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Eve's Sin, Woman's Fault:

A Medieval View

by Pierre Payer

The fall of Adam and Eve has been a favourite theme in literary and religious literature down through the ages both with Christian and non-Christian authors.(1) The literary development reached a high point in Milton's Paradise Lost which apparently incorporates many of the literary and religious themes of its predecessors.(2) The theological development of the theme will probably continue as long as religious thinkers believe the subject of original sin worthy of their consideration. Except in very fundamentalist circles, the theological discussion of the persons of Adam and Eve came to an end among sophisticated theologians in the wake of modern Biblical criticism. It is more common today to discuss the Genesis account of the fall in terms of the mythology of parallel Near Eastern accounts. However, in pre-critical days questions concerning the persons of Adam and Eve as historical persons were very pertinent to the theological discussions.

In all of these discussions Eve is a most complex figure--archetypal woman, type of the Church born from the side

of Christ and anti-type of Mary the sinless mother of Jesus. As archetypal woman Eve suggests the female as devious temptress, laying snares for unsuspecting males, an image expressed in both the literary and theological traditions. In Paradise Lost Milton places on Adam's lips an expression of the negative image of woman as representative as any:

> O why did God,
> Creator wise, that peopl'd highest Heav'n
> With Spirits Masculine, create at last
> This novelty on Earth, this fair defect
> Of Nature, and not fill the World at once
> With Men as Angels without Feminine,
> Or find some other way to generate
> Mankind? This mischief had not then befall'n,
> And more that shall befall, innumerable
> Disturbances on Earth through Female snares,
> And strait conjunction with this Sex.
> (X, 888-898)(3)

In attempting to understand and interpret the negative portrayal of Eve it is not always easy to discern whether the negative images are based on what she did as a person, irrespective of her sex, or whether what she did is to be explained because of her sex. However, the latter usually seems to be the case. Such negative attitudes and images have become imbedded in the intellectual superstructure of the culture and at certain periods like ours are detected there by the reflective consciousness; but if they became imbedded in this way there must have been cultural vehicles which promoted and fostered them. Evans has chronicled a wide array of such vehicles from ancient times which no doubt kept these images alive, both in the popular imagination and in the more lofty realms of religious discourse. The simple presence and popularity of the Bible can account somewhat for fostering the negative image of Eve, but the Bible has been notoriously open to interpretation through popular preaching, liturgical ritual, artistic representation, Biblical commentary and theological reflection. For centuries these last two frequently went hand in hand--the theology drawing on Patristic, Biblical commentaries.

While Evans provides ample evidence of the continued interest in the story of the fall up to Milton's day, he neglects to consider one important stream which developed the theme of the fall. I refer to the tradition of medieval professional theological literature which began to develop in the twelfth century. I would like to focus on a theological question in this literature which probed the matter of Eve's sin and its relative gravity in comparison to the sin of Adam.The question was clear

and forthright: "Who sinned more grievously, Adam or Eve?" It has a long history in medieval theological reflection and, I would suggest, is a good example of an important vehicle which continued and fostered a negative image of Eve as symbol of weak and wily woman. To appreciate the significance of this question it must be remembered that this theological literature was created primarily for the education and training of priests who, in turn, were the principal educators of the common people through their preaching. And the answer to the question, whatever it might be, could only gain credence as long as certain beliefs about women were seriously entertained and reinforced.

The twelfth century witnessed the beginning of a systematic theological literature in the form of collections of questions which reached a more or less final form in Peter Lombard's Books of Sentences about the middle of the century. This work became the standard theological text in the schools and later in the thirteenth-century universities: to study theology was to study this work and comment on it in addition to the standard Biblical study.(4) This did not necessarily mean a slavish adherence to the text of the Lombard and to his solutions, for soon the commentary on the Books of Sentences provided the occasion and context for independent theological reflection. To have been incorporated into the Lombard's work was to become, in a sense, institutionalized and to be assured some discussion by later theologians. But the questions were not discussed simply because they had been raised by the Lombard. Current theological interest dictated whether a question would receive any treatment beyond a brief mention, and sometimes a minor question in the Sentences became the occasion for an elaborate development of a theological theme.

There are many theological themes connected with the story of Adam and Eve and the fall of man which will not be discussed here. My main focus will be on the question: "Who sinned more grievously, Adam or Eve?" In particular, I shall not be concerned with the question of the nature of the sin, although there seems to have been fairly general agreement that it was the sin of pride; in fact, as we shall see, Thomas Aquinas in his Summa of Theology discussed the question of the gravity of the sin in his treatise on pride, not in the context of his discussion of creation and the fall. However, it should be remembered that the sin in question is related to original sin which was believed to have been passed on through Adam to each individual of the human race. The question we shall be examining is fundamentally addressing itself to the beginnings of original sin, which was of no little interest to the theologians of the period.

Although the central text for the medievals on this subject was from the

Books of Sentences (Book II, Distinction 22), the whole discussion is, as is so often the case, dominated by certain authoritative texts of St. Augustine. Robert of Melun, writing about the middle of the twelfth century, in commenting on I Timothy 2, 14, can say: "So because he [Adam] sinned knowingly, it seems that he sinned more grievously than Eve who sinned out of ignorance. But Augustine says that the woman sinned more grievously than the man."(5) Actually Augustine does not say this, but he had been used to support the opinion so often that it was natural for Robert to believe that it was Augustine's opinion. In view of this, I will first outline the position of Augustine with regard to the sin of Adam and Eve from his Literal Commentary on Genesis since this is the primary text for the subsequent discussion. Secondly, I will examine the form of the argument presented by Peter Lombard in his Books of Sentences since this is the locus classicus for future discussions of the subject. Finally, I shall look at three thirteenth-century university professors (Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas) in order to see whether the answer to the question receives any further elaboration or refinement. My concern is to analyse the bases for the answer which, although certain refinements are made and distinctions introduced, is unanimous that Eve sinned more grievously than Adam.

The Scriptural account of the fall is to be found in Genesis 3, and Augustine discusses the sin of Adam and Eve at the end of Book XI of his Literal Commentary on Genesis.(6) A text of St. Paul tends to give the discussion its particular orientation: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and was in sin."(I Tim. 2, 14) At face value, on the basis of this text it would seem that since Eve was deceived and Adam was not, Adam's sin should be the more serious since he sinned in the clear light of day. However, as we shall see, this is not going to be the case.

Before continuing it should be noted that Augustine, writing in the fifth century, was not the first author to discuss the sin of Adam and Eve. He is, however, the principal textual source for the subsequent theological discussion in the later medieval period. In fact, Augustine himself may have been influenced by a very early non-Christian source in the person of Philo Judaeus, to whom he may have been introduced by his older contemporary and mentor, Ambrose of Milan. Two interesting examples from Philo's Questions and Answers on Genesis are suggestive in this regard:

> Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man? In order that they may be potentially mortal he deceives by trickery and artfulness. And woman is more accustomed to be deceived than man. For his judgment, like his

> body, is masculine and is capable of dissolving or destroying the designs of deception; but the judgment of woman is more feminine, and because of softness she easily gives way and is taken in by plausible falsehoods which resemble the truth.(7)

And:

> Why does the woman first touch the tree and eat of its fruit, and afterwards the man also take of it? According to the literal meaning the priority (of the woman) is mentioned with emphasis. For it was fitting that man should rule over immortality and everything good, but woman over death and everything vile.(8)

Augustine begins by noting that the serpent's question and the response of the woman make it clear that her transgression was inexcusable (presumably because the verbal exchange indicates that she did what she did consciously and that she could not later plead forgetfulness of God's prohibition with regard to the forbidden fruit).(9) So after looking at the fruit and not believing that God meant the warning of death literally, she ate and--perhaps with a few persuasive words--gave it to Adam to eat.(10) After a discussion of the expulsion from Paradise and a brief discussion of some theories as to the nature of the sin, Augustine raises a difficulty: if Adam was then spiritual at least in mind, how could he believe the words of the serpent who said that God forbad them to eat of the fruit of the tree out of jealousy? It would be strange if a man endowed with a spiritual mind could believe this. Augustine clearly intends the question to be rhetorical and the form is conditional only in its grammar. He had already established that Adam was spiritual in mind and the implication is that Adam could not believe the serpent.(11) Consequently, woman was introduced since she is of little understanding and she lives by bodily sense and not spiritual sense. Augustine says:

> And because he could not believe him is this not why the woman was introduced, she who was of little intelligence and up to then had perhaps lived according to bodily sense and not according to the sense of the mind? And is this not the reason why the Apostle Paul does not attribute the image of God to her? For he says: "The man must not cover his head because he is the image and glory of God; the woman is the glory of man." (I Cor. 11, 7)(12)

However, the interesting point here is not that Eve happened to sin first and induced Adam to do the same; rather, Adam could not have been deceived and so the weakness of woman was necessary if the devil was to have any success against Adam.(13) Adam's strength and superiority were no match for the devil, so Satan had to work through a

woman. In another context Augustine says:

> Skilled in wrong-doing, the Devil had not deserted her [Job's wife] when he had destroyed her sons, for he had learned with Eve how necessary woman was for the tempter. But this time he did not find another Adam whom he could entice through a woman.(14)

Augustine does not deny that Adam sinned, but he asks why he sinned. Adam sinned out of a friendly benevolence towards his wife who, he feared, would be overcome by sadness if she were alienated from him. Adam went along with Eve out of consideration for her need of him and of his feelings towards her. Admittedly, because of a certain pride he wanted to experiment in the eating since he saw that Eve did not drop dead after eating the fruit, but he could never have believed the words of the serpent, because of his spiritual mind. Although the question is not raised, it is not unreasonable to suspect what Augustine's answer would be to whether Eve sinned more grievously than Adam. Eve's proud belief in the words of the serpent seems to outweigh Adam's proud curiosity to which he succumbed because of his friendly benevolence towards Eve.(15)

As already mentioned, in the twelfth century the question of the relative gravity of the sins of Adam and Eve was incorporated into Peter Lombard's Books of Sentences.(16) He asks whether Adam's pride was the same as Eve's, whether Adam believed and willed the same as the woman believed and willed, who sinned more grievously, and finally he discusses certain objections to his response to the last question.(17) The responses to the questions all use the basic text of Augustine to conclude that Adam sinned less seriously than Eve.(18) However, the Lombard adds other texts of Augustine and incorporates other material from previous authors of the twelfth century. Quoting Augustine he says that Adam actually thought he was only committing a venial sin and in addition to his kind thoughts about Eve he was thinking of repentance and the mercy of God.(19) The woman sinned more grievously because of her presumptuous pride and she sinned against herself, her neighbour and God, while Adam only sinned against himself and God. And finally, we can gather from her greater punishment, that Eve's sin was greater than Adam's.(20)

The Lombard's replies to the objections demonstrate an early resistance to modifying the view that Eve's sin was graver than the sin of Adam. Three objections are raised to the thesis: (1) The first is the statement of Augustine that Eve does not admit her sin but blames it on another, so she is different in sex but equal in pride.(21) From this it would seem that their sins are equal. But no,

the reply is that they become equal in the excuse they give for their sins and even in the fact that they both ate the forbidden fruit; but they are still unequal and the woman has the greater sin because she wanted to be and believed she could be like God and the man did not.
(2) A second objection suggests that the man too wished to be like God. The reply is clear: while he may have wished it, he neither thought it was true nor that it could possibly come about. The Lombard here adds another reason why Adam's sin was less grave. If the man had not sinned then the human race would not have perished, corrupted by sins. The assumption seems to be that it was Eve who was ultimately responsible for Adam's sin.
(3) The final objection comes from Isidore of Seville and had already been used prior to the Lombard. In his discussion of sin, Isidore says that there are three ways of sinning, viz., through ignorance, through weakness and through conscious deliberation (industria).(22) Eve sinned through ignorance and Adam through conscious deliberation. Since Isidore says that to sin through conscious deliberation is more serious than to sin through ignorance, the implication is clear that Adam sinned more grievously than Eve.(23) The Lombard does not disagree with this account of sin and he agrees that Eve did sin through ignorance. However, he claims that she did not sin through the kind of ignorance Isidore is talking about. Her ignorance consisted in the fact that she believed that the words of the serpent were true, but she was not ignorant of God's prohibition nor was she unaware that to act contrary to it was a sin. Consequently, she cannot be excused from sin through ignorance.(24)

With the Lombard the argument received its formal structure and line of development. Medieval theologians continued to show an interest in the subject of the relative gravity of the sins of Adam and Eve and the university masters of the next century were to make their own contributions to the argument. The thirteenth-century treatment of the question is marked by three significant features: (1)the systematic formulation of grounds for the gravity of sins in general and the application of these distinctions to the question under discussion, (2) the recognition that from a certain point of view the sin of Adam could be said to be more grievous, and (3) the conclusion that nevertheless, in an absolute sense, the sin of Eve was more serious.

Alexander of Hales proposes two sets of reasons why one sin is greater than another.(25) The first set is: by reason of desire, by reason of causality and by reason of a less occasion. On these counts Eve's sin is graver since she desired to be like God, she caused Adam to sin and there was less reason for her to believe the devil than for Adam to believe his own wife. On the other hand, one sin can be greater than another because of in-

gratitude, disobedience and condemnation. On these counts Adam's sin could be considered to be greater since he was endowed with a spiritual mind because of his greater knowledge and so showed ingratitude; since he was first given the prohibition regarding the forbidden fruit and so showed greater disobedience; and since the condemnation following his sin was greater.(26) Alexander denies that Adam sinned with conscious deliberation since he did not sin through malice, but rather through a certain weakness since he did not want to sadden Eve. And he could be said to have sinned out of ignorance since he believed to be venial what was mortal. However, Alexander says that the reasons which show that Eve's sin was greater are more primary while the reasons showing Adam's sin to be greater are incidental to the main point.

St. Bonaventure agrees with Alexander on the arguments based on ingratitude and desire, but he adds further grounds for the gravity of sin.(27) If we consider the resulting corruption, then the man's sin is graver insofar as it caused sin in others; but from the point of view of the occasion the woman's sin is graver since she can be said to have corrupted her husband and so to have corrupted their descendents. We can also consider the sin from the point of view of the sinner and from the point of view of the sin itself. If we consider the matter from the point of view of the person sinning, then the man's sin is graver since he had greater gifts to begin with and was in a way set over the woman. But when we consider the sin itself, the woman's is greater on account of her impiety towards God and her evil towards her neighbour. She dishonoured God by her ambition to become like him and destroyed her neighbour by her temptation. The sin of Eve is greater than the sin of Adam and more grave if we consider what essentially pertains to sin as such; and this is shown by the fact that she was punished more and, if she went to hell, she would have received a greater punishment.

By most assessments of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas represents the culmination of creative medieval theology and so constitutes a reasonable culmination to our examination of the medieval treatment of the sins of Adam and Eve. In his independent Summa of Theology, Aquinas deals with the question in the context of the discussion of the sin of pride.(28) He claims that if we consider the persons who sinned then the sin of Adam is greater because he is more perfect than the woman; from the point of view of the kind of sin, their sins are equal since they both sinned out of pride; but as far as the species of pride is concerned the woman's sin is graver for three reasons:
(1) The woman's pride was greater since she believed the devil while the man did not believe him.
(2) The woman not only sinned herself but suggested sin to the man.

(3) The man's sin was diminished since he sinned out of a friendly benevolence through fear of saddening his wife. In reply to an objection concerning ignorance, Aquinas says that Eve's ignorance does not excuse her sin but increases it since out of her ignorance she was raised to greater pride.

We have examined some of the major theological literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and have seen that it is unanimous in agreeing that Eve sinned more grievously than Adam. Although Augustine does not explicitly discuss the question in his Literal Commentary on Genesis, his general discussion there of the sins of Adam and Eve is used to support the medieval argument. In every case the conclusion is assumed that Eve sinned more grievously because (1) she believed the suggestions of the devil that she would become a god if she ate the forbidden fruit, (2) she actually wanted to become like God and (3) she was responsible for Adam's sin and so offended against the two great commandments of love of God and neighbour. In this, her pride was greater since Adam, because of his superior intelligence, could not believe the suggestions of the devil, while Eve believed them because of her impoverished intelligence. Adam's superior intelligence might be a reason to consider his sin as graver than Eve's in one sense but, absolutely speaking, Eve's is worse. Furthermore, Eve's sin is compounded by her drawing the man into sin so she offended both God and neighbour while Adam sinned only against God.

If we examine what Adam's sin was we find that he sinned by loving too much and perhaps by a certain experimental curiosity; his sin was inordinate affection for his wife whom he did not want to alienate and sadden by refusing her request. His thoughts were concerned with mercy and forgiveness which he believed he could receive by going along with Eve and he thought this sin was only venial and so a candidate for easy forgiveness. The greater gravity of Eve's sin is further shown in her receiving the greater punishment. Finally, the clear suggestion of Isidore that Adam sinned more grievously since he sinned through conscious deliberation while Eve sinned through ignorance is universally rejected.

This is a unanimous theological opinion which persists at least from Ambrose (perhaps borrowed from Philo Judaeus), through Augustine into the systematic theological literature almost nine hundred years later. It is not simply the incorporation of a Biblical fact into the theological literature, but the incorporation and elaboration of an interpretation of a Biblical account. There is no sign that in the thirteenth century the question became a desultory exercise; each of the authors we have mentioned shows a certain creative interest in the use of authorities and

the formulation of arguments. Nor do we have a slavish repetition of the central text of Augustine. The texts suggest that in the thirteenth century there is still a critical interest in this question.

It is certainly possible to read these authors as if they were proposing purely theological opinions grounded on purely theological considerations. To do this one would have to see the argument as moving on the level of the treatment of the deeds of persons irrespective of their sex, but in the light of the actual arguments used, this position would be hard to maintain. Adam and Eve are types and symbols of male and female and their sins are accounted for by their respective sexual natures and the conclusions are, to say the least, not complimentary to the female. We have here a cultural, intellectual vehicle for basic attitudes towards male and female which carried these attitudes through history for a least nine hundred years.

On the one hand, a very negative image of Eve is maintained and, on the other, this image is supported through the maintenance of basically negative beliefs concerning women. Although we studied only one question out of the hundreds of theological questions of the period, I would suggest that attitudes and values are usually not carried on by one huge, central vehicle. The vehicles are diffuse and multi-faceted, pervading a culture, reflected in its various institutions and exposed by the piece-meal analysis of facets of that culture and these institutions. The question we have examined is a sign, is symptomatic of an attitude towards female nature as intellectually inferior, subordinate to man, easy prey to the suggestions of evil, which can turn man away from his superior position. For this reason it was believed good that woman be subject to man's dominance; and because of all of this, childbirth is her punishment. While the existence of the question is a sign and expression of an attitude, its continuance in the literature must have had some reinforcing effect. A culture, social or theological, does not long expend its intellectual energies on questions which do not concern it nor respond with answers it does not believe.(29) In this, Eve is more than an individual; she is the archetypal woman symbolizing the beliefs of a culture about its women.(30)

Further soundings suggest that the comparative principle (woman as weaker and more sinful) in the arguments given to the question just examined is operative in other areas of medieval thought and life, but at this time I would not suggest any firm conclusions. However, there is an interesting and most influential work written at the end of the fifteenth century (ca. 1486) which I would like to mention by way of conclusion. The Malleus Maleficarum (The

Witch Hammer) is a handbook written for members of the Inquisition to aid them in the prosecution of witches.(31) In the first part of this work the question is raised as to why it is that women are chiefly addicted to evil superstitions. The response is a virtual anthology of the whole misogynist tradition which, although interesting, is not of direct concern here.(32) What is relevant is that the comparative principle of argument is operative and the presence of Eve-archetypal woman is felt throughout. Perhaps one example might suffice:

> For though the devil tempted Eve to sin, yet Eve seduced Adam. And as the sin of Eve would not have brought death to our soul and body unless the sin had afterwards passed on to Adam, to which he was tempted by Eve, not by the devil, therefore she is more bitter than death.(33)

As is well known, these attitudes survived long after the fifteenth century. In 1928 the translator of The Malleus Maleficarum had this to say in defense of the anti-feminist views of the work:

> Possibly what will seem even more amazing to modern readers is the misogynic trend of various passages, and these not of the briefest nor least pointed. However, exaggerated as these may be, I am not altogether certain that they will not prove a wholesome and needful antidote in this feministic age, when the sexes seem confounded, and it appears to be the chief object of many females to ape the man, an indecorum by which they not only divest themselves of such charm as they might boast, but lay themselves open to the sternest reprobation in the name of sanity and common-sense.(34)

Twentieth-century introductions to a fifteenth-century handbook for the prosecution of witches are a long way from medieval handbooks of theology. However, each represents in its own way the employment of a basic principle of argument which was suggested in the early patristic period, elaborated and structured in the medieval period and employed with deadening logic in The Malleus Maleficarum. Today there is a reflective consciousness in some circles which wants to do more than correct social dislocations caused by discriminatory practices against women; it wants to identify and understand the cultural sources for these social and attitudinal anomalies. The sources are rooted in our history and our history has surely received the stamp of centuries of theological concern. Perhaps this study might be extended forward beyond the end of the thirteenth century and expanded into areas of popular preaching, liturgical documents and artistic representation. The Malleus Maleficarum suggests the possible fruitfulness of such an undertaking.

NOTES

1. For a useful survey of both the literary and religious literature see, J. M. Evans, 'Paradise Lost' and the Genesis Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). For a survey of the theme in religious literature in particular see, N.P. Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin. A Historical and Critical Study (London, 1924).

2. See Evans, op. cit.

3. In adducing this text I do not want to insist on a definitive interpretation of this particular passage. But even if we entertain the view that Adam is speaking out of the depths of blinding despair, nonetheless the despair is expressed in this particular way. For the suggestion concerning despair see, E.L. Marilla, The Central Problem of Paradise Lost: the Fall of Man (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 24 and p. 36, n. 25. Note, as Merritt Hughes in his edition of Milton suggests, Adam's speech is quite reminiscent of a similar speech in Euripides:

> Women! This coin which men find counterfeit!
> Why, Why, Lord Zeus, did you put them in the world,
> in the light of the sun? If you were so determined
> to breed the race of man, the source of it
> should not have been women.
> (Hippolytus, lines 616-620)

4. Peter Lombard, Sententiae in IV libris distinctae. A third edition of this work is being issued, and the first two Books have appeared (Grottaferrata, 1971); I shall use this edition. In what follows the citation of a Latin title indicates that there is no English translation of the work. Where an English translation does exist it alone will be cited.

5. Robert of Melun, Quaestiones [theologicae] de Epistolis Pauli, ed. R.M. Martin, Oeuvres de Robert de Melun (Louvain, 1938), Vol. II, p. 280.

6. No English translation of this work exists but there is a Latin edition with facing French translation which I shall use. Page references are to this volume: Augustine, La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (VIII-XII), traduction, introduction, et notes par P.A. Agaësse et A. Solignac, Bibliothèque Augustinienne, Oeuvres de Saint Augustine, 49 (Desclée de Brouwer, 1972). The Latin title of the work is De Genesi ad litteram which I abbreviate to De Gen. Translations from this work are my own.

7. Philo Judaeus, Supplement I. Questions and Answers on Genesis, tr. R. Marcus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1953), p. 33, p. 20.

8. Ibid., q. 37, p. 22.

9. See Genesis 3, 1-5; Augustine, De Gen., XI, 30, 38 (pp. 292-294).

10. See Genesis 3, 6 and 2, 17; Aug., De Gen., XI, 30, 39 (p. 294).

11. Aug., De Gen., XI, 42, 58 (p. 322). And see Aug., De Gen., VI, 28, 39 (Vol. I, p. 504): "Therefore, according to this view, Adam had an animal body not only before he was in paradise but even when he was in paradise; however, in the interior man he was spiritual according to the image of his creator." It is interesting to note that this view is extended to men and women as types; see Ambrose: "The serpent is a type of the pleasures of the body. The woman stands for our senses and the man, for our minds." Ambrose, Paradise, tr. J.J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 42 (New York, 1961), 15, 73, p. 351. Cf. Philo, "In the allegorical sense, however, woman is a symbol of sense, and man, of mind." op. cit., q. 37, p. 22. Augustine also says much the same: "What, therefore, in one person are mind and concupiscence (for the one rules, the other is ruled; the one dominates, the other is subdued), that in two human beings, man and woman, is represented according to the sex of the body." The Work of Monks, tr. M.S. Muldowney, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 16 (New York, 1952), 32, 40, p. 393.

12. Aug., De Gen., XI, 42, 58 (pp. 322-324). Augustine is not suggesting that woman is radically incapable of receiving this image, but she had not yet received this privilege and perhaps would only receive it gradually under the leadership and teaching of man, ibid., p. 324.

13. See Augustine: ". . . and misusing it [a serpent's body] as his instrument he conversed deceitfully with woman. In so doing he no doubt began with the lower member of that human couple in order to arrive gradually at the whole. Presumably he did not think that the man was readily gullible or that he could be snared by his own mistake, but only if he gave way to the mistake of another." The City of God against the Pagans, Books XII-XV, tr. Philip Levine (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) XIV, 11, pp. 328-330. Evans, op. cit., refers to several literary developments of this theme in which Satan actually tries first with Adam but is unsuccessful so he goes off to tempt Eve, see pp. 159-160 (Genesis B), pp. 199-200 (Mystère d'Adam), and p. 208 (Adamus Exul).

14. Augustine, Patience, tr. L. Meagher, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 16 (New York, 1952), chp. 12, pp. 245-246. See Ambrose: "The male endures your defects and your feminine levities. Can you not bear with your husband? Adam was deceived by Eve, not Eve by Adam. It is right that he whom the woman enticed to do wrong should assume the office of guide, lest he fall once more because of feminine instability." Hexameron (The Six Days of Creation), tr. J.J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 42 (New York, 1961), 5, 7, 18, pp. 173-174. And cf. Augustine, Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, tr. D.J. Kavanagh, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 11 (New York, 1951), 1, 12, 34, p. 53.

15. See Augustine, De Gen., XI, 42, 59-60 (pp. 324-326).

16. However, he was not the first to raise the question in the twelfth century. Abelard in his Expositio in Hexaemeron discusses the superiority of man over woman and says that this is shown by the fact that Adam could not be seduced by the serpent. See the discussion in Patrologia Latina (PL) 178, 760D-761D. In the Sic et Non 55, "That Eve alone was seduced not Adam, and the contrary," Abelard adduces the central text of Augustine. The question as to who sinned more grievously, Adam or Eve, was explicitly raised by two works written several years prior to the Lombard; see Summa sententiarum III, 6 (PL 176, 97-98), and Hugh of St. Victor, On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith I, 7, 10, tr. R.J. Deferrari (The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951), pp. 124-25. From a table of chapters, which is all we have for this matter, we can conclude that Robert of Melun had projected an immense discussion of this question and related material; see Robert of Melun, Sententiae, ed. R.M. Martin, Oeuvres de Robert de Melun (Louvain, 1948), Vol. III. 1, p. 128 ff. beginning at question 108 and running to q. 216.

17. Peter Lombard op. cit., Book II, Distinction 22.

18. The time period between the fifth century and the twelfth is indeed a long time but it must be remembered that the influence of Augustine was a constant and profound presence both conceptually and textually during this period. The use of Augustine in the topic we are discussing is representative of a certain methodology of the time and of his overwhelming authority.

19. Aug.; "Nevertheless, in so far as he had no experience of the divine severity, Adam could be deceived in believing that his transgression was merely venial. And, therefore, he was merely mistaken concerning the judgment that would follow his attempt to excuse himself." The City of God XIV, 11, tr. G.G. Walsh and G. Monahan, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 14 (New York, 1952), pp. 378-379. For Adam's thinking of repentance and mercy, see Hugh of St. Victor, op. cit., p. 125. In one passage Augustine suggests that both Adam and Eve may have hoped for future forgiveness, see De Gen., XI, 31, 41 (p. 298). And see Ambrose: "But the weaker sex begins by an act of disobedience, whereas the stronger sex is more liable to feelings of shame and forgiveness. The female furnished the occasion for wrong doing; the male, the opportunity to feel ashamed." Paradise, chp. 12, tr. cit., p. 349.

20. All seem to agree that Eve's punishment (Gen. 3, 16) was greater than Adam's and this is a sign of her more serious sin. It is curious that none of the authors in this context use the rest of the text from I Timothy which continues: "Yet women will be saved by childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with modesty." (I Tim., 2, 15).

21. See Gen. 3, 13; Aug., De Gen., XI, 35, 48 (p. 308).

22. See Isidore, Liber sententiarum II, 17, 3-4 (PL 83, 620); a similar distinction in Gregory the Great, Moralium libri in Job XXV, 11 (PL 76, 339A).

23. This objection was previously raised in the Summa sententiarum III, 6 (PL 176, 98A-98B) and see Robert of Melun above, note 5.

24. Augustine, De Gen., XI, 30, 38 (p. 292) had already said that Eve's sin was inexcusable. The Lombard's views are repeated almost verbatim by two representative authors after him without any significant change. See

Peter of Poitiers, Sententiarum libri quinque II, 18, 17-25 (PL 211, 1011-1013), and Alan of Lille in P. Glorieux, ed., "La Somme 'Quoniam homines' d'Alain de Lille," Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age 28 (1953) 310-312.

25. See Alexander of Hales, Summa theologica, secunda pars secundi libri, inq. 2, Tract 3, q. 1, title 1, c. 4, a. 2 (Quaracchi, 1930), Vol. III, 209-210. William of Auxerre (Summa aurea, 1500 ed.) asks whether Eve's sin was greater and answers in the affirmative (62va). He introduces an objection which seems to be from Alan of Lille (op. cit., p. 301) although William claims Jerome as authority (Comm. in Ezechielem, V, 16, PL 25, 157A), and it is taken up again by Alexander of Hales. The objection claims that where there is a greater gift of knowledge the sin is to be considered more faultworthy. In each case the reply is made that while it is true that Adam had a greater gift of knowledge, in the total picture Eve's sin is greater--an additional example of the resistance to granting that Adam's sin was greater in any significant way.

26. This seems to be a reference to the fact that we are all condemned because original sin arose through Adam's sin.

27. Bonaventure, Commentaria in secundum librum Sententiarum D. 22, art. 1, 2.3, Opera omnia (Quarrachi, 1885), Vol. II, 520-521.

28. Thomas Aquinas, Summa of Theology 2-2, 163, 4; written in the early 70's of the thirteenth century. In his earlier commentary on Peter Lombard (Scriptum super libros Sententiarum II, d. 22, q. 1, a. 3) Aquinas follows the previous theological tradition. Eve's sin was more grievous for two reasons: (1) she sinned solely out of pride while Adam's pride was tempered by the amicable kindness he felt towards his wife, and (2) the woman's pride was greater than Adam's since she was moved solely by the words of the serpent; she believed that what the serpent said could come about. On the other hand, Adam's judgment was not deflected into believing the words of the serpent. Consequently, the woman's will was unalloyed in her desire for the divine likeness while Adam's was imperfect since he doubted whether it could actually happen.

29. This is not to deny that in the history of thought questions have become ossified and repeated over a long period of time because of rigid formalization and intellectual lethargy. But the question we have examined shows no signs of these traits. It was admittedly not center stage like the questions regarding universals or the plurality of forms, but perhaps this is because it meshed so smoothly with accepted beliefs about Eve and women.

30. It is with some hesitation that I suggest the argument that perhaps one of the reasons why such beliefs persisted so long is because the writing of theology was in the hands of men. However, the suggestion seems to be inescapable and it is difficult to imagine women interpreting the Genesis episode in the way it was interpreted by the medieval theologians.

31. See Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, The Malleus Maleficarum, tr. Montague Summers (New York: Dover, 1971; reprint of 1928 translation).

32. See The Malleus Maleficarum, Part 1, q. 6, pp. 41-48.

33. The Malleus Maleficarum, p. 47. In another place it is claimed that men are not as culpable in their relations with Succubus devils as women with incubus devils "for men, being by nature intellectually stronger than women, are more apt to abhor such practices." Ibid., p. 164. A previous passage promises that the question of incubus devils "will be discussed more fully later with reference to the qualities of the feminine sex." Ibid., p. 114. Unfortunately, the discussion is not found in this edition.

34. The Malleus Maleficarum, "Introduction to 1928 Edition," 1971 reprint, p. XXXIX. The translator did not see fit to emend these remarks in the "Introduction to the 1948 Edition." These otherwise erudite introductions are seriously marred by similar attitudes towards other subjects.

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