No. 131.

On the parable of Dives and Lazarus.
Luke xvi, 31. — "And he said unto him, if they
hear not Moses & the prophets, neither will they be
persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

We are now to attend to the instruction afforded by
the sequel of the parable of the rich man & Lazarus.

We have considered the first part of this instructive,
impressive, & solemn representation; & have held up
the views of the future condition of man, as this par-
able, interpreted by the rules of right reason, pre-
sents. We left the rich man with the answer of Ab-
raham to his supplicating petition, giving him the aw-
ful assurance, that his sufferings were the justifica-
tion of the character he had formed on earth,
that he was separated by a wide gulf from that state.
my father's house; for I have five brethren, that the man听说 שְׂכָרָה יְהוֹסָף יָכֹד אֶת־הַלְּאָדָם. The man said, "I will go to my master." And he went on his way. And when the man saw the woman, she said, "I am his wife.""}

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Do not now, yet at some time, you will think of the
women of your children hanging on to that as a
trumpet on the heels of vice. Are you a friend? Remember, that
your influence may be made to have some effect, as the
removing whether the path of those with whom you
associate, shall determine to finally and for ever leave them. You
may lead others to heaven or to hell. Be it then your
costly care that it may not be your fate, to rich in
own of heart, like the rich man, that pays brethren not come to your place of torment. And what reply did
Abraham make to his request? He earth made him, they
have Moses, the prophets, but them hear them? i.e. there
is no need that he should be sent to from this world back
to earth to warn your brethren: they have already the
means of warning and instruction; they have Moses, the prophets, the
dead. Things of from these, they may learn their duties or
dangers. 
With this reply, however, the rich man seems not
satisfied. His deep anxiety for his friends urges him to
refrain, may I say either. That if one were unto them from
the dead, they would repent; i.e. although they were

writings should have no effect, yet the sudden
appearance produced by the appearance of a messenger
from the regions of the dead would hold them back from
that career of iniquity. If they would pause a moment. To this
other I first pass the conclusion, by saying, if they would
Moses, the prophets, not only in they forever made, things
for the dead. By this we are to understand him
to mean, that if the evidence of the truth and existence of
religion, or they already possessed, were not on sufficient
its convince them, there would be little hope that they
would be permanently affected by an event so extraordinary.

a circumstance, as the appearance of a messenger from
the dead, if their minds were so obdurate, that they
could resist the former; they would in all probability
resist the latter. They, who are not disposed to receive
the truth on proper sufficient evidence, will hardly
receive it, even if it be made an object of their desire.

Such is the principle stated in the text, a principle
which I have endeavored to confirm by illustration. When a
man was represented as saying, that if they heard the voice of the
they would not believe, though in should arise from the dead.
ally in our minds, yet some extraordinary influences won't persuade us at once? Perhaps everyone has at some
time or other wished, that the spirit of some departed friend would return to the bank of evidence, rekindle the cor-

The same eye, which sees objects plainly through

light. But the means of our assertion is not intended to

voice a fact. A spirit of inquiry, no that dispenses with

its fallacy, no that is constant in demanding mere evidence, but

be, we are now to understand it is intended to mean, that

no, wherefore have we not found them in broad daylight

will still complain that they are left in darkness? It

is a subject, especially on religious subjects, to see how

more evidence of a better proof, than the whole basis of nature, can supply. If we are not able to think that

truth is what may be before us, less in evidence to be

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time of course must be convinced by a greater. This would

the law, if ever we are to be satisfied with partial evidence. The same eye, which sees objects plainly through

day cannot be able to see them in the dimness of twin-

light. But the means of our assertion is not intended to

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In which we stand to him, giving thanks for the knowledge of the promises of the divine love, in returning to our souls the faith the revelation seems beyond the grace. And thus all that we ought to know is, if we are not satisfied with this, more would not satisfy us, if we had it. Let us consider some of the reasons, among which is probable that we reject the public revelation from God. There is no little ground for expecting that we should be convinced, by means from the dead, of the existence of extraordinary phenomena of Providence.

1. If such signals of supernatural events were to become common, they would lose their effect, if regarded with any little degree of any emotion. If messages from the dead, for instance, were sent to every man, to remove his doubt, as fast as they arise in his mind, he would soon learn to listen to the message, as soon as it might be, with indifference. And unless we suppose one has to common ordinary, we have no right to expect them at all. So it is certainly unreasonable, that the most imminent warnings should expire this, as a peculiar favor or privilege to themselves, that God should not do as much for others, who have observed it more, as would phy-
preservative thing to see a man die solemnly take his last leave of the world. He perhaps will speak of the other world, as if he were just come from it, rather than going to it; he will severely condemn himself for the ills of his life; with what earnestness will he wish that he had lived better and done good more sincerely, but seriously will he resolve upon a better life, if God would be pleased to raise him up a second time. With what zeal of eagerness will he endeavor to hasten his next life, as the only thing that will administer comfort to them when they come to this condition? Such scenes as these have a tendency to cause the attention, and interest the feelings of spectators for the time; but when soon is their efficacy lost, how soon do their minds, like those plunged by the heel of the vessel, close up again and leave no trace of what has passed over it. We suppose for a moment that apparitions from the dead were as common as it is for men to die; we may not reasonably presume that the discourses of dead men living, if these were going on, they arose from the dead, would have much the same effects in the generality of mankind. Would they not be equally unchecked by transient? Would not the same thing happen as does with regard to other subjects, would not familiarity breed contempt? Undoubtedly such would be the case, as the effects of these supernatural appearances and in time probably be even much less than those of the common and published revelation of the will of God in the Scripture.

It is reasonable to presume that if we are not satisfied with proper sufficient evidence, as cannot but be convinced by any wonderful appearances, because the nature of mind, not only causes us to doubt of their respect in the one case, will also to the other. The effect in a sound mind, the mind, depends frequently quite as much on the state of the heart, as on that of the intellect. We are not convinced, because we do not wish to be convinced. Passing prejudices and vices have defeated more arguments than any clear reasoning or fair dealing. In any affair whatsoever, if men are purposely determined to give no attention to, or not to be guided by the evidence of things, it makes no difference whether the evidence be smaller or greater, as to which his eyes it makes no dif-
fore he be surrounded by midnight darkness by the brightness of noonday, as in neither case will he distinguish objects. Any one who knows what beauty of interest in nature man and are will hope more from making the heart battle than from presenting one's self. The good proofs have been already affixed. Light is come into the word, says our Saviour; men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, lest his deeds be reproved. Thus it is men reject the doctrines and truths of the holy scriptures, not because they have insufficient reason to doubt of their divine authority, but because they are unwilling to be governed by them. To confirm they live to the laws and practices of that book. For the minds of men have great influence on their understandings, to make an act easy or difficult; if as many are set to that act, and they publish it to the world, so they are very prone to believe anything. Whereby, if the minds of men are confirmed in the minds of others, it would be no want of evidence. Though for me to increase proof, and bring multiplied argument upon argument, I think in the understanding were to lose down, before an acknowledge its force, will the art of the world probably would hold out in obstinate resistance of bold frame to all efforts at conviction. If I suppose a man to be in this situation, suppose him to have a heart set against the love of the truth, deprived by all the laws and rules of reason, one of passion force, will seeking for arguments to defend. Can one of this career, rather than theSuch one, would do, against the resistance of the man. If he rejects the evidences, his religion afforded by the very process of reason, is there any probability that and the degree of his belief would compel him to believe, if somepfy of the subject would not be such. If any one of the dead should arise, would his mind think you, even that he who should arise? Would not the same passions of intense force, with which he is taught to despise the light of truth, insist on the passage to its entrance, still be at work, urge him to believe what he has no inclination to believe? Would he agree any more credence to the messages from the unseen world, the he who gave to admit messages of higher association of God's will? There is surely in the heart; probability that, as would We would violate is slighter the one with spirit as much.
sufferings & dangers which return to their former
bad habits & vile propensities. Though one rose from the
dead, may though, they almost arose from the dead, then
their effect is owing much more to some casual excitement
of the passions, than to any new or stronger evidence afforded
by the truth of reality of religion. In general, we may safely
calculate that he whose prejudices bind him from be-
lieving Moses, the prophets, and, in account of the same
prejudices, Moses, will be persuaded though one rose from the
dead.
5. We have the testimony of history & experience to show
how in fact extraordinary events are to convince & prevail
over the minds of strong passion. Consider for example
what effect the predictions of the Book of Deuteronomy have
produced. Has it not certainly been a transient & superficial
effect. They have too often been like the last distant
dear, our minds forgotten; if they have excited atten-
tion, for partial & inadequate has been their evidence. This
is illustrated in the history of individuals of education. It
is not uncommon to see men after death, affecting severe
cases average, as the other. I do not deny that, in den-
generally extraordinary impressions have sometimes moved the
heart, where the common means of conviction have failed. But
these instances are all rare. Even when they occur, their effect
is owing much more to some casual excitement of the passions,
than to any new or stronger evidence afforded by the truth of
the reality of religion. In general, we may safely calculate
that he whose prejudices bind him from believing Moses, the
prophets, and, in account of the same prejudices, Moses, will
be persuaded though one rose from the dead.
himsfelf came forth from the grave and appeared unto thousands, showed himself alive by many infallible signs, not the great majority of his countrymen seeming to have noticed or remembered. Since then history's experience does, that men may have signs of wonder and at the same time the eyes of the people will be sealed against conviction so as to yield their heart to the truth of God, are we not authorized to conclude in the language of Abraham, that if they had not Moses the prophet, we, with all devotion to the service and means of conviction, not God's affairs, they would not be persuaded, though we arise from the dead, could not be spoken to again, even by signals & supernatural events to receive the truths of religion, taken from those who have it to pass on.

These, therefore, are some of the causes why man would not be persuaded though we arise from the dead. Those who say that, because we have no right to reason, it is as if it were continually asking for more and more evidence, when that evidence already have is sufficient, if rightly understood, to lead us to the knowledge of all important truths, that is the essence of salvation. Let us from the view we have taken be in

struck to use with diligence the light and truth has so mercy afforded us for, knowing of doing harm, instead of clamorously demanding more, with such feeling that if we had that more we should not be satisfied, Jn 11:25, "the golden keys of hope are forever thrown down at the throne of our existence, is health at any moment to be cut out? A little it to be out contamination, that we have mastered these precious moments, whom can never return, in idly asking ye what if we had it, we may not improve, let us hear Moses if the prophets of them or shall not want one to rise from the dead to persuade us to believe.

We have therefore, only been employed in considering the parallel of the rich man & Lazarus. It is full of the same surprise and instruction. It teaches us how different may be the future from the present condition of men. The rich man in this world, beset on the oneness of prosperity, so prospered in the exercise of wealth, that it could not be denied, of the wealth of the wealth, had been to his breast, of the only good city he had brought with him was the character need.
formed, that all those who do pursue it so, must constitute his hell, with all its dreadful consequences of sin, with all its indulgences and every kind of lust. On the other hand, the beggar, though despised as an outcast in earth, was welcomed to the joys of heaven, the mansions of virtue, in the bosom of Abraham. Who has, perhaps, not rather been the poor man's road to heaven at least than the rich man's brink to hell? Let us then reflect that the hours we spend on earth are appointed by innumerable and immeasurable consequences;—time is burying us away, let us gather in its opium of light, these treasures shall all your dearest, more valuable through eternity—cultivate the love, practice of virtue, of true virtue, such as you find in the life, in the character of Jesus;—for that is the pathway to heaven.—Bethink yourself, from you all evil propensities, sins, affects of satanic force in all its forms of temptation, for they are the pathway to hell.

Dec. 1824.
At home, Dec. 30th, 1821. Freeman.