

due to St. Alphonsus. The first is that St. Alphonsus has gone far towards destroying the ground of dispute between Probabilists and Probabiliorists; for if the opinion in favour of liberty be sufficiently well founded to shew that the obligation is doubtful (and except it be so it is not truly probable), then the principle, "*Lex dubia non obligat*," evidently has its place, whether the contrary opinion be more or less probable. It may seem that there is something of a "vicious circle" in deducing the doubtfulness of the law from the opposite probability, and then estimating the sufficiency of the probability by the doubtfulness of the law. But in truth the foundation of the probable opinion lies in its intrinsic reason and extrinsic authority, and we refer to the law merely as it may sometimes help us to correct our estimate. Just as in practical astronomy, the observations regulate the clock but the clock is made use of to secure greater exactness in the observations. There is no vicious circle in either case. The second advantage is that a sound and moderate system of moral theology, equally free from laxity and rigour, has been widely diffused. The wise and moderate system of St. Alphonsus has now become generally accepted. The *quasi* approbation which his writings have received, while it does not oblige us to follow his opinion in all cases, yet warrants us in doing so, so that henceforward there will be much less cause for difference of opinion amongst Catholic Casuists. The author of the Tract on Casuistry indeed tells us that St. Alphonsus is accused of leaning too much to the side of laxity by Dr. Newman. But he has evidently mistaken the drift of Dr. Newman's words. In the passage from the Apologia, to which the author probably alludes, Dr. Newman argues against those with whom St. Alphonsus has the repute of being a lax moralist, and his object is to account for the accusation, and to defend the personal holiness and austerity of the saint. We assert confidently that Dr. Newman has never accused St. Alphonsus of leaning too much to the side of laxity. St. Alphonsus seems to have been raised up by God to stem the flood of Jansenistic rigorism with which the Church was threatened at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century, and to set a stamp on many opinions of eminent Casuists whose name and authority had been assailed by the unrelenting enemies of religion. The Jansenists had endeavoured to introduce Calvinism into the Church; in their dogmatic teaching they maintained that some of the commandments of God were impossible, and that Christ had not died for all men. With the true spirit of heresy they violently resisted the authority of the Holy See, and equivocated in their interpretation of the Pontifical decisions. In their moral theology, with great consistency, they assumed everywhere a subtle and hypocritical severity which rendered the sacraments inaccessible to repentant sinners; but they were detected and overthrown at all points. Their dogmatic teaching was declared heresy; and this, and their rigorism in casuistry, were condemned by Alexander VIII and other Popes.

Danger of a material violation of the Law.

It may be well to examine the only solid objection urged against Probabilism—that it exposes us to the danger of a material violation of the law, and that out of reverence to the Law-giver we should avoid