

The blind not to lead the blind.

Of course these considerations are suited only to persons capable of judging of the reasons and authorities for and against any obligation of which there is question; and that is chiefly the business of Casuists. As for the simple and ignorant, they must be guided in doubtful cases by others, by their Pastor, their Confessor, or their Superior, or by some prudent friend. St Thomas Aquinas (2a 2æ., q. 4. a. 8., ad. 2) says, "*aliquis parvæ scientiæ magis certificatur de eo quod audit ab aliquo scientifico quam de eo quod sibi secundum suam rationem videtur*," that is, "one of little knowledge is more certain of that which he hears from a well-informed person than of that which seems to him according to his own reason."

Direct and Reflex Probabilism.

We are now in a position to see how we can lay aside a *practical doubt*, and within the above-mentioned limits form our conscience by a practical and certain dictamen wherever we have a probable opinion in our favour. Thus; "Where there is a probable opinion in favour of liberty the obligation is doubtful, and therefore does not hold. Now "I have a probable opinion in favour of liberty in this case therefore "I am certainly free to act without sin." This is called "reflex probabilism," and it is distinguished from the "direct" probabilism, of which we have a good specimen in Jeremy Taylor, who maintains that in a speculative doubt we can take up and adopt as our own the probable opinion on either side, making it our own judgment by an act of the will. The principle of the reflex probabilism is "*Lex dubia non obligat*," a doubtful law does not oblige." The principle of the direct Probabilists was "*Qui probabiliter agit prudenter agit*:" he who (in doubtful cases) acts in conformity to a probable opinion acts prudently. St. Alphonsus, n. 55, asserts this latter principle to be false, because it is not sufficient for the formation of a certain dictamen of the conscience. With the greatest reverence for the wise and saintly author, we venture to think differently. Surely we can form our conscience to a certain dictamen in this way: "in such and such speculative doubts we are certainly at liberty to follow a probable opinion in favour of liberty; in this particular case I have a probable opinion, therefore I am certainly at liberty to act." Here is a certain practical dictamen. Moreover the reasons of Jeremy Taylor in favour of direct Probabilism have something in them, and they concur with those of eminent theologians. However, that is merely a question of the schools, and we adhere to the system of St. Alphonsus. Practically it comes to the same thing.

"Lex dubia non obligat" holds good both for Probabilists and Probabiliorists. St. Alphonsus and the Jansenists.

In contrasting the two systems of *direct* and *reflex* Probabilism we certainly recognize two great advantages to sound casuistry which are