

but is also directly contrary to fact, since there is not even one place in the Bible where the Hebrew word *almah* is used to describe a young woman "who is clearly not a virgin."

When your writers discuss theological or philological matters it would be much better if they would get their facts straight.

*TIME* magazine replied on April 28, 1970:

Thank you for writing in connection with *TIME* March 23 report on the New English Bible. We are glad to have this opportunity to explain the reference to *almah*. The translation was, as we noted, the work of eminent scholars selected by the churches sponsoring the project. Sir Godfrey Driver, one of the directors of the project and a former professor of Semitic Philology at Oxford University, explains the NEB version of the passage in Isaiah as follows: "The Hebrew word for virgin is *bitulah* but the word used in Isaiah is *almah*, which means a marriageable adult. Moreover, the same word is used in Judges 19:1 for a concubine, and on Phoenician inscriptions it has even been used to describe a temple prostitute. The one thing the word definitely doesn't mean is virgin. The Greeks knew this too. The Greek word used in Matthew is *parthenos*, which means adult. *Parthenos* is used also by the Greeks in Genesis to describe Dinah after she had lain with Shechem and so certainly couldn't be a virgin." Referring to the 1961 New Testament translation, which uses the word "virgin", Sir Godfrey says: "The translators should have dropped it but ... I suppose the doctrinal consequences would have been too complicated."

Dr MacRae responded to Miss Josephine Reidy of *TIME* thus:

Your letter of April 28 surprised me greatly. In fact it is hard to believe that a man with the reputation of Sir Godfrey Driver would have written a letter containing so many misstatements as are included in the remarks that you quote as coming from him.

Thus you quote him as saying about the word *almah* that "the same word is used in Judges 19:1 for a concubine." It is true that Judges 19:1 speaks of a concubine, but there is no Hebrew word in this verse or anywhere in its vicinity that even remotely resembles the word *almah*.