

The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké

Gerda Lerner



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Sarah Grimké, feminist activist and abolitionist, was one of the nineteenth century's most important feminist thinkers. She was the first American woman to write a coherent feminist argument, and her writings and work championing the emancipation of woman still carry a powerful message for contemporary women. In the view of historians, Sarah Grimké has long been overshadowed by her sister, Angelina. In *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, Gerda Lerner corrects this appraisal by placing Sarah's work in the context of the long history of feminist thought and Biblical criticism, showing that she was indeed a major figure and a pioneer. Based on her meticulous study of primary sources--Sarah's writings, letters, and journal entries--Lerner at last gives full credit to Sarah Grimke's contribution to the women's rights movement. As Lerner explains, "That Sarah's work came to us in snippets and fragments, handwritten on paper cut out of a notebook, embedded in the manuscript collection of her brother-in-law, unnoticed and forgotten for over a hundred years is typical of what happened to the intellectual work of women," but it is not indicative of her accomplishments as a major thinker.

The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké not only revises our appreciation of Sarah Grimké's thought and life, but it represents some of Gerda Lerner's most significant work in documenting women's role in history.

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