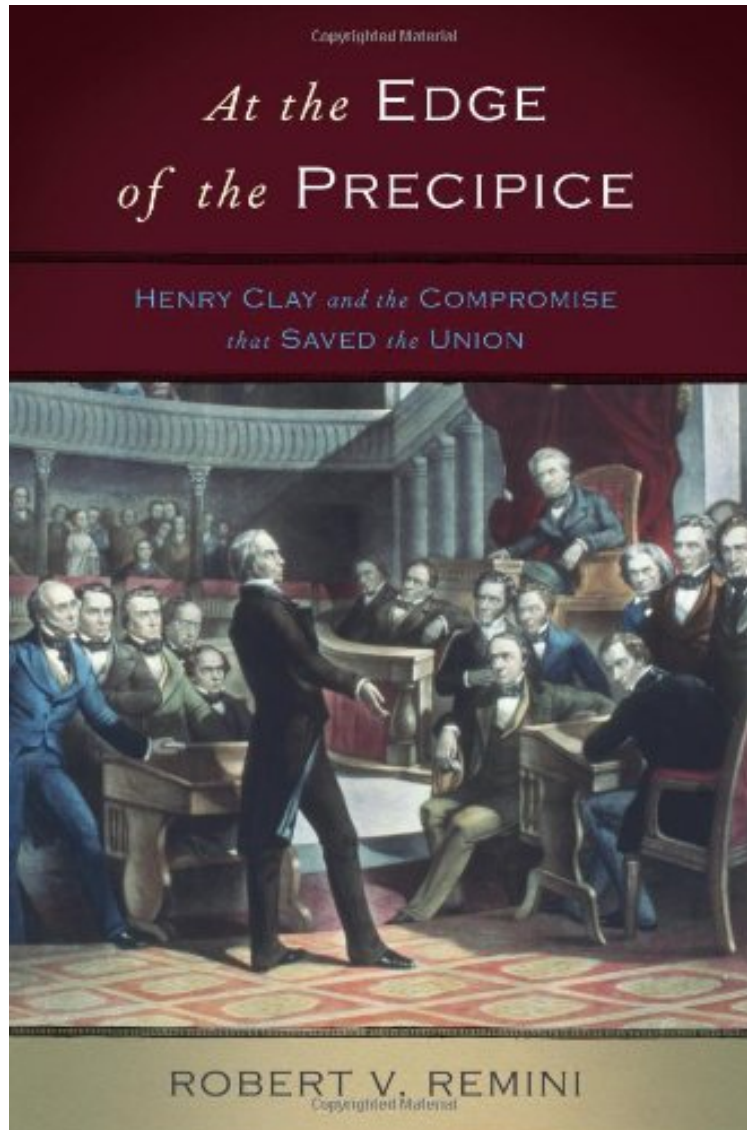


[FREE] At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise That Saved the Union

At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise That Saved the Union

Robert V. Remini

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Robert V. Remini : At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise That Saved the Union before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise That Saved the Union:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Required reading for today's politicians in Washington. By John Barell At the Edge of the Precipice is a well-written, concise history of how Senator Henry Clay engineered

compromises that preserved the Union, prevented secession, at least until 1860. This book by an Emeritus Historian of the House of Representatives presents the essence of various conflicts that would eventually lead to the Civil War: Federal Government and its powers vs. States' Rights; Human Freedom/Dignity vs. Property Rights; Omnibus Compromise bills that focus on a single problem vs. singular bills to deal with various sub-problems; "We, the People. . ." vs. We, the several States within the Union. Remini shows how Clay's battle to move away from party ideologies to focus on problem solving and, therefore, compromise, shows us the historical antecedents to today's similar conflicts, ones that have brought current Congress into gridlock, with some steadfast in their all or nothing at all approach. This book should be required reading for everybody in the US Congress, The House and Senate alike! 23 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Henry Clay and the Art of Compromise By Robin Friedman Henry Clay (1777 -- 1852) had his finest hour when he brokered the Compromise of 1850 late in his life. The Compromise resolved seemingly irreconcilable differences between North and South resulting from the Mexican War. The issues involved the expansion or the curtailment of slavery. By fashioning a delicate series of measures, the sections were able to resolve their differences for a time. When Civil War came ten years later, the North was much further along in industrialization and in political will than had been the case in 1850. The North also had bought time to find a new leader in the person of Abraham Lincoln. Thus, the Compromise of 1850 played an essential role in ultimately keeping the United States together. Robert Remini's short, elegant new book "At the Edge of the Precipice" tells the story of the Compromise of 1850 and of Clay's role in it. Remini examines the factors leading to the near break-up of the Union in 1850 that showed why compromise was both difficult and essential. He offers a detailed look at the legislative process and the play of various political interests in enacting the Compromise. Clay's strengths and contributions to the Compromise are emphasized as are his failings. At the end, it fell to Stephen Douglas to bring the process to a conclusion. Remini's book is of avowedly more than historical interest. He tries to teach a lesson about what compromise is and why it is important. To be successful, for Remini, a compromise must give each party something of value so that each may claim success regarding something of essential importance. Conversely, each party must be prepared to negotiate and not press certain matters that are of less importance. Polarization, distrust, ill-will and sometimes violence can be the results of a failure to compromise. In his Preface, Remini writes: "This point is especially important today when the nation faces myriad problems, both foreign and domestic, that defy easy solutions, and that will, in all likelihood, require both major political parties to agree to compromise their differences. With severe economic problems that threaten to pitch the nation into a deep recession; with other domestic issues, such as health care, energy, immigration, and social concerns such as abortion and gay marriage; with wars in the Middle East that verge on escalation throughout the region; and with terrorism rampant around the globe, compromise on the part of the nation's political leaders, and the leaders of other countries, becomes all the more necessary." We learn more about compromise as the narrative unfolds. Henry Clay had run unsuccessfully for president three times and had sought his party's nomination on two other occasions. Ill, elderly and discouraged, he reluctantly accepted a call to return to the Senate in 1849 after being denied the Whig presidential nomination in 1848. With no further presidential opportunities open to him, Clay acted with a large degree of disinterestedness. As a patriot and an American, his goal was to hold the Union together. Clay also saw that many issues divided the country and that a successful compromise package would need to deal with seemingly disparate issues. Thus, Clay fashioned a series of proposals involving 1. the admission of California to the Union; 2. the organization of the Territory of New Mexico 3. the boundaries of Texas 4. Federal assumption of the debts of the former Republic of Texas 5. the existence of slavery in the District of Columbia; 6. buying and selling of slaves in the District of Columbia and 7. a fugitive slave law to allow southerners to recover runaway slaves. The proposed compromises gave something to each party, and Clay fought for them with force and eloquence. After much debate including missteps along the way Clay's proposals became the basis of the Compromise of 1850. Remini offers lengthy accounts of the eloquence of the "Great Triumvirate" of the Senate -- Clay, Webster, and Calhoun -- as they addressed the proposed Compromise in their near final hours. He also shows how rising politicians such as Douglas and William Seward played a role in the Compromise. Douglas showed great political skill in securing the enactment of the components of the compromise as separate items of legislation after Clay, against his better judgment, had put all the components in a single package which could not garner sufficient legislative support. Seward gave a speech in the Senate which he invoked God and religion against the Compromise and its concessions to slaveholders. Remini's account suggests that such appeals are unlikely to be useful or successful. As a prelude to his treatment of the Compromise of 1850, Remini discusses compromise in the creation of the Union beginning with the Constitution. But he focuses on Clay's lifelong role as the "Great Compromisor" in which ideological extremes are put aside to try to achieve consensus. Clay had taken this role many times his life, especially in securing passage of the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and in helping to defuse the secession crisis with South Carolina and Nullification in 1832 -- 1833. Remini is the historian of the U.S. House of Representatives and the author of many books on American history which focus on the pre-Civil War Era. This book teaches a great deal about an important event in United States history and about a great, if flawed, statesman, Henry Clay. Equally important, the book is also a meditation upon the importance and the nature of political compromise. Robin Friedman 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Short Study of Critical Historic Compromise By Paul M.

LeonardExcellent short account of critical effort to pass compromise of 1850. It discusses Clay's strengths and weaknesses and role of other Senators such as Stephen Douglas.

In 1850, America hovered on the brink of disunion. Tensions between slave-holders and abolitionists mounted, as the debate over slavery grew rancorous. An influx of new territory prompted Northern politicians to demand that new states remain free; in response, Southerners baldly threatened to secede from the Union. Only Henry Clay could keep the nation together. *At the Edge of the Precipice* is historian Robert V. Remini's fascinating recounting of the Compromise of 1850, a titanic act of political will that only a skillful statesman like Clay could broker. Although the Compromise would collapse ten years later, plunging the nation into civil war, Clay's victory in 1850 ultimately saved the Union by giving the North an extra decade to industrialize and prepare. A masterful narrative by an eminent historian, *At the Edge of the Precipice* also offers a timely reminder of the importance of bipartisanship in a bellicose age.

From Publishers WeeklyThe National Book Award-winning biographer of Andrew Jackson focuses on Henry Clay, who as an aging, ill Kentucky senator spearheaded the Compromise of 1850, a complex balancing of Northern and Southern interests that averted Southern secession. The compromise guaranteed that California would be a free state and New Mexico and Utah free territories; gave Texas \$10 million in return for its relinquishing its claim to parts of New Mexico; the enactment of a more effective fugitive slave law; and the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. The compromise gave the North 10 years to industrialize and find a leader in Abraham Lincoln who could restore the Union. Clay, who also delivered the 1820 Missouri Compromise, emerges as a complex figure, a slave owner who regarded slavery as an evil that betrayed American values. He was an electrifying orator and remarkable statesman who lacked discipline (he indulged in carousing, gambling, and drinking). Not all readers will linger over the legal details of the compromise, but Remini ably dissects a dangerous moment in the nation's history and the remarkable but flawed man who ushered the nation through it. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistThe author of such definitive histories as *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (1991) here turns in a case study of the Compromise of 1850. It was not the first deflection of civil war by Clay, who engineered the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the resolution to the nullification crisis of 1832. But it may have been the Kentucky senator's most consequential compromise if, as Remini argues, it postponed for a decade a war the North could not have won in 1850. Describing Clay's view of compromise as victory for both parties and detailing the deadlock over slavery's status in the territories, which needed to be broken to quash secession, Remini recounts the strategy Clay devised to placate the South's grievances. Inaugurated with Clay's speech, soaring oratory by Daniel Webster, and a bitter rebuttal from the dying John Calhoun, the debate over Clay's compromise boiled until the death of President Taylor and the tactical talents of Stephen Douglas cooled down sectional acrimony and produced Clay's compromise. Condensed with well-dramatized brevity, Remini's account will captivate the American-history audience. --Gilbert Taylor Library Journal Award-winning historian Remini draws on his immense knowledge of antebellum American politics and sectionalism to give an informed and lively recounting of the (in)famous Compromise of 1850. Remini's great strength is making sense of the many and various personal and political interests entangled in the slavery issue and in showing how the great men like Henry Clay tried to manage sectional reconciliation and their own ambitions. Publishers Weekly Remini ably dissects a dangerous moment in the nation's history and the remarkable but flawed man who ushered the nation through it.