

of its various parts, whether in respect to situation, or magnitude, or figure—as the position of a large and luminous mass in the centre; and of the vastly smaller but opaque masses which circulated around it, but at such distances as not to interfere with each other; and of the still smaller secondary bodies which revolved about the planets: And we should include in this description the impulses in one direction, and nearly in one plane, given to the different moving bodies; and so regulated, as to secure the movement of each, in an orbit of small eccentricity. The dispositions of matter in the planetary system were fixed at the original setting up of the machine. The laws of matter were ordained for the working of the machine. The former, that is the dispositions, make up the framework, or what may be termed the apparatus of the system. The latter, that is the laws, uphold the performance of it.

11. Now the tendency of atheistical writers is to reason exclusively on the laws of matter, and to overlook its dispositions. Could all the beauties and benefits of the astronomical system be referred to the single law of gravitation, it would greatly reduce the strength of the argument for a designing cause. La Place, as if to fortify still more the atheism of such a speculation, endeavoured to demonstrate of this law—that, in respect of its being inversely proportional to the square of the distance from the centre, it is an essential property of matter. La Grange had previously established—that but for such a proportion, or by the deviation of a thousandth part from it, the planetary