

## THE MEANING AND TRANSLATION OF κύριος IN ROMANS 14:4<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

*The word κύριος occurs twice in Romans 14:4. Translations differ with respect to the capitalization of these two instances – the main problem being whether κύριος should be taken to refer to Christ or to a human master. In this article, the matter is investigated by first examining the context in which this verse occurs and thereafter taking a closer look at the verse itself.*

### **1. Introduction**

In Romans 14:4 the term κύριος occurs twice, with quite a bit of confusion over the way in which these instances of κύριος should be translated. The extent of this problem is clearly illustrated by the following table which notes different interpretations by various commentaries and translations:

<b>Translation</b>	<b>Commentaries and/or translations</b>
Master ... master	Byrne (1996:407); Käsemann <sup>2</sup> (1980:365); Meeks (1987:295)
Master ... Master	Witherington (2004:328); RSV
Lord ... Lord	NLT
master ... Lord	Morris (1988:476); Van Bruggen (2006:206); NAV; ESV; NIV; NJB; Karris (2005:88)
Master ... Master	NEB

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of part of the research done for an MTh degree at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Prof. G.J. Steyn.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley.

lord ... Lord	Bartlett (1995:122); Moo (196:833); ASV
lord ... God <sup>3</sup>	Jonker (1966:179); OAV
master ... God	KJV; NKJV

This study seeks to find a responsible way of translating these occurrences of κύριος. One way of doing so would be to read Romans 14:4 against the backdrop of its immediate textual context. This will be the first objective of this article: to determine the immediate context. The second objective is to read Romans 14:4 against a reconstructed socio-cultural context. To reconstruct the socio-cultural context of this specific passage, recourse will be made to socio-historic insights. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn concerning the translation of these two instances of κύριος.

## 2. The context of Romans 14:4

### 2.1 The situation at Rome<sup>4</sup>

Commentators are in two camps about the nature of Romans 14-15. Does this reference concern a real situation in the church(es) at Rome,<sup>5</sup> or is it a hypothetical application in which Paul simply draws from his experience in other churches and especially Corinth?<sup>6</sup> Those commentators that believe the situation to be real also differ with regard to who these groups were. Some would equate the groups with Jewish Christians (“the weak”) and non-Jewish Christians (“the strong”),<sup>7</sup> although most would agree that these are not

<sup>3</sup> This difference is due to a textual variant in which the second occurrence is read as θεός in stead of κύριος.

<sup>4</sup> For the general social setting of Romans, see Esler (2003:passim). From a social-scientific point of view, Esler describes the situation at Rome as consisting of an “ingroup” and an “outgroup.”

<sup>5</sup> The following commentators, among others, from many different backgrounds, take this to be the case: Bartlett (1995:121), Dunn (1988:795), Esler (2003:340-341), Greijdanus (1933:583), Haacken (1999:277), Moo (1996:827-828), Tobin (2004:404) and Witherington (2004:326). Krimmer (1983:349) is of the opinion that Paul heard about a specific matter from his many friends at Rome – citing Romans 16 as example of such friends.

<sup>6</sup> Omanson (1982:107) notes that there is quite a disagreement on this matter. For an example of such a commentary that takes this question to be hypothetical, see Johnson (1997:198). Also see Jewett (2007:833-834), who takes the argument as a rhetorical construct – no precise group is intended. For Jewett (2007:838), using such an unlikely but recognizable description enables each actual group “to smile and feel included in the subsequent argument.” Karris (2005:88-89) is of the opinion that the (present day) readers of Paul creates these two groups. Käsemann (1980:364-365) notes that the discussion *could* be addressed to a specific situation, but it could also be that Paul – on account of his experience – simply suspects such divisions. However, bulk of commentaries seemingly takes the discussion to be addressed to a specific situation.

<sup>7</sup> As do Bartlett (1995:121), Byrne (1996:404), Esler (2003:342-344), Harrington (1976:144), Krimmer (1983:349), Moo (1996:828-831), Omanson (1982:107) and Witherington (2004:333). Witherington (2004:326,334-335) states that this division is plain on account of the discussion of the role of Israel in Romans 9-11. One possibility is that the Jews, returning after the exile of 49CE, could not find any *kosher* meat in Rome – which was simply not being sold any more, since there was no market for it. Harrison (1976:144) proposes that the situation occurred after the death of Caligula in 54CE, when the non-Jewish Christians had free reign for a lengthy period of time and by now were set in their ways. Byrne (1996:404) notes that the term κολύβος is a

watertight groups – rather, they consist *mainly* of these two ethnic groups. This can be illustrated by reference to Paul, a Jew himself, who clearly sides with the strong<sup>8</sup> (Byrne 1996:404; Meeks 1987:292; Moo 1996:831). These views have merit, but one has to admit that very little is known about the specific situation at Rome. For one thing, one remains “uncertain to what extent Paul possessed definite information about the internal affairs of the Roman church” (Harrison 1976:143). This makes it impossible to know whether Paul is addressing a specific problem (Byrne 1996:406). Even if one could show that Paul is not merely using references to eating as a hypothetical possibility but addresses a specific situation, one can never be certain about the composition of the groups that he addresses (Schlier 1979:403). Certainly, even more than the two groups presupposed by many commentators could be in view (Käsemann 1980:366). As Morris (1988:475) notes, “[i]t is best to accept the fact that we are ignorant of the precise situation and simply to consider what Paul says,” especially with regard to the topic of this article. Thus, this article does not deny that Paul could be writing with a specific situation in mind, nor does it denounce the view that he could be painting a hypothetical situation. Rather, the implied readers of the text will be used, as can be gleaned from Paul’s rhetoric. For the moment, then, it should suffice to say that there are (at least) two groups of Christians to whom Paul is addressing himself - some Christians that are weaker, and some that are stronger with regard to faith.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 The backdrop – Romans 14:1-12

In order to better determine the meaning of Romans 14:4, a look at the immediate context, *viz.* Romans 14:1-12, is necessary.

### 2.2.1 Verses 1-2

Paul clearly begins a new pericope at Romans 14:1. He turns from his summary at the end of Romans 13 to paraenesis, with the specific example of “the weak” and “the strong.” The strong (generally, those who eat anything) are advised to accept the weak (generally, those who do not eat meat).<sup>10</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that the latter are weak “in faith.” They do not yet allow their faith to “permeate all areas of life” (Byrne 1996:408) as they do

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*technicus terminus* used by Jews alone. One of the lengthiest discussion is to be found in Moo (828-831), who believes that the “weak” group are Jewish Christians who wish to stay loyal to the Mosaic law. A few commentators disagree with these views. Among them should be noted Van Bruggen (2006:*passim*) who takes the whole letter of Romans as addressed to non-Jewish Christians. Similarly, Tobin (2004:408) argues the Christian group in Rome to be “ethnically Gentile.”

<sup>8</sup> See also the discussion under verses 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Cf Grayston (1997:115), who makes similar conclusions and also uses the implied readership (although not named as such) as a starting point.

<sup>10</sup> Bartlett (1995:122) notes that this is quite contrary to popular notions about Christianity: generally “strong Christians” are thought of as “those who have very clear rules that they loyally obey” and “weak Christians” are thought to be “those who seem less concerned with having regulations for every aspect of behavior.”

not yet have full “insight into some of the implications of their faith in Christ (Moo 1996:835; cf Jonker 1966:179; Morris 1988:477).

The enigmatic μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν probably means that the strong should not cajole the weak into believing exactly the same as they do (Dunn 1988:798). This is strengthened by the use of προσλαμβάνομαι, which is more than a mere formal acknowledgement and rather points to acceptance with the view to care as one would expect in a family (Moo 1996:835; Van Bruggen 2006:204). Προσλαμβάνειν here means “‘welcome someone’ into a ‘home or circle of acquaintances’” (Jewett 2007:835; cf Esler 2003:347). Moo (1996:835) notes that the present imperative of προσλαμβάνομαι may point to this welcoming attitude as being continuous. Van Bruggen (2006:205) believes that the choice of words (διάκρισις and διαλογισμός) betrays a forensic interest, especially in the light of the judging event portrayed in Romans 14:12. This might be true to some extent, although one has to remember that “passing judgement” is quite normal in a society preoccupied by honour and shame.

### 2.2.2 Verse 3

In this verse, Paul addresses both the strong and the weak. The former is admonished not to despise or reject (ἐξουθενεῖτω) the latter; they, in turn, are cautioned against judging (κρινέτω) the former. These two terms are not to be seen as synonyms (Dunn 1988:803), even though they form a parallelism. For the stronger group to look down upon the weaker one is natural. The weaker group, more rigorous in their rules, could easily have judged the stronger group on theological grounds (Michel 1978:423). At the end of this verse, a reason is advanced for this imperative: ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο (“for God has accepted him”). Käsemann (1980:369) and Jewett (2007:841) takes this as applying to both groups. Of course, the same reason underlies Paul’s argument, but textually, this is not the case (Greijdanus 1933:588; Louw 1979:127; Schlier 1979:406) - rather, the reason is addressed only to the weak.<sup>11</sup> In the immediate context, this is on account of the connection to the previous clause brought about by the γάρ (Moo 1996:839). In the broader context of the pericope, this is seen in the fact that verse 1 and verse 3 form an inclusio. Προσλαμβάνομαι is found in both the first clause of verse 1 and the last clause of verse 3. Stylistically, it makes sense to take the προσλαμβάνεσθε of verse 1 as directed to the strong, while the προσελάβετο of verse 3 is directed to the weak. This inclusio also sets verses 1-3 apart as a distinct unit.

### 2.2.3 Verses 5-6

Verses 5 and 6 are found in the first (and only) place that reference is made to specific days. The phrase κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ’ ἡμέραν, ὅς δὲ κρίνει

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<sup>11</sup> According to, among others, the following commentators: Dunn (1988:813), Greijdanus (1933:588), Harrison (1976:145), Jonker (1966:180), Krimmer (1983:350), Moo (1996:839) and Schlier (1979:406). This is also affirmed by Louw (1979:127) and Rolland (1980:46), who place this clause in relation to the second clause of the parallelism in their respective structural analyses.

πάσαν ἡμέραν remains enigmatic<sup>12</sup> (Van Bruggen 2006:206). Some of the proposed interpretations include that it could be the Sabbath<sup>13</sup> or other Jewish festive days that are in view.<sup>14</sup> This interpretation seems to be the most widely accepted and also the most likely. Others, arguing that the context concerns eating or not eating, suggest days of fasting.<sup>15</sup> Van Bruggen (2006:203) gives valid critique on this suggestion, noting that Romans 14:2 does not concern fasting as a one-time event, but rather implies continuous fasting. Another proposal is the so-called “lucky” or “unlucky” days, the belief of which was current among the Gentiles.<sup>16</sup> Michel (1978:425) convincingly negates this suggestion, as Paul would certainly not have approved of this foreign concept and he would have reacted more fiercely against such a practice. In any case, the better option would be to simply state that there is a clear difference of opinion about days. This once again affirms that there are (at least) two groups in view.<sup>17</sup> Paul seems to regard the food issue as enough of an example, and eventually returns to it at the end of verse 6.

#### 2.2.4 Verses 7-9

Verses 7-9 give the theological cause behind Paul’s slave image and his command not to judge or despise other groups. That Paul moves over to an explanation is indicated by the γάρ of verse 7.<sup>18</sup> One does not live for oneself, neither does one die for oneself. This was indeed a “commonplace of conventional wisdom” (Byrne 1996:410), but Paul does not use it in the same sense. In fact, Paul’s main idea at this point is not even that Christians should live to serve another (*contra* Bruce 1963:245).<sup>19</sup> Rather, Paul believes that

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, Bruce (1963:245) and Haacker (1999:283) note that this phrase could also mean that some believers thought every day a “special” day to be set apart for the service of God. Just as likely, the phrase could indicate that some thought one day to be more special than others.

<sup>13</sup> Michel (1978:425) even speculates that it might be Sunday!

<sup>14</sup> Commentators adhering to this view: Byrne (1996:409), Dunn (1988:803-806), Jonker (1966:180), Lekkerkerker (1971:159), Witherington (2004:336), Zeller (1985:225). Tobin (2004:405) also takes the day to be the Sabbath, but further notes the high improbability that the question is whether to go to the synagogue on this day. Meeks (1987:292) expresses reservations about this being the Sabbath. Some commentators explicitly deny that the Sabbath is in view (e.g. Greijdanus 1933:591; Schlatter 1962:223).

<sup>15</sup> For example, Greijdanus (1933:584) and Harrison (1976:146). A good discussion of different examples of fasting in the ancient world can be found in Schlier (1979:403), who also believes the day in question to be a day of fasting.

<sup>16</sup> So Käsemann (1980:370), Meeks (1987:292-293), Van Bruggen (2006:206) and Zeller (1985:225). The latter suggests that the reference could be to a mixture of these “lucky” and “unlucky” days and the Jewish festivals. Van Bruggen uses the Latin terms *fasti et nefasti*. He believes that the days referred to in the text could even have astrological or magical overtones (Van Bruggen 2006:204).

<sup>17</sup> Jewett (2007:844-845) maintains his argument that this is a rhetorical technique employed by Paul, and that there are no specific situation in mind.

<sup>18</sup> Γάρ is repeated three times – in verses 7, 8 and 9. Each γάρ supplies the reason for the previous statement and therefore implies a different level of interpretation.

<sup>19</sup> See also Jewett (2007:847).

one lives or dies τῷ κυρίῳ<sup>20</sup> (Morris 1988:480), as can be clearly seen in verse 8. What is even more important in verse 8 is that, no matter what the state of the believer, he or she is “of the Lord” (τοῦ κυρίου ἐσμέν). This indicates a possessive relationship – the believer, whether strong or weak, *belongs* to the Lord. This idea is further elaborated in verse 9. Paul’s discussion of both the dead and the living has led him to use the verb ζάω rather than the expected ἀνίστημι<sup>21</sup> (Witherington 2004:337). Moreover, ἀπέθανεν and ἔζησεν are antonyms and thus form a merism, just as νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων, which echo the previous statement about the death and life of Christ. *Everything* is under his Lordship. Jaquette (1996:30,47-53) convincingly argues that this statement can be taken as ἀδιάφορα.<sup>22</sup> If it is “nebensächlich, ob wir leben oder sterben”<sup>23</sup> (Althaus 1970:141), one can quite readily deduce the unimportance of eating or not eating or regarding days as special or profane (Dunn 1988:807-808, Jaquette 1996:53). What is important is that Christ is Lord of all. These verses are the crux of this pericope (Käsemann 1980:371; Michel 1978:421,427). The image of Lordship not only explains verses 1-6, but also informs verses 10-12.

### 2.2.5 Verses 10-12

Verse 10 starts with an emphatic σὺ – one of the marks of a diatribe.<sup>24</sup> For the first time since verse 3, both groups are addressed separately. The same logic applies; now, however, both groups are addressed as brothers (ἀδελφοί) (Byrne 1996:414). The image is more poignant – returning to verse 4 but now tinged with the image of brotherhood. Furthermore, the Lordship image naturally makes way for the image of the final judgement<sup>25</sup> - giving these verses an eschatological overtone (Byrne 1996:414; Michel 1978:428). This does not imply that verse 4 itself should be

<sup>20</sup> This probably refers to the slave image. One’s life and death should be of service to the Lord. Haacker (1999:283) notes that this type of speech is akin to military use. He also proposes that this military speech might be present already in verse 4. However, the image of slave and master is simply too strong – verse 8 would rather be the one to echo verse 4.

<sup>21</sup> Such a use of ἵστημι is indeed evidenced by the textual variant ἀνέστη. This is only found in F G 629 and the Vulgate manuscript edition of Wordsworth, White and Sparks and Origen, and this reading might be influenced by 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (Metzger 1975:531). The reading of ἀνέστη καὶ ἔζησεν found in the majority of other manuscripts is quite clearly a conflation (Käsemann 1980:372). The textual witnesses reading ἔζησεν clearly weighs the most: ✠ A B C 365.1506.1739 and a few others, including the Coptic tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Ἀδιάφορα can be described as “things which make no contribution to either happiness or ill fortune” (Jaquette 1996:30). Also see Deming (2003:passim) for a discussion on ἀδιάφορα, its Stoic use and how Paul applied the concept. Deming (2003:384) notes that ἀδιάφορα, for the Stoics, also had positive or negative value. However, ἀδιάφορα did not fall into the class of either κάκον (“bad”) or ἀγαθόν (“good”). Deming (2004:388-390) discusses how Paul’s use of the concept of ἀδιάφορα pertains to life and death by using the Phil 1:20-26 as an example.

<sup>23</sup> Translation: “of no consequence whether we live or die...”

<sup>24</sup> See the discussion under verse 4.

<sup>25</sup> Παρίστημι is here used in its sense of a “legal technical term for appearing before a judge” (Jewett 2007:850). Likewise, βῆμα is a “technical expression for a tribunal or judicial bench, the raised podium on which the judge or presiding ruler sits to issue official judgments ...” (Jewett 2007:851).

understood eschatologically – verses 10-12 are merely the application of Paul’s image. The pericope ends with ἕκαστος ἡμῶν (“each of us”), showing that the two groups are now to be taken as one (Jewett 2007:852).

### 2.2.6 Towards the context of Romans 14:4

Some conclusions can now be drawn from the analysis thus far, which will help to elucidate the role of Romans 14:4 in this pericope. Verses 1-3 form a separate unit with the main theme of “acceptance.” This is the imperative that Paul places on the recipients of his letter. The rest of the pericope serves to explain his command, with verses 5-6 as an added example. The image of “Lordship” is the most important point of his explanation. In fact, as Jewett (2007:832) states, κύριος becomes a *Leitmotif* in this passage, occurring nine times. The final judgement occurs precisely because of this Lordship image. This image is mainly derived from verse 4. Thus, while verses 7-9 can be seen as the theological crux of the pericope, verse 4 can be seen as the controlling image (Byrne 1996:409). Armed with this knowledge, turning to an analysis of verse 4 itself is appropriate.

## 3. Romans 14:4

### 3.1 Addressee(s)

The first question that needs to be answered regarding Romans 14:4 is to whom the verse is addressed. This can be either to the weak only,<sup>26</sup> or to both groups. The argument that κρίνειν pertains only to the weak believer is not justified, as verse 5 contains a clear use of this same verb applied to both the weak and the strong (Meeks 1987:295). Nor does the fact that the last clause of verse 3 (ὁ θεὸς γὰρ ...) is clearly addressed to the weak group imply that verse 4 should also be directed towards them. Verses 1-3 are a clear unit and consequently the addressee of verse 3 does not have to be the same as that of verse 4. More likely, the obvious nature of verse 4 as a diatribe (Byrne 1996:412; Dunn 1988:797; Michel 1978:424; Stowers 1981:100) betrays its addressee(s). As Stowers (1981:79) notes, in a diatribe such as verse 4 “Paul seems to stop speaking directly to the recipients of the letter and begins to speak as if he were addressing an individual.” This second person singular, which is characteristic of the diatribe style (Zeller 1985:223) can be defined as an “imaginary interlocutor” (Meeks 1987:295) or an “imaginary conversationalist” (Morris 1988:479). In directing his discussion to this fictitious person, Paul in effect speaks to both the weak and the strong groups.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Commentators sharing this view, among others, are: Dunn (1988:796), Esler (2003:351), Greijdanus (1933:589), Lekkerkerker (1971:158), Michel (1978:424) and Wuest (1955:232). Moo (1996:839) notes that the verse could apply to both groups, but he believes it more likely to be addressed to the weak group.

<sup>27</sup> Krimmer (1983:351) also notes that the diatribe address (σύ), at least in the case of verse 4, serves to highlight the *Vermessenheit* (“presumptuousness”) of the one addressed.

### 3.2 The οἰκέτης and his master

The image conjured up in verse 4 is that of a slave and his master. This slave is identified as an οἰκέτης, a domestic slave (Käsemann 1980:369; Schlier 1979:407), rather than the more general term, δοῦλος.<sup>28</sup> The choice of this term serves to highlight the close bond between a master and his domestic slave;<sup>29</sup> more to the point, calling into mind the *lordship* of this master.

The use of ἀλλότριον (“belonging to another”) and τῷ ἰδίῳ (“his own”) might imply that a different owner for each οἰκέτης is in view. Although this will certainly not be the case if Paul is referring to Christ as Lord, such an interpretation might be quite possible if he is only using the illustration as an image drawn from a specific cultural background. This can indeed be the case. The cultural background in which Paul finds himself is described by Malina (1998:13) as an “authoritarian society.” In such a society, one could expect, among other values, “total submissiveness ... to authority,” “the tendency to exercise power for its own sake” and “admiration for the application of physical force.” Pilch (1998:49) remarks the following about the accompanying value of domination orientation and the place of a “lord” in such a society:

*“What people seek in dominion over others is to be “lord,” to “lord it over” others. A “lord” is a person with the right to control other persons totally and at will, with the right of life and death over another, with full rights to the property and being of another.”*

A slave would be “a person that is another’s property with no rights at all, not even ‘human’ rights” (Pilch 1998:49; cf Balch 2003:272).<sup>30</sup> The slave being property, then, only the master himself could pass judgement on him or her (Dunn 1988:804; Krimmer 1983:351; Schlier 1979:406). Neither the slave, his or her fellow slaves, other masters’ slaves or other masters themselves could judge this particular slave, as he or she simply is not their property. The image of one slave owned by a master (or perhaps that master himself)

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<sup>28</sup> The use of κύριος instead of οἰκοδεσπότης or δεσπότης to designate the *pater familias* is not that foreign to Paul, as can be seen in Gal 4:1-3 (White 2003:465). The *pater familias* in a Roman household “stood as the ultimate source of power and authority” and generally, he could do with slaves as he pleased (White 2003:458). Nevertheless, Paul’s avoidance of these terms might be to temper his idea of lordship in this case. This is in line with Jewett’s (2007:484) remark that “this lordship is a gracious rather than a domineering one” as can be seen by God’s welcoming attitude in Rom 14:3. This line of thinking, however, should not be taken too far: Paul’s point is still that the κύριος has dominion over his household.

<sup>29</sup> As is noted by Byrne (1996:412), Dunn (1988:803), Esler (2003:348), Greijdanus (1933:589) and Morris (1988:479-480). Jewett (2007:842) notes that the οἰκέτης can almost be described as part of the family.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.42-45) relates the story of a slave who murdered his sleeping master. The Roman Senate responded to this crime by condemning all 400 slaves in the household to death (Harrill 2003:575). Although Harrill (2003:576-577) agrees that slaves are to be seen as property, he places even greater stress on the “concept of absolute power” as the key to understanding slavery. Slavery is a “dynamic process of total domination.”

judging a slave owned by another master would be just as apt as two fellow slaves of the same master judging one another.

Paul's audience, too, would find the image of a master and his οἰκέτης close to home (cf Esler 2003:351).<sup>31</sup> Ruprecht (1993:881) estimates that 85-90 percent of people dwelling in Rome in the first two centuries were either slaves or of slave origin.<sup>32</sup> He also notes that names such as "Andronicus" (Romans 16:7) and "Urbanus" (Romans 16:9) were names used exclusively for slaves in that period of time. That the recipients of Paul's letter consisted of a large group of slaves is very likely.

### 3.3 Τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει

One might presume a parallel between the expression τῷ ... κυρίῳ and the datives used in verse 8: "to live or die for the Lord." Blass, Debrunner and Funk (1961:101) seem to understand this phrase in such a way, taking the dative in Romans 14:4 as a dative of advantage and disadvantage. Although this seems plausible, the broader context of Romans 14:4 points to τῷ ... κυρίῳ as being a dative of reference (Moo 1996:840) or a dative of respect (Byrne 1996:412).<sup>33</sup> This points out that the slave stands or falls with reference to the Lord's judgement. This is especially true if the expression is read against the background of the text in Romans 14:1-12. That judgement is in view can also be seen in the interesting relation of verse 4 to verse 10. Both of these are in the diatribe style. In a sense, verse 10 "balances" verse 4 (Meeks 1987:295). Since verse 10 clearly concerns the judgement seat of God, this can also be applied to verse 4.

The expression στήκει ἢ πίπτει has elicited many an interpretation. Jonker (1966:180) believes the right interpretation to be whether or not the slave sins. This is not in step with the argument. Whether or not the slave sins, the master still decides what "sin" is. Some have proposed that such a slave falls from faith (Althaus 1970:140; Käsemann 1980:369; Schlier 1979:407). This suggestion is not convincing, as there is no reference to losing faith in the context of this pericope. A better proposal is that στήκει ἢ πίπτει denotes being kept safe or going to ruin (Greijdanus 1933:589; Haacker 1999:281; Michel 1978:424). This can also not be deduced directly from the context, but this could be the end result of a master's exercising judgement over a slave. In any case, the proposal that the master approves or disapproves of the slave (or his conduct) would best suit the context (Dunn 1988:804; Moo 1996:841). As both Dunn and Moo note, this does not pertain to an eschatological judgement *per se*, but rather to the image Paul has drawn from his cultural background. This is *contra* Byrne (1996:412) and Jewett (2007:842), who believes the image already to pass into eschatological

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of Paul and slaves, see Balch (2003:271-273; 280-282) and in the same volume, Harrill (2003:*passim*).

<sup>32</sup> Studies on slavery in the ancient world are rather complex and hampered by a lack of sources. See Harris (1999:*passim*) for some other estimations and a general overview of the Roman slave population.

<sup>33</sup> Wallace (1996:145) treats these two categories (reference and respect) together.

judgement. However, clearly verse 4 is the image taken out of daily life while verse 10 is Paul's theological commentary on that image. Ultimately, then, *σπῆκει ἢ πίπτει* concerns the *relationship* of a slave to his master.

### 3.4 Moving away from the image

From a socio-historic and literary point of view one may argue that Paul's image is drawn from his cultural background and as such serves as an image without explicit reference to Christ as Lord. Seen in this light, the first instance of *κύριος* in Romans 14:4 could be translated without capitalization, as this occurrence does not directly refer to Christ.<sup>34</sup> What about the second? Does it also fall under this image, or could Paul directly be referring here to Christ? The second occurrence of *κύριος* is much more strikingly an application of the image (Byrne 1996:409). Image starts mixing with reality in verse 4c (Käsemann 1980:369-370; Moo 1996:840-841; Morris 1988:480. Seen from a literary perspective, the second *κύριος* of verse 4 is already moving away from the image. That the second *κύριος* is much more likely to have a divine referent than the first can also be substantiated by reference to the textual tradition of Romans 14:4.

### 3.5 Textual criticism

Regarding the second occurrence of *κύριος*, a glance at the manuscript tradition provide further evidence.<sup>35</sup> In a great number of manuscripts, the second *κύριος* is replaced by *θεός*:<sup>36</sup>

Witnesses	Reading
D <sup>p</sup> F G 048 latt sy <sup>h</sup> and the majority text	θεός
P46 κ A B C P Ψ pc sy <sup>p</sup> co	κύριος

Clearly, the best text reads *κύριος* (its witnesses include Papyrus 46, κ, A B C P Ψ, a few others, the Peshitta and the Coptic tradition), but at some stage, a referent to a divine entity was introduced to the text. This difference did not seem to bother those reading this alternative textual tradition at all. The second *κύριος* of Romans 14:4 was interpreted by some very early readers of the text as pointing to a divine entity. The same cannot be said of the first instance of *κύριος*, although the absence of such a textual variant can certainly not be used to prove its profane use.

<sup>34</sup> Byrne (1996:409) points out that Paul could have used *δεσπότης* ("master of the house") instead of *κύριος*. (See, for instance, 1 Pet 2:18; 1 Tim 6:1; Tit 2:9; Luk 2:29). This is probably because Paul wishes to keep the image as close to his argument as possible.

<sup>35</sup> Most of these readings occur as *nomina sacra*. They have been written out in this table so as not to give the impression that every reading is necessarily a *nomen sacrum*.

<sup>36</sup> Metzger (1975:530) and Moo (1996:833) believe the reading originated after having been influenced by the same word occurring in verse 3.

#### 4. Conclusion

Clearly, the evidence shows that the second occurrence of κύριος in Romans 14:4 should be translated with a capital letter. This can be substantiated by a literary perspective and can also be deduced from evidence presented by the textual tradition. Paul uses the second κύριος as an application of the image he stated in the first part of the verse.

Whether the first κύριος should be capitalized is more of a conundrum. A literary reading of Romans 14:1-12 shows the first κύριος to be part of an image that is drawn from Paul's cultural background – an image pertaining to everyday life in the Greco-Roman world. The image of “Lordship” dominates Romans 14:4-12, along with the image of judgement. Both these images are grounded in the image Paul uses in Romans 14:4. This view seems to be the strongest, considering there are no other conclusive evidence pointing to the first occurrence as referring to a divine being.

The best option for translating the two occurrences of κύριος in Romans 14:4 would be to translate the first occurrence without a capital letter and the second with a capital letter. The choice between “lord” and “master” in the English language rests, in the author's opinion, with the translator. However, the use of “master” would probably best bring out the relationship between a master and his domestic slave in today's language.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Whatever the choice, the best translation would probably also reflect the double use of κύριος in the translation by using the same term, only not capitalized and capitalized, e.g. “master ... Master” or “lord ... Lord.”

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