



Half Slave and Half Free, Revised Edition: The Roots of Civil War

By Bruce Levine



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this academic but accessible survey of the 80 years preceding the Civil War, historian Levine (*Who Built America: The Place of Labor History and Working People in U.S. History*) synthesizes a vast body of scholarship to show how the country's two different labor systems influenced economics, society, culture and, ultimately, politics. The North's free market nurtured "free will" evangelicalism over Calvinist predestination, and that evangelicalism clashed with slavery. In the South the slave system affected the planter class not only in religion but in entertainment and morality. Ironically, slaves "appropriated both the democratic-republican and evangelical Christian doctrine of the nation that held them captive and reshaped those materials into weapons of liberation." Northern unity was for years undermined by differences regarding the ethics of its own free labor system, but the South's demand for increased federal guarantees for slavery--to preserve its own economy--finally forced the North to confront the issue of slavery. That led to increased polarization and war, what black leader Frederick Douglass called "the inexorable logic of events." Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

In this vigorously argued narrative tracking the causes of the Civil War, Levine tries to explain what drove so many working people to commit themselves to the cause of freedom--Southern slaves by their efforts to resist bondage and Northern farmers, mechanics, and factory laborers by their support for free soil and free labor principles. By Levine's reckoning, the slavery issue overrode ethnic and economic concerns and made sectional differences almost irreconcilable within the framework of the Union. Levine succeeds in giving fresh views of the social lives of immigrants, slaves, and working people generally, but his preoccupation with the politics of slavery overwhelms his social history and makes disunion seem more predestined than it really was. Still, this is an eminently readable, intelligent book recommended for use in college courses and for purchase by college/university libraries.

- *Randall M. Miller, St. Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia*

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Review

"A skillful blending of social, cultural, and political history."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lee Durfee:

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Mary Gines:

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Jason Valladares:

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