

AGGRAVATIONS OF SINNING AGAINST KNOWLEDGE.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.—ROM. I. 21.

THERE are two general aggravations the apostle insists on, in these two chapters, of the Gentiles' sinfulness: First, their unthankfulness, ver. 21, in 'despising the riches of God's goodness,' chap. ii. 4; secondly, of rebellion, in sinning against knowledge, that 'when they knew him, they glorified him not as God.' And of all other, he inculcateth this of sinning against knowledge as the greatest, for, bringing in a long, large, and particular indictment of many several sins, idolatry, ver. 23, unnatural uncleanness, ver. 26, &c., and all kinds of unrighteousness, ver. 29, he doth, both in the beginning and end of the bill, bring in this aggravation, that they sinned against knowledge in all these. So, ver. 18, he begins the indictment and promulgation of God's wrath above all for this, that 'they withheld the truth in unrighteousness,' which was as much as all that unrighteousness committed, barely in itself considered. And then again, in the end, when he comes to pronounce sentence, he comes in with this, after all particulars had been reckoned up, 'Who, knowing the judgment of God against those which do such things, yet do them.'

So that this doctrine is clear from hence, that *to sin against knowledge, either in omitting good duties which we know we ought to perform, or committing of sins we know we ought not to do, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness.*

I put both in; both sins of omission and commission—for so the particular sins the Gentiles are taxed for here are of both sorts, as not glorifying or worshipping God, as well as turning his glory into a lie, &c.—to omit prayer when your consciences tell you you ought to do it, to omit holy discourse, examining the heart, when you know you ought to do them, are as well sins against knowledge as to tell a lie against your knowledge, or as to steal and forswear, or murder, or be drunk, &c.

Now, when I say it is an aggravation to these sins, my meaning is this, that, take any sin thou thinkest most gross, and view it barely in the act of it, put the act nakedly in the one scale, be it a sin of uncleanness or drunkenness, and then put this circumstance which was added to it in the

other scale, that before and when thou didst it thou knewest it to be a sin, this alone weighs as much, yea, more than the sin itself doth ; that as it is said of Herod that ' he added this to all his other sins, that he cast John in prison,' who told him of his Herodias, and so is made as much as all his former sins, so is this brought in here, that in and unto all their unrighteousness this was added, they withheld the truth, the light of their consciences (which is as a prophet from God) they did imprison in unrighteousness, ver. 18. And therefore when Daniel would convince Belshazzar of his deservedness to lose his kingdom, and that he was not able to ' hold weight in the balance,' Dan. v. 22, what puts he into the other scale against him to weigh him up, and to shew he was too light ? ver. 21, 22, he tells him how his father knew the God of heaven, and how that his knowledge cost him seven years the learning among wild beasts, and ' thou' (says he) ' His son knewest all this, and yet didst not humble thyself.' Here is the aggravation weighs down all ; he knew the God of heaven against whom he sinned, and that judgment on his father for his pride ; and then withal he tells him, that ' this God, in whose hands is thy breath, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified.'

I name this place among many others, because it is parallel with this in the text. I'll name no more, but give reasons and demonstrations for it.

I. First, demonstrations.

The greatness of this kind of sinning might many ways be made appear ; we will demonstrate it only by comparing it with other kinds of sinning.

To sin, though out of simple ignorance, when that ignorance is but the *causa sine qua* non of sinning, that is, so as if a man had known it a sin, he had not done it, doth not yet make the fact not to be a sin, though it lesseneth it. For, Luke xii. 48, ' He that did not know his master's will was beaten,' when the thing committed was worthy of stripes, though he did not know so much, because the thing deserves it. And the reason is, because the law being once promulged, as first to Adam it was, and put into his heart, as the common ark of mankind, though the tables be lost, yet our ignorance doth not make the law of none effect. For the law of nature for ever binds, that is, all that was written in Adam's heart, because it was thereby then published in him, and to him for us. But positive laws, as I may call them, as to believe in Christ, &c., anew delivered, bind not but where they are published. Josiah rent his clothes when the book of the law was found, because the ordinances were not kept, although they had not known the law of many years ; yet because they ought to have known it, therefore for all their ignorance he feared wrath would come upon all Israel. So also, Lev. v. 17, sins of ignorance were to be sacrificed for ; yet however it lesseneth the sin, therefore ' he shall be beaten with few stripes.'

And sure, if ignorance lesseneth them, knowledge aggravates ; for *contrariorum eadem est ratio*, therefore ' he that knows shall be beaten with many stripes.' Yea, such difference is there that God is said to wink at sins of ignorance. Acts xvii. 30, ' The time of this ignorance God winks at.' Whiles they had no knowledge, God took no notice ; yea, and he abates something for such sins, because the creature hath a cloak, hath something to say for itself (as Christ says, John xv. 22) ; but when against knowledge, they have no cloak. Yea, farther, Christ makes a sin of ignorance to be no sin in comparison : so there, ' If I had not spoken and done those works never man did, they had had no sin,' that is, none in com-

parison; but 'now they have no cloak,' no shelter to award* the stripes, or plea to abate of them.

1. And that you may see the ground of this vast difference between sins of ignorance and against knowledge, consider first, that if a man sin (suppose the act the same) out of ignorance merely, there may be a supposition that if he had known it he would not have done it, and that as soon as he doth know it he would or might repent of it. So, 1 Cor. ii. 8, 'If they had known, they had not crucified the Lord of glory.' The like says Christ of Tyre, Sodom, and Gomorrah, that 'if the same things had been done in them, they would have repented.' But now, when a man knows it afore, and also considers it in the very committing it, and yet doth it, then there is no room for such a supposition, and less hope. For what is it that should reduce this man to repentance? Is it not his knowledge? Now if that had no power to keep him from his sin, then it may be judged that it will not be of force to bring him to repentance for it; for by sinning the heart is made more hard, and the knowledge and the authority of it weakened and lessened, as all power is when contemned and resisted, Rom. i. 21, 'Their foolish heart becomes darker.' Aristotle himself hath a touch of this notion in the third of his Ethics, that if a man sin out of ignorance, when he knows it, he repents of it; if out of passion, when the passion is over, he is sorry for what he hath done; but when a man sins deliberately, and out of knowledge, it is a sign he is fixed and set in mischief, and therefore it is counted wickedness and malice. And hence it is that those that have been enlightened with the highest kind of light but that of saving grace, Heb. vi. 4, 5, and Heb. x., 'if they sin wilfully after such a knowledge of the truth,' God looks on them as those that will never repent. And therefore likewise the school gives this as the reason why the devils sin obstinately, and cannot repent, because of their full knowledge they sin with; they know all in the full latitude that it may be known, and yet go on.

2. Secondly, The vast difference that in God's account is put between sins of knowledge and of ignorance, will appear by the different respect and regard that God hath to them, in the repentance he requires and accepts for them; and that both in the acts of repentance and also in the state of grace and repentance, upon which God accepts a man, or for want of which he rejecteth him.

First. When a man comes to perform the acts of repentance, and to humble himself for sin, and to turn from it, God exacteth not, that sins of ignorance should particularly be repented of. But if they be repented of but in the general, and in the lump, be they never so great, God accepts it. This is intimated, Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his error? cleanse me from my secret sins;' that was confession enough. But sins of knowledge must be particularly repented of, and confessed, and that again and again, as David was forced to do for his murder and adultery, or a man shall never have pardon. Yea, *farther*, greater difference will appear in regard of the state of grace and repentance, for a man may lie in a sin he doth not know to be a sin, and yet be in the state of grace, as the patriarchs in polygamy, and in divorcing their wives; but to lie in a sin of knowledge is not compatible with grace, but unless a man maintaineth a constant fight against it, hateth it, confesseth it, forsaketh it, he cannot have mercy. This cannot stand with uprightness of heart. A friend may keep correspondency with one he suspects not to be an enemy unto his friend, and be

* That is, 'to ward off.'—ED.

true to his friendship notwithstanding; but if he knows him to be an enemy, he must break utterly with the one if he leans to the other.

3. Thirdly, Yet farther, in the third place, so vast is the difference, that some kind of sins committed out of and against knowledge, utterly exclude from mercy from time to come, which done out of ignorance remained capable of and might have obtained it; as persecuting the saints, blaspheming Christ, &c. Paul's will was as much in those acts themselves, and as hearty as those that sin against the Holy Ghost; for he was mad against the church, and in these sins, as himself says, not sinning willingly herein only, but being carried on with fury as hot and as forward as the Pharisees that sinned that sin; only, says he, 1 Tim. i. 13, 'I did it ignorantly, therefore I obtained mercy.' Though it was ignorantly done, yet there was need of mercy; but yet in that he did it but ignorantly, there was a capacity and place for mercy which otherwise had not been. But thus to sin, 'after a man hath received the knowledge of the truth, shuts a man out from mercy, Heb. x., and 'there is no more sacrifice for sin,' for such sins; I say, such sins as these, thus directly against the gospel, when committed with knowledge. For sins against the law, though against knowledge, there was an atonement, as appears, Lev. vi. 1-8, where he instanteth in forswearing. But to persecute the saints, and Christ's truth, with malice, after knowledge of it, there is no more sacrifice; not that simply the sin is so great in the act itself of persecution, for Paul did it out of ignorance, but because it is out of knowledge: so vast a difference doth knowledge and ignorance put between the guilt of the same sin.

4. And therefore indeed, to conclude this in the last place, this is the highest step of the ladder, next to turning off, the very highest but sinning against the Holy Ghost; which must needs argue it the highest aggravation of sinning, when it ascends so high, when it brings a man to the brink, and next to falling into the bottomless pit, irrecoverably. And therefore to 'sin presumptuously' (which is all one) and to 'sin against knowledge,' as appears, Num. xv. 26-30, it being there opposed to sinning out of ignorance (such a sin as David did, of whom it is said, 2 Sam. xii. 9, that 'he despised the word of the Lord;,' which phrase also is used to express sins of presumption, verse 31 of that 15th chapter of Numbers). To sin, I say, presumptuously is the highest step. So in David's account, Ps. xix. 12, 13. For first he prays, 'Lord, keep me from secret sins,' which he maketh sins of ignorance, and then next he prays against 'presumptuous sins,' which, as the opposition shews, are sins against knowledge; for (says he), 'if they get dominion over me, I shall not be free from that great offence,' that is, that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven, so as these are nearest it of any other, yet not so as that every one that falls into such a sin commits it, but he is nigh to it, at the next step to it. For to commit that sin, but two things are required—light in the mind, and malice in the heart; not malice alone, unless there be light, for then that apostle had sinned it, so as knowledge is the parent of it, it is 'after receiving the knowledge of the truth,' Heb. x. 27, 28.

II. These are the demonstrations of it; the reasons are,

1. First, Because knowledge of God and his ways is the greatest mercy next to saving grace: 'He hath not dealt so with every nation.' Wherein? In 'giving the knowledge of his ways;' and as it is thus, so to a nation, so to a man; and therefore Christ speaking of the gift of knowledge, and giving the reason why it so greatly condemneth, Luke xii. 48, says,

'For to whom much is given, much is required.' As if he had said, 'To know his master's will, that is the great talent of all other. There is a *much* in that. Thus it was in the heathens' esteem also. They acknowledged their foolish wisdom in moral and natural philosophy, their greatest excellency; and therefore Plato thanked God for three things, that he was a man, an Athenian, and a philosopher. And Rom. i. 22, the apostle mentions it as that excellency they did profess. And Solomon, of all vanities, says this is the best vanity, and that it 'exceeds folly as light doth darkness,' Eccles. ii. 13. But surely much more is the knowledge of the law, and of God, as we have it revealed to us; this must needs be much more excellent. And so the Jews esteemed theirs, as in this second chapter of the Romans, the apostle shews also of them, that they 'made their boast of the law, and their form of knowledge of it, and approving the things that are excellent.' And what do the two great books of the creatures, and the word, and all means else serve for, but to increase knowledge? If therefore all tend to this, this is then the greatest mercy of all the rest.

2. For, secondly, God hath appointed knowledge as the immediate guide of men in all their ways, to bring them to salvation and repentance; for to that it leads them. It is that same $\tau\omicron\delta\ \acute{\eta}\gamma\eta\mu\acute{o}\nu\iota\zeta\omicron\nu$, as the philosopher called it; and therefore the law, Rom. vii. 1, 2, is compared to a husband, so far as it is written in or revealed in the heart, that as a husband is the guide of the wife in her youth, so is the law to the heart. And whereas beasts are ruled by a bit and bridle, God he rules men by knowledge. And therefore if men be wicked, notwithstanding this light, they must needs sin highly, seeing there is no other curb for them, as they are men, but this: if he will deal with them as men, this is the only way, and therefore if that will not do it, it is supposed nothing will.

It is knowledge makes men capable of sin, which beasts are not; therefore the more knowledge, if men be wicked withal, the more sin must necessarily be reckoned to them; so as God doth not simply look what men's actions and affections are, but chiefly what their knowledge is, and accordingly judgeth men more or less wicked. I may illustrate this by that comparison, which I may allude unto: that as in kingdoms God measures out the wickedness thereof, and so his punishments accordingly, principally by the guides, the governors thereof, what they are, and what they do; as in Jer. v. 4 it appears, where first God looks upon the poor people, but he excuseth them, 'These are foolish, and know not the way of the Lord;' and therefore God would have been moved to spare the kingdom, notwithstanding their sins. But from them, at the 5th verse, he goes to view the rulers, 'I will get me to the great men, for these have known the way of the Lord;' and when he saw that 'these had broken the bands,' then 'how shall I pardon thee for this?' So is it in his judgments towards a particular man: when God looks down upon a man, and sees him in his courses exceeding loose and wicked, he looks first upon those rude affections in him, which are unclean, profane, debauched, greedy of all wickedness. Ay, but, says he, these are foolish of themselves, but I will look upon his understanding, and upon the superior faculties, which are the guides of these affections, and see what they dictate to these unruly affections to restrain them. And when he finds that the guides themselves are enlightened, 'and have known the way of the Lord,' and that the will and the affections, though informed with much knowledge, yet 'break all bands,' then 'how shall I pardon thee?' thee, who art a knowing

drunkard, and a knowing unclean person, &c., so as thus to sin aggravates and maketh sin out of measure sinful.

Now that knowledge and reason is a man's guide, will further appear by this : that even erroneous knowledge doth put an obligation, a bond, and a tie upon a man, which can be in no other respect, but because knowledge is appointed to be a man's guide. Thus, if a man thinks a thing which is in itself common and indifferent to be a sin, and forbidden, as Rom. xiv. 14, although the law forbids it not, yet 'to him it is unclean,' though in Christ it is not unclean, that is, by the law of Christ. For this his knowledge and judgment of the thing hath to him the force of a law, for it propounds it to him as a law, and as from God, which reason of his God hath appointed as his immediate guide ; and the will is to follow nothing that is evil, which is represented to it as evil. This is the law of mere nature in all conditions ; therefore if a man should do an action which is in itself good, if he thought it to be evil, he should sin, and so *è contra*, for he goes against the dictate of nature. So that erroneous knowledge, though against the law, is a law to me, though not *per se*, yet *per accidens*. Now therefore if to go against a false light of conscience be yet a sin, though it proves that the commandment allows the thing was done, and was for it, then to go against the true light of the law, how sinful is it !

3. Again, thirdly, the knowledge of the law binds the person so much the more to obedience, by how much the more he knows it ; so as though it would be a sin when he knows not the law to transgress it, yet when he knows it, it is a greater sin. It is true, indeed, that conscience and the law, when they meet, make up but one law, not two distinct laws ; and therefore in sinning against knowledge, though a man doth not commit two distinct sins, yet the knowledge of it doth add a further degree of sinfulness to it ; as a cloth is the same cloth when it is white that it was when it is dyed with a scarlet dye, yet then it hath a dye, a tincture given it, which is more worth than the cloth : and so, when you sin not knowing the law, the sin is the same for substance it would be if you had known it, yet that knowledge dyes it, makes it a 'scarlet sin,' as Isaiah speaks, far greater and deeper in demerit than the sin itself ; and the ground of this is, because laws then come to be in force when they are promulged and made known, so as the more they are promulged and made known, the more is the force of their binding, and so the greater guilt. Therefore, Deut. xii. 3, 8, God straightens the cords more, the binding force of the law more upon those Jews' consciences, to whom he at first personally with majesty had promulgated it, than upon their children, though upon theirs also. Now if all God's laws, being made known to Adam, bind us, and are in force, and this when we know them not, then, if we do know them, or might know them, they bind much more, and still the more clearly we know them the obligation increaseth, and the guilt ensuing with it ; and the rather, because now when we come to know them, they are anew promulged in a way of a peculiar mercy, we having defaced the knowledge of them in our fall.

4. Fourthly, When the law, being known, is broken, there is the more contempt cast upon the law, and the lawgiver also, and so a higher degree of sinning. And therefore, Num. xv. 30, 'He that sins out of knowledge' is said to 'reproach the Lord, and to despise the word.' And therefore Saul sinning against knowledge, Samuel calleth it rebellion ; and though it were but in a small thing, yet he parallels it with witchcraft. So also, Job xxiv. 13, they are said to rebel when they sin against light ; because rebellion is added to disobedience. For knowledge is an officer set to see the

law executed and fulfilled, and makes God present to the conscience. Therefore, Rom. ii. 14, it is called a witness, and therefore in sinning against knowledge men are said to sin before the face of the Lord himself; now what a great contempt is that? Therefore also, Ps. l. 17, the hypocrite sinning against knowledge is said to 'cast the law of God behind his back,' so as there is a contempt in this sinning, which is in no other.

5. Fifthly, The more knowledge a man sinneth against, the more the will of the sinner is discovered to be for sin, as sin. Now *voluntarium est regula et mensura actionum moralium*, willingness in sinning is the standard and measure of sins. The less will, the less sin; so much is cut off, the less the will closeth with it, at leastwise so much is added by how much the will is more in it; and therefore the highest degree of sinning is expressed to us by sinning willingly, and this after knowledge, Heb. x. Now though an ignorant man commits the act as willingly, as when Paul persecuted the church, yet he commits it not considered *as sin* till he hath the knowledge of it; but then when it is discovered to be sin, and the more clearly it is so discovered, the will may be said to join with it as sin. Therefore the apostle says, 'To him that knows to do well, and doth it not, to him it is sin,' James iv. 17, because by his knowledge the thing is represented as sin; and so he closeth with it the more, under that notion and apprehension.

6. Sixthly, In sinning against knowledge a man condemns himself, but when out of ignorance merely, the law only doth condemn him; so Rom. ii. 1, a man having knowledge in that wherein he judgeth another, he condemneth himself; so Rom. xiv., now as self-murder is the highest degree of murder and an aggravation of it, so self-condemning must needs be reckoned. God took it as a great advantage over him that hid his talent, that 'out of thine own mouth I will condemn thee, thou wicked servant.'

The doctrine being thus proved; first, I will explain what it is to sin against knowledge.

Secondly, I will give the aggravations of it.

Thirdly, I will give rules to measure sins of knowledge by, and the greatness of them in any act.

Lastly, the use of all.

1. For the first, what it is to sin against knowledge. First, to explain it, I premise these distinctions.

(1.) The first distinction: that it is one thing to sin *with knowledge*, another thing *against knowledge*.

There are many sins do pass from a man with his knowledge, which yet are not against knowledge. This is to be observed for the removal of a scruple which may arise in some that are godly, who else may be wounded with this doctrine through a mistake.

A regenerate man is, and must needs be, supposed guilty of more known sins than an unregenerate man; and yet he commits fewer against knowledge than he.

[1.] First, I say, he is guilty of more known sins; for he takes notice of every sinful disposition that is stirring in him, every by-end, every contrariety unto holiness, deadness to duty, reluctancy to spiritual duties, and when regenerated, beginneth to see and know more evil by himself, than ever he did before; he sees as the apostle says of himself, Rom. vii. 8, 'all concupiscence;' and the holier a man is, the more he discerns and knows his sins. So says the apostle, Rom. vii. 18, 'I know that in me dwells no good thing.' And ver. 21, 'I find when I would do good, evil

is present with me.' And ver. 23, 'I see another law.' All these, he says, he perceived and found daily in himself; and the more holy that he grew, the more he saw them. For the purer and clearer the light of God's Spirit shines in a man, the more sins he knows, he will see lusts streaming up, flying in his heart, like motes in the sun, or sparks out of a furnace, which else he had not seen. The clearer the sunbeam is which is let into the heart, the more thou wilt see them.

[2.] But yet, in the second place, I add, that nevertheless he sins less against knowledge; for then we are properly said to sin against knowledge, when we do take the fulfilling of a lust, or the performance of an outward action, a duty, or the like, into deliberation and consideration, and consider motives against the sin, or to the duty, and yet commit that sin, yield to it, and nourish that lust, and omit that duty. Here now we sin not only with knowledge, but against knowledge, because knowledge stepped in, and opposed us in it, comes to interrupt and prevent us; but now in those failings in duty, and stirring of lusts in the regenerate aforementioned, the case is otherwise, they are committed indeed with knowledge, but not against it. For it is not in the power of knowledge to prevent them, for *motus primi non cadunt sub libertatem*; but yet though such sins will arise again and again, yet, says a good heart, they must not think to pass uncontrolled and unseen. Therefore let not poor souls mistake me, as if I meant throughout this discourse of all sins which are known to be sins, but I mean such sins as are committed against knowledge, that is, when knowledge comes and examines a sin in or before the committing of it, brings it to the law, contests against it, condemns it, and yet a man approveth it, and consenteth to it; when a duty and a sin are brought before knowledge, as Barabbas and Christ afore Pilate, and thy knowledge doth again and again tell thee such a sin is a great sin, and ought to be crucified, and yet thou criest, let it go; and so for the duty, it tells thee again and again it ought to be submitted unto, and yet thou omittest it, and committest the sin, chooseth Barabbas rather than Christ: these are sins against knowledge. Now such sins against knowledge break a man's peace, and the more consideration before had, the more the peace is broken.

(2.) The second distinction is, that men sin against knowledge, either directly or collaterally, objectively or circumstantially.

[1.] First, directly, when knowledge itself is the thing men abuse, or fight against, becometh the object, the *terminus*, the butt and mark shot at, this is to sin directly against knowledge itself.

[2.] The second way, collaterally, is, when knowledge is but a circumstance in our sins, so as the pleasure of some sin we know to be a sin is the thing aimed at, and that our knowledge steps but in between to hinder us in it, and we commit it notwithstanding though we do know it; here knowledge is indeed sinned against, yet but collaterally, and as a stander by, but as a circumstance only, shot at *per accidens, concomitanter*, and by the by, as one that steps in to part a fray is smitten, for labouring to hinder them in their sin, as the Sodomites quarrelled with Lot; they are both found in this chapter, and therefore come fitly within the compass of this discourse.

First, this collateral kind of sinning against knowledge is mentioned in the 21st verse, where he says, 'They knew God, yet they glorified him not;' there knowledge is made but a circumstance of their sinning, they sinned against it but collaterally. But then that other kind of sinning directly against knowledge is mentioned, verse 28, 'They liked not to

retain God in their knowledge ;' that is, they hated this knowledge itself, so as now they did not only love sin they knew to be sin, but also they loved not the knowledge of it ; so that because both are thus clearly instanced in. we will speak of both more largely.

Now, sins directly against knowledge itself are many. I will reduce the chief heads of them into two branches :

First, In regard of ourselves.

Secondly, In regard of others.

(1.) First, In regard of ourselves, five ways we may thus sin against knowledge itself.

[1.] First, When we abuse knowledge to help us to sin : as, first, to plot and contrive a sin, as Judas plotted to betray his Master, if he could ' conveniently ;' so the text says, Mark xiv. 11, he would do it wisely ; and thus those that came to entrap Christ with most cunning questions did sin, and those who plot against the just, Ps. xxxvii. 12.

[2.] So, secondly, when men use their wisdoms to tell a cunning lie to cover a sin ; as Plato says, men of knowledge *sunt ad mendacia potentiores et sapientiores*, whereas fools, though they would lie, yet often tell truth ere they are aware.

[3.] But also, thirdly, when they abuse moral knowledge, which yet, as Aristotle says, is least apt to be (I am sure should least be) abused, so as to make a show of good pretences to cover their sins and dissemble them, not only by finding out some cunning artificial colour, as David did in the matter of Uriah, ' Chance of war (says he) falls to all alike ;' but when men are so impudently hypocritical as to make use of religious pretexts, as the devil sometimes doth, as Saul, who pretends to Samuel ' I have done the will of the Lord ;' and when Samuel told him of the cattle, Oh, says he, ' they are for a sacrifice,' when God had expressly commanded to kill them all. But this shift shifted him out of his kingdom, Samuel pronounced him a rebel in it, rebellion is sin against knowledge, there he knew it. Thus also Jezebel coloured over the stoning of Naboth with a solemn fast. So Judas fisheth for money with a charitable pretence, ' This might have been sold, and given to the poor.' In sins against knowledge, usually the mind endeavours to find out a colour, and that provokes God more than the sin, because we go about to mock him. We see men cannot endure a shift, much less the all-knowing God not to be mocked ; and we see it hard to convince such an one. David was fain to be brought to the rack ere he would confess, when he had a shift ; and men do seek such shifts only in case of sinning against conscience, for else there were no need, they would be sure to plead ignorance, as Abimelech did.*

Secondly, When men neglect the getting and obtaining of knowledge, which knowledge might keep and hinder them from sinning, and might make them expert in duties. This is as much as to sin against knowledge, although the sins be committed out of ignorance ; yet that ignorance being through their own default, it comes all to one, when it may be said of men, as the apostle doth of the Hebrews, chap. v. 12, ' that for the time they have had to learn, they might have been teachers, they had yet need be taught again the first principles.' If a man had an apprentice, who through negligence and want of heeding and observing what he daily sees and hears about his trade, might have got for his time much knowledge in his trade, whereby he might have saved his master much, which he now hath lost him, and rid and perfected much work he daily spoils him ; such

* 1 Sam xxii. 15.—ED.

careless, blockish ignorance it is just for his master to correct him for, and to charge on him all that waste and loss, because he might have known how to have done better. And therefore even they who thought ignorance in itself no sin (wherein they erred), yet the neglect of knowledge upon this very ground they thought a great sin, and that it would be so far from excusing sins, as that it would aggravate them. So here we see these Gentiles shall not only be reckoned with for the actual knowledge they had attained to, and sinned against; but also for what they might have had and have picked out of the creatures. For so the apostle brings in this here in the 20th verse, that the power of God being clearly seen in the creatures, they neglecting to spell and read it, so much knowledge as they might have got God will reckon to them, and aggravate their sins by.

Thirdly, Which is yet much worse, when men refuse knowledge that they may sin the more freely, and so stop the ear, lest they should be charmed. As when men are loath, and afraid, and dare not read such a book as discovers or might discover that truth to them, the submission to which would prejudice them, and this to the end that they may plead ignorance of their sin. Thus also those that assent not to truth when it comes strongly upon them, but seek to evade it. But 1 Cor. xiv. 37, when the apostle had clearly discovered the truth in those things controverted, so as whoever was spiritual, or not fully blind, might see, and would acknowledge the truth, then he shuts up his discourse about them, ver. 38, 'If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant;' for it is wilful, it is affected; he speaks it as elsewhere, Rev. xxii. 11. it is said, 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;' that is, he that will be unjust, and refuseth to turn, let him go on. This is a great sin, for God, you see, gives such a man over. One that is but neglectful, or dull of capacity, God will take pains with him, to teach him, and bear with him, as Christ did with his disciples; but if he be wilfully ignorant, he lets him die in his ignorance, and yet will reckon with him, as if all his sins had been committed against knowledge, because he refused to know.

[4.] The fourth is to hate the light, and to endeavour to extinguish it. This is yet much worse, when men hate the word, and the ministers of it, the examples of God's people, and the light they carry with them, they 'shining as lights in a crooked generation,' Phil. ii. 15, and yet they hate these, as thieves do a torch in the night, and fly against the light as bats do, and as the Jews did, John iii. 20. This Christ says is the great condemning sin of all others. So these Gentiles put Socrates to death for reproving them. And thus men sin also, when they labour to extinguish the light in their own consciences, and 'like not to retain God in their knowledge,' ver. 28, but would study the art of forgetfulness, when men have put the candle out, and drawn the curtains, that they may sin, and sleep in sin more freely and securely. Thus those also sin in a higher measure, who have had a clear conviction that they ought to be thus strict, and ought to sanctify the Lord's day, and pray privately, but now have lost this light, and think they need not be so strict; when men continue not in what they were once assured of, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. iii. 14, these sin against their knowledge, and are the worst of such sinners. And this estate Aristotle himself makes *statum maligni*, the state of a wicked one, namely, when the sparks of light are extinguished or hated. For when any man's light is lost and turned into darkness by sinning, then, as Christ says, how great is that darkness! When good laws are not only not enacted and embraced, but repealed also (it is Aristotle's similitude, to distinguish an

incontinent person and a wicked man), this is an high kind of sinning. So of these Gentiles it is said, 'their foolish heart was darkened,' they had extinguished some of that light God gave them. As some drink away their wits, so some sin away their consciences, and thus by degrees they first sin away the light of the word they had, as they in Jude who were religious once, and then they quench even that little spark of nature that is left. Also ver. 10, 'corrupting themselves in what they know naturally.'

[5.] Fifthly, Men sin against knowledge yet worse, when they hold opinion against their knowledge. So many are said to do. In 1 Tim. iv. 2, he foretells they should 'speak lies in hypocrisy,' and invent lies that should have a pretence of holiness, which they know to be a lie, or else they should not be said to 'speak lies in hypocrisy;' but they do it to maintain their honour and greatness, which must down if their doctrine prove false; and though many are given up to believe their lies, 2 Thes. ii. 11, as a punishment of their not loving the truth, yet others of them shall know they are lies, and yet vent them for truths. Thus when men fashion their opinion to the times and ways of preferment, and their dependencies on great ones, or to maintain and uphold a fashion, or out of pride having broached an error maintain it, though the pulling out that one tile doth untile all the house. These are the two causes given of perverting the truth, 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5, namely, pride and covetousness, and supposing gain godliness, and so fashioning their religion accordingly; when men are 'knights of the post,' that will write or speak anything, whereby they may get gain and preferment.

(2.) Secondly, Men sin against knowledge in regard of others.

[1.] First, By concealing it. The apostle indeed says in a certain case, 'Hast thou knowledge? keep it to thyself.' He speaks it of opinions or practices about things indifferent, which might scandalize the weak; but if thou hast knowledge which may edify thy brother, thou oughtest to communicate it. Socrates, knowing there was but one God, said, in his apology for his life, that if they would give him life upon condition to keep that truth to himself, and not to teach it to others, he would not accept life upon such a condition; and I remember he expresseth his resolution in words very nigh the same words the apostles used, Acts iv. 40, 'Whether it be better to obey God than men, judge you;' and 'We cannot but teach the things we have heard and seen,' says Christ; for knowledge is a thing will boil within a man for vent, and cannot be imprisoned. It is light, and the end why light was made was to be set up to give light. And Christ argues from an apparent absurdity to put a light under a bushel, which may give light to all the house. Hast thou knowledge of God and of his ways? thou canst not but speak (if withal thou hast but a good heart) to all in the family, to thy wife in thy bosom, &c. God took it for granted that Abraham would teach his children what he should know from him: the same disposition is in all the children of Abraham.

[2.] Secondly, When men endeavour to suppress knowledge. As the Pharisees, they kept the keys of it in their hands, and would not open the treasures of it themselves, nor let others do it neither. So they (Acts iv. 16) 'could not deny but a great miracle was done' by the apostles (say themselves), 'but that it spread no further, let us threaten them, and charge them, that they speak no more in his name.' And this they did against their consciences, by their own profession, 'we cannot deny it;' as if they had said, if we could we would, but it was too manifest it was the truth. So when masters keep their servants from the means of knowledge, they are thus guilty.

[3.] Thirdly, When we would make others sin against their consciences. The Pharisees, when the blind man would not say as they said, they cast him out; they would have had him say that Christ was a sinner, when through the small light he had he judged it evident enough that a sinner should not do such a miracle as was never done since the world began. And so Jezebel made the judges and witnesses sin against conscience in accusing Naboth; and so some of the Gentiles, that would hold correspondence with the Jews, would have constrained the Galatians to be circumcised, Gal. vi. 12. Those that knew that circumcision was to be abolished, yet they would persuade them to it by club-argument, drawn from avoiding persecution, not from evidence of the truth, or by reasons that might convince them and their consciences; therefore, he says, they 'constrained them.' The persuaders might indeed glory, as having their cause and side strengthened, but they won little credit to their cause by it; for as the persuaders' arguments were suited to flesh, so the others' yielding was out of flesh, and so 'they glory in your flesh' and weakness, says he; as the papists urged Cranmer, not by arguments, but threats and promises, to recant; this is the greatest cruelty in the world, to have a man murder himself, stab his conscience. To offend a weak conscience is a sin, if but passively, when thou dost something before his face, which his conscience is against; but if thou makest him wound his own conscience, and to do an act himself which his own conscience is against, it is much worse; as if thou beest a master, and hast a servant who pleadeth conscience that he cannot lie for thy advantage in thy shop, or who will not do unlawful business on the Sabbath day, and pleads conscience, wilt thou smite him and whip him? 'God will smite thee, thou whited wall.' How darest thou smite him and so cause him to do that for which God will whip him worse? Shew mercy to those under you, inform their consciences, wring them not, you may hap to break the wards if you do.

2. Now for sins committed collaterally, or *per modum circumstantiæ* (that I may so express it), against knowledge, they are done either when particular acts of sin are committed, and duties omitted, against light and knowledge; and so the saints may and do often sin against knowledge. Or,

Secondly, in regard of a known estate of sin and impenitency persisted in, when men continue and go on in such a state against conviction of conscience, that such is their estates.

(1.) For the first, because particular acts of sin committed against knowledge are infinite, and there will be no end of instancing in particulars, therefore I will not insist. Only in brief this distinction concerning such acts may be observed, and the observation of it may be useful, that some acts of sins against knowledge are merely transient, that is, are done and ended at once. And though the guilt of them is eternal, yet the extent of the act is finished with the committing it, and reaches no further: as a vain oath, breach of the Sabbath, &c., which acts cannot be repealed, though they may be repented of. But others there are, which though the act may be but once outwardly and professedly done, yet have an habitual and continued permanency, life, and subsistence given it, such as that until a man doth recall them, he may be said continually to renew those acts, and every day to be guilty of them, and to maintain it, and so habitually to commit them. As it is with laws, which, though made but once, are yet continued acts of the state whilst they stand in force unrepealed, so is it in some sins. For instance, when a man doth take goods from his neigh-

bour unjustly, the act indeed is done but once ; but till he restores them, he may be said to steal them ; every day, every hour, he continues to do it habitually. So a man having subscribed to falsehood, or recanted the truth publicly, the act, though done but once, yet until a retraction be someways made, he continues that act, and so is daily anew guilty of it. So if a man should marry one whom it is unlawful for him to marry, as Herod did, though that sinful act of espousals whereby they entered into it was soon despatched, yet, till a divorce, he lives in a continual sin. And such acts (of this latter sort I mean) against knowledge, are most dangerous to commit ; because, to continue thus in them, though but once committed, hazards a man's estate ; and therefore men find, when they come to repent, the greatest snare, and trouble, and difficulty in such kind of sins, to extricate themselves out of them by a meet and true repentance.

But as concerning the first branch of this distinction, namely, of particular acts committed against knowledge, besides this last distinction briefly touched, I will anon give you several aggravations and rules, whereby to measure the sinfulness that is in such acts so committed ; but, in the mean time, the second branch of this former distinction must be insisted upon, and therefore I will bring in these aggravations and rules which concern particular acts, as distinct heads, after I have briefly spoken to this other, which is, that,

(2.) Secondly, Those sin against knowledge who go on in an estate of sin and impenitency which they know to be damnable ; as Pharaoh, Exod. ix. 27, who confessed that he and his people were wicked, and yet hardened himself in sin most dangerously ; and yet three sorts of men may apparently be convinced thus to sin.

First, Those that keep out, and withdraw themselves from professing Christ and his ways, and the fear of his name, out of shame or fear of man, or loss of preferment, or the like worldly ends, when yet they are convinced that they are God's ways, and ought to be professed by them. I do not say that all who do not come in to profess Christ, and that do not join themselves with his people, that they go on against knowledge, for many are ignorant and mistaken about them ; but when men are convinced of the truth, and necessity of professing and confessing of it even ' unto salvation ' (as the apostle speaks, Rom. x), and yet out of fear or shame keep still on the other side, drawing in their horns altogether, these go on in an estate of impenitency against knowledge ; for put all these together, and it must needs appear to be so. As, first, when they are convinced that this is the truth, and that salvation and the power of religion is only to be found in such ways and men ; and secondly, that these are to be practised and professed ; and yet, thirdly, out of shame, &c., keep still aloof of, and go on a contrary way ; these must needs know that they go on in an estate of impenitency against knowledge. This was the case of many of the Pharisees, who therefore sinned highly ; they believed, and were convinced that Christ was the Messiah ; and so then to be confessed, and followed, and to be cleaved unto, and then also they must needs know that his followers only were the children of God. Yet, John xii. 42, it is said, ' Though they thus believed on him, yet they durst not confess him for fear of the Jews,' and of the Pharisees, and of being ' put out of the synagogues.' At the latter day Christ shall not need to sever such from the rest as he will do the sheep from the goats, for they willingly remain all their days amongst them whom they know to be goats, and refuse the company, and fold, and

food, and marks of the sheep which they know to be such; they may apologise, and make fair with the saints, that their hearts are with them, but they will be ranked at the day of judgment as here they ranked themselves, with the 'workers of iniquity.' Of these doth the psalmist speak, Ps. cxxv. 5, 'Those that turn aside by their crooked ways, them shall the Lord leave with the workers of iniquity.'

Those also thus sin, and are to be joined with these, who know the terms and condition of salvation, and how they must part with all for Christ, and yet will not come to the price; such do go desperately on against knowledge in a bad estate, and do judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Thus the young man in the gospel he was told that he was to sell all, and that was the condition, and he knew heaven was worth it, and was convinced of the truth herein, that thus he ought to do, for 'he went away sorrowful;' now if he had not known that he went away without happiness, he needed not have been sorrowful at all, but he knew the bargain of salvation was not struck up, and likewise what it struck at, and yet still rested in his former condition, and chose rather to enjoy his many possessions. This man now went on in his state against knowledge.

Secondly, As also those who upon the same or like ground defer their repentance; these go on in a bad estate, and must needs know they do so; for in that they promise to repent hereafter, and take up purposes to do it, when they have gone on a little while longer, to add drunkenness to thirst, they do thereby profess that there is a work of grace which they must attain to ere they can be in the state of grace; for they would not promise so much hereafter, but that they know not how, without such a work, they should be saved. Whilst therefore such shall rest without present endeavouring after it, so long they are judged in themselves to be in a bad estate at present. When men know the curses due to their present estate, and yet say as he, Deut. xxix. 19, 'I will go on in the way of my heart, and shall have peace' afterward; this man sins most highly, and therefore God's wrath 'smokes against that man,' and he says of him that he 'will not be merciful to him' in that place.

Thirdly, Sunk and broken professors, such cannot but go on in a bad estate against knowledge, when either men are fallen from the practice and profession of what is good, which once they thought necessary to salvation, or when they continue to hold forth their profession in hypocrisy. Those that have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but are returned to their vomit again, some of these are ingenious,* and acknowledge themselves fallen, and their present estate most miserable, and yet go on in it; and such are to be pitied, but yet are in a most dangerous condition. Saul when he was fallen away, yet had this ingenuity* a while left, he desired Samuel to pray to his God for him, and told David that he was more righteous than he; yet still went on in his courses, and in the end, as some have thought, sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But others there are, who, though they be fallen from all the inward, powerful, and secret performance of duties they once did practise, and from all conscience of sinning, yet retain their profession, which they know to be but an outside. These of all others go on against knowledge; and, Rev. xxii. 15, they are said to 'make a lie,' not only to tell a lie in words, but to make a lie in deeds. Now a lie is a sin of all others most against knowledge, and indeed against a double knowledge, both *facti* and *juris*; and so

* That is, 'ingenuous,' and 'ingenuousness.'—Ed.

is this. [1.] That they profess themselves to be that they know they are not. [2.] That they will not endeavour after that state they know they ought to get into if ever saved. This is the condition of many, who, being convinced of the power of religion, have launched forth into a profession, and hoist up sail, but now the tide is fallen, the Spirit withdrawn, the conscience of sin extinguished in them; yet for their credit's sake still bear their sails up as high as ever, even as many merchants do, who are sunk in their estates, still bear a fair show, yea, will seem richer than ordinary, by purchasing lands, &c. Such a professor was Judas, he began seriously, and thought to have gone to heaven, and was earnest in good duties at first, as they also, 2 Pet. ii. 18, they really, or ὁπωσ, escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ; but in the end Judas became a gross hypocrite, one that pretended the poor when he loved the bag, and on the sudden betrayed his master, when yet the disciples knew it not, suspected Judas as little as themselves; and the end of those also, in that fore-named place, it is said to be 'worse than their beginning.' Now because such sin so highly against knowledge, therefore their punishment is made the *regula* of all other wicked men's; as when it is said that other sinners 'shall have their portion with hypocrites,' as the wicked angels' punishment is made the measure of men's. 'Go, ye cursed, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' So among men, such gross hypocrites, their punishment is made the rule, and so the chief of all kind of torments which sinners of the sons of men shall undergo.

Application. Now let me speak a word to all such as thus go on in a state of impenitency against knowledge. This is a high kind of sinning, and of all the most desperate, and doth argue more hardness of heart, and 'despising the riches of God's goodness.' For if, as in the Romans, ii. 4, to go on in sin when a man knows not, that is, considers not that 'God's mercy leads him to repentance,' is made the sign and effect of a very hard heart, treasuring up wrath, then much more, when thou knowest and considerest thou art in an impenitent condition, and hast many motions leading thee to repentance, is thy heart then to be accounted hard. When a man commits a particular act against knowledge, he haply and usually still thinks his estate may be good, and that he shall not lose God utterly, or hazard the loss of him, only his spirit being at present empty of communion with him, he steals out to some stolen pleasure; but when a man knows his estate bad, and that he is 'without God in the world,' and yet goes on, he doth hereby cast away the Lord, and professeth he cares not for him, or that communion which is to be had by him, as Esau did his birthright.

David, though he despised the Lord, yet he did not cast away the Lord, as Saul did; for Saul ventured utterly to lose him, knowing his estate naught.

David, when he sinned, thought God's eternal favour would still continue, though for the present he might lose the sense of it.

But when a man goes on in a state of sinning, he ventures the loss of God's eternal love, and slights it, and knows he doth so. When a man knows that he is condemned already as being impenitent, and that all his eternal estate lies upon the non-payment of such duties of repentance, &c., and that the guilt of all his sins will come in upon him, and that an execution is out, and yet goes on, this is more than to commit one act against knowledge, whereby he thinks he brings upon himself but the guilt of that one sin; and upon the committing of which, he thinks not the mortgage of all lies, though it deserves it; herein men shew themselves more desperate.

2. In the next place, I come to those rules whereby you may measure

and estimate sinning against knowledge in any particular act of sinning; and they are either before the sin, or in sinning; three of either, which I make a second head, to explain this doctrine by.

(1.) First, Before.

[1.] The first rule is, the more thou knewest and didst consider the issues and consequents of that sin thou didst commit, the more thou sinnest against conscience in it: whenas, in Rom. i. 32, 'Thou knowing' (says the apostle) 'that those that commit such things are worthy of death;' that is, thou considerest that hell and damnation is the issue and desert of it, and yet comittest it, yea, and this when haply hell fire at present flasheth in thy face, and yet thou goest on to do it: in this case men are said to choose death, and to love it, Prov. viii. 36. When a man considers that the way to the whore-house are 'the ways to death,' as Solomon speaks; so when thou, a professor, considerest with thyself before, This sin will prove scandalous, and undo me, disable me for service, cast me out of the hearts of good men, and yet dost it. Thus that foolish king was told again and again, Jer. xxxviii. 17-19, that if he would yield to the king of Babel he should save his life, and city, and kingdom, and live there still, but if he would not, he should not escape; but as Jeremiah told him, verse 23, 'Thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire,' yet he would not hearken. 'This is the word of the Lord,' says Jeremiah, and he knew it to be so; and yet being a weak prince, led by his nobles, he would not follow his counsel. And thus Judas fully knew the issue; Christ had said again and again, 'Woe be to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed;' and yet went on to do it.

[2.] The second rule is, the more consultations, debates, and motives against it did run through thee before thou didst it, so much the greater and more heinous. How often did mercy come in and tell thee, that if thou lookest for any hope or part in it, thou shouldest not do such an evil! How often came that in, 'Shall I do this, and sin against God?' Did any scripture come in to testify against thee in the nick? Did God send in the remembrance of such a mercy past to persuade thee, or some mercies to come, which thou dependest upon him for? That which made Spira's sin so great was such debates as these before; and this made Darius's sin in casting Daniel into the lion's den so great, he debated it with himself, Dan. vi. 14, he was sore displeased with himself, and laboured to the going down of the sun to deliver him. He considered that he was at his right hand in all the affairs of his kingdom, and a man entrapped merely for his conscience, and that to put him to death was to sacrifice him to their malice. He knew him to be holy, and wise, worth all the men that sought after his life had yet yielded; these considerations troubled him afore, and also after, insomuch as he could not sleep for them, verse 18. Now, because that every such consultation should set an impression upon the heart, and countermand the motions of sin, when therefore thou dost it, maugre all such debates and motives to the contrary, this is much against knowledge, and very heinous. Therefore the Pharisees, Luke vii. 30, are said to have rejected the counsel of God, *ἐς ἐαυτοὺς*, in or against themselves, the words will bear either. 'In themselves,' because they knew it, and took it into consideration, and yet rejected it; and 'against themselves,' because it was their destruction.

[3.] The third rule is, that the more confirmations any man hath had of the knowledge of that which he sinneth in, and testimonies against it, the greater sin against knowledge it is: when a man hath had a cloud of wit-

nesses in his observation against a particular sin, and yet doth it, and goes on in it, it is the more fearful. To go on against that one witness, the bare light and grudging of natural conscience only, is not so much ; but when it is further confirmed and backed by the word written, which a man hath read, and with testimonies, out of which a man meets with such places, wherein again and again in reading of it such a practice is condemned, and observes it, and then also hears it reprov'd in sermons, and of all sins else hears in private conference that sin spoken against also, yea, hath in his eye many examples of others sinning in the like kind, which have been punished, yea, haply himself also ; yet to sin against all these is exceeding heinous. Sometimes God orders things so, as a sin is made a great sin by such forewarnings. So he contrived circumstances that Judas sinned a great sin ; for Judas knew before that Christ was the Saviour of the world, he knew it by all the miracles he had seen, as also by his gracious words and converse, and he professed as much in following of him ; and he had the written word against it, 'Thou shalt not murder the innocent.' But yet further, God, to aggravate his sin to the highest, orders it so, that Christ should tell him of it when he was to go about it, pronounceth a woe to him, Luke xxii. 22, that 'it had been good for that man that he had never been born,' Mark xiv. 21. And the disciples they were sorrowful at Christ's speech when he suspected one of them, and shewed an abomination and detestation of such a fact ; there was a jury of eleven men, yea, witnesses against it ; yea, and Judas against himself, he asked if it were he, yea, and Christ gave him a sop, and told him, 'Thou hast said it, and do what thou dost quickly : ' which even then might argue to his conscience that he was God, and searched and knew his heart ; and yet he went out and did it immediately. How did he sin against the hair, as we speak, and how did all these circumstances aggravate his sin !

But yet a more clear evidence of this is that instance of Pilate, whom God many ways would have stopped in his sin of condemning Christ, who examining him before the Pharisees, he could find no fault with him as concerning those things whereof they accused him, Luke xxiii. 14, and yet to allay their malice unjustly scourged him, ver. 16. And further, when he sent him to Herod, as being willing to rid his hands of him, Herod also found nothing worthy of death in him, ver. 15, which was another witness might have confirmed him concerning Christ's innocency. Yea, yet further, that the fact might be more aggravated, a most notorious murderer's life must be put into the scale with Christ's, and either the one or the other condemned ; and when the people yet chose Barabbas, why, says Pilate, what evil hath he done ? ver. 22. Then he distinctly knew and considered that he was delivered up through envy. Yea, and when he was upon the bench, and ready to pronounce sentence as it were, God admonished him by his own wife, Matt. xxvii. 19, whom God himself had admonished in a dream, she sending him word she had 'suffered many things by reason of him that night, and therefore have nothing (says she) to do with that just man ; ' yea, he himself, when he condemns him, washeth his hands. And thus it falls out in many sinful businesses which men are about, that God often and many several ways would knock them off, and stops them in their way, as he did Balaam, reproves them, as he did him by a dumb ass, 2 Pet. ii. 16 ; so these by some silent passage of providence, and not only so, but by his Spirit also standing in their way, with the threatenings ready drawn and brandished against them, as the angel did with a drawn sword against Balaam ; and yet they go on ; this is fearful.

(2.) There are three rules also, whereby the sinfulness of sin, as it is against knowledge, may be measured, from what may be observed in the act, as,

[1.] First, The less passion, or inward violence or temptation to a sin committed against knowledge, the greater sin against knowledge it is argued to be. For then the knowledge is the clearer, passion or temptation being as a mist. But then to sin when a man is not in passion, is to stumble at noon-day. For as drunkenness takes away reason, so doth passion, which is a short drunkenness, cloud and mist a man's knowledge. And so Aristotle compares the knowledge of an incontinent person to the knowledge of one that is drunk. When Peter denied his Master, though he had warning of it before, and so it was against knowledge, and it was by lying, and swearing, and forswearing, which are sins of all others most directly against knowledge, yet he was taken unexpectedly, and when that which might stir up fear to the utmost in him was in his view; for he was then in the judgment-hall, where his Master, just before his face, was arraigned for his life, and he thought he might also have presently been brought to the bar with him, if he had been discovered to have been his disciple; so as his passion being up, his soul was distempered, reason had little time to recover itself, and therefore, though it was against knowledge, yet the less against knowledge, because knowledge had *lasam operationem*, it had not its perfect work upon his heart; but now Judas, in betraying his Master, had not only warning before, but was not tempted to it, but went of himself, and made the offer to the Pharisees, sought how 'conveniently' to do it, plotted to do it, had his wits about him, had time to think of it, and therefore it was, besides the heinousness of the act, more also against knowledge, and so the greater. So David, when he went to slay Nabal, was in hot blood, in a passion; but when he plotted to kill Uriah, he was in cold blood; he was drunk when he lay with Bathsheba, but sober when he made Uriah drunk: he went quietly and sedately on in it. And there we find David blamed only in the matter of Uriah, not so much for that of Bathsheba.

[2.] Secondly, The more sorrow, *renisus*, or reluctancy, and regretting of mind there is against a sin, it is a sign that the knowledge of it is the stronger and quicker against it, and so the sin the more against knowledge; for that gainsaying and displeasure of the mind against it ariseth from the strength and violent beating of the pulse of conscience, and opposition of it against the sin; it springs from the greater and deeper apprehension of the evil of the sin in the action which is then in doing. And though that reluctancy be a better sign of the estate of a person than if there were none at all, as there is not in those who are 'past feeling,' and 'commit sin with greediness,' whose estate is therefore worse, and more incapable of repentance, yet the fact itself is argued to be the more heinous, for it argues it to be against strong, active, stirring knowledge. This argued Herod's sin to be much against knowledge, as indeed it was, Mark vi. 26; the text says 'he was exceeding sorrowful:' now that he could not have been, unless he had exceedingly apprehended what a great sin it was to behead John, who he knew was 'a just and holy man,' ver. 20, and who was one that had a great place in his estimation, for 'he observed him,' and was wrought much upon by his ministry; and he knew that he did but sacrifice him to the malice of a wicked woman. And in this case the sin is also hereby made so much the greater, in that conscience doth stir up a contrary violent passion in the heart against the temptation, and therefore yet to do it, when

there is such a bank cast up that might resist it, yet then to break all down, such a sin wastes the conscience much.

[3.] Thirdly, On the contrary, the more hardness of heart there is, and want of tenderness, in committing that sin which a man knows to be a sin, it is argued thereby to be the greater sin against knowledge; not only the greater sin, but the greater sin against knowledge. For hardness of heart in sinning is an effect of having formerly sinned much against knowledge before. For as the light of the sun hardeneth clay, so the beams of knowledge and conscience, lighting upon men's hearts, use to harden them, and do make them in the end past feeling. And therefore, in 1 Tim. iv. 2, sinning against knowledge is made the cause of a seared conscience, 'they speak lies in hypocrisy;' and therefore knowingly that they are lies, and such lies as damn others as well as themselves, which who believe are damned, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12; and if so, no wonder if it follows, 'having their consciences seared with a hot iron.' It is not a cold iron will sear their consciences, and make them insensible, but a hot iron, a burning and a shining light, which once having had place in their consciences, and being rejected, they begin to be hardened and seared; for knowledge makes sins and the apprehension of them familiar to a man, and so less terrible and frightful in the end, as bears and lions do become to their keepers through custom. Judas had a hard heart when he came to betray his Master; surely his conscience had smitten him at first more for nimming out of the bag than it did now for this of murder. He could never have had such a hard heart, had he not had much knowledge. Was it not a heart, that when he was challenged to his face, he could set a brazen face on it, and did ask as well as the rest, Is it I? When also Christ cursed him to his face who should do it, and the disciples all abhorred it, had not Judas lived under such blessed and glorious means, and sinned long against knowledge, all this would have startled him and have staggered him in his purpose; but he goes on as if it were nothing, though when he had done it his conscience was then opened too late. When a man formerly hath been troubled with a small sin, more than now with a gross lie, which he can digest better than once the other, or when before, if he omitted praying, it troubled him, now he can go a week without, and is not sensible of it, it is a sign that his knowledge hath hardened him.

III. Thus having given such rules whereby you may estimate the sinfulness of particular acts, I will now proceed to other ways, aggravations taken from the kind of knowledge a man sins against, to sin against what kind of knowledge is most heinous and dangerous. And these are five, drawn from the several qualifications of that knowledge, and the light which men sin against; for the greater, or the more strong and efficacious the light and knowledge is, the greater is the sin of knowledge thou committest. And this I make a third general head to explain this doctrine by, all these five rules being applicable and common both to particular acts against knowledge, and also lying in an estate of impenitency against knowledge, and all other particulars which have been mentioned.

1. First, then, to sin against the inbred light of nature, that is, in such sins, as though thou hadst wanted the light of the word in, thou wouldst have known to be such; this is a high kind of sinning. Such the apostle speaks of, Jude 10, 'What things they know naturally, in these they corrupt themselves, as brute beasts;' putting as it were no difference of actions no more than beasts, no, not in what nature teacheth them; and therefore

therein are as beasts, for it is the light of nature puts the first difference between men and beasts ; and in such kind of sins the apostle instanteth in this first chapter, as namely, that of unnatural uncleanness, in three particulars ; as, 1. self-uncleanness, ver. 24, *ἐν ἑαυτοῖς*, that is, alone by themselves ; so Beza and Theophilaet understand it, which he makes there the first degree of unnatural uncleanness, which is therefore unnatural, because thou destroyest that which nature gave thee for propagation, *quod perdis homo est*. Then, 2. the unclean love of boys, ‘men burning in lust with men,’ ver. 27, be it discovered in what dalliance it will, though not arising to an act of sodomy, doing that which is unseemly, ver. 27, which he therefore says, is the perverting the use and intent of nature, and so is a sin against nature, leaving the natural use of women. My brethren, I am ashamed to speak of such things as are done in secret. These kind of sins, by the apostles ranking them, are in a further degree of unnaturalness than any other, because they are made the punishments of other sins, which yet were against the light of nature also, namely, not glorifying God when they knew him ; yet that being a sin, the light of nature was not so clear in comparison of these, therefore these are made the punishments of the other, as being more against nature. So for men to be disobedient to parents, stubborn to them, and without natural affection, as the apostle says, ver. 30, 31, this is against nature, even the instinct of it. So unthankfulness, and requiting evil for good, is against a common principle in men’s minds. ‘Do not the Gentiles do good to those that do good to them ?’ Your hearts use to rise against such an one out of common humanity ; or if you see one cruel and unmerciful, which is another reckoned up, ver. 31, there being usually principles of pity in all men’s natures by nature, therefore for one man to prey upon and tyrannize over another, as fishes do over the small ones, as Habakkuk complaineth, chap. i. 14, this is against nature, which teacheth you to do as you would be done to. So covenant-breakers, and lying, and forswearing, mentioned ver. 30, inventors of evil, and truce-breakers, are sins against nature, and natural light. Lying is against a double light, both moral ; both *juris*, which tells us such a thing ought not to be done ; and *facti*, whilst we affirm a thing that is not, the knowledge of the contrary ariseth up in us against it, though there were no law forbade it ; therefore of all sins else, the devil’s lusts are expressed by two : lying, which is a sin in the understanding, and malice in the will, John viii. 44.

[2.] Secondly, To sin against that light which thou didst suck in when thou wert young, to sin against the light of thy education, this is an aggravation, and a great one. There is a catechism of a blessed mother, Bathsheba, which she taught Solomon when a child, put in among the records of sacred writ, Prov. 31, wherein she counsels him betimes, ‘not to give his strength to women ;’ she foretold him of that sin ; and because it is incident to kings most, they having all pleasures at command, she tells him particularly, ‘it destroys kings ;’ and so also ‘not to drink wine’ was another instruction there he was forewarned of. This aggravated Solomon’s fault the more ; for, read the second chapter of Ecclesiastes, and we shall find there that he was most guilty in the inordinate love of these two ; but he had not been brought up so, his good mother had not thus instructed him. And thus also when God would aggravate his own people’s sin unto them, he recalls them to their education in their youth in the wilderness. So Jer. ii. 2, ‘Go and cry to them, I remember the kindness and towardliness of thy youth ;’ he puts them in mind of their education by Moses their tutor,

and their forwardness then. And so Hos. xii., 'when he was a child I loved him;' and then God had their first-fruits, ver. 3, this he brings to aggravate their backsliding, ver. 5. Therefore the apostle urgeth it as a strong argument to Timothy, to go on to persevere in grace and goodness, that he 'had known the Scriptures from a child,' and therefore for him to fall would be more heinous. The reason is, because the light then infused, it is the first, a virgin light, as I may call it, which God in much mercy vouchsafed to prepossess the mind with, before it should be deflowered and defiled with corrupt principles from the world; and did put it there to keep the mind chaste and pure; and this also then, when the mind was most soft and tender, and so fitter to receive the deeper impression from it. And hence ordinarily the light sucked in then seasons men ever after, whether it be for good or for evil; it forestalls and prejudgeth a man against other principles. And though a man comes to have more acquired knowledge and reasons after put into him when he is come to perfect age, yet the small light of his education, if it were to the contrary, doth bias him, and keep him fixed and bent that way. So we see it is in opinions about religion, the light then entertained can never be disputed out; so in men's ways and actions, 'Train up a child in his way, and he will not depart from it,' Prov. xxii. 6. To sin therefore against it, and to put out the beams of it, or defile it, and to wear out the impressions of it, how wicked is it, and what a wretch art thou to do so!

Many of you young scholars* have had a good Bathsheba that instructed you, not to pour out your strength to drink or women, but to pray privately, and to fear God, and love him; and when you come hither, you have good tutors also, who teach you to pray; ministers who instil blessed truths into you, from which one would think you should never depart; yet you do.

Think how grievous this is; for if it is made an excuse for many a man in sinning, that it answers his education, that he never knew or saw better, as you say of many papists, then must it needs, on the contrary, be an aggravation of sinfulness. And as it was Timothy's commendation, that he 'knew the Scriptures from a child,' so it will be thy condemnation, that thou knewest better from a child, and yet rebellest against thy light.

[3.] Thirdly, The more real and experimental the light is men sin against, still the more sin; as when they have learnt it from examples of godly men whom they have lived amongst, or the observations of God's dealings with themselves or others, and not only from the word notionally. To sin against such light, this adds a further degree; not only to sin against the bare light of nature, but also further, when nature hath besides lighted her torch at the Scripture, and then when beyond all this the real examples and observations made of God's dealings with a man's self and others shall confirm all this, this makes a man's sinfulness much more grievous; for as *exempla efficacius docent quam præcepta*, so the knowledge got by experiments of mercies or judgments is of more force and evidence. Knowledge learnt by experience is the most efficacious. Therefore Christ himself, who knew all things already, yet 'learnt,' in the school of experience, 'by what he suffered.' A little of some knowledge distilled out of a man's own observation is most precious, every drop of it; therefore the apostle urgeth it on Timothy, 'Continue in the things thou hast learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,' 2 Tim. iii. 14. There is a twofold motive, and both emphatical: first, he was assured in himself;

* This was probably preached at Oxford.—Ed.

and secondly, that which strengthened that assurance, and was a means to work it, was the example of the holy apostle, and of his own parents, 'knowing of whom thou hast learned it.' And so, verse 10, the apostle again urgeth his own example, 'Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life;' and then also brings to his mind the education of those his godly parents who instructed him. Hence also, Isa. xxvi. 10, it is made an aggravation, that 'in the land of uprightness men deal unjustly.' Thus light drawn from the observation of God's judgments upon others, it much aggravates; it is laid to Belshazzar's charge, 'Thou knewest all this, how God dealt with thy father Nebuchadnezzar,' Dan. v. 22. So some of you come here, and live in a religious society, and see sometimes one, sometimes another of thy colleagues turn to Christ, yea haply, chamber-fellow converted from his evil courses, and yet thou goest on; this is sinning against a great light.

[4.] Fourthly, The more vigorous, strong, powerful the light is that is in thee, and more stirring in thy heart, and joined with a taste, the greater the sins committed against it are to be accounted. The more thou hast tasted the bitterness of sin, and God's wrath, and hast been stung with it as with a cockatrice, the more thou hast tasted God's goodness in prayer, and in the ordinances,—the more of such a knowledge, and yet sinnest, the worse. In John v. 35, Christ aggravates the Jews' unbelief in himself, and their present hardness, that John was to them, not only a 'shining,' but also a 'burning light;' that is, they had such knowledge engendered by his ministry, as wrought joy and heat as well as light; therefore it is added, 'they rejoiced therein for a season.' And thus their fall, Heb. vi., is aggravated that it was such a light as had tasting with it. For to explain this, you must know, that between ordinary natural light, or that assenting to spiritual truths which is common with men, from traditional knowledge living in the church, that between it and true saving light, or the light of life, there is a middle kind of light, which is more than the common conviction men have, and less than having* light. It is a light which leaves also some impression on the affections, makes them feel the powers of heaven and hell, and be affected with them. Now the more of such light against a sin, be it drunkenness, or uncleanness, or oppression, and yet fallest to it again, the worse. For this is a further degree added to knowledge, and not common to all wicked men. And therefore as those Jews who had not only common means of knowledge, but miracles also, and yet believed not, John xi. 47, shall be more condemned; so those who have such tasting knowledge set on by the Holy Ghost, which is as much as if a miracle were wrought, for it is above nature, a supernatural work of the Spirit. And therefore to sin against such light, and such only, is that which makes a man in the next degree of fitness to sin against the Holy Ghost.

[5.] Fifthly, To sin against professed knowledge is an aggravation also, and an heavy one, to sin against a man's own principles which he teacheth others, or reproves or censureth in others. Titus i. 16, those 'that profess they know God, and yet deny him,' these are most abominable of all others, for these are liars, and so sin against knowledge as liars do; in 1 John ii. 4, such an one is called a liar in a double respect, both in that he says he hath that knowledge he hath not, it not being true, and because, also, he denies that in deed which he affirms in word. This is scandalous sinning. So, Rom. ii. 24, the Jews, boasting of the law, and of having the

* Qu. 'saving'?—ED.

form of knowledge in their brains, caused the Gentiles to blaspheme when they saw they lived clean contrary thereto; and, therefore, a brother that walks inordinately was to be delivered to Satan, 'to learn what it was to blaspheme,' 1 Tim. i. 20, that is, to learn to know how evil and bitter a thing it is, by the torments of an evil conscience, to live in such a course as made God and his ways evil spoken of, as it befell David when he thus sinned. Yea, 1 Cor. v. 10, 11, though they might keep company with a heathen, because he was ignorant and professed not the knowledge of God, yet if a brother, one that professed, and so was to walk by the same rules, did sin against those principles he professed, then keep him not company. Thus did Saul sin. All the religion he had and pretended to in his latter days was persecuting witches; yet in the end he went against this his principle, he went to a witch in his great extremity at last. And thus God will deal with all that are hollow, and sin secretly against knowledge, in the end. He suffers them to go on against their most professed principles.

These are aggravations in general, applicable both to any act of sinning, or going on in a known state of sinning.

Use. Now, the use of all that hath been spoken, what is it but to move all those that have knowledge to take more heed of sinning than other men, and those of them that remain in their natural estate to turn speedily and effectually unto God? For if sinning against knowledge be so great an aggravation of sinning, then of all engagements to repentance knowledge is the greatest.

First, Thou who hast knowledge canst not sin so cheap as another who is ignorant. Therefore, if thou wilt be wicked, thy wickedness will cost thee ten times more than it would another. Places of much knowledge, and plentiful in the means of grace, are dear places to live in sin in. To be drunk and unclean after enlightening, and the motions of the Spirit, and powerful sermons, is more than twenty times afore; thou mightest have committed ten to one, and been damned less. 'This is condemnation,' says Christ, 'that light came into the world.' Neither canst thou have so much pleasure in thy sins as an ignorant person, for the conscience puts forth a sting in the act when thou hast knowledge, and does subject thee to bondage and the fear of death. When a man knows how dearly he must pay for it, there is an expectation of judgment embittereth all. Therefore the Gentiles sinned with more pleasure than we. Therefore, Eph. iv. 18, 19, the apostle, speaking of them, says that through their ignorance and darkness and want of feeling they committed sin with greediness, and so with more pleasure, they not having knowledge, or hearts sensible of the evils that attend upon their courses.

Secondly, Thou wilt, in sinning against knowledge, be given up to greater hardness. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness,' says Christ, 'how great is that darkness.' Therefore, the more light a man hath, and yet goes on in works of darkness, the more darkness will that man be left unto, even to a reprobate mind in the end.

Thirdly, It will procure thee to be given up to the worst of sins more than another man; for God, when he leaves men, makes one sin the punishment of another, and reserves the worst for sinners against knowledge. These Gentiles, when they knew God, they worshipped him not, God gave them up to the worst of sins whereof they were capable, as unnatural uncleanness, &c. But these are not sins great enough for thee, that art a sinner of the Christians, to be given up to drunkenness or adultery,

&c. ; otherwise than to discover thy rottenness, these are too small sins ; but thou shalt be given up to inward profaneness of heart (as Esau was, having been brought up in a good family), so as not to neglect holy duties only, but to despise them, to despise the good word of God and his saints, and to hate godliness and the appearance of it ; thou shalt be given up to contemn God and his judgments, to ‘trample under foot the blood of the covenant,’ or else unto devilish opinions. Those other are too small to be punishments of thy sin, for still the end of such an one must be seven times worse than the beginning, as Christ says it shall. If thou wert a drunkard, a swearer, or an unclean person before, and thy knowledge wrought some alteration in thee, thou shalt not haply be so now at thy fall, but seven times worse, profane, injurious to saints, a blasphemer, or derider of God’s ways and ordinances.

Fourthly, When thou comest to lay hold on mercy at death, thy knowledge will give thee up to more despair than another man. Knowledge, though when it is but newly revealed, it is an help ; yet not made use of, turns against the soul, to wound it, and to work despair ; and this both because we have sinned against the means that should have saved us, as also because such as sin against knowledge, sin with more presumption ; and the more presumption in thy life, the more despair thou art apt to fall into at death. Therefore, Isa. lix. 11, 12, what brought such trouble and ‘roarings like bears’ upon these Jews ? and that when salvation was looked for, that yet it was so far off from them, in their apprehensions ? ‘Our iniquities’ (say they) ‘testify to our face, and we know them.’ Now, then, sins testify to our face when our conscience took notice of them, even to our faces when we were committing them ; and then also the same sins themselves will again testify to our faces, when we have recourse for the pardon of them. Therefore thou wilt lie roaring on thy deathbed, and that thou knowest them will come as an argument that thou shalt not have mercy. As ignorance is a plea for mercy, ‘I did it ignorantly, therefore I obtained mercy,’ so I did it knowingly, will come in as a bar and a plea against thee, therefore I shall not have mercy.

Fifthly, Both here and in hell, it is the greatest executioner and tormentor. In this sense it may be said, *Qui auget scientiam, auget dolorem*, ‘He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,’ as Solomon speaks ; for knowledge enlargeth our apprehension of our guilt, and that brings more fear and torment. ‘Have they no knowledge who eat up my people ? Yes, there is their fear,’ says David. Therefore, Heb. x. 28, after sinning after knowledge, there remains not only a more fearful punishment, but a more ‘fearful expectation’ in the parties’ consciences. And this is the worm in hell that gnaws for ever. Light breeds these worms.

But then you will say, It is best for us to be ignorant, and to keep ourselves so.

I answer, No. For to refuse knowledge will damn as much as abusing it. This you may see in Prov. i. 23, ‘Ye fools’ (says Wisdom), ‘you that hate knowledge, turn, and I will pour my spirit upon you, and make known my words to you.’ Well, ver. 24, ‘they refused,’ and would none of his reproof ; therefore, says God, ‘I will laugh at your calamity,’ that is, I will have no pity, but instead of pity, God will laugh at you ; ‘and when your fear comes, I will not answer, because ye hated knowledge,’ ver. 29 ; so as this is as bad, there remains therefore no middle way of refuge to extricate thyself at, and avoid all this, no remedy but turning unto God ; otherwise thou canst not but be more miserable than other men. Yea, and

this must be done speedily also. For thou having knowledge, God is quicker in denying thee grace, and in giving thee up to a reprobate mind, than another man who is ignorant. He will wait upon another that knows not his will and ways, twenty, thirty, forty years, as he did upon the children of the Israelites that were born in the wilderness, and had not seen his wonders in Egypt, and at the Red Sea; but those that had, he soon sware against many of them, 'that they should never enter into his rest.' Christ comes as a 'swift witness' against those to whom the gospel is preached, Mal. iii. 5; he makes quick despatch of the treaty of grace with them. Therefore few that have knowledge are converted when they are old, or that lived long under the means. And therefore you that have knowledge are engaged to repent and to turn to God, and to bring your hearts to your knowledge, and that speedily also, or else your damnation will not only be more intolerable than others, but the sentence of it pass out more quickly against you. Therefore as Christ says, John xii. 36, 'Whilst you have the light, walk in it.' For that day of grace which is very clear and bright, is usually a short one. And though men may live many natural days after, and enjoy the common light of the sun, yet the day of grace and of gracious excitements to repent may be but a short one.