

Theological Studies



THE CREATION OF EVE IN CATHOLIC TRADITION

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AMONG the questions answered by the Biblical Commission on June 30, 1909, relating to the interpretation of Genesis, was one concerning the manner in which the first woman, Eve, was produced by God. The reply said very clearly that the literal historical meaning of the first three chapters of Genesis cannot be considered doubtful where the narrative is concerned with facts that touch the fundamental truths of the Christian religion. Among these facts it specifies several in particular. One of these is the origin of Eve from Adam. The exact statement of the Commission was: "the formation of the first woman from the first man cannot be called into question."¹

For several years after this reply, Catholic writers, theologians and others, seemed to be well agreed that, whatever might be said about the origin of Adam's body, there could be no question among Catholics regarding the fact that Eve's body was produced by a special operation of Almighty God using as material a part of the body of Adam. And yet, in the last few

¹Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. 18a, n. 2123.

years, more than one Catholic writer has given expression to doubts about the literal historical sense of the account of the making of Eve, as set forth in Genesis, 2, 21-22: "Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam; and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman; and brought her to Adam."

An example of these doubts may be found in *L'Ami du Clergé* of March 5, 1936. In an unsigned article on human origins, the following statement occurs: "In admitting that, parallel with the the creation of the first man (whether by way of evolution, directed by God and terminating in a brusque and successful *mutation*, or by way of direct and immediate creation) the creation of the first woman took place exactly in similar conditions, would there not be a physical dependence of the woman on Adam, sufficient to justify the expression *formatio ex primo homine*?"

Another example is had in the recent book of the Abbé P. M. Périer, *Le Transformisme*, in which the author leaves the question open as to how far the inspired writer of Genesis 2, 21-22 has had recourse to allegory or symbol, merely insisting that the passage contains moral and social teaching of a high order.³

³Paris, 1938, p. 227, note 1: "Il y a deux manières de la (the origin of woman's body) considérer. Les uns, déclarant, *a priori*, cette formation miraculeuse, en veulent tirer des conséquences pour la formation du corps de l'homme lui-même. C'est aller plus loin que l'Eglise ne le demande, et rendre impossible tout examen scientifique. Les autres estiment qu'il convient d'étudier, d'abord, dans son ensemble, le problème de l'origine de l'organisme humain, comme nous le faisons en ces pages. La solution adoptée aura nécessairement sa répercussion sur l'interprétation du récit biblique concernant la femme.

"La commission biblique demande d'admettre que la femme vient de l'homme en quelque manière: '*formatio primæ mulieris ex homine*.' Mais comment? Aucune décision ecclésiastique n'oblige à prendre à la lettre toutes les particularités du récit. La Genèse, en ce passage, donne un enseignement moral et social de haute portée. Dans quelle mesure a-t-elle recours, pour l'inculquer, à l'allégorie ou au symbole?

"Il y a longtemps que le cardinal Cajetan a émis l'avis que les détails de ce récit ne doivent pas être pris à la lettre, mais d'une manière symbolique: *non esse juxta litteram intelligenda, sed secundum mysterium*. Récemment, deux auteurs, assurément soucieux

To these writers we might, perhaps, add those Catholic scientists who suggest that the theologians should reconsider and perhaps reinterpret the dogmas of original sin and the unity of the human race so as to leave room for the scientific theory of polygenism.⁴ The natural evolution of Eve or rather of many Eves would be a corollary of such an hypothesis.

It is clear that these authors are not averse to a purely metaphorical or symbolic interpretation of the words of Genesis concerning the making of Eve. For the author of the article in *L'Ami du Clergé*, "the idea which the Bible wishes especially to inculcate in the formation of Eve . . . is that Eve was to be for the first man a companion *similar to him, of the same physical nature as he*."⁵ In such an interpretation the words of the sacred text are a symbolic expression of an important physical and moral truth, but they do not signify the literal historical fact which *prima facie* they seem to do.

In contrast to these statements, stands the hitherto unanimous teaching of Catholic theologians against the metaphorical exegesis of Cajetan, which the writers cited above seem to favor. That teaching may be presented in the words of a recent author who, while favoring the evolution of Adam's body, rejects the symbolic interpretation of the words of Genesis concerning Eve: "It is our considered and definite belief that Eve was really formed from Adam. In other words the *formatio primae mulieris ex primo homine* is literally and historically true, as affirmed by the Biblical Commission. Indeed

d'orthodoxie, les Pères Schmidt et A. Lemonnyer, ont formulé cette opinion: 'Le trait d'Adam, formé de la poussière de la terre, fournit l'occasion de rappeler combien fragile et périssable est la vie qu'il possède. Celui d'Eve, formé d'une côte d'Adam, doit traduire la relation d'égalité et d'étroite solidarité qui existe entre l'homme et sa compagne' (*La Révélation primitive*, p. 123). Est-ce suffisant pour obéir à la commission biblique? Je n'en déciderai pas.—Ceux qui veulent une interprétation plus littérale attendent, du progrès des sciences, des indications plus précises sur les dépendances possibles d'un organisme par rapport à un autre."

⁴Cf. article *Polygénisme* by A. and J. Bouyssonie in *Dict. Théol. Cath.* vol. 12, col. 2536.

⁵*Loc. cit.*

that is so certain and so clearly taught both in the Scripture and tradition that it may well be *de fide*. In the first place, Scripture teaches this very clearly. Thus St. Paul bases important truths, both dogmatic and moral, on the origin of Eve from Adam. Secondly, we have the evidence of the constant teaching of Catholic tradition, which has always regarded the origin of Eve as historically true, and has seen in it the prophetic image of the Church originating from Christ dying on the cross."⁶

The purpose of the present article is to gather together the principal elements of this "constant teaching of Catholic tradition." It is, perhaps, because theologians from Suarez' to our day have readily affirmed that tradition but failed to demonstrate it, that this point of Catholic doctrine should still be called in question by some. If it can be shown that, as a matter of fact, the Church has always taken the special manner of the production of Eve's body as described in Genesis to be literally true and has always considered it to be divinely prophetic of the relation of the Church to Jesus Christ, then indeed is the manner of the special creation of Eve a fact which touches one of the fundamentals of the Faith, and all attempts at giving the words of Genesis a metaphorical meaning are out of accord with Catholic truth.

First of all, let it be remembered that the declaration of the Biblical Commission is not the first ecclesiastical document to treat of the making of Eve. In the year 1201, Pope Innocent III, in a letter to the Bishop of Tiberias, declared that the practice of polygamy was "inimical to the Christian faith because in the beginning one rib was changed into one woman and the divine Scriptures testify that 'because of this a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall

⁶E. C. Messenger, *Evolution and Theology*, New York, 1932, p. 252.

⁷*De opere sex dierum*, lib. iii, cap. ii, n. 4, edition of Paris, 1856, tom. 3, p. 177.

be two in one flesh'.⁸ From these words it is clear that the Pontiff wished to prove the divine institution of monogamy from the literal meaning of Genesis 2, 21 and 24. Needless to remark, the unity of marriage is also one of the fundamentals of Christian moral teaching.

More impressive still, and more to our present purpose are the words of the Council of Vienne, which solemnly defined that Saint John the Evangelist correctly narrated the order of events when he wrote that it was after Christ had died that one of the soldiers opened His side with a lance. In the chapter containing this definition the Council asserts that the side of the Word of God was perforated "in order that from the water and blood which flowed out of it might be formed the one, immaculate, and holy virgin Mother Church, the spouse of Christ, just as from the side of the first man, while he slept, Eve was formed to be his wife, that thus the truth in Christ, our newest Adam, might correspond to the certain type of the first and old Adam, who, according to the Apostle, 'is the figure of the one who was to come'."⁹ Even though it be admitted that this parallel between Adam and Eve on the one hand and Christ and the Church on the other was not the object of the conciliar definition, nevertheless it is impossible to deny that the Council found a *type* in what it considered to be a real fact, namely, the formation of Eve's body from the body of Adam. It placed such solemn emphasis on the real opening of the side of the *dead* Christ because of the *mystery* which was contained therein, a mystery which, the Council says, was prefigured in the forming of the first woman out of the side of the first man, while the latter slept.

That a very clear and definite doctrine on the mystery contained in the special manner of Eve's formation existed in the

⁸Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. 18a, n. 408.

⁹Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. 18a, n. 480. On the history of this definition and the still unsettled question as to whether the condemned doctrine was really taught by John Peter Olivi, cf. Ewald Müller O.F.M., *Das Konzil von Vienne, Münster in W.*, 1934, pp. 353-355.

second decade of the fourteenth century is sufficiently evident from the Council of Vienne. It was expressly taught by the great theologians of the preceding century.

For Peter Lombard, the creation of Eve was a figure of the sacraments flowing out of the side of Christ: "For as the woman was formed from the side of the man in his sleep, so the Church from the sacraments which poured out of the side of Christ dying on the Cross, namely, from the blood and water by which we are redeemed from punishments and washed from sins."¹⁰

Saint Bonaventure in his commentary on this passage of the Lombard gives two reasons why it was congruous that Eve should be produced in the way Genesis indicates. The first is that the manner of production corresponds to the properties of that mutual union which in reality exists between the man and the woman; secondly, it is consonant with the things that are signified by the man and the woman. These are three: God and the soul, Christ and the Church, the superior reason and the inferior. As to the second of these, he writes: "For the Church is formed from Christ, when from the side of Christ asleep on the Cross blood and water flowed out, from which comes the efficacy of the sacraments of the Church. Through these sacraments the Church is founded and thus the man corresponds to Christ, the sleep to death, the removing of the rib to the opening of the side."¹¹

A slight variation of the same teaching is contained in the *Summa* of Alexander of Hales. Speaking of the mysterious significance of the fact that all men, including Eve, come from Adam, he says: "The second mystery is that of spiritual union, for as Adam and Eve were as it were one carnal body, seeing that the woman was formed from the man, so Christ and the Church are as it were one spiritual body, for the Church was formed from Him, as it said in Ephesians 5, 30 'We are mem-

¹⁰*II Sent.*, d. 18, cap. III, Quaracchi, 2nd ed., 1916, tom. I, p. 389.

¹¹*In II Sent.*, d. 18, a. 1, q. 1, concl., *Opera Omnia*, Quaracchi edition, tom. II, p. 432.

bers of His body and of His flesh and of His bone'.¹² Again he writes in the same vein: "The manner of forming Eve was ordained for our instruction. For as the woman had to be made, that by her conjunction with man she might signify the conjunction of Christ with the Church, so also she had to be formed (in such a way) that by her formation might be signified the formation of the Church from Christ. Hence the words of Ephesians 5, 31-32 'They shall be two in one flesh; this is a great sacrament in Christ and the Church'.¹³

Saint Albert the Great, in reply to the question why did God make the woman from the side of the man, gives five reasons, the third of which is drawn "from the signification: for as Eve from the side of Adam, so the Church was to be formed from the side of Christ." And he cites the same words of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."¹⁴

The Angelic Doctor enumerates four reasons why Eve should have been made from Adam: his superior dignity as origin of the whole race; the special love he should have for his wife; the exigencies of family life in which the husband is the head; and finally "the sacramental reason, because by this is prefigured the fact that the Church has its origin in Christ, whence the Apostle says 'This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and the Church'." Saint Thomas argues for the fitness of forming Eve from the rib of Adam. His second reason for it is "the sacramental signification, because from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross the sacraments flowed out, that is, blood and water, by which the Church was established."¹⁵

¹²*Prima Secundae, De Corpore Humano*, sectio II, q. I, tit. I, membr. I, cap. I, Quaracchi edition, tom. II, p. 554. For an account of the divergent opinions concerning the authenticity of the treatise *De Corpore Humano*, cf. Ernest J. Primeau, *Doctrina Summae Theologiae Alexandri Halensis de Spiritus Sancti apud Justos Inhabitatione*, Mundelein, 1936, pp. 11-15.

¹³*Op. cit.*, tit. II, membr. II, q. II, cap. II, p. 617.

¹⁴*Sum. Theol.* pars 2, tract. 13, q. 80, membr. III, *Opera Omnia*, Borgnet edition, tom. 33, p. 118.

¹⁵*Sum. Theol.* 1, q. 92, a. 2 and 3.

No one who reads the articles in which these princes of the School treat of the production of Eve can doubt that they considered the literal sense of Genesis as necessary for the understanding of the way in which the Church comes into being with dependence on the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. That this dependence was prefigured by a real formation of the first woman from the first man, in the literal and factual sense and not merely metaphorically, is clear from their plain unvarnished statements as well as from their insistence on the miraculous nature of the operation of Almighty God in producing Eve.¹⁸

That this doctrine of the Council of Vienne and of the theologians of that age was founded on a universal and constant tradition, is not difficult to show. It is especially in the commentaries of the Fathers on Genesis and on the letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians that we have searched for it. But not there alone is it found. The very frequency with which the Fathers in speaking and writing on the Church, the Incarnation, the Passion of Our Lord, and even other dogmatic and moral topics, invoke or refer to the prophecy and mystery contained in the peculiar mode of Eve's production, is an indication of the importance they attached to the obvious meaning of the narrative of Genesis.

Among the Greek Fathers the first explicit witness to this tradition we have found in a sermon *On the Passion and Cross of the Lord*, attributed to St. Athanasius, though not certainly authentic. In this sermon two reasons are given why the body of Christ was pierced in the side, from which blood and water flowed out, rather than in another part. It was "in order that, as first through the woman formed from the side deception had

¹⁸That they considered the way in which Eve was formed miraculous is clear in the five whom we have quoted: Peter Lombard, *II. Sent.*, d. 18, cap. IV, VI; St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, *op. cit.*, Tom. II, p. 436 sqq.; Alexander of Hales, *op. cit.*, tit. II, membr. II, q. II, cap. III, p. 619 sqq.; St. Albert the Great, *loc. cit.*, p. 115; St. Thomas, 1, q. 92, a. 4, corp., ad 2, ad 3.

come, so through the side of the second Adam the redemption and cleansing of the first might be brought about."¹⁷

Saint Epiphanius in a spirited letter to John the Bishop of Jerusalem concerning the doctrines of Origen argues against the latter's metaphorical interpretation of the tunics of skins with which Adam and Eve were clothed after their sin. St. Epiphanius insists that the skins do not mean human bodies, because "if that is so, how is it that before the garments of skins and before the disobedience and ejection from paradise we read the words of Adam who said not allegorically but truly 'This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'? Or whence is that which the divine text testifies 'And God cast sleep upon Adam and he slept, and He took one of his ribs, and He filled in flesh in its place, and out of the rib which He had taken from him He built up for him a wife'?"¹⁸

In his treatise on heresies, entitled *Panarion*, Epiphanius observes the accuracy of Holy Scripture in saying not that Eve was formed but that she was *built up*, "that thereby we might understand the fact that the Lord shaped for Himself a body from Mary, and that He built for Himself the Church from His side, when that side was wounded by a spear and the mysteries of blood and water flowed out of it for our purification."¹⁹ That St. Epiphanius took the account of Eve's formation quite literally and that he saw in it a forecasting of the mystery of Christ and the Church, is beyond question.

Saint John Chrysostom in a beautiful discourse entitled *In praise of Maximus and concerning the Kind of Wives Men should Marry* dwells at some length upon the prophetic significance of the account of the making of Eve. The whole passage is worth quoting. "For just as Eve was born of the side of Adam, so we ourselves from the side of Christ. That is the meaning of 'of his flesh and of his bones'. But we all know

¹⁷MG 28, 228 sq.

¹⁸MG 43, 385 sq.

¹⁹MG 42, 729-732.

that Eve was born of the side of Adam and the Scripture says plainly that God threw Adam into an ecstasy and took one of his ribs and built it up into a woman. But how can we show that the Church was put together from the side of Christ? Well now, the Scripture brings that out. For after Christ was brought up to the Cross and fastened to it and died, 'One of the soldiers came up and pierced His side, and blood and water came out.' And from this blood and water the whole Church arose. And He testifies (to this) when He says 'Unless a man be born again of water and spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Now the blood is called spirit. And we are born through the water of baptism and nourished through the blood. You see how we are of His flesh and of His bones, because by this blood and water we are brought forth and nourished. And so, just as while Adam slept the woman was built, so when Christ had died the Church was fashioned from his side."²⁰

Practically the same teaching is presented in Chrysostom's twentieth homily on the letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians. It is in baptism that we are born and share in Christ's life, become His body and are said to be 'of His flesh and of His bones.' There are heretics who deny this, but let us remember that "Adam was formed, Christ was born; from the side of Adam came out corruption, from the side of Christ life arose."²¹

One of the opponents of St. John Chrysostom in the court of Constantinople, Severian, Bishop of Gabala in Syria, in his fifth oration *On the Creation of the World* finds the picture of Christ in the whole account of Eve's formation. "But see the image of Christ everywhere. God did not take the rib from Adam before casting him into a deep sleep. Why? Sin was destined to originate from the rib, in as much as it entered (the world) through the woman. The Saviour came bringing

²⁰MG 51, 229 sq.

²¹MG 62, 139.

from His side water and blood, water to wash away our sins, blood to furnish us the mystery. Behold the figure. Adam sleeps, the rib is taken. Sleep comes over the body of Christ; His side is opened, that He might unravel the old tragedy with a new solution. I speak of His sleep on the Cross."²²

Theodoret of Cyrus, noted for his share in the Nestorian controversy and one of the most prolific of the Greek writers, gives expression to the same idea in his commentary on the letter to the Ephesians: "Just as Eve was formed from Adam, so we from the Lord Christ. For we are joined together with Him in baptism, we rise with Him and we eat His body and drink His blood."²³ In his treatise *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, speaking of the causes of the Passion, he says: "His side was opened like Adam's, but no woman came forth from it who by her deceit was to give birth to death; on the contrary it was a fountain of life which by a double stream was to vivify the whole world. One of these streams in the baptistery makes us new and puts around us the stole of immortality, the other nourishes us, when born, at the divine table as milk nourishes infants."²⁴

Saint John Damascene commenting on Ephesians echoes the ideas of the earlier Greek Fathers. On the words "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and the Church," he writes: "He joined the spiritual to the carnal that He might show forth the latter as a figure of the former. In this way there comes into being a *mystery* of the truth hidden in the type; namely the taking of the woman from the man and her union with him typify Christ and the Church. For it is from Christ that we have our holiness and through holiness we are joined to Him."²⁵

²²MG 56, 482

²³MG 82, 547.

²⁴MG 75, 1468. Wrongly attributed to St. Cyril of Alexandria and found among his works in the Migne edition. Cf. B. Altaner, *Patrologie*, Freiburg im B., 1938, p. 215.

²⁵MG 95, 851.

Before passing to the Latin Fathers we may remark that while various reasons are given by some of the Greeks for the opening of Adam's side, and various figures are found in the blood which flowed from the side of Christ on the Cross, still one thing is clear among all those who treat at all of the prophecy of Adam (Gen. 2, 23) and the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians (5, 32), namely that as Eve came out of the side of Adam so the Church from the side of the Saviour. Besides Origen,²⁶ whom many of the Fathers, both Greek and Latin, reprehend severely for his allegorizing in this matter, we have found only two writers of the Eastern Church, who give reasons for the forming of Eve from Adam but make no mention of this parallel. These are St. Theophilus of Antioch²⁷ and St. Ephrem the Syrian.²⁸ Both treat the subject with references to Genesis only. For both the main reason seems to be the safeguarding of the truth of the oneness of God as the maker of both man and woman. Suffice it to say that in these two Fathers the relation to Christ and the Church is in no way denied. It is simply passed over in silence. Perhaps St. Ephrem was influenced in his treatment by St. Theophilus.²⁹ The latter, writing at the end of the second century, belonged to a period in which the Catholic doctrine on the primitive state of man was not yet well organized,³⁰ and the doctrine on the origin of woman was treated in the most fragmentary manner, if at all.

Among the Latins, the traditional parallel appears as early

²⁶Origen's denial of the literal sense of Genesis 2, 21-22 may be found in *Contra Celsum* IV, 38, MG 11, 1085-1089. For a list of the Fathers who took him to task for his rashness, see L. Méchineau, *L'Historicité des trois premiers chapitres de la Genèse*, Rome, 1910, p. 86 sq.

²⁷To *Autolycus* II, 28, MG 6, 1095.

²⁸Excerpt from *Interpretationes in Sacram Scripturam*, Rouët-Journal, *Enchiridion Patristicum*, n. 723.

²⁹For the place of St. Ephrem in the Syrian tradition cf. G. Ricciotti, *Sant' Efrem Siro*, Roma, 1925, pp. 137-144.

³⁰Cf. A. Slomkowski, *L'état primitif de l'homme dans la tradition de l'église avant Saint Augustin*, Paris, 1928, p. 69 sq.

as Tertullian. In his treatise *De Anima*, speaking of sleep in general and that of Adam in particular, he considers the sleep of Adam to be an image of death. "For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep foreshadowed the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted on His side might in like manner (as Eve was formed) be typified the Church the true mother of the living."⁸¹

Saint Zeno of Verona speaking of spiritual circumcision, our ruin through Eve and Adam, and our vivification through Christ our Lord, says that the first man was restored to his pristine state by the sacrifice consummated on the Cross. "And while He slept a happy sleep, by the thrust of the lance not a rib was torn from His side, but a spiritual body of a spiritual woman was poured out through the water and blood, that is baptism and martyrdom. In this way Adam was made new by Christ, Eve by the Church."⁸² In this text we have an instance of the variation which sometimes occurs in the explanation of the meaning of the blood which poured out of Our Lord's open side, but the essential elements of the parallel are maintained, as is evident.

The correlation of Adam and Christ, Eve and the Church, is beautifully developed in a long passage of St. Ambrose's *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*. We shall quote but a few of the most striking phrases. "The new Adam is Christ, the rib of Christ is the life of the Church . . . it is not a bodily rib but spiritual . . . this is Eve the mother of all the living . . . the mother of the living is the Church which God built up on the cornerstone of Christ Jesus. . . ."⁸³ In one of his letters, with direct reference to Ephesians 5, 32, he writes: "If therefore the marital union of Adam and Eve is a great sacrament in Christ and the Church, it is certain that as Eve was bone

⁸¹ML, 2, 723.

⁸²*Tract.* lib. 1, tr. 13, n. 10, ML 11, 352.

⁸³ML 15, 1584.

of her husband's bones and flesh of his flesh, so we are members of the body of Christ, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh."³⁴

The Ambrosiaster has this terse comment on St. Paul's exhortation to Christian wives in the fifth chapter of Ephesians: "From Christ the Church took its origin, therefore it is subject to Him; so the woman from the man that she might be submissive."³⁵

Saint Leo the Great also understands Ephesians 5, 30-32 in the traditional sense. In one of his letters while proving that Christ had a true body he adduces that text with this observation: "From the very beginning of the human race Christ was announced to all men as coming in the flesh. In the flesh, just as it is said 'they shall be two in one flesh,' there are indeed two, God and man, Christ and the Church which came forth from the flesh of her spouse when from the side of the crucified, as blood and water poured out, she received the sacrament of redemption and regeneration."³⁶

Saint Jerome in interpreting the prophetic words of Adam, as cited by St. Paul in Ephesians, clearly links up the creation of Eve from the side of Adam with the consummated matrimony of the two and finds in both a figure of the relation which exists between Christ and the Church. He denies that the whole history of Adam and Eve can be referred to Christ and the Church, but holds that the words cited by St. Paul can indeed. In them Adam really prophesied "that Our Lord and Saviour should leave His Father, God, and His mother, the heavenly Jerusalem and should come to earth for the sake of His body the Church and from His own side should make her, and because of her the Word should become flesh." St. Jerome refers in this connection to a conversation he had with St.

³⁴*Epist.* 76, 3-4, ML 16, 1260. Cf. also *In Ps.* 36, n. 37, ML 14, 986 and *In Ps.* 40, n. 13, ML 14, 1073.

³⁵ML 17, 398.

³⁶*Epist.* 59, 4, ML 54, 870-871.

Gregory of Nazianzen concerning these words of the Apostle. For St. Gregory they were full of "ineffable mysteries."³⁷

But no writer of the Christian centuries has come back so often to the prophecy contained in Genesis 2, 23 as St. Augustine. In his commentaries on Genesis, in the *De Civitate Dei*, in his sermons, in the *Ennarationes in Psalmos* and the *Tractatus in Joannis Evangelium*, there is frequent reference to the making of Eve and its significance.

First of all, the literalness of the narrative of Genesis and its reality are taken for granted as plainly evident. Thus, for example, in *Tractatus IX in Joannis Evangelium*, St. Augustine insists on the mystical meaning of the process of Eve's production and clearly supposes the historical reality of the facts which have that meaning. So he says that God might just as well have taken out Adam's rib painlessly, while Adam was awake, but He did not do so. Adam was asleep when the rib was removed, because that detail had a mystical significance. It corresponded to the death of Our Lord on the Cross.³⁸ Again in the *De Civitate Dei* he accuses of infidelity those who deny the truth of the account of the making of Adam and Eve and consider it to be a fable.³⁹

It is in the *De Genesi ad litteram* that the reality of the manner in which Eve was made is brought out most clearly and its miraculous character indicated. St. Augustine compares the production of Eve to the conception of Christ without carnal intercourse. "Both are incredible to the infidels, but for the faithful, why should the fact of Christ's conception be taken literally while that which is written of Eve is given a figurative meaning?"⁴⁰

³⁷ML 26, 535-536. Cf. also *Contra Joannem Hiersol.*, n. 22, ML 23, 372; *In Philem.*, ML 26, 609.

³⁸N. 10, ML 35, 1463 sq.

³⁹Lib. 12, cap. 23, ML 41, 373.

⁴⁰Lib. 9, cap. 15, n. 30, ML 34, 405. For an excellent discussion of St. Augustine's idea of the miracle, cf. P. de Vooght, *La notion philosophique du miracle chez saint Augustin, Recherches de Théol. Anc. et Méd.*, t. 10, 1938, pp. 317-343. Even though St. Augustine admitted that Eve's body may have been contained in the *rationes seminales* in Adam's rib, this did not prevent him from looking on its production as a special intervention of God's power and in that sense miraculous.

That the words of Adam on first seeing his wife contained a great mystery, St. Augustine, as so many others before him proved from St. Paul to the Ephesians 5, 31-32. That Adam's words were truly prophetic he shows from the fact Our Lord Himself (Mt. 19, 4) attributed them to the God who made Adam.⁴¹

Now the exact bearing of the prophecy and the mystery it contains was clearly understood by St. Augustine from the very beginning of his literary career. Furthermore, his explanation hardly varies throughout his life. And so from the time of the completion of the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* in 389 or 390, all the way through to the writing of the last book of the *De Civitate Dei*, in 426, the essentials of the parallel between Christ and the Church on the one hand and Adam and Eve on the other are brought out in striking relief. The sleep of Adam is the death of Christ, the taking out of the rib is the opening of the side with the lance, the building up of Eve out of the rib is the construction of the body of the bride of Christ, the Church, from the blood and water, i.e., the sacraments of the Church. Thus it is that the Church is the mother of all those who live in Christ, just as Eve is the mother of all living men.

Out of the numerous passages in St. Augustine a few of the most typical may be cited. One of the earliest occurs in the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*.⁴² It does not materially differ from the later treatment, but it may be omitted lest the excessive use of allegory, of which the Saint accuses himself, referring to this work in the *De Genesi ad litteram*,⁴³ render it suspect in the question of Eve.

Writing against Faustus the Manichaean, some time between 397 and 400, St. Augustine says apropos of Genesis 2, 22: "For the sleeping man a wife was made out of his side; for the dying

⁴¹*De Gen ad lit.*, lib. 9, cap. 19, n. 36, ML 34, 408.

⁴²ML 34, 215-216.

⁴³Lib. 8, cap. 2, n. 5, ML 34, 373 sq.

Christ the Church was made by the sacrament of the blood which flowed out of His side after His death. Eve is called the mother of the living, for she was made from the side of her husband; and the Lord said in the Gospel, 'If a man does not eat my flesh and drink my blood, he shall not have life in himself.' So all the minute details of this part of Genesis foretell of Christ and the Church, whether in good Christians or in bad. For it was not in vain that the Apostle said 'Adam who is the figure of the one who is to come,' and also 'A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and the Church.' For who does not acknowledge that Christ left His Father in such a way 'that being in the form of God, He did not think it rapine to be equal to God, but emptied Himself taking the form of a slave'; that He left His mother, the Synagogue of the Jews, which clung in a carnal manner to the Old Testament, and adhered to His wife the holy Church, so that in the peace of the New Testament they might be two in one flesh? For being God before His Father, through whom we were made, He became one of us by the flesh, in order that we might be able to be the body of Him who is our head."⁴⁴

The same interpretation of Genesis appears in the twenty-second book of the *De Civitate Dei*. In his argument for the resurrection of woman in the form of her own sex, he insists that the wisdom and goodness of God will be praised for having made woman. "For at the beginning of the human race the woman was made of a rib taken from the side of the man while he slept, for it seemed fit that even then Christ and His Church should be foreshadowed in this event. For that sleep of the man was the death of Christ, whose side, as He hung lifeless upon the Cross, was pierced with a spear, and there flowed from it blood and water, and these we know to be the sacraments by which the Church is 'built up.' For Scripture used this

⁴⁴Lib. 12, cap. 8, ML 42, 258.

very word not saying 'He formed' or 'framed' but 'built her up into a woman'; whence also the Apostle speaks of the *edification* of the body of Christ which is the Church. The woman therefore is a creature of God even as the man; but by her creation from man unity is commended; and the manner of her creation prefigured, as has been said, Christ and the Church. He then who created both sexes will restore both.⁴⁵

It is true that St. Augustine sometimes finds significance in details in a way that savors of a refined allegorical exegesis, but in the few salient features of the parallel he is always consistent, and perfectly in accord with his predecessors among the Greek and Latin writers of the Church. Moreover he constantly harks back to the *mystery* contained in the way in which Eve's body was made.

The last mentioned feature of Augustine's exposition is all the more telling in view of the fact that, contrary to many of the Fathers, he denied that there was any special reference to the dignity of man in the way in which Adam's body was produced out of the slime of the earth.⁴⁶

Through the centuries down to the days of St. Thomas, the Latin writers echoed these thoughts of St. Augustine, sometimes almost in his very words. The relation of Adam and Eve to Christ, in its chief elements, is invariably set forth. A mere enumeration of these authors will suffice: St. Prosper of Aquitaine,⁴⁷ Blessed Quodvultdeus,⁴⁸ St. Maximus of Turin,⁴⁹

⁴⁵Cap. 17, ML 41, 778 sq. cf. also *De Gen ad lit.*, lib. 8, cap. 5, n. 10; lib. 9, cap. 13, n. 23; lib. 9, cap. 18, n. 33 sq., ML 34, 376, 402, 406 sq.; *De Civ. Dei*, lib. 12, cap. 27 and lib. 14, cap. 22, ML 41, 376, 430; *In Jo.*, tr. 15, n. 8; tr. 120, n. 2, ML 35, 1513, 1953; *In Ps.* 40, n. 10; *In Ps.* 56, n. 11, ML 36, 461, 668; *In Ps.* 103, *Sermo* 4, n. 6; *In Ps.* 126, n. 7; *In Ps.* 127, n. 11; *In Ps.* 138, n. 2, ML 37, 1381, 1672, 1684, 1784 sq.; *Sermo* 5, n. 3; *Sermo* 218, n. 14, ML 38, 55, 1087.

⁴⁶*De Gen ad lit.*, lib. 6, cap. 12, nn. 20-22, ML 34, 347 sq. cf. E. C. Messenger, *op. cit.* pp. 183-196.

⁴⁷*Lib. Sent. Aug.*, ML 51, 478.

⁴⁸*Lib. de Promiss. et Praedictionibus Dei*, cap. 1, n. 3, ML 51, 735. Concerning the authorship of this work cf. B. Altaner *op. cit.* p. 288.

⁴⁹*Homi'* 55, *Sermo* 30 *de Paschate*, ML 57, 355, 596.

St. Avitus of Vienne,⁵⁰ St. Fulgentius,⁵¹ Eugypsius,⁵² St. Cesarius of Arles,⁵³ St. Gregory of Tours,⁵⁴ St. Isidore of Seville,⁵⁵ St. Hildefonsus of Toledo,⁵⁶ St. Bede the Venerable,⁵⁷ Rabanus Maurus,⁵⁸ Hugh of St. Victor,⁵⁹ Hervé of Bourgdieu.⁶⁰ No doubt a more extensive research would unearth other instances of this tradition of the Latin Church. Nor have we found any contradiction of it in any of the Fathers or writers, whom we were able to consult, up to the thirteenth century.

It is well known that Cajetan in his commentary on Genesis denied the literal historical sense of the texts referring to the production of Eve, but it is worthy of note that in his commentary on the *Summa* of St. Thomas, he gives no hint of wishing to depart from a strictly literal interpretation.

Of the post-Tridentine commentators on Genesis or the Epistle to the Ephesians we were able to read Estius,⁶¹ Tirinus,⁶² Cornelius a Lapide,⁶³ Bernardine a Piconio,⁶⁴ Menochius,⁶⁵ Natalis Alexander.⁶⁶ Of these Estius alone passes over in silence the prophetic significance of the formation of Eve. He finds the "great mystery" in this that Christ left His Father and His mother (the Synagogue or the heavenly Jerusalem) and by taking flesh is united with the Church, which is composed of

⁵⁰*Libelli de spiritalis historiae gestis*, lib. 1, *De initio mundi*, ML 59, 327.

⁵¹*Epist.* III, 5, 8, ML 65, 327.

⁵²*Thesaurus ex S. Aug. operibus*, cap. 57, ML 62, 668.

⁵³*Sermo* 91, 2, ML 39, 1920.

⁵⁴*Hist. Francorum*, lib. 1, n. 1, ML 71, 163.

⁵⁵*Quaestiones in Vet. Test.*, cap. 3, nn. 8-11, ML 83, 217-218.

⁵⁶*De cognitione baptismi*, VI and VII, ML 96, 114.

⁵⁷*Hexaem.* I, ML 91, 38 and 51 sq. cf. also *Comment. in Pentateuchum*, *ibid.*, col. 210.

⁵⁸*In Epistolam ad Ephesios*, ML 112, 406.

⁵⁹*De Sacramentis*, lib. 1, pars 6, cap. 36, ML 176, 284.

⁶⁰*In Epistolam ad Ephesios*, ML 181, 1268 sq.

⁶¹*In omnes D. Pauli epist.*, edition of Mayence, 1859, vol. II, p. 404 sq.

⁶²*In Univ. S. Scripturam*, edition of Turin, 1883, vol. IV, p. 674.

⁶³*Commentarii*, edition of Milan, 1870, tom. 17, p. 727 sq.

⁶⁴*Triplex Expositio*, edition of Paris 1872, vol. II, p. 345.

⁶⁵*Commentarii totius S. Scripturae*, Venice 1758, tom. I, p. 3; tom. II, p. 371.

⁶⁶*Comment. in Omnes Epist. S. Pauli*, Paris 1768, p. 318.

men, and thereby is bound to her with an indissoluble love. In this interpretation Estius adopts without argument only one of the secondary items of St. Augustine's exegesis. The other authors named are in line with the tradition of the Fathers and of the theologians of the Middle Ages.

In conclusion it may be worth while to point out that not all of the Fathers insist on Eve's being made from Adam's rib, in the strict sense, as did St. Augustine⁶⁷ and many of the scholastic theologians. Perhaps this fact would justify those who are satisfied with maintaining that Eve was made from matter taken from Adam's side, but not necessarily from his rib in the literal anatomic sense of that word. Such an interpretation would not as a matter of fact be out of conformity with the original Hebrew text. The point is secondary. What is of importance in the question is to exclude an exegesis which would reduce the words describing the creation of the first woman to a merely symbolic expression of the physical and moral relation existing between her and her husband, the first man. Such an exegesis can not be squared with the consensus of the Fathers of the Church and the great number of Catholic writers who have followed in their footsteps. We must hold as unquestionable that Eve's body was produced by a special operation of God's power from matter taken from the side of Adam.

⁶⁷Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* lib. 9, cap. 13, n. 23, ML 34, 402; *In Jo. tr.* 15, n. 8, ML 35, 1513.