

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Physical Agency of the Deity.

1. WE are not to expect that physical investigation can enable us to conceive the manner in which God acts upon the members of the universe. The question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" must silence the boastings of science as well as the repinings of adversity. Indeed, science shows us, far more clearly than the conceptions of every day reason, at what an immeasurable distance we are from any faculty of conceiving *how* the universe, material and moral, is the work of the Deity. But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this;—we can perceive that events are brought about, not by insulated interpositions of divine power exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws. This, which is the view of the universe proper to science, whose office it is to search out these laws, is also the view which, throughout this work, we have endeavoured to keep present to the mind of the reader. We have attempted to show that it combines itself most readily and harmoniously with the doctrines of Natural Theology; that the arguments for those doctrines are strengthened, the difficulties which affect them removed, by keeping it steadily before us. We conceive, therefore, that the religious philosopher will do well to bear this conception in his mind. God is the author and governor of the universe through the laws which he has given to its parts, the properties which he has impressed upon its constituent elements; these laws and properties are, as we have already said, the instruments with which he works: the institution of such laws,