

THE RELATIONSHIP OF INTERPERSONALISM AND DOCTRINE

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Sets the character of doctrines

1. Interpersonalism sets the context that establishes the character of individual doctrines and the practices that grow out of them within the living whole. Interpersonalism adjusts the sense in which some doctrine like the trinity is to be understood. It is not simply a formal threeness-in-oneness, but an interpersonal threeness-in-oneness.

2. Doctrinal teaching includes the nature of the One and the ones we relate to. It establishes the values and purposes that govern our relationship to Him and them.

Enlivens

3. Interpersonalism gives life to doctrines by plugging them into a larger whole that is more than a metaphysical construct. It sets up a real-world worldview that includes functioning as well as holistic understanding.

4. Interpersonalism fits with “education for use.” It gives rationale to the claim that knowledge (hence, education to give ideas) has not done its work until it has affected life in the way relationships call for.

Prioritizes

5. Interpersonalism prioritizes which doctrines are more central and which are less central to Christianity and its concerns.

6. Doctrines that have interpersonal behavioral correlates are the ones most “relevant” to Christian concerns.

Buys time

7. Relational considerations (attitude, trust, *etc.*) hold us in good stead until such time as we can get doctrinal accuracy worked out. It fills the gap in the interim situation.

Degree of accuracy

8. Interpersonalism determines what kinds of theological mistakes we can make and not be leaving the faith. Up front an awareness of interpersonalism helps significantly in avoiding mistakes. It redeems the errors in a direction that removes their dysfunctional character and keeps them from doing so much harm; it allows us to be conceptually wrong about some doctrines without destroying the kingdom. The kinds of errors that do not harm personal relationships and purposes are more usually tolerable.

9. The kind and degree of doctrinal accuracy is the kind and degree of it that fits with, establishes, maintains, and builds relationships. Doctrinal accuracy must exist to the extent required by the nature of relationship and purpose. Interpersonalism is an appropriate principle for determining the amount of “play” there can be in the system. It defines the range of things that may not destroy the reality involved.

10. Interpersonalism supplies the appropriate kind and degree of motivation for doctrinal accuracy.