

c. Irrationalism (improper thinking patterns)

Virgil Warren, PhD

- (1) Irrationalism occurs when feelings become the final frame of reference.

Viewpoints based on feelings can come from confusing feelings with the work of the Spirit. People do not consider changing beliefs because they feel that the viewpoint they have must be right. There is danger in supposing that the sense (feeling) of certainty is a reason for certainty—that the Spirit places it directly in the mind. There is no more reason to assume that happens in regard to a feeling than a thought. In either case, if people cannot differentiate between something planted by the Spirit and their own thoughts and feelings, they should not consider it divine in origin.

Perhaps intuition belongs here under irrationalism based on feelings. It means grasping something without deliberately reasoning to. It is equivalent to impression, something again that people may identify with the Spirit because they cannot explain where it came from. The Holy Spirit gets confused with subjectivism, uninhibitedness, spontaneity, intuition.

- (2) Irrationalism occurs when the laws of thought are misapplied—the laws of inductive and deductive logic.

- (a) Confusion between validity and truth

Validity means proper reasoning pattern; truth means corresponding with reality.

- (b) Confusion between primary proof and confirmatory evidence

Confirmatory evidence is useful for [1] limiting the range of possible views when primary evidence is not available; for [2] increasing confidence in the primary evidence; for [3] creating cumulative effect, where arguments and data are individually indecisive but become compelling in the aggregate (relative certainty, greater likelihood than known alternatives, opinion). As a matter of fact, much of what people believe is based on relative likelihood rather than on absolute certainty.

- (c) Confusion between describing and proving

- (d) Confusion between consistency and circular reasoning

“Circular reasoning” results from arguing on the principle of consistency as if it were deductive-inductive reasoning. “Correlation” differs from circular reasoning in that the two items stand or fall together because of more fundamental facts. The existence of the church correlates with the resurrection of Jesus. It is not circular reasoning to argue from the one to the other in the sense of consistency. In this case, since we know one correlate is true—the existence of the church, it argues for the reality of the other—resurrection. The only loophole would be if the first disciples could have “thought” Jesus resurrected when he did not—mistaken identity in the appearances, stolen body, mistaken

tomb. The likelihood of these possibilities people need to decide for themselves in light of other Christian evidences.

(e) All examples of formal and informal fallacies

(3) Irrationalism occurs when people espouse mistaken notions about the nature of language.

Interpretation is more than logic. It includes the nature of things and the nature of language.

(a) Confusing reality with words

(b) Supposing that different words equal different things

(c) Supposing that the same word always means the same thing

(4) Irrationalism occurs when people misunderstand divine sovereignty and invoke it against the need for divine self-consistency. (cp. *What the Bible Says About Salvation*, p. 465.)

People may say, “*I just read the text to you; I did not interpret it.*” The very fact that they read it in the discussion implies that it applies to that discussion.

For examples of “parity of reason” and consistency, see *What the Bible Says About Salvation*, pp. 306, 315.

d. Not caring about the issue. When people see no use for a concept, they discount it.

9. Distinction between understanding and belief (corresponds with the distinction between describing and proving on the presenter’s side)

christir.org