

Ethan Smith

Deity of Christ

The world, after the flood, lost the knowledge of the true God, and fell into idolatry. One object of the mission of Christ into the world, and of Revelation, was to recover man from idolatry to the knowledge and worship of the true God. Would the Most High then in the very outset for effecting this object, have instituted a system of idolatry, as the means of effecting it? But if God sent a derived and dependent Being into the world, under the names, titles and attributes of God, and commanded Angels and men to honor him, even as they honor the Father; then the Most High, in the origin of his attempt to recover man from idolatry, instituted a system of idolatry. For idolatry is the worship of some being, beside the one only living and true God. It is having another God, before the only One. This is the immutable nature of idolatry. - God would be giving his glory to another; and subverting the fundamental law of his own kingdom, which presents himself, as the only God, and the only Object of worship. Is it possible that God, in undertaking to recover man from idolatry, to the knowledge and worship of himself, should first establish another Object of worship beside himself? Is not this a contradiction of his own object, as well as of the whole tenor of his Word? His object is to recover men to the worship of Himself. - The language of God's word upon this subject is, "I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory I will not give unto another. Beside me, there is no God; I know not any." Certainly then, Christ and the Father must be comprised in this pronoun ME, beside whom, Jehovah himself knows not any God. Inevitably the Persons of the Father and the Son must each be found in this one God, who speaks of himself as the Only One. Christ is through the Scriptures represented as, in some sense, distinct from the Father; while yet he is honored with the very names, titles and glories of God; and is represented as really one with God. --- God informs, that he is a jealous God, and will never give his glory to another. Yet abundantly God ascribes the work of creation, and of upholding all things, to Christ; and this in the most positive language. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; (the Word, or Christ) and without him was not anything made, that was made." "The world was made by him." "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Col.1:13-17. "And upholding all things by the word of his power." These things are said expressly of Jesus Christ. But can all this be said, by the God of truth, of a finite, derived, dependent Being? The parts of creation above enumerated, contain all created, dependent beings in heaven or earth. Surely then, Christ himself, (who created them,) cannot be among them, a finite, dependent being. And who can believe in a derived, dependent Creator of all things? A dependent Almighty! How could all things be said to be created for Christ, as well as by him, if he were not very God? --- The Jews understood Christ as claiming equality with God, notwithstanding all the notices he gave, of the dependence of his humanity: "Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Again; "Making himself equal with God." Christ was so far from correcting this, as a mistake, that he told them plainly, "I and my Father are one." "I dwell in the Father; and the Father in me." "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "If ye had known me, ye had known my Father also." Would the meek and lowly Jesus have said such things as these, and have put himself before the Father, ("I and my Father are one,") if he had been as much inferior to the Father, as is a derived, dependent being, to the infinite, eternal Jehovah? It appears impossible! What; the faithful and true Witness speaking most impious falsehoods? --- The

"Son of God," in Rev.2:18,23, says, "And all the churches shall know, that I am he, who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Christ does not say here, that I am given and enabled to know the hearts; but "I am He, who searcheth the reins and the hearts." I am that very God of the Old Testament, who said, "I, Jehovah, search the heart, and try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways." Christ accordingly adds, "And I will give unto every one of you according to your works?" As if he had said, I am the very Jehovah, who by Jeremiah spake these words; and all my churches shall know it. What opinion then must we form of those, who are laboring to disprove, in the churches, this divine sentiment; and are laboring to propagate the opinion that Christ is derived, and totally distinct from that Jehovah, who searches the hearts? --- The law of God demands, that we should "love the Lord our God," with all the heart, soul, strength and mind. But is not the same love demanded towards Jesus Christ? Was man ever cautioned against loving Christ more than God; or too intensely? We are much cautioned against loving the creature more than the Creator. But we are so far from being cautioned against loving Christ more than God, that we are clearly taught, that to love Christ, is to love God. Not merely that love to Christ is an evidence of love to God; for love to Christians is thus; but love to Christ, is itself love to God. As he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father; so he that hath loved Christ hath loved the Father. Accordingly man's want of love to God is expressed, and threatened as follows; "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." Does the divine economy render idolatry essential to an escape from the wrath to come? Must a derived being, totally distinct from the infinite Jehovah, the God of Israel, be supremely loved; or man be lost? --- Jesus Christ relative to his human body, said, "Destroy this temple; and in three days I will raise it up." "But God raised him from the dead." Christ here declares that he is God; and he declares that he has two natures in his one Person, divine and human; and sometimes he speaks of himself in relation to the one, and sometimes in relation to the other. When he spake, in the days of his humiliation, of his dependence on God, he spake in relation to his mediatorial character. But when he spake in relation to his divine nature, he spake as God. I will raise up this temple of my body in three days. "I will; be thou clean." To the dead, "I say unto thee arise." "Lazarus, come forth." To the stormy lake, "Peace, be still!" To the Disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it." "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." In relation to his humanity, and mediatorial character. Jesus wrought miracles in his Father's name. In relation to his Divinity, he wrought miracles in his own name, and received the praise of it. Should any doubt relative to the correctness of this distinction, between Christ's two natures, let Christ himself decide it. "I am the Root and offspring of David." He is David's Root, and David's offspring; David's Jehovah, and David's Son; David's God, and David's descendant; David's Creator, and his seed according to the flesh. Can any believer in Revelation doubt whether Christ does possess two natures; and whether this fact together with his constituted mediatorial character, may solve all the seeming contradictions of Christ's dependence on God; and yet his being himself the very independent God? --- Paul tells the Corinthians, that he was determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But was not the glory of God his object? Jesus Christ then, in Paul's view, was God. To preach Christ, was to preach God. To know Christ, was to know God. Christ was Paul's only object. Yet God was his only object. This accords with the words of Christ, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Paul again speaking of Christ, who will appear in judgment, the King of kings, adds, "Who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." If Christ only hath immortality; then surely he is God, the only living God; or else there is no God of immortality. The Father is not, in this text, excluded, but included. But the passage shows the unity of God and Christ. Each of them only hath immortality. Paul says; "I am dead unto the law, that I might live unto God." Yet he tells us, "For me to live is Christ;" -- "that we

should live to him, who died for us, and rose again." "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's." Thus with Paul, Christ was God. God and Christ, in point of real Divinity, were with Paul convertible terms. Man is commanded to rejoice and glory only in God. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." "As it is written: He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "We also joy in God." But yet Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Your rejoicing being more abundant in Christ" - "in whom though now ye see him not; yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." There is no avoiding the conclusion, that in those passages, God is Christ; and Christ is God. --- Read the description of Christ, in Rev. i. chapter; and the ascriptions of glory to him there found. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, -- be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen." Are the heavenly hosts idolaters? Is this Saviour, whom they worship, a merely derived, dependent being? If he be, I see not that the Bible can be exonerated from the just imputation of establishing a most deep and refined system of idolatry! While it calls men to the worship of the one only living and true God; it at the same time institutes, and justifies the worship of one, who is totally distinct from, and dependent on the one only living and true God. A sentiment which appears an infinite absurdity! --- In the Apocalypse, the infinite Divinity of Jesus Christ is repeatedly and clearly ascertained. The Person, who styles himself the Alpha and Omega, in the Revelation, who is evidently Jesus Christ, (see Rev. i. 8-18; ii. 8; xxi. 6, 7,) says, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." These are the words of him, who in the preceding verse says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." These are the very titles that Christ repeatedly in this book takes to himself. It is Christ then, who here speaks, and says, of him that overcometh, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." But would Christ say such things as these, if he were not the true and living God? Would not the affirmative make Christ a blasphemer! He is the God and fountain of life, to the Church triumphant; and this too, it appears, after the Son shall have given up the mediatorial kingdom, at the end of the world, that God may be all in all! Christ has a nature in his person, that even there will be the God and Fountain of life to all, who shall overcome. This idea accords with the repeated inspired assertions, that Christ has a kingdom, which shall have no end; even though his mediatorial kingdom shall close at the end of the world. Of the New Jerusalem, it is said, "The Lamb is the light thereof." And, "The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their forehead." Rev. xxii. 3, 4. Are not God and the Lamb here presented as one and the same God? What is the antecedent to the pronoun HIS and HIM, in the singular number, repeatedly used in this text? God and the Lamb are the antecedent. But if God and the Lamb be two distinct Beings, why is it said in relation to both of them, "his servants shall serve him, and shall see his face, and his name shall be in their forehead?" No doubt the Father and the Lamb are in a sense two, as has appeared. But if the Lamb were not essentially one with God, it could not have been said of the New Jerusalem, "The Lamb is the light thereof;" nor could God and the Lamb have been represented, in the above text, as one Being, whose servants serve him, who see his face, and his name is in their forehead. Ethan Smith {Character of Jesus Christ, 1824}