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## Patrick N. Lynch, 1817-1882: Third Catholic Bishop of Charleston

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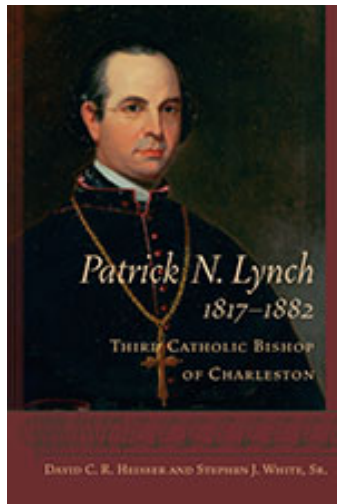
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**Patrick N. Lynch, 1817-1882: Third Catholic Bishop of Charleston.** David C.R. Heisser and Stephen J. White Sr. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-61117-404-5. 271 p. \$39.95.



The book, *Patrick N. Lynch*, takes readers back to the time of the Civil War while giving the reader a rare look at slave-owning clergy who both defended their actions and promoted slave owning too. It portrays a time when the country was in flux: the Civil War was raging on and there was strong anti-Catholic sentiment.

Lynch became the Third Catholic Bishop of Charleston at a time when South Carolina—and some neighboring states—had less than .3 percent Catholic population in their states. Lynch ascended to the office of Bishop of Charleston in 1858.

Lynch was the eldest son of Conlaw Peter Lynch and Eleanor Nelson Lynch, was one of twelve children. Lynch's two sisters, Anna and Catherine became nuns.

Lynch was certainly not the only religious man to obtain slaves. Southern bishops, religious communities, priests, and laypeople were slaveholders; as were some of their Protestant and Jewish neighbors. Slaveholding was legal and protected by state and federal statutes.

Lynch was a learned man, becoming fluent in seven languages as well as earning a doctorate in theology. He also was elected a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—and probably the first Catholic priest to be admitted to the Society.

The book “Patrick N. Lynch” portrays the horrors of the Civil War—how one of every fifteen white South Carolinians died during war; and how both black and white Carolinians were affected by food shortages during war.

The book portrays Lynch as being a product his environment, having grown up in South Carolina in a slave owning family. His parents had about seven slaves. The

book states that Patrick's parents were “benign” slave masters.

Despite his controversial practices, Lynch was, according to the authors, “arguably one of the most important and accomplished Irish émigrés in the history of Catholicism in South Carolina.”

Lynch justified owning slaves by asserting the alleged poor living conditions of free blacks; stating that emancipation also would lead to a race war that would lead to black American's coming in harm's way. Lynch defended flogging of slaves, yet said that flogging was the “fault of human nature, not the system of slavery.”

Bishop Lynch had bought about 95 slaves over time Charleston city tax records. Those slaves became diocesan property.

Lynch's status as a slave owning Bishop took new prominence in 1864 when President of the Confederate States of America Jefferson Davis appointed Lynch to be commissioner of the Confederate States of America to the States of the Church.

Lynch's role was to win recognition of the confederacy by the Pope.

Lynch's legacy of his diplomatic mission was “inconclusive” Lynch strongly believed in the cause he was advocating—yet his role cast him in an uncertain light among the Vatican—whom never endorsed the Confederate.

The book notes that how Lynch's homecoming to Charleston also included “restoring to diocese to a degree of soundness” after all the damage it suffered—along with its church goes—because of the Civil War.

Lynch was considered by some South Carolinians to have neglected his duties there while attending to his duties in Rome. The authors note how Lynch is much less well known than his predecessor, probably because of his own slave-practices.

The book, “Patrick N. Lynch,” provides interested readers a rare glimpse into the Civil War era. This book has an extensive bibliography.

It is recommended for academic libraries.

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