

King James Only, Sometimes, Never: Examining the Modern Versions of the Bible

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Introduction

What Bible translations are best for use in the pulpit? Which ones are best for private Bible study? Good questions like these are the reason for this seminar. Contrary to the impression that the seminar title might give, I will not be lecturing on the “King James Only” debate. Our purpose is to answer the preceding questions about Bible translations. Pastors and churches ask about modern Bible translations because they want to use the most accurate Bible translation available for preaching, teaching, and personal devotional reading. With the plethora of so-called “literal” Bible translations available on the market, how is a pastor or church member to know which is the best choice? We will not look at obviously inappropriate Bible translations in this seminar (e.g., *Revolve* New Testament). Instead, we will focus on the following versions: King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), New American Standard Bible Update (NASU), English Standard Version (ESV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New International Version (NIV), and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). These eight versions have the greatest potential of being chosen by evangelicals for pulpit, pew, or personal use. For those of you who are already wondering why the more dynamic NIV is listed with the seven more formal translations, just stick around. There is method to my madness.

Description of Methodology

Robert Thomas's *How to Choose a Bible Version*¹ lays out a five-step deviation test for evaluating Bible translations. The technique assigns the following values for different types of deviations:²

Changes in order and omissions	= 1
Lexical and syntactical alterations	= 2
Additions	= 4

Some omissions, however, might represent a greater deviation from literal translation than some additions. Assigning omissions a value of 1 and additions a value of 4 does not reflect the more serious cases of omission nor does it adequately represent lesser additions. Meanwhile, the area that most affects accuracy (that of lexical and syntactical alterations) is assigned only a 2-point value in all occurrences.³ In order to simplify the procedure and to provide a hierarchy within each category of change, I propose a slightly different system of evaluation.

¹ Robert L. Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Translation: An Introductory Guide to English Translations*, rev. ed. (Geanies House, U.K.: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 91-95.

² *Ibid.*, 93. Thomas derives his system from that of William Wonderly as described in Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1964), 187-88.

³ Thomas's assigned values are not the same as those indicated by Wonderly's evaluation method. Wonderly's system assigns a value of 1 for the simplest change in order, omission, addition, and lexical and syntactical alteration. He assigns a value of 2 to those changes that are a little more complex in all of these categories. The value of 4 he assigns to the most radical changes in each of the categories.

In the course of examining these eight versions, I attempt to critique them by an objective analysis that compares selected passages with the text in the original languages as well as comparing the versions with each other. Rather than looking at the analysis as merely a measurement of literalness,⁴ I suggest that the emphasis be placed equally upon the verification of accuracy (faithfulness to the original languages). The resulting comparison between versions, therefore, reflects both the literalness and the accuracy of the translations. Accuracy especially comes into play when we deal with idioms in the original language. An idiom is an expression that cannot be taken literally. For example, the headline in an English-language newspaper reads "WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED BY ADMINISTRATION." Some readers might find it amusing. After all, white paper is not published, it is merely made so that someone can use it in publishing. Right? Wrong. *White paper* in the diplomatic sense refers to a government declaration of an administration's position on a matter of national or international interest. That meaning, however, cannot be determined from the two words themselves. The diplomatic usage differs from the ordinary sense of *white paper*. *White paper* is an example of an idiom. Technically an idiom is a word or group of words that has a special meaning not discernible from the parts comprising that word or group of words. Usually an idiom is an expression peculiar to a particular language and conveys a distinct meaning that may be contrary to the meanings of its component parts. Two different languages will rarely have the same idiomatic forms. Therefore, in a deviation test, translations of idioms can be categorized too readily as non-literal.

It behooves all of us to keep in mind that it is difficult enough to translate the Bible. As difficult as translation might be, however, judging a translation is even more difficult. Thomas's book goes a long way toward helping us understand that translations do need to be judged or evaluated. Although he and I might use two different modifications of Wonderly's deviation test, the similarity of our results demonstrates that the differences in translations is significant. Too often translation critics employ subjective criteria that are too arbitrary to be of value. Indeed, many critical evaluations are more involved with literary criticism than with actual translation criticism. Leland Ryken's *The Word of God in English*⁵ is a superb examination of English Bible translations from the viewpoint of a literary critic. In the national Evangelical Theological Society meetings in San Antonio (Nov 2004), he admitted, however, that he had no background or training in the original languages. Such lack of basic exegetical skills hampers his ability to provide a truly useful critique for any Bible translation. Nonetheless, he has provided a valuable list of literary criteria worthy of consideration in choosing a Bible translation.

Pastors and lay people need an approach that highlights faithfulness to the original languages and accuracy with regard to meaning. Katharina Reiss's observation deserves our attention. She said, "The judgment of a translation should never be made *one-sidedly* and *exclusively* on the basis of its form in the target language."⁶ Therefore, measurement of literary quality alone is not sufficient. Most importantly, all Bible translations must be evaluated according to identical principles and standards. At all costs, we must avoid the vague generalities that plague reviews or promotional materials: "a fluent translation," "clear and understandable," "an uneven translation," "a readable translation," or "this translation reads like the original."

⁴ Literalness in some cases is quite a different matter in English versions as compared with other language versions. Approaching this as a Bible translator with prior involvement with translation projects in other languages, I find that literalness can be a detriment to accuracy. Translators with only an English Bible translation experience often equate literalness and accuracy. While agreeing that such an equation might fit a majority of the time in the discussion of English translations, I still maintain that there are cases where the equation is not always applicable.

⁵ Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2002).

⁶ Katharina Reiss, *Translation Criticism—The Potentials & Limitations: Categories and Criteria for Translation Quality Assessment*, trans. by Erroll F. Rhodes (Manchester, U.K.: St. Jerome Publishing/ New York: American Bible Society, 2000), 9.

Due to the limitations of a single seminar session, we will devote our attention to but one familiar text from each testament. From these two sample texts I will make observations about the relative faithfulness of each of the selected versions. Such observations must be understood for what they are: limited and select. It would be hazardous to extrapolate an ultimate characterization of any one version on the basis of these two texts alone. The principles gained through such analysis, however, should provide the tools for continuing this kind of analysis in other sample pericopes. Eventually, given enough research of this nature, a pastor should gain a clear enough analysis to produce a sound recommendation for the people in his congregation.

A grading system for the translations expedites the presentation of a quantitative evaluation. For each verse of each sample text I have assigned a numerical value equal to the total number of *necessary* English words for an *accurate and literal translation*. Numerical values for each version will be decided by assigning points as follows:

Words that are <i>both clear and accurate</i>	= 1.0
Words that are <i>relatively accurate but unclear or ambiguous</i>	= 0.5
Words that are <i>inaccurate lexically and/or grammatically</i>	= 0.0

Unless a change in word order affects clarity and/or accuracy, that aspect will be ignored since word order is inherently different between English and Hebrew or Greek. Restructured grammar that affects accuracy and/or clarity will be treated as inaccurate.⁷ The average grade a translation receives for the pericope will provide the score by which we might identify the most accurate translation. The higher the score, the more accurate the translation. In order to provide a comparison, I include scores for Today's English Version (TEV, also known as the Good News Bible), since it tends to be far more free in its translations than the other eight versions being evaluated.

This study presents a table for each verse in the selected passages. Observations follow the table to explain the evaluation process. Following the observations I list principles by which subsequent decisions might be made. At the conclusion of the passage a summary table appears to display the overall grading for each of the versions.

⁷ Adherents to dynamic equivalence may find fault with the strictness with which I apply this principle. Restructuring according to subjective esthetics is less desirable than restructuring required by the relative absence or non-use of a grammatical structure in the receptor language. For example, rare use of the passive in Bengali requires restructuring many biblical passives as actives. Such restructuring is not for esthetic purposes—it is directly related to a difference in the structures of two languages.

Evaluation of Translations of Psalm 23⁸

v. 1	MT		מְזֻמֹּר לַדָּוִד יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסֵר:		%
	Base	A psalm by David. YHWH is my shepherd, I do not lack.		12	100
	KJV	A Psalm of David. The LORD <i>is</i> my shepherd; I shall not want.		9.5	79
	NKJ	A Psalm of David. The LORD <i>is</i> my shepherd; I shall not want.		9.5	79
	NAS	<i>A Psalm of David.</i> The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.		9.5	79
	NAU	A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.		9.5	79
	ESV	A PSALM OF DAVID. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.		9.5	79
	NRS	A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.		9.5	79
	CSB	A Davidic psalm. The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.		10	83
	NIV	A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.		10	83
	TEV	The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.		6	50

Observations on verse 1:

- Other than differences in italicization (NASB) and capitalization (ESV), all except HCSB and TEV treat the psalm heading the same. Omission = -4.0.
- A more accurate translation recognizes that the Hebrew preposition is a *lamed* of authorship (cp. the same usage in Isa 38:9; Hab 3:1).⁹ The psalm is actually “by David.” Ambiguity = -0.5 point. HCSB’s “Davidic” is contrary to David as author. Inaccuracy = -1.0.

⁸ Due to the constraints of space in the individual verse charts, I have shortened the longer acronyms for the versions to just 3-letter abbreviations. Full abbreviations will be used elsewhere.

⁹ The *lamed* of authorship is really nothing more than the *lamed* of agency (cf. Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 114). In the psalm titles the verb (viz., כָּתַב) is elided—not an uncommon occurrence in the use of prepositions in biblical Hebrew (cf. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 224-25).

- The verb in the first line of the text is absent, but understood, in the Hebrew noun clause. Italicization in KJV and NKJV is unnecessary, as evidenced by the treatment of the remaining translations.
- “The LORD” is the traditional rendering of the Tetragrammaton (יהוה = YHWH) first employed by the Septuagint translators because of a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Third Commandment.¹⁰ In public reading there is no way for the hearer to know whether the divine title thus represented is *Yahweh* (LORD: יהוה = YHWH/Yahweh) or *Adonai* (Lord: אֲדֹנָי = “Master/Lord”). Translating both with the same word contributes to a confusion of divine names. Ambiguity = -0.5 point.
- Employment of a future tense for the Hebrew verb in the second line is due to a doubtful, but traditional, treatment of the imperfect in Hebrew as a present-future tense form. The context of this psalm and of this line (cp. the first line) indicates that the present would be more accurate. Inaccuracy = -1.0 point.
- “Want” is ambiguous in English and continues in use in translating Psalm 23 primarily due to familiarity with the KJV’s rendering of the psalm even among non-Bible readers. A smoother use of “lack” would be “I have no lack,” even though it changes the form to imply the negation of a noun (“lack”) rather than the Hebrew’s negation of the verb. Ambiguity = -0.5 point.
- NIV and HCSB exhibit the only substantial attempts to clarify the meaning of “want.” NIV’s is accurate and clear, but HCSB’s is potentially misleading. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- TEV’s positive for negative in the final line is unnecessary and misleading. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 1:
 - Principle #1:** Copula verbs understood in Hebrew noun clauses need not be italicized since they are part of the accurate translation into English. This verb is present in the Hebrew grammar even though not represented by a specific Hebrew word.
 - Principle #2:** Hebrew verb tenses need to be translated by context, not by form.
 - Principle #3:** Ambiguity in English should be avoided as much as possible.
 - Principle #4:** Treatment of the Tetragrammaton should not be based upon the erroneous interpretation of the heretical Jews of Alexandria, Egypt in the third century B.C. Clarity rather than confusion in public oral reading ought to characterize a translation’s treatment of the divine name.

v. 2	MT	בְּנֵאוֹת דֶּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל־מִי מְנַחֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי:		%
	Base	In grassy/green pastures He causes me to lie down, Beside calm water He leads me.	15	100
	KJV	He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.	15	100
	NKJ	He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.	15	100
	NAS	He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.	15	100
	NAU	He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.	15	100

¹⁰ Louis F. Hartman, “God, Names of,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), 7:680.

	ESV	He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.	15	100
	NRS	He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;	15	100
	CSB	He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.	14	93
	NIV	He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,	15	100
	TEV	He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.	12	80

Observations on verse 2:

- Most versions are unusually accurate throughout.
- HCSB and TEV change the causative to a permissive (“lets”). Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- There are two Hebrew idioms in this verse: “pastures of vegetation” and “waters of rest.” The first refers to the fresh green of grass or other edible vegetation. “Green pastures” is an excellent rendering in English. The second refers to water that is not a rushing torrent with cascades and rapids. “Still” and “quiet” are both accurate translations for English.
- TEV substitutes “rest” for “lie down.” This is potentially misleading since the Hebrew verbs are different. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- TEV’s exchange of “to” for “beside” is potentially accurate, but interpretive. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- Expanding the final phrase, TEV again misrepresents the actual wording of the original. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 2:
Principle #5: Hebrew idioms should not be translated word for word, but according to their sense.

v. 3	MT	נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב יִנְחֵנִי בַּמַּעֲגָלִי-צְדָק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:		%
	Base	He revives/restores my soul, He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.	15	100
	KJV	He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.	13	87
	NKJ	He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.	13	87
	NAS	He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.	14	93
	NAU	He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.	14	93
	ESV	He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.	14	93
	NRS	he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.	13.5	90
	CSB	He renews my life; He leads me along the right paths for His name’s sake.	13	87
	NIV	he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.	15	100

	TEV	He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised.	10	67
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Observations on verse 3:

- TEV's interpretive translation obscures the potential reference to conversion in the text. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- The psalmist employs a different verb for "lead/guide" in this verse as compared to verse 2. That difference ought to be maintained in translation so that the reader understands that it is different. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- "Paths of righteousness" proves to be another point of differentiation between the translations. The Hebrew construction (בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק, *bēma'g'lēy-tseḏeq*) represents an indefinite rather than a definite noun phrase. No definite article appears in the text. "The paths of righteousness" is too specific as far as the grammar of the Hebrew is concerned. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- NRSV's "right paths" represents a different interpretation that can be taken as "correct paths" or "moral paths." Neither has any definite connection to the concept of "righteousness" in the Hebrew text. "Right paths" is overly interpretive. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- Both "life" (HCSB) and "me" (TEV) for "soul" is ambiguous = -0.5.
- "As he has promised" (TEV) is interpretive and obscures the original wording badly. Inaccuracy = -3.0 (for three elements of particle, noun, and pronominal suffix).
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 3:
Principle #6: Different vocabulary words in the same context should be translated by different terms in the receptor language when possible.
Principle #7: The absence of the definite article ought to be retained in translation unless other contextual or idiomatic factors indicate clearly otherwise.
Principle #8: Interpretive translations should be kept to a minimum.

v. 4	MT	גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶךְ בְּגוֹי צַלְמוֹת לֹא-אִירָא רָע כִּי-אַתָּה עִמָּדִי שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ הִפְּוֹה יִנְחַמֵּנִי:		%
	Base	Indeed, though I walk in a very dark valley, I do not fear trouble, Because You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.	27	100
	KJV	Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou <i>art</i> with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.	23	85
	NKJ	Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You <i>are</i> with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.	23	85
	NAS	Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.	24	89

NAU	Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.	24	89
ESV	Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.	23	85
NRS	Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.	26	96
CSB	Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.	27	100
NIV	Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.	23	85
TEV	Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.	22.5	83

Observations on verse 4:

- There is no article for “valley” in the text (Principle 7). NRSV’s “the darkest valley” resulted from attempting to be smooth and concise. The article was added due to proper English usage. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Omission of “valley” (TEV) obscures the intended metaphor. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- “The shadow of death” is a Hebrew idiom (Principle 5) referring to deep darkness. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- The verbs (“walk,” “fear,” “comfort”) are present by context (Principle 2). Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- In the Hebrew, רָצָה (râ‘) in this context refers to “calamity” or “trouble” while the English “evil” implies something moral. Omission (TEV) is equally inaccurate. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Providing an antecedent for the 2ms pronoun (TEV’s “Lord”) is unnecessary. Lesser inaccuracy = -0.5.
- The final line of the verse involves a compound nominative absolute (or, extraposition) followed by the emphatic personal pronoun before the verb. Although the emphasis is not possible to represent easily and smoothly in English, a careful wording of the absolute construction can help to imply it.
- TEV’s “protect” for the text’s “comfort” is inaccurate = -1.0.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 4:
Principle #9: When possible, emphasis ought to be expressed in the translation, but not at the expense of a smooth English translation.

v. 5	MT	תַּעֲרֵךְ לְפָנַי שִׁלְחֹן נֹגַד צָרָרִי דִּשְׁנַת בַּשֶּׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה:		%
	Base	You arrange a table before me in front of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil, My cup overflows.	19	100
	KJV	Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.	19	100
	NKJ	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.	19	100
	NAS	Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.	18	95
	NAU	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.	18	95
	ESV	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.	19	100
	NRS	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.	19	100
	CSB	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.	19	100
	NIV	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.	19	100
	TEV	You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honored guest and fill my cup to the brim.	11	58

Observations on verse 5:

- Again, the context requires present tense verbs (Principle 2). NASB and NASU are the only versions choosing to employ the English present perfect, which makes the action past. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- TEV's expansion of "in front of my enemies" to say "where all my enemies can see me" contains two inaccuracies: the addition of "all" and the unwarranted restructuring of the statement. Inaccuracies = -2.0.
- TEV's total interpretive restatement of the second line inserts potentially erroneous cultural detail ("honored guest") and obliterates the psalmist's actual statement. Inaccuracies = -5.0.
- In the Hebrew for "with oil" (בַּשֶּׁמֶן, *bashshemen*) the definite article is used, but it is the generic usage with a commodity or with the material used in connection with an action like anointing.¹¹ Therefore, its absence in English is accurate.

¹¹ E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and rev. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1910), §126n.

- TEV's exchange of "fill to the brim" for "overflows" employs words that do not represent the original text. The reader would be unable to know what the psalmist actually said. Inaccuracy = -1.0.

v. 6	MT			%
		אֶךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשָׁבְתִי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמַיִם:		
	Base	Surely, goodness and loyal love will pursue me my whole life, And I will dwell lifelong in YHWH's house.	19	100
	KJV	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.	16	84
	NKJ	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.	16	84
	NAS	Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.	16.5	87
	NAU	Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.	16.5	87
	ESV	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.	16	84
	NRS	Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.	17	89
	CSB	Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live.	17.5	92
	NIV	Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.	16.5	87
	TEV	I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.	13.5	71

Observations on verse 6:

- "Only" in HCSB leads to a misunderstanding of the text. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- TEV's "I know that" for "Surely" is an inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Adding "your" (TEV) to the two descriptive nouns in an inaccuracy = -1.0.
- The verbs in the context of verse 6 are obviously future because of references to the remainder of the psalmist's life (Principle 2).
- That which is translated "mercy," "lovingkindness," and "love" in these versions is the Hebrew חֶסֶד (*hesed*) referring to "loyal love" or "steadfast love." "Mercy" is inaccurate = -1.0; "lovingkindness" and "love" are closer = -0.5.
- "Follow" is a tame and potentially misleading translation of the much more aggressive "pursue" for רָדַף (*rdp*), but it is not so much a matter of absolute inaccuracy as ambiguity. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- Complete elimination of the preceding verb ("pursue") by TEV is a misrepresentation of the text. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- As in verse 1, the divine name requires a less ambiguous translation for public reading. Ambiguity = -0.5.

- Elimination of the divine name (TEV) is an inaccuracy = -1.0.
- TEV's "will be my home" for "I will dwell" is a misleading restructuring that obscures the original wording of the psalmist. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- "Forever" is extremely unfortunate as a translation of לְאֶרֶךְ יָמַי (*l'orekh yamim*, literally, "for length of days"), and idiom (Principle 5) meaning "lifelong." It is in synonymous parallelism with the preceding phrase ("all the days of my life" or "my whole life"). Inaccuracy = -1.0.

Concluding Statistics and Observations for Psalm 23 Translations

Version	Verse by Verse Score						Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
KJV	79	100	87	85	100	84	89.2
NKJ	79	100	87	85	100	84	89.2
NAS	79	100	93	89	95	87	90.5
NAU	79	100	93	89	95	87	90.5
ESV	79	100	93	85	100	84	90.2
NRS	79	100	90	96	100	89	92.3
CSB	83	93	87	¹² 100	100	92	92.5
NIV	83	100	¹³ 100	85	100	87	92.5
TEV	50	80	67	83	58	71	68.2

Comparison with TEV shows the degree of literalness and accuracy in the eight selected versions. Those translations of Psalm 23 are obviously not free translations emphasizing dynamic equivalence. They are more formal in their renderings.

Why do HCSB, NIV, and NRSV outscore KJV, NKJV, NASB, and NASU? Part of the reason in this particular passage is the former three translations allowed their translators greater freedom in handling this very popular and well-known text. NKJV, NASB, and NASU basically followed the KJV with little variation, even if the translation proved to be technically inaccurate with regard to the original Hebrew. The high scores in Psalm 23, therefore, ought not be taken as indicative of the tenor of the rest of the OT in these versions. Other factors must be taken into consideration in evaluating a translation. For example, NIV's obvious penchant for the Septuagint in matters of textual criticism impacts the overall accuracy and consistency of its translation in the OT. Also, NIV will tend, at times, to be quite free with the text. Psalm 23's popularity may not have allowed the NIV translators to be as free with it as they might with less familiar and popular portions of the OT. It is possible, in any evaluation system, for a less accurate overall translation of the Bible to shine and excel in both accuracy and clarity in certain passages. It just so happens that Psalm 23 reveals the "Achilles heel" of the KJV/NKJV and NASB/NASU pairings. The newer translations remained too faithful to the KJV at the price of accuracy. Politics and commerce do not mix well with Bible translation, because accuracy is thereby jeopardized.

¹² Surprisingly, HCSB bettered all of the more literal translations in its accuracy for Ps 23:4.

¹³ Such examples of accuracy in NIV when the more literal translations have failed, are the reason why its overall final score is higher. At least in Psalm 23, NIV has been more consistently accurate and literal than the other translations. Accuracy in Psalm 23, however, does not guarantee equal success for accuracy in the remaining translation of the OT.

Evaluation of Translations of Romans 6:8-14

Turning to the NT, I chose Romans 6:8-14 because (1) it is of similar length to the OT passage we evaluated, (2) it is in a familiar passage, but not as familiar as Psalm 23, and (3) it will allow a comparison with Thomas's deviation values for the epistle to the Romans.¹⁴ The Greek text is that of the United Bible Societies' 4th edition.

v. 8	UBS 4th	εί δε ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ,		%
	Base	But since we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him,	15	100
	KJV	Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:	14	93
	NKJ	Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,	14.5	97
	NAS	Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,	14	93
	NAU	Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,	14	93
	ESV	Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.	14	93
	NRS	But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.	14	93
	CSB	Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him,	14.5	97
	NIV	Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him	14.5	97
	TEV	Since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.	14.5	97

Observations on verse 8:

- All the versions were close in their renderings.
- Many of the translations treated the aorist as though it were a Greek perfect. The reader (either on the basis of English grammar knowledge or some knowledge of Greek) might think that the translation implies a continuing result. While not entirely incorrect (a person who has died is still dead), it is misleading¹⁵ and does not represent the actual Greek verb form. Ambiguity = -0.5.

¹⁴ Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Translation*, 96.

¹⁵ Cf. Rodney Huddleston, *Introduction to the Grammar of English*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 158: "The essential difference between the perfect and the past tense is this: the perfect locates the situation within a period of time beginning in the past and extending forward to include the present . . . , whereas the past tense is used where the time of the situation is identified as wholly in the past, as a past that excludes the present. With the perfect we have an 'inclusive past', with the past tense an 'exclusive past'." Sidney Greenbaum, "Perfect," in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, ed. by Tom McArthur (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1992), 759-60, confirms this distinction. I might be accused of being overly technical, but I believe that Bible translations should be superior examples of proper grammar since grammar is the conveyor of significant meaning.

- Conditions can be notoriously difficult to translate. The 1st-class condition can reflect a true condition, a condition assumed to be true for the sake of argument, or a condition that is real (“if, and it is”). Context determines the meaning. Here it is best to take the condition in its third sense and to translate with “since.”¹⁶ Ambiguity = -0.5.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 8:
 - Principle #1:** Although the aorist must be interpreted by context (it is not always a one-time action, contrary to an oversimplified approach), care must be taken to avoid giving the readers a misconception. Here, “have died” does have the potential to mislead the reader. Greek verbs are more exact with regard to time than Hebrew verbs, but the context is still the overriding factor.
 - Principle #2:** English Bible translations should adhere to the highest standards of grammatical accuracy in the English that they employ.
 - Principle #3:** When possible by context, the translator should make the use of the 1st-class condition clear for the sake of accuracy.

v. 9	UBS 4th	είδότες ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει, θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει.		%
	Base	knowing that Christ being raised from the dead no longer dies, death no longer lords over him.	17	100
	KJV	Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.	17	100
	NKJ	knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.	17	100
	NAS	knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.	16	94
	NAU	knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.	16	94
	ESV	We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.	15	88
	NRS	We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.	15	88
	CSB	because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, no longer dies. Death no longer rules over Him.	16.5	97
	NIV	For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.	13	76
	TEV	For we know that Christ has been raised from death and will never die again—death will no longer rule over him. ¹⁷	12.5	74

¹⁶ A case can be made for always translating εἰ as “if” in English translations and leaving the identification of the type of condition for the reader to determine by context. For some translators this approach avoids having the translator engage in interpretation. It is my opinion, however, that translation always involves interpretation. For example, even the most literal of English Bible translators would not translate ἐκ as “out of” in every occurrence nor ἐν as “in” in every occurrence. He would translate both with “by” when the context clearly indicates instrumentality. “By” in such cases is still literal translation even if it is the result of contextual interpretation. Likewise, “since” for εἰ in the context of Rom 6:8 is a literal translation.

¹⁷ “For we know” = -0.5; “has been raised” (changing dependent participle into independent verb) -1.0; “death” instead of “dead” (referring to the dead individuals) = -1.0; future tenses (2x) = -1.0; inconsistent negatives = -1.0.

Observations on verse 9:

- The initial participle may serve as a causal participle, but to translate as NIV, HCSB, and TEV disrupts the flow and intrudes an emphasis upon the subjects (“we”) rather than on the action itself. The same basic disruption of the participle from the preceding verb to which it is subordinate occurs in translations like ESV and NRSV. Relative inaccuracy = -0.5.
- The second participle is an aorist passive that is somewhat difficult to translate into good, smooth English. Therefore, the variations must be allowed except for those like NIV and TEV that make the participle a regular verb, destroying its subordination to the main verb (“dies”). Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Two identical negatives (οὐκέτι) follow the one upon the other in consecutive clauses. These ought to be translated identically so as not to destroy the symmetry of the original statement or lead the reader to think that two different kinds of negatives have been employed in the original language. NIV’s “cannot” inserts the concept of ability without grounds to do so. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- The present tenses are significant—they indicate the ongoing nature of the situation. Future tenses in translation are not nearly as clear—they are ambiguous = -0.5.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 9:

Principle #4: Participles are often employed to show subordination to a major verb in the sentence. Disrupting that subordination gives an inaccurate view of the relationships internal to the sentence that help to identify the true emphasis or focus. Whenever possible, the subordination should be retained.

Principle #5: Identical terms in the same context (like the two negatives in v. 9) should be translated the same unless there are additional particles or collocations that indicate otherwise.

Principle #6: Converting present tenses into futures can only be legitimately performed under contextual constraint. Futures might give basically the same idea, but they will not be identical to a present in many circumstances. If need be, the translator should err on the side of caution in this particular matter.

v. 10	UBS 4 th	ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφάπαξ· ὁ δὲ ζῆν, ζῆν τῷ θεῷ.		%
	Base	For the <i>death</i> He died, He died once for all <i>time</i> to sin; but the <i>life</i> He lives, He lives to God.	22	100
	KJV	For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.	22	100
	NKJ	For <i>the death</i> that He died, He died to sin once for all; but <i>the life</i> that He lives, He lives to God.	22	100
	NAS	For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.	21	95
	NAU	For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.	21	95
	ESV	For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.	21	95
	NRS	The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.	20	91
	CSB	For in that He died, He died to sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives to God.	22	100

	NIV	The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.	20	91
	TEV	And so, because he died, sin has no power over him; and now he lives his life in fellowship with God. ¹⁸	17.5	80

Observations on verse 10:

- “Once” has the meaning of “once for all *time*” not “once for all *people*.” “Once for all” could be ambiguous. However, in this particular context only the most careless of readers would misunderstand the meaning. Therefore I am not counting this potential ambiguity as a fault or inaccuracy.
- Absence of italics to indicate words added to the translation that are not actually in the original language is terribly misleading for readers. It actually contributes to inaccuracy because it misleads the reader. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Omitting translation for the Greek particle γάρ obscures the logical relationship between verses 8-9 and verse 10. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 10:
Principle #7: Italics is a valuable tool for signaling to the reader what words have been added that were not in the original language.¹⁹
Principle #8: Overly interpretive translations make exegetical decisions for the reader that are not necessarily implicit in the text. When there are more than one potential interpretations of the grammar in the pericope’s context, the translators should employ a translation that allows for a legitimate variety of interpretations.

v. 11	UBS 4 th	οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.		%
	Base	So also you account yourselves, on the one hand, to be dead to sin but, on the other hand, to be alive to God in Christ Jesus.	27	100
	KJV	Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.	24	89
	NKJ	Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.	25	93
	NAS	Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26	96
	NAU	Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26	96
	ESV	So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26.5	98
	NRS	So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26.5	98

¹⁸ “And so” is a fairly adequate rendering of γάρ. “Because” expresses a new relationship created by restructuring the grammar of the verse and misleading the reader as to the content of the original; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Sin has no power over him” is an equally misleading restructuring; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Now” is also an inaccuracy = -1.0; “his life” is unnecessarily interpretive = -0.5. “In fellowship with God” is very interpretive, eliminating the meaning “with regard to God’s will” or “for God’s purpose”; inaccuracy = -1.0.

¹⁹ For an excellent discussion of the use of italics in Bible translation, see Jack Lewis, “Italics in English Bible Translation,” in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, ed. by Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 255-70.

	CSB	So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26	96
	NIV	In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.	26	96
	TEV	In the same way you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus. ²⁰	24	89

Observations on verse 11:

- The coordinating function of μὲν ... δὲ could be exegetically significant by indicating with clarity a “both/and” (“on the one hand ... but on the other hand”) situation. “Indeed” (KJV/NKJV) is a misleading emphatic conjunction that does not adequately represent the Greek particles. Employing only the second particle (“but”) implies a contrast between two situations that might not be co-existent. Inaccuracy = -1.0. Translating the second as “and” comes very close to expressing the coordination, but could be ambiguous. Ambiguity = 0.5.
- NASB/NASU’s “even so” is a legitimate literal translation that interprets the καὶ conjunction as explanatory (or, expegetical).
- “Through” (KJV) for the preposition ἐν is overly interpretive and misleading. Inaccuracy = 1.0.
- “Our Lord” is most likely a textual addition without adequate support to retain.²¹ Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 11:
Principle #9: Text critical problems need to be properly resolved in order to establish a firm base for translation from the original languages. A translation can be only as accurate as its text base.

v. 12	UBS 4 th	Μὴ οὖν βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ,		%
	Base	Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its lusts.	16	100
	KJV	Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.	15.5	97
	NKJ	Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.	15.5	97
	NAS	Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,	15.5	97
	NAU	Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,	16	100
	ESV	Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.	14.5	91
	NRS	Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.	14.5	91

²⁰ TEV’s translation of the first half of v. 11 is unnecessarily expansionistic, but not terribly inaccurate. “But” = -1.0; “living in fellowship with God” = -1.0; “through” = -1.0.

²¹ See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 513.

	CSB	Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires.	16	100
	NIV	Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.	15.5	97
	TEV	Sin must no longer rule in your mortal bodies, so that you obey the desires of your natural self. ²²	12.5	78

Observations on verse 12:

- The plural pronoun ὑμῶν indicates that the singulars (βασιλευέτω, σώματι, and αὐτοῦ) are to be understood as distributive, applying to each and every individual and/or “body.” Due to the ambiguous nature of “your” in English (it can be singular or plural), the distributive singulars may be translated literally without fear of obscuring the original plurality of “your.” “Bodies” (ESV, NRSV, TEV) contributes to a potential misunderstanding that the passage has a corporate, rather than a distributive, focus. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- “Should” is a modal auxiliary verb that implies moral necessity. The context does not indicate that force for the infinitive. In the older KJV English the subjunctive following a “that” indicating result is expected, but not in more recent English grammar. Ambiguity = -0.5.
- ESV’s and NRSV’s “to make” is an inaccurate representation of the result clause. Causation is not indicated by the context and the result is not guaranteed. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- NIV’s “evil desires” is an interpretive expansion for which “evil” should be in italics. Minor interpretive direction = -0.5.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 12:
Principle #10: Modality is an exegetically significant factor in the grammar of the text. Great care must be taken not to obscure, remove, or alter the modality of the text where it clearly places responsibility for action or inaction upon the individual(s) referred to in the context.

v. 13	UBS 4 th	μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ, ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὡσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας καὶ τὰ Μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ.		%
	Base	Do not present your members <i>as</i> weapons of unrighteousness for sin, but rather present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God.	31	100
	KJV	Neither yield ye your members <i>as</i> instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members <i>as</i> instruments of righteousness unto God.	30.5	98
	NKJ	And do not present your members <i>as</i> instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members <i>as</i> instruments of righteousness to God.	30.5	98

²² Omission of “therefore” = -1.0. “Sin must no longer rule” is a restructuring that destroys the personal responsibility indicated by the wording of the Greek; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Of your natural self” creates an artificial and inaccurate dichotomy between “bodies” and “natural self”; = -1.0.

NAS	and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin <i>as</i> instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members <i>as</i> instruments of righteousness to God.	29.5	95
NAU	and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin <i>as</i> instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members <i>as</i> instruments of righteousness to God.	29.5	95
ESV	Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.	29.5	95
NRS	No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness.	26	84
CSB	And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.	28.5	92
NIV	Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.	25.5	82
TEV	Nor must you surrender any part of yourselves to sin to be used for wicked purposes. Instead, give yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes. ²³	23	74

Observations on verse 13:

- “The members of your body” (NASB/NASU, cf. NIV “parts of your body” and HCSB “parts of it”) misrepresents the pronoun as a singular, since readers will understand the addition of “body” in the singular as indicating such a meaning. This detracts from the Greek’s plural pronoun. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- ESV’s and NRSV’s “who have been brought from death to life” is a misleading interpretive expansion that erroneously focuses attention on the agent by means of the passive translation when the agent is not the focus in this text. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- “No longer” (NRSV) misrepresents the text especially in the light of the presence of the term οὐκέτι in the immediately preceding context (v. 9). Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- NRSV’s “wickedness” might be an acceptable translation of ἀδικίας, but unnecessarily detracts from the carefully constructed word pair in the original language. Ambiguity = -0.5.

²³ First, “surrender” implies a combat-related action not conducive to the context; ambiguity = -0.5. Second, “give” is obviously a translation seeking to provide variety rather than accuracy; inaccuracy = -1.0. Third, the second “surrender” has the same problem as NRSV’s 3-fold “present” and NIV’s 3-fold “offer”; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Any part” and “whole being” commit the same error as HCSB; inaccuracy = -1.0 each. The additions of “to be used for ... purposes” are unnecessary additions that inadequately represent the original text; ambiguity = -1.0 each. “Wicked” is the same error as NRSV that detracts from the word pair of the original text; ambiguity = -0.5. “Who have been brought from death to life” commits the same error as ESV and NRSV; inaccuracy = -1.0.

- The adversative ἀλλὰ is stronger than δέ and, in some contexts like this one, needs to be correspondingly strengthened to “but, on the contrary” or “but rather” (NIV) or even “instead” (TEV). Ambiguity = -0.5.
- NRSV’s insertion (without italics) of a third “present” (cf. NIV’s “offer”) misleads the reader as to the wording of the original and proposes a 3-part logical division of the verse when the grammar indicates only a 2-part logical division. Inaccuracy = -1.0.
- NIV’s overall translation is a bit expansionistic, but not always in the direction of inaccuracy or in a way that is misleading. However, it makes nearly all the same mistakes as NRSV.
- HCSB’s “any” and “all” are both added concepts not present in the text. Inaccuracy = -1.0 for each.
- Principles derived from the examination of the translations of verse 13:
Principle #11: Additions expressive of totality (“any,” “all,” “whole”) must be limited to those situations where either lexical or grammatical factors demand such a translation.
Principle #12: Clever turns of phrase like “surrender” for “present” in a context where there are military terms like “weapons” (ὄπλα) might not represent the intent of the author to extend the metaphor. Indeed, it might misrepresent one or more aspects of the overall statement.

v. 14	UBS 4 th	ἀμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ Χάριν.		%
	Base	For sin will not lord over you; for you are not under law but rather under grace.	17	100
	KJV	For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.	17	100
	NKJ	For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.	17	100
	NAS	For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.	17	100
	NAU	For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.	17	100
	ESV	For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.	17	100
	NRS	For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.	17	100
	CSB	For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace.	17	100
	NIV	For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.	17	100
	TEV	Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God’s grace. ²⁴	13	76

²⁴ Elimination of transitional particle γὰρ; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Must” as a subjunctive is not the same concept as the indicative “will”; inaccuracy = -1.0. “Live” is an interpretive rendering that does not represent the wording of the original nor leave the option for other meanings; inaccuracy = -1.0. “God’s” is an unnecessary addition and misleading with regard to the underlying Greek text; inaccuracy = -1.0.

Observations on verse 14:

- Most of the versions merely failed to indicate the strength of the adversative ἀλλὰ, which appears to be strong in this particular context. However, translation of the strong adversative in such a clear and concise contrast becomes unwieldy and potentially misleading when a translator attempts to utilize “but rather” or “but, on the contrary.” Therefore, it is not inaccurate to retain the simple English “but” in this example.
- NIV’s wording might, at first blush, appear to be a restructuring. However, if it represents restructuring, so do NASB/NASU. Both are legitimate and equally accurate translations of the verb and pronoun.

Concluding Statistics and Observations for Romans 6:8-14 Translations

Version	Verse by Verse Score							Average
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
KJV	93	100	100	89	97	98	100	96.7
NKJV	97	100	100	93	97	98	100	97.9
NASB	93	94	95	96	97	95	100	95.7
NASU	93	94	95	96	100	95	100	96.1
ESV	93	88	95	98	91	95	100	94.3
NRSV	93	88	91	98	91	84	100	92.1
HCSB	97	97	100	96	100	92	100	97.4
NIV	97	76	91	96	97	82	100	91.3
TEV	97	74	80	89	78	74	76	81.1

Tabulated results from this study reveal a nearly identical overall measurement to Thomas’s Romans chart.²⁵ We can now compare the order of ranking for both OT and NT from our evaluations of Psalm 23 and Romans 6:8-14. They rank as follows:

Psalm 23		Romans 6:8-14		Overall	
1. HCSB	92.5	1. NKJV	97.9	1. HCSB	95.0
2. NIV	92.5	2. HCSB	97.4	2. NKJV	93.6
3. NRSV	92.3	3. KJV	96.7	3. NASU	93.3
4. NASU	90.5	4. NASU	96.1	4. NASB	93.1
5. NASB	90.5	5. NASB	95.7	5. KJV	93.0
6. ESV	90.2	6. ESV	94.3	6. ESV	92.3
7. NKJV	89.2	7. NRSV	92.1	7. NRSV	92.2
8. KJV	89.2	8. NIV	91.3	8. NIV	91.9
9. TEV	68.2	9. TEV	81.1	9. TEV	74.7

Ties in scoring were resolved by referring to the known characteristics of a version regarding its text-critical methodology in the OT (faithfulness to the MT rating higher than a lack of overall faithfulness to the MT). Of course, the deviation tests conducted for this study are first of all very limited and secondly only one means of evaluating a version. Before a pastor, church, or lay person chooses a Bible version, they must consider a number of factors. There’s the matter of choosing the older English with “thee”/“thou” and *-st/-th* words (like “hast,” “anointest,” “dieth,” and “liveth”) or the more modern English that excludes the older forms (making NKJV and

²⁵ Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Translation*, 96.

NASU more desirable than either KJV or NASB). Some prefer the old style versification without paragraph format. Others prefer the paragraph format, since it more accurately conveys the structure of the text. Accuracy in paragraphing must also be evaluated, however. The presence of paragraphing does not guarantee that the text has been formatted accurately. Translation theory and text-critical philosophy need research as well. Both of these factors are normally explained in the translators' introduction to the version.

Another factor to influence choice is the treatment of gender. Although there is legitimate reason for indicating when "man" is truly generic, the version's degree of consistency will indicate the translators' concern for accuracy. The following samples demonstrate the problem in that regard. Note that both NT passages are citing one or both of the OT passages. The column on the right indicates the number of passages in which the translators of a version employed gender-specific terminology and the number of passages that employed gender-inclusive terminology.

Version	Psalm 62:12/ Proverbs 24:12	Romans 2:6	Matthew 16:27	Specific/ Inclusive
HCSB	each ... his a person ... his	each one ... his	each ... he	0/4
NKJV	each one ... his <i>each</i> man ... his	each one ... his	each ... his	1/3
KJV	every man ... his <i>every</i> man ... his	every man ... his	every man ... his	4/0
NASU	a man ... his man ... his	each person ... his	every man ... his	3/1
NASB	a man ... his man ... his	every man ... his	every man ... his	4/0
ESV	a man ... his man ... his	each one ... his	each person ... he	2/2
NRSV	all ... their all ... their	___ ... each one's	everyone ... ___	0/4
NIV	each person ... he each person ... he	each person ... he	each person ... he	0/4
TEV	everyone ... his you ... you	every person ... he	everyone ... his	0/4

NKJV, NASU, and ESV stand out as inconsistent even when the same identical text is being represented in the four separate passages. HCSB, NRSV, NIV, and TEV have stuck with gender-inclusive in these texts, but each would have to be checked further to find out if any actually distorts truly gender-specific passages. KJV and NASB remained gender-specific in spite of the clear genderless meaning of this particular text. Obviously, pastors would want to pursue this topic more systematically before choosing a particular version for pulpit and/or pew use.

For every single-verse proof regarding inaccuracy in a version, one could probably find twice as many as proof of accuracy—and vice versa. A shotgun approach will never reveal the true dimensions of a version's integrity and accuracy. Whole passages need to be carefully evaluated and compared between versions in order to get the true, unvarnished truth.

Conclusion

This brief and limited analysis is but an example of the type of research that one needs to pursue in order to decide on a particular Bible translation for pulpit, pew, or personal reading. One might choose the easy road by just accepting the conclusions of excellent volumes like Thomas's *How to Choose a Bible Version*. Or, one might choose to look even deeper into the matter and involve others in his search for the best translation. For churches, this process should not be hasty. One to two years for church leaders to research and discuss the matter will prove well worth the effort. Personal Bible study can more readily adopt a variety of translations without causing division and confusion if the individual is willing to tie himself to solid literal translations and sound exegetical commentaries during the process of study.

No Bible translation is perfect. Many translations are disturbingly imperfect—above and beyond what one might expect out of an objective, original text-based translation. Evangelicals need to stay vitally involved in the production of Bible translations and evangelical churches need to make wise choices with regard to pulpit and/or pew versions. Lazy translations produce lazy expositors and lazy readers. Imperfect translations can contribute to the production of imperfect interpretation and flawed theology. Do not take the task lightly.