

## QUESTION 92

### The Production of the Woman

The next thing we have to consider is the production of the woman. On this topic there are four questions: (1) Was it fitting for the woman to be produced in this [initial] production of things? (2) Was it fitting for the woman to be made from the man? (3) Was it fitting for the woman to be produced from the man's rib? (4) Was the woman made directly by God?

#### Article 1

##### Was it fitting for the woman to be produced in the initial production of things?

It seems that it was not fitting for the woman to be produced in the initial production of things [*in prima rerum productione*]:

**Objection 1:** In *De Generatione Animalium* the Philosopher says, "The female is an inadvertently caused male (*femina est mas occasionatus*)." But it was not fitting for anything inadvertent and deficient to exist in the initial institution of things. Therefore, it was not fitting for the woman to be produced in that initial production of things.

**Objection 2:** Subjection and abasement are the result of sin; for it is after the sin that the woman is told, "You shall be under the man's power" (Genesis 3:16), and Gregory says, "When we do not sin, we are all equal." But the woman has less natural power and dignity than the man, since, as Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 12, "That which acts is always more honorable than that which is acted upon." Therefore, it was not fitting for the woman to be produced in the initial production of things, before the sin.

**Objection 3:** The occasions of sin should be eliminated. But God foreknew that the woman would be an occasion of sin for the man. Therefore, He should not have produced the woman.

**But contrary to this:** Genesis 2:18 says, "It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like to himself."

**I respond:** As Scripture says, it was necessary for the woman to be made as a helper to the man—more specifically, as a helper in the work of generation and not as a helper for just any other work, as some have claimed, since for any other work a man can be helped more appropriately by another man than by a woman.

This can be made clearer if one considers the modes of generation among living things:

For some living things do not have within themselves the active power of generation, but are instead generated by an agent of another species, e.g., those plants and animals that are generated from the appropriate matter without seed (*sine semine*) by the active power of celestial bodies.

On the other hand, other living things have the active and passive powers of generation joined together [within themselves], as in the case of plants that are generated from seeds. For in plants there is no vital work that is more noble than the work of generation, and so it is appropriate in their case for the active power of generation to be joined with the passive power of generation at all times.

By contrast, perfect animals have the active power of generation in the male sex and the passive power of generation in the female sex. And because in animals there is a vital work which is more noble than generation and which their life is principally ordered to, the masculine sex is not joined at all times to the female in perfect animals, but is joined only at the time of coitus. So we might imagine that through coitus the male and the female become one in a way similar to that in which the masculine and feminine powers are joined at all times in a plant—even though in some plants the one power is more abundant, and in others the other power is more abundant.

Now man is ordered toward an even more noble vital work, viz., intellectual understanding. And so in the case of man there is an even stronger reason for why there ought to be a distinction between the two powers, with the result that the female is produced separately from the male and yet they are joined together as one carnally (*carnaliter in unum*) for the work of generation. And this is why, immediately after the formation of the woman, Genesis 2:24 says, “They will be two in one flesh.”

**Reply to objection 1:** In relation to a *particular* nature, the female is something deficient and inadvertent (*aliquid deficiens et occasionatum*). For the active power that exists in the male’s seed aims at producing something complete and similar to itself in the masculine sex, and the fact that a female is generated is due either to a weakness in the active power, or to some indisposition on the part of the matter, or even to some transformation from without, e.g., from the southern winds (*a ventis australibus*), which are humid, as *De Generatione Animalium* says.

However, in relation to nature *as a whole* (*per comparationem ad naturam universalem*), the female is not something inadvertent, but is instead ordered by the intention of nature toward the work of generation. Now the intention of nature as a whole depends on God, who is the universal author of nature. And so in instituting the nature, He produced not only the male but also the female.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two kinds of subjection.

The first kind is *servile subjection*, according to which the one who presides makes use of his subjects for his own advantage. This kind of subjection was introduced after the sin.

The second kind is *civil* or *economic subjection*, according to which the one who presides makes use of his subjects for their own advantage and good. This kind of subjection existed even before the sin. For the good of order would have been lacking within the human multitude if some had not been governed by others who were wiser. And so it is by this sort of subjection that the woman (*femina*) is naturally subject to the man, since the discernment of reason (*discretio rationis*) naturally abounds more in the man. Nor, as will be explained below (q. 96, a. 3), is inequality among men excluded by the state of innocence.

**Reply to objection 3:** If God had removed from the world everything that man appropriates as an occasion of sin, the universe would have remained incomplete (*imperfectum*). Nor should the common good have been destroyed in order that a particular evil might be avoided—especially in light of the fact that God is powerful enough to order every evil toward the good.

## Article 2

### Was it fitting for the woman to be made from the man?

It seems that it was not fitting for the woman (*mulier*) to be made from the man (*vir*):

**Objection 1:** The sexes are common to both man (*homo*) and the other animals. But in the case of the other animals the females (*feminae*) were not made from the males (*mares*). Therefore, this should not have been the case with man, either.

**Objection 2:** Things that belong to the same species have the same type of matter. But the male (*mas*) and the female (*femina*) belong to the same species. Therefore, since the man was made from the slime of the earth, the woman (*femina*) should have been made from the same thing, and not from the man (*vir*).

**Objection 3:** The woman (*mulier*) was made as a helper in the work of generation. But excessively close kinship renders a person unsuitable for generation, and this is why closely related persons are excluded from matrimony, as is clear from Leviticus 18:6. Therefore, the woman should not

have been made from the man.

**But contrary to this:** Ecclesiasticus 17:5 says, “He created from him”—that is, from the man—“a helper like to himself”—that is, the woman.

**I respond:** In the initial institution of things it was fitting for the woman (*mulier*) to be formed from the man (*vir*)—more so than in the case of the other animals.

It was fitting, first of all, in order that a certain dignity might be preserved for the first man (*homo*), viz., that, by way of likeness to God, he himself would be the source of his whole species in the way that God is the source of the whole universe. Hence, in Acts 17:26 Paul says that God “made the whole human race from one.”

It was fitting, second, in order that the man might love the woman more and adhere to her in a more inseparable way, given his realization that she had been produced from him. Hence, Genesis 2:23-24 says, “..... she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.” This was especially necessary in the case of the human species, in which the male and the female remain together throughout their whole life—something that does not happen with the other animals.

Third, it was fitting because, as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 8, in the case of human beings, the male and the female are conjoined not only because of the necessity for generation, as with the other animals, but also for the sake of their domestic life, in which the other works of the man and the woman take place and in which the man is the head of the woman. Hence, it was fitting for the woman to be formed from the man as her source.

Fourth, there is a reason having to do with the mysteries [of the Faith] (*ratio sacramentalis*). For [the woman’s being made from the man] is a figure (*figuratur*) of the Church’s taking her origin from Christ. Hence, in Ephesians 5:32 the Apostle says, “This is a great mystery (*sacramentum magnum*); I mean in Christ and in the Church.”

**Reply to objection 1:** The reply to the first objection is clear from what has been said.

**Reply to objection 2:** The matter is that from which something is made. But created nature has a determinate source, and since it is determined to one outcome, it also has a determinate process. Hence, it produces from determinate matter something that belongs to a determinate species.

By contrast, since God’s power is infinite, He can make something that is the same in species from any kind of matter whatsoever, e.g., the man from the slime of the earth and the woman from the man.

**Reply to objection 3:** The sort of close kinship that is an impediment to matrimony comes from natural generation. But the woman was produced from the man solely by God’s power and not through natural generation. This is why Eve is not called Adam’s daughter. For this reason, the argument is invalid (*non sequitur*).

### Article 3

#### Was it fitting for the woman to be formed from the man’s rib?

It seems that it was not fitting for the woman to be formed from the man’s rib:

**Objection 1:** The man’s rib was much smaller than the woman’s body. But more can be made from less only either (a) through *addition*—but if this had happened, then the woman would be said to be made from what was added rather than from the rib—or (b) through *rarefaction*, since, as Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram*, it is impossible for a body to increase unless it becomes rarified. But a woman’s body (*corpus mulieris*) is not more rarified than a man’s, at least not in the proportion that a rib

has to Eve's body. Therefore, Eve was not formed from Adam's rib.

**Objection 2:** There was nothing superfluous in the works that were initially created. Therefore, Adam's rib contributed to the perfection of his body. Therefore, when it was taken away, what remained was imperfect. But this seems wrong.

**Objection 3:** A rib cannot be separated from a man without pain. But there was no pain before the sin. Therefore, the rib should not have been separated from the man so that the woman might be formed from it.

**But contrary to this:** Genesis 2:22 says, "The Lord God built the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman."

**I respond:** It was fitting for the woman (*mulier*) to be formed from the man's rib (*ex costa viri*).

It was fitting, first, in order to signify that there should be social union (*socialis coniunctio*) between the man and the woman. For instance, the woman should not dominate over the man, and so she was not formed from his head. But neither should she be looked down upon by the man as if she were under servile subjection (*tamquam serviliter subiecta*) (cf. a. 1), and so she was not formed from his feet.

Second, it was fitting because of a mystery [of the Faith] (*propter sacramentum*). For the sacraments—i.e., the blood and water by which the Church was instituted—flowed from the side of Christ in dormition on the cross.

**Reply to objection 1:** Some claim that the woman's body was formed by the multiplication of the matter without the addition of anything else, in the way in which our Lord multiplied the five loaves.

But this is altogether impossible. For the multiplication of the loaves occurred either through a transformation of the substance of the matter itself or through a transformation of its dimensions. But it did not occur through a transformation of the substance of the matter itself, both because (a) matter, considered in itself, is wholly unable to change as long as it exists in potentiality and has only the character of a subject, and also because (b) multitude and magnitude lie outside of the essence of matter itself. And so the multiplication of matter is not in any way intelligible as long as the same matter remains without addition—unless the matter takes on bigger dimensions. But as the Philosopher explains in *Physics* 4, for the matter to be rarefied is just for it to take on bigger dimensions. Therefore, to claim that the matter is multiplied without rarefaction is to posit contradictories simultaneously, viz., the definition without the thing defined.

Hence, since rarefaction does not seem to be present in the multiplications under discussion, it is necessary to posit an *addition* to the matter, either through creation or—what is more probable—through conversion. Hence, in *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, "Christ satisfied the five thousand men with the five loaves in the way that from a few seeds He produces a field full of corn"—which happens through the conversion of nutrients.

Yet we still say, "He fed the five thousand *with five loaves*," or "He formed the woman *from the man's rib*," because the addition was made to the preexisting matter of the loaves or the rib.

**Reply to objection 2:** The rib contributed to Adam's perfection not insofar as he was a certain *individual*, but insofar as he was the source of the *species*—in the same way that semen, which is released by a natural operation accompanied by pleasure, contributes to the perfection of the one that generates. Hence, *a fortiori*, by God's power the woman's body was able to be formed from the man's rib without pain.

**Reply to objection 3:** From this the reply to the third objection is clear.

#### Article 4

#### Was the woman formed directly by God?

It seems that the woman was not formed directly (*immediate*) by God:

**Objection 1:** No individual produced from something similar to it in species is made directly by God. But the woman was made from the man, who was of the same species as she was. Therefore, she was not made directly by God.

**Objection 2:** In *De Trinitate* 3 Augustine says that corporeal things are managed by the angels. But the woman's body was formed from corporeal matter. Therefore, it was made by the ministry of the angels and not directly by God.

**Objection 3:** Among creatures the things that preexist through their causal principles are produced by the power of another creature and not directly by God. But as Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 9, the woman's body was produced in its causal principles in the initial works. Therefore, the woman was not produced directly by God.

**But contrary to this:** In the same book Augustine says, "Only God, from whom all of nature subsists, was able to form or shape the rib in such a way that it would be a woman."

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 2), natural generation in any given species is from a determinate matter. But the matter from which man is generated is the human seed of a male or a female. Hence, an individual of the human species cannot be naturally generated from any other type of matter. Rather, only God, who institutes nature, can bring things into being outside of the order of nature. And so only God was able to form the man from the slime of the earth or the woman from the man's rib.

**Reply to objection 1:** This argument goes through for a case in which the individual is generated by a natural generation from something similar to it in species.

**Reply to objection 2:** As Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 9, we do not know whether God made use of the ministry of an angel in forming the woman. However, it is certain that just as the man's body was not formed by angels from the slime of the earth, so neither was the woman's body formed by angels from the man's rib.

**Reply to objection 3:** As Augustine says in the same book, "The initial state of things was not such that the female was going to be formed wholly in this way, but it was only such that she *could* be formed in this way." And so with respect to its causal principles the woman's body preexisted in the initial works not in virtue of an active power, but only in virtue of a passive power ordered to the creator's active power.