

THE PURITANS ON
CONVERSION

THE PURITANS ON...

Books in the Series:

The Puritans on Conversion

The Puritans on Loving One Another

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THE PURITANS ON CONVERSION

Essays by
Samuel Bolton
Nathaniel Vincent
Thomas Watson

Edited by Don Kistler

Foreword by Albert N. Martin



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Editor's Preface

This collection of Puritan writings, comprised of two sermons and a treatise, begins what we hope will be a long series entitled, **The Puritans On _____**. The potential for a significant series is evident. Anyone who has read the rich writings of the Puritan Divines has been touched by their sense of reverence for God and His majesty, their awe at His beauty, and their recognition of His sovereignty. Who can spend time with these men without having their concept of God elevated to a higher plane? Who can read these masters of Scripture without realizing that we have lost the intimate knowledge of God they had?

With this volume we pay tribute to those who have gone before us in this work. In the 19th century, the work of James Nichols and James Sherman paved the way with their labors of love in seeing so many of the works of the Puritans revised, edited, and made available once again. In this century, Jay Green and his Sovereign Grace Trust, Iain Murray and the work of the Banner of Truth Trust, and Lloyd Sprinkle have enriched the Christian community with their reprinting of classic Puritan writings. Undoubtedly, there are many more of whom we are unaware, but we know that God is aware of them and will reward them accordingly!

The editing of these three works into one volume has not altered their content substantially. Paragraphs that ran for pages have been broken down into a more

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readable format. Punctuation has been added or deleted to conform to more contemporary standards. Spelling has been changed where necessary, so that “easie.” has become “easy.” Words whose meanings have become obscure have been changed in the text to a more common usage, so that “cozen” has been changed to “deceive.” This was done using the Oxford English Dictionary.

No theological alterations have been made, as we do not presume to think that we could better express the hearts of these men than they were able to do themselves. The Scripture verses have been left intact in whatever form was used in the original, punctuation and all. The only change has been to capitalize pronouns that refer to the Deity.

We trust, dear reader, that our efforts will be used of God to deepen your knowledge of Him, and thereby your love for Him. If such is the case, then the labor involved in editing and reproducing these writings will never be thought of as tedious or in vain. To that end, we commit this work to His Sovereign hand to use as He pleases.

To His Glory,

Don Kistler
Soli Deo Gloria Publications

FOREWORD TO “THE PURITANS ON CONVERSION”

The most crucial issue with which the human mind and heart can ever grapple is that which is bound up with the question, “How can sinful man be made right with God?” All who have ever held to the Biblical and Apostolic faith have agreed that the only ground of the sinner's acceptance with God is comprised of the work of the God-man Christ Jesus Who, as the sin-bearing substitute of His people, procured a perfect righteousness as the fruit of His life, death, and resurrection (Rom. 5:19).

However, the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that none are brought into possession of this Christ-wrought righteousness except in the way of a thorough conversion to God (Acts 26:16-18, Matt.18:3). What is involved in true conversion is the area in which there is abounding confusion and frightening delusion in our day, even among the evangelicals who are clear on the question of the ground of the sinner's acceptance with God. It is precisely in the area of setting forth the Biblical doctrine of conversion that the Puritan preachers have so much to teach us.

While Joseph Alleine's book **ALARM TO THE UNCONVERTED**, and Richard Baxter's **CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED** have gone through numerous reprints in the past few decades, and have become

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a model of Puritan preaching on the doctrine of conversion, the three shorter treatises combined in this volume give us the heart of the same Puritan understanding of the doctrine of conversion.

The advantage of this trilogy is that each sermon has its own distinct areas of strength in setting forth both a sound theology of conversion as well as penetrating pastoral insights into the method of conversion. In contrast to much evangelical preaching and writing in our day, these three sermons are marked by the distinctive Puritan characteristics in the broad areas of the content of their doctrine of conversion, and in the manner in which they preached that doctrine.

THE CONTENT OF THEIR DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

1. They show the horrible evil of sin without in any way clouding the magnitude of the grace of God. Bolton's treatise is especially helpful in showing that one cannot overstate the horrible evil of sin. Further, Bolton's treatise, along with the other two messages, forever silences any just accusation that a preoccupation with the details and the extent of the evil of sin will cloud an appreciation of the magnitude of God's grace.

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2. The sermons demonstrate the necessity of a felt consciousness of sin without in any way constricting the freedom of the sinner's access to Christ or the duty of an immediate application to God for pardoning mercy.

3. Each of these sermons presses home to the conscience the absolute necessity of a deep and thorough repentance if there is to be any genuine faith in the promise of pardon to believing sinners. Unlike the "cheap grace" concepts in our day, these authors demonstrate, in convincing fashion, that Jesus Christ came to save His people from their sins, but not in them.

4. Each of these authors is clear with respect to the currently agitated question of whether or not Christ can be received as Savior while not being acknowledged as Lord. As an example of this assertion, Vincent demonstrates that in true conversion converts are turned from "the darkness of ignorance." Then he goes on to cite one of the specific areas in which this turning occurs. He writes, "They are made to know that Christ is to be received by faith, and that there is no salvation in any other, and that it is vain to expect anything from Him as a Saviour unless there is a consenting to obey Him as a Lord. These and like truths are no longer hidden from them." Later on in the same treatise he writes, "The convert eyes God as a lord. He owns His sovereignty and submits himself unto His

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scepter. *Other Lords indeed in times past have had dominion over him* (Isaiah 13), but now his resolution is fixed and peremptory to own no other Lord but God alone. His will stoops unto, and complies with, the will of God.”

5. These treatises show a dominance of a God-centered view of conversion. While there is no veiling of the realities of the peace and joy which the penitent, believing sinner enjoys, there is a constant emphasis upon the fact that in conversion it is God's aim to bring the sinner back to the original intention for which he was created - namely, to a life of God-centeredness. Again, the words of Vincent are most perceptive when he writes, “The convert eyes God as his Ultimate End, that God may be glorified, that God may be enjoyed in His design for turning. The sinner is sensible, while unconverted, that he lived to the dishonor of Him who gave him life, and in whose hand his breath is. Now therefore he has more zealous desires to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.”

6. They constantly set forth the greatness and magnitude of the work of conversion, and its utter impossibility without a direct and sovereign intervention of God. One of the curses of our day is the widespread notion that salvation is “simple.” While the essence of the message of God's salvation is indeed simple, to have the sinner thoroughly divorced from his sins, his own righteousness, and to give himself up

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to God on Gospel terms is a thing which our Lord Himself said is “impossible with men.” These Puritan authors have captured the realism of that statement of our Lord, and are not afraid to set it forth in bold and convincing statements.

7. They show us that preaching the elementary truths concerning conversion must be done in a manner that is vigorously doctrinal and eminently Biblical. Wherever one turns in these three sermons, he will find Scripture illustrating and enforcing Scripture, and an evident grasp upon the balance of truth. In their most impassioned appeals to the consciences of their hearers, these authors never upset the delicate balance wheel of a sound systematic theology.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY PREACHED THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

One cannot read these sermons without being struck with the dominant characteristics of the manner and method of the preaching of these men in contrast to the folksy, easy-going, casual, and non-confrontational preaching that marks much of current evangelicalism. I have noted only a few of the characteristics of the manner of their preaching which are worthy of emulation.

1. They are models of a kind of holy relentlessness

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and passionate tenacity in pressing their hearers to the one end that they might see them converted. One need only read “The Dedication” and “The Epistle to the Reader” at the beginning of Vincent's treatise to see that he is unashamed in committing himself to the great end of securing the conversion of his hearers. It is this holy passion which caused their sermons to be marked by pointed appeals to the conscience, specific applications with reference to sin, the struggles of the soul, the questions precipitated by doubt, and their boldness in addressing objections to an immediate and hearty compliance with their calls to conversion.

2. Their sermons are marked by a compelling chain of reason and argumentation. While these men believed firmly in the absolute spiritual deadness of the sinner, they did not believe that man had lost his capacity to feel the pressure of reasonable arguments. One marvels at their skill in driving people from the various “refuge of lies” in which they have sought to hide from the living God. Also, Scriptural reason and logic are brought to bear upon both the terrors connected with the state of impenitence and unbelief, and also upon the blessedness and desirability of being in a state of grace and acceptance with God.

3. It is evident that these men were not afraid of being labeled “excessive” in their passion. One said of the saintly McCheyne, who shared much of the spirit of the Puritans, that “he preached as if he were dying

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to have men converted.” This unashamed passion which throbs through the printed sermons of these men, leaping over centuries and changes of literary style, etc., is one of the most glaring deficiencies of current evangelical and even of much reformed preaching. God Himself is unashamed to demonstrate passion when He expostulates with the words, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” So these men were unashamed to let the passion of genuine concern for the souls of their hearers be shown throughout their closely reasoned and eminently Biblical appeals.

For the reader who is unfamiliar with the standard Puritan authors, a first reading of the treatises in this book could give a wrong impression. One must remember that the Puritan views on justification by faith alone through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ was as clear as that of Martin Luther. This note is certainly sounded in these treatises. For example, Bolton writes, “Christ has left nothing for us to do, but to receive what He has purchased and laid up in the hands of the Father; nothing but sue out an acquittal, ye, and at the hands of Him who is just and will not deceive us; at the hands of Him who will certainly bestow whatever His Son has so dearly earned at His hands.” Bolton goes on to write, “And oh! How should this make us advance Christ, admire Christ, prize Christ! What should endear our hearts more to Christ

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than this, that He has borne our sins, and so borne them as we shall never bear them, if we have an interest in Him!” However, for a fuller treatment of the Puritan doctrine of justification, one should read such works as Volume 5 of Owen, Volume 8 of Goodwin, and the appropriate sections in the works of Robert Traill.

When opening up such texts, says Romans 4:4-5, these men asserted the freeness and fullness of salvation grounded in the work of Christ. But when handling such texts as Luke 13:24, which command us to “strive to enter in by the narrow gate,” they did not hold back from an unfettered opening up and applying of the obvious pressure of such texts.

If there is to be any hope that a true doctrine of conversion will once again be sounded forth in the power and passion of the Holy Spirit, it is most likely that the authors of these sermons and these pages will be our most helpful guides.

The publisher is to be commended for making these three treatises on conversion accessible to our needy generation.

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Sin: the Greatest Evil

(On II Samuel 24:10)

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Late Master of
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(First Published in 1657)

Sin: The Greatest Evil

“...and now I beseech Thee, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly....”

(II Samuel 24:10)

The occasion of these words was the hand of God upon the children of Israel for David’s sin of numbering the people. You read in verse 2 that *“David commanded Joab to go and number the people,”* and at first, *“Joab dissuaded him.”*

But you will say, “Was it not lawful to number the people? Did Moses not do the same in the wilderness as well as Joshua and Nehemiah?”

Yes, but Joab saw the pride of David’s heart in it, as appears by his answer in verse 3, *“and Joab said unto the King, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people how many soever they be, an hundredfold, but why doth my Lord the King delight in this thing? Notwithstanding, the King’s word prevailed against Joab,”* though indeed to his trouble and Israel’s cost.

Happy it had been for David and Israel, too, if the work had not been done, but Joab went and the number was brought in. There were *“eight hundred thousand men that drew sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand.”*

Well, but what was the fruit? What was the effect of this?

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1. You read, "*David's heart smote him,*" verse 10. That is, his conscience accused him. If conscience is not a bridle, it will be a whip. If it is not a curb, it will be a scourge. If you will not hear the warnings, you shall feel the lashings of conscience. If it does not restrain from sin by admonition, it will put us to pain by contrition.

2. But that was not all. God would punish him for the sin. And you may read the sin in the punishment. He had gloried in the number and, therefore, God would lessen the number. Yet He puts it to his choice which of the three judgments he will take, whether it be the seven years famine, three months flight before his enemies, or three days pestilence. Every one was a sweeping scourge.

But mark David's behavior. God threatens judgment, and David goes and mourns for sin. David's "heart-smiting" and his prayer, though set before yet seem to be afterward, and an affect of the prophet's discovery of sin, as appears by the verse which follows our text, "*when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto Gad, David's seer.*" You see it rendered as a reason why his heart smote him and why he prayed thus, because the prophet had been with him, had convinced him of his sin, and had denounced God's judgments against him, whereupon "*David's heart smote him,*" and he prays, "*take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly.*"

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But here it may be demanded why, when God threatened judgment, should David go and pray for pardon of sin? Why did he not desire God rather to forbear his strokes, to avert and turn away His wrath rather than to merely beg pardon of sin? Or if he had desired this, yet why did he not beg the other as well as that, and join them together in the same petition?

Answer 1. To teach us in all the pressures and evils upon our outward man to turn our thoughts inward and lament sin.

Answer 2. Because he saw sin as the cause of judgment and therefore desired the removing of this that the other might also be withdrawn.

Answer 3. Because he knew the judgment could never be removed in mercy unless the sin was taken away. Every preservation is but a reservation. Every deliverance is in justice, not in mercy, if sin is not taken away.

Answer 4. He was more apprehensive of the dishonor of God by his sin than of any judgment that his sin brought upon him.

Answer 5. Or he sees in sin the greatest evil, and therefore seeks the redress of that rather than of any other evil, "*take away the iniquity of Thy servant.*"

In the text you may observe two parts of prayer:
(1) **Confession**, and (2) **Petition**.

1. Confession, with self-judging: "*for I have done*

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foolishly.”

2. Petition: “*take away the iniquity of Thy servant,*” joined with faith.

Here you have (1) the petitioner, David, setting forth his relation, “*Thy servant,*” (2) the petitioned, God, (3) the petition itself, “*take away (or pardon) the iniquity of Thy servant.*” The phrase seems to have respect to the scapegoat, a type of Christ which was to carry away the sins of the people into the wilderness, Lev.16:22, thereby signifying Christ’s taking away of sin.

There is little difficulty in the words but what we may make a difficulty. Indeed, it would be a making of a difficulty to go about to expound that which is so plain, rather than an unfolding of them, if I should tell you of the several distinctions men make of sin, three words in the Hebrew. By one they will have to be meant original sin, by another infirmities, by the other your grosser sins. But upon examination, I find them used promiscuously, and therefore such distinctions of them have no bottom.

The letters of the words and the outward face of the text speak three doctrines:

1. That God’s servants may commit sin, commit iniquity: “*the iniquity of Thy servant.*”

2. Fresh sinnings must have fresh repentings. If you renew your sins, you must renew your sorrows.

3. There needs to be fresh pardon for fresh revolts:

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“take away.” He does not say, “Assure me it is taken away,” but “take away.” But this will not be the subject of my discourse now.

That which I intend to speak to shall be the time and occasion of these words, which was when God’s judgment was threatened against him.

1. Sin truly is, and God’s people apprehend it to be, the greatest evil in the world.

He does not say, “Take away the plague,” or “take away the judgment,” but “take away this sin.” He looked upon sin as the greatest evil.

2. When God threatens to punish sin, it is the best way to run unto God to take away sin. Or, when God’s hand is either felt or feared, it should be a Christian’s wisdom to repent of sin, to desire sin removed.

We begin with the first, that sin truly is, and God’s people apprehend it to be, the greatest evil in the world. We will take it (1) in its pieces, and (2) we will close them. The doctrine divides itself into two parts: (1) that sin is the greatest evil in the world, and (2) that God’s people apprehend it to be the greatest evil in the world.

For the first, that sin is the greatest evil in the world, I may show this (1) by collation and comparison of this with other evils, and (2) by demonstration and proof of it to you.

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If you compare the evil of sin with other evils, you shall see how short all other kinds of evils are to this evil of sin.

1. Most of all, other evils are only outward. They are only such as are on the body, the estate, the name, but this is an inward evil, an evil upon the soul, which is the greatest of evils.

2. All other evils are only of a temporal nature, they have an end. Poverty, sickness, disgrace, all these are great evils, but these, and all others, have an end. Death puts a conclusion to them all. But this evil of sin is of an eternal nature that shall never have an end. Eternity itself shall have no period to this.

3. All other evils do not make a man the subject of God's wrath and hatred. A man may have all other evils and yet be in the love of God. You may be poor and yet precious in God's esteem. You may be under all kinds of miseries and yet dear in God's thoughts. But now this is an evil that makes the soul the subject of God's wrath and hatred. The absence of all other goods, the presence of all created evils, will not make you hateful to God if sin is not there, so the presence of all other goods and the absence of all other evils will not render you lovely if sin is there.

4. All other evils only oppose your well-being, and your well-being for the present, for they cannot rob you of future happiness, but this opposes your well-being forever. You cannot be happy if you are not

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holy. Nay, this opposes your being. It brought you to death. You would sin yourselves into nothing again if God did not hold you up to be that you might be miserable for sin.

5. All other evils are only destructive to a man's self, they fight only against particulars. But this is contrary to the universal good being contrary to God, and is, as far as it may be, destructive to the very being of God, as I shall show hereafter.

6. All other evils are God's creatures, and so far good. He owns all the rest, He is the Author of all the rest. *"Is there any evil in the city that I have not done?"* (Amos 3:6), meaning all the evil of punishment penal, not sinful evil. But this is the Devil's creature, yea, and worse than he, being all sin.

7. All other evils are God's medicine and are used as medicines, either for the prevention of sin, or for the cure of sin.

For the prevention of sin: that you might not be condemned with the world, He lays afflictions and evils upon you, I Cor.11:32. He suffered Satan to tempt Paul, and gave him up to his buffetings, which yet is the greatest evil in the world next to sin, the greatest penal evil in the world. And all to prevent sin, as the Apostle himself said in II Cor.12:7, God sent a messenger of Satan to buffet him, and what was the reason? Why, it was to prevent sin lest he should be exalted above measure, that is, lest he should be proud.

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And as He uses all other evils for prevention, so for the cure of sin. You know no medicine can be as bad as is this disease. Now all other evils God has laid upon His people for the cure or for the recovery of them out of the state of sin. And to speak as much as I can at once, there is not as much evil in the damnation of a thousand worlds of men for sin as there is evil in the least sin, the least sinful thought that rises upon your spirits, inasmuch as the good of these falls short of the good and glory of God.

Thus you see, by collation and comparison of this evil with others in which I might more enlarge myself, that of all evils, sin is the greatest evil. We will now come to the demonstration of this point.

I. DEMONSTRATION

That which fights against and opposes the greatest Good must be the greatest evil, but now sin opposes and fights against the greatest Good. Hence a church father called sin “God-slaughter,” that which strikes against the being and essence of God, that which, were it strong enough, were it infinitely evil as God is infinitely good, would labor to “un-be” God. God is *summum bonum*, and indeed, *non datur summum-malum*, sin cannot be infinite.

If sin were as evil as God is good, that is,

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adequately and proportionably, if infinitely evil as God is good, sin would be too hard for God to pardon. It would be too hard for God to subdue, too hard for God to conquer. Sin would endeavor to conquer God.

Indeed, there is more evil in the least sin than there is good in any, nay, all the angels of heaven. Therefore you see it conquered them, spoiled all their goodness, made them devils, which it could not have done if the good in them had been greater than the evil in sin.

And though it is not able to conquer God, to overcome Him (there is more goodness in God than evil in ten thousand hells of sin, and so it cannot overcome the power of God, the mercy of God, the holiness of God), yet it fights against God, and makes parley against Him every day. It musters up all its strength against God and comes into open field to bid defiance against Him every day.

Nay, when it is beaten out of the open field by the power of God and His ordinances, then it has strongholds, as the Apostle tells us in II Cor.10:4, and from thence fights against Him and opposes Him. There it lusts against Him, it wills against Him, the heart rises against Him.

When sin is beaten out of the field, yet a long time it will be before it is beaten out of the strongholds. When sin in practice is overcome and conquered, yet sin in affection is hard to be overcome. That con-

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trarity that is between God and your heart is hard to be conquered. It will cost you many a battle, many an assault, before you can conquer sin in its strongholds, overcome sin in the heart.

Though sometimes it may seem to be overcome and to render up all, yet afterwards it gathers together again and will make new and fresh assaults upon you, to weaken and wound you.

Nay, and herein lies the malignity, the poisonous and venomous nature of sin, that, though God has conquered it, though it is never so weakened, yet it will act against God and spit its venom still.

You have an emblem of it in the thief upon the cross. When he was nailed upon the cross, his hands and feet made fast and only one member loose, yet that one member could spit its venom at Christ, revile Christ. So though God has crucified sin, yet as long as there is any life in it, it will act itself and spit venom against God, which shows that great contrarity between God and sin. And this contrarity and opposition of the chief good must show sin to be the greatest evil.

2. DEMONSTRATION

That which is univerally evil, all evil and no good, must be the greatest evil in the world. But sin is all evil. As we may say of God, "there is no evil in Him, He is

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good,” so I may say of sin, there is no good in it, it is all evil!

There is some good in the worst things in the world, and something in the worst things to make them capable of our choice of them in some cases; some good in sickness, some good in death. But now there is no good in sin, nor can any considerations in the world make sin the object of our choice. Though you might avoid death by sin, yet sin is universally evil and no good in it, you may not make use of sin to avoid death.

And therefore you shall read that when the Apostle would speak the worst of sin, he could find no name worse than its own to set it out, Rom.7:13, “*sinful sin.*” He calls it sinful sin, nothing but sin!

3. DEMONSTRATION

That which is the sole object of God’s hatred must be the greatest evil. But sin is the sole object, not only the object, but the sole object of God’s hatred. He hates nothing but sin. His love runs in divers streams toward all the things He has made, but His hatred runs in one channel alone, and that is toward sin.

If man were made the center of all other evils in the world, God could love him under all if sin were not there. And if there is a confluence of all other goods,

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health, beauty, riches, learning and so on, God hates you if sin alone is there. God's love cannot be there, but His wrath abides there.

4. DEMONSTRATION

That which separates the soul from the chief Good, that which divides between the soul and God, the chief Good, must be the greatest evil. But sin divides between God and the soul, Is.59:2, "*your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God,*" between your souls and His grace, your souls and His comfort, your souls and His blessings.

It was said of Naaman that he was a great man, an honorable man, a mighty man of war, but he was a leper, II Kings 5:1. So whatever ornaments a man has, whatever gifts, parts, riches, beauty, etc., yet if he is a leper, though a learned man, a rich man, if he is a wicked man, that spoils all the rest.

5. DEMONSTRATION

That which is the ground and cause of all other evils must be the greatest evil, but sin is the cause of all other evils. Is the old world drowned with water? It is for sin. Is Sodom destroyed with fire and turned

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into an asphalt lake to this day? It is for sin. Is Jerusalem laid on heaps? Sin has done it. Should I center on this I should find no end.

Sin is the cause of all national evils. We will name some and only name them.

1. Wars-

Judges 5:8 *"They chose new gods, then there was war in the gates."*

James 4:1 *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Is it not from your lusts?"*

2. Famine-

Ps.107:34 *"He turneth a fruitful land into a desert for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."*

Amos 4:6 *"Therefore (for their sins) have I given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and scarceness of bread in all your places, etc."*

3. Pestilence- Note David's sin of numbering the people in Deut.28:21, *"The Lord shall make the pestilence to cleave to thee, till He hath consumed thee*

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from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it."

And as sin is the cause of national evils, so of personal evils, and those are (1) temporal, (2) spiritual, and (3) eternal.

Sin is the cause, the meriting, the procuring cause of all. All evils are but the births of sin. Sin is a big-bellied evil and all other evils are but the births of sin. Those upon your bodies: sickness, aches, pains, weaknesses. Those upon your souls: fears, heart-breakings, terrors, horrors. If you could rip up sin, you would find all these to lie in the bowels of the least sin.

Shall I tell you? Sin was the first founder of hell, that which laid the cornerstone of that dark vault, for before sin there was no hell. No, and it was sin that built up hell and has fitted hell with those treasures and riches of wrath, fire, and brimstone. No, and that which still adds to it and increases the fuel, Rom.2:5. It treasures up wrath against the day of wrath.

Therefore, being a universal evil, a catholic evil, the womb of evils and cause of all, it must be the greatest evil.

6. DEMONSTRATION

That which is worse than the utmost evil must be the greatest evil, but sin is worse than the utmost evil. That which is greater than the greatest evil must be

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exceedingly great. Hell is the utmost evil, but sin is a worse evil than hell itself. Hell separate from sin is only miserable, not sinful; a penal evil, not a sinful evil.

Separate hell from sin (though we cannot really separate hell from sin, yet we may make an intellectual separation, we may abstract hell from sin in our understandings), and then I say sin is worse than hell because hell is only a penal evil, sin is a sinful evil. And there is no penal evil as bad as a sinful evil. There is good in the punishment, the good of justice, but no good in sin, and therefore sin in itself is the greatest evil.

Now we come to the second point, which is the main one. As sin is in itself, so in the apprehensions of God's people, sin is the greatest evil. Their sighs for sin, and their sufferings to avoid sin, show that they apprehend sin as the greatest evil.

1. Their sighs for sin— you may look into David's penitential Psalms and see what sighs and groans he had for sin. Look into Psalm 51. Why, what was the reason for them? All the sufferings, all the evils in the world, would not have affected him as much as his sin. Paul said, Rom.7:24, "*Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death!*" The death of his body was nothing to him in comparison to this body of death!

Paul went through many tribulations, endured a

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great deal of sufferings, as you may read in II Cor. 11:23-25, yet all these scourges, these prisons and persecutions, did not go as much to his heart as sin, even the presence, though not the power of sin. Though he suffered much, yet we do not read that he ever cried for all of that. Yet he does cry for sin, "Oh miserable man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of sin!" So did Peter, Manasseh, etc.

2. Their sufferings to avoid sin— Daniel was content to be thrown into the den of lions, the three children into the fire, Paul and Silas into the stocks. And many of God's children have chosen to embrace prisons, stakes, fire, and the hottest persecutions rather than sin, which plainly evidences to us that they esteemed sin to be the greatest evil.

They esteemed it greater than poverty, which is a great evil. "Better to beg," said one, "than to sin." Heb. 11:24-28, "*Moses chose to rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*" One who was like Moses, Caleacius Caracciolus, was a noble prince and marquis who, that he might not sin, left and forsook all he had and took himself to live meanly with the people of God, merely to enjoy the ordinances.

Musculus, a man of excellent learning and a famous Divine, rather than sin, would close with any condition. The story tells us that, being driven out of all he had, he was content, rather than sin, to take

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himself to a poor trade, to be a weaver, to get bread to maintain his wife and children. Afterwards, being cast out of the way, the world looking upon itself as too good for him, he took himself to work with a spade in the common ditch of the town to get his living. He could be in any condition rather than sin.

They have not only apprehended sin to be a greater evil than poverty, but greater than death itself. It was the speech of Ambrose, "Will you cast me into prison? Will you take away my life? All this is desirable to me, rather than to sin."

When Eudoxia, the Empress, threatened Chrysostom, whom she afterward banished, he sent this message to her, "Go tell her," he said, "I fear nothing in the world but sin."

3. They have apprehended sin to be a greater evil than death. Basil speaks of a rich virgin who, being condemned to the fire and sentenced to lose her estate because she would not worship idols, yet afterwards was promised life and restitution of estate if she would. She replied, "Farewell life, let money perish." Look through the Ten Bloody Persecutions and our late Marian Days and you shall find many instances to this purpose.

4. Further, they have not only apprehended sin to be a greater evil than death, but more, a greater evil than hell itself. It was the speech of Chrysostom, "I thus think, and thus will I ever preach, that it is more