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THE REFORMED FAITH IN MODERN SCOTLAND

In the summer of 1841 a distinguished American Divine paid a short visit to the West of Scotland. J. H. Thornwell was one of the leaders of the Old School in his own Church. That School had just come through its struggle with its opponents; the spirit of the conflict was still alive and the type of later New England theologising, associated with Dwight, Barnes and the Doctors of New Haven, was what Thornwell spoke of as New Schoolism. He found during his stay in Glasgow that the leaven of their teaching had begun to work among the Seceders, who until that generation had for a century been the pillars of orthodoxy in the old Covenanting country. It had only begun to work and it was vigorously antagonised. Yet in connection with the beginning of the spirit of speculation in religion Thornwell was apprehensive. After speaking highly of the Scots and balancing, rightly enough, his favourable estimate with the judgment that they were a little too much inclined to bigotry he went on to say, "If the spirit of speculation on Theological subjects should once become propagated among them there is no telling where the evil would stop." At that time it was not widely propagated amongst professed Evangelicals.

In the State Church a species of speculation had been widely prevalent long before those days. It was not so much however a Theology as a negation of Theology. Moderatism so far as it had a principle or could be spoken of as a system was the expression of a philosophy of life that was strongly impregnated with Rationalistic elements. It was a rebellion against the Reformed Faith. The cold breath of Deism had

NOTES AND NOTICES

THE MEANING OF 'ALMA (A. V. "VIRGIN") IN ISAIAH VII. 14

Having frequently been asked concerning the meaning of
'Alma in Is. vii. 14—a very important question in view of the
fact that it is rendered in the Greek version and cited in Mat-
thew i. 23 as meaning παρθένος—I have undertaken in the fol-
lowing pages to give a *résumé* of the evidence which I have
collected upon the subject. Whatever else this evidence shows,
it seems to afford no support for the view that the word means
"young married woman."

I. THE RENDERING OF 'ALMA (עלמה) IN THE VERSIONS

'Alma occurs seven to nine times in the Old Testament.[1] In
these places it is translated in the ancient versions as follows:

1. Gen. xxiv. 43: "Behold, I stand by the well of water; and
it shall come to pass, that when the virgin (העלמה) cometh
forth to draw *water,* and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a
little water from thy pitcher to drink."

> VERSIONS: LXX, παρθένος; Targum of Onkelos,
> *'ulema;* Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, *riba;* Peshitto,
> *'alaimta;* Jerome, *virgo;* Coptic, *parthenos;* Armenian,
> *gohs;* Ethiopic, *dengel;* Aquila, ἀπόκρυφος; Arabic,
> *gariya;* Samaritan, *rebitha.*

2. Ex. ii. 8: "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And
the maid (העלמה) went and called the child's mother."

> VERSIONS: LXX, νεᾶνις; Targ. Onk., *'ulemta;* Targ.
> Pseudo-Jon., *talya;* Pesh., *'alaimta;* Jer., *puella;* Copt.
> *talou;* Arm., *aghtshig;* Eth., *walat;* Arab., *gariya;*
> Sam., *'alaimta.*

3. Prov. xxx. 19: "The way of an eagle in the air; the way of
a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the
sea; and the way of a man with a maid (עלמה)."

> VERSIONS: LXX, νεότης; Targ., *'ulemta;* Pesh.,
> *'alaimutha;* Hark., *talyutha;* Jer., *adolescentia;* Arm.,
> *yeritasardi;* Symmachus, νεᾶνις; Arab., *hadathiyyat.*

4. Cant. i. 3: "Because of the *savour* of thy good ointments

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[1] In 1 Chr. xv. 20 and the heading of Ps. xlvi., where the plural is
used, it is not certain that the singular is *'alma.*

thy name *is as* ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins (עלמות) love thee."

VERSIONS: LXX, νεάνιδες; Targ. paraphrases; Pesh., '*alaimotho;* Arab., *šabab;* Jer., *adolescentulae;* Arm., *harsin;* Aquila and ε' = LXX; Harklensian = Peshitto.

5. Cant. vi. 7 (8): "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins (עלמות) without number."

VERSIONS: LXX, νεάνιδες; Latin, *adolescentula;* Pesh., '*alaimotho;* Arab., *šawab;* Eth., *awled;* Arm., *oriordk;* Hark. = Peshitto.

6. 1 Chr. xv. 20: "And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth (עלמות)."

VERSIONS: LXX, ἀλαιμώθ; Jer. *arcana;* Arab. "They praise God"; Pesh. "who praise with psalms"; other versions in Greek, either κρυφίων or αἰωνίων; Armenian transliterates the Greek.

7. Is. vii. 14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin (העלמה) shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

VERSIONS: LXX, παρθένος; Targ., '*ulemta;* Pesh., *bethula;* Jer., *virgo;* Hark., *bethula;* Arab., '*adra;* Copt., *parthenos;* Arm., *gohs;* Eth., *dengel;* Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, νεᾶνις.[2]

8. Ps. xlvi. (heading): "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, a song upon Alamoth (עלמות)."

VERSIONS: LXX, κρυφίων; Targ., אתכסי: Arab., *sara'ir;* Latin Vulgate, *arcanis;* Jer., *(Juxta Heb.)* *juventutibus;* Aq., νεανιοτήτων; Sym., αἰωνίων; ῎Αλλος: νεοτήτων;

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[2] Field in his *Hexapla* says as follows (1) under Is. vii. 14 παρθένος but A,S,Θ νεᾶνις. So Iren. in Eus. *Hist. Ecc.*, v. ὡς θεοτίων ἡρμήνευσεν ὁ Εφέσιος καὶ Ἀκύλας ὁ Ποντικός. Jerome says: "praeter LXX omnes *adolescentulam* transtulerant, Porro ALMA apud eos verbum ambiguum est; dicitur enim et *adolescentula*, et *abscondita*, id est ἀπόκρυφος . . . Ergo ALMA non solum puella vel virgo, sed cum ἐπιτάσει *virgo abscondita* dicitur et *secreta*; quae nunquam virorum patuerit aspectibus, sed magna parentum diligentia custodita sit. (2) On Gen. xxiv. 43, " Jerome adds: Ubi Rebecca dicitur ALMA, Aquila non adolescentulam nec *puellam*, sed *absconditam* "transtulit."

Memphitic and Sahidic Copt., *etḥep;* Arm., *kaztn-yeatz;* Hark. *metašyotho.*

9. Ps. lxviii. 26: "The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels (עלמות) playing with timbrels."

VERSIONS: LXX, νεᾶνις; Targ., נשיא צדיקתא; Pesh., *'alaimotho;* Arab., *fatayat;* Lat. Vulg., *juvencularum;* Jer. (*Juxta Heb.*), *puellarum;* Arm., *tousanato;* Memphitic Coptic, *lelšairi;* Sahidic Coptic, *šeere-šem;* Hark. = Pesh.

The above evidence shows that:

1. The LXX version of Is. vii. 14, made about 200 B.C., Matthew i. 23, from the first century A.D., the Syriac Peshitto, from the second century A.D., and Jerome's Latin Vulgate, from about A.D. 400, all render *'alma* by παρθένος (virgin) or its equivalents *bethula* and *virgo.*

2. The LXX of Gen. xxiv. 43, also, renders *'alma* by παρθένος and Jerome by *virgo.*

3. The Coptic version of Is. vii. 14, and Gen. xxiv. 43, as if to emphasize the παρθένος, transliterates it; although it has *alou* in Ex. ii. 7 and *lelšairi* (Memphitic) and *šeerešem* (Sahidic) in Ps. lxviii. 26 and also has the words *lelou* (girl) and *launi* (virgin) and *mnt rooune* (virginity).

4. The Armenian version renders παρθένος by *gohs* (virgin) in Gen. xxiv. 43, Is. vii. 14 and Mat. i. 23; νεᾶνις by *aghtshig* (maid, virgin), Ex. ii. 8, by *harsin* (bride), Cant. i. 3, by *oriorak* (girls, virgins), Cant. vi. 8, by *tousanato* (daughters, girls), Ps. lxviii. 26; νεότης by *yeritasardi* (youth), Prov. xxx. 19; κρυφίων by *kaztnyeatz* (secrets), Ps. xlvi. i; and transliterates the ἀλαιμώθ of 1 Chr. xv. 20.

5. The Harklensian Syriac renders παρθένος in Is. vii. 14 by *bethula* (virgin); νεᾶνις by *ṭalyutha* (youth) in Prov. xxx. 19 by *'alaimta* in Cant. i. 3, vi. 8, Ps. lxviii. 26; κρυφίων Ps. xlvi. 1 by *meṭašyotho* (secrets).

6. The Ethiopic renders παρθένος by *dengel* (virgin) in Is. vii. 14, Mat. i. 23; and νεᾶνις by *walat* (daughter, girl), Ex. ii. 8.

7. The Arabic version renders the παρθένος of Is. vii. 14 by *'adrā* (virgin) and in Gen. xxiv. 43 by *gariya* (girl). Νεᾶνις Ex. ii. 8 and Prov. xxx. 19 is rendered by *gariya* (girl); in Cant. i. 3 by *šabāb* (youth from puberty to thirty); in Cant. vi. 8 by

šawāb (virgin in the night of her devirgination); Ps. lxviii. 26
by *fatayāt* (girls). Κρυφίων in Ps. xlvi. 1 is rendered by
sarayār (secrets); and in 1 Chr. xv. 20 for *'alamoth* the Arabic
has "they praise God."

8. The Samaritan version renders *'alma* in Gen. xxiv. 43 by
rebitha (girl) and in Ex. ii. 8 by *'alaimta.*

9. The Targum of the Pseudo-Jonathan has *riba* (girl) in
Gen. xxiv. 43 and in Ex. ii. 8 *talya* (maid).

10. The Targum of Onkelos renders *'alma* by *'ulamta* in
Gen. xxiv. 43 and Ex. ii. 8.

11. The other Targums render it by *'ulamta* in Is. vii. 14 and
Prov. xxx. 19; paraphrase in Cant. i. 3 and vi. 8; render by
"pious women" in Ps. lxviii. 26 and by "was covered" in Ps.
xlvi. 1.

12. The Syriac Peshitto renders by *bethula* (virgin) in Is.
vii. 14 and by *'alaimta* in Gen. xxiv. 43, Ex. ii. 8, Cant. i. 3, vi. 8,
and Ps. lxviii. 26; by *'alaimutha* (youth) in Prov. xxx. 19; and
paraphrases in 1 Chr. xv. 20 by "who praise with psalms."

13. The Latin Vulgate has *virgo* in Gen. xxiv. 43 and Is. vii.
14; *puella* in Ex. ii. 8; *adolescentia* in Prov. xxx. 19; *adoles-
centula* in Cant. i. 3, vi. 8; *arcana* in 1 Chr. xv. 20, Ps. xlvi. 1;
and *juvencula* in Ps. lxviii. 26.

14. Jerome *Juxta Hebraeos* has *juventus* in Ps. xlvi. 1 and
puella in Ps. lxviii. 26.

15. Aquila renders *'alma* by ἀπόκρυφος (hidden) in Gen. xxiv.
43; by νεᾶνις in Cant. i. 3, Is. vii. 14.

16. Symmachus and Theodotion render by νεᾶνις (girl), in Is.
vii. 14 and Symmachus in Prov. xxx. 19.

17. The lack of further evidence in the case of Aquila, Sym-
machus, Theodotion, the Harklensian Syriac, the Coptic ver-
sions and the Ethiopic is due to the non-existence, absence, or
inaccessibility of manuscripts and texts. Fortunately, we have
practically all the evidence for the primary and secondary ver-
sions for Is. vii. 14.

II. MEANING OF THE ROOT 'ALAM IN THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES

1. In the Hebrew, the root occurs 26 times (Kal, once;
Niphal, 10 times; Hiphil, 10 times; and Hithpael, 5 times);
always in the sense of "hide." *'Olam* (eternity, age, ever) may
come from this root. It occurs about 400 times in the Old

Testament. Also, *'alamoth* (*'almuth*) of Pss. ix. I. xlvi. I and I Chron. xv. 20 may come from this root; possibly, also *'elem* and *'alma.*

2. The Arabic has two roots which correspond in spelling to the Hebrew *'alam*; one of these begins with the smooth gutteral *'ain* and means "to know." Under this root the Arabs put *'alam* (age, world, etc.). A second root begins with the rough gutteral *ghain* "to lust after" and under this root the Arabs put the words corresponding to the Hebrew *'elem* and *'alma.*

Lane in his great Arabic Dictionary defines *ghulâm* as "a male child from the time of its birth until it attains to the period of the 17th year" or "a little son," i.e., "one who has not attained to puberty." In the Koran, Abraham is made to say concerning the promise of Isaac: "My Lord how can there be to me a boy" (*ghulâm;* so in Suras xv. 53, li. 28, xxxvii, 99). Joseph in the pit is called by this name (xii. 19). In xviii. 73-81 it is used of two youths who had not yet attained the age of puberty. Zachariah says in xix. 9: "How can I have a boy, when my wife is barren?" In xix. 19 the angel says to Mary: "I am a messenger of thy Lord, to give to thee a pure boy." To which, in xix. 20 Mary replies: "How can I have a boy seeing that no man has touched me and I am not a harlot?"

Unfortunately, the Koran does not contain the feminine form of this noun; but it is evident that the masculine did not mean a "young married man." Dr. Van Ess of Bosrah assures me that the feminine never means "young married woman" in modern Arabic.

3. In Syriac, the root does not occur in the simple stem and in the intensive stem the verb has a denominative meaning "to make one young again" (*juventutem alicui reddidit*). Payne Smith in his *Thesaurus* defines the noun as meaning "one who has not taken a wife" or as equivalent even to *bethulo* "virgin."

4. In Ethiopic the root means "to write," or "subscribe." There is no derivative for "boy" or "girl."

5. The root and derivatives are not found in Assyrio-Babylonian.

6. In the Aramaic of the Targums and Talmud the root is found a few times in the simple stem (if the pointing is correct) in the sense of "be strong" for the Hebrew אמץ. So in the

Targum to Jos. i. 6, x. 25, Deut. xxxi. 6, 7, 23; and in the intensive stem in the sense of "to strengthen" Ps. xxvii. 14.

The noun עולים occurs as a translation of נער in 1 Sam. xvii. 55, of David when he was going to fight Goliath; and in xvi. 11, when he was feeding the flock, and often elsewhere. The feminine of this noun renders נערה in Onkelos in Gen. xxiv. 14, 16 and עלמה in Gen. xxiv. 43 (all referring to the as yet unmarried Rebecca) and Exodus ii. 8 (for the child Miriam when she came down to watch the boy עולם Moses in the ark among the bulrushes). Esther is called an 'ulaima before she was married to Xerxes (Est. ii. 2); and the same name is given to the seven maidens who waited on her.

In Onkelos, 'ulaima translates the Hebrew בתולה (Deut. xxxii. 25), ילדה (Gen. xxxiv. 4), עלמה (Gen. xxiv. 43, Ex. ii. 8) and נערה (always).

In the LXX, 'alma is translated by παρθένος (2 times), νεᾶνις (4 times), νεότης (2 times).

III. Meaning and Use of Naʻara (נערה) in the Hebrew

1. The word naʻara occurs 63 times in the Old Testament, 24 of them being in the Pentateuch. The AV renders it by "damsel" (34 times), "maiden" (15 times), "maid" (8 times), "young woman" (Ruth iv. 12), "young maiden" (1 Sam. ix. 11), and by the adjective "young" (4 times, always in connection with bethula "virgin," viz., Jud. xxi. 12, 1 Kings i. 2, Est. ii. 2, 3). The "damsel" of Deut. xxii. 23 is, also, followed by the Hebrew word bethula; so that five times out of the 63 times the naʻara is defined specifically as a virgin. In Deut. xxii. 25, 27, she is called "betrothed" and in Gen. xxxiv. 12 the "damsel" Dinah is asked for by Hamor as a wife for his son Shekem.

In New Hebrew naʻara is "a maiden from 12 to 12½ years old." The word does not occur in Syriac nor in any Aramaic dialect. It is rendered in Onkelos invariably by 'ulaima. It is not found in Arabic, nor in Ethiopic; nor in Babylonian, unless it is equivalent to nartu "songstress."

In the LXX naʻara is translated by παρθένος (5 times: Gen. xxiv. 14, 16, 55, xxxiv. 3 bis); by ἄβρα (5 times); by νεᾶνις (20 times); by κοράσιον (13 times); by παιδίσκη (2 times); by θεράπινα (once) and by γυνή (once, Est. ii. 4).

IV. Meaning and Use of Bethula (בתולה) "Virgin" in the Semitic Languages

1. The word occurs 50 times in the Old Testament, and is rendered in the A.V. by "virgin" (38 times), by "maid" (7 times), and by "maiden" (5 times). Of the 9 times in which it is used in the Pentateuch the A.V. renders it always by "virgin" (except Ex. xxii. 16 (15)), and Onkelos always by *bethula* (except Deut. xxxii. 25).

2. The LXX renders it usually by παρθένος (47 times), by παρθένικος (Est. ii. 3), once by νύμφη (Joel i. 8) and once by ἄφθορος (Est. ii. 3).

3. In the Hebrew it is used 5 times to define *na'ara* as a "virgin" but never to define *'alma*.

4. In Arabic, it is defined as "a virgin girl, a eunuch, a celibate or unmarried person, a chaste one." The Greek παρθένος is translated in Is. vii. 14 by *'adra*, "virgin."[3]

5. The Syriac *bethula* corresponds to the Hebrew in form and usage; as also does the Aramaic of the Jewish and Samaritan Targums.

6. In the Assyrian inscriptions of Asurnaṣirpal and Shalmaneser II., *batuli* and *batulati* are used for boys and girls

V. Conclusions

1. None of the ancient languages or versions gives any evidence to show that *'alma* ever meant "a young married woman."

2. There seems no doubt that *bethula* is the specific and unambiguous word for "virgin."

3. A *na'ara* may not have been virgin. Otherwise, it would scarcely have been necessary to define her five times by the word *bethula*, "virgin."

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[3] In Arabic there are two words for virgin *bikr* and *'udhra* or *'adra* each meaning one who has preserved her maidenhood. The latter does not occur in the Koran, but *bikr* is found in Suras lvi. 35 and lxvi. 5. The former reads: "And we caused them to grow up as a growth and found them virgins." The latter reads: "It may be that the Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in exchange wives better than you . . . young women who have been married and virgins too." The word *thayyab* used in the last citation is the most proper word in Arabic to denote "young married woman." It is never used to translate *na'ara*, *'alma*, or *yalda* and Dr. Van Ess tells me that it is only used in Arabic to denote "young married woman" and that *ghulama* is never used for this purpose.

4. An *'alma* must have been presumed to be a "virgin," since it is never defined by *bethula.*

5. Since the LXX version was made in the case of Genesis 280 years B.C. and in the case of Isaiah 200 years B.C., it is to be presumed that their rendering of *'alma* by παρθένος in Gen. xxiv. 43 and Is. vii. 14 was in their minds a justifiable rendering. So far as we have any evidence, the citation of Is. vii. 14 in Matt. i. 23 is thus justified by the Jewish interpretation up to the time when Matthew was written.

6. Since the Peshitto Syriac version of the Old Testament was probably made by Jews, their rendering of the word *'alma* by *bethula* in Is. vii. 14 must have been considered proper even as late as the second century A.D.

7. Jerome, who studied Hebrew under the Jewish rabbis of his time (about A.D. 400), still thought it possible to render *'alma* by *virgo,* in Gen. xxiv. 43 and Is. vii. 14.

8. Since Aquila, Theodotian and Symmachus were all probably renegrades from Christianity and Jewish proselytes, their rendering of *'alma* in Is. vii. 14 by νεᾱνις instead of παρθένος is easily understood.

9. The rendering *'ulemta* of the Targum to Is. vii. 14 cannot possibly argue in favor of the meaning "young married woman" in view of the following facts:

    (1) *'Alma* in the Old Testament never has this meaning elsewhere.

    (2) *'Ulemta* translates not merely *'alma* but also *na'ara, yalda,* and *bethula,* none of which means "young married woman."

    (3) *'Ulemta* is used of Rebecca when she came to the well and met Eliezar; of Miriam when she was set to watch the infant Moses; of the 400 virgins of Jabesh Gilead (Jud. xxi. 12); of Esther and the other virgins who were selected for the choice of Xerxes as wife.

10. The feminine noun is not found in the Koran; but the masculine is used of the as yet unborn Isaac and John the Baptist, and of Jesus the son of the virgin Mary, of Joseph in the pit, and of two young men who are expressly said to have been killed before they had reached the age of puberty.

11. All the versions of the Greek παρθένος—Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Harklensian, Syriac and Arabic—render the word in

both Is. vii. 14 and Matt. i. 23 by the best word for "virgin" which they possess.

12. The evidence that Mary was a virgin does not after all depend on the meaning of the words 'alma and παρθένος alone; for it is said, also, of Mary that "she had not known man." This phrase is used in the Old Testament of Rebecca "a virgin that had not known man" (Gen. xxiv. 16), of Jephthah's daughter (Jud. xi. 39) and of the virgins of Jabesh Gilead (Jud. xxi. 12).

Finally, two conclusions from the evidence seem clear; first, that 'alma, so far as known, never meant "young married woman"; and secondly since the presumption in common law and usage was and is, that every 'alma is virgin and virtuous, until she is proven not to be, we have a right to assume that Rebecca and the 'alma of Is. vii. 14 and all other 'almas were virgin, until and unless it shall be proven that they were not. If Is. vii. 14 is a prediction of the Conception and if the events recorded in Matthew i. 18-25 and Luke i. 26-38 are true and the Holy Spirit of God really overshadowed the virgin Mary, all difficulties are cleared away. The language itself is not the difficulty. The great and only difficulty lies in disbelief in predictive prophecy and in the almighty power of God; or in the desire to throw discredit upon the divine Sonship of Jesus.

In the third Sura of the Koran, Mohammed represents Mary as saying to the angel: "Lord how can I have a son when man has not yet touched me?" And the angel said: "Thus God creates what He pleaseth. When He decrees a matter He only says BE and it is." Mohammed was a better Theist than many who profess to be followers of Christ today.

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