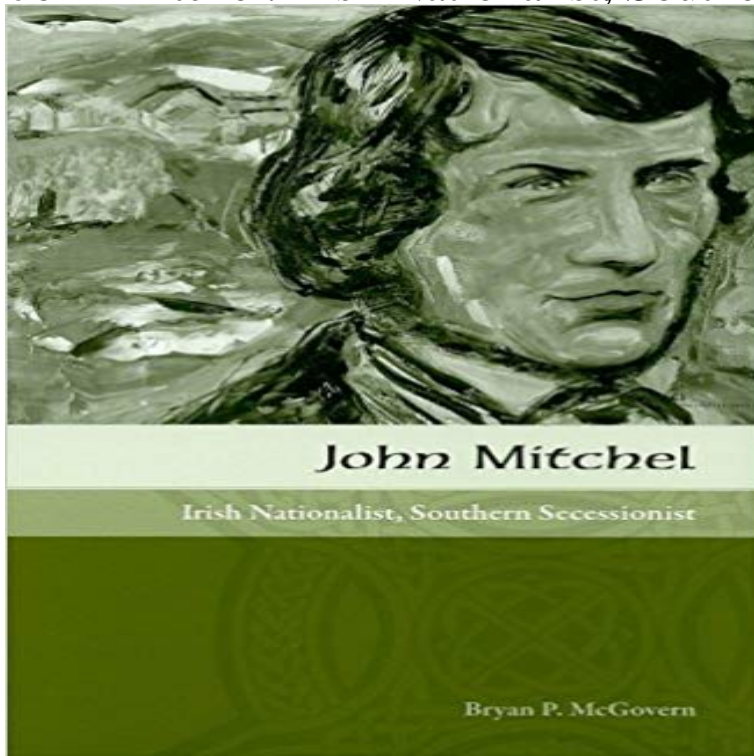


John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist



This is an informative, balanced biography that embraces a man who seemed defined by contradictions. McGovern unravels these to reveal how Mitchel made sense of himself and his world. The result is a must-read book for anyone interested in nineteenth-century Irish and American history. Susannah U. Bruce, author of *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* This book chronicles the life and times of John Mitchel, a radical Irish nationalist who relocated to the American South, where he became an ardent supporter of the Confederacy before and during the Civil War. Mitchel was exiled for his beliefs by the British government in 1848, during the Great Famine (1845-52). Though neither a peasant nor a Catholic, he empathized with the plight of over one million impoverished Irish Catholic emigrants who fled starvation. These expatriates believed that they had been forced unwillingly from their homes by the British government, which they also blamed for causing the famine or at least creating conditions that seriously threatened Irish survival. As a publisher of several expatriate newspapers, Mitchel was able to echo the sentiments of his audience, and perhaps more important, shape the prevailing attitudes of Irish Americans attempting to adjust to a hostile society. Well educated, bourgeois, and respected by the Irish immigrant community, the Protestant Mitchel became an ardent Irish nationalist during a time when most Irish Protestants, including the Scotch-Irish in America, were becoming almost uniformly opposed to Irish nationalism. In giving full treatment to his experience in America, this first contemporary biography of Mitchel addresses the basic paradox of his ideology: why an Irish nationalist who called for an end to the British enslavement of the Irish enthusiastically supported the slave society of the American South. It thus

sheds invaluable light on how Irish nationalism played out on both sides of the Atlantic and on issues of racism and cultural assimilation facing the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. Bryan McGovern is an assistant professor of history at Kennesaw State University. He published an essay on Mitchel in New Hibernia Review.

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