

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7, Image of God – R. C. Newman Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7, Image of God – R. C. Newman, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This source presents a theological lecture by Dr. Robert A. Peterson on the doctrines of humanity and sin, specifically focusing on the concept of the **image of God** and the **constitution of human beings**. Peterson explores Robert C. Newman's relational perspectives on the *imago Dei*, using analogies of human relationships to God as potter, gardener, shepherd, king, and parent. The lecture then synthesizes different views on the image, highlighting substantive, functional, and relational aspects, and emphasizing Christ as the perfect image. Finally, Peterson examines various perspectives on human constitution—monism, dichotomy, and trichotomy—ultimately arguing for a form of **holistic dualism** supported by biblical passages discussing the intermediate state.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Humanity and Sin).



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7, Image of God – R. C. Newman

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on the Image of God and the Constitution of Humanity

Executive Summary: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on the Image of God in humanity, heavily drawing upon Robert C. Newman's relational perspective, and then outlines the various views on the constitution of human beings, emphasizing the biblical support for a form of dichotomy (holistic dualism) that includes an intermediate state. Peterson stresses the importance of synthesizing substantive, functional, and relational aspects of the Imago Dei and critiques monistic views of human constitution based on biblical teachings about the intermediate state after death.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

I. The Image of God in Humanity (Drawing on Robert C. Newman's Synthesis):

- **Newman's Central Thesis:** Peterson introduces Robert C. Newman's "creative proposal" for understanding the image of God, stating that it "seems to really help, especially with the relational aspects of the image." Newman's thesis posits that "a very fruitful way of viewing humans as being in God's image is to consider those pictures God gives of himself, which are analogies featuring man in his relationship to other people or to other parts of the created environment. We learn about man and woman in God's image by considering pictures God gives of himself, which are analogies featuring human relationships."
- **Humans in Relationship as Analogies to God:** Peterson outlines Newman's framework, showing how human relationships and roles mirror God's attributes and actions:
- **Inanimate (Potter and Clay):** Human creativity, purpose, and sovereignty reflect God's creation, planning, and control. "The potter and clay picture teaches that the image of God in man involves creativity, planning, and sovereignty."
- **Plants (Gardener/Farmer and Plants):** Human care, planning, blessing, and judgment of plants mirror God's similar responses to humanity. "Here, man mirrors God in his caring for plants and in his execution of his plans... The image of God expressed through this picture involves caring, planning, blessing, and judging."

- **Animals (Shepherd and Sheep):** Human activities of seeking out, guiding, feeding, protecting, and separating reflect God's relationship with His people as their shepherd. "Man mirrors God in his activities of seeking out, guiding, feeding, and protecting his people. Man, as the one who separates the sheep from the goats, pictures God as a judge."
- **Human Society (King and Subject):** Human worthiness of honor, ruling, blessing, and judging parallel God's role as the heavenly king. "Under this picture, man is like God in being worthy of honor as ruling, blessing, and judging."
- **Family (Parent/Child, Husband/Wife):** Human begetting/adopting, showing godly resemblance, providing, and the marital covenant reflect God's fatherhood, covenant relationship, authority, joy, love, and intimacy with His people. "The husband-wife relationship images clearly the intimacy between God and his own. This picture thus points to the image of God in man as involving God entering into covenant with his people... God's authority, his joy, his love, and the intimacy of the union between him and his beloved."
- **Implications of Newman's View:** Peterson highlights the remarkable idea that through these relationships, "all human beings know a little bit of what it is like to be God. What it is like for God to be God." He notes the convicting nature of comparing our human roles (e.g., parenting) to God's perfect example.

II. Systematic Synthesis of the Image of God:

- **Five Helpful Perspectives:** Peterson presents a synthesis of biblical teachings on the image of God, identifying five key perspectives:
 1. **Substantive, Functional, and Relational Aspects:** These must be held together. While Peterson agrees with Erickson that the image is "primarily substantive or structural...something in the very nature of man in the way he was made," he critiques overemphasis on this aspect and affirms Hoekema's view that functional and relational aspects are predominant in Scripture. Peterson suggests a synthesis where substantive aspects are like "attributes" (nouns) and functional/relational aspects are like "manifestations of attributes" (verbs). "The biblical pictures of the image in man's relationships and roles are the results of his being created in God's likeness."
 2. **Jesus Christ as the Perfect Image:** Christology is intrinsically linked to anthropology. Jesus is both the "ultimate model and eschatological goal for the

redeemed." He "substantively is the image of God, and in his incarnation, he perfectly manifests that image."

3. **Redemptive-Historical Perspective:** The image must be understood in stages: creation (image created), fall (image perverted), redemption (image being renewed in Christ), and consummation (image perfected in the eternal state). "Since this is God's truth about us we must think in these terms to minister to people effectively."
4. **Image in Relationships:** The image involves human beings in their relationships with God, fellow human beings, and creation. This aligns with Newman's study and the life of Jesus.
5. **Sum Total of Redeemed Humanity:** The collective body of redeemed individuals is the largest expression of the relational aspect of the image (referencing spiritual gifts and Revelation 5). "So, we should open ourselves up to the sum total of redeemed humanity as being the greatest example and manifestation of the three of our relationships, of the relational aspect of the imago dei."
- **Further Considerations:** Peterson briefly mentions male and female as a further expression of the relational aspect (Genesis 1) and Hukum's claim that the image encompasses the "totality of our being," including the body as an instrument for the soul's expression (citing Birkhoff).

III. The Constitutional Nature of Human Beings:

- **Survey of Views:** Peterson outlines four views on human constitution:
- **Monism:** Humans are indivisible; different terms refer to the totality of being. Denies disembodied intermediate state. Peterson strongly disagrees, stating, "...the Bible does teach a disembodied existence in an intermediate state and thus monism is wrong." He notes its dominance in modern thought but rejects it based on Scripture.
- **Dichotomy:** Humans are composed of two parts: a material body and an immaterial soul/spirit.
- **Trichotomy:** Humans are composed of three parts: body, soul (affections, desires, will), and spirit (God-consciousness, communication with God). Relies heavily on 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. Peterson notes it's "hard to find examples of theologians today who affirm this."

- **Conditional Unity/Psychosomatic Unity/Holistic Dualism:** A modern form of dichotomy emphasizing the normal state of humans as unified body and soul, but acknowledging an intermediate disembodied state as "incomplete or abnormal." Peterson aligns with this view, stating, "...this conditional unity emphasizes the unity of human beings, but it does not absolutize that unity and acknowledges that we are of two parts, and yet those two parts are normally unified."
- **Biblical Data Supporting an Intermediate State:** Peterson presents several passages to refute monism:
- **Luke 23:43 (The Dying Thief):** Jesus' promise, "today you will be with me in paradise," indicates an immediate presence with God after death, separate from the body. "Here, Luke promises the dying thief, I tell you the truth today, you'll be with me in paradise... since their bodies remained on the crosses... there must be an immaterial part of human nature that survives death."
- **Philippians 1:23 (Paul's Desire):** Paul's desire "to depart and be with Christ" implies a conscious existence apart from the body at death. "Paul expected to go into the presence of Christ when he died. His body would be buried in decay. His immaterial part would go to be with the Lord."
- **2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (Absent from the Body):** Paul contrasts being "at home in the body" and "away from the Lord" with being "away from the body and at home with the Lord," presupposing an immaterial aspect that enters Christ's presence upon death. "Presupposed here is that human nature is composed of material and immaterial aspects. When a believer departs the body, he goes to be with the Lord."
- **Revelation 6:9-10 (Souls Under the Altar):** The disembodied souls of martyrs crying out for vengeance.
- **Acts 7:59 (Stephen's Prayer):** Stephen's plea, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," at the time of his stoning.
- **Hebrews 12:23 (Spirits of Righteous Men Made Perfect):** Reference to the perfected spirits of the righteous in the intermediate state.
- **Conclusion on the Intermediate State:** Peterson concludes that these passages "sufficiently refute the monistic view." While acknowledging the intermediate state as "incomplete or abnormal," he emphasizes that our final state will be in glorified bodies after the resurrection. "Our final state will be in glorified bodies on the new earth. In that sense, the intermediate state, the intermediate

disembodied spiritual existence, is temporary and incomplete." He indicates that the next lecture will examine the proof texts for trichotomy.

Key Quotes:

- **Newman's Thesis:** "a very fruitful way of viewing humans as being in God's image is to consider those pictures God gives of himself, which are analogies featuring man in his relationship to other people or to other parts of the created environment."
- **Potter and Clay:** "The potter and clay picture teaches that the image of God in man involves creativity, planning, and sovereignty."
- **Gardener and Plants:** "The image of God expressed through this picture involves caring, planning, blessing, and judging."
- **Shepherd and Sheep:** "Man mirrors God in his activities of seeking out, guiding, feeding, and protecting his people."
- **Husband and Wife:** "The husband-wife relationship images clearly the intimacy between God and his own."
- **Erickson on the Substantive View:** "the image should be thought of as primarily substantive or structural. The image is something in the very nature of man in the way he was made."
- **Synthesis of Substantive, Functional, Relational:** "Substantive and structural emphases on the image are attributes. Functional and relational views of the image are like manifestations of attributes."
- **Monism Critique:** "...the Bible does teach a disembodied existence in an intermediate state and thus monism is wrong."
- **Luke 23:43:** "truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."
- **Philippians 1:23:** "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."
- **2 Corinthians 5:8:** "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."
- **Intermediate State as Incomplete:** "Our final state will be in glorified bodies on the new earth. In that sense, the intermediate state, the intermediate disembodied spiritual existence, is temporary and incomplete."

Actionable Items/Further Questions:

- Further exploration of the scriptural basis for the substantive, functional, and relational aspects of the Image of God.
- Detailed examination of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 as proof texts for trichotomy (as indicated for the next lecture).
- Consideration of the implications of the different views on human constitution for Christian life, death, and the afterlife.
- Reflection on how the relational aspects of the Imago Dei, as highlighted by Newman, impact our understanding of community and our relationships with God and others.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Peterson's lecture on the Image of God and the constitution of humanity based on the provided source material. It highlights the key arguments, supporting scriptural references, and areas for further consideration.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7, Image of God – R. C. Newman

Study Guide: The Image of God and the Constitution of Humanity

Quiz:

1. According to Robert C. Newman, how can a fruitful understanding of humans being in God's image be achieved?
2. Describe two ways in which human beings in relationship to the inanimate (potter and clay) reflect the image of God.
3. How does the relationship between a gardener/farmer and plants illustrate aspects of God's image in humanity? Provide one specific example.
4. In what ways does the shepherd/sheep analogy demonstrate humanity reflecting God's image? Give at least two examples.
5. Explain how the king/subject relationship reflects God's image in humankind.
6. Describe two ways the parent/child relationship mirrors God's image in humanity.
7. How does the husband/wife relationship uniquely picture the image of God in humankind?
8. Briefly explain the three aspects of the image of God that are important to hold together according to the text.
9. What is the key difference between the monistic and dichotomous views of the constitution of humanity?
10. According to the text, what biblical evidence supports the existence of an intermediate state after death? Provide one specific example.

Answer Key:

1. Newman suggests that viewing humans in God's image is best understood by considering the pictures God gives of himself, which are analogies featuring human relationships or humanity's relationship to creation. By examining these analogies, we learn about the ways humans reflect God.
2. Humans reflect God's image in the potter and clay analogy through creativity (the ability to create) and purpose/design (conceiving and bringing something into being according to a plan), mirroring God's creation and purposeful action.

3. The gardener/farmer relationship illustrates God's image through the human act of caring for plants to help them bear fruit, which mirrors God's care and purpose for our lives, often described in terms of bearing spiritual fruit.
4. The shepherd/sheep analogy shows humanity reflecting God's image in seeking out (finding lost sheep), guiding (leading the flock), nourishing (providing pasture), and protecting (defending from enemies), mirroring God's care for his people.
5. The king/subject relationship reflects God's image in humankind through the human capacity to rule, be worthy of honor, bless, and judge, similar to God's role as the heavenly king who governs and exercises justice.
6. The parent/child relationship mirrors God's image in humanity through the human act of begetting/adopting children (as God does) and the expectation that children will show a family resemblance through their behavior, reflecting believers' resemblance to God.
7. The husband/wife relationship uniquely pictures the image of God by illustrating the covenant bond between God and his people, the wife's obedience mirroring our obedience to God, and the husband's love picturing Christ's love for the church, highlighting intimacy and fidelity.
8. The three aspects of the image of God that are important to hold together are the substantive (something in the very nature of man), functional (exercising dominion), and relational (relating to God, others, and creation).
9. The monistic view holds that human beings are indivisible and that the various terms used to describe parts of a person refer to the whole being. Dichotomy, on the other hand, posits that humans are composed of two distinct parts: a material body and an immaterial soul/spirit.
10. Biblical evidence for an intermediate state includes Luke 23:43, where Jesus tells the dying thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise," indicating an existence apart from the physical body after death. Philippians 1:23, where Paul expresses his desire to "depart and be with Christ," also supports this idea.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Compare and contrast Robert C. Newman's relational perspective on the image of God with the traditional substantive view. How does Peterson attempt to synthesize these approaches?
2. Discuss the redemptive-historical perspective of the image of God (creation, fall, redemption, consummation). How does understanding these stages impact our view of humanity and our role in reflecting God?
3. Analyze the various analogies used by Newman (potter/clay, gardener/plants, shepherd/sheep, king/subject, parent/child, husband/wife) to illustrate the relational aspects of the image of God. Which analogy do you find most compelling and why?
4. Evaluate the different views on the constitutional nature of human beings (monism, dichotomy, trichotomy, conditional unity/holistic dualism). Based on the provided text, which view is best supported by scripture and why?
5. Explain the significance of Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God for understanding the nature and destiny of humanity. How does Christ serve as both a model and a goal for believers?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Image of God (Imago Dei):** The concept that human beings are created in God's likeness, reflecting certain attributes and characteristics of God.
- **Substantive/Structural Aspect (of the Image):** The view that the image of God refers to something inherent in the very nature or constitution of human beings.
- **Functional Aspect (of the Image):** The view that the image of God is primarily expressed through what humans do, particularly in their dominion over creation.
- **Relational Aspect (of the Image):** The view that the image of God is primarily manifested in human relationships, mirroring God's relational nature.
- **Redemptive-Historical Perspective:** Understanding biblical doctrines within the context of God's unfolding plan of redemption throughout history (creation, fall, redemption, consummation).
- **Monism:** The view that human beings are fundamentally one indivisible substance, typically emphasizing the physical body.
- **Dichotomy:** The view that human beings are composed of two distinct parts: a material body and an immaterial soul or spirit.
- **Trichotomy:** The view that human beings are composed of three distinct parts: body, soul (seat of emotions and will), and spirit (capacity for God-consciousness).
- **Conditional Unity/Psychosomatic Unity/Holistic Dualism:** A form of dichotomy that emphasizes the normal unity of body and soul while acknowledging an intermediate disembodied state as temporary and incomplete.
- **Intermediate State:** The condition of believers after death and before the resurrection of the body, characterized by the soul/spirit being in the presence of Christ but separate from the physical body.
- **Consummation:** The final stage of God's redemptive plan, often referring to the new heavens and the new earth and the resurrection of believers in glorified bodies.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 7, Image of God – R. C. Newman, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Image of God and the Constitution of Humanity

1. According to Robert C. Newman's perspective, how can we best understand what it means for humans to be made in God's image? Newman proposes that a fruitful way to understand humanity as being in God's image is to consider the analogies God uses to describe Himself, which often feature humans in relationship with others or with the created environment. By examining these "pictures" – such as God as potter, gardener, shepherd, king, and parent – and how humans mirror these roles in their own relationships and interactions, we gain insight into the functional and relational aspects of God's image in humankind.

2. What are the different relational "pictures" Newman highlights, and what aspects of God do they reflect through human activity? Newman outlines several key relationships:

- **Potter and clay:** Human creativity in working with materials reflects God's role as the Creator, His planning, and His sovereignty.
- **Gardener/Farmer and plants:** Human care for the environment and the execution of plans in nurturing it mirror God's caring, planning, blessing, and judging.
- **Shepherd and sheep:** Human acts of seeking out, guiding, feeding, protecting, and even separating (judging) others reflect God's care for His people.
- **King and subject:** Human worthiness of honor, ruling, blessing, and judging in societal structures parallel God's kingship and authority.
- **Parent and child/Husband and wife:** Familial relationships reflect God's begetting/adopting children, providing for them, showing a family resemblance, and the covenantal love, authority, joy, intimacy, and fidelity between God and His people.

3. Beyond the relational aspect, what other key perspectives are important for a comprehensive understanding of the image of God in humanity? A comprehensive understanding involves recognizing:

- **Substantive, Functional, and Relational Aspects:** These three dimensions must be held together. The substantive (our very nature) enables the functional (our actions) and relational (our connections) aspects.
- **Jesus Christ as the Perfect Image:** He serves as the ultimate model and the eschatological goal for believers. He perfectly manifested the image through fellowship, obedience, and love.
- **The Redemptive-Historical Perspective:** The image has been affected by creation, the fall (becoming perverted), redemption in Christ (being renewed), and will be perfected in the consummated eternal state.
- **Humanity in Relationship:** The image is expressed in our relationships with God, fellow human beings, and creation.
- **The Sum Total of Redeemed Humanity:** The unified body of believers from all backgrounds represents the largest expression of the relational aspect of the image.
- **Maleness and Femaleness:** The creation of humanity as male and female is a further expression of the relational aspect of the image.
- **The Totality of Our Being:** We image God not just in our souls or spirits, but in the totality of our being, including our bodies as instruments for self-expression.

4. What are the different theological views on the constitutional nature of human beings? There are primarily three views:

- **Monism:** Humans are indivisible unities, and the terms body, soul, and spirit are different ways of referring to the whole person. This view typically denies a disembodied intermediate state.
- **Dichotomy:** Humans are composed of two distinct parts: a material body and an immaterial soul or spirit.
- **Trichotomy:** Humans are composed of three distinct parts: a physical body, a soul (the seat of affections, desires, emotions, and will), and a spirit (that which knows and communes with God). A fourth perspective, often called **conditional unity, psychosomatic unity, or holistic dualism**, is a modern form of dichotomy that emphasizes the normal unified state of body and soul, while acknowledging a temporary disembodied intermediate state after death.

5. What biblical evidence supports the idea of an intermediate state after death and before the resurrection? Several passages suggest a disembodied existence after death:

- **Luke 23:43:** Jesus tells the dying thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise," indicating an immediate presence with God after death, even though their bodies remained on the cross.
- **Philippians 1:23:** Paul expresses his desire "to depart and be with Christ," implying that death would lead to an immediate presence with Christ apart from his physical body.
- **2 Corinthians 5:6-8:** Paul contrasts being "at home in the body and away from the Lord" with being "away from the body and at home with the Lord," suggesting a separation of the immaterial part from the body leading to Christ's presence.
- **Revelation 6:9-10:** The "souls under the altar" of martyred believers cry out for justice, indicating a conscious existence after death but before resurrection.
- **Acts 7:59:** Stephen's plea, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," as he was being stoned, suggests his spirit went to be with Jesus at the time of his death.
- **Hebrews 12:23:** Refers to the "spirits of righteous men made perfect" in the intermediate state.

6. How does the concept of an intermediate state challenge the view of monism? The biblical teaching on the intermediate state, where the immaterial part of a person (often referred to as soul or spirit) continues to exist and can be in the presence of God or Christ after the death of the physical body, directly contradicts monism. Monism asserts that human beings are indivisible, and therefore a disembodied existence is impossible. The passages describing individuals being with Christ or conscious after death, while their bodies remain buried, demonstrate a separation that monism cannot accommodate.

7. What is the significance of the resurrection of the body in relation to the intermediate state? While the intermediate state is a reality for believers after death, it is considered temporary and incomplete. The resurrection of the body is the ultimate hope and the final state for believers, where the immaterial part will be reunited with a glorified, imperishable body. This resurrected state is seen as the "best" state, surpassing even the "better" intermediate state because it involves a complete, unified existence in God's presence. Therefore, the intermediate disembodied state is not the final destiny of believers.

8. What are the primary biblical texts often cited in support of trichotomy, and how are they viewed in the context of this discussion? The primary proof texts for trichotomy are often cited as **1 Thessalonians 5:23** ("May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ") and **Hebrews 4:12** ("For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"). The speaker notes that without these texts, there would be no basis for trichotomy and indicates that these passages will be examined in a subsequent lecture to determine if they necessitate viewing soul and spirit as ontologically distinct parts of human nature rather than as different ways of referring to the immaterial aspect.