A CATHOLIC PROSLAVERY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

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Many studies concerning the religious perspective of proslavery thought in antebellum America heavily favor Protestant ideology. Different minority religions’ contributions to proslavery rhetoric in the old South are often overlooked or diminished in the light of the overpowering Protestant voice. This thesis analyses one proslavery perspective voiced from the context of the Catholic minority in the South in order to identify special Catholic nuances in support of slavery. Bishop Patrick N. Lynch, of South Carolina, provides an excellent example of a Catholic Proslavery voice. His Southern upbringing gave him an intimate relationship with the institution, resulting in his ownership of nearly one hundred slaves. As a slave owner and Southerner, Bishop Lynch defended the Institution of slavery

Bishop Lynch’s proslavery ideals were almost identical to his Protestant counterparts. The Reverend Thornwell, also of South Carolina, expressed very similar proslavery ideals despite his vocal and public disagreements with Catholicism. Bishop Lynch’s denomination influenced his views of slavery only in subtle ways, such as his
different approach to laws prohibiting slave literacy. By examining Bishop Lynch’s life and experiences Southern culture as well as his specific proslavery ideals, this thesis demonstrates that Southern culture and identity trumped denominational differences on the question of slavery.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1861, Bishop Patrick N. Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina, sent a public letter to Archbishop John Hughes of New York. Lynch blamed “[t]he dogged obstinacy of the Black Republicans” for the onset of the Civil War. He scoffed at Northern churches that “[took] up anti-slavery, making it a religious dogma, and carrying it into politics,” and wrote that “Catholics, might everywhere smile at this additional attempt to ‘reform’ the teachings of our Savior.” Considering the condition of slaves, he wrote that they were “more quiet and orderly now, if possible, than before.”

By the time he wrote this letter, Bishop Lynch had spent his entire life developing a proslavery worldview. He spent his childhood in South Carolina, perhaps the most proslavery and pro-secessionist state in the Union, where influential men in his life provided positive views of the peculiar institution. His father, an Irish immigrant, rose into the slaveholding class, and Bishop John England, famous for his proslavery letters to Secretary of State John Forsyth, took the young Patrick Lynch under his wing. Later when Lynch became the bishop of Charleston, one of his parishioners willed him nearly one hundred slaves. No other bishop was as invested in the institution, nor had

2 Lynch, 351.
3 Lynch, 354.
any other bishop implicated his diocese so deeply in the practice of slavery than Patrick Lynch. Bishop Lynch’s slaves were considered diocesan property. Thus by accepting the inheritance in persons, Lynch tied the fortunes of his diocese to the fortunes of slavery, a decision that would cost him and his diocese dearly when emancipation rendered the monetary value of this investment worthless. Because of his background and actions regarding slavery, Lynch provides an excellent example of a Catholic proslavery perspective.

Academia has thus far favored heavily the Protestant Christian voice when studying religious proslavery arguments. The recent and elucidating anthology edited by John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, for example, features writings exclusively about Protestants. Although Protestantism dominated the religious landscape of the antebellum South, the importance of the Catholic minority cannot be disregarded. In fact, Snay and McKivigan acknowledge this deficiency in their book, when they note that “not all aspects of the story have been covered. The response to the sectional conflict by the nation’s liturgical denominations, its many small, pietistic sects, or the non-Christian faiths has not been examined.” Catholics, in fact, played an important part in forming proslavery principles. Bishops like John England and Patrick Lynch were prominent figures, not only within

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their denomination but in the nation as a whole. They, like their Protestant counterparts in the South, felt it necessary to defend slavery.

Despite the doctrinal differences between Catholics and Protestants, they found common ground on the issue of slavery. The Reverend James Henley Thornwell, once described as “the Calhoun of the church,” makes an interesting comparison to Bishop Lynch. Although Lynch was an Irish-born Catholic, and Thornwell was a native-born South Carolinian and Presbyterian with strong anti-Catholic sentiments, they shared similar views regarding slavery. Both, for instance, owned plantations with many slaves, and both offered biblical defenses of slavery. These two clergymen argued that slavery itself was morally permissible, and they stressed that masters should be kind to their slaves.

Doctrinal differences between Catholics and the Protestant denominations, however, ensured that the persons from those various traditions brought their own special perspectives to the theory and practice of slavery. Lynch’s proslavery thought was influenced by the dominantly Protestant culture in which he lived, the morals he received from the Catholic Church, and the nativist attacks against Catholics. These factors shaped how he acted as a slave owner. Thornwell serves as a good representative of Protestant ideas about slavery. In 1844, he and Lynch engaged in a public debate about the inspiration of scripture. Although the debate offers only a small glimpse of their proslavery thought, it excels as a comparison of the differences in belief about faith and

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morals between Catholics and Protestants. Comparing Thornwell’s proslavery ideals with Bishop Lynch’s reveals important nuances between the two views and helps to clarify the latter’s special Catholic perspective.

It must be noted that Bishop Lynch’s perspective on slavery did not represent the official teaching of the Church. Many Catholic leaders, especially outside the United States, expressed antislavery ideals. At least two popes during the antebellum period voiced antislavery opinions. Like most Southerners, however, Lynch swallowed the ethic of his culture and displayed it in his own unique way. The same is true of Thornwell. To Thornwell’s credit, he may have momentarily flirted with the idea of gradual emancipation, but the evidence for this is scarce and questionable. Bishop Lynch also had some high ideals about what should be done with the slaves, but even he admitted that his plans would not work.

Comparing Bishop Lynch to Thornwell as a prominent southern religious intellectual therefore yields a greater understanding of Lynch’s perspectives on slavery. Since so much work has been done concerning the Protestant perspective, the focus will be preponderantly on Bishop Lynch. Major events in the South concerning slavery and involvement with important persons in South Carolina influenced Lynch’s childhood and adolescence. His early clerical career and association with Bishop England likewise shaped his views about the institution of slavery. The Southern culture, dominated by Protestant ideology about slavery, develop Lynch’s proslavery thought. In regard to the Protestant-dominated culture, the example of the Reverend Thornwell provides an appropriate comparison to explore how Protestants and Catholics differed in their
approach of the issue. Finally, Lynch’s role as a bishop and a slave owner, involving himself and his diocese deeply into the institution, nuanced his own views of slavery.
CHAPTER II

GROWING UP SOUTHERN

Patrick Lynch’s childhood provided him with a Southern social dynamic that promoted the institution of slavery. The fact that he grew up in South Carolina is significant. The list of Southern abolitionists is quite short, and those who did voice antislavery sentiments, like the Grimke sisters of Charleston, often had to move North to agitate. South Carolina in particular promoted slaveholding to the point of fanaticism, seceding from the Union and perpetrating war because of presidential election results. Lynch was raised in this culture in a well known, affluent, and slaveholding family. Early in life Lynch was present for the Missouri Compromise, the Nullification crisis, and anti-abolitionist violence in Charleston. Long before he ever wore the miter, he became steeped in a peculiarly South Carolinian stew consisting of these events, their legacies, and the general sentiment of proslavery.

On March 10th 1817, in Clones, Ireland, Eleanor McMahon, wife of Conlaw Peter Lynch, gave birth to her firstborn son, Patrick Lynch.1 Mrs. Lynch came from a prominent family; her mother was the cousin of Patrice de MacMahon, who would serve as president of the Third Republic in the 1870s.2 Aside from giving Patrick Lynch an

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2 According to Richard Henry Clarke, Mrs. Lynch was related to Marshal McMahon of France. Clarke, 68. J.J. O’Connell corroborates this information, elaborating that her mother Sue McMahon was the cousin of Marshal McMahon (who later became the President of France from 1873-1879). J.J. O’Connell,
illustrious lineage, this family connection counted for little. Eleanor’s father disinherited her for marrying Conlaw, whose family was not particularly distinguished. In fact, Richard Henry Clarke suggests that the Lynch family left Ireland because of this disinheritance. J.J. O’Connell, on the other hand, noted that the Irish patriot Daniel O’Connell had not yet succeeded in Catholic emancipation in Ireland, and the couple left because of religious persecution. Whatever the cause, and it is not improbable that a combination of the two factors accounted for it, Conlaw moved his family to America. In 1819 the family landed at Georgetown, South Carolina. Apparently Conlaw was a congenial man because he soon made friends with three prominent citizens, John Lyde Wilson, who became the governor of South Carolina in 1822, General Harrington, and Major Panney. It is unclear how the Lynches met Wilson, then a state senator, but he apparently befriended Conlaw and recommended the family move to Cheraw. Wilson gave Conlaw letters of recommendation to General Harrington of Marlborough, and the Lynches set off. En route, Conlaw became ill when the low river forced the steamboat to stop. Major Panney lived nearby, and he invited Conlaw to convalesce at his home where the two became friends. Once in Cheraw, Conlaw built a house in the pine woods. Given the Lynch family’s connections they probably were not destitute. Conlaw Lynch worked successfully studying architecture and building, and


3 Clarke, 68.
4 O’Connell, 132.
5 Clarke, 68.
6 ibid., and O’Connell, 128.
7 Clarke, 68, and O’Connell, 129.
8 In 1930 the Reverend Wilfrid Foley submitted a masters thesis to the graduate school of the University of Notre Dame concerning Bishop Lynch. He used as one of his sources a collection of letters in the hands of a Mrs. Powell M. Miller, Bishop Lynch’s niece. Miller’s collection of letters has since been lost. Although the Reverend Foley assured his reader that “references will be made to these sources with painstaking
“always employing good workmen.”⁹ There is, however, some uncertainty about the family’s wealth. Wilfred Foley, an early scholar of Bishop Lynch, did not mention Conlaw’s successful construction business, and he claimed that the Lynch family’s assets in this early period were limited to “a log hut . . . a cow, a few pigs, cleared-ground and plenty of work.”¹⁰ O’Connell’s description of the Lynches “handsome wooden house,” however, certainly does not suggest the squalor of a “hut.”¹¹ It is also hard to believe that the Lynch family could have been living a hard life with such prominent friends as described above.

In Cheraw, the Lynch family became something of a novelty because they were the only Catholics for miles around.¹² In 1819 there was only one Catholic priest in South Carolina, and his visits were so infrequent that the Lynches had to visit Charleston to have their second child baptized.¹³ To make matters worse, before the Diocese of Charleston was set up, “the church in Charleston was in open schism.”¹⁴ In fact, the entire state possessed “only one or two priests, who immediately left the field” when Bishop England came to set up his fledgling diocese in 1820.¹⁵ To show how scarce Catholics were in the region, O’Connell related an entertaining anecdote about a man

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accuracy,” he painstakingly quotes very little. Rev. Wilfred Foley, O.S.B. Patrick N. Lynch: Catholic Bishop and Confederate Statesman (Indiana: Notre Dame University, 1930), 4-5. The accuracy of Foley’s Thesis is seriously in question. On pg. 3, for example, he states that Patrick Lynch was “the second son of Conlaw Peter Lynch.” This is in conflict with all other sources which hold Patrick to be the first born. Foley does not cite this information. It is unfortunate that the letters in possession of Mrs. Powell M. Miller are not available as Foley must now be treated as the next best thing to that source.

⁹ O’Connell, 129.
¹⁰ Foley, 5.
¹¹ O’Connell, 29.
¹² Clarke, 69.
¹³ ibid., 68.
¹⁵ O’Connell, 42.
who “actually walked two miles after attending a camp-meeting, just to see a Papist, and whether he had the veritable ‘hoofs and horns.’”

Although Protestantism dominated the religious landscape of South Carolina, the Lynches remained true to their tradition of Catholic practices. In fact, their devotion to their inherited denomination outwardly seemed to thrive in spite of the lack of local Catholic culture. Despite the lack of priests, the family still recited prayers and learned catechism on Sundays, and their parents taught the Lynch children “at a very early age to silently shun heresy, and at the same time to learn a reason for the Faith that was in them.” At a young age, Patrick Lynch would use his father’s armchair as a pulpit and deliver sermons to his brothers and sisters. Certainly if the Lynch family remained faithful and orthodox amidst Protestantism and Catholic apostasy then it is not hard to believe that the priests who infrequently visited Cheraw were impressed. Bishop England, at least, was impressed by the outward show of faith the family expressed, so much so that he invited Patrick to study at St. John the Baptist Seminary in Charleston, under the bishop’s care. It is uncertain when Patrick began his studies there. O’Connell suggested that upon his first visit to Cheraw, Bishop England made the invitation. The seminary, however, was not established until 1824. O’Connell also referenced that the Lynch children attended school in Cheraw. At the earliest, Patrick Lynch could have been in Charleston anytime from 1824 to 1834, though he probably began his studies in Charleston at least by 1830.

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16 ibid., 130.
17 O’Connell, 130-131, and Clarke, 69.
18 ibid., 62.
19 ibid., 131.
20 Bishop England sent Patrick Lynch to study at the College of the Propaganda in Rome circa 1834. See Chapter 2.
The issue of when Lynch was in Charleston is important because his being there placed him in the center of proslavery thought in the South. Charleston was the vortex of a virulently proslavery South Carolina attitude. Proslavery sentiment manifested itself in South Carolina’s population throughout many slavery related crises. The Diocese of Charleston itself was born amidst slavery controversies. In 1820, the year the diocese was formed, the nation faced its first major crisis about the institution of slavery in the Missouri Compromise. Although Patrick Lynch, at three years old, was undoubtedly too young to take interest in such political matters, he grew up in a world colored by similar incidents.

The Compromise, which ignited a bitter sectional debate over slavery, left a heavy imprint on the mood in South Carolina. In 1822 an anonymous “South-Carolinian” penned a small book with a long title that defended the institution of slavery in light of the Compromise. The author made three points that especially demonstrate the prevalent attitudes of South Carolina’s whites toward African Americans. Displaying the author’s mistrust of slaves, the author wrote that constant supervision over the entire black population was “indispensable to [white South Carolinians’] safety.” The author also had a low opinion of free blacks, the very existence of whom the author regarded as “the greatest and most deplorable evil.” The author described their entire population as “an idle, lazy, insolent set of vagabonds, who live by theft or gambling, or other means equally vicious and demoralizing.” In contrast to the negative view of free blacks, the

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21 A Refutation of the Calumnies Circulated Against the Southern & Western States Respecting the Institution and Existence of Slavery Among them to Which is Added a Minute and Particular Account of the Actual State and Condition of Their Negro Population, Together with Historical Notices of All the Insurrections That Have Taken Place Since the Settlement of the Country (1822; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), i.
22 ibid., 82.
23 ibid., 83.
author regarded the condition of slaves as favorable. Arguing against abolitionist claims that slaves were in a deplorable state, the author wrote, “[T]he condition of the slave, so far from partaking of the misery which has been attributed to it, is in every respect preferable to that of the poor laboring class of people of any Government on earth.”

This was a widely used argument, and it demonstrates common feelings toward slavery in Charleston, if not all South Carolina. The anonymous “South-Carolinian” also discussed slave uprisings. Although a slave uprising would seem to testify against slaves being happy, the author argued that revolts were the result of northern agitation against slavery.

One such slave revolt that the author alluded to occurred in the very year the book was published. In 1822, white Charlestonians uncovered a plot planned by a mulatto freeman named Denmark Vesey. Vesey was a well-off carpenter who had been allowed to buy his freedom from the winnings of a lottery ticket he had purchased. He became angry about the lot of African Americans in South Carolina and thus planned a revolt. The official record of the Vesey plot reads much like a horror story. It is full of cartoonishly terrifying characters like “Gullah Jack,” a witch doctor who had tiny arms and legs, and a huge beard. Vesey organized slaves to revolt on a specific night. They were all to simultaneously raid Charleston’s armories, then kill their masters, terrorize the masters’ wives and children, and escape to San Domingo aboard merchant ships in the harbor. The news of such a plot must have been terrifying in an area where “Negroes

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24 ibid., 47.
25 See below, chapter 2.
26 A Refutation, 11.
outnumbered whites three to one,” especially among unkind masters.\textsuperscript{28} Michael P. Johnson, in his article “Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators,” argued that Vesey in fact did not plan an insurrection, but rather certain Charlestonians fabricated the plot in order to advance their political careers.\textsuperscript{29} Whether or not the conspiracy was real, however, is inconsequential. As Freehling noted, the horror caused by Vesey’s plot remained long after it was crushed in 1822.\textsuperscript{30}

Nat Turner’s rebellion in Virginia in 1831 similarly stimulated terror among South Carolinians. Unlike Vesey, Turner had some initial success. Turner recruited more than seventy slaves, and together they killed nearly sixty whites. Despite having taken place in Virginia, the rebellion caused panic throughout South Carolina. Rumors about uprisings in Cheraw and Georgetown spread, Union imprisoned much of its black population, the legislature formed a cavalry unit, and a vigilance association in Columbia “offered a $1,500 reward for the capture of anyone distributing incendiary pamphlets.” Like Vesey’s conspiracy, Nat Turner’s rebellion convinced South Carolinians that greater repression was needed for black Americans.\textsuperscript{31}

More than any slave rebellion, however, the nullification crisis in South Carolina shed light on the proslavery character in the state. The crisis was ostensibly about tariffs. Many proslavery advocates, however, imagined that if they could use nullification against tariffs, then they could also use it as an opportunity to hinder abolitionists without ever actually mentioning slavery.\textsuperscript{32} The most striking aspect of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} ibid., 11.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Michael P. Johnson, “Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly}, Third Series, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), 915-916.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Freehling, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{31} ibid., 63
\item \textsuperscript{32} ibid., 86.
\end{itemize}
crisis was the relative unity of white South Carolinians on the issue. No other state in the Union was as close to being of one mind about the slavery issue than South Carolina. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Lynch family was not immune to the prevalent sentiments in the state.

South Carolinians overcame class and regional differences to form a unity of thought in a number of ways. By 1830 many upcountry planters had transformed from “hard fisted” frontiersmen to more refined gentlemen. Wealthy low country planters frequently fled the stifling heat, humidity, and disease that oppressed their plantations in the summer, and sought refuge in the healthier climate of the upcountry where they mingled with its residents. Intermarriage between wealthy low country dynasties and upcountry planters created an aggregate South Carolina culture of kin. South Carolina College helped foster ideological unity since all classes of whites attended the institution and formed lifelong friendships. These factors meshed together to form a remarkably unified support for nullification in the state. A strong anti-nullification group, however, did exist in the state. Although South Carolina exhibited a remarkable unity on the issue of nullification, dissenters still played a role as an important minority.

It is unclear whether or not the Lynch family was for or against nullification. Their location in Cheraw put them in anti-nullification territory. In Chesterfield District, where Cheraw is located, only thirty-eight percent of voters in 1832 voted for nullification. The Lynchs’ ethnicity, however, could have put them within that thirty-eight percent. Most Irish in Charleston, for example, tended to be pro-nullification. The

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33 ibid., 19.
35 Rogers, 55-56, and Freehling, 19-21.
36 Freehling, 366.
all-Irish St. Patrick society in Charleston “was so heavily Nullifier by 1832 that Unionist Irish were driven to form their own Emerald Isle Society.”37 The Lynchs’ Catholicism probably played little role in their nullification views. Bishop England, for example, was pro-Union, yet his stance on this issue had little influence among his parishioners, and Catholics were “evenly split” about the issue.38 Patrick Lynch may have been more susceptible to Bishop England’s influence given the bishop’s relationship to him as a mentor. Still, Bishop England’s example shows that pro-Union did not equal antislavery.39 On the slavery issue, almost every white South Carolinian was united. Rich and poor alike “had too much in common to risk a quarrel. All types of slaveholders, and yeoman farmers who hoped to become slaveholders, wanted to protect slavery.”40

This uniformity of thought took shape during Patrick Lynch’s formative years. When the Vesey plot was uncovered, Patrick was five years old, and he was fourteen when Nat Turner rebelled in 1831. He was almost certainly in Charleston under Bishop England’s wing during the Nullification crisis. Because the sources for his childhood do not mention anything about Vesey, or even slavery for that matter, discussion about how he was affected by such events would be speculative. It is not unreasonable, however, to assume that these events played a major part in shaping Lynch’s views on slavery. His father was friends with prominent men in South Carolina, and Patrick probably absorbed the proslavery sentiment of the state through them. The Lynch family had certainly

38 Pease, 347.
39 For Bishop England’s pro-slavery writings see below, chapter 2.
40 Freehling, 22. Emphasis added.
assimilated into the slave-owning culture. Census data for 1830 shows that the family owned two slaves,\textsuperscript{41} and seven slaves in 1840.\textsuperscript{42}

Not all whites raised in South Carolina assimilated themselves into the dominant proslavery culture. For example, Anne Jemima Clough, an English girl who immigrated with her family, spent much of her childhood in South Carolina during this same time period, 1822-1836.\textsuperscript{43} Recalling her stay in Charleston, she wrote, “As time went on, I became more & more aware of the great evils of Slavery, the immorality of the men, the sufferings of the slaves.”\textsuperscript{44} Clough’s family, however, did not include slave owners. They did not make friends with prominent Charlestonians, but they did make friends with fellow foreigners like the British consul.\textsuperscript{45} Furthermore they were not permanent immigrants to the United States, but left when Anne was sixteen.\textsuperscript{46} Given the differences that Lynch’s family did own slaves, made friends among prominent South Carolinians, and considered themselves to be United States citizens, it is not surprising that Clough would concoct a totally different view about slavery than Patrick Lynch.

The culture that surrounded Lynch during his childhood and adolescence gave him a firm basis for future proslavery thought. His formative years were full of slave rebellion scares, and proslavery sentiment. South Carolina had a remarkably united proslavery attitude. As a member of an affluent and well known family in Cheraw, Patrick

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\textsuperscript{41} David C.R. Heisser, “Bishop Lynch’s People: Slaveholding by a South Carolina Prelate,” \textit{The South Carolina Historical Magazine}, Vol. 102, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), 242.
\textsuperscript{43} Mary Gallant, “Recollections of a Charleston Childhood, 1822-1836,” \textit{The South Carolina Historical Magazine}, Vol. 98, No. 1 (Jan., 1997), 56.
\textsuperscript{44} Gallant, 60.
\textsuperscript{45} ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{46} ibid., 58.
would have been especially exposed to these proslavery ideals. Though it does not
exonerate him, being brought up in this culture helps to explain his future proslavery
ideals.
CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW

CONCERNING SLAVERY

Prominent men in Patrick Lynch’s life filled his young adult years with influential opinions about slavery. Even silence about slavery was significant. In 1839, Pope Gregory XVI promulgated an antislavery apostolic letter, but was vague enough in his language to allow the American bishops a great amount of leeway in explaining its meaning. Bishop John England and Bishop John Hughes, arguably the two most influential Catholic bishops in the United States, both made public statements about slavery. The bishops, however, exercised caution as to when and how they approached the issue. They generally kept silent and only gave their opinions when they felt threatened by nativist violence. When they did speak about slavery they often argued less about slavery itself and more about the compatibility of Catholicism with American institutions.

Sometime in the 1830s, Bishop England sent the young Patrick Lynch to the College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome to finish his studies. The exact date when Lynch began his studies at the Propaganda is uncertain.¹ Lynch received a doctorate of divinity in 1840 and he clearly studied in Rome the previous year when Pope Gregory

XVI penned his famous apostolic letter *In Supremo Apostolatus*.² This letter, promulgated generally, strictly condemned the slave trade. Importantly, Gregory XVI also cited and endorsed previous popes’ condemnations of the institution of slavery itself.³

Pope Gregory XVI began the letter by stating his duty to dissuade all people from supporting the slave trade. In this introduction he admitted that the Apostles commanded slaves to obey their masters as they would obey Christ, but he noted that the Apostles also commanded masters to give their slaves what is “just and equal” and to be kind because masters themselves are subject to God.⁴

In the second paragraph, Gregory adjured the faithful to begin releasing their slaves. The Pope reasoned that since Jesus had taught that any act committed for or against the lowly would be like committing that act against Jesus himself, Christians ought to treat their slaves like “brothers,” and Christians “should be more inclined to set free those who merited it.” Although this qualification of merit suggests that the pope may not have been in favor of immediate and general abolition, the condition is akin to gradual emancipation plans entertained by some abolitionists. Gregory also claimed that since the time of the Apostles, through the workings of the Catholic Church in charity, few slaves existed in the major Christian nations. He blamed modern slavery on the greed and concupiscence of “some.”

We say with profound sorrow - there were to be found afterwards among the Faithful men who, shamefully blinded by the desire of sordid gain, in lonely and distant countries, did not hesitate to reduce to slavery Indians, negroes and

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⁴ ibid.
other wretched peoples, or else, by instituting or developing the trade in those who had been made slaves by others, to favour their unworthy practice.\textsuperscript{5}

In the body of the letter, Gregory recounted many past pontiffs who also took a stance against slavery. Most notably he quoted an apostolic letter written by Pope Urban VIII in 1639 that comprehensively anathematized anything to do with slavery. Urban VIII’s letter, Gregory XVI wrote,

severely and particularly condemned those who should dare ‘to reduce to slavery the Indians of the Eastern and Southern Indies,’ to sell them, buy them, exchange them or give them, separate them from their wives and children, despoil them of their goods and properties, conduct or transport them into other regions, or deprive them of liberty in any way whatsoever, retain them in servitude, or lend counsel, succour, favour and co-operation to those so acting, under no matter what pretext or excuse, or who proclaim and teach that this way of acting is allowable and co-operate in any manner whatever in the practices indicated.\textsuperscript{6}

Although it is only a small part of the letter, the clause “retain them in servitude” shows that the Holy See opposed the institution of slavery itself. The Pope reiterated his condemnation of all things related to slavery in his conclusion, and further added his own special condemnation of the slave trade.

\textit{In Supremo Apostolatus} was promulgated generally in 1839, and was read at the fourth provincial council at Baltimore that same year. Even though Lynch was in Rome when the letter was written, it is unclear how much influence it had upon the young man. Certainly he had no qualms about slavery in later life. Having been raised in the South and indoctrinated with antebellum Southern values, even if there had been a public outcry against slavery in Rome it may not have bothered him at all. Just as his family flourished in its faith as the only Catholics in Cheraw, he may have also thrived as the only seminarian in Rome who believed in slavery’s moral permissibility. It is just as

\textsuperscript{5} ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} ibid.
likely, however, that slavery was not brought up much at all while he was in Rome. He certainly did not bring any abolitionist ideals back to Charleston.

By some twist of fate, Lynch happened to be in Charleston for many of the crises that rocked the nation concerning slavery in the early republic. Almost as though he were being groomed to be a proslavery prelate, he had every opportunity to absorb the dominant culture of the slave states. He would have been far too young to take notice of the Missouri Compromise but he would have had a hard time avoiding its after-effects. He was most probably in Charleston for the entirety of the Nullification Crisis, though he probably missed its conclusion because of his stay in Rome. When he returned from Rome, Bishop England almost immediately presented him with another opportunity to cultivate proslavery ideals.

Bishop England’s influence on Lynch should not be underestimated. England was widely published and extremely popular among Catholics and Protestants alike. In fact, Bishop England’s influence was so great that he was honored in 1826 as the first Catholic bishop to address Congress. Bishop England himself had an interesting career with slavery. Describing the young priest in Ireland, J.J. O’Connell wrote that he was “[i]ndignant at oppression and intolerant of persecution.” England, “more than any other man in Ireland, educated the minds of the people, taught them to hope, and struck off the manacles from their hands, eventually emancipated the Church after centuries of oppression, and gained freedom of conscience for every man in the British Empire.”

Despite the enthusiasm, O’Connell’s description contains some truth about England’s

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views on freedom and slavery. Soon after his 1808 ordination as a priest in Cork, the young John England vocally supported Irish Catholic rights against the British government’s efforts to restrict them. He especially spoke out against the Veto, which would have given the English crown the power to block the appointments of Catholic bishops. In addition to fighting for Irish Catholic rights, England also spoke up for African Americans. In 1832, after having been in the U.S. for twelve years, England claimed that “no greater moral evil could be brought upon any country than the introduction of slavery.” Furthermore, Bishop England clearly cared about the spiritual wellbeing of black Americans. He even set up a school for free blacks in 1835. Why then would Bishop England, a champion of the oppressed and believer in the moral evil of slavery, ever consider defending slavery?

If taken in context, England’s proslavery ideals can be seen as an extension of his opposition to oppression that O’Connell described. Frank Saunders and George A. Rogers argue that his experience in Ireland, especially his support of Catholic emancipation, “a radical conception of a free church in a free society,” gave him a solid foundation for his episcopate in the United States. When England wrote his defense of slavery, he was doing it less to defend slavery and more to defend Irish Catholics against the sort of nativist violence that frequently plagued the Catholic Church in antebellum America. In 1834, for example, a nativist mob attacked and burned an Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, perhaps inspired by the Protestant minister Lyman

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11 Note that Patrick Lynch would have been absent from the diocese for this episode as he was already in Rome in 1834.
12 Saunders and Rogers, 306.
Beecher’s anti-Catholic sermon earlier that day. Bishop England himself experienced similar violence in his own diocese. In a Charleston newspaper announced that abolitionist tracts had arrived from New York. A mob broke into the post office and burned all of the tracts, but a rumor circulated that Bishop England possessed some of the tracts. The mob therefore threatened to burn down England’s school for free blacks. The Irish in the city rallied together, and defended their bishop and saved the school from burning. England, however, was forced to close the school, which he did under the condition that all other schools for free blacks also close. This episode demonstrates the sensitivity that southerners had in regard to slaves. In this case, the nativist rioters faced England with the choice of defending the rights of black Americans or defending the property of his diocese. As Saunders and Rogers aptly observe, the interests of England’s diocese won out.

When Lynch returned from Rome, Bishop England installed him as a priest at the cathedral in Charleston. Both O’Connell and Clarke in their biographies of Lynch wrote that he edited the *United States Catholic Miscellany*, a Catholic newspaper created by Bishop England, “for years.” Neither is specific, however, as to when he began editing the newspaper, or for how many years. If Lynch became editor as soon as he returned to Charleston then he would have been acutely aware of Bishop England’s

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13 Beecher denied that his sermon had anything to do with the burning of the convent since the sermon was delivered two miles away, but the coincidence of his delivering an anti-Catholic sermon hours before a mob attacked a Catholic convent is quite uncanny. Jeanne Hamilton, “The Nunnery as Menace: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent,” 1834, in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), 35, 63.
16 Saunders and Rogers, 318.
17 O’Connell, 124.
18 Clarke, 71; O’Connell “for some years,” 124.
letters to the secretary of state, John Forsyth. Even if he was not an editor at the time, however, he almost certainly still would have been conscious of the controversy. He was after all close to Bishop England and lived in Charleston where the paper circulated among Catholics. Furthermore, at the request of England’s successor Bishop Reynolds, Bishop England’s letters to Forsyth were compiled “chiefly from the pages of the Catholic Miscellany, with great pains and diligence, by Dr. Lynch and Father Huet.”

Bishop England’s controversy with John Forsyth began over Pope Gregory’s apostolic letter discussed above. At the Fourth Provincial Council at Baltimore in 1840, the Catholic bishops unanimously agreed to the apostolic letter, which they read in Latin, and then moved on to other matters such as the progress of the faith, Catholic education, vocations to the priesthood, the danger of riches, and other more strictly religious topics. In fact, there is nothing in the pastoral letter produced by this council that mentions slavery at all. That the apostolic letter excited little discussion among the American bishops is not surprising. A proclamation denouncing slavery would certainly have endangered Catholics living in a nation that had already demonstrated its willingness to attack Catholics and their property. Furthermore, the bishops were afforded an excuse to overlook the letter. They readily took advantage of the fact that the letter was not directly aimed at the United States. Instead it was written at the request of the British foreign minister, Lord Palmerston, an anti-slavery advocate who had previously persuaded Spain and Portugal to sign an anti-slavery declaration in 1815 that

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19 O’Connell, 117.
21 Ibid.
turned out to be impotent. The letter was targeted specifically at Spain and Portugal, the two countries still plying the slave trade in full force. Both Gregory XVI and his secretary of state, Cardinal Luigi Lambruschini, however, deemed it imprudent to direct the letter specifically at the two countries, as neither had diplomatic relations with the Papacy. Lambruschini feared that the letter would not be published if sent directly to Spain and Portugal. He also worried that sending the letter to the bishops of those nations would provoke their political leaders. The pope thus promulgated the letter generally, leaving it up to the individual Catholic communities to decide the intended direction of the letter. Given the charged nature of the debate surrounding the slavery issue and the tenuous position of the Catholic Church in the United States, it is not strange that the American bishops would brush off the apostolic letter. The fact that the United States had abolished the slave trade as of January 1, 1808, the first day it could constitutionally be abolished gave them a convenient excuse to overlook the apostolic letter.

There was, of course, that nagging clause the pope quoted that condemned those who retained their slaves in servitude. In September 1840, U.S. Secretary of State and Democrat John Forsyth wrote a public letter in which he capitalized on this point to discredit his party’s political opponents in the upcoming presidential election. In it, he claimed that the Whigs, who had nominated William Henry Harrison, had formed an anti-southern coalition that included American and British abolitionists, Irish antislavery

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23 Quinn, 70.
spokesman Daniel O’Connell, and Catholics. Fearing the nativist violence that could result from this address, Bishop England published a series of letters to refute Forsyth’s claims.

Taken all together, England’s letters to Forsyth are the most complete and exhaustive religious defense of slavery ever written by an American Catholic bishop. In his first two letters, Bishop England denied, first, the notion that there was a coalition in league with the Whigs to oppose the South, and, second, the idea that the pope’s apostolic letter condemned slavery, and not just the slave trade. He began by asking rhetorically if Forsyth proposed that there was “a co-operation hostile to southern interests between the abolitionist supporters of General Harrison, the British government, the World's [antislavery] convention, including the brutal O'Connell and his Holiness the Pope? And that, therefore, all these should be held in fear and detestation by the south?”

This question Bishop England answered negatively. To contradict the idea that a coalition existed between himself and Catholics in general, abolitionists, and Daniel O’Connell, he wrote,

> I have been opposed elsewhere in the performance of the duties of my spiritual office, by the leading abolitionists of the United States, upon the ground of my being a bishop in the southern slave-holding states, and for having reproved Mr. O'Connell's assaults upon our planters, more than eleven years ago: and my judgment and feeling are now what they were then.  

Similarly he left no room for doubt about any alleged connection between himself and British interests. He wrote,

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25 Forsyth had been invited to give an address at a meeting in Indian Springs, but an illness stopped him in Fredericksburg, Virginia. In lieu of the address, he had his letter published in a newspaper, the Augusta Constitutional. Saunders, 319.


As regards the anti-slavery folks in Great Britain, you may judge of my attachment to them and my respect for their love of liberty, when I tell you, that for years, whilst I resided in Ireland under the operation of the persecuting code of Britain, I witnessed the yearly display by the anti-slavery society of the preparation and presentation to parliament of two petitions; one for abolishing the slavery of the negroes in the West Indies, the other for riveting the chains of the white slaves in Ireland, by continuing to enforce the penal laws against the Roman Catholics.28

Aside from these refutations of Forsyth’s arguments, Bishop England gave few other remarks regarding an anti-Southern coalition. In fact this was only a minor point for England. His main purpose, and the purpose for which he devoted eighteen letters, was to show that the Catholic Church was not an abolitionist entity and that slavery could exist alongside religion.

His first task was to prove to Forsyth, and more importantly to the rest of the nation, that In Supremo Apostolatus did not condemn slavery. To do this England made a clear distinction between the slave trade, which the apostolic letter undeniably denounced, and *domestic slavery* that existed in the United States.29 He claimed that “[t]he Pope neither mentions nor alludes to this latter in his Apostolic letter which is directed, as were those of his predecessors, solely and exclusively against the former.”30 He wrote that the distinction was clear, that the pope’s words “traffic in negroes” could not be confused with domestic slavery. “[T]hat in the language of continental Europe, [traffic in Negroes] is precisely and exclusively what the United States knows as criminal trading in slaves: that it is not, at all, applicable to what is known amongst us as ‘domestic slavery.’”31 Thus Bishop England concluded in his first letter that the Catholic

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28 ibid, 14-15.
29 ibid, 16.
30 ibid, 16.
31 ibid, 17.
Church had nothing against the South or any of its legal institutions, no matter how peculiar they were.

Of course, England’s opinion that the apostolic letter only referenced the slave trade, and not domestic slavery ignored the two thirds of a million slaves who were ripped from their families and communities and traded South in the interstate slave trade during the antebellum period.32 No other American Catholic bishop seemed to notice this point either. The American bishops did not ask for clarification about distinctions between international and interstate slave trades from the Papacy during the Fourth Provincial Council at Baltimore. Perhaps the bishops took it for granted that the two were mutually distinct, or more likely, they may have foreseen adverse consequences from recognizing the glaring similarities between the two. Given his reaction to Forsyth’s letter and his history with nativism, it seems clear that Bishop England, at least, meant to ignore the similarity in order to protect his diocese.

Bishop England did not stop with one concise refutation. He had created a forum in which he could reassure anyone curious about Catholic opinion that Catholics could be good Americans, and he took the opportunity to do just that. In his second letter, he argued that the pope could not have been referring to slavery practiced in the United States or else the entire American Church stood to be excommunicated. He noted that if the letter had condemned slavery as practiced in the United States, then the bishops would be forced to comply and thus condemn slavery themselves. Instead they had read the letter at the Fourth Provincial Council in Baltimore, agreed to it, and moved on to other matters. England argued that if the bishops had found the letter to “contain any

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thing contrary to their judgment, respecting faith or morals, it would have been their duty to have respectfully sent their statement of such difference to the holy see, together with their reasons for such dissent.”

Likewise if the bishops had found that “it contained the correct exposition of Christian morality, and were aware that in the ecclesiastical province of the United States under their charge there existed practices in opposition to that exposition, it would have been their duty to use their best efforts to have such practices discontinued, and to refuse sacraments to those who would persevere in the immoral conduct which it denounced.” Bishop England further contended that “if this document condemned our domestic slavery as an unlawful and consequently immoral practice, the bishops could not have accepted it without being bound to refuse the sacraments to all who were slaveholders unless they manumitted their slaves.” Since none of bishops at Baltimore took any of these actions, and none of them expected anyone to manumit their slaves, Bishop England concluded that the pope could not have referenced the United States in his letter. Quite accurately he noted that the pope really directed the letter against nations that still practiced the slave trade, but England additionally contended that it was “not against domestic slavery.”

Bishop England went on to exhaustively explain, as he saw it, the Church’s stance on slavery. Using the idea of natural law, he described that many forms of slavery existed, for example, voluntary slavery, compulsory slavery of an invaded peoples, and domestic slavery that he argued was distinct from the other two. He claimed that slavery was not contrary to natural law, that natural law does not prohibit a man from

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33 England, Letters to Forsyth, 19.
34 ibid, 19.
35 ibid, 19-20.
36 ibid, 21.
37 ibid, 21.
voluntarily giving up his freedom to secure certain advantages.\textsuperscript{38} England did admit that “natural law does not establish slavery,” but he qualified this by adding that, “it does not forbid it.”\textsuperscript{39} Citing St. Thomas Aquinas, he wrote that “the distinction of possessions and slavery were not introduced by nature, but by the reason of man, for the benefit of human life: and thus the law of nature is not changed by their introduction, but an addition is made thereto.”\textsuperscript{40}

In addition to arguing that slavery was not contrary to natural law, Bishop England also described American slavery as benign. Adding his personal testimony to his argument, he wrote, “I know many slaves who would not accept their freedom; I know some who have refused it; and though our domestic slavery must upon the whole be regarded as involuntary, still the exceptions are not so few as are imagined by strangers.”\textsuperscript{41} Advancing the idea that slavery was not such a bad institution after all he wrote,

\[ \text{the situation of a slave, under a humane master, insures to him, food, raiment and dwelling, together with a variety of little comforts; it relieves him from the apprehensions of neglect in sickness, from all solicitude for the support of his family, and in return, all that is required is fidelity and moderate labor. I do not deny that slavery has its evils, but the above are no despicable benefits. Hence I have known many freedmen who regretted their manumission.} \textsuperscript{42}\]

Many other proslavery proponents extensively used these descriptions of slavery as a benign institution where the vast preponderance of slaves were well cared for and content. South Carolina’s John C. Calhoun, in a speech in the U.S. Senate, compared the condition of the elderly slave to that of the free
“pauper” and argued that the slave was vastly more comfortable. In a letter to an English abolitionist, James Henry Hammond, also a South Carolina politician, described in great detail how much “better off” the slave was from the wage laborer, a point also commonly asserted by other proslavery spokesmen such as George Fitzhugh.

Bishop England claimed that he personally did not agree with the institution. He wrote, “I am not in love with the existence of slavery. I would never aid in establishing it where it did not exist.” He even went so far as to quote St. Augustine, who wrote that “slavery is the consequence of sin.” Nevertheless, his argument remained that although the Church did not endorse slavery, it also did not forbid it. He explained the church’s stance on slavery from every standpoint he possibly could. In excruciating detail he discussed how the Church had regarded slavery throughout its history. He agonized over every instance of slavery in the Bible. In all of these minutiae of information about the church’s stance on slavery, Bishop England never condemned the institution.

It is apparent that Bishop England intended to continue his letters, but an illness that eventually resulted in his death prevented him. He wrote a short note explaining that he would have to stop drafting the letters, in which he stated,

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I have been asked by many, a question which I may as well answer at once, viz.: Whether I am friendly to the existence or continuation of slavery? I am not – but I also see the impossibility of now abolishing it here. When it can and ought to be abolished, is a question for the legislature and not for me.\textsuperscript{46}

In order to protect Catholics in a predominantly Protestant and often nativist world, Bishop England constructed a popular Catholic disposition toward slavery: ambiguity. He never spoke in outright favor of the institution, yet neither did he condemn it. Rather he held that it was a matter for the state to decide, and that a person could be a slaveholder and hope for salvation simultaneously. This ethic was mimicked by many other Catholic leaders in the United States, as they too battled against nativist prejudices. Bishop John Hughes of New York, for example, led a career riddled with ambiguity about slavery. Hughes did not address slavery nearly as systematically nor as directly as Bishop England, but periodically he did reveal his changing attitudes about the system. Like England, Hughes was born in Ireland. He moved to America and joined Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Maryland, where he paid his way by acting as overseer for the school’s slaves.\textsuperscript{47} Early in his life in this occupation, he developed a dislike for the institution, and published several poems lamenting slavery. In one poem, he wrote,

\begin{quote}
Wipe from thy code Columbia, wipe the stain:
Be free as the air, but yet be kind as free,
And chase foul bondage from thy southern plain; if such be the right of man, by heaven’s decree
Oh then let Afric’s sons feel what it is – to be.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

When Hughes moved to Philadelphia, his association with the Rodrigue family quieted these early abolitionist feelings. The patriarch of this family was an

\textsuperscript{48} ibid, 334.
émigré from the Haitian Revolution. He no doubt recounted horrors from Santo Domingo changing Hughes’s attitude toward slavery. Hughes commissioned William Rodrigue, an architect, to build the Cathedral of St John in Philadelphia. Later this same William married Hughes’s sister Margaret. By the time Hughes had been appointed bishop of New York, he had been “all but adopted” by the Rodrigues.

In the early 1840s, Hughes first waded into the debates about slavery following efforts by William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, two prominent abolitionists, to convert Boston’s Irish-American minority to abolitionism. At the end of a speech at a Faneuil Hall meeting, Phillips cited Gregory XVI’s apostolic letter in order to appeal to the immigrants’ religion. Like Bishop England, Hughes, fearing nativist backlash, reacted to the meeting. In his response, Bishop Hughes largely ignored the reference to the apostolic letter and instead focused on a letter written by Daniel O’Connell, an Irish patriot, and signed by 60,000 Irish supporters of abolition, which Phillips also presented at the Faneuil meeting. Hughes rejected this letter as a possible forgery, and he argued that it was wrong to address Irish-Americans as being separate from other Americans. He asserted that Irish-Americans were first and foremost Americans.

Bishop Hughes’s response to Phillips said little about slavery itself, which accords with his remarkable silence on the issue, a silence he shared with many other of his fellow American bishops. It is surprising that a man as vocal and forceful as Hughes

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49 ibid, 109.
50 ibid, 334.
51 ibid, 75.
52 John F. Quinn, “‘Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope!’: American Reaction to Gregory XVI’s Condemnation of the Slave Trade, 1840-1860,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (Jan., 2004), 81-82.
should remain relatively mute. His private papers contain a document entitled “Notes on slavery” in which he gave a brief summary of his views on the institution. He noted that the slave trade had been condemned by Gregory XVI, but he insisted on the permissibility of domestic slavery where it already existed. He wrote that neither the master nor the slave should be blamed for his respective condition, and that the master owed his slave benevolence while the slave owed his master obedience. He stressed the rights of property and promoted a plan of gradual emancipation, but he also noted that the issue of race would be a problem in a post-slavery society.53

Hughes rarely recorded his indefinite stance on slavery. The few times he did speak he showed ambivalence toward the institution. In 1854, he told his congregation,

While we all know that this condition of slavery is an evil, yet it is not an absolute and unmitigated evil; and even if it were anything more than what it is – a comparative evil – there is one thing, that it is infinitely better than the condition in which this people would have been, had they not been seized to gratify the avarice and cupidity of the white man.54

Claiming that he was “no friend of slavery,” he worried about the spiritual condition of slaves.55 The extreme harshness of slaves’ labor and of the discipline commonly used against slaves upset Hughes. Furthermore, that the sanctity of marriage could be broken up in an instant should a slave be sold distressed him.56 In a debate with John Breckinridge, the vice president under James Buchanan, Hughes recognized the incongruity of American principles of liberty and the existence of slavery: “when you wished to pay a compliment to our memorable Declaration of Independence were you not

55 Sharrow, 258.
56 Ibid.
rather unfortunate in coupling it with an allusion to the question of slavery? . . . It reminds me of the Negro slave, who, on his way to Georgia, shook his manacled hands at the capital and began to sing 'Hail Columbia, Happy Land.'"  

On the other hand, in an argument with reformer Orestes Brownson, he painted the slave trade as a comparative good: “we of course believe that no genuine Christian, no decent man – would be engaged in this kind of business; still, we cannot discover the crime, even of the slaver, in snatching them from the butcheries of their native land.”

Concerning the duties of the master toward his slave, Hughes adhered to the paternalist view of slavery. He “stressed the heavy burdens of authority which the master had incurred from God.” By the same token, he “looked somewhat longingly at the element of security and predictability in the slave’s life.” As Walter Sharrow pointed out, however, these ideals were totally inconsistent with the reality of the issue, and it is doubtful that Hughes was truly ignorant of this fact.

The Catholic bishops’ silence regarding slavery often mimicking the gag rule in Congress, and their ambiguity when they did address the issue shows that they had an important secondary job in the United States, protecting the lives and property of Catholics. One way in which they sought to do this was to stress that Catholicism was not contrary to the values of American democracy. As Timothy Byrnes states, “the bishops served as apologists for the compatibility of Catholic doctrine with American

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57 Shaw, 89.
58 ibid, 344.
59 Sharrow, 260.
political principles. Convinced that good Catholics could also be good Americans, the bishops defended the separation of church and state. "60

Patrick Lynch spent his first years as a priest in this world of silence and ambiguity. It is uncertain how much influence clergymen like Pope Gregory XVI, Bishop England, or Bishop Hughes exercised over the newly ordained Patrick Lynch. Although Gregory XVI penned an antislavery apostolic letter, it probably had little effect on Lynch given the pope’s language stressing the slave trade and Bishop England’s subsequent explanation of the letter. England clearly had much more influence over Lynch, as he did over American Catholicism as a whole. Lynch’s proximity to and relationship with Bishop England may account for the fact that Lynch remained remarkably silent about slavery in the United States. Aside from passing references, he never brought it up publicly until 1864 when he accepted a commission from the Confederacy specifically to soften the image of slavery in Europe. Even then Lynch displayed Bishop England’s influence on his ideals by borrowing to the point of plagiarism England’s arguments about the benignity of slavery.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUTHERN VANTAGE POINT

In 1844, Patrick Lynch crossed pens with the Reverend James Henley Thornwell, one of the most influential Protestant thinkers in South Carolina. In 1841, Thornwell had published an essay arguing against the canonical status of the Apocrypha. Patrick Lynch, fresh from Rome and ready to flex his debating muscles, found this same essay in a South Carolina newspaper and used his position as editor of the United States Catholic Miscellany to oppose Thornwell’s claims against the Apocrypha. The ensuing debate revealed much about the two clergymen, and even their views on slavery. Although they represented different and often hostile faith traditions, Lynch and Thornwell both spent their lives in a culture that demanded they have similar attitudes toward the peculiar institution.

Unlike Patrick Lynch, Thornwell did not come from a wealthy family. His father worked as a slave overseer, and he did not accumulate much wealth in that position. When Thornwell was eight-years old, his father died leaving the family with

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1 James Henley Thornwell, The Arguments of Romanists from the Infallibility of the Church and the Testimony of the Fathers in Behalf of the Apocrypha Discussed and Refuted (New York: Leavitt & Trow Company, 1845), 7. Catholics refer to the seven disputed books known commonly as the Apocrypha as the deuterocanonical books for the obvious reason that they do not consider the books to be apocryphal. For the purposes of this thesis the word “Apocrypha” will be used in reference to these seven books.

2 Benjamin Palmer wrote, “Of his father little can be gathered . . . He is described as generous in disposition, free-handed and hospitable, living always up to his means, and accumulating nothing.” Benjamin M. Palmer, The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL.D., Ex-President of the South Carolina College, Late Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1875), 3.
little other than one slave, and his mother was forced to work at weaving and sewing.\textsuperscript{3}

During this life of poverty, Thornwell began to show his intellectual gifts at an early age. Between 1821 and 1823 his scholarly character impressed his teachers at the country school he attended.\textsuperscript{4} He soon came under the care of two men who supported him until he graduated from the South Carolina College.\textsuperscript{5} These men, General James Gillespie and William Henry Robbins, lived in Cheraw, and Thornwell apprenticed at Robbins’s law firm.\textsuperscript{6} When Thornwell was sixteen, he decided to give up law for theology.\textsuperscript{7} He graduated from the South Carolina College at the top of his class in 1831.\textsuperscript{8} Although he had anticipated a career in theology at an early age, he did not become interested in Presbyterianism until 1832 and by 1840 he was a prominent member of the Presbyterian Church.\textsuperscript{9}

In physical appearance Thornwell and Lynch had little in common. Whereas biographers described Lynch as “a conspicuous figure . . . by his grand, majestic, and senatorial appearance and bearing,” Thornwell was “hopelessly lean,” and attempts to photograph him “produced only a queer and grotesque characterature [sic].”\textsuperscript{10}

Intellectually, however, the two were much of the same caliber. In their debate over the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[3] Palmer, 3 and 14.
\item[4] Palmer, 17. As a point of interest, one of his teachers, Eugene Kinnon, was an Irish Roman Catholic.
\item[6] Farmer, 42.
\item[7] Farmer, 42-43.
\item[8] Farmer, 47.
\item[9] Farmer, 47 and, 57.
\item[10] For Lynch, see Clarke, 76. For Thornwell, Farmer, 44.
\end{footnotes}
Apocrypha, both men claimed to have roundly defeated the other, and no doubt they were both correct.\textsuperscript{11}

The controversy began when Thornwell published a short essay in \textit{The Spirit of the Nineteenth Century} simply titled “The Apocryphal Books.”\textsuperscript{12} He approached his topic from the “high vantage ground of Protestantism.”\textsuperscript{13} He began by severely rebuking the Catholic Church for having upheld the canonical status of the Apocryphal books at the Council of Trent. He wrote, “In nothing is the intolerable arrogance of the Church of Rome more strikingly displayed, than in the authority which, if she does not formally claim, she yet pretends to exercise, of dispensing the Holy Ghost not merely to men themselves, but also to their writings.”\textsuperscript{14} He argued, rather acerbically, that “those who are not yet fastened as captives to the car of Rome,” that is “any candid and unprejudiced mind” should apprehend that the Apocryphal books were not canonical.\textsuperscript{15} He contended that no one fitting this description of clear mindedness could “believe that these books proceeded from God, when there is not a particle of evidence to establish the fact.”\textsuperscript{16} Thornwell concluded his essay with a challenge. “Let the Romanist come up manfully to the point of \textit{inspiration} — that is the issue between us, and upon that issue we are always ready to meet them.”\textsuperscript{17}

When Patrick Lynch read this essay he took up the challenge. He began not by refuting Thornwell’s arguments, but by rebuking him for his harsh anti-Catholicism.

\textsuperscript{11} The title of Thornwell’s published version of the debate clearly state that the “arguments of the Romanists” were “discussed and refuted.” Clarke on the other hand wrote that “victory was adjudged to Dr. Lynch by all fair minded men.” Clarke, 71.
\textsuperscript{12} Thornwell, 339.
\textsuperscript{13} Thornwell, 340.
\textsuperscript{14} Thornwell, 339.
\textsuperscript{15} Thornwell, 347.
\textsuperscript{16} Thornwell, 347.
\textsuperscript{17} Thornwell, 348.
It was common for nineteenth century Protestants to display bigotry toward Catholics, but Thornwell was especially callous. Lynch thus prefaced his response with this reprove:

Permit me to take this occasion of expressing, once for all, my regret at finding an essay from you so plentifully interspersed with the vulgar epithets papist, Romanist, and such manifestations of ill feeling as the expressions vassals of Rome and captives to the car of Rome . . . Catholics are neither outcasts from society nor devoid of feeling; they are neither insensible to, nor think they deserve, such words of opprobrium. . . . Still it is painful to see a Professor descending from calm, gentlemanly and enlightened argument, to mingle with the crowd of those whose weapons are misrepresentations and abuse. To me it is doubly painful when such language obliges me not to respect as highly as I would desire those whom I address.

Lynch’s preface set the tone for the rest of the debate. He remained defensive and sensitive to insult while Thornwell remained as harsh as ever. To prove that the books of the Apocrypha were canonical, Lynch centered his arguments on the infallibility of the Church. Not surprisingly, Thornwell argued in favor of determining the inspiration of scripture through the use of one’s own intellect. Lynch claimed that Thornwell’s argument against the Church being able to determine the inspiration of books was contradictory. “[Y]our article, like most articles written against us, breathes a spirit, which I will not qualify, but which would exclude the Catholic church from that right Protestants boast God has given to all men, — to believe in religious matters, according to our own judgment, and to declare what she holds true.”

To attack Thornwell’s position that one should determine the inspiration of books oneself, Lynch used the example of slaves to show that not everyone could so

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18 Farmer, 66.
19 Thornwell, 348-349.
20 Farmer attributes Thornwell’s abrasive debating style both to his passionate commitment to his beliefs, and also to the great personal sorrow Thornwell endured in the death of four of his children. Farmer notes that “he mellowed considerably as he got older.” Farmer, 66.
21 Thornwell, 353-354.
judge the canonical value of a book. Arguing that every individual cannot be expected to read and research for himself or herself whether or not a text is canonical, he wrote:

Not to leave our own state, are not more than one-half of her population debarred by law from learning to read? Of the 550,000 souls in South Carolina, think you there are 550 or even 50, who have time, the means, the ability, the opportunity of devoting themselves to this laborious task? If every individual is bound to reject the inspiration of a book, until it is clearly and evidently proved to his mind to be inspired, and if such proof can only be obtained through that personal examination, then must the negro and the Indian, and the poor and the unlettered, and the daily laborer toiling from sunrise to sun-set for his bread, then must the overwhelming majority of Christians reject the Scriptures.  

Lynch advanced this idea with some rhetorical questions. “Surely the negro cannot answer,” he stated, “cannot even comprehend, the arguments brought against the existence of God. Is he therefore doomed to remain an Atheist?” He wrote again, “Surely the 300,000 negroes in South Carolina prohibited by law from being taught to read, cannot learn much from the perusal of the Scriptures. Must they therefore remain ignorant of the truths of Christianity?”

Thornwell’s reaction to Lynch’s slave literacy argument largely ignored the literacy issue. Thornwell rather called Lynch’s rhetorical question “an idle equivocation” and described Lynch’s conclusion as illogical. He wrote, “In that case the sin which is condemned, is evidently a sheer impossibility except to a man who was stark mad.” He charged that the argument was “a mental contradiction which can

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22 Thornwell, 362.
23 Thornwell, 372.
24 Thornwell, 381.
25 Thornwell, 19.
26 Thornwell, 19.
only be received by those whose capacious understandings can digest the mystery of transubstantiation.”  

What neither party did in this exchange about how a slave could determine the inspiration of scripture without the ability to read was recognize the injustice of slaves not legally being able to read. South Carolinians reacted to abolitionist tracts (at least the fear of abolitionist tracts) with literacy laws that criminalized the teaching of slaves to read and write. The movement was successful during the nullification crisis when the South Carolina legislature passed a law forbidding anyone to teach a slave to read and write. While nullifiers fought to restrict slave literacy, a group of upcountry Presbyterians fashioned and presented to the legislature coherent arguments against the state’s literacy laws. Unionists also generally opposed the restrictions, and Bishop England was a unionist. Although he was England’s protégé, Patrick Lynch never clearly stated his position about slave literacy, and his use of the topic in the debate may have just been a suitable case to prove his point. In fact neither party discussed the moral implications of slaves not being able to read. Lynch almost touches on it when he proposes a scenario in which a Unitarian confronts an African-American about the doctrine of the trinity. Lynch notes that, if unlettered, the African-American would not be able to reply to the Unitarian’s arguments. If the African-American were Catholic, however, Lynch states that he could simply reply, “My mind is feeble, I cannot by reasoning reply to what you say; but here is a tribunal which God has appointed to teach

27 Thornwell, 19.
me what doctrines he has declared, and which He will not permit to mistake.”

Lynch had an opportunity to note the immorality of not allowing slaves to learn to read the bible, but he ignored the issue. Thornwell also ignored the chance, but he was certain to taunt that it was “no uncommon thing among [Catholics], [to] be profoundly ignorant that such a book as the Bible exists at all.”

Thornwell’s quip about Catholics not knowing the Bible represents the importance that Thornwell attributed to reading scripture. As a Presbyterian he believed that the Bible acted as the sole rule of faith. In 1851 Thornwell delivered a report on slavery to the Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina. In this report he declared that “[t]he Bible, and the Bible alone, is her [the church’s] rule of faith and practice.” He further wrote about the Church that “[b]eyond the Bible she [the church] can never go, and apart from the Bible she can never speak.” Indeed, Thornwell based his proslavery logic on the Bible’s apparent condoning of slavery. He once wrote that “the institution of slavery is continually alluded to in the Scriptures, recognized as an existing condition of human society, and spoken of without the slightest mark of approbation.”

Oddly he did not take the opportunity that Lynch provided him to develop how this tenet of his belief influenced his thoughts on the peculiar institution. Although neither he nor Lynch showed much concern over the matter in their debate, slave illiteracy deeply troubled Thornwell. In a letter written in 1847 Thornwell tells of his

30 Thornwell, 403.
31 Thornwell, 19.
33 ibid.
wish to repeal “the disgraceful statute, which prohibits [slaves] from learning to read.”

It must have been maddening for Thornwell, believing that the Bible was the sole rule of faith, to know that slaves were not legally allowed to read the scriptures. He argued that southerners owed it to slaves “to give them the Gospel; they have bought it by their labor.”

Although Thornwell was willing to petition the legislature to allow slaves to read, he did not think that the church had any business in politics. Much like Bishop England and Bishop Hughes, Thornwell believed in a strict separation of church and state. In this manner, Thornwell could treat the existence of slavery as a political matter not suited for clergy. As his worry about slave illiteracy demonstrates, however, he could not ignore the moral problems connected to the institution. In addition to his qualms about slave illiteracy, he also decried the masters’ ability to break up slave families, separating children from parents and husbands from wives. Showing his distaste for harsh masters, he preached that “[p]ain unrighteously inflicted is cruelty.” He qualified this statement, though, by noting that “[t]he chastisements of slaves” should not “awaken the indignation of loyal and faithful citizens,” since “the penalties of disgrace, imprisonment, or death” were given for “crimes against the State.” Thornwell, therefore, may have been uncomfortable with certain aspects of slavery, but he certainly argued in favor of the institution, nonetheless.

35 Palmer, 301.
36 Westerkamp, 60.
37 Westerkamp, 54.
40 Thornwell, 25.
One way he defended the institution was to shift blame for the problems inherent in slavery and dismiss the seriousness of abolitionists’ resolve. He blamed abolitionist distribution of antislavery pamphlets for anti-literacy laws. He described abolitionist activity as lunacy, writing that “[t]his insane fury of philanthropy has not been content with speculating upon our degradation and wretchedness at a distance. It has aimed at stirring up insurrection in our midst.” He commented that the abolitionists’ “philanthropy” was ephemeral and dependent on excitement. He wrote that “[w]hen they have freed the slave, he may sob in beggary and wretchedness and they will never lift a finger to relieve him.” Defaming the abolitionist camp, he wrote that the “parties in this conflict are not merely Abolitionists and Slaveholders; they are Atheists, Socialists, Communists, Red Republicans, Jacobins on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other.”

Thornwell’s defense of slavery centered on the responsibility masters owed to their slaves. Like most proslavery thinkers, he defended the institution in its ideal state. Thus his proslavery arguments could not win the sectional debate over slavery, but they established the grounds upon which the debate could be won. Many of his proslavery arguments, therefore, hinge on the amelioration of slaves’ condition. As a theologian, Thornwell considered the supreme duty of the master “‘to make known His gospel, in its simplicity and purity,’ to the Negro.” This did not mean, however, that the slaves ought to be elevated out of slavery. Thornwell explained that “[o]ur design in giving them [the

41 Westerkamp, 59.
42 Thornwell, 8.
43 Farmer, 218.
44 Farmer, 222.
45 Freehling, 389.
46 Bishop, 23.
slaves] the Gospel is not to civilize them – not to change their social condition – not to exalt them into citizens or freemen – it is to save them.”\(^{47}\) Thornwell’s ideal of slavery rested upon the good condition of a slave’s moral well-being, not the status of his social well-being. Accordingly, an enslaved man could be just as fulfilled as a free man, and by this paradigm Thornwell defended the institution.

Arguably Thornwell’s greatest demonstration of proslavery ideology came in his peculiar definition of the “golden rule,” the precept that one should treat others as one would wish to be treated. This rule constituted the abolitionists’ best biblical antislavery argument. On May 26, 1850, Thornwell delivered the dedicatory sermon of the Anson Street Church, built by white Presbyterians and Episcopalians for Charleston’s black population.\(^{48}\) Thornwell’s sermon centered on this biblical passage: “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.”\(^{49}\) For Thornwell, this passage answered the golden rule argument perfectly. He understood the golden rule to mean “that we should treat our slaves as we should feel that we had a right to be treated if we were slaves ourselves.”\(^{50}\)

With this interpretation of the golden rule, Thornwell identified the master-slave relationship as “a mutual relation within the domestic sphere” where “[t]he master, in return for labor, owed the slave life, happiness, and protection.”\(^{51}\) He contended that “the relation was divinely regulated among the chosen people of God and the peculiar duties of the parties [were] inculcated under the Christian economy.”\(^{52}\) Thornwell’s

\(^{47}\) Bishop, 23.
\(^{48}\) Farmer, 220.
\(^{49}\) Thornwell, 15.
\(^{50}\) Farmer, 225.
\(^{51}\) Westerkamp, 59.
\(^{52}\) Bishop, 20.
concept of the master-slave relationship closely resembled Lynch’s. Although Lynch shied away from religious defenses for the institution,\(^{53}\) he defined domestic slavery similarly as “a system or state of mutual claims and obligations between the owner and the slave, whereby the latter is bound to give to the former the produce of his reasonable life long labour under the owner’s direction; and the owner is bound in return to give to the slave a reasonable support according to his condition, from infancy to death.”\(^{54}\) Thornwell and Lynch thus held parallel ideas about the mutual obligations in the relationship between master and slave.

Thornwell advanced his idea of the master-slave relation, going so far as to claim that “property of man in man – a fiction to which even the imagination cannot give constancy – is the miserable cant of those who would storm by prejudice what they cannot demolish by argument.”\(^{55}\) Thornwell believed that a master had a claim “not to the man but to his labour.”\(^{56}\) With this perspective he compared the condition of the slave to that of the wage laborer. Thornwell contended that the slave had the better lot. He noted that “the master must always find work for his slave, as well as food and raiment.”\(^{57}\) The wage laborer did not have such certainty because a “multiplication of laborers not only reduces wages to the lowest point, but leaves multitudes wholly unemployed.”\(^{58}\) Again Thornwell’s idea closely resembles Lynch’s thoughts. Lynch, though he did not compare the relative conditions of slaves and wage laborers, agreed with Thornwell’s description of slave’s remuneration. Lynch wrote that “[t]he work of

\(^{53}\) See chapter five.
\(^{54}\) Lynch, 87-88.
\(^{55}\) Westerkamp, 58.
\(^{56}\) Freehling, 391.
\(^{57}\) Freehling, 392.
\(^{58}\) Freehling, 392.
the negro is light; his food is abundant; his condition is one of comfort; his necessities in sickness and old age are all provided for.”

A major point in both Lynch and Thornwell’s proslavery ideology therefore hinged upon the reportedly enviable condition of the slave.

The enviable condition of the slave, however, was the ideal, certainly not the norm. Recognizing this fact, Thornwell described slavery as an evil. He argued that slavery resulted “not from the nature of man as man, nor from the nature of society as such, but from the nature of man as sinful, and the nature of society as disordered.”

This, however, did not mean that all who practiced slavery were sinners. Thornwell explained that “[s]lavery is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world, and stands in the same general relations to Christianity as poverty, sickness, disease, or death.”

Thornwell’s notion that slavery comes from sin, but is not in itself sinful is especially interesting because in 1864 Lynch parroted the same argument in his Civil War Pamphlet on slavery. Lynch wrote that “[t]o say that freedom is better than slavery, is to my mind very much like saying that health is better than sickness. Yet this world is so unfortunate that both sickness and Slavery have existed, do exist, and will continue to exist.”

Thornwell held the belief that African Americans were not morally inferior to whites. He wrote that “it is a publick [sic] testimony to our faith, that the Negro is of one blood with ourselves — that he has sinned as we have, and that he has an equal interest

59 Lynch, 94.
60 Bishop, 21.
61 Bishop, 20-21.
with us in the great redemption.\textsuperscript{63} He affirmed that black and white Americans shared “the same humanity in which we glory as the image of God.”\textsuperscript{64} And he touchingly went on to say “We are not ashamed to call him our brother.”\textsuperscript{65} Despite this positive view of African Americans’ character, Thornwell did suffer from racism. He believed that slavery was a natural state for blacks, and that whites could not be slaves. He argued that “[t]he free citizen of England and America . . . could not endure the condition of African bondage – it would defeat his individual development.”\textsuperscript{66} Conversely, African Americans were well suited to bondage since “subjection to a master” was “the state in which the African is most effectually trained to the moral end of his being.”\textsuperscript{67}

Both permitting the institution of slavery to exist and arguing for the moral equality of slaves and their masters, Thornwell set high standards for slaveholders in regard to their treatment of slaves. Apparently he lived up to these standards.\textsuperscript{68}

According to his sympathetic nineteenth-century biographer, “He was an easy and indulgent master; and it is doubtful if his slaves made their own support; certainly, they never accomplished much more; and were often a tax upon him, rather than a source of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[63] Thornwell, 11.
\item[64] Thornwell, 11.
\item[65] Thornwell, 11.
\item[66] Freehling, 392. Note that Thornwell only describes citizens of England and America in this passage. This description of whites excludes every other European nationality. It could be another manifestation of Thornwell’s nativism clearly seen in the acerbic tone he uses in his debate with Lynch. For an interesting and elucidating treatment of differences in race among whites see David R. Roediger, \textit{The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class} (New York: Verso, 1999).
\item[67] Freehling, 392.
\item[68] Many of the secondary scholars of Thornwell cite Benjamin Palmer’s work to show that Thornwell was a kind and benevolent slave owner. Westerkamp, 57, Farmer, 229. The scholar should, however, be skeptical of Palmer’s word. Palmer was a friend, admirer, and protégé of Thornwell (Farmer, 231) writing in praise of the man in 1875, during reconstruction, thirteen years after Thornwell’s death, and ten years after the death of slavery. The reference to Thornwell’s plantation finances is not supported by primary documents in Palmer’s work, but rather his claim that Thornwell indulged his slaves is likely an attempt by Palmer to soften Thornwell’s image as a master. The claims that Thornwell cared deeply for his slaves’ spiritual welfare, however are far more believable.
\end{footnotes}
Because of Thornwell’s alleged benevolence toward his slaves, “His plantation was never of much pecuniary benefit to him.” This may or may not be true. Thornwell also enjoyed the best food, best cigars, fancy clothes, and other visible manifestations of wealth, and it is hard to believe that he could support his ostentatious habits and an unprofitable plantation simultaneously. It is very believable, however, that “[Thornwell] was exceedingly conscientious in securing to them every religious privilege, and contributed regularly to a minister, who made it a part of his duty to visit the place, to catechize and to preach.” Thornwell, thus, presumably desired the physical well-being of his slaves, and he ensured his slaves were taken care of spiritually.

Lynch and Thornwell differed most notably on the issue of the preservation of the Union. Thornwell allegedly could contemplate gradual emancipation in order to preserve the union. Palmer recorded that in 1861 upon Thornwell’s return from a trip to Europe, Thornwell told him that he had considered a plan for gradual emancipation in order to save the Union. Unfortunately it was too late by the time Thornwell got back. Palmer’s reference, however, is the only evidence that Thornwell ever considered any plan for emancipation. Palmer was certainly not an unbiased recorder, given his association as Thornwell’s friend and protégé. Furthermore the quote is Palmer’s personal recollection of a single statement made fourteen years before Palmer recorded it. Not only was the thought of emancipation completely out of character for Thornwell, but his actions during the secession crisis argue clearly against his having a fleeting...

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69 Palmer, 342-343.
70 Palmer, 342.
71 Farmer, 172.
72 Palmer, 343.
73 Palmer, 482-483. As addressed in footnote 68, the careful scholar will handle the validity of this quote with skepticism.
abolitionist moment. Thornwell became “a leading voice for the separation of northern and southern churches in 1861,” after the sectional divide of the nation occurred, and he supported the Confederacy until his death in 1862. Lynch also supported the continuation of slavery throughout the secession crisis, and there is no evidence at all that he ever seriously considered a plan for emancipation.

As “the proslavery spokesman,” Thornwell serves as a useful comparison to Lynch. Both were deeply immersed in Christianity, yet both were even more so products of Southern culture. Thornwell’s proslavery ideology considered the institution as a product of sin, much like sickness and death. He contended, however, that slavery could be moral if it were used properly. In this case, the master must follow the Bible and give to “servants that which is just and equal.” Thornwell therefore bemoaned laws restricting slave literacy, and the lack of protection for slave families. He believed that the master only had a right to the slave’s labor, not to the slave’s person. As such, he defined the master-slave relationship as a set of mutual obligations, and he defended slavery as a more charitable system than wage labor. As a master, he was apparently kind and benevolent toward his slaves, and he especially cared for their religious instruction. Despite any qualms they had about the institution, both clergymen allowed their Southern character to trump any religious objections to slavery. Lynch and Thornwell, indeed, had many doctrinal differences about religion, but these did not prevent them from sharing a Southern heritage and thus having very similar views concerning slavery. Only if the questionable testimony of Palmer is to be believed did the two differ in their attitudes toward the preservation of the Union. Thornwell may have contemplated a plan for

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74 Westerkamp, 50.
gradual emancipation in order to save the Union. Lynch, on the other hand, unquestionably bade the United States farewell in favor of slavery.
CHAPTER V

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF

BISHOP LYNCH’S SLAVERY

In 1861 Bishop Lynch inherited a large number of slaves and several plantations from the will of a parishioner. By the lights of his day he was a benign master, meaning that he provided the most basic of his slaves’ necessities, tried not to punish them cruelly, and respected some of their basic rights. The very reason he chose to take his share of the inheritance in slaves was to preserve slave marriages. His plantations were not, however, meant to be humanitarian enterprises. Although Lynch cared for certain basic dignities of the slaves, the pecuniary interests of the diocese took precedence over the individual interests of the slaves. Despite his priorities, Bishop Lynch did seem to practice what he preached about slavery. In 1864, he gave a description of slavery allegedly as it truly existed in which he portrayed the condition of the slave as favorable. Based on this description and his personal correspondence about his slaves, he did attempt to make his slaves’ condition as good as it could be while still exploiting their labor for profit.

In 1844, Bishop England’s successor, Ignatius Aloysius Reynolds, appointed Patrick Lynch to the pastorate of St. Mary’s Church in Charleston where he showed
promise. In 1847 he became the principal of the Collegiate Institute, a day school for boys that discontinued in 1850, where he furthered his reputation as a scholar, already established by his controversy with Thornwell. Sometime after, probably in the late 1840s or early 1850s, Bishop Reynolds appointed him as Vicar General of the diocese of Charleston. In this position, Lynch assumed partial responsibility for the construction of the new St. Finbar’s Cathedral. Throughout this time he maintained his position as editor of the *United States Catholic Miscellany*, and he contributed scholarly and religious essays to its pages.

In 1855 Bishop Reynolds died, and Lynch, as the Vicar General, took over the administration of the diocese. For nearly three years Lynch operated in this capacity while the seat was vacant. Then, on March 14, 1858, Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore consecrated Patrick Lynch as the third bishop of Charleston. Although it began with promise, catastrophe marred Lynch’s episcopate. The Civil War drained the entire state of South Carolina of its resources, and Lynch’s diocese suffered likewise. In 1861 a fire erupted in Charleston and burnt down most of the diocese’s assets, including St. Finbar’s Cathedral that Lynch had helped to build. To make matters worse, the insurance for the Cathedral had run out and its destruction was a total loss. In February 1865, Sherman’s army burned and looted diocesan property in and around Columbia. At the end of the war, Bishop Lynch estimated a total loss of $316,500. In this approximation, however, he did not include the added loss of slave property.

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2 Clarke, 70-71, and O’Connell, 110-111.
3 Clarke, 71. Neither Clarke nor O’Connell specify when he filled the office of Vicar General.
4 Clarke, 71-72.
Lynch acquired his first slaves in 1857 when he became the owner and trustee of a widow’s two slaves. By 1860 Lynch held a total of 10 slaves in Charleston. It is unclear who these people were or what they did, but they would have had the closest relationship with the Bishop. Unfortunately there is no record of how Bishop Lynch treated these slaves.6 There is a suggestion that he was not happy with the work that house servants did. He wrote that “three of them will not do as much work as one European or Northern white servant. To foreigners coming into the South their idleness, slothfulness and awkwardness render them unbearable.”7 He went on to write that even though they provided poor service, “they receive abundant gratuities, and love to give full evidence of it in the natty hats, the broadcloth coats and the polished boots of men, the silks and ribbons and flashy jewelry of the women.”8 These descriptions made the house servants seem spoiled. Other than this general attitude toward house servants, however, there is no evidence of how Lynch treated his household slaves.

Bishop Lynch acquired the bulk of his slaves in 1861, shortly before the Civil War began. In 1857, William McKenna, a merchant, planter, politician, and the wealthiest Catholic in either of the Carolinas, died and left nearly all of his property to Bishop Lynch.9 The McKenna family, however, contested the will on the grounds of

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6 Heisser, 243.
8 Lynch, Part 1, 89.
9 J.J. O’Connell, Catholicity in the Carolinas and Georgia: Leaves of its History, 1820-1878. (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co. 1879), 297. David C.R. Heisser states that McKenna died in 1859, but this is likely a typo since he also wrote in the same article that the diocese of Charleston was formed in 1840 when it was actually formed in 1820. In addition to O’Connell, Heisser cites “Madden, Catholics, 79” which the reader must assume means Richard C. Madden, Catholics in South Carolina: a Record (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985.) as there are no previous citations which provide the full information. Despite these few editing errors, Heisser remains a valuable resource for his depth of research.
mental incapacity and “undue influence on the part of the clergy.” By a compromise the McKenna family received five-eighths of the estate, and Lynch took three-eighths. McKenna’s will stipulated that most of the 180 slaves were to be sold, meaning that many of the families would be broken up and sold to different masters. This posed a problem for Bishop Lynch. He could receive his share of the legacy in cash, a substantial sum, in fact. This would have been an unsavory idea since, like the majority of southern clergy including Lynch’s mentor, Bishop England, Lynch believed in the sanctity of marriage even among slaves. Lynch thus acquired plantations and eighty-five slaves as his share of the estate. The Diocese of Charleston Archives contain two lists of the McKenna slaves used by Bishop Lynch. One provided the names and ages of parents and children, and the other recorded the Catholic family groups. By choosing to inherit his share of the property in slaves, Lynch not only guaranteed that at least some families would be protected, but also that the slaves would remain under a Catholic master. Furthermore, slave property would have seemed a smart investment given the profitability of cotton production and the fact that slave property naturally increased.

By accepting a large portion of his inheritance in slaves, however, Bishop Lynch involved himself and his diocese deeply in the institution of slavery. Many Catholic clergy in the Southern United States owned slaves, but Lynch stood alone in the number of slaves he owned. No other Catholic clergy could boast of multiple

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10 O’Connell, 297.
11 Heisser, 244, writes that the McKenna estate was worth in excess of $250,000. Lynch could have therefore accepted a cash payment of $93,750. O’Connell states that Lynch received “about a third of the proceeds of the property.” 297-298.
12 Heisser, 244-245.
13 Heisser, 245-246.
14 Heisser, 240-241.
plantations, one of which was two-thousand acres, and ninety-five slaves. Furthermore, McKenna did not leave his property to Bishop Lynch personally, but “in trust to the Bishop of Charleston and his successors in office.” Lynch’s slaves were thus diocesan property meaning that Lynch not only tied his fortune to slavery, but guaranteed that the destiny of his entire diocese hinged upon slavery’s continuation. Even if Lynch had any unvoiced qualms about slavery, this fact certainly tipped the scales unreservedly in favor of the institution.

How Lynch treated his slaves once they were under his ownership yields very important facts about his attitude toward African Americans. One of his plantations was located outside of Columbia, and his brother, John Lynch, who was a doctor in the city, looked after the Bishop’s holdings. John wrote to his brother about the plantations in a series of letters from 1861 to 1864. Although the letters are exclusively from Bishop Lynch’s brother, the Bishop’s attitude about the slaves can be gleaned. These letters contain complaints about whom to hire for plantation positions, the high prices of commodities, and various upkeep projects. John also discussed different problems and situations pertaining to the slaves on the plantations. In so doing he revealed some paradoxical attitudes both he and his brother held toward slaves. In some instances they regarded the slaves as persons deserving of human dignity. At the same time, however, they constantly devalued the slaves by regarding them as property. John’s letters reveal some ways that the slaves could exercise agency. In several of the stories John told about the slaves, he showed ways that the slaves could manage their own destinies in

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15 Heisser, 246. There were three plantations. One in Lexington was 650 acres. The Malta Plantation near Lancaster was 2000 acres, and Valle Crucis near Columbia was meant to eventually become an Urusiline convent, but Lynch set it up as a working plantation. It was 130 ½ acres. Heisser, 248-249.
16 O’Connell, 297.
opposition to the plantation system. These stories provide a hint of Bishop Lynch’s perspective about slaves’ discipline and dignity in how he handled the slaves’ exercise of agency.

Lynch seldom visited his plantations, and it is uncertain how he directly dealt with African Americans. The best evidence for how Lynch treated any of his slaves remains the letters from his brother John. One incident in the letters demonstrated slave agency, something that all slaveholders, Lynch included, fought against. It involved an enslaved man named Emmett. On November 13, 1861, John wrote to his brother:

I saw a letter from yourself to sister Eliza... making some inquiries about the negro man Emmett... about the boy, the jailer told Mr Buff he would write to you at once about him... I gave Mr Buff’s son fifty dollars to go over to Edgefield for the boy. the jailor told him that not more than a quarter of an hour before his arrival Emmett with another negro had made their escape from the jail... I told Daniel if Emmett should come around the plantation to tell him to come in and go to work, as I did not blame him for trying to escape from prison, it was natural, he promises to do so.17

By running away, Emmett deprived the plantation of his labor, enjoyed a period of freedom and probably experienced quite a rush of excitement. It further appears that he made a friend after his capture in Edgefield; at least he trusted another captive enough to realize an escape plan together. Emmett’s story provides one example of how many slaves used escape as a way to both deny their labor to their masters and also to provide themselves with a break from plantation life. In this manner they could prove that the slaveowner’s control was not absolute, if even for a short while.

Despite the adventure he would have experienced by running away, it is apparent that Emmett meant his flight to be temporary. Slaves knew to go north for permanent freedom. The plantation was near Columbia, South Carolina, and Edgefield was situated west and south of that city so Emmett probably did not plan on running away for good. In fact John himself expected that Emmett would return, giving another slave directions for when he should. Just a few months later in a letter dated January 22, 1862, Emmett is in fact described as being back at the plantation. In this letter John talked about Emmett’s family.\footnote{John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, January 22, 1862} The fact that a permanent departure would have left his wife and children abandoned at the plantation further suggests that Emmett did not mean to leave for good.

These two letters concerning Emmett also reveal the Lynches’ conflicting attitudes toward slaves. They humanized Emmett and sympathized with him when John told Daniel not to punish him. More practically, however, by being lenient he created an incentive for runaway slaves to return. Furthermore, the fact that Emmett escaped from the jail saved the Lynches’ forty-five dollars (John gave Mr. Buff’s son five dollars to pay for horses and for the trouble of traveling to Edgefield).\footnote{John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, November 13, 1861} John may have wanted to encourage future runaway slaves to try to escape from jail and return to the plantation thus saving him the money to pay for their release. John’s leniency may have simply been an economical rather than humanitarian act.

The Lynches also showed a sense of superiority toward Emmett in the language they used. In the letters John always refers to white people as Mr. or Mrs./Miss while slaves were called by the first name only. An implicit hierarchy was thus
established with white people treated respectfully, and slaves referred to as one would a child. John did use first names when talking about his family, but this was due to familiarity rather than disrespect. This diminutive language used for Emmett was made obvious when John repeatedly called Emmett “the boy.” 20 Likening slaves to children in such a manner was a useful way for slave owners to establish dominance, at least in their own minds. Children were supposed to be submissive and obedient because of their lower status in relation to adults. By calling a grown man with a wife and children “the boy,” John affirmed for himself a hierarchy that put him above Emmett.

In the letter of January 22, John further revealed this paradoxical concern for Emmett’s human dignity, and simultaneous degradation of him to the status of livestock. John told his brother that a Mr. Mullin visited and wrote that he:

> sent him over to the plantation in the Buggy, he found one of Emmett's children with the measles, and as the weather was so bad did not move them, nor tell them he had bought them, he proposes paying the expenses of someone taking them over or coming for them himself as soon as I think they can be moved without danger, now if there are no new cases in the family, they can go the first good weather, but I fear there will be, I am to see Emmett and tell him Mr M has bought himself + family, and get him willing to go quietly, as I understand he refuses to be hired quietly.” 21

The letter demonstrated surprisingly little compassion on its face. Bishop Lynch carried out the transaction without any knowledge on the part of the family. The slave owners displayed little consideration about uprooting an entire family from their community and displacing them elsewhere. The only concern they seemed to have was that Emmett might have raised a fuss. Probably if Emmett refused to go quietly there would be added expenses for the slave-owning parties. Bishop Lynch thus diminished his personhood to movable property. The one other shred of humanity given to them was

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20 John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, November 13, 1861.
their master’s refusal to move them in either sickness or inclement weather. Presumably Mullin could have taken most of the family immediately and sent for the sick member when the child had recovered. At the very least, they received the medical care of one of the most prominent doctors in Columbia at the time, but that is probably owing to the fact that the doctor was the owner’s brother, and de facto overseer of the plantation.

Contrary to their participation in a dehumanizing traffic of people, John and the bishop upheld the human dignity of slaves in at least one way; they refused to sell slaves if doing so would break up a family. In the case with Emmett he sold the family as a whole. This commitment to recognize and respect the sanctity of marriage within the marginalized slave population was fairly common among the contemporary Southern clergy. As Christian leaders, many Southern clergy felt duty bound to respect slave marriages even if the state did not. For example, the Reverend Thornwell worked unsuccessfully for protections of slave marriages. In 1847, he wrote a petition to the South Carolina legislature from the South Carolina Presbyterian Synod requesting that the state pass a law “to protect the family relations of the slave.” Some Southern Christian churches dealt with the problem of breaking up families through the slave trade by declaring that a separated man and wife were as good as dead to each other allowing them to remarry if they were separated. The letters do not reveal Bishop Lynch’s attitudes toward Catholics who did break up slave families, but they do show that he at least did not break apart marriages.

24 Protestant Episcopal Convention of South Carolina, Duty of Clergymen in relation to the Marriage of Slaves, in Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South, a Brief History with Documents ed. Paul Finkelman (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003), 117.
This commitment to keep families together is further illustrated in a letter dated March 17, 1862. John told his brother about a woman who attacked the overseer with a hoe when she found him beating her child. John suggested that his brother might want to sell her in order to deal with the situation. Even though she was described as the only one who deserved punishment for the incident, John talked about selling her family as a whole. Similarly in a letter dated February 2, 1863, John suggested that his brother should sell some of his slaves as they would be “a great annoyance and expense.” He noted that he saw some slaves sold for good prices, but he specified that “they were bought principally by speculators.” This suggests that Bishop Lynch was either uncomfortable or unwilling to sell to speculators. Speculators in the slave market cared little for the sanctity of slave marriages, and it is very likely that Bishop Lynch would not have dealt with them because of this fact. Indeed, John writes that he could sell the slaves “if [he] could find the proper purchaser for them.” Bishop Lynch’s respect for slave marriages exposes a humanizing aspect to his treatment of the slaves that conflicts with his willingness to treat them as property, work them against their will, and trade them like cattle.

Care for the sanctity of Marriage, however, was the only solid thing that these letters reveal concerning the master’s concern for the slave’s humanity. In describing the incident with the mother attacking the overseer, John did not condemn the overseer for beating a young boy. John did claim that the overseer “has some very lazy + idle negroes to deal with.” He further wrote that the overseer had given this particular boy a task, but

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25 John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, March 17, 1862.
26 John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, February 2, 1863.
the boy “soon slipped on his coat and was idling about, [the overseer] returned and called him up, gave him a strapping.” Since the boy’s mother defended her son, John and the overseer agreed that she should have been harshly punished. But John wrote that he was deferring the decision to the Bishop because “if [the bishop] intended selling her a whipping such as she would be obliged to receive, would not increase her value.”

Furthermore John and the overseer worried that if the mother were not punished promptly and severely that would set a precedent, which suggests they planned on beating children in the future. In this case John showed no compassion for the boy or his mother. Although he sympathized with Emmett when telling of his escape from jail, he failed to not note that it was far more natural for a mother to protect her children. In the former instance John stood to gain from Emmet’s “natural” instincts, while in the latter he had nothing to gain and thus condemned the mother’s love for her son as a serious crime.

The letters that John Lynch wrote to his brother, Bishop Patrick Lynch, showed a paradoxical aspect of both John’s and the bishop’s attitudes toward slaves. Their commitment to the sanctity of slave marriages suggested that they did value the slaves as human persons. Simultaneously, however, the letters reveal that they dehumanized the slaves by demanding their unwilling labor, exacting harsh and cruel punishment, and ultimately trading these human persons as livestock.

Bishop Lynch’s treatment of his slaves stood in contrast to his descriptions of slavery, though it was not a stark contrast. Lynch claimed practical knowledge of the institution. “Having spent all my life in the Southern States. . . I may claim to know the real state of things.” He, of course, left out the fact that he also owned nearly one

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29 John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, March 17, 1862.
30 Lynch, Part1, 75-76.
hundred persons. He defended the practice of slavery as benign, claiming that if the system were not absolutely good, it at least was not absolutely evil, and really it was the best possible system for all parties concerned. Lynch described the slaves as well cared for, and content. He suggested that the slaves exercised a degree of freedom even if their labor was not theirs. He also revealed his attitudes toward black morality, and therefore also his belief that slavery was good for African Americans.

The most important aspect of Lynch’s proslavery thought was his belief that slavery benefited the slaves. He argued that their constitution was well suited for labor in the sun, especially in the low country rice and sea island cotton plantations since “the negro exults in the fullness of health in a tropical heat.”31 To show that slavery offered the best situation for African Americans Lynch claimed that free blacks were “the pests of society.”32 He attributed this alleged fact to African Americans’ natural character. He wrote that “[t]he negroes are, as a race, very prone to excesses, and, unless restrained, plunge madly into the lowest depths of licentiousness.”33 He thus contended that slavery was better than freedom for not only African Americans but all of society, since “free negroes are far more immoral than the slaves.”34 Lynch thus presented dominion over slaves as a good thing since masters could ostensibly keep them in check. For Lynch, the slaves displayed their lack of self-control in their sexual habits. He wrote that “the negroes themselves have very loose ideas on the subject, and very little regard for the sanctity of marriage.”35 Bishop Lynch did not explore what caused this lack of respect.

31 Lynch, Part 1, 91.
32 Lynch, Part 1, 98.
34 Lynch, Part 2, 97.
for marriage other than assuming it to be an innate characteristic. Since law did not protect slave marriages, the slaves were probably forced to assume that the institution was ephemeral by nature. Nonetheless, Lynch claimed that the solution to this problem of marital laxity was the institution of slavery. He argued that “the owners, actuated alike by morality and by their own interest, will not tolerate the open . . . forms of immorality. And they strive as far as they can to render the marriage unions of the negroes permanent.”

Showing the paternalistic side to his ideals he wrote that “it is the pride of the owner that his negroes are healthy, well ordered, and happy,” and he added that “all owners labour to secure this condition.”

Paternalism represented a large part of Lynch’s proslavery ideals. In order to defend slavery, he had to argue that masters treated their slaves benevolently and that the slaves were content. Lynch purported that slave families throughout the South “[live] in a small house of a suitable size, and ordinarily has a small plot of ground attached to serve as a garden.” Lynch noted that the master provided the house and the ground, and also gave the slaves their food. The food consisted of “a pound of meat a day, maize or rice in proportion, salt molasses and vegetables according to the season.” Lynch described it as “fully as much as they [can] consume.” The master, according to Lynch, also gave the slaves “a sufficiency of suitable clothing,” as well as top notch healthcare with a “physician, employed to attend the negroes regularly when ill.” In return for all of this care and attention, Lynch wrote that the master required only mild labor. He claimed that the most common way to organize slave labor was the task system. This,

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37 Lynch, Part 1, 94.
38 Lynch, Part 1, 91.
39 Lynch, Part 1, 92.
40 Lynch, Part 1, 93.
however, was not the norm where his plantations were located. In the upcountry the gang system was typically used, especially on large plantations like Lynch’s.\textsuperscript{41} The master, according to Lynch, would give the slave “a task, a three quarter task, a half task, or a quarter task, according to the varying age, strength, or ability of the slave.” Under this system, “[a]n industrious man [could] ordinarily accomplish his work by two or three o’clock.”\textsuperscript{42} Lynch wrote that on Saturdays masters only gave slaves half the usual work so that they could prepare themselves for Sunday which by universal custom was “always a day of entire rest.” Only during the cotton harvest or times of similar pressing needs did the master work his slaves all day, but Lynch stated that this lasted only for a short while and, that even during this period of extra work, the slaves’ labor was less strenuous than an English or Irish farmer’s.\textsuperscript{43} Lynch thus argued that the condition of slaves was good as a result of masters’ efforts.

Many countered this contention that masters were benevolent. Lynch specifically pointed out \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} as a source of “charges of severe punishment and of cruel treatment and tortures.”\textsuperscript{44} He argued that northerners made these accusations both falsely and hypocritically. He first established that the Northern states were originally slave states, and “as long as it was pecuniarily profitable for them to hold slaves, there was not a word among them of Emancipation.”\textsuperscript{45} Lynch conceded to abolitionist charges that masters exercised brutality toward slaves. He qualified this, however, by noting that “passionate men are found in every country, and in every grade of society . . . An evil minded and cruel magistrate uses his authority to oppress and

\textsuperscript{41}Peter Kolchin, \textit{American Slavery: 1619-1877} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 103, and Heisser, 252.
\textsuperscript{42}Lynch, Part 1, 91.
\textsuperscript{43}Lynch, Part 1, 92.
\textsuperscript{44}Lynch, Part 1, 95.
\textsuperscript{45}Lynch, Part 1, 85.
wrong those under him. A cruel husband outrages his wife. A father wreaks his cruelty on his own children. And a cruel owner vents his passions on the slaves.” Lynch contended that abolitionists wrongly blamed slavery for such cruelty since it “is the fault of human nature, not the system of Slavery.”

Lynch further ameliorated the institution by noting that law prohibited the murder of, and excessive cruelty toward slaves. He reduced the severity of flogging by likening it to spanking children, and he argued that it was the mildest and most effective method for correction.

Easily the most shocking crime masters committed was the rape of their female slaves. Lynch passed this off, claiming that “such charges must be exaggerated.” Shifting the blame again from slavery to the inherent sinfulness of man, he noted that “[t]he passions of men exist and will seek their gratification whether Slavery exist or not.”

Thus he contended that “[i]t is not by such isolated instances of sinful abuse, that we can properly judge any system.” He did, however, acknowledge that the sexual abuse of slave girls did exist. In defending slavery, Lynch went so far as to suggest that there was a positive side to this abuse. He wrote that since rapists exist among men apart from slavery, the fact that men could rape black women meant that “the white females are exempted from its influence.” This fact made the forcible molestation of girls under the total authority of their masters easier to bear since “it [replaced] libertinism which would otherwise exist to a greater extent than it [did], in the white race.” Lynch thus a claimed that a redeeming aspect of allowing the raping of female slaves was that “[n]owhere save

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46 Lynch, Part 1, 95.
47 Lynch, Part 1, 96.
48 Lynch, Part 1, 97
49 Lynch, Part 2, 97.
in Ireland are [white women] so pure as in the South.” With this argument Lynch not only gave a disgusting excuse for rape, but also made a clear value judgment placing the worth of whites far above African Americans. Aside from displaying poor judgment on the part of Lynch, the elevated status he conferred on white women was meant to diminish the horror of a system that allowed for sexual abuse. To further soften the nature of these crimes against black women and show that slavery was the best place for African Americans, Lynch claimed that “if the negroes were free, this immorality [the sexual oppression of black women by white men] would assume infinitely greater proportions.” Lynch thus contended that the institution actually protected the chastity of both black and white women, in the face of the reality that masters raped slaves.

Despite his assertion that freedom was against the best interest of the slaves, Lynch contended that even in bondage slaves exercised a considerable degree of freedom. Borrowing an argument from Thornwell, Lynch posited that a master only had “a claim on the services of the slave.” He claimed that “[e]specially in the matter of Religion, of morality, and, in a measure, of his family relations does [the slave] hold himself free.” Once a slave completed his task, “the remainder of the day [was] at his own disposal.” The slaves could cultivate their garden as they saw fit, raise what animals they wanted, and do whatever they pleased with the produce. Lynch also wrote that slaves could go hunting and fishing and keep whatever they caught. Under the method of slavery that Lynch described, therefore, the slaves actually had a great degree of

50 Lynch, Part 2, 98.
51 Lynch, Part 2, 98.
52 Lynch, Part 2, 94.
53 Lynch, Part 1, 91.
54 Lynch, Part 1, 92-93.
liberty. At the same time they enjoyed the protection and guidance of their kind and benevolent masters.

Bishop Lynch’s proslavery ideals did not represent reality, nor did they necessarily represent his own actions as a slaveholder. As a Catholic bishop, Lynch’s perceptions of the sexual licentiousness of slaves in their loose ideals of marriage must have been appalling, and he did try his best to stem immorality on his plantations. When he was confronted with marital problems or scandals among his slaves he meddled to the point of relocating entire families to prevent adultery.\(^{55}\) This, however, did not solve the underlying problem regarding the lack of legal protection for slave marriages. As for how he fed his slaves there is little evidence to show that he was either generous or mean. After 1861 Bishop Lynch instructed that his plantations not produce cotton but only foodstuffs.\(^{56}\) It is therefore plausible that his slaves were well fed, and there is no evidence against his slaves having gardens and hogs. He did provide his slaves with clothes, though on occasion they could be moldy and damaged by bilge water.\(^{57}\) Furthermore he did afford his slaves medical care, and he did employ the task system on his plantations that may have eased the condition of the slaves. More to his credit he protected slave families from being broken up unwaveringly. Despite this, he was not such a mild master that his slaves did not attempt to escape. He defended even the most horrifying aspects of slavery including rape. His slaves were beaten, and sold away from their communities. Comparatively he was a benign master, but his care of his slaves did not measure up to the rosy picture of slavery that he painted in his proslavery writings. No matter what, Lynch’s arguments and defenses could not ameliorate the institution as it

\(^{55}\) Heisser, 256-257.
\(^{56}\) Heisser, 252.
\(^{57}\) John Lynch to Patrick Lynch, December 15, 1863.
existed. Despite his paternalistic wishes, he could not escape the fact that the bottom line in slavery was profit, not humanitarianism.
CHAPTER VI

LYNCH’S PLAN FOR SLAVES

In 1864, Bishop Lynch undertook a mission to Europe for the Confederate States of America. Lynch’s commission, penned by the Confederate Secretary of State, J.P. Benjamin, required him to attempt to gain diplomatic relations with the Papal States, and to positively influence the Confederacy’s image in the eyes of European rulers.¹ While on his mission he published a pamphlet that made his clearest statement about slavery. Lynch defended the institution as mild and benevolent in this pamphlet titled “A Few Words on the Domestic Slavery in the Confederate States of America.” At the same time, however, he also described slavery as a sickness.² The fact that Lynch did not regard slavery as a moral good brings up the question of what thought ought to be done with the slaves. Believing that slavery was a national disease, Lynch thought that he had the best remedy to treat the particular social ill. In his Civil War pamphlet on slavery, he discussed many possible scenarios for emancipation, but refuted them all as disastrous. He gave his own peculiar cure for the peculiar institution, but he also noted that

Americans would not adopt it. He concluded that for the time being, the best possible condition for slaves was continued enslavement.

One problem facing Lynch’s mission was that during the nineteenth century the Catholic Church did not condone slavery. Although the Church in Rome did not engage in antislavery activities, it did project an antislavery ideal, with which American bishops had to cope. When Lynch visited the Vatican as part of his mission, Pope Pius IX refused to acknowledge him as a representative of the Confederacy. The pope even told Lynch that “something might be done looking to an improvement in [the slaves’] position or state, and to a gradual preparation for their freedom at a future opportune time.”

Earlier in the century another Pope had given a far more concrete and far more public pronouncement about slavery. The apostolic letter, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, penned by Pope Gregory XVI and presented to the American bishops at the Fourth Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1839, roundly condemned slavery. Bishop John England, Lynch’s predecessor and mentor, however, argued that the apostolic letter did not apply to the institution of slavery in the United States. He made a distinction between “the slave trade” that he admitted the Church condemned, and the practice of “domestic slavery” that merely retained the position of persons already enslaved. The distinction was flimsy at best, but it was enough to influence the debate about slavery in the United States.

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In 1861 Augustus Martin, bishop of Natchitoches, Louisiana, wrote a pastoral letter about the Civil War in which he advanced Bishop England’s ideas about the slave trade. Martin described slavery as a positive good ordained by God so that Africans could be introduced to the Gospel. Glorifying the slave trade to that purpose, he wrote, “How noble and fine was the mission which our Father entrusted to us, in his way of joining us in His work of redemption and choosing us as his ministers of His goodness and as the instruments of His mercy.”

Martin granted that slavery was not an absolute good because of the fallen nature of man. “[B]linded by materialistic doctrines and without any respect for God, in whose likeness their immortal souls as well as ours have been created, most of us have considered as means of power to exploit, very often as docile instruments of brutish passions, those whom we should have raised from their original degradation. . .”

Although Bishop Martin wrote that slavery was a good, he conceded that it could be abused and turned into something less than godly. Despite this concession, however, the Roman Congregation of the Index, the body in charge of discovering heresy within written church documents, disagreed with his pastoral letter. The Reverend Vincenzo Gatti, a member of the Index, wrote a critique that condemned both the slave trade and the institution of domestic slavery. In response to Bishop Martin’s claim that God ordained the slave trade in order to rescue Africans from their deplorable situation, Gatti wrote, “Did Jesus Christ say: ‘Go and snatch them by force from their native country, drag them to your countries and convert them?’ No, He did not. . . And did He

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6 Martin, 220.
say: ‘In exchange for the spiritual good that you will do, exploit them as instruments for your material interests?’ No, he did not. . . the[sic] aim of teaching them the Christian Faith, even if it exists, which very often it does not, is a trifling matter and it does not justify the iniquity they commit in this trade.’

Gatti also described slavery itself as “a violation of a natural right.” He concluded that Bishop Martin’s letter “promotes the mistake of those who believe that the slave trade of the Negroes is lawful.” He further wrote that “[t]his mistake favors the preservation of slavery in the Southern states in opposition to the will of the Sovereign Pontiffs who, as is clear from the words I have quoted above, have condemned not only the slave trade but slavery itself: ‘to reduce to slavery, to retain in slavery.’”

Although Bishop Lynch may not have been aware of it, the Reverend Gatti’s criticism of Martin’s pastoral letter clearly shows that the church was opposed to Southern slavery. As a southerner and supporter of slavery, Bishop Lynch certainly bought into Bishop England’s logic that the Church merely condemned the slave trade. The title of his pamphlet overtly specified that slavery as practiced in the Confederate States was “domestic.” Despite his idea that domestic slavery was morally permissible, he gave no theological or biblical defenses for slavery in his pamphlet. Instead he relied strictly on arguments about the temporal well-being of slaves. He likely left out any theological defense for slavery to avoid a critique similar to that which Bishop Martin experienced. Certainly a loud Papal refutation of his arguments would have been

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8 Gatti, 223.
9 Gatti, 224.
10 Gatti, 225.
counterproductive to his mission of Confederate boosterism. Because Lynch knew that elements within the Catholic Church did not support his views, he decided to publish the pamphlet anonymously. Writing this as a piece of propaganda on behalf of the Confederacy to influence European powers, he may not have wanted its contents to reflect his own person. Whether he knew about Gatti’s critique or not, his choice to publish anonymously and not to use theological arguments clearly shows that he knew that the Church did not approve of slavery, but he published the pamphlet defending Southern slavery, nonetheless.

In discussing what ought to be done with the slaves, Lynch’s first considered the idea that they should all be emancipated immediately. He asserted that this question of emancipation should belong to the South. He wrote that proponents of abolition, whom he described as good intentioned “strangers,” did not consider that “if Emancipation is so productive of good results, they [southerners] are to receive the benefits of it. If on the contrary, it brings disaster in its train, they [southerners] are to be its sufferers.” Lynch, like many of his fellow southerners, happily predicted disaster for black and white, North and South, should immediate emancipation occur. In his scenarios, though, African Americans stood to lose the most from emancipation.

Bishop Lynch thought that a sudden and general emancipation “would be every way disastrous, and to no party more so than to the negroes themselves.” Although abolitionists would argue that slaves stood to gain many good things from emancipation, Lynch thought that it would result “in the most deadly Antagonism”

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manifesting itself in “an inhuman war unparalleled [sic] in the history of the world.” In this war he predicted that “[w]here the negroes would for a time obtain the upper hand, the atrocities of San Domingo would be reënacted [sic]; where the infuriated whites, from superior numbers and superior intelligence, would conquer, no mercy would be shown. The contest would cease only from exhaustion, to be renewed until the negroes approached extinction.”

Bishop Lynch actually had some solid evidence for his predicted race war. His reference to Santo Domingo was an allusion to the bloody Haitian Revolution. He often cited this revolution as an example of what happened when two races were put on a plane of equality. Beginning in 1791, thousands of Haitian slaves rose up against their masters and fought to gain their freedom. The revolution had left Haiti devastated. After roughly fifteen years of fighting, more than 100,000 Haitians were dead, and more were left crippled for life. In 1806, two years after the official end of the revolution, the Haitian leader, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, was assassinated, plunging the new nation into a civil war. Many of the slaves who had been freed by the revolution fell into extreme poverty, and because of the militaristic nature of the revolution the Haitian government tended toward autocracy. By the time Lynch wrote his pamphlet, Southerners had been watching the events in Haiti for half a century, gleefully pointing out every atrocity committed. Bishop Lynch too latched onto the misfortunes of the Haitians citing them as examples for inherent racial enmity.

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17 Dubois, 303.
18 Dubois, 302.
In an example closer to home, Lynch used the ill-treatment of the many Native American tribes by the U.S. government as further evidence of racial “antagonism.” Drawing from popular southern periodicals such as *De Bow’s Review* and *Southern Quarterly Review*, he described the results of two races occupying the same land.19 “It [racial antagonism] was seen between the English settlers on the North American Continent, and the Aboriginal Indians, and these have been exterminated up to and beyond the Mississippi. It still continues between the whites in California and along the Pacific, and the Indians in their vicinity, and the latter are being rapidly exterminated.”20 He also cited the conflict between Maoris and English settlers in New Zealand as further evidence for racial antagonism that would ultimately lead to the extinction of the non-white race. Based on current trends, Lynch predicted that like the American Indians, “Such an extinction awaits the Maoris.”21

The example of the Maoris was for Lynch especially potent as he used it to forecast the inevitable extinction of non-white races when such racial antagonism existed. He noted that “[i]n the house of Lords, in London, in a debate of June of this present year, this fact [that the Maoris were being exterminated] was acknowledged and lamented. It was felt that the war now waging there was unjust, & that the Maoris had been oppressed.”22 Rather than coming up with a reason as to why such racial antagonism might exist (and there are many reasons, especially from an ecclesiastical point of view: the fallen nature of man, the effects of greed upon the world, and other such sins) Lynch instead chalked it up to simple human nature. He claimed bluntly,

19 Lynch, Part 2, 121.  
“Certain it is, that no people is so fierce and inexorable in such an Antagonism, as the Anglo Saxon and cognate races.” Furthermore, he suggested that the extermination of races cohabitating with the “Anglo-Saxon” race was unavoidable. He asserted that in the case of the British Parliament and the Maoris, the “legislatures are powerless before a law of human nature. The most the Government could do, would be to render the process of inevitable extinction as merciful as possible.” Such chilling insights bring up thoughts of future racist regimes with similarly ominous plans for extinction.

Bishop Lynch used this language as an either/or argument to influence the reader of his piece of propaganda. He stated that at the moment whites and blacks were cohabitating in the American South. He further asserted that because of the institution of slavery, “there is no Antagonism between them.” In order to make the slave’s condition of abject servitude seem more palatable he offered the only alternative to be utter extermination.

In contrast to these examples of annihilation, Lynch claimed that slaves in the Confederate States were thriving. “At present the negroes are well provided and well cared for, happy and content.” He further asserted that when offered manumission, “[n]ot infrequently the negroes refuse to accept the proffered gift. They actually possess the good will of a kind owner and protector, to whom they are attached; and they prudently decline to exchange comfort and certainty of their present position, for the uncertainty and misery to which they would be exposed as free negroes.” Lynch described the work load for slaves as light so that “[a]n industrious man can ordinarily

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26 Lynch, Part 2, 114.
27 Lynch, Part 2, 105.
accomplish his work by two or three o’clock. In that case the remainder of the day is at his own disposal.”

For compensation, Lynch noted, “the negroes receive in strong solid food, fully as much as they [can] consume, and have something over to satisfy a negro’s natural inclination to waste.” In addition to food, Lynch asserted that “[e]ach family lives in a small house of a suitable size, and ordinarily has a small plot of ground attached to serve as a garden.”

Lynch’s idyllic descriptions of slave work and compensation made the lot of the slave seem quite enviable. If he was to be believed, then American slavery was the beginning of the eight-hour work day and the five-day-week. Lynch used this idea that slaves had such an fortunate lot in life as a tool to contrast their condition with that of African Americans in the North.

Lynch claimed some knowledge of the condition of free blacks outside the South. He described their lives in the North as terrible, destitute, and dangerous. He wrote that some slaves were so fond of slavery that when offered their freedom in the North, “[t]hey [were] unwilling to leave their homes; and many of them [were] well aware of the miserable condition to which they would be reduced, if they were to go to the Northern States.”

Using contrasting population figures he compared the well-being of slaves in the South to the distress of free African Americans in the North. “The fact that [slaves] natural annual increase is over two and a half percent, is sufficient evidence of their physical condition, and is a striking contrast to that of the free negroes at the North, who are dying out rapidly.”

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28 Lynch, Part 1, 91.
29 Lynch, Part 1, 93.
30 Lynch, Part 1, 91.
31 Lynch specifies that Sundays were always days of rest, and that Saturdays were “half days” so that slaves could prepare for Sunday. Lynch, 92.
32 Lynch, Part 2, 106.
33 Lynch, Part 2, 115.
In addition to the effects emancipation could have on race relations, Bishop Lynch also discussed the financial implications of freedom. He argued that no compensation to the owners of the slaves could be made. He estimated the value of the slaves to be “at least 9,000,000,000 francs.”\[^{34}\] He admitted that “[i]t may be said that as they remain in the country after they are freed, the state actually loses nothing.” He represented this, however, as a gross injustice and a vast infringement on personal property rights. “[W]ould not their emancipation be, in fact, the confiscation by the state of the property of individuals to that vast amount, and the disposal to other purposes at the will of the Civil Government?” Lynch portrayed the seizing of any such personal property to such an extent as grossly tyrannical. In Lynch’s opinion it would ruin slave owners financially since the combined value of slaves “forbids any such compensation.”\[^{35}\]

Lynch, however, took up very little space writing about the losses to be had by slave owners. Instead he cleverly moved his argument back to the condition of the slaves and argued that emancipation would not only spell the financial doom of slave owners, but it would also financially ruin slaves. “At present, and under the system in force, these four millions [of slaves] are profitably employed.” Of course the slaves labored not for their own prosperity, but for the financial gain of their masters, but Bishop Lynch wisely left this fact out. Instead he asserted that “If emancipated, [the slaves] would at once sink to the level of the free negroes, and become unproductive and a load on the

\[^{34}\] Lynch, Part 2, 109. In a footnote on pg 121, David C.R. Heisser notes that this would be aprox 1.7 billion at that time.
community.” This opinion that slaves could not be productive citizens developed less from actual data, and more from prevalent racist ideals of the time.

Even after the Civil War had ended slavery, Southern intellectuals clung to the idea that African Americans were of an inferior race. In 1866 Josiah C. Nott, a prominent Alabama physician, published an essay entitled *Instincts of Races*. In it, he likened humanity to dog breeds, and asserted that by nature “the negro is not an agricultural race.” He belittled African Americans further by writing that “[t]he Negro has no excuse, but that of race, for the want of agriculture, art and science.” Nott almost parroted Bishop Lynch’s arguments when he wrote:

> When the late civil war broke out in the United States, there were 4,000,000 negroes in that country, about 500,000 of whom were free. The slave portion was not only the best cared for, most comfortable, contented, and increasing laboring population in the world, but was more intelligent, more moral, more Christianized, more useful in the progress of civilization than this race had ever been in its native or in foreign lands, in freedom.

Even after the Civil War ended, Nott professed the idea that if freed the black population in the United States would become a drain on the economy. Bishop Lynch, therefore, simply espoused the most prominent idea among white southerners of his time.

Closely following this rhetoric Bishop Lynch described the natural character of African Americans as “idleness, and the want of foresight.” He asserted that an African American was only suited for a tropical climate where “he can stretch forth his hand any month of the year to gather the fruits necessary for his existence.” In the American South, however, Lynch wrote, “[t]he negro cannot find support in the almost

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38 Nott, 208.
39 Lynch, Part 2, 110.
spontaneous productions of nature.” Instead, “a man must labour all the year, and with a certain degree of skill and care to support himself and family.” Bishop Lynch wrote that “[t]his, no one, who knows the negro expects him to do.”

He did grant that emancipation could be practical, but only under certain conditions:

where the number of slaves is so small that some compensation can be made to the owners for the loss of property by the emancipation, and where the climate is more congenial to the negro, and he can stretch forth his hand any month of the year to gather the fruits necessary for his existence, where winter is unknown and clothing may be reduced to the scantiest demands of modesty, their emancipation may not be attended with these consequences.

The consequences he foresaw were the utter destitution of African Americans, as well as the financial ruin of southern whites and the nation as a whole. His perception of the slaves as idle and lacking foresight led him to the conclusion that their freedom would burden the Christian community with their care. Furthermore he argued against setting what he saw as “profitably employed” persons free. He imagined that they would become “a burden on the charity of the rest of the community” and would diminish the resources of the state. This latter consequence he used to refute the argument that if the slaves were free and were to remain within the state there would be no actual losses.

Bishop Lynch thus argued that a general and sudden emancipation was a bad idea, both for white and black Americans. Such an act would, he concluded, destroy the prospects of both the slaves and the slave-owning class in the South, and ruin the entire nation’s finances. He argued that such an act would create four million paupers out of a

42 Lynch, Part 2, 110.
formerly productive class, which would put an immeasurable strain on the community.

Finally he predicted that such an act would excite the racial animosity of the white race, which would spell the certain doom of African Americans.

Lynch, however, did not stop at arguing against a general emancipation. He recognized that many other plans to free the slaves existed. One such plan was to gradually prepare slaves for their emancipation (termed “preparatory apprenticeship”) so as not to take the step suddenly, since sudden emancipation would ensure all of the dooms Lynch so ominously predicted. As with his arguments against general emancipation, Lynch used a combination of the fanciful racist ideals of his day, and real world examples.

Lynch began his argument against “preparatory apprenticeship” by stating that no good plan “beyond the mere proposal” had been put forward for the gradual training of slaves for their freedom. He suggested that the “mere proposal” was simply unworkable since, “[i]t would require a large number of men to conduct it, pure, wise and self denying.” Reminiscent of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s character, Augustine St. Clare, Bishop Lynch was skeptical that anyone would be willing to take up the task. He was especially skeptical that anyone fitting his “pure, wise and self denying” description could be found in the United States government. He described government officials, probably quite accurately, as “restless and changing, whose first duty in this life is, each to accumulate a fortune in the shortest time, and who equal other government

45 Lynch, Part 2, 110.
46 Lynch, Part 2, 110.
47 “That’s you Christians, all over! – you’ll get up a society, and get some poor missionary to spend all his days among just such heathen. But let me see one of you that would that would take one into your house with you, and take the labor of their conversion on yourselves! No; when it comes to that, they are dirty and disagreeable, and it’s too much care, and so on.” Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly (New York: Penguin, 1981), 353.
employés[sic], in turning public funds to their own account, and in avoiding irksome duties.”

For concrete evidence both condemning preparatory apprenticeship and describing government officials’ ineptitude, Lynch used the example of the escaped slaves who fled to Union lines during the Civil War and were set free as “contraband of war.” Lynch stated that these were “to live and work under the care and guidance of certain teachers and superintendants specially sent by the Government for that purpose.” Lynch insisted that while in Union care, “[the contraband] lived in filth and rags, were crowded into miserable huts and tents, or lived in the open air around the camps. . . Diseases ravaged them. They lay ill for days without medical attendance. . . of the 250,000, not one half are now living. Is this the apprenticeship and preparation for freedom offered to the negro” His outlook for the success of preparatory apprenticeship was bleak. Lynch concluded that even in the unlikely event that such a plan of preparatory apprenticeship was achieved, there would still be the issue of racial antagonism that he could only see ending in the extermination of African Americans.

A possible solution to this supposedly inevitable race war was the colonization of the freed slaves outside the boundaries of the United States. In his pamphlet Lynch described the criteria for a suitable colony. It had to be large enough to accommodate four million slaves, it had to be far away from whites to avoid a race war, and it had to be in the tropics because Lynch’s racist ideals told him that people with dark

48 Lynch, Part 2, 110.
50 Lynch, Part 2, 111.
51 Lynch, Part 2, 111.
skin were only suited to tropical climates.\textsuperscript{52} He admitted that such a colony had already begun in Liberia, but he was quick to claim that the conditions in Liberia were not so good. He noted that “in the course of time thousands of them [free black colonists] or their children have passed or fallen into the hands of the savage tribes around them.”\textsuperscript{53} Liberia was thus an example of the impracticality of colonization as a solution to the problem of slavery.

Bishop Lynch argued against the expediency of colonization. He noted, quite accurately, the sheer enormity of the proposal in terms of time, treasure, and effort. He gave a hypothetical scenario in which 250 ships making three round trips from America to Africa per year would carry the freed slaves to their new colony. Taking the slave population of four million and adding an average annual increase of 100,000, Lynch estimated that such an undertaking would occupy thirty years.\textsuperscript{54} He rhetorically asked, “Does anyone dream that any one nation could, or that all nations combined would, subject themselves to this labour and tax upon their resources and commerce, for thirty years, for mere charity, without any pecuniary return . . .?”\textsuperscript{55} He further attacked the idea of colonization by stating that even if such an undertaking were mounted, and all of the slaves in the South were transported to a colony in Africa, that if left to their own devices to govern themselves, “they would soon sink below the level of Hayti.”\textsuperscript{56}

Lynch then discussed why colonization within North America would be a bad idea. He noted that some who supported colonization had recognized the prohibitory amount of work involved in transporting the whole number of slaves to Africa, and

\textsuperscript{52} Lynch, Part 2, 111.
\textsuperscript{53} Lynch, Part 2, 112.
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\textsuperscript{56} Lynch, Part 2, 112.
instead proposed that they be given a piece of land in the American continent that they
could simply walk to. Lynch refuted this idea by arguing that the plight of the African
American in such a case would be the same as that of the American Indian. He had
already discussed the racial antagonism that existed between the white Americans and the
American Indians as a parallel to what would happen to the slaves if they were suddenly
emancipated. Lynch argued that as with the Indians, the United States government would
simply continue to move the African American colony farther and farther away until
there was nowhere else to go and Lynch’s predicted race war would occur, exterminating
all African Americans.

After refuting these proposals for emancipation, Bishop Lynch described his
own unique solution. His answer to the issue was in fact to free the slaves. Lynch
prescribed a form of colonization, but his version was influenced not only by his racist
world view, but also by his religious convictions. He first proposed that a colony in the
tropics should be set aside, because he posited that this was the only place that African
Americans could thrive on their own. He asserted that they would not be able to govern
themselves, again alluding to the Haitian Revolution, and he further asserted that most
white governments would be inept in that regard. He suggested, instead, that because of
African Americans’ “innate, though vague reverence for religion” a religious body should
be responsible for governing them. He volunteered the Jesuits, citing the missions in
California and Paraguay as successful examples of Jesuits’ care in such situations (he
blamed secular governments for taking over the missions and ruining the Jesuits’ good
work). Lynch imagined that, governed by such a religious body “[t]hey would work
harmoniously together.” Although he stated that “[i]t is only in such a way that these
communities can be successfully and prosperously governed,” he noted that “[t]here is nothing in the heart of the nineteenth century, which would support, or even tolerate, such an effort,” thus condemning what he considered the only theoretically possible alternative to maintaining the institution of slavery.

Lynch did not see, or at least did not publish, any way to end slavery and avoid catastrophe at the same time. In his pamphlet he saw no way of escaping “[t]he fundamental danger, in great measure to whites, & absolutely to the blacks in America, [which] is the Antagonism of races.” Because slavery in the United States involved two races, Lynch saw no way of avoiding that deadly antagonism. He suggested that things might be different “[i]f the masters and the slaves were of the same race, as was the case in Europe, with regard to Slavery of the first eight or nine centuries of Christianity.” In this case, “this Antagonism of course would not exist. . . but it is not so in America. There two races confront each other face to face, each marked by nature, by unchanging and unmistakable traits and features.” Heading off any counter arguments that might have arisen in the reader, he continued, “[e]ven if the two races were such that they could intermarry, and thus become gradually merged in an intermediate race, the difficulty might perhaps be lightened. But this is not so.” Bishop Lynch also reminded his reader that the slaves were happy and well cared for, and would be better off left alone. Having proposed that any act of emancipation would be bad for slaves, he spoke for those he condemned to servitude, writing, “At least then, the slaves of the Confederate States may ask to be left in their present state of quiet and content, awaiting the future which God

57 Lynch, Part 2, 117.
only knows; and not be doomed at once to ruin, if not speedy extermination, for the sake of a mere theory.”

In all of this it must be remembered that Bishop Lynch’s Civil War pamphlet on slavery was a piece of propaganda. Given the evidence that he used in support of this claim, it is entirely possible that he believed that a catastrophic race war resulting in the extinction of African Americans would take place should the slaves be emancipated. His low opinion of African Americans’ innate character also suggests that he could truly have believed that their freedom would result in their destruction. The utterly cold tone he took in describing the inevitability of the event complicates the idea that he believed in this outcome. It is difficult to believe that he would not have shown mercy. It is even more difficult to believe that a man of his intellectual prowess saw no difference between a peaceful emancipation and an explosive rebellion like the one he alluded to in “San Domingo,” or between the treatment of Indians tribes that were considered separate nations and African Americans who were under the jurisdiction of the United States. It is entirely possible, and even probable that he did not fully believe in these ideas, that he would have shown mercy and that he did see the apparent differences between things like emancipation and rebellion. In any case, his arguments against emancipation are clear.

Ultimately Lynch decided that the best thing to do with the slaves was to keep them enslaved. He asserted, however erroneously, that the slaves were happy and contented, and in an enviable condition being cared for throughout their natural lives. He admitted, however, that the institution of slavery could not last forever.

Whether, in course of time, the too great increase of the number of negroes in a limited area, the notable diminution of the Cotton trade of the Southern States, the lack of some fitting industry to take its place in the adequate

59 Lynch, Part 2, 117.
employment of negro labour, or some other change in the conditions of
nations, may render the negroes a danger to the country, a load on the whites,
or an obstacle in the way of their industry or progress, or when these things
will happen is more than I can foresee.  

He noted that those who keep these “inevitabilities” in mind “must only look
to the present as a time of truce.” He then said that this time of truce should be used for
“redressing and mitigation any accidental evils that may now exist,” by which he
probably meant the extreme amounts of physical and psychological abuse heaped upon
African Americans through beating, rape, and the breaking apart of marriages. Most of
all, he suggested that this time of truce in which African Americans were enslaved should
be used for “elevating the character of the negroes, so that they may become moral and
pious Christians.  

Lynch’s opinion about what ought to be done with the slaves is therefore
somewhat nebulous. On the one hand, he portrayed slavery as the best possible condition
for African Americans at that time. On the other hand, he admitted that this condition
was very fragile and could be easily disrupted through any number things, whether it be
an overpopulation of slaves, or a move away from cotton production. He argued against
the preparation of slaves for freedom, but also suggested that their time in slavery should
be used to improve their persons. He came up with a plan for emancipation which would
supposedly solve all of the problems that he foresaw, but also admitted that his plan could
not work. In all of these conflicting ideas, the one point that Lynch made clear was his
belief that the best possible course of action concerning slavery would be to maintain the
status quo.

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60 Lynch, Part 2, 115-16. [emphasis added]
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

When Bishop Lynch returned to the United States, in late 1865, the diocese of Charleston was a complete shambles. Through war and disaster the Lynch’s episcopate had racked up hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. Most of the Catholic churches, convents, and other buildings had been destroyed. Bishop Lynch himself might not have even been allowed back into the United States due to his Confederate activity. He was, however, granted a pardon because of “his charity towards Federal prisoners, black and white, for whom he exhausted his resources and exposed his health in the hospitals and prisons.”

Given the desolation of his diocese, it is not surprising that Lynch held quite a bit of resentment after the war over his failed proslavery activity. In an undated letter he answered a question, presumably about public education, with the following rant:

In this State of S. Carolina, the Civil Government has passed into the hands of the negroes, formerly the slaves – they constituting about two thirds of the legislative assembly – Destitute of education – without any property, and therefore having no taxes to pay, but free to make others pay as they please – And intoxicated with their powers, they are in the hands of certain leaders whom they blindly follow, and are in fact a governing body, as hostile to the whites, and as odious to them as I presume the Prussians are to the Alsaciens [sic]. So far the great effort has been to fill the purses of those leaders, nearly

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all of whom are adventurers from the Northern States; who came poor, and are now rich.²

The continued low opinion of African Americans and reaction to Reconstruction demonstrates the deep seated nature of Lynch’s beliefs. Southern culture and Southern values permeated Lynch’s every day life up to Reconstruction. Slavery especially influenced his worldview. He had close associations with slaveholders, including various family members. His mentor, Bishop England wrote a widely publicized defense of slavery, and Lynch himself bought, owned, and sold slaves, fully participating in the South’s peculiar institution. Because of his experience with slavery, Lynch is the best representative for Catholic proslavery thought.

Lynch’s proslavery ideals included a blend of paternalism and fear of what might happen in the event of abolition. He contended that slaves existed in an enviable condition of contentment and fulfillment. He argued that masters took great pains to care for their slaves. Any abuses to the system he blamed either on the innate sinfulness of man, or the agitation of Northerners. He posited that emancipation would not only bankrupt the nation, but would also lead to the extermination of African Americans. He argued against possible remedies such as preparatory apprenticeship and colonization as unworkable or prohibitively expensive. Even his own peculiarly Catholic plan for emancipation which was an odd blend of apprenticeship, colonization, and Spanish style missionization complete with Jesuit friars, he passed off as impractical. Basically his proslavery thought followed an age old maxim, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” For Lynch, the institution of slavery was a practical, workable social system, so he argued, why take the risk of emancipation if so many bad things could happen.

Essentially, therefore, Catholic proslavery rhetoric mimicked its Protestant counterpart. Both traditions argued that the institution was compatible with the Gospel. Neither side saw slavery as an absolute good, and in fact, they both described it as a result of sin. Consequently, they also lamented the abuses of the system. Nevertheless, Catholics and Protestants argued that slavery was a good condition for African Americans, blaming man’s innate sinfulness for the abuses of slaves. Both faith traditions sought to ameliorate the image of slavery, and the actual condition of the slaves.

Nevertheless, the Catholic proslavery ethic differed from its Protestant counterpart in subtle ways. Most of the American Catholic leaders did not completely defend the institution. Defending, rather, their marginalized flock against nativist aggression, they argued that slavery could be compatible with Catholicism. In this respect, Lynch differed from bishops like England and Hughes. Although he defended Catholicism in the United States, he also imbibed proslavery rhetoric and culture throughout his entire life in the South. He was therefore more ready to defend the institution outright. The Catholic Church itself claimed to have ended slavery in Europe through Christian charity. Catholics therefore had hope that the institution would end in this world, unlike their Protestant brethren who saw the realistic end of slavery only in the millennium.\(^3\) Even Lynch conceived that the institution could not be permanent. He argued, however, that ending slavery in the United States posed too many problems and involved too many risks, and thus the best solution to the slavery problem was to maintain slavery’s current status.

The authority structure of the Catholic Church also gave Catholics a unique nuance to their proslavery ideals. Whereas most Protestant denominations, and especially Thornwell’s Presbyterianism, relied on the Bible as the source of instruction and authority, the Catholic Church rested its authority on the Magisterium or the teaching authority of the Church. Although the Bible remained important to Catholics, they did not necessarily need to read in order to receive the revealed truths of the Gospel. Because of this fact, Lynch was more comfortable with laws prohibiting slaves to learn their letters. Like Protestants he still disagreed with the laws, and blamed their existence on abolitionist agitation, but for Lynch, they did not preclude slaves from salvation. Lynch’s Church, after all, had been instructing illiterate peoples for centuries.

Because of his Catholicism, Lynch therefore brought a rather paradoxical attitude to the proslavery debate. On the one hand, Lynch conceded that slavery could and probably should end before Jesus’ second coming, yet simultaneously he was able to be more comfortable with the institution as it existed with all of its imperfections. Aside from these nuances, Lynch’s proslavery ideals really came down to culture. Despite subtle differences, his proslavery thought was essentially in line with Protestant proslavery clergy.
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