



Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists

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Historical observations of abolition have ranged from perspectives of contempt to acclamation, and now show signs of a major change in interpretation. The literature often has been dominated by hostile appraisals of William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionist leaders until the 1960s, when historians equated abolitionism may have fluctuated from one period to the next, most of this scholarship shared certain assumptions--that abolitionists provided pivotal factors toward the onset of the Civil War, that their internal disputes were intensely interesting, and that somehow they were emblematic of other generations of radicals in the American experience.

Today the scope of antislavery scholarship was widened to examine abolition in light of the social, economic, and political climate of nineteenth-century society and culture. This volume of fourteen new and original essays comprises the first survey of current directions in abolitionist writings and represents an advanced perspective in contemporary American historical research. The contributors include such well-known scholars on abolitionism as Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Leonard Richards, James Brewer Stewart, and William Wiecek.

The authors examine various dimensions of abolitionism from its religious context to its international effect, from its attitude toward the northern poor to its impact on feminism, and from wars of words waged with southern intellectuals to the bloodier conflicts begun in Kansas. These essays, rather than expounding a single revisionist attitude, include every major approach to antislavery -- women's history, quantitative history, comparative history, legal history, black history, psychohistory, social history. Antislavery Reconsidered allows both specialists and laymen a chance to survey recent scholastic trends in this area and provides for them the assumptions, methods, and conclusions of the best current literature on antislavery.

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