

SPIRITUAL FRUIT AND INTERPERSONALISM

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In scripture, “*spirit*” vs. “*flesh*” stands for the interpersonal center of life in distinction to an egocentric or ethnocentric one. It is the transcendent vs. the imminent. The terminology evidently came about because flesh takes something into itself to find fulfillment. Persons, however, must give of themselves to find fulfillment. “Flesh” stands for an individualism that fosters a competitive mentality. “Spirit” stands for an interpersonalism that fosters unifying love.

Sanctification occurs mostly by dynamic increase in the process of interpersonal interaction. The spiritual exercises to produce that sanctification are various kinds of personal interaction. The spiritual fruit comes from social interaction. The products of sanctification have the character of what produces them—the law of the harvest, “*after their kind*.” Spiritual exercises contrast with individualism, materialism, or political process.

The fruit of the spirit (spiritual fruit) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trust/trustworthiness/faithfulness, humility, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Some are blessings from the other person(s); some are virtues we produce in ourselves; they are all interpersonal. They contrast with negative interpersonal experiences—fruit of the flesh: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, parties, envying, drunkenness, reveling (Galatians 5:19-21). The other virtue and vice lists in the New Testament contain comparable items separated out by the same flesh-spirit variable.

“*Fruit of the spirit*” in Galatians 5 means spiritual fruit in contrast to fleshly fruit. Spiritual means intangible, interpersonal, invisible, psychological, transcendent reality in distinction to tangible, impersonal, visible, material reality. The point is not that the Holy Spirit miraculously deposits them in the human soul, but that they naturally result from a new interpersonal orientation with God. All the spiritual fruits arise from fellowship with God, who is spirit (or “a spirit”; John 4:24). So, they do not depend on circumstance or fade with time.

Peace is not so much inner as inter peace. It comes from a sense of acceptance and well-being before God and his people. It comes from what is right and what lasts. Likewise, all for all the spiritual fruits.