

THE CREATOR-CREATURE DISTINCTION

1. God is totally distinct from the universe and all its creatures.

- a. God created the matter-space-time universe.
 - (1) **Ge 1:1** 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
 - (2) **Is 45:18** 18 Thus says Yahweh, who created the heavens..., I am Yahweh, and there is none else.
 - (3) See *God as Creator*.
- b. God transcends the matter-space-time universe.
 - (1) See *Transcendence of God*.
- c. God created all living creatures in the matter-space-time universe.
 - (1) **Ex 20:11** 11 In six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.
- d. God is not the universe or a part of the universe.
 - (1) See *Pantheism*.
- e. The universe is not greater than or equal to God. The universe is finite, but God is infinite. The universe began to exist, but God has always existed.
 - (1) See *Eternity of God*.
- f. The universe obeys the commands of God.
 - (1) **Ps 148:1-6** 1 Hallelujah! Praise Yahweh from the heavens. Praise him in the heights! 2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his hosts! 3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! 4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! 5 Let them praise the name of Yahweh! For he commanded, and they were created. 6 And he established them forever and ever. He gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.
 - (2) **Is 48:12-13** 12 Listen to me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he. I am the first, and I am the last. 13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens. When I call to them, they stand forth together.
 - (3) See *Sovereignty of God*.

2. God is in a category of his own. No one compares to him.

- a. See *The Incomparability of God*.
- b. Yahweh is the only God in heaven and on earth.
 - (1) **Dt 4:39** 39 Know therefore today and lay it to your heart, that Yahweh is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. There is no other.
- c. We cannot compare God to anyone.
 - (1) **Is 40:25** 25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
- d. God alone stretched out the heavens.
 - (1) **Is 44:24** 24 I am Yahweh who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.
- e. There is none like God.
 - (1) **Is 46:9-10** 9 I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.
- f. God is wholly other.

- (1) God differs in kind, not just degree, from the universe and all its creatures. He exists in a fundamentally different order of being, in dimensions totally unknown to us. In fact, he exists outside all dimensions. He is the Creator of all dimensions.

3. The pagan alternative to the Creator-creature distinction is the “chain of being” concept.

- a. The gods of pagan myths are not distinct from creation as the God of the Bible is.
 - (1) In pagan myths creation usually comes from body parts of the gods.
 - (2) By contrast, the God of the Bible spoke the universe into existence.
- b. Only Judaism, Christianity, and Islam maintain the Creator-creature distinction.
 - (1) Islam is erroneous on other grounds. But it’s got the Creator-creature distinction right.
- c. Like Paul, we are to carefully distinguish the God of the Bible from pagan gods.
 - (1) **Ac 14:11-15** 11 When the crowds [of Lystra] saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd crying out, 15 Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.
 - (2) **Ac 17:24-29** 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, because he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, because he himself gives to all people life, breath, and all things. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 For in him we live, move, and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, For we also are his children (γένος). 29 Being then the children (γένος) of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature (θεϊος) is like gold, silver, or stone, an image (χάραγμα) formed by the art and thought of man.
- d. Blurring the Creator-creature distinction always leads to idolatry.
 - (1) **Ro 1:19-25** 19 That which is known about God is evident within men, for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among

them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

- e. Idolatry is worshipping someone or something in creation rather than the Creator.
 - (1) I.e., a young man who worships a young woman is engaged in idolatry.

4. God is totally distinct from the angels, including Satan.

- a. God made the angels, and the angels worship him.
 - (1) **Ne 9:6** 6 You are Yahweh, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. And you preserve all of them. And the host of heaven worships you.
- b. Satan, as an angelic creature, is no match for the Creator God.
 - (1) Satan exists because God allows him to exist.
- c. Biblical Christianity is not dualistic. There are not two equally powerful forces at war with each other. Evil exists temporarily at God's desire, but evil cannot and will not exist eternally. God can and will crush Satan at the right time, and it will not be difficult for him.
 - (1) **Re 20:9-10** 9 They marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- d. We are not to worship angels because angels are creatures like us. Worship is reserved for the Creator alone.

5. God is totally distinct from humanity.

- a. God is not a man nor a son of man.
 - (1) **Nu 23:19** 19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind (נחם).
- b. God made us, and we belong to him.
 - (1) **Ps 100:3** 3 Know that Yahweh, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
- c. We are men, and God is God.
 - (1) **Eze 34:31** 31 As for you, my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, you are men (אָדָם), and I am your God (אֱלֹהֵיכֶם), declares Lord Yahweh.
- d. God is the Holy One in our midst.
 - (1) **Hos 11:9** 9 I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.
- e. God's nature is completely distinct from ours.
 - (1) **Ac 14:14-15** 14 When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd crying out, 15 Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.
- f. The divine nature is not an image formed by the art and thought of man.

(1) **Ac 17:24-29** 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, because he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, because he himself gives to all people life, breath, and all things. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 For in him we live, move, and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, For we also are his children (γένος). 29 Being then the children (γένος) of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature (θεῖος) is like gold, silver, or stone, an image (χάραγμα) formed by the art and thought of man.

g. God is infinitely wiser and stronger than men.

(1) **1 Co 1:25** 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

h. There are no demigods or supermen, half-gods or half-men. Between God and man an uncrossable chasm is fixed. Men can never be or become God, nor should they ever try to be.

i. Men may and should imitate God's communicable attributes, like righteousness, justice, and love. But man will never be able to imitate God's incommunicable attributes, such as omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. With respect to essence, God is totally distinct from man.

j. The Creator-creature distinction does not mean man cannot personally relate with God. God created us for a love relationship with himself and other creatures, and he loves to communicate with us in that love relationship.

6. The Creator-creature distinction is the only basis for angelic and human free will.

a. This is the most basic philosophical difference between the biblical worldview and all other worldviews.

(1) "[T]he biblical doctrine of creation means that creator and creation are separate, giving to the latter the possibility of real freedom. This is perhaps the most basic philosophical difference between biblical religion and all rival systems."¹

b. If God does not exist, man has no immaterial soul and therefore no free will.

c. God is totally distinct from the universe he created and has unlimited free will.

d. God has blessed angels and men with limited free will, though angels and men exist inside the matter-space-time universe. There is an immaterial aspect of angels and men that is free from the material aspect. In other words, men and angels are not totally bound by cause and effect.

e. Because angels and men have limited free will, God is justified in holding them morally accountable.

7. It is very dangerous for angels or men to seek equality with God.

a. For a creature to claim or seek equality with God is the height of arrogance.

b. The first temptation in human history was a temptation to be like God.

¹ H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 302.

- (1) **Ge 3:5** 5 God knows that when you eat of [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
- c. The king of Babylon aimed to make himself like the Most High.
 - (1) **Is 14:14** 14 I [the king of Babylon] will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High.
- d. We must not make our heart like the heart of a god.
 - (1) **Eze 28:2-10** 2 Son of man [Ezekiel], say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says Lord Yahweh: Because your heart is proud, and you have said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas, yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god... — 6 therefore thus says Lord Yahweh: Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, 7 therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you, the most ruthless of the nations. And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor. 8 They shall thrust you down into the pit, and you shall die the death of the slain in the heart of the seas. 9 Will you still say, I am a god, in the presence of those who kill you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who slay you?
- e. God punishes men who allow other men to call them a god.
 - (1) **Ac 12:21-23** 21 On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. 22 The people kept crying out, The voice of a god and not of a man! 23 And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

8. As the God-man, Jesus is fully Creator and fully creature in one person forever.

- a. Through Jesus' incarnation, God bridged the gap between Creator and creature.
 - (1) See *The Incarnation of Jesus*.
- b. The Creator-creature distinction is always maintained in the one person of Jesus.
 - (1) See *The Hypostatic Union*.
- c. The impossible became possible.
 - (1) **Mt 19:26** 26 Looking at them Jesus said to them, With people [salvation] is impossible, but with God all things are possible.
 - (2) **Lk 18:27** 27 The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.
- d. The Creator had to become a creature in order to redeem all creatures. The death and resurrection of the God-man was the only way the Creator and creation could be reconciled.

9. We are to reserve our worship for the Creator alone.

- a. The Creator alone is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power.
 - (1) **Re 4:8-11** 8 Day and night [the four living creatures] never cease to say, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, is, and is to come! 9 And whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne saying, 11 Worthy are you, our

Lord and God, to receive glory, honor, and power, for you created all things, and by your desire they existed and were created.

- b. It is appropriate for creatures to worship their Creator. It is never appropriate for creatures to worship other creatures.

(1) **Mt 4:8-10** 8 Again the devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. 10 Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship Yahweh your God, and him only shall you serve.

(2) **Re 22:8-9** 8 When I [John] heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. 9 But he said to me, You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.

10. Proclaim and defend the Creator-creature distinction everywhere.

- a. Never blur the Creator-creature distinction.
- b. Making clear the Creator-creature distinction is a key aspect of evangelism (e.g., Paul in Athens).

Notes