

Eudocia and Augustine: Woman Problems? Reflections on Eve, the Theotokos, and Redemption

Augustine of Hippo (354-430), and Eudocia of Athens, Constantinople, and Jerusalem (400-460) may have been contemporaries of each other, but when it came to relevant points of theology, they could not have been more different. A particular point where they parted ways was on the question of who bears the blame for the fall. For Augustine, it was almost singularly Adam, but for Eudocia, it was Eve. This distinction highlights a theological point of departure between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Catholicism in the fourth and fifth century that Eudocia does not hesitate to emphasize: The centrality of Mary as the *theotokos*. In so doing, Eudocia highlights the mother of the Christ not as the bearer of culpability, but of redemption; in doing so she became the “Queen of the Angels.” The Eastern Orthodox recognition of the prominence and virtual pre-eminence of Mary is obviously not the work of Eudocia alone, nor is there evidence that she and Augustine were in actual dialogue. Yet her retelling of the story of the fall and the redemption might be seen as a “corrective” in this way: It not only draws upon the rich Homeric and patristic tradition of her Greek forbears, but illustrates the cultural schism in the Christianity of her century and those to come that is at best only partially explicable in the history books.