

from 22 percent to 37 percent. Little Dixie farmers considered slavery essential to the profitability of commercial agriculture. Hurt documents the concern of Missouri slaveholders with abolitionism and the fate of Kansas Territory as well as the day-to-day problems of policing, feeding, clothing, and providing medical care for a slave population. Hurt interprets Little Dixie's support for John Bell, Constitutional Union party presidential candidate in 1860, as evidence of the region's devotion to a moderate solution to the sectional issue.

Perhaps unintentionally, Hurt inserts himself into the quarrel over the timing and extent to which frontier farmers moved from self-sufficiency to involvement in the market economy by repeatedly asserting that Missouri farmers wanted, from the very beginning, to produce their crops for market.

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*Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War.* By Bruce Levine. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. Pp. x, 292. Bibliographical essay, index. \$30.00.)

Bruce Levine describes his new book on the coming of the Civil War as a "resynthesis of social and political history" (p. vii). It attempts to integrate newer works in social and cultural history into a wide-ranging reconsideration of how sectional and intrasectional differences led to what the author calls the "second act of America's democratic revolution" (p. 14). Despite a fairly sophisticated interpretative framework, Levine sees slavery as fundamental to the complex political, economic, social, and cultural conflicts of the antebellum decades.

As the book's title and much of the text suggests, the paradox between liberty and slavery was a central theme of American history and a source of chronic and finally irreconcilable tensions. Joining James Oakes and others in downplaying the importance of paternalism, Levine views slavery as a mechanism for labor exploitation. Indeed, an interest in labor systems—and in the history of workers—is a powerful thread running through the book and one that distinguishes it from other works on this topic.

New material on religious, social, and cultural life in the North and South, however, is not especially well integrated with the more conventional descriptions of sectional politics. Moreover, Levine sometimes exaggerates the degree of sectional distinctiveness. For instance, he underestimates the influence of evangelical religion on more traditional notions of honor in the South and is too quick to accept some provocative but at times misleading generalizations found in a number of secondary works. To be fair, how-

ever, by painting a picture of sectional conflict with such broad strokes, the author is also able to make some telling points, especially about the tangled meanings of liberty for various groups and individuals.

On more conventional topics such as the territorial question, the breakdown of the second American party system, and the politics of slavery of the 1850s, Levine is often sketchy, episodic, and predictable. An exception is his skillful analysis of nativism and, curiously enough, his basic rejection of ethnocultural explanations for political behavior in the two decades before the Civil War. Again, he is especially good at examining reactions of northern working people to the political upheaval of the era.

As a new synthetic treatment of the "roots of the Civil War," *Half Slave and Half Free* adds a few new twists to a familiar story. The attempt to bring cultural and social themes into the analysis is ambitious and laudatory but not entirely successful. Useful for both general readers and undergraduates, especially for introducing important ideas from the most recent scholarship, Levine's book in many ways reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary erudition.

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*In the Hands of Providence: Joshua L. Chamberlain and the American Civil War.* By Alice Rains Trulock. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. xxii, 569. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

Civil War buffs and historians need little introduction to General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. His defense of the left flank of the Union army on Little Roundtop at Gettysburg, together with the chivalrous manner in which he formally received the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House, are legendary. A volunteer who rose to the rank of major general and never officially commanded more than a brigade, Chamberlain has since overshadowed many of his superior officers who commanded divisions and corps. His figure has graced the pages of numerous histories of the Army of the Potomac, most notably John Pullen's *The Twentieth Maine* (1957), Willard M. Wallace's *Soul of the Lion*, and Chamberlain's own numerous writings. Nevertheless, the full story of Joshua Chamberlain has never really been told until now.

*In the Hands of Providence*, by the late Indiana author Alice Rains Trulock, is, quite simply, the definitive biography of the modest professor-turned-soldier. Writing with a poetic prose that is reminiscent of Bruce Catton, Trulock recounts Chamberlain's life in microscopic detail, from childhood through his four postwar