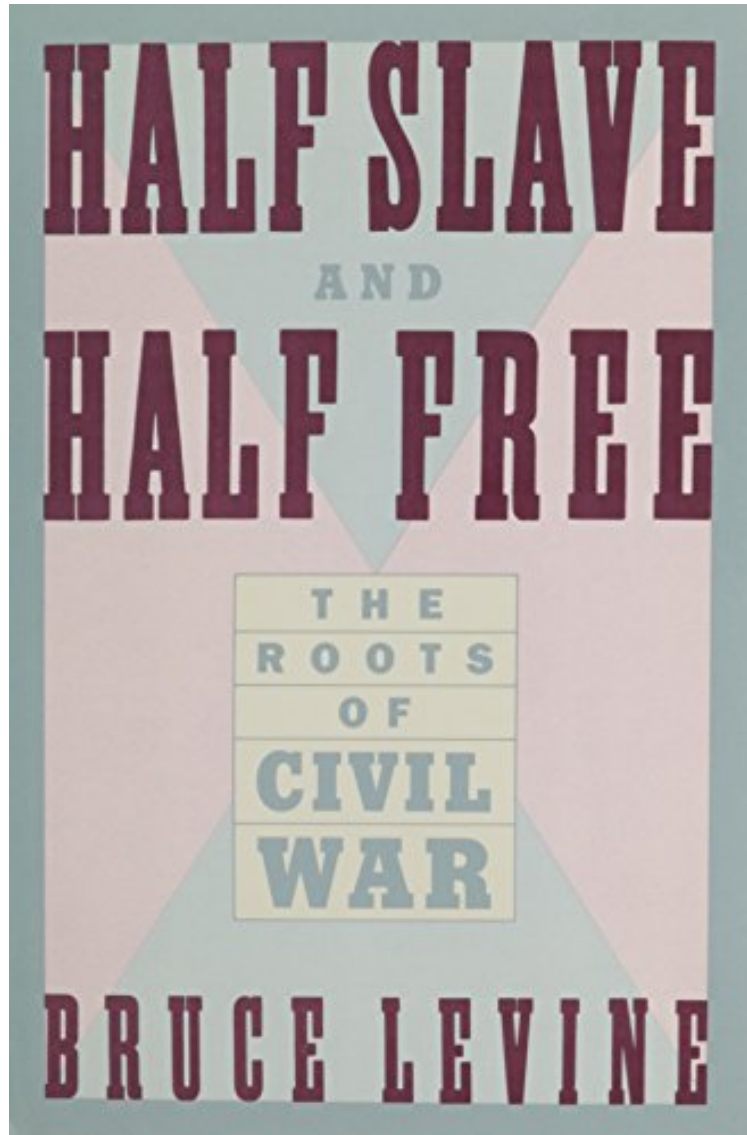


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Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War

Bruce Levine

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Bruce Levine : Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Levine Review #12By Scott JohnstonLittle do we see in modern scholarship a work of of lasting historical significance as Bruce Levine exemplifies in his monograph "Half Slave and Half Free." In his work, Levine nicely balances producing a deeply thought provoking work which applies toward research, as well as producing a work which has appeal to the masses of common-day historians. Though the book's

title refers to the North and South equally, the monograph focuses more on Southern life and economy and comparing it with that of the North. Levine shows a side of the the South that often becomes overlooked. It is easy to see the south as primarily agrarian based with its "Southern Gentleman" plantation owners, but Levine takes his audience much farther into the southern world. Levine provides a plethora of primary sources, mostly from southern planters but also letters and journal entries from central figures such as Jefferson Davis. He also incorporates a good deal of statistics and almost each time with a comparison to the North. Levin's work is a wonderful place for research because its loaded with primary sources. However, this can also be an enjoyable weekend reader. I would not suggest this to someone who has little knowledge of the Civil War. This is not a book to tell you this battle happened here and the Confederate Army did this there. This book, on the other hand does a WONDERFUL job of showing the ever growing divide between the northern states and the southern states. In the end, i do suggest this book as one to take you deeper into the Civil War... far past the issues of slavery. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By NonaVery enlightening book on American history 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Ellen ScanlinExcellent

Revised Edition With a New Preface and Afterword In a revised edition, brought completely up to date with a new preface and afterword and an expanded bibliography, Bruce Levine's succinct and persuasive treatment of the basic issues that precipitated the Civil War is as compelling as ever. Levine explores the far-reaching, divisive changes in American life that came with the incomplete Revolution of 1776 and the development of two distinct social systems, one based on slavery, the other on free labor--changes out of which the Civil War developed.

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 Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA concise and clear treatment of the diverse issues and social changes that precipitated the Civil War. Working largely with the results of recent scholarship on the antebellum period, Levine (*American History/Univ. of Cincinnati*; ed., *Who Built America?*, 1990) argues that the American Revolution occurred in two distinct stages. The first, liberation from Britain, came about only through a fragile alliance between separate social orders, one based on servile labor and the other on free labor--but the compromises between these systems (an integral part of the fabric of the Constitution), Levine tells us, failed to hold up as America expanded westward. The Civil War was the second stage, the result of friction that grew increasingly heated as other factors came into play. Changes in work life and cultural life in the North and South, Levine says, led to clearer class distinctions, sharpening the perceptions of laborers who toiled as free men and as slaves. Assessing the contribution to the debate from free blacks in both regions, from abolitionists and proslavery rabble-rousers, and especially from the hard-working German and Irish immigrants who had little use for plantation society, Levine sees the polarization in attitudes manifesting in specific political platforms, most notably in the rise of Republicanism in the 1850's as Whigs, Democrats, Know-Nothings, and other parties proved unequal to the task of curbing slavery. Intelligent, eminently readable sociopolitical history. -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.