

such a danger. We answer, first, that if we sedulously observe all the known and certain laws under which we live, we shall not be wanting in reverence to the Law-giver by considering ourselves to be at liberty where we do not *know* of any obligation to the contrary, being always prepared to obey in all cases where the proper authority may intervene to determine the doubt. Secondly we have the highest authority for the safety of such a course, as will appear from the following examples: 1. Sinnich and the Jansenist Wendrock (Arnauld's assumed name) denied that it was lawful to follow even the most probable opinion in favour of liberty, and that doctrine was condemned by Alex. VIII. in prop. 3., 7 Dec. 1690. Hence we have the authority of the Church for following an *opinio probabilissima*, and thus exposing ourselves to the *danger* of materially violating the law. 2. The whole school of Probabiliorists, including the Jesuits Gonzalez and Antoine, the Dominicans Concina and Patuzzi, and a crowd of others, maintain that it is lawful to follow a more probable opinion, and thus expose ourselves to the *probable* danger of a material violation of the law; and this may be said to be allowed by the whole body of theologians, on the ground that to oblige man to obey the law in all doubtful cases would be to expose him to intolerable perplexity.

The certainty or uncertainty of the law the key of the question.

Now this consent of the Casuists of all the schools is irresistible authority, in favour of using our liberty in doubtful cases even though we thereby expose ourselves to the *probable* danger of materially violating the law. As to the shade of difference between the probable danger and the more probable danger, it would be infinitely more perplexing to oblige us to determine that. Where there is doubt, a clever theologian may easily make his side appear a little more probable. The only solid foundation of obligation is the certainty of the law. Indeed, as we have shewn, there is no room for Probabiliorism in the system of St. Alphonsus. There was obviously a plausible reason for Probabiliorism in those who held with Jeremy Taylor that it was lawful to conform the judgment to a probable opinion *directly*. In such a course there would be a moral discomfort in choosing the less probable in contradiction to a more probable opinion, even though one might think it lawful. But where liberty depends upon the absence of any certain obligation, it is evident that the whole question turns on the certainty or uncertainty of the law. At first sight it may seem to some of our readers that we go further than St. Alphonsus in our doctrine of Probabilism, but we think we have represented his principles exactly. The key to any difficulties which may be urged from some obscure passage in his works, we think to be this. In the entire course of his works, St. Alphonsus uniformly allows the use of a solidly probable opinion; but it must be remembered that whenever he says of an opinion that it is "*verior*" or "*tutior*" or "*longe probabilior*," he does not allow that the opposite opinion is solidly probable. Those who may wish to see this matter thoroughly discussed, and our view elaborately demonstrated, would do well to read Ballerini "*Dissert. de Moral. System. S. Alphonsi*," Romæ, 1863.