

III. Personhood and the Triune God

Last week:

We spoke of the 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.

(Quote from Richard E. Nisbett, The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently—and Why, chap. 3.)

In contrast: we talked about the idea in Israel of “corporate personhood” Israel as corporate “son of God,” the firstborn called to prepare for adoption of other “sons.”

Personhood

How is personhood conceived by atomistic individualism?

- identification with desires
- desire to be an object of admiration

What would true personhood be?

Freud: “Wo es war soll Ich werden.”

Existence as a true subject rather than as an object or a mechanism.

Christians believe that true personhood was revealed in Christ, the true self of all mankind.

What constitutes this personhood?

Being formed and animated from within by the presence of the Holy Spirit — the “breath” of life that “proceeds from the Father and abides in the Son” (St. John of Damascus)

How does this conception of personhood apply to us?

- To die to “self” (conceived as “individual ego,” our “self-interpretation” in terms of individualistic desire) and to rise to new life in Christ.
- To live within the Triune God (Love) and know God from within.

The Christian calling to true personhood “in Christ”

Jesus as “true Israel,” the one who lived up to the calling of Israel.

Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as corporate person, the “new Israel”

On Living “In Christ” in the NT

2Cor.1

[21] Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

[22] Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

2Cor.5

[17] Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

[18] And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

[19] To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Col.1

[25] Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

[26] Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

[27] To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

[28] Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

[29] Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Eph.1

[1] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: ...

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

[4] According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

[5] Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

[6] To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

...

[9] Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

[10] That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

[11] In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated [prooristhentes (προοριστω) = to look forward to, to provide for, to see from afar] according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

[12] That we should be to the praise of his [whose?] glory, who first trusted [proelpikotas = hoped] in Christ.

[13] In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

[14] Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Eph.2

[1] And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

[2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

[3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

[4] But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

[5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

[6] And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

[7] That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

[8] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

[9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

[11] Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

[12] That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

[13] But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

[14] For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

[15] Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace....

Rom.8

[1] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

[2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

[3] For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

[4] That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

John.14

[1] Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

[2] In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

[3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

[4] And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

[5] Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

[6] Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. [δι' εμου = "through" me]