

which he was censuring others, for suffering their relation of facts to be perverted, by an attachment to preconceived theories.*

Volney, in opposition to the sentiments of Rousseau, has endeavoured to sink the character of the savage, in the same proportion as that eccentric author sought to raise it. On the subject of the Indian religion especially, no one should be read with greater caution. He who could imagine that Christianity was only an astronomical allegory, and that the birth of our Saviour meant no more than that the sun had entered the constellation Virgo, can hardly be considered as perfectly sane, even when he treats on the religion of Heathens.† We need not be surprised, therefore, at the assertion, that the Indians have no regular system of religion; that each one employs the liberty allowed him of making a religion for himself; and that all the worship they know is offered to the authors of evil.‡ Never was there an

* See Robertson's America, book iv. §. vii.

† See Les Ruines, ou Meditations sur les Revolutions des Empires, par M. Volney. *Nouvelle édition, corrigée*, Paris, 1792, 8vo. chap. 22. p. 185. 221-4. In this work, Volney had the hardihood to maintain, not only that our Saviour was an allegorical personage, but that all religions, Heathen, Mahometan, and Jewish, as well as Christian, are in substance the same; that all have arisen from a literal interpretation of the figurative language of astronomers; and that the very idea of a God, sprung from a personification of the elements, and of the physical powers of the universe. At the sight of this monstrous creation of a disordered fancy, one cannot help exclaiming with Stillingfleet, "Oh what will not Atheists believe, rather than a Deity and Providence."

‡ Volney's View of the United States, ut supr. trans. by Brown, p. 416.