A discourse on the text.

"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." II Cor. IV: 3

In the estimate to be formed in regard to the Revelation which God has made to us, a due discrimination is to be preserved between what is unquestionably mysterious and beyond our mental grasp, and what is merely obscure to us through our own indisposition to its study, our inability to appreciate it. The former is, in its nature unfathomable, and not so because one man's intellect is less vigorous than another's, but the difficulties
Bible Mysteries

which involve are precisely of such a character as to be solved by no vigor of intellect however mighty, or by no process of investigation however patient, profound, and persevering. They are mysteries, because they are "the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God." We do meet such obscurities in the course of our meditations upon the plan of Divine Revelation. Nor do we regard the objection raised against the Word of God on the score of its mysteries as anything more than a childish quibble, the mere
futile effort of Infidelity to shake off the pressing conviction of the
truth of Revelation, which has
taken fast hold upon my conscience.
For whatever emanates from God
must partake to some extent of
His own character, and as He is
beyond our capacity to search out,
we naturally expect to find some
things in His revelations which
would be also beyond the grasp
of the most gigantic intellect. And
we do not object to this state of
things; for were it otherwise, it
would de-throne God and destroy
our reverence for His character.
Since in the language of Dr. Spencer,

"A comprehensible God is no
God at all, for what is comprehensible is not infinite."

This is one class of subjects which are set forth in Scripture, concerning which it may be said

they are hid from all, not from those "that are lost," only, but from all finite minds. But

there are many points of immense weight and importance which have no intrinsic mystery, no inherent obscurity about them which are presented for our consideration in the Word of God.
about which men, the majority of men, affect to find such darkness and insolvably mysterious, that to them at least these matters seem to be hidden in the gloom of moral midnight. Now as we gave the reason why the former class of mysteries were inscrutable, so we say of this class, that they owe their apparently mysterious character to nothing at all in their nature inherently, but to the fact that men will not turn their thoughts with earnest intensity upon them, and hence the plainest representations of
These matters are so entirely disregarded by them as to make it a necessary consequence that they fail properly to appreciate them. Hence of course they are hid from them. There is no occasion for this. I conceive that this is what the Apostle means to convey in the announcement of the whole verse. Those who complain that there is an unintelligible mystery in our Gospel, notwithstanding that in presenting it, we have not handled the word of God deceitfully, nor walked in craftiness but by manifestation of the truth.
commended ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Know ye that "if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

And who are they? A momentous question! In its answer are included the immense majority of the human race. All over the Earth are found those who are lost, and to whom "the Gospel is hid." I know you will readily admit that in those dark and dreary regions of the Earth where the light of the blessed Gospel has never yet been kindled there the people
that sit in that region and shadow of death, are lost and ruined. They are involved in ignorance, immersed in superstition, degraded in idolatry, and sunk in barbarism, for "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." To these wretched beings "the Sun of Righteousness" has never yet arisen "with healing in his beams," and in their fearfully degraded condition it is obviously true that to them that are thus lost the Gospel is hid. They have no knowledge of its nature
or its Author, of its provisions, or of its precious and unspeakable importance to their soul's eternal interests. And hence not only its mysteries, but everything connected with it remotely or more nearly is hidden and unknown to them.

We may add, that it is the experience of missionaries who have been laboring for years to bring the Gospel to bear upon them in their benighted condition, that the mind of a heathen idolater covered over with this thick veil of previously implanted superstition, seems almost proof against
any impression which they strive to produce. And now what is true of these Heathen Idolaters is found verified in many a mournful instance, in thousands of cases, in this Christian land. Change the name of the cause from ignorance & Superstition to "Pride, Prejudice and ungodly lusts," and you will find here in our very midst those upon whose hearts rests a thick impenetrable veil, that effectually hides the Gospel from them. It is of special importance to bear constantly in mind that the veil
is not upon their Gospel. That is unveiled, thanks to God in this glorious Protestant Land, where we have an open Bible and a free Press, and no State dare as yet enact a Law forbidding the people to obey the Sacred mandate of Jesus Christ, to "Search the Scriptures." No veil is on the Gospel. But the veil is on the hearts of men themselves. And worst and most unpromising feature of all, men are drawing its folds more and more closely over their hearts, that the Gospel may be more effectually hid. Let
us look into the manner of the operation of these causes and endeavor to ascertain how it is that Pride prevents the access of the Gospel to the heart. And I remark that this constitutes one of the most formidable barriers to the success of the Spirit of God in his operations upon the heart. It was in full view of this fact that our Savior so often warned his disciples against it. "Whosoever is ashamed of me and my words in this wicked and adulterous generation of men will I also be ashamed when I come with the
glory of my Father and His Holy Angels.

"Blessed is he whosoever shall be ashamed of me." When Christ made His appearance upon the Earth, so humble in His origin, and when His condition was so lowly and His associates were so mean in the esteem of the World, and more especially when He preached doctrines so humiliating to the Pride of the human heart, it was so revolting to the haughty spirits of the Jews that they rejected Him, and all His instructions and refused to receive Him as the Messianic Saviour.
persecuted, crucified & slew him as a Malefactor. I have not a doubt that the offended pride of the Nation more than any other cause led to this fearful catastrophe. And still we find men who are swayed by the same Spirit, and who shew most clearly by their conduct that had they lived in that age, had they been Jews, they would have imbrued their hands in the precious blood of this humble Jesus of Nazareth. And nothing proves this more conclusively than their rejection
with so much bitterness, the doctrines of the Gospel. The grand funda-
mental depravity of human nature is among those points which are held in the utmost desestation and abhorrence by the mass of unsanctified men. And I pray you to bear in mind that this is hateful most of all to the Pride of the human heart. It is this which makes it hateful. The heart loves to cherish the delusion, it is flattering that there is something good and praiseworthy in itself. And there is no thing so objectionable to the in
penitent man as to preach to him that he is by nature corrupt alienated from the Life of God. He revolts at it be pushed away the shoulder, he stops the ear, he refuses to hear it. And in many cases, the experience of men would be that the greater efforts made to preach the doctrine and to convince men of its truth, the greater resistance is offered to it. And yet this doctrine rejected and disbelieved, men must be lost eternally. I would that men could understand that this is true.
That the Salvation of the Soul is intimately connected with a Knowledge and belief of the doctrine of the total Depravity of human Nature. For then it would occupy that position in the Theological Creed to which its vast importance entitles it. But alas! Such is the Pride of the human heart that it is one of the parts of our Gospel which seems to be "hid" from the men of the world. But if the nature of man be not radically corrupt and depraved why does the Bible tell us that "the imagination of the heart of man is only evil and
continually. "That God looked upon the Earth, and behold it was corrupt? Why does God say of man "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean hortone. What is man that he should be clean? Or he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Why did David exclaim in the bitterness of his agony and remorse "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my Mother conceive me"? Why does God say "The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they be born—tis prating? And what means the Apostle when he tells the Ephesians "Wicked
by nature the children of wrath, even as others? I can understand nothing at all from these passages except that the Bible teaches that the nature of Man is totally and radically depraved. And I would ask you what other principle are we to explain the universal prevalence of wickedness all over the Earth, if not that there is in the heart an ever-welling fountain of corruption which every man brings into Life with him? If, as some teach, the moral character of every human being is like a pure unsullied sheet of paper, at his birth, upon which...
Each man with his own hand writes his own character and destiny; how comes it to pass, that all invariably without exception have written in the same dark and gloomy colors the character he is to bear through life? Upon what principle is it to be accounted for, that all are wicked and that from the earliest demonstrations of the disposition? Why is the world desolate by war, society broken up by envy, malignity, hatred, wrath, strife and variance? Why is “man a wolf to man?” I account for...
it on the scriptural doctrine of the radical universal depravity of the human heart. And I have not a doubt that were all the restraints of God's Providential Govt withdrawn such would be the fierceness of its course and the violence of its exhibitions that the Earth would become a Lazar house of misery and a Pandemonium for the residence of the Spirits of Darkness. But present this doctrine to be rec'd by men, the Pride of the Human heart (only one of the developments of
its native depravity as at once aroused, and the doctrine is denounced as a slander upon human nature. And in many cases it is best to restrain argument with such cases. The surest way to secure conviction upon the mind is to leave them to their own experience. And the word of God and the experience of men on this subject is, that one of the first effects produced upon the mind by the Holy Spirit is to enlighten the seeking soul in the knowledge of its own
deep deplorable depravity. Until this conviction is fastened upon the heart, not one step can be taken in the progress of the soul towards its salvation. We must know it. We must feel it. We will feel it. The very difficulties which arise in the pathway of the ignis are all traceable to this fundamental cause. Hence until its existence is ascertained, it believed no step will be taken aright. It is in consequence of the pride of the heart that the Gospel is his to them that are lost.
And no man need ever expect to have the ear of God bent in listening to the condescension and graciousness while he comes to the Throne of Grace, under the impression that in him "That is in his flesh there dwelleth any good thing" we are told, "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Surely he scorneth the scorners, but he giveth grace unto the lowly." "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The Gospel will remain hidden effectively to you until Pride is subdued.
But Pride rejects another doctrine which is of vital importance to the Sinner, (i.e.) the Sinner's inability. It is not to be wondered at that men in their unregenerate state are opposed to this doctrine since we find even Ministers of the Gospel, who in dilating upon human responsibility dwell with so much delight upon the exalted faculties with which men are endowed; hence deduce the obligation to serve God, by turning to Him of their own will and by their own power. This is the doctrine that is so sweet to the unregenerate.
hence when the true doctrine is presented to them, when men are told that "By the original corruption of our nature, we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good" it is the most natural of all impulses to reject the doctrine. It cuts to the roots of all pride and self-esteem. It brings down all lofty conceptions of self, and subjects the sinner to the most entire dependence upon God as his only Helper. No natural heart can receive this doctrine with cordiality. Let a Gospel sermon be based upon
and fairly honestly develop the text.

"No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him." Let a man preach upon the other declaration of St. "Without me ye can do nothing!" And

erase

the heart rejects it at once. This Gospel is hid from those who are costly a time lost. It requires too hard a sacrifice for them to yield up the cherished thought that there is something that they can do, that will not only effect their salvation but by which they can meritoriously purchase the favor of God. This in the language
of a modern Divine is what they call their "favorite doctrine of ability"—but which is on the contrary a "favorite falsehood." Preach to them if you will of their obligation to repent, their duty to be Xtrants, tell them "that there is much to do that they must do freely and voluntarily, and then add to this, that their help is in God, that they are undone and dependent sinners to be saved if saved at all by grace through Jesus Christ." And this is the hardest thing to receive. They cannot understand it. They do not believe it."
is hid from them through the influence of the Pride of the heart. The term "Lost" is well applied to those from whom our Gospel is thus "hid." They are indeed lost to all proper estimate of their own true interest and happiness. They are lost to all clear understanding of the great truths of the Gospel, and all idea of the Way of Life into the scheme of Redemption. They are like Travellers who have wandered in a wilderness.
ness of confusion, "where wilds
immeasurably spread seem
lengthening as they go, "they
become finally lost utterly
and irretrievably. So the man
to whom this Gospel is hid
was so long been treading
the devious paths of worldly
wisdom & worldly enjoyment
that his mind is totally in-
volved in confusion, and
is so completely lost. "Stumbling
over the dark mountains
of perdition," that he has no
even a correct idea as to
the direction of the way. That
leads to life eternal. And unless a Heavenly Light be shed upon his pathway, and the Holy Spirit the Divine Guide be sent to him in his lost condition, his confusion and perplexity will only deepen and darken until he finally reach the precipice of Despair over which he will sink into the bottomless Cordition. How sad the reflection that man in this awfully lost condition are so lost also to their danger! "Arise, oh Sleeper, arise and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee that Thou perish not!"
Nor is Pride the only influence that casts a veil upon the heart; but
Prejudice also hides the Gospel from those who are lost. A baleful influence is it that prevents a man from examining for himself a truth of vital importance to him, and merely because he has conceived improper views of it from false representations, chooses to reject it as false and hateful. This influence Prejudice exerts. Many of the doctrines of the Gospel have been caricatured and travestied so absurdly as to present them in any other
than their true light. They have been clad in such repulsive garb as to drive men away even from their slightest investigation. In proof that it is the influence of prejudice which thus prevents men from embracing these truths we need only reflect that very frequently when the self-same doctrines are presented fairly and these men have an opportunity of considering them in their true light all objection vanishes at once and they see their entire reasonableness and consistency. And furthermore, it is
a well known fact that certain great doctrines of the Gospel have had certain distinctive names affixed to them, by which they are known and such objectionable features have been supposed without examination to belong to these doctrines, that utterance of the very names by which they are known, is sufficient to arouse the opposition that bred of many men. And yet present the substance of these doctrines conceal the name, or call them by some other name and no objection whatever is raised but the doctrines are admitted and received.
save by attributing it to Prejudice
And I know not how else, to account
for a phenomenon which is not
infrequently exhibited by men
who in their unregenerate condi-
tion reject these doctrines.
and yet when a radical change
has been wrought in their na-
tures by the regenerating influ-
ence of the Holy Spirit, the
same doctrines are insensibly
embraced as those most per-
fectedly natural and consistent
with the System of Divine
Truth, and the nature of
man and the exigencies
of the Soul. They have been trained
and educated in the hatred of these doctrines and no amount of argument however profound and unanswerable will ever produce in their minds a conviction of their falsity. But it has been found in more cases than one that if left to the influences of the Holy Spirit— if they ever are regenerated at all,— among the very first doctrines received and embraced by them are these once so hateful. The elements of this form of prejudice are ignorance early.
education, and intellectual pride. They are ignorant of the true nature of the Gospel; hence form incorrect notions in regard to it. They are trained from early youth to regard the Gospel with some of its parts, with abhorrence and this all barriers seems one of the most difficult barriers of all to overcome.

And many men having conceived the idea that they are possessed of a most exalted intellect, refuse to receive any doctrine which they cannot comprehend. And as there are many things...
in the Gospel hard to be understood and which require a humble and docile disposition in order to their being properly understood, they refuse to receive them as of old. These are to the one set "a stumbling-block," to another "foolishness." The immediate inevitable inseparable effect of Prejudice are that it contracts the views, it hardens the heart, it blinds the understanding and congeals the genial flow of social affections of men. It is not to be wondered at then, that when thus lost to
"whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, our "Gospel is hid." I could particularize, but deem it best most expedient to leave the subject in its mere outline so that each may have as wide a margin as possible for a personal application to his own case. With one remark I pass from this topic.

Whatever may be the form in which Prejudice operates to produce its dreadful effect upon the mind, one thing is certain, that if the veil is
draws over the mental vision be not removed while it surely proves them in one sense to be lost & ruined now, it ultimately will terminate in irretrievable loss of the soul.

But I have assigned, as a cause why the Gospel is hid, the dominion of some ungodly lust. The operation of this cause differs somewhat from that of the two former in that along with the existence and while cherishing some lust rife in its nature, there may be some considerable intell-
actual Light. Much of the Theory of the Gospel may be known, there are times when the facts that the heart is depraved, that we must be born again, that God is angry. Heaven shut, hell open for the sinner, are far from being hid from the man that is lost. And in the time of some dire extremity when he is brought nigh to the eternal world and the tribunal of Eternal Justice he sees enough to realize in some good his imminent peril. But alas! when the clouds
of terror are dispersed, and the things of this goodly Earth once more array themselves in all their wonted smiling & deceitful garb. Then he forgets his danger, and the veil is again drawn over his hardened heart and the Gospel is effectually hid from him. The experience of the man of God furnishes him with melancholy instances of the influence of such lusts over men, in keeping men from a correct appreciation of the blessings of the Gospel.
It is recorded of one man that he called upon his Pastor one evening in the greatest anxiety of mind. He had become suddenly alarmed on account of his condition as a sinner. His feelings quite overcame him. He went to the man. He was an intelligent, well-educated man, who had seen much of the world, and evidently possessed a quick and ready mind. He had a good degree of intellectual knowledge on the subject of religion. He was evidently a man of sound understanding.

He continued to call on his Pastor for months, but he attained no
peace of mind—no hope in Christ.
He appeared from the first so earnestly attended all the religious services so punctually and in all respects manifested so much determination that the confident expectation was indulged that he would become a Christian. But he continued in much the same mind, and not even a conjecture could be formed why a man who appeared to know the truths of the Gospel so well and feel them so deeply should not make some progress in his religious attempts.
A few weeks after this his Pastor saw him in such company as to suggest to his mind the thought that he might possibly be addicted to the use of intoxicating drinks. On inquiring he found this to be so. The man was told of this, affectionately by his Pastor, who warned that it was a device of Satan to hide the blessed hope of the Gospel from him. He at first acknowledged the fact, but did not believe it injurious afterwards promised to quit but did not; he kept on; he lost all regard for religion; he forsook the Church, and is for aught that
it known to the contrary is still an irreligious man." Now this is but an illustration of the way in which the cherishing of sinful lust blinds the mind to the blessings of the Gospel. And this is but one lust. We celebrate once more. Mr. Nettleton is said to have remarked: "If a hard drinking man gets a hope, it will be likely to be a false hope!"

I care not what may be the name or character of the reigning lust—the love of the world—in any of its forms, will just as effectually as drinking, drown men hide...
the Gospel from the hapless subject. I will venture to conclude what I have to say on this subject, by repeating the remark, that there is no veil on the Gospel. Oh no! Praise be God. In this Land where diabolical hand of Ecclesiastical Tyranny clave lay its ruthless polluted grasp upon the pure Gospel, here it is open & uncovered, the may read that runs: 'The wayfarer may who a foot need not err therein.' Ten thousand July.
through this broad land of civil & Religious liberty, sabbath after sabbath are holding it forth in its purity, brightness, simplicity & truthfulness; all are welcome to read & understand. Over 40 million of copies of the blessed Volume containing ‘our Gospel’ have been issued since 1804. How then can it be hid? It is not hid! There is no veil upon it. And so plain and simple and clear in its heavenly instructions that we may well conclude, ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.’