

## DIVISIONS AMONG THEISTS

### *Sources and Response*

1. Clarity and Inexcusability: “The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divine nature; so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20)  
What is clear to reason from general revelation is assumed and affirmed in special revelation (Scripture) and made still more explicit in Historic Christianity (in its Creeds and Confessions).
2. What is clear from general revelation, Scripture and Historic Christianity concerning the nature of God: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. Man is the image of God, finite, temporal and changeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. This is the universal aspect of man, the image of God. There are several other aspects of the image of God in man not addressed here.
3. Divisions and sin: There are divisions among theists regarding the nature of God. In light of the clarity of general revelation these divisions are without excuse. Misconceiving the nature of God is idolatry, which produces spiritual death (meaninglessness and boredom and guilt). All divisions among theists are rooted in idolatry, which must be repented of as sin. Repentance requires confession of sin in order to receive forgiveness and cleansing from God.  
These general divisions among theists will be more explicitly applied to the various forms of theism in subsequent papers.
4. The first division among theists concerns the infinite power and goodness of God: “If God is all good and all powerful, why is there evil?” Original creation is very good; it reveals the glory of God. Natural evil (toil, strife and old age, sickness and death) is not in the original creation. In the Fall, the moral evil of one man (Adam) affects all men by the covenant of creation. Moral evil serves to deepen the revelation of the glory of God. Man is redeemed from sin and death by the curse (natural evil) and the promise (of one to come in the place of Adam). Natural evil is imposed by God to restrain, recall from and remove moral evil.
5. The second division concerns God’s justice and mercy. If God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in *both* justice and mercy, then mercy cannot set aside God’s justice, but must satisfy justice. If God is neither just nor merciful by nature, then he is without a nature and the word *God* becomes meaningless. In Christ alone, in place of Adam, by vicarious atonement, the justice and mercy of God are fully revealed and reconciled. Christ alone is necessary *and* sufficient for salvation.
6. The third division concerns Scripture and the Word of God. The Word of God is first eternal. Scripture is the Word of God written. The Word of God comes to man in several ways which are ordered: reason, general revelation, Scripture, incarnate, through councils in creeds and existentially (by regeneration and sanctification). There is no contradiction in the Word of God; what comes after must be consistent with what is prior. The Word of God is the Logos and is Truth in its fullness.

7. The fourth division concerns the Trinity. Jesus is the eternal Word of God, the Son of God incarnate. The Son of God is eternal, *before* taking to himself human nature by incarnation. He is not a mere man claiming to be God, but fully God *and* fully man. The infinite includes the finite; it is not opposed to or excludes the finite. The finite cannot include the infinite.
8. The fifth division concerns divine sovereignty, predestination and freedom. God is sovereign by virtue of creating (as first cause) the nature of all things (second causes). God as first cause in creation *and* by re-creation predestinates all things through the nature of second causes. Human beings as rational beings are always free at the most basic level of their being to use their reason if they want to. This is so because the first cause does not deny, or allow to be externally overridden, but upholds the nature of second causes.
9. The sixth division concerns the worship of God. Man is to worship God in spirit and in truth. Due to sin remaining in man, corporate worship is regulated: we are to worship God only as he has commanded in Scripture or we sink into idolatry. Only the book of Psalms is given by God for singing in worship. Only the book of Psalms for singing embodies the Truth of God in its fullness.
10. The seventh division concerns eschatology. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Mankind is to glorify God in all that by which he makes himself known, in all his works of creation and providence. Through the work of dominion, given to man at creation, man is to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The Sabbath signifies to man, both before and after the Fall, that the work of dominion will be completed.