

some attention on our part in order to understand it with proper clearness. One reason of this is, that it is a mode of operation altogether different from that in which we are able to make matter fulfil our designs. Man can construct exquisite machines, can call in vast powers, can form extensive combinations, in order to bring about results which he has in view. But in all this he is only taking advantage of laws of nature which already exist; he is applying to his use qualities which matter already possesses. Nor can he by any effort do more. He can establish no new law of nature which is not a result of the existing ones. He can invest matter with no new properties which are not modifications of its present attributes. His greatest advances in skill and power are made when he calls to his aid forces which before existed unemployed, or when he discovers so much of the habits of some of the elements as to be able to bend them to his purpose. He navigates the ocean by the assistance of the winds which he cannot raise or still: and even if we suppose him able to control the course of these, his yet unsubjected ministers, this could only be done by studying their characters, by learning more thoroughly the laws of air and heat and moisture. He cannot give the minutest portion of the atmosphere new relations, a new course of expansion, new laws of motion. But the Divine operations, on the other hand, include something much higher. They take in the establishment of the laws of the elements, as well as the combination of these laws and the determination of the distribution and quantity of the materials on which they shall produce their effect. We must conceive that the Supreme Power has ordained that air shall be rarefied, and water turned into vapour, by heat; no less than that he has combined air and water so as to sprinkle the earth with showers, and determined the quantity of heat and air and water, so that the showers shall be as beneficial as they are.

We may and must, therefore, in our conceptions