

beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true or certainly false. *But to us Probability is the very guide of life.*"

Probabilism no invention of the Jesuits.

We have extracted these passages partly to give some notion of the older Anglican casuistry, and partly to show that what is called "*Direct Probabilism*" was not confined to the Jesuits, but was a general philosophical view, and in fact, as Voltaire said, "If Pascal had wished it, he could have found matter for his "*Provinciales*" in the writings of Casuists of the other schools; but his purpose was to assail the Jesuits, and he confined himself to them."

How a positive speculative doubt affects our liberty.

We shall now give another explanation of the matter, it being hardly necessary to say that we do not put forward the Anglican doctrine as our own; we claim to be heard and judged by our own statement. The question into which Probabilism chiefly enters is this: where there is a *positive speculative doubt* as to the existence of an obligation, how does it affect our liberty? All theologians agree that in a *practical* doubt about the lawfulness of any action we are bound, if we cannot resolve the doubt, to take the safest side. And the reason is clear. In a *practical doubt* the intellect is suspended between two opposite judgments; one, is the judgment that the act here and now to be done is unlawful; the other, that it is lawful. To act in this doubt is to act against the conscience, which apprehends the danger of sin—according to that, "*omne quod non ex fide est peccatum est.*" (Rom. xiv. 23). What is not done with a clear consciousness of being right is wrong. Our duty is in such cases to resolve the doubt, or, as it is commonly expressed, "to form our conscience" by the adoption, on prudently chosen grounds, of some practical dictamen which extricates us from *practical doubt*, though it may not, and perhaps cannot, solve the *speculative doubt*. For example, if one sees clearly that the doubt is not solidly founded, but is a mere unreasonable apprehension, he may discard it altogether by an act of his will; but if the speculative doubt (which always underlies the practical doubt) be *positive*, then it cannot be prudently discarded. It is in this case chiefly that probabilism comes in.

Opinions or Degrees of Probability.

In considering the motives in favour of either side in speculative doubts, we find that they have many shades or degrees of Probability, which qualify the opinions founded on them.

A *probable opinion* is said to be an opinion which is founded on so weighty a motive, whether intrinsic of reason or extrinsic of authority as to be capable of drawing to itself the assent of a prudent and