

## II. Israel and Corporate Personhood

Religious symbols are expressions of experience, handed down by way of a continuity of experience.

### Two approaches to understanding the meaning of a tradition of symbols:

- Beginning from present associations of meaning
- Beginning from the history of experience and symbolization

Beginning from present associations of meaning (e.g. Jesus was “the Son of God”:  
Milton, *Paradise Regained*: Father and Son look down from heaven...)

### Need to take into account the problem of bias or implanted cultural lenses — in this case, atomistic individualism.

Probably one of the most basic assumptions of the modern Western worldview is **atomistic individualism**, the belief that reality is made up of a vast number of indivisible units, and that the self is one of these.

Such modern, largely Western, “individualism” is fundamentally alien to the thought of ancient Israel, or early Christianity, of the Eastern Christian tradition, and also to Eastern thought generally.

See Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently—and Why*, chap. 3.

### Beginning from the history of experience and symbolization

Israel called to divine sonship.

Exodus 4:22 — Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

[23] And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me

Isaiah 49

[1] Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

[2] And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

[3] And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

[4] Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

[5] And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

[6] And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Jeremiah 1:4f. Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

[5] "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

...

[9] Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,  
"Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

[10] See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,  
to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Jeremiah 3:19 (*God, speaking to Israel*) — [19] "I thought  
how I would set you among my sons,  
and give you a pleasant land,  
a heritage most beautiful of all nations.  
And I thought you would call me, My Father,  
and would not turn from following me.

[20] Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband,  
so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the  
LORD." ...

[22] "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness."

Jeremiah 31:33 — But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel  
after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon  
their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hosea 11

[1] When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

[2] The more I called them, the more they went from me;

...

[4] I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as  
one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

...

[7] My people are bent on turning away from me; so they are appointed to the yoke,  
and none shall remove it.

[8] How can I give you up, O E'phraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel!

...

[10] They shall go after the LORD,  
he will roar like a lion; yea, he will roar,  
and his sons shall come trembling from the west;  
[11] they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,  
and like doves from the land of Assyria;  
and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD.