

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19, Works of God (Creation & Providence) Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19, Works of God (Creation & Providence), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture, "The Works of God, Creation and Providence," explores the Christian theological doctrines of **creation**, where God brings everything into existence *ex nihilo*, and **providence**, God's ongoing work of sustaining and directing creation. The lecture emphasizes that God's works reveal his glory and accomplish his purposes, focusing specifically on how God created all things through the Trinity and how he actively preserves and governs the world, even using secondary causes. Peterson also distinguishes the Christian view of creation from errors like dualism, emanationism, pantheism, and deism, and concludes by highlighting that God's providence extends to all aspects of reality and inspires various responses in believers.

**2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19 – 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 → Theology Proper:
God).**



**Peterson_TheoProp
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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19, Works of God (Creation & Providence)

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on The Works of God - Creation and Providence

Executive Summary:

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 19 of his Theology Proper lectures, focusing on the works of God in Creation and Providence. Dr. Peterson outlines the Christian understanding of God as the creator of everything *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and his ongoing role in maintaining and directing his creation through providence. The lecture emphasizes the glory of God as the primary purpose of his works and addresses several erroneous views of creation and God's relationship with the world.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Introduction to God's Works:

- Dr. Peterson introduces the topic by stating that after studying God's being (Trinity and attributes), the lecture now focuses on God's works, specifically Creation and Providence.
- He clarifies that the course will not cover Redemption and Consummation in detail but will address angels, Satan, and demons later, acknowledging their created (though some rebellious) nature.
- The fundamental principle is that "The glorious God is known by his works, which both accomplish his purposes and display his glory."

2. The Doctrine of Creation:

- **Creation *Ex Nihilo*:** The core of Christian creation doctrine is that "God, without the use of any pre-existing material, that is *ex nihilo*, Latin for out of nothing, brings into being all that is." This is a free act of God to communicate his excellence.
- **Scope of Creation:** God created everything, including "light, the earth, sky, water, vegetation, marine life, animals, angels, and everything else." Biblical support is drawn from Genesis 1, Psalm 148, Colossians 1:16, and Revelation 4:11. Psalm 148:1-5 is cited to illustrate the vastness of creation praising God, noting, "Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created."

- **Special Creation of Humanity:** God directly created men and women "in his image" (Genesis 1:27), highlighting their unique status.
- **Wisdom, Will, and Word of God in Creation:** Creation reflects God's design and order, coming into being through his wisdom (Jeremiah 10:12), will (Revelation 4:11), and word (Psalm 33:6-9). Psalm 33:6 states, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."
- **Revelation of God through Creation:** Creation serves as a witness to God's "eternal power and divine nature," leaving humanity "without excuse" for ungodliness (Romans 1:18-32).
- **Glory of God in Creation:** Creation displays God's "kingship, power, goodness, wisdom, love, and beauty." Revelation 4:11 links creation to worship and glory: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."
- **God's Eternal Existence Before Creation:** Psalm 90:2 ("from everlasting to everlasting, you are God") emphasizes God's pre-existence and independence from creation. Hebrews 11:3 underscores creation from the invisible: "the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."
- **Role of the Trinity in Creation:** The Father is the source, the Son is the agent (John 1:3: "All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created"), and the Holy Spirit is active in creation (Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4).
- **Rejection of Erroneous Views:** The Christian doctrine of creation rejects dualism, emanationism, pantheism, and deism.
- **Dualism:** Erroneously posits two eternal principles of good and evil. Peterson clarifies, "Evil is not a competing eternal principle with God, but is a distortion, an aberration of God's good creation."
- **Emanationism:** Incorrectly claims the world is an extension or overflow of God's being. Peterson states, "the creator, according to scripture, is distinct from his creation. It is not part of himself emanated."
- **Pantheism:** Falsely equates God with his world, saying "God is everything, and everything is God." Peterson counters, "God is not his world. Everything is not God."

- **Deism:** Mistakenly teaches that God created the world and then left it to run on its own without his involvement. Peterson emphasizes that "God not only makes the world but continues to uphold it and direct it."
- **Chief Purpose of Creation:** God's ultimate aim in creation is "his own glory," as affirmed in Romans 11:36: "For from him [creation], and through him [providence], and to him [consummation], are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." Colossians 1:16 also states that all things were created "for him" (Christ).
- **Intrinsic Goodness of Creation:** Genesis 1:31 declares creation "very good," meaning "Everything God makes is intrinsically good, not evil, including physical things." This refutes the idea that the body and sexuality are inherently sinful and challenges asceticism.
- **Humanity's Place in Creation:** Humans, as creatures, have "great gifts and many limitations." They are crowned with "glory and honor" and given "dominion" (Psalm 8:5-6), carrying the responsibility of stewardship. Acts 17:28 is quoted: "in him we live and move and have our being," highlighting human dependence on God.
- **Meaning and Intelligibility of the World:** The created world has "meaning, unity and intelligibility" and points to God's attributes.

3. The Doctrine of Providence:

- **Definition:** Providence is "God's ongoing work of maintaining and directing his creation," distinct from the initial act of creation.
- **Westminster Shorter Catechism:** Defines providence as "God's most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."
- **Two Aspects of Providence: Preservation:** God's work of "maintaining his creation." Psalm 104:10-30 is extensively quoted to illustrate God's provision for all living things. Colossians 1:17 ("by him all things hold together") and Hebrews 1:3 ("he upholds all things by his powerful word") emphasize Christ's role in preservation. God's preservation particularly extends to his people (Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Romans 8:28-39, 1 John 5:18).
- **Government:** God's work of "directing his creation toward his goals." Several scriptures are cited: Psalm 33:10-22 (emphasizing God's sovereignty over nations), Isaiah 40:22-26, Daniel 4:34-35, Acts 4:23-31, and Acts 14:12-17.

- **Concurrence:** God often works through the "free actions of people and other secondary causes" to achieve his purposes, rather than always acting directly. Examples include Genesis 1:26-30, 2 Samuel 12:1-15, John 6:1-13, Acts 1:5 (using human agents); Isaiah 1:10, 10:5-11, Ezra 1 (using nations); Psalm 104, Genesis 16:6-14, Luke 1:26-38 (using creatures and angels).
- **Extent of God's Providence:** God's providential care extends to "every area of his creation," including the universe (Psalm 103:19, Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11), nature (Job 37:5, 10; Psalm 104:14, 135:6; Matthew 5:45, 6:25-30), Satan and angels (Job 1:12, Psalm 103:20-21, Luke 22:31), nations (Job 12:23, Psalm 22:28, 66:7, Acts 17:26), animals (1 Kings 17:4-6, Psalm 104:21, 28; Matthew 6:26, 10:29), accidents (Proverbs 16:33, Jonah 1:7, Matthew 10:29), free actions of human beings (Genesis 45:5, Exodus 10:1, 20; Isaiah 10:5-7; Acts 4:27-28), and even sinful actions (Genesis 50:20, Exodus 14:17, Acts 2:22-24, 2 Thessalonians 2:11).
- **Reflection of God's Attributes:** God's providence demonstrates his "greatness, wisdom, power, truth, justice, and grace."
- **Inspiring Responses:** The doctrine of providence should inspire "our praise, delight, confidence, trust, awe, fear, and wisdom" (Psalm 111).

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of the doctrines of Creation and Providence, emphasizing God's sovereign power and his active involvement in the world. He clearly articulates the biblical understanding of creation *ex nihilo*, the Trinity's role in creation, and the ongoing nature of God's providential care. The lecture also highlights the importance of rejecting erroneous theological views that distort the relationship between God and his creation. Ultimately, both creation and providence serve to display God's glory and inspire a fitting response from humanity.

Further Considerations:

- The lecture sets the stage for the subsequent discussion on angels, including the fall of some, which relates to the created order and God's permissive will within his providence.
- Further engagement with the scriptures cited would deepen understanding of these crucial theological doctrines.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19, Works of God (Creation & Providence)

The Works of God: Creation and Providence

Quiz

1. What are the four primary works of God mentioned in the lecture, and which two are the focus of this session?
2. Explain the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. What does it mean and why is it a key aspect of the Christian doctrine of creation?
3. According to the lecture, how do the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit participate in the work of creation? Provide a specific scriptural reference for each person of the Trinity in relation to creation.
4. Describe two of the four errors regarding creation that the Christian doctrine rejects. Briefly explain the error and how the Christian understanding differs.
5. What is the primary purpose of God's work of creation, according to the lecture and supported by Romans 11:36?
6. Define God's providence as presented in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. What are the two main aspects of providence that are discussed?
7. Explain the difference between God's preservation and God's government in the context of his providence. Provide a scriptural example of God's preservation.
8. What is "concurrence" in the context of God's providence? How does God often guide history according to this concept?
9. According to the lecture, to what extent does God's providence extend? Provide two specific examples from different categories mentioned (e.g., nature, free actions).
10. How should the doctrine of God's providence influence believers? Name two specific responses it should inspire.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The four primary works of God are Creation, Providence, Redemption (or Salvation), and Consummation. This session focuses on God's works of Creation and Providence.

2. *Creatio ex nihilo* is a Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing." It signifies that God created everything without using any pre-existing materials. This highlights God's absolute power and freedom in creation, as he is the sole source of all being.
3. The Father is the source of creation (1 Corinthians 8:6, Revelation 4:11), the Son is the agent through whom all things were created (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16), and the Holy Spirit was active in creation (Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4).
4. **Dualism** wrongly asserts that good and evil are co-eternal principles, challenging God's sole eternal existence. The Christian view is that God alone is eternal, and evil is a distortion of his good creation that originated after the fall and will not exist in the new creation. **Deism** incorrectly teaches that God created the world with built-in mechanisms to run independently, without his ongoing involvement. The Christian doctrine emphasizes both creation and providence, affirming God's continuous upholding and directing of his creation.
5. The chief purpose of God's work of creation is his own glory. Romans 11:36 states, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen," encompassing creation, providence, and consummation.
6. God's providence is defined as his "most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions." The two main aspects of providence are preservation (God's work of maintaining his creation) and government (God's work of directing his creation toward his goals).
7. Preservation is God's ongoing work of sustaining and upholding his creation, ensuring its continued existence (e.g., Psalm 104 describes God providing for the needs of all creatures). Government is God's active direction and control of all things according to his will and purposes (e.g., Psalm 33 describes the Lord frustrating the plans of nations and establishing his own counsel).
8. Concurrence in providence refers to God working together with the actions of his creatures (both human and other secondary causes) to accomplish his intended purposes. God often guides history not only through direct intervention but also by using the free choices and actions of people and other created things.
9. God's providence extends to every area of his creation, including the universe (Psalm 103:19), nature (Matthew 5:45), people's lives (Acts 17:28), Satan and angels (Job 1:12), nations (Acts 17:26), animals (Matthew 6:26), accidents (Proverbs 16:33), free actions (Genesis 45:5), and even sinful actions (Genesis 50:20).

10. The doctrine of God's providence should inspire praise and delight in God's wisdom and power (Psalm 111), confidence and trust in his sovereign control even in difficult circumstances, awe at his comprehensive oversight, fear of disobeying his will, and wisdom in understanding his ways in the world.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the implications of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* for understanding the relationship between God and the created order. How does this doctrine differentiate the Christian worldview from other creation narratives or philosophical perspectives?
2. Analyze the interconnectedness between God's work of creation and his work of providence as presented in the lecture. How does the understanding of God as Creator inform our understanding of his ongoing governance of the world?
3. Evaluate the four errors regarding creation (dualism, emanationism, pantheism, and deism) in light of the biblical understanding of God and his relationship to creation. Why are these views considered incompatible with Christian theology?
4. Explore the concept of God's glory as the primary purpose of creation and providence. How do these works of God display his attributes, and how should humanity respond to this revelation?
5. Consider the practical significance of the doctrine of God's providence for the life of a Christian believer. How should an understanding of God's preservation and government shape one's attitudes, actions, and responses to the challenges of life?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Theology Proper:** The branch of Christian theology that focuses specifically on the study of God himself, his nature, attributes, and works.
- **Incommunicable Attributes:** Attributes of God that are unique to him and not shared with humanity (e.g., eternity, immutability, infinity).
- **Communicable Attributes:** Attributes of God that are reflected in humanity, though in a limited and finite way (e.g., love, wisdom, justice).

- **Creation:** God's act of bringing all things into existence by his powerful word, without the use of any pre-existing material (*ex nihilo*).
- **Ex Nihilo:** A Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing," referring to God's creation of the universe without any pre-existing matter.
- **Providence:** God's ongoing work of preserving, governing, and directing all things in the universe according to his wise and holy purposes.
- **Preservation:** The aspect of God's providence by which he upholds and sustains his creation, ensuring its continued existence and operation.
- **Government:** The aspect of God's providence by which he actively directs and rules over his creation, guiding it towards his intended goals.
- **Concurrence:** In the context of providence, the understanding that God works together with the actions of creatures (both directly and through secondary causes) to accomplish his purposes.
- **Dualism:** A belief in two co-eternal and independent principles, often good and evil, which is rejected by Christian theology's affirmation of God's sole eternity and sovereignty.
- **Emanationism:** The idea that the world originated as an outflow or extension of God's own being or substance, a view contrary to the Christian doctrine of a distinct creator and creation.
- **Pantheism:** The belief that God is identical with the universe and everything in it ("God is everything and everything is God"), which contradicts the Christian understanding of a transcendent and distinct creator.
- **Deism:** The belief that God created the universe but then left it to operate on its own according to natural laws, without his ongoing intervention or involvement, a view that denies the Christian doctrine of providence.
- **Asceticism:** A lifestyle characterized by severe self-discipline and abstention from worldly pleasures, often with religious motivations. The lecture suggests it is misguided if it stems from a belief that the physical body is inherently sinful.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 19, Works of God (Creation & Providence), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Creation and Providence

1. What are the primary works of God discussed in this session, and why are they significant in Christian theology? The primary works of God discussed are creation and providence. Creation is God's act of bringing all things into existence *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), and it frames the entire biblical narrative, from Genesis 1:1 to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation. Providence is God's ongoing work of maintaining and directing his creation. These doctrines are fundamental because they reveal God's power, wisdom, and glory and establish the relationship between God and the created order.

2. What does the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* signify about God and his creation? The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, meaning creation out of nothing, highlights that God did not rely on any pre-existing materials when he brought the universe into being. This underscores God's absolute sovereignty, power, and freedom in the act of creation. It also emphasizes that all of existence owes its being entirely to God's will and word, and that creation is not an emanation or extension of God's own being but is distinct from Him.

3. How does Scripture portray God's involvement in creation, and what is the role of the Trinity in this work? Scripture portrays God as directly involved in creation through his word ("Then God said...") and his wisdom and will. The entire Trinity is involved in the work of creation. The Father is the source, the Son (the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ) is the agent through whom all things were created (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16), and the Holy Spirit is also active in creation (Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4). This inseparable action of the Trinity reflects their unified purpose and divine nature.

4. What errors regarding creation does the Christian doctrine refute, and what are the key distinctions of each? The Christian doctrine of creation refutes several errors, including:

- **Dualism:** The belief in two eternal principles, good and evil. Christianity affirms that God alone is eternal and that evil is not a co-equal power but a distortion of God's good creation.

- **Emanationism:** The idea that the world is an overflow or extension of God's substance. Scripture teaches that God is distinct from his creation; it is not a part of Him.
- **Pantheism:** The belief that God is everything and everything is God, confusing the Creator with the creation. Christianity maintains a clear distinction between God and the world He created.
- **Deism:** The view that God created the world but then left it to run on its own without his ongoing involvement. The doctrine of providence asserts God's continuous upholding and directing of creation.

5. What is divine providence, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and what are its two main aspects? According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, God's providence is his "most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions." Its two main aspects are preservation and government. Preservation is God's work of maintaining his creation, ensuring its continued existence and sustenance. Government is God's work of directing his creation toward his intended purposes, guiding history and the actions of creatures.

6. How does God exercise his providence in the world? Does he always act directly? God exercises his providence through both preservation and government. While God can and does act directly, he often uses the free actions of people and other secondary causes to accomplish his purposes. This concurrence means that God's actions and the actions of his creatures work together to bring about his intended outcomes. Scripture illustrates this by showing God using human agents, nations, and even creatures to fulfill his will.

7. To what extent does God's providence extend, and does it include negative or sinful actions? God's providence extends to every area of his creation, including the universe, nature, people's lives, angels (both good and fallen like Satan), nations, animals, accidents, and the free actions of human beings. It even extends over sinful actions, in that God can use these actions to ultimately serve his purposes, though he is not the author of sin.

8. What are the ultimate purposes of God's works of creation and providence, and how should these doctrines affect believers? The chief purpose of God's works of creation and providence is his own glory. All things are from him, through him, and to him. Recognizing God as the all-powerful Creator and the wise and sovereign Governor of all things should inspire believers to praise, delight, confidence, trust, awe, fear, and wisdom. It should also lead to an understanding of humanity's creaturely dependence on God and the responsibility to be good stewards of his creation.