It is in this way that textual criticism renders such a valuable service. We do not wish to accept as Holy Scripture something which, in point of fact, may not have found its way into the biblical text until the fourth century A.D. Such a passage is the sentence which appears as 1 John v. 7 in the Authorized Version — the verse about the three that bear record in heaven. The first occurrence of this verse is in Latin, in the writings of Priscillian, a Spanish Christian, who died in A.D. 385; earlier copies of the New Testament, whether in Greek or in any other language, know nothing of it. Erasmus, the editor of the first printed Greek Testament to be published, rightly omitted it from his first two editions (1516 and 1519), and was persuaded against his better judgment to insert it in his third edition (1522) because it was found in one — but only one — Greek manuscript, and that a manuscript which had been written but a few years before, in the same century! Had Erasmus followed his better judgment, the verse would never have appeared in the Authorized Version, and most of us would never have heard of it. It is of course nonsense to suggest (as Jehovah's Witnesses do) that the doctrine of the Trinity depends on this verse, so that with the disappearance of the verse the doctrine disappears as well. No doctrine of the faith depends on one verse of Scripture only; every article of Christian belief and conduct is broadly based on the whole range of biblical teaching.

The study of the early textual families has carried our researches back to the middle of the second century. Can we push them still farther back, into the first century itself? Nearly seventy years ago Dr. Warfield said: 'The autographic text of the New Testament is distinctly within the reach of criticism in so immensely the greater part of the volume, that we cannot despair of restoring to ourselves and the Church of God, His Book, word for word, as He gave it by inspiration to men' (*Textual Criticism of the New Testament,* p. 15). With the wealth of additional knowledge that has come to light since then, we need not be less hopeful today.

CONCLUSION

In 1647 the Westminster Assembly of Divines, in their *Confession of Faith,* spoke of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as having been 'kept pure in all ages' by God's 'singular care and providence'. Thanks to the further progress in textual criticism during the three centuries that have gone by since then, we can appreciate even more fully than their contemporaries could what abundant justification they had for such a statement.

THE USE OF THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

By A. F. WALLS, M.A.

SOMEONE, when confronted with a modern translation of the Bible is said to have retorted, 'If the Authorised Version was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me.' Over 50 years ago the translators of the Twentieth Century New Testament declared, 'Few English-speaking people of today have the opportunity of reading the Bible in the English of their own time. In the course of the last hundred years the Bible has been translated into the everyday language of the natives of most countries, but the language of our Bible is still the English of three

hundred years ago.' Strictly speaking, this is no longer true as far as the *opportunity* is concerned: since 1901 there has been a flood of modern translations of the Bible or parts of it. But to the majority of Christians still, 'the old is better'. The authors of that amusing satire, *Babylon Bruis'd and Mount Moriah Mended,* are but reflecting popular feeling when in a visitation of Cambridge churches and college chapels it is said 'in ye chapel at Ridley Hall . . . we tooke awaye i. superstitiouse booke called ye Revised Version & did put ye Bible in place thereof'.

ARE NEW VERSIONS NECESSARY?

But let us recognize that there is New Testament warrant for the use of modern translations. We have only to examine, for instance, Paul's quotations of the Old Testament to see what a variety of versions he uses. Sometimes he makes a direct translation from the Hebrew; sometimes he employs what for most of his Gentile readers was the 'Authorised Version', the Septuagint; sometimes he uses some other. So in Eph. iv. 8, to make his point clearer that the gifts possessed by Christians are the result of our Lord's redeeming work, he quotes Psa. lxviii. 18 not in the Septuagint but, as far as we can see, from a contemporary 'Targum' — the equivalent in his day of Moffatt or Weymouth.

Also we must not forget that most of the Bible, and the New Testament in particular, is written in plain, idiomatic and living language such as would be in day to day use by the peasants and ordinary folk to whom it first came as the very Word of God. There is something to be said for a version which conveys this freshness in our own language, but we must remember not only the vocabulary, but the whole structure of language is constantly changing so that language-forms much nearer to our own than are those of 1611 seem foreign to modern ears. There would seem to be a place for the provision from time to time of a translation of the Bible that takes account of these changes.

We can divide English versions of the Bible into two types — the Authorised Version of 1611 and its successors, stemming back to the Tyndale and ultimately to the Wycliffe version, and translations independent of this mighty stream.

THE AUTHORISED VERSION AND ITS SUCCESSORS

The Authorised Version is little less than a miracle. It seems quite incredible that such a noble monument of the English language at its finest flower, destined to mould thought and language for generations, and such a worthy and powerful presentation of the Word of God should have had such a curious history and patchwork compilation.

We may attribute the motives behind the desire for a revision mainly to the progress of modern knowledge about the Bible, its language, text and versions. The discovery of new manuscripts, such as the Codex Sinaiticus, was bound to suggest the need for a version of Scripture which should be nearer to the words and intention of the original than the Authorised Version translators had been able to get.

Yet there are still other reasons why it may not be advisable to use the Authorised Version alone. One result of the change in language structure referred to is that the whole climate of thought represented by the Authorised Version is alien to anyone not trained up in it. It is no longer safe to assume that most people will be familiar with the Authorised Version. Among younger people in particular there is probably less contact with it than ever before, and if paganism, pure and simple, among us increases at the present rate, we can expect familiarity with the Version to decrease rather than increase. It is important that we do not contribute to the impression that Christianity is surrounded by a halo of old-world

sentiment. Modern versions have, we are persuaded, a real place in evangelism.

It is not only the outsider who needs to be shocked into recognition of the supreme relevance of the Word of God. It is terribly true that all of us may be lulled into somnolence by our very familiarity with the well-loved old version, so that we miss some challenge or illumination, or fail to reflect on the meaning of a verse or passage which has long been clothed for us in the soft raiment of delightful but obscure English.

But when all this has been said, it would be little short of a tragedy if the Authorised Version should ever lose its place of honour amongst us. Fortunately it is not likely to do so. The honour yielded to it is only dangerous when it is given for the wrong reason, when it is invested with a sacrosanctity that does not belong to the original. There are solid reasons for its continuance in a supreme place of usefulness. It would be tragic indeed if children of Christian homes were to be robbed of their heritage, and not trained up to know and love it, provided only that they are familiarized too with its meaning. The Authorised Version is the key to most of our best hymns — those of Watts and Wesley in particular — and such hymns provide for many worshippers the only theology they are given. And, above all, as a translation A.V. is a faithful one. In the Old Testament the resemblance to the cadences of the Hebrew could hardly be reproduced in readable English today. In matters of text and translation it is sometimes criticized needlessly; differences are of detail and not such as to mislead in teaching. Let us not be mistaken, there are abundant treasures for our generation in this great version; only our use of it must not be regulated by unreality or sentiment.

The Revised Version of 1884 has been much abused. Spurgeon, one of its kindlier critics, said of it that it was 'strong in Greek, but weak in English.' Much of the dislike of it arises from the fact that it often sounds like a spoilt A.V. — there is just sufficient difference to annoy the ear. This is inevitable. R.V. never set out to be a 'modern translation'; it was simply a correction of A.V. in the light of the progress of biblical learning. Sometimes its alterations are pedantic (e.g. 'were come to pass' for 'were done' in Mt. xxviii. 11), and sometimes almost certainly wrong (e.g. 2 Tim. iii. 16 is better rendered in the A.V., followed by R.S.V., than in R.V.). And if textual criticism was revolutionized between 1611 and 1884, it has moved quite a way since 1884, so that not all the R.V. readings can be defended wholeheartedly now.

But if the literalness of the R.V. be accounted a weakness, it is also an asset when an accurate version for close study is required. R.V. preserves and enhances the faithfulness of A.V., and even its pedantries may may be all to the good for purposes of detailed study. And its great advantage over A.V. is that it is made from a much better text. R.V. is therefore a very useful working tool.

The American Revised Standard Version is the latest, and presumably the last, of the A.V. revisions. Like the R.V., it has aimed to take into account advances in linguistic and textual knowledge, and to preserve as much as possible of the force and beauty of the old version. It will, like its predecessor, have to prove itself in the fiery ordeal of popular utility, but if in these early days we may be permitted a judgment, it would be that the R.S.V. has succeeded in both aims extremely well. The result is a translation of the whole Bible that is reasonably accurate and immensely readable. Its suitability in evangelism was recognized in the I.V.F.'s publication of the R.S.V. Gospel of John in booklet form some years ago.

We realize that there has been considerable objection to R.S.V. in several quarters. That it is not a

perfect translation, none would deny; that it contains more 'interpretation', especially in the New Testament, than does R.V. (which sought to follow a literal translation with the original order of words as far as possible), is confessed by the translators. Generally speaking, however, they do not seem to have taken many unreasonable liberties, and some of the objections lodged against the work strike one as frivolous.

We have no hesitation in saying that this is one of the best translations of the Old Testament for general use that is readily accessible. Many of the obscurities of the A.V. are cleared up, and light shed in many a dark place. To take an example, A.V. in 1 Sam. xiii. 21 reads, 'Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.' In context, this yields little sense. R.V. is no better: and in fact, both are based on guesses as to the meaning of the strange word *pim* which stands in the text. Moffatt omits the verse altogether as corrupt. But since then, excavations have revealed that there was a scale-weight, about $\frac{2}{3}$ shekel, which was called a *pim*. R.S.V. takes account of this and gives perfect sense: 'and the charge was a pim for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.' The Philistines held the monopoly of smithying and were profiteering on it. Many other felicities might be quoted. If the Revisers resort to the Septuagint or other ancient readings instead of the Hebrew text, they indicate this in the margin. Another welcome feature is that, while the R.V. put the 'poetical books' (Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Song of Songs) into their verse form, R.S.V. has extended the principle to extensive sections of the prophets which are in poetry.

We may be thankful for this edition. The liberal theological position of most of the translators has not impaired a fine, workmanlike translation that will do good service in devotion, in study and in seeking to make known the Word of God to others.

SOME INDEPENDENT TRANSLATIONS

This century there have been innumerable attempts — and still they come — to work out a translation which would give the sense of the original in idiomatic modern English. Even to enumerate them here would be impossible. The feature of most of them is that they are not word-for-word translations; they are attempts to convey the sense into the completely different idioms of 20th century speech. To do this, translators have allowed themselves varying degrees of freedom; Dr. Moffatt allowed himself more than Dr. Weymouth, and Mr. Phillips more than either. Mr. C. Kingsley Williams's *New Testament in Plain English* is bound to be somewhat limited by the confines of what constitutes 'plain English'. So all these versions are 'interpretative' to some degree; and, as we have noted, this is true to some extent even of the R.S.V. This is not to rule out of use these versions, many of which are excellent; but it may be best to compare their rendering with the original, one of the older versions, or a commentary, when close study of the text is required. But such versions may excel the others in lighting up a difficult passage, or showing the outline of an involved argument. They may be particularly valuable for getting hold of the thought of a whole book, or for introducing an outsider to the Bible.

Dr. Moffatt's translation (1922) has proved the most popular of these versions. Certainly, his forceful English (some would say, Scottish) strikes home time after time, especially when translating Paul. Unfortunately, the idiosyncrasies of the translator also appear quite often, making the more prosaic Weymouth (1902) a safer, if less brilliant, guide.

Dr. Moffatt has not only translated the Old Testament, but rearranged the text and unravelled the 'sources' where he thought this to be necessary. In general, while Moffatt's version is deservedly popular for its vigour and flashes of insight, it has to be used with caution .

Monsignor Ronald Knox has repeated Moffatt's achievement of a single-handed translation of the whole Bible (N.T. 1945, O.T. 1949). It bears the Roman imprimatur and the legend 'For Private Use Only'. Mgr. Knox is second to none in the command of forceful English, and there are many renderings which are quite delightful (we may point to his beautiful rendering of Ps. xxiii). The great disadvantage as a translation is the fact that it is made from the Latin Vulgate, with the original Hebrew or Greek brought to bear only where the Vulgate yields no sense. It is a translation at second hand. There are other marks of its origin, occasionally amusing ones, such as the margin to Job i. 5: 'or possibly, *Job would send (a priest) to them*' !

Letters to Young Churches by the Rev. J. B. Phillips has proved very popular in its short life. Mr. Phillips has worked on the principle that where the Greek of the Epistles is colloquial, an English rendering should also be so. So there are sections which are confessedly paraphrase rather than true translation. It is obviously very easy to pick holes in his version. But using his book is an excellent way of getting the grasp of a whole Epistle: the letters spring to life. Mr. Phillips has more recently issued a translation of *The Gospels,* which has met with less acclamation than his earlier work.

Perhaps some of the remarks suggested above may be illustrated by comparing several renderings of Rom. viii. 1-2.

A.V.: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

R.V. omits 'who walk not after . . . Spirit.'

R.S.V.: There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Moffatt: Thus there is no doom now for those who are in Christ Jesus; the law of the Spirit brings the life which is in Christ Jesus, and that law has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Knox: Well then, no judgement stands now against those who live in Christ Jesus, not following the ways of flesh and blood. The spiritual principle of life has set me free, in Jesus Christ, from the principle of sin and death.

Phillips: No condemnation now hangs over the head of those who are 'in' Jesus Christ. For the new spiritual principle of life 'in' Christ lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death.

SUMMING UP

If we were permitted to draw conclusions from the remarks made so far, they would be these. We should not ask, is a particular version the best one? but, is it best for some particular purpose? We would suggest that the A.V., with due recognition of its limitations, should continue to hold its place in our biblical study: that we should continue to treasure it and seek thoroughly to appropriate it, and encourage children to do so. But we would add that its use should be supplemented by that of other versions, and great care taken to ensure that not only the language but also the meaning is assimilated. We would esteem the R.V. highly for reflection of the actual words of the original, and the R.S.V. for its general accuracy. To gain freshness from a passage, to see the thought of a book or a section, or to see how something we tend instinctively to

express in the language of 1611 may appear in modern English, we would go to one or more of the independent translations. There is a function for each type of version.

Finally, we would say that there are two things we ought not to expect. One is a perfect translation — finality will not rest even with the new translation in progress in Edinburgh; the other is a worthy version that will make the Bible 'easy reading' — the Bible is not that sort of book. It is the Word of God, that strenuous and shattering thing spoken of in Heb. iv. 12. In the most idiomatic of translations, there is bound to be much that is strange to modern conceptions, for God's thoughts are not our thoughts. We note that none of the translators of Rom. viii. 1 quoted above can render the startling words 'in Christ Jesus' by anything substantially different. Even Mr. Phillips has to resort to putting 'in' in inverted commas! We cannot ask for a Bible that will save us trouble, but we can humbly give thanks that so many good tools have been put in our hands to help us to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches, and to us.

'PREACH THE WORD'

The Layman's Opportunity

By O. WRIGHT HOLMES, B.A., B.D., Ph.D.

IT would be interesting to know how many members of the Graduates' Fellowship assist their church in the capacity of lay reader or lay preacher. In the Free Churches there has long been a welcome for those who will come forward, and in the Church of England the continuing shortage of the clergy is having the result that the opportunity for laymen to take services and to preach is steadily growing. It might even be that this is what the Spirit of God would have the Church to do. It has seemed to me that a high standard should be expected of candidates, and that candidates so admitted should be given responsible assignments, which will in turn make this work worth striving for.

When an adult congregation is to be faced it is plainly wise to find out as much as possible about those expected to be there — for example, whether the evening congregation differs from the morning, or whether a Guide parade is due; otherwise the preacher may find himself like the exam. candidate who did a brilliant answer to a question which the examiner had not asked. But whatever the congregation there are few congregations of which it is not true to say that explaining the Bible is sure to be helpful.

One reason why Bible exposition is so much needed today is because we are confronted with widespread idolatry. The old form was well pilloried by Isaiah, describing a man using the creation of his hands to pray to. The new form, when modern man bows down to a creation of his own mind, has yet to be denounced with equal efficacy. Yet is it not so, that men who get as far as going to church — and the wireless 'worshippers' — have too often decided how much of the divine revelation they are prepared to accept? Their worship is offered to a hypothetical being whose very qualities and limitations they have devised for Him!

PRINCIPLES OF PREPARATION

When, during the war, I was stationed in India, I made the acquaintance of a book by one Henry Sloane Coffin entitled *What to Preach.* This book suggests that preaching may be grouped under the headings Expository, Doctrinal, Ethical, Pastoral, Evangelistic, but it