Ars Disputandi

Pulling traducianism out of the Shedd

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Abstract

This article considers several problems concerning the origin of the soul in the work of the nineteenth century American theologian, William G. T. Shedd. He opts for the traducian position, which is, that the soul is passed down from parents to child, in a way similar to the passing of physical seed from two human parents that fuse in syngamy to form a genetically distinct entity. The essay considers three problems with this view. The first concerns the composition of human natures; the second, whether souls are fissiparous; and the third, the relationship between traducianism, creationism and Augustinian realism.

> *'tradux animae, tradux peccati'*
>
> – Tertullian

[1] One of the most important contributions that the nineteenth century American divine William Greenough Thayer Shedd (1820–1894) made to systematic theology was his vigorous defence of a version of traducianism. This is the notion that the souls of human beings are not created individually and *ex nihilo* by divine fiat, but rather, are propagated from one generation to the next, just as the physical part of a human being is propagated from one generation to the next.[1] The alternative view, that God creates the soul of each individual out of nothing at the moment that individual begins to exist, is called creationism.[2] There are several ways this could be understood depending on when it is thought human life begins. It might be that individual human beings begin to exist from conception, when ensoulment (i.e. the possession by a soul of a body) occurs. But it might be thought that the human zygote begins to exist and is only ensouled at some later time *in utero.* Both of these views have been taken in the tradition, and both could

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1. Unless otherwise stated, in what follows the noun 'soul' refers to human souls only.

2. Lynne Rudder Baker states that in the Early Church there were three competing views of the soul: creationism, traducianism, and pre-existence – the doctrine that God has a 'stock of souls from eternity and allocates them as needed'. We shall not consider pre-existence as a theory of the origin of the soul, because it is not a view that is supported by Scripture, and is usually thought to be unorthodox. See Baker, 'Death and the Afterlife' in William J. Wainwright (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 370 ff. Shedd considers and rejects pre-existence in several places. See Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1999 [1864]), pp. 3–10 and Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, *Third Edition*, ed. Alan Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), pp. 430–431. All citations from Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology* will be from this edition, which supersedes previous editions of the same work. I shall refer to it parenthetically in the body of the text as DT, followed by page number.

be construed along creationist lines (although they need not be).[3] What makes a particular view of the origin of the soul creationist, rather than traducian,[4] is the idea that God creates the soul out of nothing at the first moment the individual human begins to exist. Whether this moment is at conception, or some later time is a separate, though related issue, and one that we shall ignore.[5]

[2] Famously, theologians have been divided on the question of the origin of the soul, and some, like Augustine, were unable to decide which view of this matter is the correct one.[6] What makes Shedd's contribution important is the clarity and rigour of his defence of traducianism, rather than any particular originality in his argument. (Shedd is quick to admit at various points in his argument, his own debt to earlier Reformed theologians such as Jonathan Edwards, John Owen and Francis Turretin.)

[3] In this essay I propose to give a critical account of several aspects of Shedd's doctrine with particular reference to his treatment of the subject in his *Dogmatic Theology*,[7] the mature statement of his theological views. We shall not consider everything he has to say on the subject in detail. Our focus is on the way in which Shedd attempts to overcome philosophical-theological problems for traducianism presented by creationists on the one hand and what he calls 'representationalists' on the other.[8] In this context, representationalism is the doctrine that Adam is somehow the representative or 'federal head' of humanity,

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3. The theologian most often associated with a 'delayed ensoulment' version of creationism in the tradition is Thomas Aquinas. For discussion of this issue, see David Albert Jones, *The Soul of The Embryo* (London: Continuum, 2004).

4. It might also be worth pointing out that the creationism in view here is not to be confused with the 'creationism' that has to do with a particular view of the origin of the world and the creation narratives of Genesis 1–3.

5. Although, for the record, it is clear Shedd maintained that human foetuses are ensouled from the moment of conception. See DT: 471.

6. For discussion, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Vol. II, God and Creation*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 580 ff., Gerrit Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God,* trans. Dirk W. Jellema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), ch. 8, Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics,* trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Collins, 1950), ch. XI, Jones, *The Soul of The Embryo,* chapter 7 and Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Vol I,* trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), pp. 477–482. As Bavinck points out, 'the argument between traducianism and creationism remained undecided in Christian theology'. Moreover, 'in the strength of their arguments traducianism and creationism are almost equal' (pp. 580–581).

7. Shedd deals with traducianism elsewhere and we shall refer to his other work in this area where it is pertinent. See, his essay, 'The Doctrine of Original Sin' in Discourses and Essays, Revised Edition (Andover, MS.: Warren F. Draper, 1870 [1856]) reprinted by The University of Michigan University Library in the Michigan Historical Reprint Series, n.d., pp. 259 ff. Shedd's *A History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II* offers a much more sustained treatment of the issues, that complements what he has to say in DT. There is also relevant material in Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 2001 [1879]), pp. 119–142, where he exegetes Romans 5: 12–19.

8. In DT Shedd's presentation of traducianism is divided into three areas. These comprise biblical, theological and physiological arguments. The focus of this essay is on his theological arguments in particular, although the section on physiological arguments will be touched upon, where it has a bearing upon the theological.

and that his primal sin is imputed to his progeny, whom he represents in this action.[9] Shedd argues that representationalism is false, and that Adam's sin is really my sin. Hence, he links commitment to traducianism (souls and bodies are passed down mediately from our first parents) with commitment to a particular theological account of the imputation of original sin, known as Augustinian realism. This, very roughly, is the view that Adam's sin is (somehow) my sin because we are both parts of one metaphysical whole, created by God. Of course, there is conceptual overlap between traducianism and Augustinian realism, and most often theologians who are committed to one of these doctrines are also committed to the other (although, as Shedd points out, there are exceptions to this, such as Francis Turretin. See DT: 458). It may be that some doctrines about the manner in which sin is transmitted imply traducianism. But not all versions of Augustinian realism require traducianism. Nevertheless, Shedd defends both of these doctrines. In a similar fashion, theologians who defend representationalism usually also hold to creationism (viz. the origin of the soul), although it is possible to be both representationalist and traducian. In this essay, we shall be concerned with Shedd's traducianism rather than his Augustinian realism, *per se*. However, where the latter is informative for Shedd's account of the former, we shall have to deal with it as well.[10]

[4] We shall proceed in two stages. In the first, Shedd's version of what we might call traducian-realism is set out. In the process, we shall consider his arguments against what I shall dub creationist-representationalism—the main alternative to his own position that he deals with.[11] In a second section, I shall offer some critical comments on Shedd's defence of traducianism.

1 Shedd's traducian-realism

[5] Shedd thinks that humanity is a species that originates with Adam and Eve:

> Traducianism applies the idea of species to both body and soul. Upon the
> sixth day, God created two human individuals, one male and one female, and

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9. Representationalism also applies to the doctrine of the atonement, as Shedd points out elsewhere in DT: 461 ff. An atonement theory is representationalist where Christ is thought to act as my representative, taking upon himself the penal consequences of my sin, which is a central theme of the penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement, a doctrine Shedd defends. So, in one respect, Shedd himself is a representationalist in the matter of the atonement, but not in the matter of the imputation of Adam's sin. But in what follows, we shall put this to one side, and concentrate on representationalism viz. the imputation of Adam's sin only.

10. Shedd's Augustinian realism has been dealt with in several previous essays. See Oliver D. Crisp, 'Scholastic Theology, Augustinian Realism and Original Guilt' in the *European Journal of Theology* 13 (2004): 17–28; Crisp, 'Federalism vs. Realism: Charles Hodge, Augustus Strong and William Shedd on The Imputation of Sin' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006): 1–17; and the application to Shedd's Christology in Crisp, 'Shedd*ing* the Theanthropic Person of Christ' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59 (2006): 327–350.

11. This is not the only logically possible alternative, of course, but it is the alternative that Shedd spends his time dealing with. We shall see that it is possible for a theologian to be both a creationist and an Augustinian realist.

in them also created the specific psychico-physical nature from which all the subsequent individuals of the human family are procreated both psychically and physically. (DT: 431)

[6] Our first parents contained, as it were, the whole of human nature that is propagated to subsequent generations of human beings. And, as it is propagated, human nature is dispersed, or divided as each new individual human being is generated. So, each new human being has his or her own particular individual nature. But each individual human being is also one part of a much larger entity, namely, humanity. To make this clear, consider the example of a lump of clay and a piece of stoneware made from the lump (an image Shedd himself uses at one point in DT: 470). The lump of clay is rather like the human nature that is had by Adam and Eve. As the first human pair, they have the whole of human nature, just as the lump of clay is a whole lump of clay—no clay has yet been removed from the lump to form individual pieces of pottery. But consider what happens when the potter does remove a small piece of the lump of clay to make a stoneware cup. He gouges out the smaller lump from the larger lump, and forms it on his wheel into a cup, which he then fires and sells. The cup is still a part of the original lump of clay, or what was a part of the original lump. It is also the particular receptacle into which the potter has formed it. We might say that the cup is a small part of the greater whole, that is, the original lump of clay. But it is also a particular thing, the individual cup. And the more cups are made from the original lump, the more the original lump is divided up into the different receptacles into which the clay is formed.

[7] In a similar way, Shedd claims that Adam and Eve 'contain' the whole of human nature. But as they begin to procreate, that human nature is propagated. Cain, Abel, Seth and every other human being is like the cup formed from the original lump. Like the cup, the progeny of the first human pair are individual entities in their own right, but also 'contain' a small part of the human nature their parents had as a whole. And, as each new generation is formed, so each parental pair passes on both genetic and, to use Shedd's phrase, 'psychical' material to their progeny. Moreover, like the lump of clay, the 'lump' of Adam's nature out of which individual humans are formed is diminished with each division. Thus Shedd:

> All the individuals of a race can be propagated only from the first two individuals. Should an individual pair be taken at the middle of the series it would be impossible to derive as much population from them as from Adam and Eve. And the reason is that they do not contain the whole specific nature, but only a portion of it.... There is a constant diminution of the primitive non-individualized human nature when once its division and individualization begins at conception. (DT: 490)[12]

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12. Shedd thinks of a species as generic nature that is created by God and exemplified by different individuals of the species. Human nature is had by Adam an Eve *in toto,* and 'spread' by propagation to individuals, in whom 'fractions' of this nature are individualized. Compare the following: 'A species or a specific nature is that primitive invisible substance or plastic principle

[8] Creationists and traducians share in common the idea that the physical parts of a human being are passed on through procreation from parent to child. My body is formed from the fusion of the gametes of my parents, producing a genetically unique individual.

[9]   The difference between the two views lies in the question of the generation of the soul. Assuming human beings are composed of a body and soul, is the soul also passed from parent to child as the traducians claim? Or does God create each new soul for each new individual? Shedd presents several theological reasons for thinking that the traducian view (or a version of the traducian view) is correct.[13]

1.1 Creationism and the problem of imputed sin

[10]   The first of these is that traducianism, when coupled with Augustinian realism, yields a coherent picture of the transmission of original sin from one generation to the next whereas a creationist-plus-representationalist view of the same problem, does not. In his *Dogmatics*, Shedd returns to this problem again in the context of his anthropology and his Christology. But in his discussion of traducianism proper (in DT: 429–493), Shedd argues that the problem with the creationist-representationalist view is that it cannot account for the transmission of that which is essentially 'mental' (which I think we can charitably take to be a euphemism for the soul). He says,

> If each individual soul never had any other than an individual existence and were created *ex nihilo* in every instance, nothing mental could pass from Adam to his posterity. There could be the transmission of only bodily and physical traits. There would be a chasm of six thousand years between an individual soul of this generation and the individual soul of Adam, across which "original sin" or moral corruption could not go "by natural generation". (DT: 446)

[11]   Shedd thinks that some creationist-representationalists, like the Genevan Reformed Orthodox theologian Francis Turretin, realise that their own view leaves them without a satisfactory solution to the problem of the transmission of sin, and introduce elements of a traducian-realist view into their own thinking in order to augment the creationist-representationalism they start out with. 'Hence', says Shedd, 'the creationist partially adopts traducianism' (DT: 447). But this cannot work, because 'natural union [viz. Augustinian realism] logically excludes representation, and representation logically excludes natural union. Either theory by itself is consistent; but the two in combination are incongruous.' (DT: 449)

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which God creates from nonentity, as the rudimental matter of which all the individuals of a species are to be composed.' (DT: 465) It is not entirely clear whether Shedd thinks this sort of metaphysical arrangement is restricted to human beings, as bearers of the divine image, or includes other created species as well.

13. He also presents a biblical case for traducianism, in DT: 438–444, citing passages like Ps. 139, Acts 17: 26 and Heb. 7: 10 in favour of the traducian position.

[12]   The problem seems to be this. Creationism posits the creation of each new soul by God for each individual human being. But, Shedd says, this means that only the physical part of a human being is passed from one generation to the next through procreation. How then can we explain the transmission of original sin from one generation to the next? Not according to creationism, says Shedd, because on the creationist view, original sin cannot be transmitted from one soul to the next in the same way as genes are passed from one generation to the next. The soul of each individual is created *ex nihilo*; the parents of each individual do not transmit it. But then, Adam's fall has no bearing on my own sinfulness because his sin and my sin are distinct (presuming, as it seems Shedd does, that original sin is a property of the soul, not the body). In fact, as Shedd points out, on the creationist view it appears that each soul apostatises from God by itself. 'Upon the theory of creationism, the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the newly created soul is an arbitrary, not a judicial act.' What is more the 'so-called guilt of obligation to penalty (*reatus poenae*), on the ground of which the withdrawment of grace rests [in classical theology], is putative and fictitious, not real. It is constructive guilt—the product of an act of sovereign will which decides that an innocent person shall be liable to penal suffering because of another's sin.' (DT: 456–457)

[13]   The creationist-representationalist view means that Adam's progeny are punishable for a sin that they are not culpable for. Their souls are not passed down from the first human pair, so they cannot partake of the guilt of Adam's sin. Hence, on Shedd's way of thinking, they cannot be culpable for Adam's sin. But, says Shedd, this is intolerable—liability to punishment *presumes* culpability. Christ, unlike the sinner, may be said to be punishable for my sin although he is not culpable for my sin. But this is no counter-example according to Shedd, because Christ, unlike the sinner, volunteers to act in this manner. The sinner has no choice in the matter of inheriting original sin (DT: 457).

[14]   But traducian-realism does not suffer from this problem with the transmission of sin. According to traducianism, the soul is somehow transmitted from one generation to the next as the physical parts of a human are. This, coupled with a realist explanation of original sin means that my sin really is Adam's sin because my human nature, that is, my human body and soul, are generated from the same human nature that originated with Adam and Eve, our first parents.

1.2 Soul-fission

[15]   But this raises a second issue, to do with how an immaterial substance, a soul, can be transmitted from one generation to the next in the same way that my genetic material was passed to me at the moment the gametes of my parents fused. Are souls entities that are fissiparous? If so, are individual souls generated when they 'split off' from the soul of the parent(s)?[14] Shedd would appear to be

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14. An earlier, and cruder, argument similar to this in some respects is given by Tertullian. See Tertullian, *On The Soul*, § 25 in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. III*, trans. P. Holmes, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981 [1885]).

committed to both of these claims. He thinks that the soul and body of a child is derived simultaneously 'out of the common human nature' (DT: 478). Return to the analogy of the clay. Adam has the complete human nature (the large lump of clay). Subsequent generations of human beings are literally 'chips off the old block', or 'bits of the old lump (of clay)'. It is rather like thinking that each son of Adam was a lump of clay and their offspring were bits of clay removed from them, and so on for each generation. All human beings are composed of a human nature – a body and soul – that is a small part of the original human nature had by Adam and Eve.[15]

[16]   Now, on the question of the propagation of souls from the first human pair, Shedd says that traducians need not claim either (a) that the soul is originated by propagation, or (b) that the soul is transmitted by physical propagation (DT: 478–479). On the first of these matters, the soul of a given individual is, says Shedd, a 'fraction' of the original soul given to Adam by divine fiat. So each individual soul is not originated in the act of propagation, but is a fraction of the first soul, generated by God for Adam that is somehow individualised in the moment of procreation. This would appear to mean that souls are indeed fissiparous.

[17]   This account needs to be distinguished from another similar view that is not consistent with Shedd's position. For instance, it would appear to be consistent with much of what Shedd affirms (though not all) to say that every human being has a 'part' of one indivisible human soul held in common by the species. This would be rather like saying the one Holy Spirit is participated in, or possessed, by many different believers. Just as one entity (the Holy Spirit) indwells many other entities (Christians), so the one human species soul 'indwells' or 'possesses' many different human bodies. If this way of thinking about Shedd were correct (which it is not), then his view would not require souls to be fissile, since there would be only one species-soul shared between different human beings. But, since this would conflict with other things Shedd says concerning species and species-natures – matters which we have already touched upon – I think we can exclude such a reading of Shedd's account. In any case, it would surely be unorthodox to say that all human beings have only one species-soul in which every human being has a share, or part thereof. And Shedd was certainly a stickler for theological orthodoxy.

[18]   We come to the second matter. Shedd denies that the soul is propagated by the physical act of procreation. This, it would seem, is an attempt to stave off criticism that traducianism makes the soul into some property of the body, what

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15. Elsewhere, in a brief discussion of traducianism in his essay, 'The Doctrine of Original Sin', in *Discourses and Essays,* Shedd has this to say: 'If, however, the distinction between creation and development be clearly conceived and rigorously observed, it will be seen that there is no danger of materialism in the doctrine of the soul's propagation. For development cannot change the essence of that which is being developed. It must unfold that, and only that, which is given in creation. Now, granting the creation of the generic man in his totality of soul and body [viz. Adam], it is plain that his mere individualization by propagation must leave both his physical and spiritual natures as it found them, so far as this distinction between mind and matter is concerned. For matter cannot be converted into mind my mere expansion, and neither can mind be changed into matter by it.' (p. 259, footnote.)

today would be called property-dualism, or double-aspect theory. But if this motivates his denial, it would appear to be wide of the mark. It could be that human gametes are 'carriers' of soul-stuff as well as DNA, which, when symgamy takes place, generates a new immaterial, as well as material, substance.[16]

[19] Shedd also objects to the hylomorphist view[17] propounded by Odo of Tournai (DT: 484).[18] Odo's view is complicated, not least because it is embedded in a thoroughly medieval account of different species of souls and their propagation, which seems rather arcane to the modern reader. For instance, in the third book of his treatise *On Original Sin*, Odo says this:

> A soul comes from a soul through a seed [*semen*], just as its body is propagated by its seed from a body, or a tree from a tree. Thus [they say that] the seed power is in the soul, just as in the body.

[20] Odo's point here seems to be that souls are self-propagating as bodies are, and that like bodies, souls are generated from some sort of 'seed'. He elaborates on this point later in the same passage, where he seems to suggest that the soul's seed nourishes the seed of the body into its particular form (as per hylomorphism):

> Therefore, the body's seed draws with itself the seed of the soul, namely the power of growth, which power nourishes the corporeal seed into a human form, the power growing with it into a rational soul. As a result, just as a particle which is not a human body flows from the human body in sowing the seed, so a particle which is not a human soul flows from a human soul like the seed.[19]

[21] Shedd cites this passage, and glosses Odo as follows:

> The merely material and physical semen is rationalized and spiritualized by the mental life which ejects it, so that the human embryo becomes both

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16. Something like this view is advocated by J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae in *Body and Soul, Human Nature and The Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2000), p. 221. Is this clearly a case of traducianism? Not necessarily. It might be that human gametes *generate* soul-stuff that they then 'carry', and which, if fused with another human gamete, will yield a genetically new individual with an embryonic soul that is formed from the soul-stuff carried by the gametes in some way analogous to the fusing of genetic material in symgamy. Such a position would be a version of the emergent dualism that was creationist, rather than traducian. Nevertheless, the Moreland-Rae proposal could be taken along traducian lines, and it is this sort of reasoning that Shedd overlooks.

17. This is the Aristotelian view of the relation between body and soul, which states that the soul is the form of the body. That is, the soul organizes the body into which it is integrated, rather like the lump of clay has to be 'organised' into the shape of a cup, or plate, by the potter. On a hylomorphist way of thinking, the lump of clay is 'matter', whereas the vessel into which it is shaped, is the 'form' that organises the clay/matter. In a similar way, the soul gives form to the matter of the body, according to hylomorphist accounts of the soul-body relationship. It is not clear that Shedd rejects hylomorphism as such, although he objects to Odo's hylomorphism.

18. Odo of Tournai (d. 1113 AD) presents a sophisticated account of the origin of the soul, which is now more widely available in translation. See Odo of Tournai, *On Original Sin and A Disputation With The Jew, Leo, Concerning The Advent of Christ, The Son of God, Two Theological Treatises*, trans. Irven M. Resnick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

19. Odo, *On Original Sin*, pp. 70 and 71 respectively.

psychical and physical, animal and rational, while the brute embryo remains only physical and animal. (DT: 485, n. 4. 1. 2)

[22]   But if Shedd denies this particular traducian account of the propagation of human souls – which, aside from the medieval language, presents an interesting argument for traducianism – what does he propose to replace it with? It is not clear. He does say that 'it is no valid objection to the doctrine of existence in Adam and in foregoing ancestors that it is impossible to explain the mode' (DT: 481). The fact is, says Shedd, the mode of the transmission of souls from one generation to the next is mysterious. This does not mean that traducianism, or Augustinian realism, is false.

[23]   But will this do? There are aspects of many Christian doctrines, the origin of the soul included, that are mysterious, and Shedd is right to point this out. After all, it is very difficult to make sense of matters pertaining to objects that are essentially immaterial. We have no means by which to ascertain many of the properties of such entities, unless they are revealed to us (by God), because they are literally nowhere (they have no physical extension), and are at no place where we can examine them.[20]   And, notoriously, there is very little in Scripture about the manner in which souls are propagated.[21]   So Shedd's appeal to mystery at this point in his argument might not be an unprincipled one, although it is rather frustrating that he draws a veil over this particular aspect of his position when he has felt free to speculate about other issues in the neighbourhood of the question of the soul's origin. And, in particular, it is frustrating that he makes this move without offering some account of how such immaterial objects might be fissile.

[24]   Indeed, we might want to enquire on what principled basis Shedd *can* reject Odo's account of the mode of the soul's propagation, if we cannot know how souls are disseminated because such matters are mysterious. I suppose it could be argued that one can reject an obviously false option without pretending to know what the content of the right option might be (although Shedd does not make this move).[22]   But, although he seems unhappy with Odo's position, Shedd does not explain why Odo's view is to be rejected. And it certainly does not seem to be obviously false. He does comment that Odo's introduction of the notion

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20. *Pace* Thomas, who believed the soul is 'located' where the body whose form it is, is located. See Eleonore Stump, 'Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism' in *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995): 512, and, amongst moderns, William Hasker, who thinks the soul is located somewhere in the central nervous system (see *The Emergent Self*). Roderick Chisholm even postulated that the soul is a very small entity somewhere in the brain! See Philip L. Quinn, 'Tiny Selves: Chisholm on the Simplicity of the Soul' in Lewis Hahn, (ed.), *The Philosophy of Roderick Chisholm* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1997), pp. 55–67.

21. There is material relevant to whether souls are propagated, which Shedd picks up in his section on the biblical material that supports his traducianism in DT: 438–444. But this is a different matter from the manner or mode of that propagation. It is on this matter that Scripture is (arguably) silent—or, at least, metaphysically underdetermined.

22. Example: An extra-terrestrial life form is discovered frozen in the artic permafrost in a spacecraft that crashed on the planet many years ago. Where did the creature originate? We do not know, but we do know (through various experiments on its physical structure, what the craft is composed of, and so on) that it did not originate on earth.

that material seed is made 'psychical' by the action of an individual soul upon it in the act of propagation is 'not an improvement' but 'introduces difficulties' that do not obtain with Augustine's version of the doctrine—whose view he finds more conducive to his own traducianism (DT: 484). But that is all he really says on the matter.[23] And this seems inadequate. For all Shedd knows, Odo's answer to this question is the right one. At least, Shedd offers no argument against Odo's view beyond these piecemeal comments, which makes it difficult to see why Shedd thinks Odo's account is so wrong about the mechanism for traducianism. In any case, Odo's solution does have this virtue: it offers a carefully plotted explanation of the mode of the soul's transmission from one generation to the next that avoids the cross caricatures that often pass for traducianism, thanks to the likes of Tertullian.[24]

[25]   But even if it is thought that Odo's account is unworkable (perhaps because his scholastic metaphysics are outmoded, or unpalatable), there may be other, similar ways of construing the mode of the soul's propagation that offer useful ways of thinking about this matter. And, for all we know, one such explanation, if coherent, might also be the truth of the matter.[25] Shedd may be right that the mode of the soul's transmission is mysterious, but I do not see how this particular aspect of the cluster of issues pertaining to the origin of the soul is any more mysterious, or any less speculative, than other aspects of the problem that Shedd feels perfectly happy to pronounce upon. In short, his comments seem rather *ad hoc.* But perhaps we can fill in the conceptual gap Shedd wants to leave in his account of traducianism with something like Odo's view of the mode of the soul's transmission, or some alternative story that yields an unequivocally traducianism conclusion on this matter that does not seem incoherent.[26]

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23. Mark Wynn has suggested to me that Shedd's rejection of Odo's view might have more to do with his fear that Odo says too much about the nature of traducianism, whereas Augustine recognises that traducianism is inherently mysterious and wisely refrains from elaborating the doctrine.

24. This raises the following question, How can Christ have a sinless human nature if his human soul and body are derived from the sinful human body and soul of his mother (assuming her body and soul were sinful)? Shedd offers a brief answer in DT: 475. He takes it up again in his discussion of Christology. This is also dealt with in Crisp, 'Shedding The Theanthropic Person of Christ'. In brief, Shedd's argument is that the Holy Spirit sanctifies Christ's human body and soul at the very moment of miraculous conception.

25. I have already sketched one such possibility: human gametes are carriers of soul-stuff, which, at the moment of syngamy, generates a new soul as the complement of the new genetic individual thereby generated. This soul-stuff is a 'part' of the soul of the parent, just as the DNA transmitted with the gamete is a physical 'part' of the human parent. Thus, as the human parent passes on one half of the genetic code for a new human individual, so also, each gamete carries one half of a psychical 'imprint', or 'pattern', which, when fused with the 'pattern' of another gamete in the moment of symgamy, generates a new soul, just as the new body is generated.

26. For instance, the view, given in the previous note, or, alternatively something like the traducianism offered by J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae in *Body and Soul,* ch. 6.

1.3 Shedd on human nature

[26]   A third issue in Shedd's account of traducianism has to do with what human nature consists in, and, therefore, what it is that is passed on from one generation to the next. I will deal with this more briefly than the previous points, because I have covered this material in more detail elsewhere.

[27]   Shedd denies that human nature is a property of a substance—a view that he imputes to Charles Hodge (DT: 469). Instead it is, he thinks, a substance in its own right. In fact, human nature consists in a human body and soul, which, as Shedd makes clear, each human being consists of, from the earliest stage of human development. 'Man at every point in his history, embryonic as well as fetal, is a union of soul and body, or mind and matter.' (DT: 471). And, of course, it is a condition for most versions of traducianism – though not a necessary condition of traducianism as such – that human beings have a soul and body.[27] Not all Christian thinkers agree that human beings are composed of a body and soul. Accordingly, those Christians who are materialists will not be sympathetic to Shedd's characterisation of human nature, nor, I presume, to the notion of traducianism. (Unless, the materialist wants to defend the view – often falsely attributed to traducianists – that the soul is a material entity, or a composite part of a material entity, which is, I take it, not a biblical view of the soul.[28]) For if human beings have no soul, then no immaterial substance exists that can be passed down from one generation to the next.

[28]   However, a Christian materialist could claim that souls are the epiphenomena of certain sorts of material organisation, which cease to exist when that matter degrades, or the organism that is constituted by this matter dies. Or, the Christian materialist might believe the mind is some immaterial aspect of the human being, or some property of the brain, but not a distinct substance conjoined with the physical body of a human being. It might be possible to construct some version of traducianism that is satisfied by such materialist accounts of the soul/mind. But this would not satisfy Shedd, who is, I think, quite clearly a substance dualist.

[29]   Those who think of natures and individual essences as properties or sets of properties, will find Shedd's account of human nature, like that of the medievals whom he seems to follow in this matter, baffling. How can a human nature be a concrete particular rather than a property, or set of properties?[29] Perhaps it is

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27. Idealists might also be either creationists or traducians about the nature of the soul, if they think of minds as souls, or soul-like. Perhaps an idealist of a Berkeleyan persuasion might be inclined to say that God creates different human minds and the ideas such minds have, out of nothing. Or, perhaps a traducian-Berkeleyan might think that God creates the first human minds, which (somehow) generate later human minds. The point here is that traducianism and creationism are theories about the origin of the soul, not about the constitution of human beings, as such.

28. For a defence of the view that the Bible presents a consistent case for souls being immaterial entities, see John Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000 [1989]).

29. One of the most illuminating discussions of the difference between a medieaval ontology and contemporary, essentialist ontology, can be found in Nicholas Wolterstorff's 'Divine Simplicity'

possible to make sense of this property-account of human nature along traducian lines, if it makes sense to think that certain properties can be 'transferred' from one entity to another. To give an example, we might think that a length of wiring that has an electrical current running through it, and a light bulb that has an element lit by that same current, being fed into it by the length of wire, both have the property, 'being the conduit through which this electrical current is flowing'. But the light bulb only has this property when the light switch is thrown and the current travels from the wire to the bulb.

[30]   In a similar way, it might be the case that human nature is a property that an entity has, just in case that entity has passed to it a certain material and soulish organisation from two parents. But this does seem rather more like Shedd's account than the property-account of human nature. For this sounds as if human nature is a concrete particular that exemplifies certain properties, rather than a property that is exemplified by certain entities. In any case, Shedd's view is that human nature is fundamentally a substance that exemplifies certain properties, not merely a property, and that 'soul-stuff' (my word, not Shedds') is passed from one generation to the next.[30]

2 Critique of Shedd's position

[31]   We are now in a position to offer some criticism of Shedd's version of traducianism. I shall take the three different strands of his argument dealt with in the previous section, in reverse order.

2.1 Shedd on human nature once again

[32]   First then, on human nature: here I have very little to say, since I am largely in agreement with Shedd about what human natures are.

[33]   However, I am less happy with his characterisation of what I shall call a species-nature, that is, the notion (with which we began our exposition of Shedd) that you and I are all carriers of a nature held in common with Adam. My objection to Shedd's understanding of this is not directed towards the idea of a species-nature as such. I suppose each human being has an individual nature, or essence, and that the class or set of human natures can be characterised as a species-nature. My objection is to Shedd's way of thinking about this species-nature. The idea that the first human pair have the whole of this species-nature, and that this nature is subsequently differentiated in instances of human nature

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in James E. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion* (Atascadero, CA.: Ridgeview Press, 1991), pp. 531–552. Wolterstorff characterises the medieval ontology as a constituent ontology (entities are constituted by certain things, including a nature—seen by the medievals as a concrete particular). Contemporary (essentialist) ontology he speaks of as relational ontology—entities exemplify certain properties in relation to other things, e.g. 'being referred to by Wolterstoff'.

30. The distinction between these two views of human nature (or two sorts of view), is developed more fully in chapter two of Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

exemplified by different human beings via the propagation and individuation of this species nature in the particular progeny of Adam, is, it seems to me, a rather baroque way of thinking about such metaphysical matters.

[34] This, by itself, is hardly an overpowering objection to Shedd's way of thinking about species-natures. It is not obviously incoherent to think of a species scattered through spacetime, with each individual of the given species exemplifying this species-nature. But I am not sympathetic to the idea that a species-nature is a concrete particular, as Shedd seems to be.[31] Although I share Shedd's view that particular instances of human nature are concrete particulars, I do not think that species-natures are also concrete particulars. Species natures are, it seems to me, more like properties: abstract objects that may or may not be instantiated in the actual world. (In the language introduced into Christology by Thomas Morris, a species-nature is a kind essence: that property or properties necessary for belonging to a particular natural kind.[32])

2.2 Are Souls fissiparous?

[35] More needs to be said about the second issue in Shedd's traducian-realism: whether souls are capable of generating other souls.[33] Here we run into difficulties in interpreting Shedd's views. For one thing, it is ambiguous

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31. Recall Shedd's words, quoted earlier: 'A species or a specific nature is that primitive invisible substance or plastic principle which God created from nonentity, as the rudimentary matter of which all the individuals of the species are to be composed.' DT: 465. This is from the section concerning physiological arguments for traducianism. In the previous section on the theological arguments for traducianism, he says something similar: 'natural union [realism] when examined will be found to be race-union; and race-union must be total not partial, psychical as well as physical, in order to be of any use in justifying the imputation of Adam's sin.' DT: 457. See also DT: 473, where he distinguishes between the 'general term' nature, and person, and states that, 'the general term *nature* denotes an objective entity or substance, as much as the general term *person*.'

32. Thomas Morris, in his work on Christology, speaks of individual essences and kind essences. My use of individual nature is different from Morris's individual essence in that, like Shedd, I think individual natures are fundamentally concrete particulars, not merely abstract objects (properties, or sets, or bundles of properties). However, my use of the term species-nature is, as far as I can see, just a different way of speaking about the same metaphysical thing Morris does, when he says that, in addition to individual essences there are kind-essences, or natures. Like Morris, I think that kind-essences, or, as I have expressed it, species-natures, are abstract objects, whereas Shedd seems to think of both individual natures and species-natures as concrete particulars. I use the language I do, rather than the language Morris and others have adopted, because it better approximates Shedd's idiolect, and to avoid the reader confusing my view of the distinction between individual natures and species-natures with the language deployed in recent philosophical theology by Morris and others. See Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), ch. V.

33. I am not sure there is sufficient evidence to show whether Shedd was a Thomist, or Cartesian, or some other species of substance dualist, see, for instance, his comments in DT: 471. The literature on substance dualism is growing. Representative examples of contemporary Cartesianism include John Foster, *The Immaterial Self: A Defence of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of The Mind* (London: Routledge, 1991), Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Charles Taliaferro, *Consciousness and The Mind of God* (Cambridge:

whether his substance dualism is Cartesian (souls are persons that happen to be 'attached' to a certain hunk of matter), or hylomorphist (souls are the form of the body, which they give shape to and organise), or, indeed, some other alternative, e.g. emergentism: the soul supervenes on the body; at a certain stage of bodily complexity the soul comes to be. (The reader is directed to DT: 471 ff. where Shedd deals with the relationship between bodies and souls.) For this reason, our assessment of his claim that souls are fissiparous will have to include an analysis of several different ways in which Shedd's view could be construed.

[36]   But before attempting this, another objection to Shedd's view needs to be addressed: that souls are simple substances, and therefore cannot be fissiparous, as traducianism requires. By a simple substance I mean a substance that is not a compound of other substances and is not composed of some more basic 'stuff'. Souls are essentially incorporeal simple substances. This means souls are quite different from material substances, which are composed of more basic elements, such as sub-atomic particles. If souls are simple, they are not composed of an immaterial equivalent to sub-atomic particles (e.g. 'soul-stuff').[34] But this means that souls have no parts. It also means that a soul is incapable of fission because an entity that has no parts is incapable of splitting. In which case, Shedd's contention about soul-fission cannot get off the ground.

[37]   A similar sort of objection applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to parturition. I take it that parturition denotes a reproductive act, where some part of a parent – its seed – generates or gives rise to, an offspring. Such a process need not involve fission. When a human reproduces after its kind it does not split into two. We might say humans are constitutionally parturient but not fissile. Similarly, soul-fission and soul-parturition is not the same thing. But if a soul is simple, it is incapable of parturition because it has no seed-like parts that may give rise to, or generate, a second soul. From this it should be clear that if souls are simple substances, they are incapable of soul-fission in the way Shedd envisages (even if Shedd has in mind something more like parturition than soul-fission).

[38]   Sometimes, creationists have argued that a soul, unlike a body, has no physical extension; so it is not susceptible to being divided in the same way that physical objects are. Let us call this *the indivisibility objection to traducianism*, or *the indivisibility objection* for short. One contemporary exponent of this view is Richard Swinburne:

> Of any chunk of matter, however, small, it is always logically, if not physically, possible that it be divided into two. Yet it is because matter is extended, that one can always make sense of it being divided.... But that kind of consideration has no application to immaterial stuff. There is no reason why there

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Cambridge University Press, 1994). A defence of a Thomist account is given in David Braine, *The Human Person: Animal and Spirit* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992). Criticism of these traditional dualisms and an emergent-dualist alternative, are given in Hasker, *The Emergent Self.*

34. Roderick Chisholm uses this terminology for souls in his 'On the Simplicity of the Soul' in James E. Tomberlin, (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives 1: Philosophy of Religion, 1991* (Atarscadero, CA.: Ridgeview Press, 1991), p. 167 ff.

should not be a kind of immaterial stuff which necessarily is indivisible.[35]

[39] And Swinburne thinks soul-stuff does have the property of being indivisible. His suggestion that 'there is no reason' why an immaterial entity such as a soul should not be indivisible is trivially true *if* souls are simple substances. But the traducian will not concede this.[36] Since Shedd's claim that souls are fissile is false if souls are simple substances, let us pursue the possibility that he believes souls are complex substances made up of something more basic—some 'soul-stuff' (whatever that might be).

[40] If the soul is a complex substance, then the indivisibility objection has no purchase. For no traducian worth his salt would object to the suggestion that souls cannot be *physically* divided as bodies are. But the fact that souls cannot be divided as physical objects can, does not imply that souls are indivisible. In other words, an objection to traducianism based solely on an analogy between the divisibility of bodies and indivisibility of souls falls foul of the fallacy of equivocation. In order for the objection to go through some reason would have to be given for thinking that immaterial objects like souls are *constitutionally* incapable of division. Such a reason is not provided by the indivisibility objection alone, without the assumption that souls are simple—which is just what the traducian contests.

[41] Of course, most creationists do not rest their whole case against traducianism on the indivisibility objection. There are, in fact, several different ways in which the creationist could supply the reason required for the objection against Shedd's notion that souls are fissiparous to go through without begging the question about the simplicity of the soul. One reason that can be found in traditional creationist objections to traducianism has to do with the idea that souls are incorruptible.[37] If souls are incorruptible, so such theologians claim, then they cannot be divisible. Thus, for example, in his discussion of the origin of the soul, the post-Reformation Reformed theologian Francis Turretin observes, 'all modes of propagation are pressed by the most serious difficulties; nor can they be admitted without overthrowing the spirituality of the rational soul'. Later in the same passage he goes on to say,

> that spiritual substance [i.e. the soul] is made either from the whole soul of
> the father or from a part only. Not from the whole because thus the soul of the
> father would be divisible into parts, and because that substance is corruptible

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35. Richard Swinburne, 'Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory' in Michael J. Loux, ed., *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 439.

36. At least two contemporary traducians have suggested that souls are complex entities. See the discussion of souls as 'complex entities' in Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, p. 69.

37. There is also the persistent criticism from classical theologians who are creationists that traducianism is somehow an incipient materialism (a matter we have already touched upon). The idea seems to be that if souls are propagated through natural generation, they must be passed through the gametes, and therefore must be a part of the gametes in some sense. But I take it that this is not a serious objection against traducianism. For one thing, it simply does not follow that if a soul is propagated through natural generation that the soul itself must be some physical part of the gamete, as I have already made clear.

and perishes in the very instant the soul is produced. But then it will no longer be a spiritual or incorruptible substance.[38]

[42] Turretin's comments could be taken to mean (a) souls are incorruptible, and (b) things that are incorruptible cannot suffer division, because division itself is an instance of corruption, or entails the corruption of that which is divided. One way of trying to flesh out this sort of claim (not one that Turretin offers, but one a defender of this construal of the incorruptibility claim might make) is analogous to the argument for the necessity of divine perfection one finds in perfect being theology. A perfect being theologian, following in the footsteps of Anselm of Canterbury, could say that God cannot cease to be perfect without ceasing to be divine: his perfection is a necessary condition of his being divine.[39] In a similar fashion, one might claim that it is in the nature of a soul to be incorruptible, so that it is not possible for a soul to be corrupted without the loss or diminishment of the soul concerned. Division of a soul is an instance of such corruption, or entails such corruption—the diminishment or destruction of the soul. So, if a soul is incorruptible, it is indivisible too. Let us call this the *incorruptibility objection*.

[43] One could press the point in a slightly different way, without recourse to the notion of incorruptibility, using the principle that the division of an entity entails the destruction of that entity and/or the generation of a new entity or entities. Here the idea is that if a particular thing is divided, then the product of such division, or any component part thereof, cannot be the same as the original entity prior to the moment it was divided. This seems to be a plausible principle when applied to material objects that are composed of fundamental particles, such as protons, electrons and so forth. Given this principle, the division of a loaf of bread, or a lump of clay entails the destruction of the original whole object (the whole loaf; the whole lump) and the generation of several new objects: two pieces of bread; two smaller lumps of clay. There are, of course, well-known objections to this way of thinking. If the bread is divided into two, it could be argued that there still exists an object composed of the parts of the loaf. The fact that those parts no longer occupy contiguous space does not mean they are not parts of a whole object. But, even on this rather non-commonsensical way of counting things that includes mereological sums of objects that may be spatially scattered, the action of dividing the bread does have this important consequence (that may be thought to tell against the scattered-object view): before the bread was divided there was one whole object existing in a particular space. After the moment of division, this is no longer the case.

[44] This line of thinking could be construed in one of several ways. The first

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38. Turretin, *Inst. Vol I*, p. 480. Turretin also argues that if both parents are the source of a propagated soul, it is difficult to see how this can be the case without either (a) conceding that the whole of each parental soul is transmitted (and mixed?) in the act of propagation, leaving the parents soul-less, or (b) conceding that souls have some sort of 'seed', which is he not willing to grant (on the grounds, one presumes, that souls are indivisible). But these are not the only options if souls are fissile.

39. See Anselm, *Proslogion*, in *Anselm of Canterbury, The Major Works*, (eds.) Brian Davies and Gillian Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

version involves the claim that entities cannot lose any parts *whatsoever* without ceasing to exist. This metaphysical idea is often called *mereological essentialism*—a doctrine some will find too high a price to pay for the dividends it promises.[40] Given mereological essentialism, we could reason as follows: all objects, including immaterial objects like souls, are mereological wholes that are incapable of losing any parts whatsoever, without being destroyed. If a soul is fissile, then it is capable of losing parts. But this is metaphysically impossible because no object can lose parts. So souls are not fissile. Notice on this way of thinking, that the property 'being fissile' is not a property any object, souls included, possess. By ruling out fissiparousness *tout court,* this mereological essentialist objection does offer a way of countering Shedd's soul-fission. But such reasoning will not commend itself to most readers as sound.[41]

[45]   One could opt for a weaker version of this sort of objection, which stipulates only that entities cannot lose any essential properties or parts without ceasing to exist and that one of the properties essential to souls is 'being indivisible'. But this more metaphysically modest way of construing the mereological objection is patently question begging. Hence, it is quite useless against Shedd's notion of soul-fission.[42] Without the claim that souls are simple entities, the argument from the indivisibility of the soul, taken along the lines I have suggested, is either at least as contentious as traducianism (in the mereologically essentialist form) or question begging.

[46]   Thankfully, there are other potential drawbacks to Shedd's 'soul-fission' in the neighbourhood. Here is one that uses aspects of a modified Cartesian substance dualism and problems familiar from the literature on diachronic personal identity. The modification is that this objection does not include the claim that souls are simple, which Cartesians normally do. Call it the *modified Cartesian diachronic personal identity objection*. It could be argued that it is metaphysically impossible for a person to divide, and souls are (normally speaking) persons.[43] This reasoning need not depend on persons being simple substances. It could just be that persons are indivisible mereological wholes, in which case persons might be simple substances, or persons might be complex substances that have

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40. There are well-known problems with mereological essentialism. A trivial example: each time I have a haircut, are we to suppose that the entity that existed before the haircut – call it Longhair – ceases to exist once my hair has been cut, only to be replaced by a different entity, that we might call Shorthair? This seems deeply implausible. For discussion of mereological essentialism, see Roderick Chisholm, *Person and Objection* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

41. But perhaps one could have a restricted mereological essentialism that only applies to essentially immaterial objects. Then the argument would run as follows: mereological essentialism applies to mereological wholes; all essentially immaterial objects are mereological wholes; mereological wholes are non-fissile; So, souls are non-fissile.

42. It is question begging because it relies on the premise that indivisibility is an essential property of souls. But this is precisely the point at issue!

43. I say 'normally speaking' (here and below) because I think that the Incarnation is an exception to this rule. At the Incarnation, a body-soul composite is assumed by the Second Person of the Trinity. But, according to catholic Christology this soul-body composite cannot be a person distinct from the Word of God – that is the heresy of Nestorianism, the notion that Christ is two persons, one divine and one human.

all of their parts essentially.[44] If persons are souls that are mereological wholes of some sort, it is impossible for souls to divide, since the division of souls would mean the destruction of a person.[45] This reasoning presumes, like Descartes, that human persons are essentially souls that are contingently related to certain hunks of matter: the human body that 'houses' them in this life. In fact, this is no more than the extrapolation of Cartesian substance dualism and its application to the particular issue in hand (with the modification concerning the simplicity of souls).

[47] A Sheddian-traducian who is also a modified Cartesian substance dualist might accede to the following argument: souls are fissile; souls are (normally speaking) human persons; so human persons are fissile. But I presume that one of the main attractions of a Cartesian view of the mind-body problem is that it offers a way of making sense of diachronic personal identity. It is, on the Cartesian way of thinking, the soul that perdures through bodily changes. Cartesian dualists deny that personal identity across time can be made out on the basis of any merely material constitution of the body e.g. a hemisphere of the brain, the whole brain, the central nervous system, or whatever.[46] Cartesians also deny that memory is a sufficient condition for persistence through time of a human person.[47] However, once one concedes to the Sheddian-traducian that souls (i.e. human persons, normally speaking) are fissile, one has a very good reason for thinking that the soul *cannot* provide the necessary persistence conditions for the identity across time of human persons. An entity liable, under certain conditions, to split into two further entities one of which may, or may not, be identical to the entity that existed prior to the split, presents a host of very difficult problems for the persistence-through-time of that entity that can hardly be a welcome prospect for the traducian who is a (modified) Cartesian dualist.

[48] We can spell this problem out in the following way. First a premise, which if not unassailable, is at least widely accepted: personal identity is a transi-

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44. Compare Chisholm: 'According to the principle of mereological essentialism, if a thing P is a part of a whole W, then W is necessarily such that P is a part of W. From this principle it follows that, if W is possibly such that it has no parts, then W has no parts and it, therefore, simple.' From 'On the Simplicity of the Soul, p. 177.

45. This is exactly what Swinburne does claim in 'Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory', p. 439.

46. One reason that is given for this is the *ens successiva* argument favoured by Roderick Chisholm, amongst others. If material objects are constantly gaining and losing matter, then they are, in Dean Zimmerman's memorable phrase, 'ontologically incontinent'. But if a material object gains and loses 'bits' of matter all the time, how can we be sure that the object at one moment is the same as (what appears to be) the same object at a later time? For discussion of this, see Zimmerman, 'Material People' in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics,* (eds.) Michael J. Loux and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

47. The *locus classicus* of this view is John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, ch. 27. The problems with memory as a criterion of identity across time are well known and I need not rehearse them here in detail. The basic problem is that memory is too unreliable to provide the persistence condition for personal identity. I frequently forget things that have happened to me—does this mean that those events in the past happened to someone other than me? Swinburne does a good job of recapitulating these criticisms in 'Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory'.

tive relation. If P at time t1 is personally identical with Q at t2, and Q is personally identical with R at t3, then P is identical with R. But what if at t2 Q is divided into two parts, so that at t3 we have, not merely R, but R1 and R2 respectively? Which (if either) of R1 or R2 are identical to P? If the Sheddian replies, 'the one that remains (somehow) related to the body of the parent is identical with P and the one that is 'split-off' from the parent and forms a new human being (i.e. a child) is the soul of the offspring' it should not be surprising if the creationist finds this inadequate. The fact that one product of an instance of soul-fission, say, R1, remains related (in some attenuated, non-physical sense) to the body of the parent, whilst the other, R2, is somehow transmitted – presumably with its counterpart from the second parent – to form a the new soul of the offspring, does not explain why we should think the soul-stuff that remains 'with' the first parent is identical to P. Such a Sheddian response (although, of course, Shedd himself does not make it) is rather like the Magician who, upon sawing his assistant in two, explains 'I know the piece of Debbie from the hips down that remains in this half of the box is identical with Debbie prior to my cutting of her, because it is the piece of her that I find most attractive.' I suspect his audience would find such a pronouncement fatuous. And with good reason—the fact that the Magician stipulates that Debbie-from-the-waist-down in the first half-box is identical with the whole Debbie that existed prior to sawing the poor woman in two offers no explanation as to why anyone else should think of the one half of Debbie as identical with the whole Debbie rather than the other half (or neither halves).

[49]   But the Sheddian could respond to this by claiming that souls are not fissile, but rather, parturient. Perhaps, although they cannot divide into two, souls can extrude themselves in the generation of new souls. Then, the traducian could argue that souls are capable of generating new souls, not by soul-fission, but by soul-parturition. This would involve some story about the way in which souls are 'carriers' of soul-stuff that they are able to pass on, rather like physical organisms such as human bodies, are 'carriers' of DNA which is passed on via parents to children through human seed. Aspects of what Shedd does say seem to comport with this, or something like it. But it does require that souls are compound rather than simple substances. It also requires some explanation of how such a view avoids accusations of what we might call 'incorporeal incontinence'. If souls gain and lose parts (or are capable of gaining and losing parts), then what are the persistence conditions of souls? How can such souls avoid something like Chisholm's *ens successiva* argument, according to which an entity that has a part at one time, which it loses at another, is not the same entity, but a successor to the previous one?

[50]   Well, perhaps the Sheddian-traducian who takes this sort of view can come up with counterarguments to these objections, as materialists have done when analogous criticisms have been raised with their arguments in favour of human persons being corporeal beings. These things are hard to judge—and I do not pretend to have offered anything like a watertight argument against Shedd's traducianism.

[51]   Of course, traducians need not be modified Cartesian substance dualists—

perhaps Sheddians need not either. One obvious alternative is a version of hylomorphism, where the human person (normally) consists of body-soul composite. On this view, or family of views, the soul alone is not a person, strictly speaking. So the same problems concerning soul-fission that face the Cartesian-traducian would not necessarily apply to the hylomorphist-traducian. But, if anything, this presents even more difficulties for the Sheddian to overcome. For the same sort of argument that was given against the Cartesian-traducian can be run against the hylomorphist-traducian, the relevant changes having been made. Does the soul, as the form of the body, constitute that which guarantees identity-across-time of a particular human person? If it does, then the same problems with soul-fission apply as apply with the Cartesian-traducian. If not, and personal identity across time is constituted by, say, the soul-body composite (rather than the soul alone), then further questions arise concerning whether an object that is partially composed of matter can be said to perdure, when this object is constantly gaining and losing matter. I do not propose to argue this in detail here.[48] I merely point out that if the hylomorphist-traducian goes down the road of locating persistence conditions in the body-soul composite that is human nature (according to Shedd), then this raises a number of the problems for material persistence that are raised for materialist accounts of identity-through-time. It does not seem to me to be a preferable state of affairs for the traducian to have to provide some reason for thinking that the material part of a human person is one part of what it is that perdures, the other part being the soul, or form, of the body. This seems to have all the drawbacks of both materialist and (modified) Cartesian accounts of identity-through-time without any of the advantages of coming down on one side or the other on this matter.

2.3 Creationism and imputed sin

[52]   We come, more briefly, to the third issue raised by Shedd's discussion of traducianism (the first that we dealt with in the previous section of the paper). This was Shedd's claim that creationism cannot offer a just argument for the imputation of Adam's sin. Shedd argues that if God creates souls out of nothing for each new human person, then, according to a traditional account of original sin, you and I are punishable for a sin we are not guilty of. And this seems unjust.

[53]   This is an important problem in the doctrine of sin. But I think Shedd is mistaken in thinking that his criticism applies to *all* versions of creationism. Shedd's comments are, for the most part, directed towards those in the Reformed tradition who are creationists and think that the imputation of Adam's sin to his progeny is a matter of divine convention. God treats Adam's offspring, you and me included, as if we were guilty of Adam's sin and imputes original sin to us accordingly. But a creationist need not also be a representationalist in his or her understanding of the means by which original sin is imputed to Adam's progeny. It is perfectly consistent for a creationist to be an Augustinian realist. Naturally,

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48. I direct readers once more to Dean Zimmerman's discussion of this in 'Material People', in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics.*

such a creationist-realist would have to give some satisfactory explanation about how it is just for God to create new souls *ex nihilo* for new human persons, as required, that have a sinful condition justly conferred upon them. But such an explanation can be given. There is not space to develop it in detail here, but an outline may suffice:

[54]   The first moment a given human person begins to exist is the moment God creates his soul *ex nihilo*. Now, assume that God constitutes things so that he may treat certain sorts of things that may be spatially and/or temporally scattered as one object. Alternatively, God ordains things such that spatio-temporally scattered things may constitute one object—since this is merely a sketch of an alternative to Shedd's account, I will not take sides on whether or not God constitutes things this way, or merely treats things as if this were the case. If this were a detailed examination of this way of thinking about the imputation of sin we would have to spend some time teasing these distinctions out.[49] (Is this unjust? Well that depends, amongst other things, on whether you think a metaphysical version of voluntarism is true or not—the doctrine that certain things depend upon the divine will for their existence. This is a controversial notion, but I think it is at least plausible to assume that there are certain things, perhaps even what it is that constitutes certain sorts of metaphysical entity, that are contingent upon the divine will. For the sake of argument let us grant that this is so, and that it applies to the constitution of souls.[50]) To return to the main point, God ordains that each soul as it is created is part of a larger metaphysical whole, or is treated as such. This whole comprises some number of human beings—not the whole number, because some humans, such as Adam and Eve before the Fall, Christ, perhaps his mother, and certainly those in the eschaton, are without original sin. So, God constitutes some number of human beings less than the total number of human beings that forms the relevant metaphysical whole. This metaphysical whole includes Adam from the moment of his fall and all other fallen humans, despite the fact that they are temporally and spatially scattered.[51]

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49. One problem here is that it is one thing to say God *constitutes* or *ordains* that such and such is the case, and another to say God acts *as if* such and such were the case. The former carries an ontological payload: these things are so. The latter does not – it is a kind of divinely ordained fiction.

50. Objection: if voluntarism is granted here, surely the creationist can appeal to it and claim that her view is just that God wills that it is just that I am punished for Adam's sin. Reply: it might be that there is a divine conventionalism that applies to objects (God gerrymanders certain hunks of matter into objects, say), but that such conventionalism cannot apply to the imputation of sin without violating a deep-seated moral intuition that such an action is unjust because undeserved.

51. Earlier I remarked that I found Shedd's use of the notion of a species-nature unhelpful. Is this story not smuggling in just such a notion in order to make sense of the divine gerrymandering of souls into some metaphysical entity (or fictional entity)? Well, yes. This story implies something like a doctrine of temporal parts, where temporal worms are concrete particulars. But there is an important difference with Shedd's view. On the story I am laying out it is not the case that the whole of humanity comprises the temporal worm all of whose parts have the property of original sin. Only some of humanity make this worm up, because not all humans have original sin (e.g. Adam prior to the Fall, the glorified in the eschaton ,etc.). Shedd's view is that *qua* species, there is a shared nature that is a concrete particular. My story requires only that those parts of humanity

[55] Is this story realist? I think it is. Augustinian realism only requires that somehow God constitutes Adam and his progeny one metaphysical entity for the purposes of imputing, or transmitting, original sin. There is nothing about Augustinian realism that stipulates the *mode* of this transmission, or the precise *nature* of the metaphysical arrangement concerned (although this is a point often overlooked by friends and foes of the doctrine).

[56] Shedd's argument against creationism relies on each newly created soul having no metaphysical connection with other souls going back to Adam. And this is one of the main reasons why he opts for the combination of traducianism + Augustinian realism. But the story I have just sketched out is consistent with a version of Augustinian realism, and creationism. And this, I think, offers one promising alternative to Shedd's account that is a sort of metaphysical hybrid, which is Augustinian realist and creationist. In fact, it may be more promising than Shedd's account, since Shedd does not address the problem of the identity of Adam and his progeny.[52] On his version of realism Adam and his progeny share a common nature, but they are not numerically identical. Yet much of the force of his criticisms of creationism appear to rely on the fact that creationism denies the numerical identity of Adam and his progeny, yet still applies punishment for Adam's sin in the absence of culpability. If Shedd's view is not clearly an instance of numerical identity between Adam and his progeny, then the same argument applies, the relevant changes having been made, to Shedd himself. However, it need not apply to the revised creationist-Augustinian realist hybrid I have sketched out, because on this view numerical identity is not required for the imputation of sin. Identity, on this view, is a matter of a perduring space-time worm that has different temporal parts that are numerically distinct 'temporal counterparts' that, taken together, 'form', or are 'fused into' one particular entity.

2.4 Conclusions

[57] Arguments against traducianism that are worthy of serious considera-tion are not easy to come by. An assessment of Shedd's version of traducianism only underlines this fact. But perhaps this should not be terribly surprising. The question of the origin of the soul has taxed some of the greatest minds in Chris-tendom. I have argued that, although there are objections to Shedd's account that are insufficient or question begging, there are also difficulties for Shedd's traducianism that are not easily answered and are on target. This is especially true of the problems that the simplicity of the soul poses for Shedd's view. I have also argued that Shedd's objection to creationism based on the question of the imputation of sin does not apply to all forms of creationism, as he seems to think, and that the problem of identity-across-time that motivates his argument against creationism can be applied to his own version of Augustinian realism. Although

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that have the property of original sin form a temporal worm that is divinely constituted.

52. It might be objected that the story just told is just as 'baroque' as the ontology Shedd presupposes. Well, perhaps. But it seems to me that this story has certain advantages over Shedd's view that makes this bullet worth biting.

Shedd's arguments may not be convincing, they are important and interesting. At the very least, Shedd's discussion of these matters shows that there are still intriguing problems to be explored concerning traducianism, Augustinian realism, and the nature of sin.[53]