

SIN, ATONEMENT AND REPRESENTATIONALISM: WHY WILLIAM SHEDD WAS NOT A CONSISTENT REALIST

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‘ὡσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς
ἄνθρωπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν ὅτι πολλοί,
οὕτω καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι
κατασταθήσονται ὅτι πολλοί

Romans 5:19

DOGMATIC PREAMBLE

There are many doctrines of the atonement in the history of Christian thought. One of the most important and enduring of these is the theory that Christ’s atoning work is a penal substitution. Put briefly (and somewhat roughly), this is the idea that Christ stands in the place of the sinner, the penal consequences of whose sin he takes upon himself at the cross, being punished in place of the sinner. Crucially, for the logic of this view of the atonement, although Christ is not the one guilty of sinning, God treats him as if he is the guilty party, punishing him in place of the guilty parties, namely sinful human beings (or some number of sinful human beings less than the total number of humanity). This is the central notion behind the theory of penal substitution, and it depends on what we might call a *forensic fiction*. (It is forensic because the theory concerned is penal, or judicial; it is a fiction because Christ is not literally guilty of sin, but is treated as if he were, for the sake of atonement.) Different advocates of penal substitution construe this in different ways, with different emphases, but they all share this common core understanding of the nature of the atonement.

One of the key differences between different defenders of this theory of the atonement involves a distinction between the imputations of human sin from Adam to his progeny on the one hand, and from the sinner to Christ on the other. (There is also a further matter, related to these two, which has to do with the way in which Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner.) There are those defenders of penal substitution who think that Adam's sin is imputed to his progeny because Adam acts as the representative of the human race such that when Adam sins, his sin may be justly imputed to those whom he represents. This representational view is sometimes called 'federalism', on account of the fact that it means Adam is the federal head, or representative of the human race. But there are other defenders of penal substitution who think that the imputation of Adam's sin is not merely a matter of representation. Rather, Adam and humanity are somehow one metaphysical entity. Adam's sin, on this second view really is my sin, because Adam and I are somehow two parts of one metaphysical whole. This view is usually called Augustinian realism, because it originates with St Augustine of Hippo, and because it implies that there is a real union between Adam and his progeny on the basis of which God may justly 'impute', or perhaps 'transfer', Adam's sin to Adam's offspring.

These are not the only views on the matter of the imputation of Adam's sin in the Christian tradition, but they are the two views relevant for our purposes. Those who are representationalists about the imputation of Adam's sin are usually also representationalists about the matter of the atonement. (This is a historical fact, not a point of logic – representationalism in hamartiology does not entail representationalism in soteriology.) Theologians who take this sort of view think that as Adam acts as the representative of the human race such that when Adam sins the rest of humanity are punished for that sin by having original sin imputed to them, just so, in the case of the atonement, Christ acts as my representative, standing in my place to take the punishment for sin due to me. Thus, God the Father punishes Christ in my place, treating him as if it were me he was punishing.

There is, therefore, a certain symmetry between the two representatives of the human race on this sort of view, which ties in with a particular way of understanding biblical texts such as Romans 5:12-19. In that passage, Paul lays out his comparison between the 'two Adams', that is, Adam and Christ. And on the representationalist rendering of Paul's argument, both Adam and Christ act as the 'federal' representatives of humankind. As Adam's sin affects human nature for the worse, so Christ's atoning act affects human nature for the better. But in both cases the act upon which

this relation between humanity and these two representatives turns, has to do with this notion of a forensic fiction. On the one hand, God treats Adam's progeny as if they are guilty of Adam's sin (although, strictly speaking, they are not guilty of his sin), and punishes them accordingly. But on the other hand, Christ is treated as if he were the guilty party, being punished in my place for my sin, although strictly speaking, he has no personal guilt whatsoever. Let us call this sort of view *consistent representationalism*, because it stipulates that both in the matter of the imputation of sin and the atonement and imputation of Christ's righteousness, Adam and Christ act as the representatives of (certain) human beings.¹ One example of just such a representationalist view of the imputation of Adam's sin is the twentieth-century American Dutch Reformed theologian, Louis Berkhof. In his *Systematic Theology* he says this:

In his righteous judgment God imputes the guilt of the first sin, committed by the head of the covenant, to all those that are federally related to him. And as a result they are born in a depraved and sinful condition as well, and this inherent corruption also involves guilt.

Later in the same work, whilst admitting the difficulty attending a penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement regarding the fact that there does not seem to be an adequate human analogy to the notion of a penal substitute, he nevertheless maintains that,

This does not mean that our sinfulness was transferred to Him – something that is in itself utterly impossible – but that the guilt of our sins was imputed to Him.... Strictly speaking, then, the guilt of sin as liability to punishment [*reatus poenae*] was imputed to Christ; and this could be transferred, because it did not inhere in the person of the sinner, but was something objective.²

¹ The standard account of the imputation of Adam's sin in the representationalist tradition in particular, is still John Murray's volume on *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988 [1939]), pp. 242-3 and p. 377, respectively. Compare what Charles Hodge says on this matter (cited by William Shedd in *Dogmatic Theology, Third Edition*, ed. Alan W. Gomes [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003], p. 453, from Hodge's *Princeton Essays* 1. 187): 'Adam was our representative; as a public person, we sinned in him in virtue of a union resulting from a covenant or contract. Let it be noted, that this is the only

Whatever we make of Berkhof's interpretation of penal substitution, it should be clear that this is not the only way in which the doctrine of the 'two Adams' found in Pauline theology might be taken. One alternative is the Augustinian realist view. There are two ways in which the Augustinian realist might construe the 'two Adams'.³ Both of these ways of thinking about Augustinian realism share the idea that the imputation of Adam's sin to his progeny depends upon Adam and his progeny being one metaphysical entity. The motivation behind this view is a desire to safeguard the doctrine of the imputation of original sin from the charge of injustice. For, so the Augustinian realist claims, it seems unjust that I am treated as if I were guilty of Adam's sin, and have the penal consequences of Adam's sin imputed to me by God. Yet this is what the representationalist alternative entails. However, if Adam's sin really is my sin because somehow Adam and I are really one metaphysical entity, then this problem may be evaded. If such an argument were forthcoming, then Adam's sin and guilt would be my sin and guilt, and God would be perfectly just in treating Adam and me as one entity for the purposes of the imputation of sin.⁴

union here [in the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, 22] mentioned. The bond arising from our natural relation to him is not even referred to.' The Scottish theologian William Cunningham expresses similar sentiments in *The Reformers and The Theology of The Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967 [1862]), p. 374.

³ By this I mean there are two live options for Augustinian realists on the matter of the relationship between the 'two Adams' of Pauline theology. I do not claim they are the only logically possible alternatives; clearly they are not. But I know of no theologian who claims that (a) the imputation of Adam's sin involves a mere representationalism, whereas (b) the relation between Christ and the elect is a realist one. Yet this is a position that might be taken. Theologians like Pelagius have argued that neither Adam's sin, nor Christ's righteousness, are imputed to human beings at all. But this view is, I take it, not a live option for orthodox Christian theologians.

⁴ There are several ways for an Augustinian realist to make sense of his or her realism. An outline of two of these (not the only ones, but ones relevant to a discussion of William Shedd) can be found in Oliver D. Crisp 'Scholastic Theology, Augustinian Realism and Original Guilt' in the *European Journal of Theology* 13 (2004): 17-28, and '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. For Shedd's views, see his *Dogmatic Theology, Third Edition*, pp. 479, 557 ff. All references are to this edition of Shedd's *Dogmatics*. Citations will be

The question, then, is what we are to make of the relation between Christ and his elect, that is, between Christ and those his atonement saves.⁵ Here there are two possible answers. The first is to say that there are reasons why Christ's atoning work is not like Adam's sinful act, and that these reasons are sufficiently serious to warrant a different way of thinking about the relation that obtains between Christ and the elect. For Augustinian realists sympathetic to this line of reasoning, the obvious alternative is a version of representationalism with respect to Christ's work. So, on this first version of Augustinian realism, there is an asymmetry between the work of the first and second Adam (of Paul's thinking in Romans 5). The first Adam is so united with his progeny that they are somehow one metaphysical entity, and Adam's sin passes to the later stages, or phases of the life of this same entity, that is, humanity. But Christ's union with his elect is not such an intimate relationship. Christ acts as the representative of the elect and dies in their place, taking upon himself their sin and guilt, which God the Father is happy to impute to Christ's account. So there is, on this view, a forensic fiction in the atonement that there is not in the imputation of Adam's sin. Let us designate this view, *the mediating position*, since defenders of this view claim realism is true with respect to the imputation of Adam's sin, and representationalism is true with respect to Christ's atoning work.⁶ As we shall see presently, a classic example of this mediating position is William Shedd.

But there is a second way in which the Augustinian realist argument could go. On this view, Christ is really united with his elect, just as Adam

given parenthetically in the body of the text, as DT, followed by colon and pagination, e.g. DT: 100.

⁵ I presume that Christ's atonement does actually bring about the salvation of a certain number of human beings, who come to realise that they are saved through the secret work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. We shall not deal with those who claim Christ's atoning work merely makes the salvation of fallen human beings possible, but is not sufficient to save any fallen human being without the significantly free choice of a fallen human being, required for Christ's atoning work to have purchase.

⁶ This should not be taken to imply that the mediating view is a third sort of view in-between, but not exactly the same as, either Augustinian realism or representationalism. That would be inaccurate. Rather, this mediating view is a species of realism, but one modified on the question of the atonement, by representationalism. Therefore, it is mediating only in the sense that, on the matter of the imputation of sin this view is realist, whereas on the matter of the atoning work of Christ, this view is representationalist.

is really united with his fallen descendents. Christ is somehow part of one metaphysical entity with the elect, just as Adam is somehow part of one metaphysical entity comprising Adam and his progeny. It should be clear that on this way of thinking there is an important symmetry between the two Adams of Pauline theology, which extends to the metaphysics of the imputation of Adam's sin, and Christ's righteousness, respectively. This last view we shall refer to as *consistent realism*. For according to this view, the mechanism by which both the imputation of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness is brought about, is a realist one. However, this view is not one that, to my knowledge, has ever been defended in explicitly realist terms, in the Christian tradition, (a matter to which we shall return at the end of this essay). However, there are some theologians who, in the context of discussion of the nature of the atonement say things that sound rather realist, or could be taken in a realist direction. Take, for example, the Puritan theologian, John Owen. In his *Dissertation on Divine Justice* he says that God,

might punish the elect either in their own persons, or in their surety standing in their room and stead; and when he is punished, they also are punished: for in this point of view the federal head and those represented by him are not considered as distinct, but as one; for although they are not one in respect of personal unity, they are, however, one, – that is, one body in mystical union, yea, *one mystical Christ* – namely, the surety is the head, those represented by him the members; and when the head is punished, the members also are punished.⁷

Although Owen retains the language of representationalism here, there is also material that sounds realist. And he is not the only thinker in the tradition to use such ambiguous language about the nature of the atonement.⁸ Naturally, consistent realism would require more than realist-

⁷ See John Owen, *A Dissertation on Divine Justice*, in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. X, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967 [1850-1853]), p. 598 (italics original).

⁸ Compare the language of Eusebius of Caesarea: 'And how can He make our sins His own, and be said to bear our iniquities, except by our being regarded as His body, according to the apostle, who says: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members?"' in *Demonstratio Evangelica X 1*, in *The Proof of The Gospel*, ed. and trans. W. J. Ferrar, Vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), p. 195. I owe this and the Owen reference to Dr Garry Williams, who pointed out to me in conversation that there are several instances of such ambiguous language in the tradition (another is St Cyril of Alexandria in *De adoratione et culta in spiritu et veritate*, III. 100-2, PG

sounding language. But, at the very least this shows that even a theologian like John Owen, often taken to be a paradigm of consistent representationalism, is not unambiguously representationalist on the matter of the atonement. It may be that consistent realism is not such a theologically outlandish idea, after all.

SITUATING WILLIAM SHEDD'S VIEWS ON THESE MATTERS

William G. T. Shedd was a nineteenth-century Reformed theologian who wrestled with these issues and achieved a remarkable synthesis between aspects of the realist and representational ways of thinking, which, as I have already mentioned, corresponds to the first of our two ways of construing the Augustinian realist account of Paul's 'two Adams', that is, the mediating view. In his *Dogmatic Theology*, he set out an argument for this particular realist position. In the remainder of this essay, I want to consider his argument in some detail since it sheds light (or perhaps, Shedd's light) on some difficult matters to do with the nature of the atonement, and its relationship to the doctrine of sin. We will see that Shedd offers several interesting reasons for taking the realist-representationalist position over the consistent representationalist alternative. But he does not really address the consistently realist alternative in any systematic fashion, although it seems clear from comments he does make that Shedd was not sympathetic to consistent realism – see, for instance, DT: 461. After giving a critical account of Shedd's position on this matter, I shall offer some comments on the success of his view. It seems to me that there are some important shortcomings with his view that Shedd does not tackle adequately. Finally, in the third section of the essay, I shall offer some reflections on consistent realism as a possible alternative to Shedd's mediating position.

Shedd on the atonement

That Shedd defends the doctrine of penal substitution is not in doubt. He devoted a whole chapter of his *Dogmatic Theology* (Part 6, Chapter 2) to the vicariousness of Christ's atonement. There he says things about the nature of the atonement, like this:

The sufferings of Christ the mediator were vicariously penal or atoning because the intention, both on the part of the Father and the Son, was that

68: 293 and 296). See Williams' very helpful paper, 'God, The Individual, and Systematic Solipsism: Contemporary Anglo-American Criticism of Penal Substitution' (forthcoming).

they should satisfy justice for the sin of man.... Scripture plainly teaches that our Lord's sufferings were vicariously retributive; that is, they were endured for the purpose of satisfying justice in the place of the actual transgressor: "Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (Gal. 3:13). (DT: 716-17).

Although some theologians writing around the same time as Shedd, such as John McLeod Campbell, argued that the atonement might be substitutionary but not penal, so that a vicarious atonement need not imply the doctrine of *penal* substitution, it is clear from this and the whole tenor of Shedd's discussion that he is not sympathetic to non-penal arguments for a substitutionary atonement.⁹ His is a staunch defence of penal substitution.¹⁰

Yet Shedd was also an advocate of Augustinian realism with respect to the imputation of Adam's sin. In discussing original sin and Romans 5:12-19, Shedd says that this passage teaches that, 'the death which came upon all men as a punishment came because of one sin and only one'. Moreover, 'this sin was the one committed by Adam and his posterity as a unity' (DT: 558). Later in the same discussion on the imputation of Adam's sin, Shedd states that,

The first sin of Adam, being a common, not an individual sin, is deservedly and justly imputed to the posterity of Adam upon the same principle upon which all sin is deservedly and justly imputed, namely, that it was committed by those to whom it is imputed (DT: 561).

He goes on to argue that the imputation of either Adam's sin or Christ's righteousness must 'rest upon a union of some kind' (DT: 561). But the union involved in each of these cases is quite different. The imputation of Adam's sin depends upon a 'natural union', that is, a version of realism, whereas the imputation of Christ's righteousness depends upon a union 'of constitutional nature and substance' (DT: 562). By this he seems to mean some version of representationalism applies to the atonement and imputation of Christ's righteousness.

⁹ See John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, Sixth Edition (London: Macmillan, 1895 [1856]).

¹⁰ Compare Shedd, DT: 735, where he says that Christ's sufferings, 'were a judicial infliction voluntarily endured by Christ for the purposes of satisfying the claims of law due from man; and this purpose makes them penal'.

Shedd's argument for Augustinian realism depends upon a version of traducianism, the doctrine that the souls of human beings are passed down from parents to children, just as our genetic make-up is inherited from our parents. In a nutshell, Shedd says this: Adam and Eve both share an undifferentiated 'human nature' including a 'psychical' part, or soul. This human nature is differentiated as it is passed down from one generation to the next. So, Adam's offspring had his genes and a 'part' of his soul, which became the soul of the particular individual member of Adam's offspring.

Shedd's version of realism is intriguing and controversial. Intriguing, because it offers a theologically and metaphysically sophisticated way of conceiving realism, which avoids the caricature, too often perpetuated in text books of theology, that Augustinian realism entails some sort of seminal presence of each human being in the loins of Adam. Although there are traces of this sort of argument in some of the things Shedd says, it seems to me that his reasoning need not be taken in this direction. But his thinking is also controversial for a number of reasons, in addition to the controversial nature of his spirited defence of Augustinian realism. For instance, his construal of the doctrine requires traducianism and, as a constituent of his traducianism, the idea that souls are fissiparous. But a number of classical theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, would have found the idea that souls can be divided deeply implausible.¹¹

Be that as it may (and this is not an exposition of Shedd's doctrine of traducianism, or his account of Augustinian realism *per se*),¹² what we need to be clear about is that Shedd is unambiguously a defender of Augustinian realism (coupled with traducianism) as well as of a representationalist argument for penal substitution.¹³

¹¹ Thomas, *ST* 1. Q. 75, Art. 6. For one thing, it seems odd to conceive of immaterial objects having parts in a way analogous to the physical parts of physical objects.

¹² For recent treatments of the nature of Shedd's Augustinian realism and his traducianism, I refer the reader once more to Oliver D. Crisp, 'Federalism vs. realism' and 'Scholastic Theology, Augustinian Realism and Original Guilt'. On the question of the application of some of these issues to Shedd's Christology, see Crisp, 'Shedding the Theanthropic person of Christ', forthcoming in *Scottish Journal of Theology*.

¹³ In other words, Shedd does not favour either a consistently representationalist, or a consistently realist position on the relationship between the imputation of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness. He opts for realism with respect to the former, and representationalism with respect to the latter.

(a) Shedd's historico-theological argument against consistent representationalism

What, then, are Shedd's reasons for opting for this way of understanding the imputation of Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness, respectively? There are several strands to his response. The first involves a historical-theological argument. In the context of his discussion and defence of traducianism in DT 4: 1, Shedd claims that the 'elder Calvinists', that is, Calvin and his immediate successors in the post-Reformation period, say nothing about representation on the matter of the imputation of Adam's sin. 'The term', he opines, 'is foreign to their thought' (DT: 452). In the same context, he argues that the transition from the 'elder' to the 'later' Calvinism on this particular cluster of issues can be traced to Francis Turretin, whose view could be seen as a kind of mediating position between the elder and later Calvinists.¹⁴ Like the elder Calvinists, Turretin maintained that there is a real union between Adam and his progeny (usually, it has to be said, in the context of discussing the nature of the imputation of Adam's sin). But he also speaks in terms of representationalism as well, particularly when comparing the 'two Adams'.¹⁵ This, according to Shedd, is to 'combine iron with clay'. 'For', he says, 'the two ideas of natural union and representation are incongruous and exclude each other. The natural or substantial union of two things implies the presence of both. But vicarious representation implies the absence of one of them' (DT: 449 cf. 458-9).¹⁶ According to Shedd, one must either opt for realism or representationalism with respect to the imputation of Adam's sin, but not both, or some combination thereof.

There is a good reason for Shedd's reluctance to cede ground to a representationalistic account of the imputation of Adam's sin. This reason,

¹⁴ 'Turretin marks the transition from the elder to the later Calvinism, from the theory of the Adamic union to that of the Adamic representation. Both theories are found in his system and are found in conflict' (DT: 448).

¹⁵ Compare Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. I, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994), 9. 9. 16 on the 'two Adams' and Turretin's language of consistent representationalism, and 9. 9. 24-5 for Turretin's realist-sounding language with respect to the imputation of Adam's sin. Both are cited in Shedd, DT: 448-9.

¹⁶ Although, according to Shedd, representationalism and realism logically exclude one another, these two views on the imputation of Adam's sin can be seen side-by-side in the work of a number of other post-Reformation theologians after Turretin, such as De Moor-Marck, Witsius, and, as we noted in the dogmatic preamble to this essay, John Owen. See DT: 449-50.

although not exactly the same as the objection – alluded to earlier – that imputing Adam’s sin to me is unjust, is in the same neighbourhood as this reasoning. Shedd maintains that Adam’s sin must be both *culpable* and *punishable* in his posterity. It is not sufficient to claim that Adam’s progeny are punishable for Adam’s sin, if they are not culpable for it. For that would be unjust. But, according to Shedd, this is just what the representationalist account of the imputation of sin does state. It claims that Adam acts on my behalf, and sins as my representative. Adam’s sin is then attributed to me so that I am punishable for Adam’s sin, although, on the basis of representationalism, I am not, strictly speaking, culpable for Adam’s sin. God simply treats me as if I were guilty of that sin (the forensic fiction at the heart of representationalism, mentioned earlier – see DT: 457-9 for Shedd’s argument). Turretin appears to have seen this problem, and, according to Shedd at least, it is because he recognised this shortcoming in representationalism with respect to the imputation of Adam’s sin, that he attempts to hold culpability and punishability together in a cobbled version of realism regarding the imputation of sin (DT: 459).¹⁷

This places the consistent representationalist in something of a quandary. For if Shedd is correct, then consistent representationalism imputes injustice to God at the very point at which it attempts to demonstrate the rightness of divine justice, namely, in the imputation of Adam’s sin. And, if Shedd’s historico-theological reasoning is right, the problems that representationalism (with respect to the imputation of sin) throws up for Reformed theology, is an invention of later Calvinism. Or, to put it another way, it is a problem generated by theological innovation. What Shedd seems to be saying is this: if Calvinists had remained consistent with their own tradition, that is with the elder Calvinists and Augustinians more generally, they would have avoided speaking of the imputation of Adam’s sin in terms of representation, expressing themselves in the language of Augustinian realism instead. But they did not do so, and as a result, confused theological thinking crept into Reformed theology.

This leads us from the first, historical-theological strand of Shedd’s argument, directed against consistent representationalists, to a second strand of reasoning where Shedd argues for the dissimilarity between the ‘two unions’ (of Adam and his progeny in original sin, and of Christ and the elect in the atonement – hereinafter, simply ‘the two unions’). The

¹⁷ Interestingly, Shedd notes that Jonathan Edwards comes to similar conclusions in his magisterial treatise, *Original Sin*, for similar reasons.

objective here seems to be to offer some reason for thinking that his mediating position is preferable to consistent representationalism.

(b) Shedd on the 'two unions'

The first thing Shedd says on this matter picks up where we left off discussion in the previous section. He says, contrary to the later Calvinists after Turretin, that 'culpability and punishment stand in the relation of cause and effect and hence, like these, are inseparable' (DT: 457). Against the representationalist account of the imputation of Adam's sin, this objection has purchase. But the same cannot be said against the representationalist account of Christ's atonement. Indeed, a consistent representationalist might reply to Shedd in the following fashion: 'the theological principle you are enunciating means that where there is no culpability, there can be no just punishment (in the case of the imputation of Adam's sin). Yet you affirm that Christ is punished for human sin, despite the fact that he is without sin, and is therefore neither culpable for human sin, nor, strictly speaking, punishable for it.'¹⁸ Thus, Shedd appears to be guilty of theological doublespeak.

However, in the same passage, Shedd responds to this potential counterargument to his own position with five reasons in favour of the dissimilarity between the 'two unions' (of Adam + progeny and Christ + elect). In the first of these, he claims that there is a significant difference between Christ's voluntary consent to atone for human sin, and the fact that Adam's progeny cannot consent to Adam's sin, and that this dissimilarity between the two cases is sufficient to account for the disparity between culpability and punishment. Both are required for the imputation of Adam's sin to be just. But only the latter is required for the atonement, since Christ consents to this arrangement, and, according to Shedd,

If an innocent person, having the proper qualifications and the right to do so, agrees to suffer judicial infliction for another's culpability, of course no injustice is done to him by the infliction; but if he is compelled to do so, it is the height of injustice (DT: 457, cf. DT: 461).

There is, then, on Shedd's way of thinking, a penal or forensic asymmetry between Christ and Adam's progeny, that means it would be unjust for representationalism to obtain in the case of the imputation of Adam's sin because I am not culpable for Adam's sin (according to the

¹⁸ Compare Shedd's comments at the top of DT: 461.

representationalist view). But it would not be unjust in the case of Christ's atonement, because Christ volunteers to act as a vicar.

Shedd is right to point out the difference between the voluntary nature of Christ's atoning work, and the involuntary nature of imputed sin. It is, in fact, a feature common to all accounts of the 'two unions' that hold to a robust doctrine of original sin and its imputation and a penal substitutionary account of the atonement, whether consistently representationalist or of the mediating persuasion. But, as he rightly points out, consistent representationalism has a problem explaining how it is just for Adam's progeny to be treated as if they were guilty of a sin committed on their behalf by their federal representative. A representationalist doctrine of the atonement (that aspect of representationalism Shedd shares with his opponents) does not face the same problem, says Shedd, because Christ consents to become a penal substitute for human sin.

But it seems entirely specious to claim that because an innocent person volunteers to undergo a certain act of punishment on behalf of another, this involves no injustice. It might very well be a quite unjust punishment, and unjustly imputed to the innocent party, whether or not he or she volunteers for the task. That is to say, the fact Christ consents to act on behalf of fallen human beings in the atonement does not, in and of itself, render his being punished in the place of human sinners a just action. Consider just one example that will make the point, concerning Bill, a man who volunteers to undergo the just punishment for murder allotted to his friend, Ben. Now, suppose Ben is entirely culpable and owns up to this. Would the fact that Bill consents to take Ben's punishment upon himself render his vicarious act a just one? I think it would not, and I fancy most people would have similar intuitions about Bill, and other, similar cases of vicarious punishment. So, even if a penal substitute consents to becoming the vicar for another, this act is not, in and of itself, sufficient to ensure that no injustice is perpetrated against the person of the vicar in his or her act of substitution for the sinner. Consequently, on this particular point, Shedd's reasoning appears wide of the mark.

What, then, of his other reasons for affirming the dissimilarity between the 'two unions'? Do they fare any better? His second point is that Christ suffers undeservedly, whereas Adam and his progeny suffer deservedly (DT: 461). Christ has no personal guilt – he is not a sinner. So the fact that the connection between culpability and punishment is severed in the case of Christ is perfectly just. But the same would not be true of Adam and his progeny. In the case of Adam and his progeny, sin may only be justly imputed if they are all culpable for Adam's sin, otherwise I am punished for someone else's sin, for which I am not culpable. (And, although he

does not say so in this particular context, it is clear from the overall thrust of his thinking that the Sheddian solution to this problem is a form of Augustinian realism.)

But even if we are minded to grant Shedd's realism in the case of the imputation of sin, this fails to address the fundamental problem this raises for any representational view of the atonement, which we have just touched upon. (I mean the objection that it is unjust for anyone to suffer the punishment due another in matters where serious sin is involved.) If anything, this point only plays into the hands of Shedd's opponents. For if Christ has no personal guilt, then it seems unjust that he is punished for the sin of another at all.

The remaining three reasons Shedd offers can be given a little more briefly. I shall pass comment only after mentioning all of them.

Third, Shedd says Christ is a substitute for sin, whereas Adam and his progeny are the principals involved in an act of sin (DT: 461). Christ suffers vicariously, but Adam's progeny do not. Fourth, Christ's suffering is expiatory; that of Adam's progeny is retributive. Christ endures suffering for the remission of sin, but Adam's progeny suffer to satisfy divine justice. Fifthly, unlike Adam's progeny, Christ does not possess original guilt (for Adam's sin). As a consequence, Christ could consent to undergo suffering as a penal substitute; he was under no obligation to suffer, as Adam's progeny are, because satisfaction is required in payment of their sin.

The third, fourth and fifth of these reasons for the dissimilarity between the 'two unions' do not seem to do much more by way of persuading putative interlocutors than the first two reasons did. The third point is clearly an important difference between the 'two unions' – provided Shedd's view, or something very like it, is assumed at the outset. But the theologian unwilling to concede the point at issue between Shedd and his opponents, without some reason for doing so, will find little in what Shedd says here to persuade him or her. For according to consistent representationalism, Adam's progeny are not the principals involved in original sin, but those to whom the sin of the principal, that is, Adam, is imputed.

Shedd's fourth point tells a rather one-sided story, weighting it in favour of his own position. It is true, as he suggests, that Christ's suffering is expiatory whereas that of Adam's progeny is retributive. It is also true that Christ endures suffering for the remission of sin, but Adam's progeny suffer to satisfy divine justice. However, according to Shedd's doctrine of penal substitution, it would be perfectly correct to say that Christ suffers the divine retributive punishment I should suffer (but do not

– because he acts as my vicar), and that Christ suffers to satisfy divine justice for the debt I owe because of my sin. Put like this, the dialectical force of Shedd's point is somewhat blunted. Yet, it might be thought, all Shedd is really trying to convey here is that Christ does these things voluntarily, as my penal substitute, whereas Adam's progeny do not. Well, perhaps that is right.¹⁹ But the consistent representationalist can say exactly the same thing, albeit for different reasons. So this does not do enough to distinguish Shedd's view from that of the consistent representationalist.

Similar problems beset Shedd's fifth point. This, the reader will recall, was that Christ is without original guilt, and has no obligation to suffer for sin, as Adam's progeny do, because Adam's progeny all bear original sin for which they are punishable. But, in at least one important respect, this is a theological notion Shedd shares with the consistent representationalist. On both views Adam's progeny all bear original sin and are punishable for it. And the idea that Christ is guiltless in a way that Adam's progeny cannot be, is not at issue between Shedd's mediating position and the consistent representationalist view. The representationalist understanding of the imputation of sin does entail that Adam's progeny are punishable without being culpable for Adam's sin. That much does distinguish the two views, as Shedd has already pointed out. But, with respect to the atonement, the representationalist position is that Christ is guiltless and therefore not liable for punishment, yet takes on the punishment of (some number of) fallen human beings. The same cannot be said, on a representationalist scheme, of Adam and his progeny. So, although there is a difference between Shedd and the consistent

¹⁹ Shedd's brand of Augustinian realism + traducianism means that all of Adam's progeny are literally little chips off the old Adamic block. As Shedd understands this, you and I share a common nature with Adam that is only individualized as each new human person is generated. And the whole of human nature (understood by Shedd to mean the body + soul composite that makes up each human being, not just some set of properties that comprise human nature) is transmitted to the succeeding generation by the previous one, in an unbroken chain that goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. So there is a sense in which, on Shedd's way of thinking, Adam's progeny do not choose to commit the original sin; Adam does. Yet it is Adam with this complete human nature that sins, and I who have a small part of this human nature as it has been propagated to me. So I am culpable and punishable (in Shedd's terms) for Adam's sin because we share a common nature. But, curiously, on Shedd's realism my participation in original sin is not voluntary. For more on this see Crisp, 'Federalism vs. realism'.

representationalists on the matter of the culpability and punishability of Adam and his progeny, on the one hand, and Christ in place of the elect on the other, both affirm Christ's guiltlessness and innocence. And both affirm that Adam's progeny should be punished for Adam's sin. The difference lies in the nature of what is imputed from Adam to his progeny. Both parties agree that, unlike Christ, Adam's progeny are punishable for Adam's sin.

At the culmination of these reasons for the dissimilarity between the 'two unions', Shedd has this to say:

The obvious fallacy in this argument from the parallel between Christ and Adam lies in the assumption that because there may be vicarious penal suffering there may be vicarious sinning and that because there may be gratuitous justification without any merit on the part of the justified there may be gratuitous condemnation without any ill desert on the part of the condemned. The former is conceivable, but the latter is not. One person may obey in the place of others in order to save them; but one person may not disobey in the place of others in order to ruin them. (DT: 462)

This, I suggest, goes to the heart of Shedd's mediating position. Let us call it, *the representationalist fallacy*. It amounts to this: there are good (theological) reasons for thinking that vicarious penal suffering is viable (in the case of Christ and the elect). From this we may infer that there are good (theological) reasons for thinking that vicarious sinning is also a viable notion (in the case of Adam and his progeny).²⁰ But, Shedd points out, these two issues are distinct, and one does not imply the other. The nature of these two unions, between Adam and his progeny on the one hand and between Christ and his elect on the other, is different in important respects. For one thing, righteousness may be imputed to a person meritoriously, or unmeritoriously. But sin cannot be imputed unmeritoriously (DT: 462). For another (and here, once again, Shedd turns to Francis Turretin for assistance), the two unions are different with respect

²⁰ I think it is unjust to characterize consistent representationalists as saying the union between Adam and his progeny depends upon Adam's vicarious sinning. For there is surely a difference between Adam sinning for me (because I have authorized him to do so), and Adam acting as my representative, and committing a sin in his capacity as my representative (without my specific authorization). Shedd's language suggests the former is true of representationalism. But of course, it is not. For representationalists (at least, those who are Augustinians) both Adam and Christ act on my behalf, but without my specific authorization to do so.

to the ground and reason for the imputation in each case (DT: 463).²¹ The ground and reason for the imputation of sin is inherent and personal, viz. Adam and his progeny. But the ground and reason for the imputation of righteousness is judicial and forensic, viz. Christ's penal substitution.²² For this reason, Shedd feels able to conclude his discussion of the 'two unions' by suggesting that God 'can pronounce a man innocent when he is guilty because Christ has obeyed for him; but he cannot pronounce a man guilty when he is innocent because Adam disobeyed for him. These are self-evident propositions and intuitive convictions', (DT: 464) which, Shedd believes, concur with Scripture.

There are several things that can be said in response to this. The first is that Shedd is right to point out that the 'two unions' of Adam and Christ with (some number of) humanity present different problems for the theologian. An explanation of one does not necessarily imply an explanation of the other. And to the extent that Shedd's discussion makes this clear, his contribution is a welcome one. However, Shedd's intuitions about these differences, particularly his claim that Christ may act as a representative of human beings whereas Adam cannot, is, as I have already suggested, wrongheaded. But then, to be fair to Shedd, these matters are very difficult to make sense of; the metaphysical issues are complicated and do not admit of easy resolution. It is no wonder, then, that different theologians have such different intuitions about these matters.

That said, it seems to me Shedd does not do enough to establish the nature or metaphysical description under which the two unions are dissimilar. And the central problem, around which he organizes much of what he has to say on the subject, is that Adam and his progeny must be culpable as well as punishable for Adam's sin in order for the imputation of sin to be just. But the same reasoning does not apply to the atonement. For in the case of Christ, he may be punishable for a sin he did not commit, and for which he cannot be culpable. But, despite the fact that Shedd sets out a clear case for his mediating position which has much to recommend it, it seems to me that he does not do enough to deflect the consistent representationalist criticism that his realism should apply to both the imputation of sin and the atonement. He does raise some serious problems for consistent representationalists over the imputation of Adam's

²¹ Compare Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. II, 16. 2. 19.

²² 'The formed imputation [viz. original sin] rests upon something propagated, inherent, and subjective in the posterity; the latter [viz. the atonement] rests upon something wholly objective – namely, the sovereign decision and judicial declaration of God' (DT: 464).

sin. But his doctrine of the atonement is as liable to claims of injustice as the consistent representationalist's way of thinking about imputing Adam's sin, albeit for slightly different reasons. In short, it seems to me that Shedd's achievement is rather mixed. He has taken the fight to the consistent representationalists over the imputation of sin, and does, in the present author's opinion, have the better of that aspect of the argument. But, in siding with the representationalists over the atonement he has not done enough to show, despite considerable efforts, that representationalism in this particular matter, fares any better than it does regarding the imputation of sin. And in that respect he is in the same metaphysical boat as the consistent representationalists.

SHEDD AND CONSISTENT REALISM

But finally, what of the consistent realist? Has Shedd any good reason for thinking that those who believe that both the imputation of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness depend on a form of realism are wrong about the latter? As we have seen Shedd's energies were directed against consistent representationalist arguments and in favour of his own mediating position. He has almost nothing to say about the possibility of consistent realism, although at one point Shedd does reiterate a representationalistic objection to traducianism that may be applied in a realist account of the atonement. This is that 'believers are inherently and personally meritorious through their union with Christ, that participation in Adam's disobedience carries with it participation in Christ's obedience' (DT: 461).²³

In fact, there are two objections here. The first is that a realist union with Christ through his atoning work means that believers are themselves inherently, and personally, meritorious. Shedd conflates this with the further claim, that participation in Adam's disobedience might, via some sort of transitivity relation, involve participation in Christ's atoning work. But, of course, the former claim need not include the latter.²⁴ The domain

²³ The context of this comment is the claim, made by consistent representationalists, that the 'two unions' of Adam and his progeny and Christ and the elect are so alike that, were the traducianist to be consistent, he or she would have to argue that, as Adam's posterity are inherently and personally culpable because of their union with Adam, so the elect must be inherently and personally meritorious through union with Christ.

²⁴ A transitivity relation obtains where A entails B and B entails C. Where this is the case, A entails C. Applied to the sinner and Christ, and assuming a version of consistent realism, it could be argued that (a) I participate in

comprising Christ and his elect does not necessarily contain all the same members as the domain comprising Adam and his progeny.

Still, it would appear that commitment to consistent realism ends up with the first of these problems. It is one thing to claim, with Shedd and other Augustinian realists, that Adam and his progeny are (somehow) one metaphysical entity, such that Adam's sin is really my sin (I am culpable and therefore punishable for it). But it is quite another to say that the relation between Christ and the elect is similarly realist. For how can Christ and his elect be one metaphysical entity, such that, with certain important qualifications, Christ's righteousness is my righteousness, and my original sin is taken up by Christ in his atoning work, without this also involving some much stronger metaphysical arrangement, whereby I have Christ's merits inherently and personally, whilst Christ has my demerits in a similar manner? Even more damaging: a realist doctrine of the atonement would appear to mean I am (somehow) one with the God-Man. But does this make me a *part* of the God-Man (whether in terms of metaphysical proper parts, or parts in some attenuated sense)?²⁵ Are you, and I, somehow parts of God incarnate?²⁶

These are thorny questions, at least as problematic as those posed by the representationalist account of the atonement. Even though Shedd was probably not aware of a serious contender for consistent realism, it might, at first glance, seem strange that he does not take the position more seriously than he does, especially since there is evidence that theologians like John Owen, whom Shedd admired and whose work is often cited by Shedd with approbation, sounds, at times, disconcertingly like a realist when speaking about the atonement. But I suspect Shedd is not alone in disregarding the consistently realist option. A number of classical

Adam's sinfulness (b) Adam participates in Christ's righteousness, so (c) I participate in Christ's righteousness.

²⁵ Language of 'proper parts' applied to the person of the God-Man is, for some traditional theologians, problematic, if one holds to a doctrine of divine simplicity. But I cannot go into these matters here. See Brian Leftow, 'A Timeless God Incarnate' in *The Incarnation*, eds Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) for useful discussion of these issues

²⁶ While we are on the subject, here are a few more problems a realist doctrine of the atonement faces: How can Christ be part of one entity that contains sinners like you and me, when Christ is without sin? Does this mean that I am divine if I am a member of the elect and joined in this intimate way with Christ, the God-Man? Does it mean that Christ is literally a sinner, although God cannot sin?

theologians happy to endorse realism on the question of the imputation of Adam's sin have not been quite so willing to carry over this realism into their soteriology. (Jonathan Edwards is a case in point. Perhaps a realist in the matter of original sin – although I am not sure he was a realist of the standard sort – his views on the nature of the atonement were much more in keeping with Anselmian satisfaction theory, with smatterings of the governmental view of the atonement thrown in.)²⁷ Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is much more to be said on this matter than is often thought.²⁸ Shedd's account is admirable for its clarity, although not, I think, conclusive in its arguments against consistent representationalism, as I have tried to suggest. (That said, I think he makes an interesting case for his use of realism.) But if a consistently realist argument could be given that is able to overcome the considerable problems just canvassed, this would solve two important theological problems. The first has to do with the injustice of imputing Adam's sin to my account, a problem Shedd saw, and sought to address with his realist alternative. But, secondly, a consistent realism would also be able to deal with certain problems that beset penal substitution, to do with the justice of imputing my sin and guilt to the sinless and guiltless Son of God. And this is a problem which a purely representationalist doctrine of penal substitution is, it seems to me, quite unfit to offer.

Although Shedd would almost certainly disapprove of a realist argument for the atonement, he would surely applaud an Augustinian realism that showed how the deficiencies of representationalism might be attended to, without departure from the witness of Scripture. For my part, I think a realist argument for the atonement is intriguing, despite the not inconsiderable obstacles it faces. Such an argument, as part of a consistent realism, would, I think, have the metaphysical resources available to solve the problems of injustice that apply to both the imputation of Adam's sin

²⁷ See Jonathan Edwards, *Original Sin* in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 3*, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), IV: III, and Edwards, 'Miscellaneous Remarks on the Satisfaction for Sin' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. II*, ed. Edward Hickman (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974 [1834]). Edwards' doctrine of the imputation of sin is treated at length in Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards and The Metaphysics of Sin* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005).

²⁸ The sketch of how one realist account of the atonement might go, using the contemporary metaphysical doctrine of temporal parts, can be found in an appendix to Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards*. See also the chapters on temporal parts and inherited guilt in the same volume.

and the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement.²⁹ But setting out such a view will have to wait until another day.³⁰

²⁹ In *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin*, I intimate that the doctrine of temporal parts – a metaphysical idea that says entities that persist through time (like humans, horses and hackney cabs) are composed of temporal parts, just as they are composed of physical parts – might offer the basis upon which to argue for realism with respect to the atonement (or a temporal parts doctrine consistent with realism). This raises the problems associated with the fallacy of composition, alluded to earlier, to wit: properties of parts do not necessarily distribute to wholes, nor properties of wholes to their parts. For instance, Tibbles the cat is made up of colourless subatomic particles. But this does not mean that Tibbles the cat is colourless. Nor, if Tibbles is a ginger cat, does this mean all his parts are ginger – clearly parts of him, like his bones, are not ginger. This sort of reasoning may count against a realist argument for the atonement (am I ‘part’ of the God-Man?). But it may also be used in defending such a view: the God-Man may be one part of an entity including the elect, but this, in and of itself, does not necessarily mean that all the properties of the Christ-part of this entity are had by all the other ‘parts’ of the same entity. Nor does it follow that if the whole entity has certain properties, all the parts of the entity in question have the properties of the whole – just as with the example of Tibbles.

³⁰ Thanks are due to Prof. Paul Helm, Dr Garry Williams and Dr Steve Holmes for helpful discussions on matters pertaining to this essay.