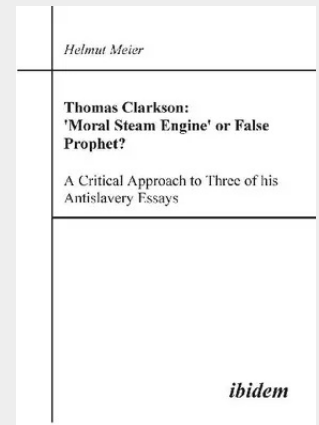


Thomas Clarkson

'Moral Steam Engine' or False Prophet? A Critical Approach to Three of his Antislavery Essays.

Although he put an immense personal effort in the cause of abolishing the British triangle trade, Thomas Clarkson tends to be overshadowed by his better known fellow-abolitionist William Wilberforce. Unjustly so - while Wilberforce acted as the abolitionist movement's spokesperson in parliament, Clarkson travelled enormous distances through all of England in search of public support for the abolitionist movement. His various essays and pamphlets made Clarkson the ideological mastermind of the British antislavery movement. Until the present day, Both Clarkson and Wilberforce rank among the saints of antislavery hagiography. Many scholars, however, have set out to discuss British antislavery in a critical way. This book examines in depth three of Clarkson's essays (An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species - 1786; An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade - 1788; Thoughts on the Necessity of Improving the Condition of the Slaves in the British Colonies - 1823) and shows changes in style and ideas. Helmut Meier tries to exemplify the links of abolitionist discourse and ideology to such phenomena as the rising of a new capitalist order in the late 18th and early 19th century, the Industrial Revolution, the emerging Imperialism of the period and the connected proliferation of abolitionist ideas around the world.

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