierre Schlumberger. However, note also the square brackets in Darby's English translation used to surround the English article where missing in Greek, e.g., "blessed [be] he that comes in [the] Lord's name" (Mark 11.9), so some cross-pollination of awareness is possible.

[28] The authors fail to note Peterson's use of "God" for NT references to the Tetragrammaton, even if he switches the "o" and "d" of "God" to lowercase (see n. 29).

Based on this approach, we propose translating κύριος in some instances as "God"[29] where multiple criteria are met.[30] Mark 11.9 could therefore be translated as follows:

Greek[31]	**NIV**	**Alternative**
Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι **κυρίου**	Blessed is he who comes in the name of **the Lord**!	Blessed is he who comes in **God**'s name!

This is a LXX citation (Ps 118.25[26]). Ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου is a well-established LXX phrase that translates a phrase that includes the Tetragrammaton (בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה "in the name of *yhwh*"). Κυρίου lacks the article (17 LXX occurrences for the full version of the phrase and 49 times for ὀνόματι κυρίου without the ἐν; ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου is never used). Finally, the OT context criterion is met automatically via the citation.

The translations that integrate NT allusions to OT phraseology in which the Tetragrammaton (or its representation in the LXX) occurs rarely fail to notice its presence in the birth narratives, rich in OT prophecy fulfilment and anarthrous κύριος phrases, even when the criterion of LXX citation is not met. For example, Matt 1.24:

Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
Ἐγερθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰωσὴφ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐποίησεν ὡς προσέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος **κυρίου** καὶ παρέλαβεν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ	When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of **the Lord** had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.	When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel[32] of **God** had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Elsewhere, other criteria are met. In 2 Cor 3.16-18, despite its not containing direct LXX citation, the way in which Paul fulfils the criteria of non-articulation,

[29] Peterson's move away from capitalizing God (or using small capitals) in the New Testament is probably owing to tradition (i.e., English NT citations of OT texts including a reference to "the LORD" are usually rendered "the Lord"). However, it is not without a cost. Ellingworth (1990, 350) points out the theological drawbacks of downgrading the NT God, who "even in quotations from the Old Testament, never has more than his initial letter capitalized. The theological implications of this are surely disastrous."

[30] It is not my intent to imply that determining the referent of κύριος is always a simple matter. Indeed, the book of Acts can represent a challenge in this regard. For an excellent discussion and sense of caution in this task, Hurtado's 2014 article is imperative reading.

[31] Westcott and Hort 1881. To reflect the likelihood that the originals would have been uncial, scripted in capitals, the somewhat arbitrary capitalization of the κ of κύριος is removed when present to reflect the original consistency (visual emphasis by means of the nomina sacra, although a very early phenomenon, would also have been unlikely).

[32] Or "Angel."

the placement of the passage within Jewish history (vv. 13-15), Paul's own familiarity with the LXX, and the presence of known LXX phrases permit us to detect multiple allusions to the Tetragrammaton by this author:

Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς **κύριον**,[33] περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα.	But whenever anyone turns to **the Lord**, the veil is taken away.	But whenever anyone turns to **God**, the veil is taken away.
ὁ δὲ **κύριος**[34] τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα **κυρίου**,[35] ἐλευθερία.	Now **the Lord** is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of **the Lord** is, there is freedom.	Now **God** is synonymous with his Spirit, and where **God**'s Spirit is, there is freedom.
ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ **κυρίου** πνεύματος.[36]	And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate **the Lord**'s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from **the Lord**, who is the Spirit.	And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate **God**'s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, all of which is fueled by **God**'s own Spirit.[37]

2. Sir/master distinctions: One challenge to translating LXX reflections of the Tetragrammaton this way involves the κύριος title as applied to Jesus.[38] First, I assume that while the NT authors were convinced of Christ's divine prerogatives, they were not necessarily implying the Tetragrammaton each time they mentioned *their* κύριος, Jesus. Rather, it seems they were

[33] Πρὸς κύριον occurs 139 times in the LXX, while πρὸς τὸν κύριον occurs just five times in reference to the Tetragrammaton.

[34] As with ὁ γὰρ κύριος, ὁ δὲ κύριος is a phrase used with a good number of the seventy-six translations of יהוה as κύριος in the nominative with the article ὁ (excluding Job); κύριος without the article occurs 2,915 times. The presence of the conjunction δὲ requires the presence of the usually omitted article.

[35] Πνεῦμα κυρίου is used eighty-six times in the LXX; πνεῦμα τοῦ κυρίου never appears.

[36] Ἀπὸ κυρίου is used twenty-three times in the LXX; ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου just six times outside Job.

[37] In accordance with the logic of KJV, NKJV, CEV, GNB, ISV, DRB, YLT (in English), and S21, BAN (in French). While we do not have an exact Greek equivalent to v. 17 (πνεῦμα κυρίου and κυρίου πνεύματος), the Greek is doubtless reiterating Paul's point that God and his Spirit go hand in hand. An even simpler but less faithful conclusion to this sentence could just be: "all of which is fueled by him," in tune with some other versions' renderings.

[38] The NT authors consistently avoided giving Jesus a range of other Greek titles, which are translated varyingly into English when they occur in reference to other biblical characters, including "leaders." One of the reasons for this is that these are more fixed positions that also (necessarily) connote not just superiority but also accountability to still-higher positions within the implied hierarchy (Ellingworth 1998, 135).

appealing to this word's wide and diverse range of deference implications in the context of Hellenistic society (see above section, "Defining the scope of κύριος"). Thus, we can separate out the different relational contexts and translate accordingly.

Luke 13.23

Greek	NIV	Alternative
Εἶπεν δέ τις αὐτῷ **κύριε**, εἰ ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς	Someone asked him, "**Lord**, are only a few people going to be saved?"	*Someone* asked him, "**Sir**, are only a few people going to be saved?"

Matt 8.21

Greek	NIV	Alternative
Ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν εἶπεν αὐτῷ **κύριε**, ἐπίτρεψόν μοι πρῶτον ἀπελθεῖν καὶ θάψαι τὸν πατέρα μου.	Another disciple said to him, "**Lord**, first let me go and bury my father."	Another *disciple* said to him, "**Master**, first let me go and bury my father."

"Master" in Matt 8.21 powerfully outlines for the reader a more long-standing relationship of deference expected from the disciple toward Jesus in contrast to the anonymous "someone" of Luke 13.23.

3. Non-title forms: In the NT texts we see κύριος stressing authority through what appears to be a title. The linguistic history of the word indicates, however, that before NT times it functioned as an adjective (Greenlee 1950).[39] In English, too, we like to vary the ways we express authority grammatically, including through verb forms. Examples include "being in charge" or "having jurisdiction over." Matthew 12.8 is a NT instance where applying this practice could be permissible:

Matt 12.8

Greek	NIV	Alternative
κύριος γάρ ἐστιν τοῦ σαββάτου ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.	For the Son of Man is **Lord** of the Sabbath.	For the Son of Man is **in charge of** the Sabbath.

[39] Note, however, that Greenlee's assertion that κύριος is only used as a noun in the New Testament misses the point that the NT writers were cognizant of and faithful to the LXX practice of article omission.

Context allows us to choose such equivalent contemporary English forms. Here, Jesus is defending his authority against legalistic criticism. This legal context could also suggest a more legal rendering: "For the Son of Man has jurisdiction over the Sabbath."

4. Royal authority: The colt story in Mark offers a particularly insightful opportunity to deploy the methodology in a fourth type of context, namely royal authority. In this account, which tells the story of the colt and its role in the preparations for Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we can observe how the author's emphasis of Jesus' kingship prefigures his supreme exaltation—*on high*. "His highness" could aptly convey this present royal context while leaving the future exaltation perfectly open:

Mark 11.3

Greek	NIV	Alternative
καὶ ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ Τί ποιεῖτε τοῦτο; εἴπατε **Ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ** χρείαν ἔχει καὶ εὐθὺς αὐτὸν ἀποστέλλει πάλιν ὧδε.	If anyone asks, "Why are you doing this?" tell him, "**The Lord** needs it and will return it shortly."	If anyone asks you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "**His Royal Highness** needs it and will return it shortly."

This royal authority is also present in the expression of the allegiance of God's people to their Messiah-King. As a principle we could maintain that κυρίου ἡμῶν (*kuriou hēmōn*) is often well represented by "our King":

Acts 15.26

Greek	NIV	Alternative
ἀνθρώποις παραδεδωκόσι τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος **τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν** Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.	men who have risked their lives for the name of **our Lord** Jesus Christ.	men who have risked their lives for the name of Jesus Christ **our King**.

5. Supreme earthly authority ("Lord of lords"): In the Old Testament, the "Lord of lords" was usually God himself (Deut 10.17; Ps 136.3), but clearly κύριος τῶν κυρίων (*kurios tōn kuriōn*) could be associated with monarchs who, by virtue of their conquests and negotiations, succeeded in placing themselves above neighboring rulers.[40] As a result, the idea of a chief commander over others could be well contained within "Commander-in-Chief." This term adequately communicates superior authority with clear implications for operational governance. We can see it at work in 1 Tim 6:

[40] "King of kings" is used to describe powerful rulers such as Artaxerxes (Ezra 7.12) and Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek 26.7).

1 Tim 6.13-15

Greek	NIV	Alternative
παραγγέλλω σοι . . . τηρῆσαί σε τὴν ἐντολὴν ἄσπιλον ἀνεπίλημπτον μέχρι τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν καιροῖς ἰδίοις δείξει ὁ μακάριος καὶ μόνος δυνάστης, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ **κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων**	I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and **Lord of lords**	I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame. Do so until God, in his own time, sends back Jesus Christ our King and reveals him as the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and **Commander-in-Chief**

6. Cosmic-divine authority as exercised by Jesus the KING: This subset of relevant passages illustrates how the method can integrate the various expressions of deference. We can also signal those occasions on which Christ's "lordship" may be viewed at the cosmic-divine level. Thus, if we designate the Tetragrammaton by capitalizing "GOD"—who is most consistently identified as the *Father* of Jesus—how might we designate that identical divine authority conferred between them? Drawing from the capitalization of "GOD" and from Jesus' royal status as "KING," we propose a combination of features by capitalizing "KING" when context permits. Thus, in Acts 2 we read:

Acts 2.36

Greek	NIV	Alternative
καὶ **κύριον** αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.	God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both **Lord** and Messiah.	this Jesus you crucified is the one God has anointed and crowned to rule as **KING**.

Epistle introductions also leave open the possibility of this ultimate level of authority:

Phil 1.2

Greek	NIV	Alternative
χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.	Grace and peace to you from God our Father and **the Lord** Jesus Christ.	Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ **the KING**.

7. Other context-driven options: By applying the current method throughout NIV, we occasionally meet examples that invite other renderings that emphasize particular authors' unique themes. In Heb 7.14, for instance, an

alternative for "our Lord" could be "our Great Priest" in the discussion of priestly authority and Jesus' place within a priestly lineage.

8. Replacing "lording over": The strong bond between the English-speaking church and its "lordship" language seems to have contributed to the retaining of a rarely-used expression to designate an act of domination, "to lord over." This, too, requires expression in more suitable English, as in the following:

Mark 10.42

Greek	NIV	Alternative
οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν τῶν ἐθνῶν **κατακυριεύουσιν** αὐτῶν	those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles **lord it over** them	those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles **are abusing their positions of power**

9. References to the ἅγιοι (hagioi, "the Lord's people"): NIV has its own special attachment to the phrase "the Lord's people."[41] On the twenty-four occasions that NT writers use a form of ἅγιος in this way, which most traditional translations have translated as "the saints," NIV translates it as "the Lord's people" even though there is no reference to God, Christ, or κύριος in the Greek. It can be observed that even when a Hebrew text says something very close to "*Yahweh*'s people/congregation" (NIV: "the LORD's people"), κύριος is present in the LXX, whereas ἅγιος is not (e.g., LXX Num 11.29; 1 Sam 2.24; 2 Kgs 9.6; 2 Chr 23.16; Ezek 36.20).

In short, NIV could learn here from certain dynamic efforts like NLT or GNB in English or the PDV in French by adopting simpler renderings, such as "the believers," and thus follow the previously-discussed principle of preserving the receptor/message relationship:

Acts 9.32

Greek	NIV	Alternative
Ἐγένετο δὲ Πέτρον διερχόμενον διὰ πάντων κατελθεῖν καὶ πρὸς **τοὺς ἁγίους** τοὺς κατοικοῦντας Λύδδα.	As Peter travelled about the country, he went to visit **the Lord's people** who lived in Lydda.	As Peter travelled about the country, he went to visit **the believers** living in Lydda.

10. Contextualizing and demystifying Paul's use of ἐν κυρίῳ (en kuriō): Here, proposals must be the most sensitive to context, not only for the same reasons that call for a new general method of translating κύριος, but also to capture

[41] Although a fairly rare rendering, we can observe likely NIV influence over CEV, which has "the Lord's followers."

(or liberate) Paul's fifty-odd uses of the expression ἐν κυρίῳ. Constantine Campbell (2012) situates this ἐν within a wider Pauline theological emphasis where such prepositions are used to develop the union between Christ and the church (as well as between the Father and the Son). For our purposes, it is sufficient to remember that Campbell does not suggest that a single phrase such as "in the Lord" can suffice to aptly render Paul's thought in each instance.[42]

The proposals sampled below are at best only suggestions, but they are offered primarily to demonstrate the feasibility of the method. They attest to the need for specific, individualized treatment for every occurrence of ἐν κυρίῳ:[43]

Rom 16.12 Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
ἀσπάσασθε Τρύφαιναν καὶ Τρυφῶσαν τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ. ἀσπάσασθε Περσίδα τὴν ἀγαπητήν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν **ἐν κυρίῳ**.	Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard **in the Lord**.	Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, and not forgetting my dear friend, Persis—all those women who work hard **for the Master**, especially Persis.

Rom 16.13 Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
ἀσπάσασθε Ῥοῦφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν **ἐν κυρίῳ**	Greet Rufus, chosen **in the Lord**	Greet Rufus, chosen **into the Master's service**

Rom 16.22 Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν **ἐν κυρίῳ**.	I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you **in the Lord**.	I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you **in the Master's name**.

Eph 2.21 Greek	**NIV**	**Alternative**
ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὔξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον **ἐν κυρίῳ**.	In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple **in the Lord**.	In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple **to God**.

[42] French translations seem more sensitive to this need for flexibility in translating ἐν κυρίῳ by varying the French preposition. English translations, on the other hand, tend to stick somewhat woodenly to "in the Lord."

[43] In my complete NIV "Lord" reassessment proposal, no two identical treatments for ἐν κυρίῳ are offered (Bainbridge 2018–2020).

New "Lord" scenarios

Diminished reliance on word-for-word translation for such a broad Greek term is both necessary and feasible. Given the current use of "Lord" in mainstream English, however, there are at least two new scenarios where it might be retained.

First, to designate certain evil characters, it would seem plausible to invert the positive Christian connotation to reflect what modern English culture and language is consistently telling us, thus granting some biblical villains lordship status: Lord Pharaoh, Lord Ahaz, and Lord Herod, for example.

Second, it may be useful as a term for an antiquated authority, such as when the NT writers reflect upon OT examples dating back several hundred years from their time. Here, an antiquated usage of "Lord" may become appropriate, such as 1 Pet 3.5-6 with the addition of quotation marks ("They put their hope in God and were subject to their husbands, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him 'lord'").

Conclusion

I have shown how usage, resilience, and grammar pose three significant problems for dynamic Bible translations that rely on "lordship" vocabulary, and I have demonstrated the legitimacy, necessity, and feasibility of the contextualized method with respect to translating κύριος. Through this method, we can work towards bringing contemporary readers closer to how first-century readers would have understood and used this term, without major compromise.

However, one potential worry encountered here has been that translating κύριος according to context may cause modern readers to lose a degree of the original cohesion achieved by a single Greek term. While this raises a legitimate concern, two points are clear. First, the worry neither diminishes the significance of the problems nor impedes our response to them, through deeper reassessment and consultation. Second, there are good reasons for reassurance, the first of which is both profound and surprisingly simple: when the referent is Jesus, the conceptual unity of the various terminological options is guaranteed. The person of Jesus holds the full range of κύριος nuances within himself. We have also seen that visual cohesion can sometimes be favored by capitalizing "KING," while other connections between the various authority terms have also been encouraged where possible. The feasibility of the method is thus secure.

We may therefore gradually bid a grateful farewell to the English term "Lord" that has served the church well for over 600 years. We can begin to foster acceptance within the translation community and beyond that there is no "Swiss army knife" equivalent to κύριος in English, and that we need to harness meaningful and contextualized alternatives according to the grammar and implied type of deference of each occurrence of κύριος.

Assessing this question is part of a dynamic rethinking of biblical deference. If we work together, freeing our translations from an outdated dependency on "lordship" language, Bible translators will contribute to reconnecting the discourse of the English-speaking church to the life-changing deference and authority at the heart of the biblical message.

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Abbreviations

BAN	Bible Annotée Neuchâtel (1891)
CEV	Contemporary English Version (1999)
Darby	Bible, translated by John Darby (1890)
DRB	Darby en français (1885)
FPB	Filos Pergamos (Spyros Filos translation, Pergamos Publications, 2013)
GNB	Good News Bible (1994)
GuNB	Gute Nachricht Bibel (2000)
ISV	International Standard Version (2011)
KJV	King James Version (1611)
LN	Louw and Nida 1996 (in References)
LXX	Septuagint
NIV	New International Version (2011)
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)
NTV	Nueva Traducción Viviente (2010)
S21	Segond 21 (2007)
YLT	Young's Literal Translation, by Robert Young (1862/1898)