



Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion)

William J. Wainwright

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Between the opposing claims of reason and religious subjectivity may be a middle ground, William J. Wainwright argues. His book is a philosophical reflection on the role of emotion in guiding reason. There is evidence, he contends, that reason functions properly only when informed by a rightly disposed heart. The idea of passional reason, so rarely discussed today, once dominated religious reflection, and Wainwright pursues it through the writings of three of its past proponents: Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman, and William James. He focuses on Edwards, whose work typifies the Christian perspective on religious reasoning and the heart. Then, in his discussion of Newman and James, Wainwright shows how the emotions participate in non-religious reasoning. Finally he takes up the challenges most often posed to notions of passional reason: that such views justify irrationality and wishful thinking, that they can't be defended without circularity, and that they lead to relativism. His response to these charges culminates in an eloquent and persuasive defense of the claim that reason functions best when influenced by the appropriate emotions, feelings, and intuitions.

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