

THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

OCTOBER 1839.

No. IV.

Samuel Miller

- ART. I.—1. *The Intermediate State: a Sermon by the Rev. Reuben Sherwood of Hyde Park.* New York, pp. 18. Appendix, pp. 42.
2. *No Intermediate Place: a Sermon delivered in the Reformed Dutch Church in Hyde Park, by the Rev. William Cruikshanks,* pp. 22.

THE discourse of Mr. Cruikshanks is a brief, plain, straightforward, honest and manly illustration of the doctrine of an intermediate *state* of departed souls; with a refutation of the doctrine of an intermediate *place* of the dead. Mr. C. goes forth into the field to meet a challenge; and he goes with his sling and the smooth stones of the brook, although he is not a Goliath that he has to encounter. He goes forth with his Bible, and tells us what God's word has declared in reference to the state of departed souls.

That there is no intermediate *place*, he argues from the plain statements of the holy Scriptures; from the fact that it is contrary to all the desires and expectations of the people of God; that it is contrary to their approved faith; that it is in direct opposition to the case stated by our Lord, in his parable of Dives and Lazarus; and to the holy visions of the

unpublished

Letters to the Rev. Professor Stuart, comprising Remarks on his Essay on Sin, published in the American Biblical Repository, for April and July 1839. By Daniel Dana, D. D. minister of the Gospel in Newbury Port, 8vo. pp, 46. Boston, Crocker and Brewster.

THE title of this pamphlet expresses with sufficient clearness, the occasion on which it was written. Professor Stuart had published under his own name, in two successive numbers of the Repository, a long essay on the question, What is Sin? The Professor's answer to this question is, that sin is the voluntary transgression of known law, and consequently there is no "other sin besides actual sin," and that the scriptures do not recognize, and we ought not to use the phraseology of ORIGINAL SIN, either imputed or inherent. As Professor Stuart's sentiments on this subject were generally known, the appearance of this Essay has excited less surprise than regret. It is not that he holds the opinions he here avows, or that, holding them, he should publish them to the world, which has excited surprise; it is the manner in which he has chosen to introduce them to public notice. Mr. Stuart has always been regarded as one of the despisers of authority, in matters of doctrine, as one of the warmest advocates of untrammelled thought and free discussion. People, therefore, opened wide their eyes when they saw him make his appearance demurely dressed in the ancient robes of the orthodox Vitringa. It is not Moses Stuart, so much, (so he would have the public think,) as Canpegius Vitringa, who teaches the doctrine of this Essay on the nature of sin. If I am a heretic, so is Vitringa. You cannot strike me without hitting the venerable expounder of Isaiah; not "a new divinity man, but an honest, pious, learned, orthodox Dutchman." Professor Stuart, however, has no right to Vitringa's robes. They do not become him, nor, he them, and the sooner he lays them aside the better.

We believe Mr. Stuart to be incapable of intentional deception. We do not doubt that he honestly believes that he has dealt fairly by his author, and yet it would puzzle any man to find, out of the pages of the Christian Spectator, a more flagrant case of misrepresentation. The very fact that Vitringa had one object in view, and his translator and annotator another, should have put the latter upon his guard against perverting the meaning of his author. Vitringa's object was

to consider the nature of *actual* sin; to show that it was not merely negative. It was then, and to a certain extent, still is a favourite idea with many theologians, that as darkness is the absence of light, cold the absence of heat, so sin may be defined as the absence of holiness. We suspect few persons ever heard the late Dr. James P. Wilson of Philadelphia, preach three consecutive sermons, in which he did not insist on this definition. It is this idea that Vitringa controverts. After the first few sentences his whole exercitation is directed to that point. Read his own account of the matter as given in the analysis of his piece in the index. *Peccati notio quo sensu passim sumatur in Paulinis? Actuale describitur, ejusque variae definitiones examinantur. Involvit rationem legis, subjecti intelligentis liberi, per legem obligabilis. In naturam illius accuratius inquiritur, et an sit merum Nihil? Non est confundendum cum vitiositate. Commissionis natura exponitur. Et Omissionis.* This is an outline of the whole dissertation, and in English would stand thus: "What is the idea of sin every where presented in the writings of Paul? *Actual* sin is described, and various definitions of it are examined. It (i. e. *actual* sin) involves the notion of a law, and of an intelligent and free subject, capable of being bound by law. Its nature (i. e. nature of *actual* sin,) is more accurately inquired into; is it merely negative? The nature of sins of commission is explained, and then of sins of omission."

Thus it appears that a discourse which is professedly upon *actual* sin, as distinguished from original and inherent sin, is partially translated and quoted to prove that the author believed there is no other sin besides *actual* sin! And this is not the worst of it. This perversion is made in the very face of the author's explicit assertion of the contrary doctrine. Vitringa begins by making the usual distinction between inherent and *actual* sin, and then avowedly confines his attention to the latter, and discusses its nature. *Bono morali oppositum est malum morale; tam in habitu, quando vitium quàm in actu, quando peccatum dici solet; etsi Paulus per ἀμαρτίαν peccatum passim in epistola ad Romanos, et alibi, quoque, intelligat peccatum habituale, sive vitium, h. e. habitus vitiosos et damnabiles, ad quorum praescriptum irrogenitus homo actus suos componit.* This is his first sentence: "Moral evil is opposed to moral good; as well as *habit* when it is called vitium, *corruption*, as in act when it is called peccatum, *sin*; though Paul always in the epistle to the

Romans, and elsewhere also, means by *ἀμαρτία* *sin* peccatum habituale, *inherent sin*, that is, those evil and condemnable dispositions under whose influence the unrenewed man acts." Can any thing be plainer than this? Every man, who has ever read a single latin volume of theology, knows that the word *habitus* has a fixed determinate meaning. It is used in precisely the same sense as that in which Edwards uses the word *principle*, or other writers the word *disposition*. Thus Turretin in describing original sin says, it is not merely the want of original righteousness, but also *injustitiae habitus*. To translate therefore the words *peccatum habituale*, by *habitual sin*, without explanation, is as gross an imposition on an English reader, as could easily be practised. The English phrase means a sin often repeated, whereas the Latin phrase means, sin considered as a principle, distinct from acts. Regeneration is defined by Turretin as *conversio habitualis*. What perfect nonsense it would make to render that phrase by "habitual conversion"! What he means by it is, "Infusio habituum supernaturalium a Spiritu Sancto;" *the infusion of supernatural principles by the Holy Spirit*.* Incredible as it may appear, Professor Stuart actually seems to understand Vitringa's peccatum habituale as equivalent to *habitual sin*. "The *vitium* which he (Vitringa) defines," he says, "or rather names, appears to be nothing more nor less than the frequently repeated i. e. habitual, desire to sin, which leads to the commission of what he calls *sinful acts*, and which is itself, (in the sense in which it is here understood by him,) forbidden by the law of God." p. 277. And stranger still, in the following page, "If the matter be thoroughly examined according to the whole of his views compared together, nothing will be plainer or more certain, than that his *vitium* is as really a transgression of the divine law, (and of course an *act* of the mind,) as his *peccatum* is." Vitringa says, moral evil may be regarded as *habitus* and as *actus*. The former he calls *vitium*, or peccatum habituale; the other simply peccatum, or peccatum actuale. Here is a formal distinction at the outset of a philosophical dissertation, by one of the greatest men of his age, between sin considered as a principle, and sin considered as an act, and yet they are both the same! his *vitium* is as much an act of the mind as his *peccatum* is!

* Turretin vol. 2, p. 569.

What makes this perversion the more extraordinary is, that the very next sentence to that in which this distinction is made, begins thus: *Utrumque Joannes definivit ἀνομίαν vitium*, which Mr. Stuart correctly enough translates, "John designates both kinds of sins by the word ἀνομία." What are the two kinds of sins? Why *vitium* (or peccatum habituale,) and *peccatum*. Yet according to Mr. Stuart, they are both the same kind, *vitium* is as much an act as *peccatum* is; though the very point of distinction between the two is, that the one is moral evil considered as *habitus*, the other moral evil considered as *actus*.

So far is Vitranga from allowing that all sin consists in acts, that he asserts, *totidem verbis* the very reverse, *NON OMNE PECCATUM EST ACTUS*. He will not allow that even sins of omission should be so called. In the 8th paragraph of chapter xvi. he again distinguishes between *peccatum habituale* and *actuale*. The former he describes as *Habitus aliquis, qui malus, peccaminosus, vitiosus dicitur, qui tanquam modus suam habet entitatem in subjecto, cui inest*. That is, "Any principle or disposition, which is called evil, sinful, corrupt, and which as a mode has its being in the subject in which it inheres."

Now when Professor Stuart can persuade us, that these ancient theologians, to whose knees we moderns scarcely reach, could gravely talk of an act inhering in a man as a mode, or of innate acts, or of acts being supernaturally infused, then we shall be ready to believe that *Habitus* and *Actus* are the same thing, and that those theologians held corruption of nature, *vitium*, or *peccatum habituale* to be an act. Until he is prepared to do all this, we respectfully hope he may let "the honest, pious, learned Dutchman" alone, and allow the new divinity to stand on its own bottom.

Mr. Stuart does not properly appreciate the responsibility which he assumes in undertaking to present the opinions of a distinguished man, in order to give authority to his own views. He will not even take the trouble to translate correctly. The sentence: *Peccatum in actu quod dicitur, habituali natura et tempore prius, phrasi scripturae rectè quis definiat per παράβασις τοῦ νόμου*, he renders "Habitual sin, in the order of nature and time, precedes sin in act, which may be scripturally defined παράβασις τοῦ νόμου, or a violation of the divine law." This is as wrong as it possibly could be, for it is the very reverse of what Vitranga says. Instead of saying "Habitual sin, in the order of nature and time, precedes

sin in act," he says just the opposite, "Sin in act, as it is called, in the order of nature and time, precedes habitual sin." This shows with how little attention he read the author whom he attempts to expound. This oversight is the more remarkable, since according to his view of the matter, it makes the statement of Vitringa perfectly absurd. According to him Vitringa's *vitium* or *peccatum habituale* is itself an act, and consequently he makes his author say, Sin in act precedes sin in act. Having gotten the "learned Dutchman" into this absurdity, he endeavours to get him out of it, by saying that in "common parlance" we distinguish between the inclination or desire to sin, and the act itself. Common parlance indeed! What has common parlance to do with a strictly philosophical dissertation, beginning with accurate distinctions, and formal definitions, and which is so abstruse that Professor Stuart does not pretend to understand some of its parts, and doubts whether even Coleridge could be more transcendental.* Vitringa needs no such lame apology. He is not guilty of the absurdity of saying that the often repeated desires or inclinations of the mind are not acts, or of distinguishing between these desires and acts, since ninety nine hundredths of all actual sin consist in these very desires. His distinction is the common one between sin in principle and sin in act; between inherent corruption and actual transgression. The latter in the order of nature and time preceded the former. Our nature was not originally corrupt; it became corrupt. It was by the transgression of Adam that this *vitium* has pervaded our whole system, and as a *habitus innatus* renders us indisposed to all good and prone to all evil.

In another dissertation, (*Observationes Sacrae Liber iii. cap. 5.*) Vitringa thus states his views on this subject. "Notatur, quod scriptores sacri, et praesertim quidem Paulus Apostolus, vitiositatem, cum qua homo post peccatum nascitur, vocare soleant ἐπιθυμίαν *concupiscentiam*. "It is noted, that the sacred writers, and especially the apostle Paul, call that corruption with which man since the fall is born, ἐπιθυμία *concupiscence*." Such is the first sentence of the heading of the chapter. This *concupiscence* he says, "belongs to human nature since the fall:" *communis humanae naturae*

* Mr. Stuart says in reference to a long quotation from Poirer, the author whom Vitringa is particularly engaged in answering, that he does not translate it, because he is utterly unable to do so, not understanding what he says, nor whereof he affirms. p. 275.

post peccatum. After quoting a few scriptural examples of the use of the word, he adds, *Quod concupiscentia in his testimoniis non tantum proponatur ut peccatum, sed etiam ut fons et origo omnis peccati, ex levissima eorum consideratione clarum est. i. e.* "That concupiscentia, in these passages, is not only represented as sin, but as the fountain and origin of all sin, is clear from the slightest consideration of them." This vitiosity or corruption then, according to Vitringa, with which man is born, is not only sin, but the fountain of all sin. Does Mr. Stuart believe that man is born with an act?

We believe that every body who knows Mr. Stuart, loves him; and if he would but confine himself to his proper sphere, every body would admire him. But when, forgetful of the truth *non omnia possumus omnes*, he makes excursions, at one time, into the regions of classical literature, at another, into those of doctrinal or historical theology, where he is entirely out of his latitude, et ubique hospes, he does himself no credit and religion great harm.

We owe Dr. Dana an apology for having allowed our remarks on Mr. Stuart and Vitringa to fill up the space allotted to a notice of his Letters. Criticism, however, is necessarily long, while commendation should be short. If our recommendation has any weight with our readers, we would urge them to read Dr. Dana's Letters. They are what they were meant to be; a testimony courteous and faithful against some of the dangerous positions assumed in Professor Stuart's Essay. We rejoice in all such warnings, for they are greatly needed; and those men who have the interests of evangelical religion at heart, are bound to come out and bear solemn testimony against doctrines which the experience of fifteen hundred years proves to be incompatible with experimental godliness. It is an historical fact, that the opinions respecting original sin, which are now assiduously propagated in this country, have never prevailed in connection with true religion. Individual exceptions have no doubt existed. But it is still true that the church of God has rejected these doctrines. They have been the property of the Pelagians of the times of Augustin, of the Socinians of the time of the Reformation, of the more erroneous of the Remonstrants of the seventeenth century, and of the Rationalists and Unitarians of the present day. We do not say that no good man has ever held these doctrines. This we have no right to say. But of classes of men, we may speak; and

we call upon the advocates of these sentiments to point to any church, or community of Christians, giving scriptural evidence of true religion, in which such doctrines have prevailed. It is a sad sight, therefore, to see good men wandering, in their blindness, from the camp of the friends to that of the enemies of religion. They may retain enough of truth from education and previous experience, to save their souls; but what is to become of those who follow them? "Rev. Sir," said John Wesley to John Taylor, "I esteem you as a person of uncommon sense and learning; but your doctrine I cannot esteem. And some time since I esteemed it my duty to speak my sentiments at large, concerning your doctrine of original sin.....It is a controversy *de re*, if there ever was one in the world. Indeed, concerning a thing of the highest importance; nay, all the things that concern our eternal peace. It is Christianity or Heathenism. For take away the scriptural doctrine of redemption or justification, and that of the new birth, the beginning of sanctification, or, *which amounts to the same thing*, explain them, as you do, suitably to your doctrine of original sin, and what is Christianity better than Heathenism? Wherein (save in rectifying some of our notions,) has the religion of St. Paul any pre-eminence over that of Socrates or Epictetus?"*

* Wesley's Works, vol. 2. p. 433.