

“ He observes :—To prohibit the open, public and explicit
 “ denial of the popular religion of a country is a necessary
 “ measure to preserve the tranquility of a government. Of
 “ this no person in a Christian country can complain; for
 “ admitting him to be an infidel, he must acknowledge that no
 “ benefit can be derived from the subversion of a religion
 “ which enforces the purest morality. No society can tolerate
 “ a wilful and spiteful attempt to subvert its religion no
 “ more than it would break down its laws—a general, malic-
 “ ious, and deliberate intent to overthrow Christianity. This
 “ is the line of indication, where crime commences, and the
 “ offence becomes the subject of penal visitation. The species
 “ of offence may be classed under the following heads :—

I.—“ *Denying the Being and Providence of God.*

II.—“ *Contumelious* reproaches of Jesus Christ; profane and
 “ malevolent scoffing at the Scriptures or exposing any part
 “ of them to contempt and ridicule.

III.—“ *Certain immoralities* tending to subvert all religion
 “ and morality, which are the foundations of all governments.
 “ Without these restraints no free government could long
 “ exist. It is liberty run mad, to declaim against the punish-
 “ ment of these offences, or to assert that the punishment is
 “ hostile to the spirit and genius of our government. They are
 “ far from being true friends to liberty who support this doc-
 “ trine, and the promulgation of such opinions, and general re-
 “ ceipt of them among the people, would be sure forerunners
 “ of anarchy, and finally of despotism. Amidst the concurrent
 “ testimony of political and philosophical writers among the
 “ Pagans, in the most absolute state of Democratic freedom,
 “ the sentiments of Plutarch on this subject are too remark-
 “ able to be omitted. After reciting that the first and greatest
 “ care of the legislators of Rome, Athens, Lacedaemon, and
 “ Greece in general, was by instituting solemn supplications