

**LETTERS TO THE REV.
WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D.D.,
ON THE EXISTENCE AND
AGENCY OF FALLEN SPIRITS**

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Letters to the Rev. William E. Channing, D.D., on the Existence and Agency of Fallen Spirits by
Canonicus

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REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D.

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OF

FALLEN SPIRITS.

BY CANONICUS.

No demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it
is true.—OSWALDOWORTH.

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1828.

1977

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS.....TO WIT:

District Clerk's Office.

BE it remembered, that on the twenty third day of October, A. D. 1828, in the fifty third Year of the Independence of the United States of America, THOMPSON R. MARVIN, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the Words following, to wit:

Letters to the Rev. William E. Channing, D. D. on the existence and agency of Fallen Spirits. By Canonius. No demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it is true.—Chillingworth.

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS, { Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.

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LETTER I.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

THE present is a day of free inquiry. Our creed cannot now rest on authority, but on argument. The subject about to be examined, which constitutes one article in "the popular creed," you will, doubtless, think of importance, of great importance, if the view here taken be correct; and even if this view be erroneous, it is surely important to disabuse the public mind of an error so long and so generally prevalent.

But you will ask, "Why are these letters addressed to me?" The question is a fair one, and shall have a frank answer. Your high standing in this community, your acknowledged talents, your various learning, your cultivated taste and extended influence, point you out as the proper person to be addressed, that any misstatement of facts or fallacy of reasoning may at once authorise and invite from your able pen prompt and certain refutation. Another motive, I am free to state, is the influence of your name in arresting attention and inviting inquiry. The simple fact, however, that you have long been known as an intelligent and influential advocate of Unitarianism, would of itself justify the course I have taken. To whom could I so appropriately address a series of Letters, controverting the opinions of Unitarians on an important subject, as to the most influential of the Unitarian clergy? Another reason, however, for this course will soon be

apparent, which, if well grounded, will not only justify, but render imperative the selection of Dr. Channing as the individual to be addressed.

Without further preface, I shall proceed to a consideration of the subject which is now to be discussed. I am about to present a simply scriptural argument *in proof of the existence of a mighty fallen Spirit, called Devil or Satan; and of his agency and influence in this world.* The subject thus presented is uncommon, and will, no doubt, with many, be unwelcome and unpopular. But you, my dear sir, and the writer, together with his Unitarian and Orthodox readers, will all agree in this, that the uncommonness or unpopularity of the views presented, either singly or combined, will afford no proof, nor presumption even, that they are untrue. The truth or falsity of our religious views must be decided by another standard than popular opinion. "To the law and to the testimony," is our ultimate, and on this subject, our only appeal. The scriptures, fairly interpreted, are the only legitimate source of evidence to which the nature of the subject admits of an appeal. On a subject relating to the invisible world, its existences and influences, the Lord from heaven—the divine teacher, and those illuminated by his Spirit, are the only admissible, because the only competent witnesses. We wish to know what the Lord Jesus, and John, and Peter, and Paul believed and taught; not what Plato or Cicero imagined, or Farmer or Edwards asserted. Quit the scriptures, and "shadows, clouds, and darkness" envelope at once all our speculations, not only on the immortality of the soul, but on all questions relating to immaterial and spiritual existences. We shall see, however, as we proceed, that reason does teach and can teach nothing contrary to the declarations of inspired wisdom, relative to the beings and influences of the unseen world.

I assume at the outset of this discussion what you, doubtless, will readily grant, that you give, and acknowledge yourself bound to give, implicit credence to what the Bible plainly declares,—declares not in a solitary, isolated, doubtful text, or in a few scattered, uncertain passages, but plainly, repeatedly, explicitly. I shall omit, on the immediate subject of these Letters, all arguments from the Old Testament, not because that was a revelation “adapted to the infancy of our race,” for “all scripture,” an inspired apostle, referring to these very books, says, “was given by inspiration of God,” who surely would not deceive in the *infancy* any more than in the *manhood* of our race, (if such terms have any meaning;) but because the Saviour and his apostles have more fully revealed the fact of diabolical existence and agency, and thus authenticated previous revelations, rendering “assurance doubly sure.”

Before we proceed farther, it will be necessary to prepare the way for the discussion, by a statement of those views, which to the writer appear alike unscriptural and untrue. Whether they are so or not, is the question at issue. Unitarian views on the existence and influence of evil spirits, have recently been more fully developed, I believe, in this country, than heretofore. The following extract from a communication in the Christian Register for December 22, 1827, gives us to understand, at least, what Unitarians do not believe on this subject. It is part of a review of Dr. Beecher’s missionary sermon, and is all that relates to this topic. “The sermon departs from the true missionary spirit, in making *erroneous representations of religion*. It asserts, as an undeniable fact revealed in the scriptures, the notion which was grafted upon the purity of the Jewish faith from the fictions of oriental mythology, that the world is under the dominion of a presiding spirit, who divides the empire with the