

is this august personage, for whom this pit of fire was prepared? Let me say to you that the terms *Devil*, *Satan*, &c., are terms used to personify evil, or to represent a person of evil propensities and passions—the depraved appetites and lusts. Eve was tempted of the devil, or her own lusts. Christ was tempted by the devil, just as Eve was—that is, by an earthly ambition. The strict idea of a devil is opposition—contention—strife—an adversary.

The idea of a personal devil is not learned from the Scriptures. This comes entirely from paganism. The ancient Persians believed in two omnipotent spirits—one good, the other evil. Milton, in his poetic drama, revived this Persian idea, and from this poetic caricature of a pagan superstition Christians get their doctrine of a great soul-destroying, omnipotent devil, who has frequently defeated the Creator, and once spoiled his fair creation. It is altogether a heathen doctrine, and finds not the least support from the Bible. In the metaphor of our text, our Saviour personifies the spirit of evil, which predominated in the hearts of those who obeyed not the Gospel. Nothing more is meant by the term devil in the Scriptures. We are sometimes accused of not believing in the existence of a personal omnipotent and omnipresent devil; and for this reason we are cast out of the “evangelical (?) Church.” We call ourselves Christians, and hence reject all doctrines that are eminently heathen. Yet we would not deprive our neighbors of one of their deities! If they find the Persian doctrine of an omnipotent evil spirit so necessary to their good behaviour and the discipline of their Church, we would not take from them the motive power of their religious life. But, for ourselves, we prefer to believe that all the devil we have to fear is within our own hearts; and it is there we would seek to exorcise the evil spirit.

Again. The unbelieving Jews have been, as a people, suffering this everlasting punishment for nearly two thousand years, and the Christians have enjoyed their gospel privileges for the same length of time; and although we see no indications that their punishment shall come to a speedy termination, yet Christ intimated to them, while weeping over their impending fate, on the same day that he addressed his disciples in the language of our texts, that the time should come when they should be delivered from their long punishment.