

THE NEW EVE

FRANK DUFF

IT is Catholic teaching that Mary was part of the original idea of the Holy Trinity for mankind; that she was viewed at the same time as Our Lord Himself. The two destinies were thus intertwined from before the ages. That had to be because of the nature of God's plan of Redemption. He foresaw the Fall and also He prepared for the uplifting. The way in which He proposed to accomplish it was the way in which it has been enacted, i.e., through a woman. That woman was to bring forth Him who would save the world. In thinking of the Redeemer, the Mother had to be thought of and in a human sense, first, because she was to be His Mother. Actually the plan went further than that. It would have been possible to arrange that a woman would bring Our Lord into the world, and yet play a comparatively small part. That is, it could have been that she would have a child and yet know little about who He was or what was going to happen. Such is the normal Protestant assessment of Our Lady. They have to admit—because it is Scriptural—that she was Mother of the Redeemer. But after that they think it necessary to diminish her.

MARY'S DESTINY AND PRAYER UNIQUE

If it were the case that she had been brought in on that plane of minimum co-operation, then indeed she would have the dignity of being the Mother of One who was God and the Redeemer, but that would have fallen far short of the heights intended. The Holy Trinity planned for her a unique destiny. The Incarnation would be entrusted to her decision and then to her charge. She would be asked if she would receive the Saviour of mankind. If she refused, the Redemption would not take place. This is a thought staggering to confront.

But even before that, she would be vitally active. Her prayer for the coming of the Messiah was to be the main instrument of drawing Him down. It must be realised that when Our Lady prayed, it was a prayer such as had never been heard before. For she was the first absolutely sinless creature who had ever lived. She was the being of all beings most dear to God. She was the Immaculate Conception. All that He could give to her, He gave. All that she could receive, she received. She was perfectly united to Him; she was, as the Angel's message said, "filled with the Holy Ghost." Her will was one with that of God Himself; her prayer was irresistible, and from her earliest days that prayer was a petition for the coming of the Redeemer. Long before she knew that she was to be the means of that coming, her soul had stood erect before God pleading for the salvation of the world.

Of course that potent prayer was coupled in the mind of God with all the other prayers that would be said for Redemption. Still hers was supreme; it was worth all the others put together; it was the powerful magnet that attracted Redemption.

The great founder of St. Sulpice, Olier, makes a quaint assertion: that such was the efficacy of her prayer that it lovingly compelled God to advance the time of the Saviour so that He came some years before it had been ordained.

SALVATION DEPENDED ON MARY'S CONSENT

In the richness of time the Angel Gabriel presented himself and invited her help by way of consent and motherhood. The Incarnation would only take place if she consented! Of all ideas I suppose that this one is the most extreme. Is it possible that God deliberately made the salvation of all mankind, from the time of Adam to the end of the world, depend on the decision of that young girl? The suggestion is too much for many people. In particular our separated brethren, those habitual doubters, reject it, but reject it foolishly. For after all there is nothing incredible about it if we only think it out. Salvation was not in peril because God had foreseen that she would agree, and He was able to build on that. Does that take away from Our Lady's part? Surely not! On the contrary would it not increase her merit that God Himself could so completely rely upon her; that when she would hear this greatest of all proposals, she would have no thought but to do His will! No matter what it involved, no matter what it cost her, her faithful acceptance could be counted on.

Nor is it to be imagined that God forced her will in the slightest. That would be the opposite of the divine idea. The saving scheme was built on the co-operation of those who were to be redeemed. This process was to be initiated and to reach its height in the co-operation of Mary, so that this decision of hers had to possess every element of perfection,

inclusive of the basic one of unfettered freedom. As man by his own free will wrought his ruin, so must he freely will his restoration.

THE MERIT OF HER CONSENT

Another point we must consider: Why was it a meritorious act for her to consent to that motherhood? This really forms a problem, because it was the desire of every Jewish girl that she might be the selected woman. The first prophecy made of Redemption was the celebrated one which is so much quoted in the Handbook, and which is contained in the chain-border of the Tessera. It is the words of Almighty God addressed to Satan: "I will put enmities between thee and the Woman, and thy seed and her Seed. She shall crush thy head." (Gen. iii. 15.) That woman was to bring forth the Child who would redeem the world. The constant tradition down through the generations of Israel was that the Redeemer would be born of a woman of their race. Every Jewish maiden prayed with desire that she would be the chosen one. Why, therefore, should there be a heroism in Our Lady's accepting something that every other maiden longed for?

Well, the deed was great and its merit was twofold. First, the ordinary Jewish maiden thought that Our Lord would come into the world in the normal way of mankind, i.e., through a father and mother. But here is an entirely different thing; that is an entry without a human father, one effected directly by the Holy Spirit. And so it represented an act of faith without equal to believe the Angel's message. Secondly, and this is vital, Our Lady knew that she was to bring into the world not merely the Eternal Son but the Redeemer as well. In other words, she understood that her Son would not be merely the occasion of joy and glory to her, but of such torture of spirit as would stir Holy Simeon to prophesy it ("Thy own soul a sword shall pierce") in the same breath as he foretold the tribulations of Jesus Himself (St. Luke ii. 34, 35). Such that the Church applies to her the exclamations of Scripture: "Come and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow . . . Mighty it is as the ocean." She knew that He was not going to be an earthly king as the ordinary Jews expected, but a Redeemer according to what we now know, and according to what the more enlightened Jews were able to reason out from the prophecies of the Old Testament.

If the Old Testament be studied attentively, it will be seen that it was not merely a triumphant figure that was being told of, but a man of sorrows, the most abject of men; wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins; as it were a leper; one struck by God and afflicted (Isaias liii. 3-5); a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people (Ps. xxi. 7); rejected, crucified. This is in Holy Writ for all to read.

The Jews read it and the thoughtful ones among them were able to discern what was at stake. It is absolutely certain that Our Lady saw far more clearly than they. She knew that she was being asked to devote her Child to that unutterable fate; to offer Him in sacrifice, to destroy that unparalleled Person. And this for the sake of an indifferent and unthankful race.

Looking at that sacrifice from now, even we with all our coarseness of perception can see how great it was. But remember that our thinking is not as hers. Her intellect was most clear and her soul most delicate. She understood things in a way that we cannot. Even when we have long reflected, we are still but on the surface. Finally we can only throw ourselves back on what the Church and our reason tell us: that Our Lady's response to the Angel's invitation was a supreme act of faith, heroism and sacrifice, immeasurably beyond any other ever performed.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE THIS WAY?

But why would God thus place salvation in her hands? What is the purpose at stake? Could not Our Lord come on earth and pay the price of Redemption without incorporating in the scheme this degree of dependence on Mary? What is the idea of introducing her in this extraordinarily possessive way? The answer lies in God's Will that mankind should co-operate in its own salvation. It was not His plan to treat man as one would treat a baby into whose mouth nourishment is placed; which has everything done for it. God's principle was to treat man as responsible; to call on him to pay as much as possible of his own ransom; to invite him to play the fullest part in the total affair of salvation. For instance, in the way that Legionaries are trying to do. Not only are they striving after their own salvation. but they are seeking to bring it to every other soul. Having honoured that principle during life, or as St. Paul puts it—worked out their own salvation—the earthly excellence will merge into a higher glory in heaven. They have not been as that

helpless baby sucking a bottle; they have been a grown-up person, a full Christian, a fighter with the Lord. They have taken part in His battles and they have suffered His wounds. Surely, as He promised, they will sit at His right hand and reign with Him!

That responsibility and co-operation is a fundamental idea. God, so to speak, planted it in the Blessed Virgin and caused it to flower from her.

When Redemption was foreseen according to that method, there was the question: Would there ever be a woman who would possess the quality to fit exactly into this divine scheme? God saw in the Blessed Virgin Mary that person. According to His own law He would have to seize on her as an admirable enrichment of the scheme. If a member of the fallen race could play that part, it would make Redemption so much more profitable for her and for humanity in whose place she stood. But note that this relation of representative took a higher form. Her Fiat made her Mother of the Mystical Body. In the most real sense she became the Mother of all those for whom Jesus Christ would be Redeemer, so that they would be intimately implicated in everything she would do.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVOTION

Protestants think that our belief in this pivotal place of Mary is a later invention of the Catholic Church. They are fond of looking back through history to the dates when certain feasts or devotions started, then triumphantly insisting on their modernity. From which they claim that our veneration of the Blessed Virgin is a comparatively recent introduction, certainly no feature of the earlier Church.

Incidentally, let me interject that the popular reading of the Bible, on which Protestants base their religion, is definitely a modern practice. For fourteen hundred years of Christianity, the generality of men were unable to read, and the same still applies to most of the world's population.

They err, however, in regarding as an innovation the Church's teaching of Mary's vital role. It is true that certain forms of prayer and behaviour towards Mary were not there in the beginning, just as within a few years' time new forms will secure acceptance. The present-day organised devotions to Our Lady did not exist in the earlier stages of the Church but grew up as time went on. Things developed similarly in regard to Our Blessed Lord Himself. Many of the devotions to Him are recent products. Just as originally there was no Litany of Loreto, neither was there a Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus nor of the Sacred Heart. All these tributes were generated by love which ever seeks new modes of expression.

Of course this does not mean that the early Christians were by comparison defective in their attitude either towards Our Lord or towards Our Lady. But when they turned to them, they did it in their own less worked-out fashion. The later expressive devotions had not been elaborated. Needless to say, a Christian did not go to his local Church once a week for the up-to-date Marian devotions. But even though unaided by the progressive clarification of doctrine, he knew Mary to have been essential to the Redemption, and he would try to signify his gratitude and love.

Can this be proved? The answer is that we can prove it, and that the proof is simple and decisive. I try to give it to you.

THE SECOND EVE-ANCIENT BELIEF

When that wonderful figure, Cardinal Newman, was digging into antiquity in order to find what place Our Lady had occupied in the teaching of the very early Church, he satisfied himself that the belief in her role was specially represented by the doctrine of the New Eve. This analogy was the most ancient possible. It was not a product of the tenth century, nor of the eighth nor of the fifth, nor of the third: it was absolutely of the first age. This description of Our Lady as the New or Second Eve is first found in the teachings of St. Justin, who was converted from pagan philosophy about 130 A.D. and taught in Ephesus, which was the traditional home of St. John the Evangelist. He typified the thought of the Apostolic Church. The idea of Our Lady as the New Eve was part of the roots of the Church. It was primary in the Christian faith.

St. Paul speaks of Our Lord as the New Adam. He does not mention the New Eve, but that parallel could not have been absent from his mind. The structure of the brain being what it is, no one could think of Adam without Eve, nor of the New Adam without the New Eve. This is made absolutely inevitable by reason of the fact that the First Prophecy

(Gen. iii. 15) spoke of the woman who with her Seed would repair the Fall. St. Paul was not less intelligent than we are.

That theme asserted itself ever after. It soon became a proverb. St. Jerome (about 300 A.D.) quotes it: "Death through Eve; life through Mary." St. Augustine (about 400 A.D.) dwells on the same: "Death through a woman; life through a woman."

It has been contended that those early writers did not see all nor intend all that has been subsequently read into that analogy. That suggestion is uncomplimentary to those great minds of antiquity. They seized at once on the New Eve comparison. They had all relevant information. Why should they be less discerning than those who came after them? The conclusions which we draw from that comparison are not forced ones. They are unescapable. Do they not grow naturally out of the fact that Redemption reversed the details of the Fall and that Eve's part was a type of Mary's function? No, we do not see too much, but too little—as in all divine things.

THE DOCTRINE EXPLAINED

Such being the antiquity and the status of the doctrine of the New Eve, it is imperative that we understand it. You know how mankind fell. Our First Parents co-operated to commit sin and to drag down their progeny with them. But God's love could not allow that to be the last chapter. So at the very moment of the brewing of the poison He was preparing the remedy, which was Redemption. It could not come at once because—to put it in our human way—God had to wait until the Blessed Virgin would be born. We may think: Why not bring her into the world quickly—immediately? We may be sure that God would have done so if it were possible according to His ways. But evidently there had to be some sort of growth or process or maturing in humanity to render it possible for the Blessed Virgin to be produced. For that fullness of time (as Scripture terms it) we—and God—had to wait.

God modelled Redemption upon the lines of the Fall. As the Fathers of the Church, and every teacher in the Church, have put it, He made Redemption exactly reverse the Fall.

Everything that was in the Fall He took and turned it backwards. It is as if somebody comes at you with a gun to kill you and you manage to get hold of the weapon and use it against the assailant.

Though Eve sinned first, still it was not in Eve that mankind fell but in Adam. Adam was the single source and the head of the human race. Eve herself was taken physically out of him. (Gen. ii. 23.) It was his behaviour that was going to ruin mankind. If Eve alone had fallen, and Adam had not, mankind would not have been involved in her fall. Yet it was because Eve enticed Adam into sin that Adam sinned and mankind fell.

The part of Eve was crucial. The serpent approached her and won her over. Eve then caused Adam to fall. It was in Adam that men fell. But the Scriptural insistence on the agency of Eve in the transaction can convey no other meaning than that Adam would not have fallen but for her. Eve is exhibited as the mediatrix of the Fall and of the fatal consequences which issued from it.

The parallel between those circumstances and the Redemption is so complete that it is evident that the one was patterned upon the other; that God intended the Redemption to be a detailed reversal of the Fall; that the Redemption was to be what it has been styled: The Divine Revenge.

In the restoration the New Adam and the New Eve reverse the part that Adam and Eve played in the original tragedy. Mary was drawn spiritually out of Jesus through the Immaculate Conception, that is by the application to her of His future merits. The Angel comes to her as the serpent came to Eve on the same day of the week, it is said and He proposes the remedial plan. She believes the good message as Eve believed the evil one. She accepts what is proposed to her. She draws Christ down upon the earth and commits Him to His mission which is terribly consummated on Calvary. And there she stands, herself almost dead, but unfainting, unflinching, offering her Seed in the sacrifice which crushed the head of the serpent, as was promised ages before in the Garden of Eden.

Mankind arose in Christ and not in Mary. It was Our Lord who redeemed us by His life and His death. But it would not have happened except for Mary. We must minutely analyse this tremendous parallel. Its importance cannot be over-estimated. For in the operation of Eve in the Fall we have a Biblical blue-print or detailed diagram of the part played by Mary in salvation. The Fall was the first Type in the Old Testament. Those types were in the Old Testament what the parables were in the New Testament. It would be incorrect to regard them as being no more than picturesque

images. They were sketches of the future Jesus and Mary, each containing some fragment of doctrine, so that when all of them are put together, the result is startling as a picture of what was to come.

As remarked in a previous article on Capharnaum, a type will be surpassed by the reality for which it stands. But at the same time, the type and the reality will be in harmonious proportion with each other.

REDEMPTION REVERSES THE FALL IN DETAIL

Each item of Satan's triumph was taken and turned against him in the Divine Revenge. Therefore each detail of the Fall has its bearing on the Restoration. The parallel shows the New Eve precisely reversing the harm wrought by the old Eve. Moreover, Mary's agency did not end on Calvary, any more than Eve's did in the Garden. After the catastrophe Adam and Eve proceeded to have children to whom they passed on their fallen, sinful condition. Adam's dependence on Eve for the procreation and upbringing of those children was absolute. And without her he could not have passed on the effects of his own fall. The same position is realised by the New Adam and the New Eve. According to Catholic teaching, Jesus—the New Adam—does not have spiritual offspring nor transmit the benefits of Redemption without the co-operation of Mary. Just as she joined with him in the process of Redemption from the first until He breathed out His life on Calvary, so she was joined with Him ever after to distribute the treasures of Redemption.

This is not to say that her part was equal to His. He is God; she is a creature; and there is an infinity between those two conditions. But such as her part was, it was made necessary. She was to the New Adam no less than what Eve was described by God as being, i.e. the helper of Adam and like unto him. (Gen. ii. 18.) The magnitude of Mary's mission is to be gauged (though insufficiently) from Eve's capital share in the original disintegration and its sequels, and the immensity of Mary's holiness is defined by that likening of her to Jesus.

THE MARIOLOGY OF INFANT CHRISTIANITY

Such is the doctrine of the New Eve, than which nothing could be earlier, more sweeping in its scope, more magnificent in its implications. With its infant breath Christianity is found talking in the accents of advanced Mariology. Under many different forms the Church is only teaching the same as is contained in that doctrine. You are familiar with those several aspects through your Handbook. Mary is the Mediatrix of all Graces, dependent on Jesus Christ, the principal, essential Mediator. Or she is the Mother of the Mystical Body while He is its Divine Head. Or she is the Mother of Divine Grace while He is the Source of grace. Or she is the Co-Redemptrix, subordinate to the sole Redeemer. The idea throughout is the same; it is only like dressing someone up in different clothes. Mary was made by the Holy Trinity to be the perpetual partner of Jesus in His restoration of the lost world.

As Our Lady was up to the time of the Annunciation the representative of all men whom God only regarded through her; and after that their true Mother, so all are bound to acknowledge what she has thus done for them. According to the law of faith, how can one hope to repudiate the means and yet receive the fruit? Adam called his wife the mother of all the living. (Gen. iii. 20.) The New Adam can bestow that name on His Beloved in a far higher, wider sense. Eve performed the immense office of generating and nurturing her children. Mary exceeds her Type by giving spiritual life; and her family is all mankind. To each individual one she imparts that life of grace, and she nurses each one from cradle to grave.

One of the titles which we are fond of using in the Legion is *Virgo Praedicanda*, taken from the Litany of Loreto. There it is inadequately translated as *Virgin most renowned*. But *Virgo Praedicanda* means the *Virgin who must be preached*, which is a different idea. It is commendable to say that Our Lady is most renowned; truly she is that. But the full meaning of the expression is that we must announce her; we must tell the world about her: this *Virgin most great*: this *Virgin most essential*: this *co-operator in salvation both in its roots and in its fruits*: the *Woman through whom Our Lord came on earth and without whom He would not have come*—the *New Eve beside the New Adam*.
