

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 8, Constitution of Humanity 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 8, Constitution of Humanity, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Peterson's lecture on Humanity and Sin, Session 8, examines the constitution of humankind, specifically addressing the concept of trichotomy and its associated problems. He outlines different theological views, including monism, dichotomy, trichotomy, and his preferred "conditional unity" or holistic dualism, emphasizing the biblical support for a temporary intermediate state but stressing the normal unity of body and soul. **Peterson critiques the trichotomist view that humans are composed of three distinct parts (spirit, soul, and body), arguing that scriptural distinctions between soul and spirit often represent different aspects rather than separate entities.** He analyzes key passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12, suggesting that a trichotomist interpretation misreads the rhetoric and creates unnecessary ontological divisions. **Finally, Peterson briefly addresses the origin of the soul, presenting the Christian views of traducianism and creationism, but concludes that Scripture does not definitively settle this question.**

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 8 – 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).



**Peterson_HumSin_S
ession08.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 8, Constitution of Humanity

Briefing Document: Constitution of Humanity - Examining Trichotomy and Related Issues

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and arguments presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 8 of his lectures on Humanity and Sin. The session focuses on the constitutional nature of humankind, specifically addressing the views of monism, dichotomy, trichotomy, and Peterson's preferred view of conditional unity (psychosomatic unity or holistic dualism). A significant portion of the lecture critiques trichotomy, and the session concludes with a brief excursus on the origin of the soul.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Four Views on the Constitution of Humanity:

- **Monism:** The view that humans are one indivisible entity, denying an intermediate state after death. Peterson identifies this as the view of modern philosophy and science, but argues it is "erroneous because the Bible teaches an intermediate state."
- **Dichotomy (Anthropological Dualism):** The belief that humans consist of two parts: a body and an immaterial part (soul or spirit), often used interchangeably. Peterson cites Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5 as biblical support for this view, noting the desire to "depart and be with Christ" and being "absent from the body and present with the Lord."
- **Trichotomy:** The view that humans are composed of three distinct ontological parts: body, soul (seat of affections, desires, emotions, and will), and spirit (that which knows and communicates with God). While acknowledging that Scripture sometimes distinguishes between soul and spirit, Peterson argues against them being separate constituents.
- **Conditional Unity (Psychosomatic Unity or Holistic Dualism):** Peterson's preferred view, which he describes as a "modern and improved version of dichotomy." It affirms two parts (body and immaterial soul/spirit) but emphasizes that the separation is "abnormal and temporary." The normal state is the holistic

unity of body and soul, as it was in the beginning and will be after the resurrection.

2. The Intermediate State:

- Peterson emphasizes the biblical teaching of an intermediate state after death, citing Luke 23:43 (Jesus and the thief in paradise), Philippians 1:23 (Paul's desire to be with Christ), and 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 ("to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord").
- He notes that while the intermediate state is primarily discussed for believers, Luke 16 (the rich man and Lazarus) and 2 Peter 2:9 suggest an "intermediate hell" for unbelievers.
- He cautions against extrapolating the intermediate state eternally, which would deny the necessity of the resurrection of the body, a "mistake in systematic theology."

3. Critique of Trichotomy:

- Peterson argues that the two primary "trichotomous proof texts," 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12, do not support the view of three distinct ontological parts.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23:** Peterson analyzes this verse ("May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless") in its context of Paul's wish prayer. He highlights the singular verb ("may it be kept") and adjective ("whole" - holakleron) as indicating a unity of the person, rather than three separate parts. He quotes F.F. Bruce, who states, "it is precarious to construct a tripartite... doctrine of human nature on the juxtaposition of the three nouns pneuma, psuche, and soma." Bruce suggests these terms provide "further emphasis to the completeness of sanctification" and that making a comparable distinction between spirit and soul is "forced." Peterson questions where "heart" (mentioned in a similar wish prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13) would fit in a trichotomist view, concluding that these terms are "aspects" and not necessarily "entities."
- **Hebrews 4:12:** Peterson examines the passage describing the word of God "piercing to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and of marrow." He argues that the mention of "joints and marrow" alongside soul and spirit suggests a rhetorical emphasis on the penetrating power of God's word to the deepest parts of a person, rather than an ontological division of immaterial and material constituents. He quotes Philip Hughes, who states, "no separation could be more

intimate than that between soul and spirit or between joints and marrow."

Peterson again emphasizes that the "thoughts and intentions of the heart" are also discerned, further complicating a strict trichotomist view.

- **Problematic Definitions:** Peterson points out that the definitions of soul and spirit used by trichotomists (e.g., soul as seat of affections, spirit as seat of God-consciousness) do not consistently align with their usage in Scripture. He provides examples like Mary's soul glorifying the Lord (Luke 1:46-47), Jesus being troubled in soul and spirit (John 12:27, 13:21), and both soul and spirit being associated with grief and surviving death (Revelation 6:9, Hebrews 12:23).
- **Comprehensive Designations:** Peterson notes that Scripture often comprehensively designates human nature as "body and soul" (Matthew 10:28) or "body and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Corinthians 7:24), without consistently including a distinct "spirit" or "soul" in all such pairings. He also points out that dying is described as the departure of both the soul (Genesis 35:18, etc.) and the spirit (Psalm 31:5, etc.).

4. Excursus on the Origin of the Soul:

- Peterson briefly addresses the origin of the soul, stating that "the Bible doesn't tell us where the soul originates in the human being."
- He outlines two main Christian positions:
- **Tradutionism:** The soul is generated by parents through the law of generation, just like the body. Peterson quotes Charles Hodge's definition.
- **Creationism:** The soul of each child is immediately created by God. Again, Hodge's definition is provided.
- Peterson quotes Hodge's conclusion, agreeing that the focus should not be on arriving at certainty on an unclear scriptural point, but rather on guarding against principles that contradict plain doctrines. He highlights potential errors associated with both views if taken to extremes (e.g., division of the soul in tradutionism, God creating a sinful soul in creationism).
- Peterson concludes that the Bible does not definitively teach either view, so Christians are not required to take a firm position.

Key Quotes:

- **Monism:** "Monism, we are one, and that is indivisible, so an intermediate state is denied...it is erroneous because the Bible teaches an intermediate state."
- **Dichotomy:** "Dichotomy or anthropological dualism says we are two parts, a body and an immaterial part, soul or spirit."
- **Conditional Unity:** "[Holistic dualism] emphasizes that the normal state of affairs is for body and soul to be together."
- **Intermediate State:** "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." (referring to 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8)
- **Critique of Trichotomy (FF Bruce on 1 Thessalonians 5:23):** "It is precarious to construct a tripartite, a three-part doctrine of human nature on the juxtaposition of the three nouns pneuma, psuche, and soma, spirit, soul, and body... The three together give further emphasis to the completeness of sanctification for which the writers pray... The distinction between the bodily and spiritual aspects of human nature is easily made, but to make a comparable distinction between spirit and soul is forced."
- **Critique of Trichotomy (Philip Hughes on Hebrews 4:12):** "No separation could be more intimate than that between soul and spirit or between joints and marrow."
- **Origin of the Soul (Charles Hodge on Tradutionism):** "[Tradutionists are those] who deny that the soul is created. They affirm it is produced by the law of generation, being as truly derived from one's parents as the body."
- **Origin of the Soul (Charles Hodge on Creationism):** "[Creationism is] the view that the soul of the child is not generated or derived from the parents but is created by an immediate agency of God."
- **Origin of the Soul (Charles Hodge's Conclusion):** "The object of this discussion... is not to arrive at a certainty as to what is not clearly revealed in Scripture, nor to explain what is on all sides admitted to be inscrutable... but to guard against the adoption of principles that are in opposition to plain and important doctrines of the word of God."

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson advocates for a holistic dualist view of human constitution, emphasizing the unity of body and soul as the norm, while acknowledging the temporary separation in the intermediate state. He strongly critiques trichotomy, arguing that its proof texts are misinterpreted and that the biblical usage of "soul" and "spirit" does not support the idea of three distinct ontological parts. Finally, he discusses the origin of the soul, concluding that Scripture does not provide a definitive answer between traducianism and creationism, and that the focus should be on avoiding theological errors rather than dogmatically adhering to either view.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 8, Constitution of Humanity

Study Guide: The Constitution of Humanity - Trichotomy and Problems

I. Key Concepts and Definitions:

- **Monism:** The view that human beings are a single, indivisible entity, denying the existence of a separable immaterial part and thus an intermediate state after death.
- **Dichotomy (Anthropological Dualism):** The view that human beings are composed of two parts: a material body and an immaterial part (soul or spirit).
- **Trichotomy:** The view that human beings are composed of three distinct ontological parts: body, soul, and spirit. The soul is often defined as the seat of affections, desires, emotions, and will, while the spirit is understood as that which is capable of God-consciousness and communication with God.
- **Conditional Unity (Psychosomatic Unity/Holistic Dualism):** A modern refinement of dichotomy that emphasizes the normal and intended unity of body and soul. While acknowledging a separable immaterial part that exists in the intermediate state, it views this separation as temporary and abnormal.
- **Intermediate State:** The state of a person's immaterial part (soul or spirit) between bodily death and the resurrection of the body.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture. The goal is to understand the original meaning intended by the author.
- **Rhetorical Accumulation:** The use of multiple similar terms or concepts to emphasize a point or express completeness, without necessarily implying distinct ontological entities.
- **Optative Mood:** A grammatical mood in Greek that expresses a wish or desire.
- **Wish Prayer:** A sub-genre of epistolary literature in which a wish or good intention is expressed, often directed towards God.
- **Tradutionism:** The theological view that the soul of a child is derived from its parents through the process of generation, just like the body.

- **Creationism (of the Soul):** The theological view that God directly creates each individual soul at some point (often conception), rather than it being derived from the parents.

II. Quiz:

1. Briefly explain the core difference between dichotomy and trichotomy regarding the constitution of humanity.
2. According to the source material, what is the primary biblical evidence cited in support of the intermediate state?
3. Why does the author consider the intermediate state to be "incomplete and abnormal"?
4. What are the two primary biblical passages often used to support trichotomy, and what are the author's main criticisms of using these passages in this way?
5. Explain the concept of "rhetorical accumulation" as it relates to the discussion of soul and spirit in Scripture.
6. How does the author interpret the use of "heart" alongside "spirit," "soul," and "body" in certain biblical passages?
7. Summarize the author's main argument against trichotomy based on the scriptural usage of the terms "soul" and "spirit."
8. What is "conditional unity," and how does it relate to the traditional view of dichotomy?
9. Briefly define traducianism and creationism as they pertain to the origin of the soul.
10. According to the author, what is the primary purpose of discussing the origin of the soul, even though Scripture doesn't explicitly state it?

III. Quiz Answer Key:

1. Dichotomy posits that humans consist of two parts: body and an immaterial soul/spirit. Trichotomy argues for three distinct parts: body, soul (seat of affections, etc.), and spirit (capable of God-consciousness).
2. The primary biblical evidence cited is passages describing believers being with Christ or the Lord immediately after death, such as Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23, and 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, indicating a separation from the physical body.

3. The author believes the intermediate state is incomplete and abnormal because humans were originally created as holistic beings (body and soul together) and will ultimately exist in this unified state again after the resurrection of the body.
4. The two main passages are 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. The author argues that 1 Thessalonians 5:23 uses "spirit, soul, and body" as a rhetorical expression of complete sanctification and unity, not distinct parts. Regarding Hebrews 4:12, the division of soul and spirit is seen as a rhetorical accumulation to emphasize the penetrating power of God's word, similar to the division of joints and marrow.
5. Rhetorical accumulation refers to the use of multiple terms (like soul, spirit, heart, mind) to comprehensively describe the inner life or being of a person without each term necessarily representing a separate ontological entity. It's a way of emphasizing wholeness or intensity.
6. The author argues that "heart" is not another distinct part of human constitution but rather an aspect of the inner person, similar to soul and spirit. Its inclusion in lists with body, soul, and spirit further suggests that these terms are sometimes used rhetorically to describe the whole being.
7. The author contends that Scripture uses "soul" and "spirit" interchangeably in various contexts, such as being capable of God-consciousness, experiencing emotions like grief, and surviving death. This interchangeable usage undermines the trichotomist definition of them as distinct and functionally separate parts.
8. Conditional unity is a modern version of dichotomy that affirms the two-part nature of humanity (body and immaterial part) but emphasizes their intended and future unified state. It acknowledges the temporary separation in the intermediate state due to death but views this as abnormal.
9. Tradutionism is the view that the soul is generated by parents and passed down to offspring. Creationism is the view that God directly creates each individual soul.
10. The author suggests that discussing the origin of the soul is important not to definitively answer an unrevealed question, but to guard against adopting principles related to these views that could contradict clear and important doctrines of Scripture.

IV. Essay Format Questions:

1. Critically evaluate the biblical arguments for and against trichotomy, focusing on the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12.
2. Compare and contrast the views of dichotomy and conditional unity regarding the nature of humanity and the significance of the intermediate state.
3. Discuss the implications of monism for the Christian understanding of death and the afterlife, and explain why the author considers this view erroneous.
4. Analyze the author's use of scriptural examples to support the claim that "soul" and "spirit" are often used as overlapping or synonymous terms in the Bible.
5. Explore the potential theological challenges and implications associated with both traducianism and creationism regarding the origin of the human soul.

V. Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Anthropology (Theological):** The study of humanity from a theological perspective, including its origin, nature, and destiny in relation to God.
- **Constitution of Humanity:** The theological understanding of the fundamental components or parts that make up a human being.
- **Ontological:** Relating to the nature of being or existence. An ontological distinction refers to a difference in the fundamental essence or substance of something.
- **Immaterial:** Not consisting of matter; spiritual. Refers to the non-physical aspect of human beings, such as the soul or spirit.
- **Material:** Consisting of physical matter. Refers to the physical body of a human being.
- **Incorporeal:** Not having a physical body or substance; spiritual. Used to describe the state of the immaterial part in the intermediate state.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the end times or the final destiny of humanity and the universe.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God.
- **Epistolary Genre:** Literature in the form of letters.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 8, Constitution of Humanity, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Constitution of Humanity

Q1: What are the main theological views on the constitution of humanity discussed in this source? The source primarily discusses four views on human constitution: monism (humans are one indivisible entity), dichotomy (humans are composed of two parts: body and an immaterial part, either soul or spirit), trichotomy (humans are composed of three distinct parts: body, soul, and spirit), and conditional unity/psychosomatic unity/holistic dualism (humans are two parts, body and immaterial soul/spirit, but their separation is abnormal and temporary). The author favors the last view as a modern and improved version of dichotomy that aligns better with the overall biblical narrative emphasizing the normal unity of body and soul.

Q2: What is the dichotomy view of human constitution, and what biblical support is offered for it? Dichotomy, or anthropological dualism, posits that humans consist of two parts: a physical body and an immaterial component referred to as either soul or spirit. The source cites biblical passages like Philippians 1:23 ("I desire to depart and be with Christ") and 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 ("to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord") as evidence for this view, suggesting an intermediate state where the immaterial part exists separately from the body after death.

Q3: What is the trichotomy view of human constitution, and what are the primary biblical texts used to support it? Trichotomy asserts that human beings are composed of three distinct ontological constituents: body, soul, and spirit. Proponents often define the soul as the seat of affections, desires, emotions, and will, while the spirit is considered the part capable of God-consciousness and communication with God. The main biblical texts traditionally used to support trichotomy are 1 Thessalonians 5:23 ("May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless") and Hebrews 4:12 ("piercing to the division of soul and spirit").

Q4: Why does the source critique the trichotomy view of human constitution based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23? The source argues against a trichotomist interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 by highlighting that Paul's use of "spirit, soul, and body" is likely a rhetorical device to emphasize the completeness and entirety of the believers' sanctification. The singular verb ("may it be kept") and adjective ("whole") modifying spirit, soul, and body suggest a unity rather than three distinct parts. Furthermore, the passage's wish prayer is compared to another in 3:11-13 that mentions the "hearts" of the believers, questioning where "heart" would fit in a trichotomist framework if spirit and soul are already considered distinct ontological parts. The author suggests that Paul is using various aspects of human nature, not necessarily separate entities, to convey the idea of complete sanctification.

Q5: How does the source address Hebrews 4:12, another key text used to support trichotomy? Regarding Hebrews 4:12, the source contends that the "division of soul and spirit" alongside the "separation of joints and marrow" is not meant to delineate ontological parts but to illustrate the penetrating power of God's word, which can reach the deepest aspects of a person's being, both immaterial and material. The author suggests this is a rhetorical accumulation of terms to emphasize the thoroughness of God's word's ability to discern even the "thoughts and intentions of the heart." Comparing "soul and spirit" to "joints and marrow," which are not exhaustive lists of the material body, further weakens the argument for them being definitive, distinct immaterial parts.

Q6: What is the "conditional unity" or "holistic dualism" view, and why does the author find it preferable? Conditional unity, psychosomatic unity, or holistic dualism posits that humans are fundamentally composed of two parts—body and an immaterial aspect (soul/spirit)—but emphasizes that their normal state is one of unity. The separation of body and soul at death, resulting in an intermediate state, is considered abnormal and temporary, necessitated by death. This view is preferred because it acknowledges the biblical teaching of an intermediate state while also stressing the holistic nature of human beings as created and as they will be in their resurrected state with unified body and soul.

Q7: What does the source say about the "intermediate state" after death? The source affirms the existence of an "intermediate state" based on biblical passages like Luke 23:43 (Jesus' promise to the thief), Philippians 1:23 (Paul's desire to be with Christ after departing the body), and 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (being present with the Lord when absent from the body). In this state, believers exist in their immaterial part (soul or spirit) with Christ. While this state is better than earthly life due to the absence of sin and being in Jesus' presence, it is considered incomplete and abnormal, as the ultimate and best state is the resurrection of the body and the reuniting of body and soul. The source also notes that Scripture mentions an intermediate state for unbelievers, sometimes referred to as an "intermediate hell."

Q8: What are the two main Christian positions on the origin of the soul, and what conclusion does the source reach regarding them? The two main Christian positions on the origin of the soul discussed are traducianism and creationism. Traducianism teaches that the soul is generated by parents through the natural process of reproduction, just like the body. Creationism, on the other hand, holds that God directly creates each individual soul, possibly at the time of conception. The source, following Charles Hodge, concludes that the Bible does not clearly reveal the origin of the soul, making it an open question. The more important concern is to avoid adopting principles tied to either view that might contradict clear and important doctrines of Scripture. Both views have potential theological difficulties, such as how a sinful soul originates if God directly creates it (in the case of creationism). Ultimately, the source does not endorse either position definitively due to the lack of explicit biblical teaching on the matter.