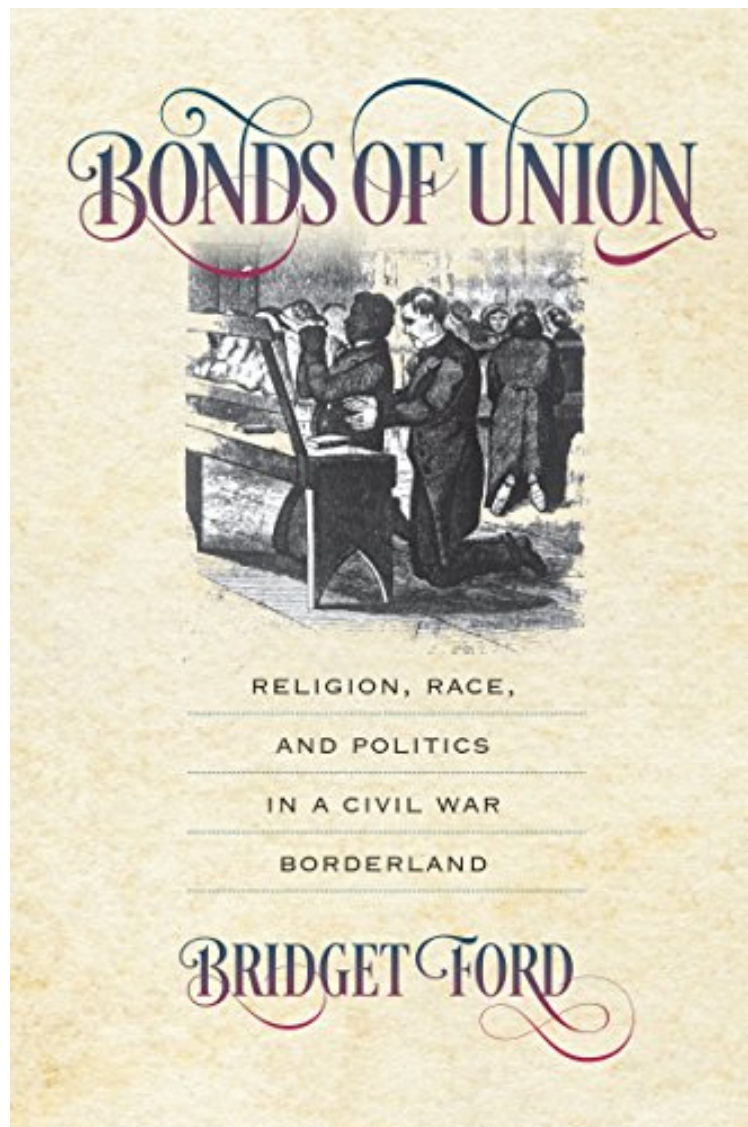


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Bonds of Union: Religion, Race, and Politics in a Civil War Borderland (Civil War America)

Bridget Ford

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This vivid history of the Civil War era reveals how unexpected bonds of union forged among diverse peoples in the Ohio-Kentucky borderlands furthered emancipation through a period of spiraling chaos between 1830 and 1865. Moving beyond familiar arguments about Lincoln's deft politics or regional commercial ties, Bridget Ford recovers the potent religious, racial, and political attachments holding the country together at one of its most likely breaking points, the Ohio River. Living in a bitterly contested region, the Americans examined here--Protestant and Catholic, black and white, northerner and southerner--made zealous efforts to understand the daily lives and struggles of those on the opposite side of vexing human and ideological divides. In their common pursuits of religious devotionalism, universal public education regardless of race, and relief from suffering during wartime, Ford discovers a surprisingly capacious and inclusive sense of political union in the Civil War era. While accounting for the era's many disintegrative forces, Ford reveals the imaginative work that went into bridging stark differences in lived experience, and she posits that work as a precondition for slavery's end and the Union's persistence.

A consistently engaging narrative rife with biographical vignettes on a variety of prominent leaders. Recommended.--CHOICE A strikingly unique take on the thirty-plus years of tumult that preceded and then encompassed the American Civil War. . . . Ford's study will appeal to a wide range of historians.--Journal of Southern Religion A sophisticated, compelling, and imaginative work of scholarship.--Journal of Interdisciplinary Study Reading Ford's study enabled me to add depth to my classroom discussions of the Ohio River Valley in courses.--Megan L. Bever, H-Net Help[s] to complicate our understandings of the past, reminding us how regional allegiances, ideologies, and social relations were often messy affairs at the margins of their societies.--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society Shows tremendous research skills and is well-written. . . . Will appeal to those who want to delve deeply into how two major cities in the Civil War borderland dealt with major issues of the mid-19th century.--Civil War News Ford's thought-provoking and complex Bonds of Union is a worthy addition to the flourishing scholarship on the role of borders and border identity in the Civil War era. . . . Worthy of recommendation to anyone interested in the field of cultural history and broadens the significance of her work.--West Virginia History In a sweeping tour of the Ohio River Valley, Bridget Ford furnishes an appealing and ingenious interpretation of the antebellum and Civil War eras. This fresh, original analysis of the conflicts and compromises that brought on and then ended the Civil War is presented in graceful prose, informed by perceptive readings of diverse texts, and enlivened with striking vignettes of individual figures.--Robert Gross, University of Connecticut A richly rewarding and fascinating book that provides a fresh perspective on the complicated connections between Ohio and Kentucky as a Civil War borderland during a time of great sectional tension and strife. Original insights and nuanced observations appear on almost every page--this is cultural history at its finest.--Alice Fahs, University of California, Irvine About the Author Bridget Ford is associate professor of history at California State University, East Bay.