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THE CONCEPT OF THE SECOND EVE IN PARADISE LOST

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THE CONCEPT OF THE SECOND EVE IN PARADISE LOST

BY MOTHER MARY CHRISTOPHER PECHEUX, O.S.U.

MOST READERS of the account of Raphael's visit to Eden in Book v of Paradise Lost center their interest on the exchange of greetings between Raphael and Adam and Eve and their gracious hospitality; Raphael is not even the same angel who was to be sent, centuries later, on embassy to Mary. Were we dealing with a medieval manuscript of obscure provenance, we might be tempted to suspect that some pious scribe had here interpolated a few lines in devotional vein. Since, however, what we are dealing with is a seventeenth-century poem carefully revised and corrected, even after printing, by its author, an author unmistakably opposed to Catholicism and its veneration of Mary, another hypothesis must be sought. If Milton inserted these lines, it was because they fulfilled a definite function in the poem. The marvellously careful construction of Paradise Lost, the elaborate system of parallels and balances, the intricacy with which ideas and images are so interwoven that almost every one forecasts or re-echoes another, all demand that we explore the connotations of the lines to discover their ramifications in the poem as a whole.

The application of the epithet "second Eve" to Mary, both here and at one other point in the poem (x.183), has been noted by certain commentators, and some have mentioned one or more of its patristic sources; but there has been no attempt to assess its full significance. Milton, of course, rejected the doctrinal—and still more the devotional—inferences drawn from it by Catholics, but he was not one to ignore its poetic possibilities. This article will examine the connotations of the concept of the Second Eve as they were elaborated in some of the Church Fathers with whom Milton was familiar and will attempt to see how he exploited these connotations to give added richness to his epic.

The poetic appeal of the concept to Milton's mind can be readily understood. Paradise Lost is oriented from the very beginning not only to its tragic climax, the Fall, but also to its triumphant dénouement, the Redemption. If the first three lines speak of disobedience, death, and woe, the fourth and fifth recall the greater Man, restoration, and the regaining of bliss; if we are appalled, early in the poem, by the power of evil as embodied in Satan, we are soon reminded by the author that "all his malice serv'd but to bring forth / Infinite goodness, grace and mercy" (i.217-218). It is within the framework of the "high permission of all-ruling Heaven" (i.212) that the multiple parallels, contrasts, and paradoxes of the total structure fit. If God's ways are to be justified, we must be shown that in the providential plan there is a completeness which overlooks no detail. Milton has almost a passion for an elaborate symmetry and parallelism; and it is in this

2 Denis Saurat remarks that mention of Mary as the Second Eve is to be understood merely as the expression of the physical fact of her motherhood of Christ; Milton, Man and Thinker (New York, 1925), p. 176. B. J. Rajan gives two contemporary references to the Second Eve, in Swan's Spectrum Mundi and in Crashaw; Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader (New York, 1948), p. 146. C. A. Patrides calls attention to Milton's mention of the parallel and refers to statements of it in Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine; "Milton and the Protestant Theory of the Atonement," PMLA, lxxiv (March 1959), 7, 10. Joseph A. Summers refers to it significantly but incidentally in "The Voice of the Redeemer in Paradise Lost," PMLA, lxx (December 1955), 1083, 1087.
3 In Of Prelatical Episcopacy he refers to two passages by Irenaeus (which will be cited below) stating the Eve-Mary analogy and singles out for contradiction two points there made: that the obedience of Mary was the cause of salvation and that Mary was the advocate of Eve; The Works of John Milton, Columbia edition, ed. Frank A. Patterson, 18 vols., (New York, 1931-40), iii, 94. If Irenaeus was in error in this case, Milton argues, his authority cannot be used to uphold episcopacy.
4 Milton's direct reference to the two passages in Irenaeus is proof that he knew at least one patristic statement on the Second Eve; his general knowledge of the Church Fathers suggests that he probably knew others as well. No doubt he was familiar with Renaissance statements of the doctrine. Certainty on his immediate sources is less important for an appreciation of its use in the poem than an awareness of the tradition, which in this article is studied at its fountainhead.
preference that is found the clue to his use of the concept of the Second Eve.

Many of the Church Fathers dwell on the appropriateness of the fact that as it was through the instrumentality of a woman that the first man fell, so it was also through a woman that the Redemption began. Our fall came, says Augustine, when a woman conceived in her heart the serpent’s poison, our salvation when a woman conceived the flesh of the Omnipotent; both sexes were involved in our fall, both in its reparation. Elsewhere he remarks that there would have been a certain incompleteness in the divine plan, a lack of suitable punishment for the devil, if both sexes had not somehow shared in the liberation of both. Ambrose comments pithily that in both the Fall and the Redemption everything began with a woman. There is obvious parallelism, then, between Eve and Mary in the fact of their sex and in their instrumentality. Neither was the primary agent: it was in Adam, not Eve, that man fell; similarly, Mary was not the Redeemer. But it was undeniable that the significant action of each had preceded chronologically the central action: Eve fell first, and then persuaded Adam to sin; Mary was informed of the Incarnation and consented to it before it took place.

Against the background of this similarity the Fathers elaborate their contrasts. Simplest and most basic of these is that death came through Eve, life through Mary. This contrast appears many times: Jerome expresses it almost as an aphorism: “Mors per Evam: vita per Mariam.” One of the facets of the duality is the irony which attaches to the fact that Eve’s name means “mother of all living,” as recorded in Genesis iv.20. She is mother of the living according to the flesh, but in actuality she is mother of the spiritually dead; it is left to the Second Eve, Mary, to fulfill the meaning of the name. Thus Epiphanius explains that Eve foreshadowed Mary, for, though called mother of the living, she brought death into the world and herself returned to dust; whereas Mary, who brought life into the world, is the true mother of the living.

An inevitable corollary to the clear antithesis of death through Eve, life through Mary was a more detailed working out of the analogy between the temptation of Eve and the announcement to Mary. Here, too, the patristic texts are numerous. The passages in Irenaeus to which Milton refers in Of Praelatcall Episcopacy are typical:

Just as Eve, wife of Adam, yet still a virgin... became by her disobedience the cause of death for herself and the whole human race, so Mary too, espoused yet a virgin, became by her obedience the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race... what is tied together cannot possibly be untied save by inversion of the process whereby the bonds of union have arisen, so that the original ties are loosed by the subsequent, and the subsequent set the original free... And so it was that the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by Mary’s obedience. For what the virgin Eve bound fast by her refusal to believe, this the Virgin Mary unbound by her belief.

For, as Eve was seduced by the utterance of an angel to flee God after disobeying His word, so Mary by the utterance of an angel had the glad tidings brought to her, that she should bear God in obedience to His word. And whereas Eve had disobeyed God, Mary was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might become patroness of the virgin Eve. And as the human race was sentenced to death by means of a virgin, by means of a virgin is it delivered.

The analogies are repeated by other Fathers with slight changes of emphasis; two more typical examples may stand here for all:

Into Eve, while she was yet a virgin, crept the word of the architect of death; likewise, into the Virgin was introduced the Word of God, the author of life; that what by one sex had been sent to ruin might by the same sex be restored to salvation. Eve believed the serpent: Mary believed Gabriel. What one committed by believing, the other by believing effaced.

There, the suggestions of the serpent seduced Eve, who let herself easily be deceived by them. Here, the archangel Gabriel, addressing joyful words to Mary, troubled but did not deceive her. There, obedience to the serpent brought death; here, obedience to the angel procured for men the joy of life eternal.


6 Expositiones in Evangelium secundum Lucam, 11, 28 (PL, 15: 1643).

7 *Epistola xxii, 21* (PL, 22: 408).


9 *Adversus Haereses*, iii, 32, 4 (PG, 7: 958-959). In this and the following quotation I have used the translation by Walter J. Burghardt in “Mary in Western Patristic Thought,” *Maurtology*, ed. Juniper B. Carol, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, 1954), 112.

10 *Adversus Haereses*, v, xix, 1 (PG, 7: 1175-1176; Burghardt, loc. cit.).

11 Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, xvii (PL, 2: 827-828).

The theme was to receive further development in medieval times and to appear in Renaissance Biblical commentaries, but the passages cited above are sufficient to indicate the main lines. And they were sufficient for Milton's purposes. In *Paradise Lost* he shows himself quite aware of the double sense in which the term “mother of all living” can be applied to Eve, the first simple, the second enriched with the connotations acquired by its association with the Second Eve. It is with the epithet “mother of mankind” that Eve is first introduced in the passage immediately following the invocation, which explains the inciting cause of the action:

Who first seduc't them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; hee it was, whose guile
Stirred up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankinde. (1.33–36)

Whether Milton intends, this early in the poem, to suggest the irony of the epithet is doubtful, though in view of the fact that Adam has already been contrasted with the Second Adam, it is possible. The term appears for the second time in the passage in Book v already referred to:

On whom the Angel Haile
Bestow'd, the holy salutation us'd
Long after to blest Marie, second Eve.
Haile Mother of Mankind, whose fruitful Womb
Shall fill the world more numerous with thy Sons
Then with these various fruits the Trees of God
Have heapt this Table. (v.385–391)

Clearly, Milton's exploitation here of the ironic meaning of Eve's title “Mother of Mankind” is the key to the meaning of the passage. The insertion of the apparently gratuitous reference to the Second Eve sets up the traditional antitheses whose reverberations will be heard later in the poem, to some extent in Book ix and with profound importance in Books xi and xii. Eve is the mother of mankind, but her limitations are hinted at by the contrast with her later counterpart. The explicit mention of the Second Eve, with its accompanying comment on the similarity between Raphael's greeting now and Gabriel's then, points us towards the Biblical account of the later scene in the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel and focuses our attention on the similarities and contrasts. The reference to Eve's fruitful womb recalls the greeting of Elizabeth recorded in the same chapter of St. Luke, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 1.42); and Eve's numerous sons are contrasted by implication with the Son of Mary, whose name, Jesus, signifying savior, indicates their need of being saved. We are reminded, then, that it is death as well as life which Eve's sons will inherit from her, and that the true life is to come through the Second Eve. There is additional irony in the comparison with the fruits heaped on the table from the trees of God, for it is through the fruit of the one forbidden tree that Eve is to lose her blessedness. The whole passage points forward to the temptation scene.

The treatment of the temptation scene itself bears some interesting traces of the patristic analogies. It is difficult to assess the extent of the indebtedness, since the episode can stand by itself and is understandable on its own terms, from both the psychological and the narrative viewpoint; nevertheless, an awareness of the implied contrasts or parallels with the Annunciation gives it further meaning. Such additional lights and shadows are never far beneath the surface of *Paradise Lost*.

The terms of the patristic comparisons may be summarized thus:

1. The persons: both Eve and Mary were virgins.
2. The actions of the two angels: the fallen angel visited Eve, who listened to him readily, believed his deceiving words, and disbelieved God; the good angel visited Mary, who, at first troubled by his words, believed the good tidings he brought from God.
3. The actions of the two women: Eve disobeyed, Mary obeyed.
4. The results: Eve brought forth death, Mary life.

The first set of analogies obviously offers a difficulty; for Milton, contrary to most of the Fathers, has made it quite clear in his poem that Eve was not a virgin in the literal sense at the time of the temptation. His insistence on this fact would lead us to expect that he would avoid using the term in connection with her at all. It is surprising, therefore, to note a series of references to virginity applied directly or indirectly to Eve grouped just before the temptation scene. The term is associated with her nowhere else in the epic, with the exception of a reference to her “Virgin Modestie” (viii.501) by Adam in his description of their first meeting (when it did appear). See *La Nouvelle Ève*, Bulletin de la Société Française d’Études Marielles, 3 vols. (Paris, 1954–56), or the two chapters by Walter J. Burghardt, “Mary in Western Patristic Thought,” cited above, n. 9, and “Mary in Eastern Patristic Thought,” in Mariology, ed. Juniper B. Carol, Vol. II ( Milwaukee, 1957).

ply to her literally). Here it is rather a metaphorical application which is suggested.

The first hint of this metaphorical use occurs in the introduction to Eve's first speech of real argument with Adam: “To whom the Virgin Majestie of Eve,” (ix.270). C. S. Lewis glosses this as “virgin in majesty,” but it surely suggests also the figurative meaning of innocence; and Milton is subtly ironic in using it now, just when he is beginning to change his notes to tragic. Eve is still innocent and sinless, but the danger of falling is proximate. When she has finally had her way and withdrawn from Adam, Milton compares her to a wood-nymph or an Oread; to the goddess Diana; to Pales; to Pomona; to Ceres. These are appropriate rural deities, but they are also virgins, and it is this latter aspect which is more emphasized:

To Pales, or Pomona, thus adord
Likest she seend, Pomona when she fled
Vertumnus, or to Ceres in her Prime,
Yet Virgin of Proserpina from Jove.
(ix.393–396)

The repetition and the qualifying phrases—“Pomona when she fled. . . . Ceres . . . yet Virgin . . .” insist that we advert to their virginal innocence, later to be lost. The derivation of Pomona’s name, her position as special patroness of fruit trees, and the fact that it was only by disguising himself that Vertumnus could woo her imply more sinister resemblances to Eve, while the mention of Proserpina, violently seized by the lord of the underworld, lends its own note of foreboding. Both Pomona and Ceres thus suggest innocence threatened by violence. When we remember that Ceres and Proserpina were mentioned just before Satan’s first glimpse of Adam and Eve (iv.268–271), and Pomona when Raphael approached to greet Eve with his “Hail,” we can only marvel at Milton’s almost incredible care for detail.

The effect of this series of references is to focus attention on what might be called the spiritual virginity of Eve and to give added pathos to the author’s digression which immediately follows, ending with the forecast that when she returned she would be “despoild of Innocence” (ix.411). And it lends even greater poignantness to Adam’s despairing cry, after the commission of the sin, “How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / Despo’d, deflourd, and now to Death devote?” (ix.900–901). Like so many other of the poem’s great lines, this one, superb in itself, receives even greater force from the pressure of other lines. Eve is deflowered not in a literal sense but in that she has lost forever the virginal innocence of soul which was her birthright.

All this, as has been said, can stand by itself; but the fact that such a cluster of references to virginity appears nowhere else in the poem suggests that Milton may have been adapting here the first aspect of the patristic analogy.

Looking at the temptation scene as a whole, we find that it falls into two large divisions, corresponding to the two chief aspects of Eve’s sin—credulity and disobedience—stressed by the Fathers. The deceit of the serpent, to which Eve culpably falls victim, and the subsequent act of disobedience are the main points which Adam himself almost foretells in his last speech of warning to her:

Since Reason not imposibly may meet
Some specious object by the Foe subordon,
And fall into deception unaware,
Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warned. . . .
Wouldst thou approve thy constancie, approve
First thy obedience.
(ix.360–368)

It is significant that the serpent’s first speech is introduced by the line “His fraudulent tempta
tion thus began” (ix.531) and that the words applied to him stress with increasing intensity his deceitfulness: he is “guileful” (567), “sly” (613), “wilie” (625); he replies “guilefully” (655); his words are “replete with guile” (733), and there is a magnificent objective correlate immediately after Eve’s fatally decisive “Lead then”:

Hee leading swiftly rowld
In tangles, and made intricate seem strait.
(ix.631–632)

The serpent’s coils have never been more brilliantly metaphorized. The extended comparison to the ignis fatuus is likewise strikingly appropriate, with its “delusive Light” which leads the amased night-wanderer and leaves him far off from succor (as Eve is far from her best prop). Eve’s progressive yielding to credulity is also brought out by the language. After the serpent’s first speech she is “not unamaz’d” (552); after his second the litotes is replaced by the positive “yet more amaz’d” and the stronger “unwarie” (614); and, as she follows the serpent to the tree of prohibition, she is “our credulous Mother” (644)—

15 Pales, an ancient Roman deity, was occasionally thought of as masculine but usually as feminine; see, for example, Ovid’s Fasti, where she is a goddess who receives chaste offerings from virginal altars (Fasti, iv, 725–731). Diana was patroness of both hunting and virginity; the latter aspect is more in keeping with Eve’s situation in this passage than is the former.

It should be noted that the “fair Virgin” of ix.452 is not Eve but part of an extended simile; the phrase may, however, be part of the general preparation for the references to Eve’s innocence.
the last word calling up the reminder of what is to be the nature of our heritage from her.

Up to this point, there is no question of a direct temptation to disobedience, for she does not yet know that the fruit supposedly eaten by the serpent is that of the forbidden tree. Satan’s only chance now that they stand before it is to persuade her, working with the multiple appeals of vanity, desire for superiority, etc., to commit the overt act of disobedience. She has already committed the preliminaries as she listens to and believes his blasphemous suggestions; the disobedience ensues when, having yielded to the tempter’s reasonings, she reaches the conclusion that “such prohibitions bind not” (760). It is only a moment now until her credulity leads to her direct disobedience; and Milton has made amply clear the connection between the two.

The general structure of the temptation scene in *Paradise Lost*, then, corresponds to the patristic division as developed in the Eve-Mary parallels; some of the details as well show a resemblance to patristic writings. Satan’s flattery of Eve’s beauty, with its easy transition to the suggestion that she deserves more admiration, and from higher beings, than she is likely to receive here in the Garden is roughly equivalent to Gabriel’s praise of Mary. Eve certainly does not seem troubled by his words. There may be some significance in the fact that both Augustine and Milton repeat twice a similar and rather important phrase. The former, commenting that both sexes were involved in our fall and both in its repARATION, says that we fell “quando femina per quam mortui sumus, in corde concepte venena serpentis,” and he repeats the words a few lines later. Milton describes Eve’s reaction at the end of the serpent’s first speech and again at the conclusion of his last in a somewhat similar way:

So gliz’d the Temper, and his Proem tun’d;
Into the Heart of Eve his words made way.

(ix.549-550)

He ended, and his words replete with guile
Into her heart too easie entrance won. (ix.733-734)

Both authors wish to emphasize Eve’s culpability in accepting the serpent’s words and the fact that sin is essentially in the interior consent. Another aspect of the sin, that of sensuality, also has some place in the account of the temptation; although it appears among Satan’s persuasions only when he describes the deliciousness of the fruit, it is a factor, added to the others, in Eve’s final act: the savory smell of the fruit, her eager appetite, her desire to touch it, all solicit her longing eye (ix.735-743). According to John Damascene, she let herself be fascinated by the suggestions of sensuality when she listened to the message of the serpent. These resemblances, though not striking enough to indicate a direct relationship, do show that Milton was working within the patristic tradition.

The result of the act of disobedience is the final point to be contrasted, and here the death-life motif appears with new meaning. Eve brought forth disobedience and death, according to Justin, whereas Mary brought forth Him who bruised the serpent and drove death far off from those who renounced their evil ways and believed in Him. Milton compresses the results into a single line as he describes Eve eating the apple:

nor was God-head from her thought.

Greedily she ingorg’d without restraint,
And knew not eating Death:

(ix.790-792)

and Adam comments that she is “now to Death devote” (901). But Milton has reserved his elaboration of this aspect of the parallel for his last two books, when he can put the emphasis on the second term, life, rather than on the first. A hint of the contrast between the two Eves does appear here, however, in the reference to Eve’s ambition for God-head, which Satan has cleverly raised in her mind:

That yee should be as Gods, since I as Man,
I of brute human, yee of human Gods.

xiv.748-750

though threat’nd, which no worse then this can bring.

So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off
Human, to put on Gods, death to be wisht,

And what are Gods that Man may not become
As they, participating God-like food? (ix.710-717)

His juggling of words and ideas is skillfully calculated to convince Eve of the righteousness of her desire to rise from humanity to godhood; but her attempt at such a union of beings is, we know, doomed to failure. It is the later Eve who is to be the instrument of a hypostatic union, as Adam is to realize later: “from thy Womb the Son / Of God most High; So God with Man unites” (901). Ambrose had remarked that humanity, driven from paradise by a man and a woman, was joined to God by means of a virgin; and Ildefonse explicitly contrasts Eve, who wanted to be like God, with Mary, who confessed herself the handmaid of the Lord.

Of the temptation scene as a whole it can be ob-

17 Homilia 2 in Dormitionem Beatae Virginis Mariae (PG, 96: 727). Cf. Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1, xi (Works, xv, 182), where glutony is mentioned among the components of original sin.
18 Dialogus cum Tryphone, 100 (PG, 6: 710-711).
served that Milton has followed the same sequence of steps and emphasized the same aspects as the Fathers did in their analysis of the Eve-Mary parallel. It does not seem, however, that he has inserted elements which would make the comparison obvious to anyone not familiar with the tradition. What can be said with some plausibility is that his treatment is close enough to indicate that his knowledge of the patristic doctrines was one factor in determining the structure and the implications of this crucial passage of *Paradise Lost*.

For an unmistakable use of the parallel we turn to the last two books, which recent criticism as a whole has come to recognize as extremely important in the structure of the epic.20 It is in these books that God's ways are finally justified, that we see good coming out of evil, salvation out of sin. The motif which, more than any other, carries the tone of peace and hope throughout Michael's prophecy is that of the Woman's Seed, already foretold in Book x; and it is at the moment of this first announcement of hope that Milton has inserted his second explicit reference to the Second Eve:

*Between Thee and the Woman I will put Enmity, and between thine and her Seed; Her Seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel. So spake this Oracle, then verifi'd When Jesus son of Mary second Eve, Saw Satan fall like Lightning down from Heav'n.*

(x.179–184)

As with the first such reference, there is no reason for speaking here of the Second Eve unless the implications of the analogy have some real function to perform. An analysis of Books xi and xii in its light shows that they have such a function. Early in Book xi God sends Michael to announce to Adam and Eve their expulsion from Paradise, instructing him to console them, if they obey patiently, with the promise of "My Cov'nant in the Womans seed renewd; / So send them forth, though sorrowing, yet in peace:" (xi.116–117). Meanwhile, Adam and Eve have finished their orisons, and Adam assures Eve of his confidence that their prayers have been heard; for

peace returnd
Home to my brest, and to my memorie
His promise, that thy Seed shall bruise our Foe;
Which then not minded in dismay, yet now
Assures me that the bitterness of death
Is past, and we shall live. Whence Haile to thee,
Eve rightly call'd, Mother of all Mankind,
Mother of all things living, since by thee
Man is to live, and all things live for Man.

(xi.153–161)

What Milton has done here is to fuse, with consummate skill, the role of the new Eve with that of the old. In the temptation scene he has eschewed direct reference to the Second Eve, partly, no doubt, because he wished to focus attention there on the tragic aspects of the Fall. Now, however, he is free to create a new mood; and he opens the transition with the parallelism he had only implied in the earlier episode. For the words and phrases here cannot fail to recall the angelic salutation to Mary. Adam's "Hail," his salute to her who is now truly to be the Mother of all things living, is charged with double meanings. She who is physically mother of all things having physical life is also, by anticipation, mother of those who are to live spiritually since she is to bring forth eventually the "greater Man" of the poem's opening lines, through whom alone the bitterness of death can be conquered. The verbal echoes from Raphael's greeting to her in Book v reinforce the overtones of meaning.

Eve's reply, too, shows her awareness of her double function:

To whom thus Eve with sad demeanour meek,
Ill worthie I such title should belong
To mee transgressour, who for thee ordain'd
A help, became thy snare; to mee reproach
Rather belongs, distrust and all dispraise:
But infinite in pardon was my Judge,
That I who first brought Death on all, am grac't
The source of life; next favorable thou,
Who highly thus to entitle me voutsaf'st,
Farr other name deserving.

(xi.162–171)

She glides easily from her literal role as the one who "first brought Death on all" to her typical role as one who "grac't/The source of life." We are surely intended to recall that it was as one highly graced or favored (both translations have been used for the Greek original) that Gabriel was to salute Mary in the fullness of time; that the first Eve, who betrayed her trust as Adam's helpmate, was to be reinstated in the second as the humble handmaid of the Lord, thus regaining the name she had forfeited.

Milton digresses for a moment, before Michael begins to unfold the vision of the future, to remind us of Adam's later counterpart: the high hill they ascend is like that "whereon for different cause the Tempter set / Our second Adam in the wilderness" (xi. 382–383); and Book xi...
ends with the vision of Noah, the one just man for whose sake God's anger is appeased. Throughout the long narration in Book xii the Old Testament events and persons are seen in their typological aspect: Moses is the one who is to show "in figure" (241) the role of the Messiah; Joshua bears his name as well as his office (310–311); everything points to development "from shadowie Types to Truth" (303). And the theme of the Woman's Seed keeps recurring: it is mentioned in connection with Abraham (125–126, 147–150), the Mosaic Law (232–234), David (327). The angel reaches finally the birth of the Messiah.

A Virgin is his Mother, but his Sire
The Power of the most High; he shall ascend
The Throne hereditary, and bound his Reign
With Earths wide bounds, his glory with the Heav'ns,
(xi.368–371)

Again we catch the echoes of St. Luke's account of the Annunciation: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.32–33). Adam's interruption takes up the motif once more:

O Prophet of glad tidings, finisher
Of utmost hope! now clear I understand
What oft my steddiest thoughts have searcht in vain,
Why our great expectation should be call'd
The seed of Woman: Virgin Mother, Haile,
High in the love of Heav'n, yet from my Loines
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy Womb the Son
Of God most High; So God with Man unites.
(xxi.375–382)

Adam's joy (he is "with . . . joy / Surcharg'd") arises from the clarification of the original prophecy, from his perception that the Virgin Mother whom he here hail's is in some mysterious sense identified with Eve, whom he had hailed, when the words were still obscure to him, as the Mother of Mankind who was to bear the chosen seed. It arises too from the recognition that this "great expectation" is to be the fulfilment of the destiny which Eve had rashly and mistakenly tried to anticipate by eating the fruit and becoming like God. Thus his human love for Eve is absorbed into and identified with his loving gratitude to God for the means whereby both were to be redeemed.

The relationship of the three passages beginning "Hail," both to one another and to the poem as a whole, has a direct bearing on Milton's theme. Raphael's greeting, on the surface simply a recognition of Eve's physical motherhood, is weighted, through the narrator's explicit reference, with implications of the Second Eve; but the literal meaning remains the obvious one. The second passage, echoing almost exactly Raphael's "Haile . . . Mother of Mankind," is likewise addressed to the first Eve, but she is now almost submerged in her figurative role, the woman through whom true life is to come. Finally, the third passage is addressed directly to the Second Eve, now clearly seen as the fulfilment of the first, who here is not mentioned. In themselves, then, the passages represent symbolically the progression from a certain spiritual naiveté which sees only surface realities (perhaps best epitomized by Adam's "can wee want obedience then / To him, or possibly his love desert" [v.514–515]), through a faint recognition of the complexity of sin and regeneration, to a full realization of the momentous implications of the future Incarnation.

The position of the three passages in the epic corresponds to this progressive revelation. The first occurs in the idyllic early scenes, before Raphael's warning of evil to come. The second marks a very crucial point in the poem, rivaling in importance the reconciliation of Adam and Eve in Book x: for though that book ends with the prophecy of the birth of the Messiah from the Virgin Mother Mary Christopher Pecheux, O.S.U. (303); everything points to development "from shadowie Types to Truth" (303). And the theme of the Woman's Seed keeps recurring: it is mentioned in connection with Abraham (125–126, 147–150), the Mosaic Law (232–234), David (327). The angel reaches finally the birth of the Messiah.

A Virgin is his Mother, but his Sire
The Power of the most High; he shall ascend
The Throne hereditary, and bound his Reign
With Earths wide bounds, his glory with the Heav'ns,
(xi.368–371)

Again we catch the echoes of St. Luke's account of the Annunciation: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i.32–33). Adam's interruption takes up the motif once more:

O Prophet of glad tidings, finisher
Of utmost hope! now clear I understand
What oft my steddiest thoughts have searcht in vain,
Why our great expectation should be call'd
The seed of Woman: Virgin Mother, Haile,
High in the love of Heav'n, yet from my Loines
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy Womb the Son
Of God most High; So God with Man unites.
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Adam's joy (he is "with . . . joy / Surcharg'd") arises from the clarification of the original prophecy, from his perception that the Virgin Mother whom he here hail's is in some mysterious sense identified with Eve, whom he had hailed, when the words were still obscure to him, as the Mother of Mankind who was to bear the chosen seed. It arises too from the recognition that this "great expectation" is to be the fulfilment of the destiny which Eve had rashly and mistakenly tried to anticipate by eating the fruit and becoming like God. Thus his human love for Eve is absorbed into and identified with his loving gratitude to God for the means whereby both were to be redeemed.

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The three extended passages dealing with the Second Eve are, then, like milestones on the inner journey from innocence to regeneration, and none of the three can be fully understood except in relation to the other two. The second one in particular (x.153–161), with its assurance of reconciliation with God, may be compared in this respect to the lines in which Eve humbly begs Adam's forgiveness and offers herself to bear the punishment alone (x.914–936), which Joseph A. Summers has shown to depend for so much of their effectiveness on the echoes of similar
Having reached an understanding of the meaning of the consolation promised in the Woman's Seed, Adam is ready now for the final lessons of obedience and love which will restore Paradise to him and his posterity. His sin is counteracted by the redemptive action of him “who comes thy Saviour, / ... by fulfilling that which thou didst want, / Obedience to the law of God,” (xii.393-396-397). The outlining of this divine plan and Adam’s reaction in his famous “felix culpa” speech complete the program adumbrated in the opening passage of the epic: “till one greater Man / Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat” (i.4-5). As all the events seen or related in the last two books have been pointing towards a future fulfilment, so the two chief prototypes give way to that which they have prefigured, even as “this Paradise” which they are leaving gives way to the “paradise within thee, happier farr” (xii.586-587).

One more thread, however, remains to be untied. The metaphor is that of Irenaeus: “the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by Mary’s obedience.” Poetically, it was necessary that she who had had so fatal a share in the tragedy should have a prominent part in the promised regeneration. So Milton does not end the poem with Adam’s words, but with Eve’s. His structure is chiasmic: Eve, the first to sin, led her husband to join her in guilt; he, the father of the human race, is the central figure, and to him appropriately is made the explanation of things to come. The poem then tapers off, however, with one more statement of Eve’s subordinate but important role. “Adam had necessarily to be restored in Christ, that mortality be absorbed in immortality and Eve in Mary.” Eve falls, and her husband sins; Adam rejoices at the vision of the redemption by the Second Adam, while Eve humbly looks forward to her role as the chosen instrument, the Second Eve. “Lead on,” she says to Adam; and her words are more than a repetition of those she had used to Satan in ix.631: they are also a prefigurement of that instrument’s formula of obedience: “Be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke i.38). The old Eve and the new blend into one in her final words:

This further consolation yet secure
I carry hence: though all by mee is lost,
Such favour I unworthy am voutsait,
By mee the Promised Seed shall all restore.

(xii.620-623)