

The middle clause of the text, "Also he hath set the world in their heart," may appear to an English reader somewhat obscure, and therefore I shall pause for a moment to explain it. There is perhaps no term in our language exactly corresponding to what is rendered "the world." It does not mean the globe, the solid material world on which we tread; nor the pleasures which the world presents, as the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but it means the world regarded as a continuous and lengthened series of events stretching, on the one side, back to the very commencement of time, and on the other, forward without limit. It means, if I may so express myself, the world of divine dispensation—the world of providential evolution. This being understood, the clause, "Also he hath set the world in their heart," signifies that man has been endowed by God with a natural propensity to inquire into the mysteries of providence. That person must have a strange mind who does not often ponder the things which have been and the things which must be. Standing upon the side of the stream of time, we cast our eyes upwards and ask, from what fountains have its waters flowed? And at the same time we cast our eyes downwards and ask, whither are they flowing? A brute thinks but of the passing moment; but God has given to us "thoughts that wander through eternity,"—wander alike through the world of the past and the world of the future.

And yet this propensity to investigate the ways of God is not such that even the most diligent exercise of it can lead to a perfect comprehension of them on our part. This is the meaning of the last clause of the verse, "So that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." The seaman's line can sound the ocean along its shores; but as he stretches out from land, he soon gets into depths whose bottom no plummet ever