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EDITOR

David M. Morris

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EDITORIAL

David M. Morris

Editor

Once again, it is with great pleasure that we publish another issue of the *International Journal of Mormon Studies (IJMS)*. This issue brings together a combination of scholars from different parts of the world and academic disciplines. Drawn from Mormon and non-Mormon perspectives, the articles found herein provide interesting insights to Mormonism globally, encouraging further attention and examination. Following on from the successful *European Mormon Studies Association (EMSA)* conference in Tilburg, The Netherlands (2010), we publish a number of the papers that were presented during that conference, as well as publishing direct submissions. These include papers from Walter E. A. van Beek, Eric R. Dursteler, Terryl L. Givens, Bryan R. Monte, Matthew L. Rasmussen and Peter Vousden. Accompanying these articles is a number of reviewed books, including those of non-English publication, which supports the expanding international dimension of Mormon Studies.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles that have been submitted for publication. We hope as an editorial board that you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE: MORMONISM IN ITALY, 1867–1964

Eric R. Dursteler

Abstract: After establishing one of the first non-Roman Catholic missions in Italy in 1850, less than two decades later the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recalled its missionaries and had no official presence in the peninsula for 100 years. Traditionally, the explanation for this has focused primarily on the domestic situation in Italy, including a combination of economic hardship, cultural disinclination, political and especially religious opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, which prevented Mormon missionaries from finding success initially, and from returning subsequently. While these factors influenced the decision to abandon Italy, the absence of the LDS church from 1867 to 1964 was less a product of circumstances in Italy, and more a result of historical events in the heartland of Mormonism and of cultural attitudes regarding Italians and Roman Catholicism which were widespread among Mormons in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the second wave of missionary work that began in 1850 following the Mormon exodus to Utah, Italy was one of the first non-English speaking countries to receive missionaries. Led initially by the apostle Lorenzo Snow and Giuseppe Taranto (anglicised as Joseph Toronto), the first Italian convert, missionaries toiled in the Waldensian valleys of the north-western Piedmont region sporadically over the next seventeen years. They found very limited success: the Italian mission produced fewer than 200 baptisms, an average of approximately 11–12 per year, though the bulk occurred in the first few years of the mission. Of these converts, 73 emigrated to Utah between 1850 and 1861, and an equal number were excommunicated, for reasons ranging from apostasy, negligence, rebellion, immorality, absurdity, to criticism,

nonchalance, cowardice, lying, and fear of the world.¹ Already in 1861 the *Millennial Star* reported that “the work in Italy ... has been at a standstill for a long time.” By 1863 there were only 13 Mormons in all of Italy, and in 1867, when the mission was definitively closed; their numbers had dwindled to six.² Save for several brief forays of individual missionaries, Italy was overlooked for almost a century; for the LDS presence in Italy, these were a hundred years of solitude.

On the surface it is surprising that Mormonism should have disappeared from the Italian scene so quickly and completely. The Mormons were among the very first to send missionaries to proselytize in Italy following the establishment of the constitution, known as the *Statuto*, accepted by the House of Savoy in 1848, which attempted, among other things, to curb the privileged position that Roman Catholicism enjoyed in Piedmont.³ This significant event marked a first step toward a more open and even tolerant religious atmosphere and a religious pluralism. It would seem that the Mormons would have been ideally situated to take advantage of this situation, and yet their missionaries were withdrawn in 1867, “too early to reap any significant benefit” from the evolving religious atmosphere and the strongly anti-clerical political environment which characterized Italy from unification in 1860 until the Lateran Accords of 1929, “when the growth of non-Catholic churches in Italy stalled until after World War II.” During this seventy-year period numerous Protestant denominations established permanent missions in Italy, and experienced significant growth.⁴ The failure to maintain an active presence in Italy, and their belated return,

¹ Michael W. Homer, “‘Like the Rose in the Wilderness’: The Mormon Mission in the Kingdom of Sardinia”, *Mormon Historical Studies*, 1, no. 2 (2000), pp. 25–62 (p. 34).

² *Millennial Star*, vol. 23 (1861), pp. 510, 524, 711, 760.

³ Anthony Cardoza, ‘Cavour and Piedmont’, in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900*, ed. by John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 118.

⁴ Michael W. Homer, ‘LDS Prospects in Italy for the Twenty-first Century’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 29 (Spring 1996), pp. 139–158 (pp. 151–152).

are central to explaining their relative lack of LDS growth, compared to other denominations, in more recent decades.⁵

Traditionally, the explanations given for the Mormon departure and delayed return have centered on factors associated primarily with the domestic situation in Italy.⁶ A combination of economic hardship, cultural disinclination, political and especially religious opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, all conspired to prevent Mormon missionaries from finding much success initially, and from returning subsequently. The roots of this view, which has become axiomatic, were derived from the attitudes of the first missionaries to Italy, who explained, and perhaps attempted to justify, their relative lack of success by pointing to Italian cultural attitudes and the political environment. As for the factors, which permitted the Mormons to return, according to this interpretation, it was again internal Italian developments, particularly World War II and Vatican II, which opened up previously closed doors by loosening the grip of Roman Catholicism over the peninsula. While these certainly were among the factors that influenced the decision to abandon Italy, it seems clear that the absence of the LDS church from 1867 to 1964 was much less a product of circumstances in Italy, and more a result of attitudes and historical events in the heartland of Mormonism.⁷

There is ample evidence that had the Mormons wished to remain in Italy, or to return, they would have been able to do so, which undercuts the assertion that the country was closed to non-Catholic religious groups. The experience of the first Mormon missionaries to Italy clearly belies this; beyond this we have the evidence of numerous

⁵ Massimo Introvigne, *I Mormoni* (Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 1993), pp. 195–197; Homer, ‘LDS Prospects in Italy’, p. 153; Franco Garelli, *Religione e chiesa in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991), pp. 112–115.

⁶ See for example, A. Bryan Weston, ‘Europe’, in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000), pp. 344–345; Richard G. Wilkins, ‘All’Italiana—The Italian Way’, *New Era* (March 1978), p. 30; Ralph L. Cottrell Jr., ‘A History of the Discontinued Mediterranean Missions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints’, M.A. thesis (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1963), p. 69.

⁷ The most perceptive analysis of the shortfall of the first mission is in James R. Moss, et al., *The International Church* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1982), p. 32.

other Protestant sects who actively proselytized among the Italians during this period, especially in the decades after the Mormons' departure. Indeed, save the Waldensians, all the major Protestant congregations present in Italy were established in the decades after 1850.⁸

Just as the Mormons were encouraged by mid-nineteenth century political developments in Italy, so too many Protestant leaders and influential figures in Great Britain and the United States followed with "lively interest" the events of the *Risorgimento*.⁹ In the years leading up to and following the 1860 unification, the Kingdom of Italy appeared to many Protestant sects as "an open field, full of promise." As one British Methodist official reported, Italy was "already moving toward a religious revitalization" that paralleled the political events of the *Risorgimento*.¹⁰ This hope in an Italian religious revival was rooted in the controversies surrounding Italy's unification, one of the thorniest of which was religion. Prime Minister Camillo Cavour famously declared the new kingdom's politico-religious formula as "a free church in a free state." Indeed, the first article of the new Italian constitution addressed the question of religion: it acknowledged the unique position of the Roman Catholic Church within Italian society, but also sought to limit its power and to protect the rights of religious minorities.¹¹

This attempt to define and circumscribe the power of the Catholic Church was a product of a long tradition of Italian anti-clericalism, which was widely embraced by many of the often only nominally Catholic leaders of unification. This latent suspicion of the Rome was accentuated by the events of the *Risorgimento* in which the papacy

⁸ Giorgio Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses: The Waldensians Across 800 Years* (Turin: Claudiana, 1989), p. 215.

⁹ "At one time or another, Hawthorne, Cooper, Melville, Longfellow, Tichnor, Emerson, Bryant, Lowell, and Whittier paid tribute in prose or verse to the cause of the *Risorgimento*." John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 7.

¹⁰ Valdo Vilnay, *Storia dei valdesi* (Turin: Claudiana, 1980), vol. 3, p. 75; Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, p. 203.

¹¹ David I. Kertzer, 'Religion and Society, 1789-1892', in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century 1796-1900*, ed. by John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 193-194; Michael W. Homer, 'Discovering Italy: The Mormon Mission and the Reaction of the Kingdom of Sardegna, The Catholic Church, and Her Protestant Rivals', (unpublished paper), pp. 9, 13 and 20; Homer, 'LDS Prospects in Italy', pp. 140-141.

strongly opposed Cavour and other liberals' secularizing efforts. As a result, the Church came increasingly to be seen "as the enemy not only of the new state, but also modernity itself," which led many Italians to question their identity as Catholics.¹² Indeed, post-Risorgimento Italy came effectively to be divided into two camps, the liberal and the Roman Catholic. Each side "had its own organization, newspapers and banks," and their rivalry was often violent: when Pius IX died in 1878, liberals attempted to halt the funeral procession, and to push his casket into the Tiber. Ironically, because of this church/state conflict, in some ways non-Catholic sects in unified Italy enjoyed more liberty of action than did the majority religion.¹³

The growing disjuncture between liberal Italy and Rome was most clearly manifest in Pius IX's famous 1864 encyclical, *Quanta cura* and its accompanying *Syllabus of Errors*, which emphatically stated the conservative and reactionary position of the papacy against what it termed "the principal errors of the day." These included pantheism, rationalism, naturalism, socialism, communism, and liberalism - in short a laundry list of the most influential developments of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Many Catholics perceived the papacy's entrenched conservatism and opposition to a unified Italy as a "tragic blunder," indeed the Church came to be perceived as the principal obstacle to the new state's consolidation. As a result, the kingdom's officials implemented numerous measures directed solely at reducing ecclesiastical power. Church property was confiscated, monasteries and convents were closed, secular public schools weakened its monopoly on education, clergy lost their exemption from military conscription, access to military academies and other prestigious positions in society was opened to non-Catholics, and marriages by priests ceased to be recognized by the state. The relationship between church and state in Italy, the so-called "Roman Question," would haunt the new nation through-

¹² Kertzer, 'Religion and Society', p. 202; Cardoza, 'Cavour and Piedmont', p. 119; Guido Verucci, *L'Italia laica prima e dopo l'Unità 1848-1876. Anticlericalismo, libero pensiero e ateismo nella società italiana* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1981).

¹³ Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, p. 181; D.A. Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 581-583.

¹⁴ Anne Freemantle, *The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context* (New York: New American Library, 1956), pp. 134-155; Kertzer, 'Religion and Society', p. 190.

out its formative years, and only be resolved by Benito Mussolini in 1929 with the Lateran Accords.¹⁵

Before the fascist agreement with the Holy See that blocked almost all proselytizing, however, the conflict between the liberal Italy of the Risorgimento and the papacy created an environment that permitted non-Catholic religious groups to evangelize openly. Indeed, after 1860, Italy became a veritable battleground as competing Protestant sects vied to save its soul. The first to arrive were the Wesleyans in 1861, over a decade after the Mormons, and the English Baptists, the Adventists, the American Baptists, and the Methodists followed them over the next decade.¹⁶ The end of papal temporal powers in the fall of 1870 had a catalytic effect that led many Protestants to think the papacy's "spiritual domain" would soon also collapse. Indeed, within several weeks the United States' Methodist Episcopal Church sent missionaries to Italy "to contribute to the spiritual transformation of the country," and the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Salvation Army soon followed them.¹⁷ Even the RLDS church became involved in 1873 when John Avondet spent two years among the Waldensians, with limited success.¹⁸ Indeed, the Waldensians themselves began to evangelize actively

¹⁵ Alice A. Kelikan, 'The Church and Catholicism', in *Liberal and Fascist Italy, 1900-1945*, ed. by Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 45-58; Harry Hearder, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento, 1790-1870* (London & New York: Longman, 1980), pp. 288-289; Kertzer, 'Religion and Society', pp. 183, 193-94; Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871-1982* (London: Longman, 1984), pp. 81-88. On education, see Beatrice Pisa, 'Cesare Correnti è il dibattito sulla laicità dell'insegnamento', *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento*, 62 (1975), pp. 212-232; Vincenzo Paglia, 'I programmi governativi nel ginnasio-liceo dell'apollinare (1870-1904)', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 35 (1981), pp. 40-73; Fabrizia Gurreri, 'Il "Visconti": Un liceo romano in età liberale (1870-1911)', *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea*, 3 (1995), pp. 727-758.

¹⁶ Vilnay, *Storia dei valdesi*, vol. 3, pp. 75-79; Kertzer, 'Religion and Society', p. 201; also Michael W. Homer, 'The Church's Image in Italy from the 1840's to 1946: A Bibliographic Essay', *BYU Studies*, 31 (1991), pp. 82-114 (p. 87); Binchy, *Church and State in Fascist Italy*, p. 594.

¹⁷ Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, pp. 172, 207; Giorgio Spini, *Italia liberale e protestanti* (Turin: Claudiana, 2002), p. 40.

¹⁸ Homer, 'The Church's Image in Italy', p. 88; *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1906), vol. 4, pp. 16-17, 22, 59-60, 73.

throughout the kingdom in the same decades in which the Mormons were retreating.¹⁹

While the hoped for religious reformation never materialized, these evangelizing efforts produced significant fruits, at least in comparison to the earlier LDS effort. By 1883 the Wesleyans counted 1451 members, and in 1881 after only eight years of work the Methodists counted over 1400 members among adults and children. By 1906 the Methodists numbered 2689 adult members, and had an established ecclesiastical structure, including pastors and schools, in place throughout Italy. Other new religious denominations appeared in this era: Pentecostalism was introduced by returning Italian immigrants who had converted in the Americas, and by 1929, there were congregations in 149 localities throughout Italy.²⁰

Contemporary census figures indicate a significant increase in the number of Italians describing themselves as Protestants: they numbered 32,684 in 1861, 58,651 in 1871, and by 1911 123,253 Italian's self-identified as Protestant. Of course these numbers were insignificant within the broader demographic context: in 1871 Italy's population numbered 26.8 million, and by 1901 it had risen to 32.5 million, despite massive emigration.²¹ Thus, though Protestant numbers quadrupled between 1861 and 1911, they represented under a quarter of one per cent of the total population, which remained predominantly and persistently Catholic.

As this overview suggests, the period following the unification was a dynamic time in the religious history of Italy. A number of sects without historical roots in Italy were able to make modest inroads into the peninsula after 1850, including Wesleyans, Pentecostals, and Methodists. This in turn points to the need to reconsider the traditional Mormon explanation for the closing of the mission in Italy, namely that the field was not ripe for the harvest.

There is, to be sure, some truth to this traditional explanation, however. Although no laws prevented their return, there were still strong cultural and social barriers, which made missionary work in Italy extremely difficult, and these certainly influenced Mormon hesitation.

¹⁹ See the very detailed discussion of this in Vilnay, *Storia dei valdesi*, vol. 3, pp. 79–173; also Spini, *Italia liberale e protestanti*, pp. 151–220.

²⁰ Vilnay, *Storia dei valdesi*, vol. 3, pp. 234–237, 241; Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, pp. 208, 210, 222.

²¹ Spini, *Italia liberale e protestanti*, p. 85; Clark, *Modern Italy*, p. 31.

While Protestants and Mormons could generally work freely and legally in Italy, there was powerful cultural opposition, and occasionally outright violence, which made it difficult and even dangerous to try to do so. The arrival of Protestant missionaries in a new town was often met by “fanatical crowds” who abused the evangelists verbally and even physically. Local police often turned a blind eye, or even arrested the victims for disturbing the peace. Investigators and converts faced tremendous social pressures, and “risked reprisals,” including the loss of their employment. In 1866, this opposition turned deadly in the so-called “Massacre of Barletta,” in which a violent crowd, allegedly incited by local Catholic clergy, lynched several Protestants.²²

Another factor that must be considered in any comparison of LDS and Protestant missions is the political and legal persecution and marginalization the Mormons experienced in their own homeland. Throughout much of its first century, the Mormon Church was specifically targeted for discriminatory treatment by the United States government. In 1879 President Rutherford B. Hayes and his Secretary of State, William M. Evarts, became convinced that Mormon immigrants represented “potential violators” of anti-polygamy laws, and thus ordered American ambassadors in Europe to seek the aid of local officials “in stopping any further Mormon departures to the United States.”²³ In the same year, the American charge d’affaires in Rome, George W. Wurts, met with the Italian Prime Minister, Benedetto Cairoli to discuss the “Mormon problem,” and he noted (apparently unaware of the brief mission two decades earlier) that there was no need to fear a “Mormon crusade in Italy where as yet Mormonism is unknown.” Cairoli responded that although Mormonism was not present in his country, “all civilized Christian powers should cooperate to terminate the existence of a sect whose tenets are contrary to the recognized laws of morality and decency.”²⁴ In contrast, the more successful Protestant sects enjoyed the strong support and protection of their governments.

In the end, however, the evidence seems unequivocal: Italy after the unification, at least until the fascist era, was a religious open

²² Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, pp. 206, 213.

²³ James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), pp. 397–398.

²⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1879* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1879), pp. 601–604.

ground, worked with success by numerous religious groups both native and imported. There was no insurmountable legal or cultural impediment to the Mormons remaining or returning to work Italy. While factors in the new Kingdom of Italy certainly played a role in the tardy Mormon return, to fully understand this decision it is necessary to look across the Atlantic, to the heartland of Mormonism.

There is no question that events both in Utah and beyond played a significant role in the decisions about where to allocate limited missionary resources. After a flurry of missionary activity in the middle of the nineteenth century, the LDS Church entered into an extremely difficult period in its young history marked by limited resources and significant external challenges. Though the commitment to taking the message of the restored gospel to the world did not waver, these challenges had a substantial impact on missionary work world-wide, which ebbed and flowed according to local, national, and international events.

The initial slowdown in the Italian mission in the later 1850s was part of a general retreat from missionary work due to the so-called Utah War of 1857. In response to the threat from federal troops sent to Utah under the command of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, President Brigham Young recalled settlers from outlying settlements as well as most missionaries from all over the world to return and defend Zion. This not surprisingly resulted in a “swift decline” in missionary work.²⁵ The Mormons’ challenges did not subside following the resolution of the confrontation with the federal government; indeed things went from bad to worse. The decade following Brigham Young’s 1877 death was one of the most challenging in Mormon history. The issue of polygamy finally came to a head, and a series of federal court decisions and laws proved severe threats to the church’s legal and financial situation, and indeed to its very survival. The most serious of these was the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, which allowed for the confiscation of most LDS church properties. While the 1890 Manifesto promulgated by LDS President Wilford Woodruff ended the practice of polygamy and some of the political pressure, in the subsequent decade the church

²⁵ B.H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), vol. 4, p. 124; Leonard J. Arrington, ‘Historical Development of International Mormonism’, *Religious Studies and Theology*, 7 (1987), pp. 9–22 (p. 14); Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 322, 344; *The Deseret Morning News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Morning News, 2005), p. 635.

experienced extreme financial difficulty, accentuated by a national economic depression. This severely impacted tithing receipts, and by 1898 the church was \$2.3 million in debt.²⁶

The impact of these events on Mormon missionary efforts was profound, but also complex. Missionary numbers initially declined as a result of the Utah War, only to experience a revival after 1860. The number of missionaries sent out between 1865 and 1869 increased to 417, almost double the 222 who had departed the previous four years. A majority of these missionaries were directed to European countries. Missionary numbers continued to follow an upward trajectory: more than 2,300 served in the turbulent 1880s, and in the following decade, despite the near bankruptcy of the church, over 6,000 missionaries were called to labour. Overall, the missionary force “doubled by 1880 and doubled again to nearly 2,000 missionaries by the early 1890s.”²⁷ In fact, one of the primary causes for the church’s financial troubles near the turn of the century was its on-going investment in missionary work. As these financial difficulties receded in the early twentieth century, missionary numbers increased. In the years preceding World War I, an average of 900 missionaries was called annually. And while the war dramatically reduced missionary activity, especially in Europe, with the end of hostilities missionary numbers quickly returned to pre-war levels.²⁸

As these statistics suggest, despite the serious problems the Mormon Church faced from 1858 to 1900, and notwithstanding broader national and international circumstances, its leaders remained committed to expanding missionary work. In 1860, for example, three apostles were called to preside over the European mission, initiating a new wave of conversion and immigration. A decade later, Brigham Young instructed Lorenzo Snow, who was traveling through Europe and the Mediterranean (including Italy), to “observe closely what openings now exist, or where they may be effected, for the introduction of

²⁶ Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 5, 216–217.

²⁷ Arrington, ‘Historical Development of International Mormonism’, pp. 14–15; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 322, 343–44, 396, 426, 460; *Church Almanac* (2005), p. 635.

²⁸ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, pp. 5, 217–218; Moss, *The International Church*, p. 71; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, p. 506.

the Gospel.”²⁹ Around 1900 Mormon leaders proposed opening missions “in those areas where the gospel was not being preached,” and in 1901 Brigham Young, Jr. declared, “The eyes of the Twelve have been roaming over the habitable globe, and they have looked upon Turkey, Austria, Russia, and especially South America.”³⁰

The on-going evangelical commitment is evident in the geography of Mormon missionary work. In the first heady years of the church’s international missionary effort, missionaries laboured throughout Europe, in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), “Australia, Chile, India, Burma, Malta, Germany, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Africa, Siam (Thailand).” The pace slowed somewhat in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but between 1888 and 1900, eleven new missions were opened, and ambitious attempts were made to proselytize in Turkey, Palestine, Austria-Hungary, Mexico, Russia, Samoa, and Tonga.³¹ As part of now church president Lorenzo Snow’s renewed stress on the worldwide missionary effort, in 1901 Heber J. Grant opened the twentieth foreign mission, Japan, though it was soon closed because of “almost negligible results.”³²

The next significant wave of mission openings followed World War I. The French Mission was reopened a second time in 1923, the

²⁹ Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow: One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884; reprint, Salt Lake: Zion’s Book Store, 1975), pp. 496–497; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 322–323.

³⁰ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, pp. 216–217; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 441–442, 459–460.

³¹ David J. Whittaker, ‘Mormon Missiology: An Introduction and Guide to the Sources’, in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. by Stephen D. Ricks et al. (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), pp. 463–464; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 396, 426, 459–460; R. Lanier Britsch, ‘Missions and Missionary Work’, in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, p. 760; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, p. 212; F. LaMond Tullis, ‘Reopening the Mexican Mission in 1901’, *BYU Studies*, 22 (1982), pp. 441–453 (p. 441).

³² Whittaker, ‘Mormon Missiology’, pp. 463–464; R. Lanier Britsch, ‘Missions and Missionary Work’, p. 760; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, pp. 235–236; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Paul Thomas Smith, ‘Snow, Lorenzo’, in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), vol. 3, p. 1370.

German-Austrian and South American Missions in 1925, the Czechoslovakian Mission opened in 1929, and the Japanese Mission was reopened in 1937. By 1930 there were 29,000 Saints throughout Europe, and despite political problems, the Mexican mission doubled in size to 4700 members. Over the next ten years “eight new missions were opened in Europe and the United States,” and the Book of Mormon was translated into Czech, Armenian, Portuguese, and Hungarian. The work proceeded so well that a number of international missions were divided. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, 697 missionaries were serving in Europe.³³

The growth in missionaries and missions as well as the commitment to opening new areas suggest that the LDS church in the last half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries was not in a retrenchment mode, on the contrary, the dedication to proselytism was a constant, despite numerous political and economic troubles that plagued the church. The decision not to return to Italy then was not a product of insufficient missionary commitment or resources; rather the decision was more a result of the failure of the first mission combined with cultural attitudes towards Italy, Italians and Roman Catholicism that were common among Mormons, and Americans, in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.

Though a few LDS Italian converts immigrated to Utah and became influential members of the community, the overall experience of the first missionaries to Italy was in the end a disappointment. Other, even less successful missionary efforts in predominantly Roman Catholic lands, such as Parley P. Pratt’s mission to South America in the early 1850s, and recurring efforts in Mexico and Chile, served to reinforce the negative views of Catholic Italy.³⁴ This spectre loomed over Italy, and was only dispersed in the post-1945 period when a

³³ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, p. 235; Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), p. 102; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, pp. 508–509, 531; Gilbert Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), pp. 88, 99.

³⁴ Gordon Irving, ‘Mormonism and Latin America: A Preliminary Survey’, *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 10 (Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), pp. 7–20; A. Delbert Palmer and Mark L. Grover, ‘Hoping to Establish a Presence: Parley P. Pratt’s 1851 Mission to Chile’, *BYU Studies*, 38 (1999), no. 4, pp. 115–138.

changed set of circumstances led to fundamental shifts in Mormon attitudes toward Roman Catholicism and Italians.

While the first missionaries set off for Italy with high hopes of success – aspiring perhaps to replicate what had happened in Great Britain a decade previous – in relatively short order these dreams were tempered by the formidable reality of their task. Already in the early days of the mission, there was a sense that Italy presented a particular challenge: Lorenzo Snow observed, the “Italian states are well known as being the most hostile upon earth to introduction of religious truth.” Snow seems also to have sensed that success in Italy would have to be measured by a metric that differed from other mission fields:

It is not our expectation to convert all these Catholic nations, ... we feel that there are a few among them who will appreciate the sacrifices we make in their behalf; and giving heed to the call, will come forth fulfilling the words of the holy Prophets, that a remnant shall come to Zion, gathered ‘from every nation, kindred tongue and people.’³⁵

By the time Snow departed from Italy in January 1851, the seeds of disillusionment had already begun to take root. He wrote to Orson Hyde of his frustrations, as well as his lingering hopes for the work:

After a residence of seven months in Italy, I am about to bid it farewell ... I might long linger to gaze upon these realms of loveliness. One might travel far over the earth before he finds a fairer clime. ... But the remembrance of the moral scenery amid which I have been moving will be more imperishably engraven on my spirit than all the brightness of the firmament, or the verdure of prairies enameled with ten thousand flowers. Amid the loveliness of nature, I found the soul of man like a wilderness. From the palace of the king to the lone cottage on the mountains, all was shrouded in spiritual darkness. ... Every man holds a creed, which has been transmitted from sire to son for a thousand years, whether he be Protestant or Catholic; and often he will lay his hand on his heart, and swear by the faith of his forefather, that he will live and die as they have lived and died.³⁶

³⁵ Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 209–210, 217–218.

³⁶ Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 169–170.

Snow was not alone in this assessment of Italy. The letters of other missionaries published in the *Mormon Millennium Star* increasingly suggest their dismay at the limited results of their difficult labours.³⁷ Jabez Woodard, who accompanied Lorenzo Snow to Italy in 1850 and replaced him as head of the mission in 1852, wrote:

We cannot proceed here with public preaching, as in England and America. I have been twice summoned before the magistrates for having given religious instructions to persons in my own room. ... as the police have refused to legalize my passport, it will be necessary for me to obtain a signature on the French frontier, ... but to be compelled to change residence in that manner, is one of the many vexations to which we are subjected in those countries where freedom is yet only a name.³⁸

When Woodard reported the results of his mission in 1854 in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, Brigham Young responded that the Waldensians were “like the brute; they are not to blame for their superstition, and they are not the people to readily receive the Gospel.”³⁹

The creeping disillusionment of the first elders in Italy was in full bloom by the time the last missionaries were removed from the valleys. One of these, Guglielmo Giosue Rossetti Sangiovanni, left southern Utah and laboured alone in Italy in 1865, where he suffered unhappily the poor living conditions, the smallness of the local branch of the church, his own homesickness, and the indifference of the people.⁴⁰ He wrote:

I also find that it is the same now as in the days of the Savior. Wherever the Gospel was rejected in the days of Jesus, it is rejected now, thus the Scriptures teach us that the Gospel was

³⁷ See *Millennial Star*, 12 (1850), pp. 370–374; 13 (1851), pp. 25–26, 89–90, 107–108, 186, 252–253, 301–302; 14 (1852), pp. 107–108, 282, 461–462, 555–558, 670–671; 15 (1853), pp. 9, 61–62, 110–111, 155, 191–192, 204–206, 350–351, 457, 707; 16 (1854), pp. 46, 53–58, 454–456; 17 (1855), pp. 154–156, 490–491, 666–667; 18 (1856), pp. 218–220, 634–636; 19 (1857), p. 655.

³⁸ Cottrell, ‘History of the Discontinued Mediterranean Missions’, p. 25.

³⁹ Homer, ‘The Church’s Image in Italy’, p. 86.

⁴⁰ LDS Church Archives, Sangiovanni, Susanna Mehitable Rogers, 1813–1905, Collection 1825–1905, MS 2986, Guglielmo Giosue Rossetti Sangiovanni, Letter to Susanna Mehitable Rogers Sangiovanni, December 21, 1864.

preached in Italy, and rejected. Therefore the children of those people are still withering under the curse entailed upon them through their Fathers [sic] rejecting the truth, so that no firm flesh remains for the Gospel to rest upon. Man proposes, but God disposes, we can preach the gospel as we may be inspired by the Almighty but we cant [sic] make the people receive it.⁴¹

A few months later, when Sangiovanni was transferred from Italy to Geneva, he enthused,

It is with great pleasure that I again take my pen to address you. Italy is given up for the present. I left there the morning of the 22 bidding farewell to the “garden of the world,” hoping never again to be under the necessity of going there to preach the Gospel. In the language of Paul, “I have fought a good fight I have finished my course (i.e. in Italy) and have kept the faith.”⁴²

Implicit in the observations of Snow, Sangiovanni, and other missionaries was an attitude which was widely held among mid-nineteenth century Saints. In the early church, Mormons were possessed of a strong sense of millenarianism: they believed that theirs were literally the “latter days.” This had a profound impact on missionary work. Missionaries were sent throughout the world to invite all to gather to Zion and to warn of the imminent “great and dreadful day of the Lord.” The expectation was that the few elect in all lands would heed the message, but the majority would reject it, and thus be destroyed at the coming of Christ.⁴³ Closely associated with this millenarianism, was the doctrine of gathering and the creation of a new Zion in the wilds of the American west.⁴⁴ Among many missionaries and leaders then, the difficulties of the first Italian mission, combined with beliefs regarding the limited number of God’s elect in the world, contributed to a view

⁴¹ LDS Church Archives, Sangiovanni, Susanna Mehitable Rogers, 1813–1905, Collection 1825–1905, MS 2986, Guglielmo Giosue Rossetti Sangiovanni, Letter to Susanna Mehitable Rogers Sangiovanni, May 8, 1865.

⁴² LDS Church Archives, Sangiovanni, Susanna Mehitable Rogers, 1813–1905, Collection 1825–1905, MS 2986, Guglielmo Giosue Rossetti Sangiovanni, Letter to Susanna Mehitable Rogers Sangiovanni, July 31, 1865.

⁴³ Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 43, 50–51.

⁴⁴ William Mulder, ‘Mormonism’s “Gathering”: An American Doctrine with a Difference’, *Church History*, 23 (1954), no. 3, pp. 248–264.

that Italy harboured only a few chosen souls. These had been identified and had gathered to Zion, and therefore there was probably not a need to expend precious, limited missionary resources on such a barren spiritual landscape.

Mormon views of Italy were certainly not unique. Protestant missionaries, such as Seventh Day Adventist leader Ellen White, arrived at a similar conclusion: "This field is not an easy one in which to labour, nor is it one which will show immediate results." Even the great French poet Lamartine characterized Italy "as the land of the dead, culturally, politically, and spiritually."⁴⁵ Similar views also existed among the handful of Italian Saints who immigrated to Utah. One of the original converts; Marie M. Cardon Guild described the difficult situation that missionaries faced in Italy in broken English:

it seemed that the pregudice against the Latter day Saints was racing throughtout the Country Especially among the Papists, and in fact among the majority of the Waldensee people were also ready To drive the elders out of the Country.⁴⁶

These initial impressions, born of more than a decade of difficult labour, became the default Mormon view. When John Henry Smith presided over the European Mission later in the century, he went to Italy "in the hope that I might see some chance of making an opening in that country." He wrote of this experience,

I regard Italy as in such a condition that there are but few chances at the present time for any opening to be made. The Italians are bound up in the religious faith that they have been reared in, or they are infidel almost entirely. I noticed in my attendance at the churches, that they are usually well filled with priests and beggars, and that few, comparatively speaking, of the well-to-do classes, or the middle classes, were paying any attention whatever to religious observance.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ D.A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe 1885-1887* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975), p. 138; Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses*, pp. 164-166.

⁴⁶ LDS Church Archives, Guild, Marie Madeleine Cardon, 1834-1914, Correspondence 1898-1903, MS 894, Marie Madeleine Cardon Guild, Letter "To My Children and to Whom it May Concern," January 12, 1903.

⁴⁷ John Henry Smith, April 6, 1885, *Journal of Discourses* (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854-86), vol. 26, p. 177.

As Smith's quote suggests, the character of the Mormon reaction to their labours in Italy was rooted in both their direct experience in proselytizing in the country, but also their views of Italy, Italians, and Roman Catholicism. These cultural attitudes are crucial to understanding the long reluctance of Mormon leaders to reopen the Italian mission. They were not unique to Mormons; indeed they grew out of common perceptions generally held among nineteenth century Protestant Americans, who tended to view Italy and Italians with a complex combination of admiration and disdain, pity and awe.

Nineteenth-century Americans entertained two seemingly contradictory images of Italy: "the 'romantic' and the 'nativist.'" The romantic picture was a product of travellers and writers who looked upon Italy as the conservatory of all the cultural values of the old world: creative spontaneity, artistic sensibility, moral idealism, and worldly experience. It represented to American travellers a "quasi-sacred ground of art," where they could "cultivate aesthetic consciousness."⁴⁸ As Henry James, who lived in Italy for a time, wrote, "We go to Italy, to gaze upon certain of the highest achievements of human power," which illustrate:

to the imagination the maximum of man's creative force. ... So wide is the interval between the great Italian monuments and the works of the colder genius of neighbouring nations, that we find ourselves willing to look upon the former as the ideal and perfection of human effort, and to invest the country of their birth with a sort of half-sacred character.⁴⁹

The striking flip side of this idealized Italy was the nativist picture. As more and more American tourists were traveling to Italy, large numbers of Italians were beginning to immigrate to the Americas. In 1880 there were about 44,000 Italians in the United States, but by the first years of the twentieth-century Italians represented one-fourth of all immigrants, and in a span of forty years, they went from a marginal minority to the most visible immigrant group in the country. The Italy

⁴⁸ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, pp. 6–8; Richard H. Brodhead, 'Strangers on a Train: The Double Dream of Italy in the American Gilded Age', *Modernism/Modernity*, 1 (1994), no. 2, pp. 1–19 (pp. 3–4).

⁴⁹ Brodhead, 'Strangers on a Train', p. 13; Alexander DeConde, 'Endearment or Antipathy? Nineteenth Century American Attitudes toward Italians', *Ethnic Groups*, 4 (1982), pp. 131–148 (pp. 132–33); Carl Maves, *Sensuous Pessimism: Italy in the Work of Henry James* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 5.

that most Americans encountered was not the lofty land of James, rather it was personified by the

young, robust, male, swarthy and emotional, frequently unlettered and unskilled, who worked in lowly jobs, usually as a day labourer, and lived in a ethnic ghetto. He seemed to many a mere bird of passage determined to return to Italy. ... He quickly acquired the reputation of a sojourner with no sense of commitment to his host country.

Italians were perceived as being racially inferior: they were “the dark or swarthy one, the untidy, non-self-improving one, natural resident of the slum and natural doer of the most unskilled labour ... the organized murderer, and thus ... a ‘cause’ of violence in the world at large.”⁵⁰

American views of Italy and Italians were schizophrenic, a complex combination of admiration for the seed-bed of great civilizations, combined with disdain for the people “who had clearly become decadent, and therefore not worthy descendants of their illustrious and proud ancestors.” Americans admired Italy’s cultural treasures, revered ancient Rome, “but detested the Italy of their time,” which they perceived as “dominated by the Papacy.” Italy was, as Mark Twain quipped, a “vast museum of magnificence and misery.”⁵¹ James adored Italy’s “special beauty,” but he despised Italians, especially immigrants, whom he found physically and morally unclean. The novelist Henry Blake Fuller admired Italy’s “high culture” but disdained “its social and moral decadence.” Most American travellers returned home awed by Italy, but disturbed, even disgusted, by Italians. As John Diggins argues,

There were really two Italys in the American mind. One was conceptual, the other existential; one a diffuse image of some hopeful ideal, a humanistic fantasy born of the frustration of all that seemed to be lacking in America; the other, a concrete and particular Italy discovered by direct experience, a corporeal reality of unabashed decadence and pungent confusions, a

⁵⁰ DeConde, ‘Endearment or antipathy’, pp. 138–39; Brodhead, ‘Strangers on a Train’, pp. 2, 6.

⁵¹ Angelo Principe, ‘Il Risorgimento visto dai Protestanti dell’alto Canada 1846–1860’, *Rassegna storica del risorgimento*, 66 (1979), pp. 151–163 (p. 152); Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, p. 6, 8.

country whose people were suffocating under the dust and dirt of their tragic history.⁵²

These views permeated Protestant American society, and informed Mormon views as well. Like their fellow citizens, Mormon travellers were drawn to Italy, yet the country they experienced alternately fascinated and repulsed them. Against the backdrop of monumental beauty, to Mormons the Italians themselves “presented a sorry spectacle” of indolence, deceitfulness, squalor, and immorality.⁵³ When Brigham Young, Jr. travelled to Italy in 1863, he was scandalized. In Bologna he noted:

I did not like this place at all. They show their vices a little too plain. As soon as we had arrived and fairly got the dust off from us, several ladies dressed in white presented themselves for us to pick from. They waited long and patiently but were disappointed at last. Such things as these make me disgusted with society as it exists at the present time, and long more earnestly for the society of virtuous men and women, which are only to be found as a community in my own loved home.

This was not an isolated incident, and in the end the son of the great LDS leader concluded “if the soldiers, whores, and beggars were taken out of Italy, it would be without inhabitants except those who like ourselves are merely transient residents.”⁵⁴ Young returned to serve as European mission president in 1864 and his views of Italy certainly influenced his decisions on where to allocate missionary resources.

Most Mormon travellers subscribed to the “admire Italy, despise the Italians” model. In 1890, William Bowker Preston, son of the presiding bishop of the church, travelled through Italy while returning from his mission. With his trusty Baedaker in hand, he immersed himself in the sights he had imagined since his youth. On his arrival in the capital, he rhapsodized, “at last the dream of my life is realized. I am in Rome.” Amid enthusiastic descriptions of the sights that filled dozens of pages in his journal, however, Preston also commented on the state of Italy and the Italians of his day: if one “will go to Italy, why he must

⁵² DeConde, ‘Endearment or Antipathy’, pp. 137–138; Maves, *Sensuous Pessimism*, pp. 48–49; Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, p. 11.

⁵³ Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. by Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), p. 47.

put up with Italy and the Italian, and what Italy and the Italians are.” The Italian women scandalized him:

women - pardon me - dare I use that appellation? - lounge around the doorways in negligée [sic], not to put it stronger, and stare at one with unpardonable audacity as he passes along - but bless my soul! Some of them are pretty - but I dare say as wicked as they are handsome.

He found Italians violent and driven by their passions, and more superstitious than religious: “I never saw so much worshipping [sic] in all my life where it apparently did so little good. For I believe the more they worship (?) The farther they remove themselves from God.” In summary, Preston wrote, “I hope I’m not doing the poor Italians any wrong when I term them lazy, murderous and gossiping. I wouldn’t injure them for the world for they spring from that wonderful people who once ruled the world; and they were praiseworthy were they not?”⁵⁵ In 1884, Ellen B. Ferguson - a physician, a feminist, an intrepid traveler, and one of the most influential women in the Utah territory - toured Italy.⁵⁶ In an essay in an LDS journal she wrote of passing from Switzerland to Italy, which seemed to her and her companions as if they “were on the boundary line between two worlds—the region of eternal snow and the region of perpetual summer.” She wrote,

We began to descend gradually by zigzag roads ... into warmer weather, calmer air and softer scenery, until there lay before us, glittering in the dazzling midday sun, the blue expanse of Lake Como, the most beautiful of the Italian lakes. Could one live on the sense of beauty alone, the most artistic temperament, and the most vivid imagination might be filled to satiety with the exquisite loveliness of an Italian landscape. ... The atmosphere is redolent with perfume, and one’s whole being is pervaded by a delicious languor, the dolce far niente, which might make it a paradise, if life were to be dreamed away. But

⁵⁵ LDS Church Archives, William Bowker Preston, Journal, MS 7557, 1890 Jan–Oct.

⁵⁶ Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), pp. 107, 134; Janet Peterson and LaRene Gaunt, *Elect Ladies* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1990), pp. 55–56; Claire Wilcox Noall, ‘Utah’s Pioneer Women Doctors’, *Improvement Era*, 42 (January, 1939), p. 16.

although this sweet climate, with its wealth of sunlight and balmy airs, may enchant the traveler for a while and make him wish at times that his whole life might be passed among such scenes, it exercises a most enervating influence on those who are born to its enjoyment. It relaxes mental and physical energy, and disposes body and mind to dreamy inactivity. The Italians as a race are indolent and effeminate. Ignorance, love of pleasure and superstition are their prominent characteristics. Of the moral dignity of man, they have but little conception. The soil, so prodigally fertile, produces, with but little labour all that is necessary for their support. The state of morals is lower than in any other country of Europe; what little virtue exists is found among the peasants. In the cities splendid churches and dirty miserable hovels stand side by side, while the luxurious palaces and grounds of the rich noblemen form a still greater contrast to the poverty of the people. This moral miasma hangs like a dark pall over the social condition of Italy, awakening sympathy for her fallen and degraded position among citizens of freer lands.⁵⁷

In the same vein, from 1870 on almost the only mention of Italy in official LDS publications was of the political disorders of the peninsula, and of Italian anarchists and socialists and their involvement in several high profile assassinations.⁵⁸ The president of the Swiss German Mission, Hyrum Valentine, visited Italy in 1912, and was infuriated by the dishonesty of the Italians. He wrote,

those leechers lie around like a pack of wolves and when a stranger alights from the train or boat, they hound him until refuge is found in one of their 'Rendivoo' where they leech you mercilessly. These wolves now retreat to their lair and recuperate for the next victim.⁵⁹

These highly critical views were occasionally tempered by more nuanced responses. When Sylvester Cannon reported on his term as mission president in the Netherlands, he wrote of a trip to Italy, which had challenged some of his presuppositions:

⁵⁷ Ellen B. Ferguson, 'Scenes in Italy', *The Contributor*, 6 (1885), pp. 12-14.

⁵⁸ *Millennial Star*, 56 (1894), pp. 423, 446, 551, 567.

⁵⁹ LDS Church Archives, Papers, 1911-1940, Hyrum Washington Valentine, MS 1340, Hyrum Washington Valentine, Letter to Brother Call, September 4, 1912.

I was agreeably disappointed in the condition of that people. From the idea we obtain here at home, from seeing the Italians who are in our midst, we are apt to gain an entirely wrong view of the Italians as a people. They are fine people, a people of intelligence, a people of hospitality and kindness in every respect.⁶⁰

An observer in 1941 expressed admiration for Italy's historical contributions: "as a world power, the Italian state made few contributions in modern history." Its real importance was in the Renaissance when "as individuals, the Italians ... contributed stores of the world's greatest art, literature, and music." Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante, Galileo and Verdi, all "left the world a richness of cultural contributions that placed the Italians with the Greeks as the cultural creators for mankind."⁶¹ Like their American counterparts, then, Mormon's views of Italy and Italians were the same schizophrenic combination of admiration for their historical accomplishments, and disdain for the decadent people they had become.

Lurking beneath their attitudes toward Italian culture and character, the issue of religion played a key role in Mormon decisions regarding the potential of proselytizing in Italy. Among nineteenth century Americans, Italy's wretchedness was a direct product of the deadening hand of the Roman Catholic Church, which was seen as "the great burden of Italian history."⁶² Mormons shared this view, but also accentuated it with their own specific beliefs, particularly concerning the doctrine of apostasy.

There was, of course, a long history of American ambivalence, and more often open hostility to Catholics, both to those in their own midst, as well as toward the institution of the papacy in Rome.⁶³ Indeed, Arthur Schlesinger observed (with some exaggeration) that anti-Catholicism was "the deepest-held bias in the history of the American

⁶⁰ *The Year of Jubilee: A Full Report of the Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 April 1903 (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1903), p. 18.

⁶¹ *Millennial Star*, 103 (1941), p. 347.

⁶² Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, p. 10.

⁶³ On this see Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

people.”⁶⁴ Anti-Catholicism included both religious and political sentiments, and was widespread in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. These views were a complex combination of historical sentiments that Americans inherited and perpetuated from their English Protestant ancestors, and their direct experiences in dealing with large numbers of Catholic Irish and Italian immigrants.⁶⁵ Mark Twain’s statement “I have been educated to enmity toward everything that is Catholic, and sometimes, in consequence of this, I find it much easier to discover Catholic faults than Catholic merits” was a mild response in comparison with the vituperative river of criticism that flooded Protestant America.⁶⁶

Despite the fact that nineteenth century Protestant writers “often attacked Catholics and Mormons using surprisingly similar arguments” and visual caricatures, Latter-day Saints shared many of the common prejudices of American society toward Catholicism.⁶⁷ Almost all early Mormon converts came from Protestant backgrounds, and as a result they carried with them a certain cultural baggage that informed their perceptions of the world and other religions. Their views of Roman Catholicism derived from beliefs inherited from the Reformation rhetoric of the broader Protestant community in which they were raised, which they transported with them into Mormonism.⁶⁸ To be

⁶⁴ John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 159.

⁶⁵ Howard R. Marraro, ‘Il problema religioso del Risorgimento italiano visto dagli americani’, *Rassegna storica del risorgimento*, 43 (1956), pp. 463–472 (pp. 463–464, 468).

⁶⁶ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1869), p. 599.

⁶⁷ Matthew J. Grow, ‘The Whore of Babylon and the Abomination of Abominations: Nineteenth-Century Catholic and Mormon Mutual Perceptions and Religious Identity’, *Church History*, 73 (2004), pp. 139–167 (pp. 141–143); Thomas J. Carty, *A Catholic in the White House: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy’s Presidential Campaign* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11–25; Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834–1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), pp. 82–86.

⁶⁸ Francis J. Weber, ‘The Church in Utah, 1882. A Contemporary Account’, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, 81 (1970), pp. 199–208 (p. 202); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 59; Thomas F. O’Dea,

sure, most did not embrace the most extreme, virulently anti-Catholic attitudes, which infected nineteenth-century American society. Leaders like Joseph F. Smith preached “let us treat with candor the religious sentiments of all men, no matter if they differ from ours, or appear to us absurd and foolish. Those who hold them may be as sincere as we are in their convictions,”⁶⁹ and Mormons in Utah generally got on much better with the state’s Catholics than its Protestants.⁷⁰ Rather, Mormon bias against Catholicism was more theological in nature, based on a belief that Catholics were less inclined spiritually to embrace the Mormon message than were more spiritually pliant Protestants. Mormons attributed this to their view that Protestant northern Europe contained a higher percentage of the lost tribes of Israel, who were considered more susceptible to accepting the restored Mormon gospel.⁷¹

At the core of Mormon attitudes toward Catholicism, and by extension to Italians, was their unique doctrine of apostasy. The idea of a universal apostasy, termed “The Great Apostasy” by Mormons, is one of the linchpins of the faith. It refers to the “falling away” from Christ’s original church and its teachings in the centuries immediately following his crucifixion. The apostasy was the necessary precursor to the entire Mormon experience: without it, there would have been no need for Joseph Smith or the Restoration. Indeed, one of the chief revelations of

The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 34; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religions in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 232–233.

⁶⁹ Joseph F. Smith, September 30, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 19, p. 194.

⁷⁰ Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, p. 253; Weber, ‘The Church in Utah’, p. 200; Bernice Maher Mooney and Jerome C. Stoffel, *Salt of the Earth: The History of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, 1776–1987* (Salt Lake City: Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, 1987), pp. 40–47; Bishop Scanlan, *The Catholic Church in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Intermountain Catholic Press, 1909), pp. 330–334; Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, p. 349; Bernice Maher Mooney, ‘The Cathedral of the Madeleine: The Building and Embellishment of a Historic Place’, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 49 (Spring 1981), pp. 110–132 (pp. 110–112); Francis J. Weber, ‘Father Lawrence Scanlan’s Report of Catholicism in Utah, 1880’, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 34 (1966), pp. 283–289 (p. 289).

⁷¹ Mark L. Grover, ‘The Maturing of the Oak: The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Latin America’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 38 (2005), no. 2, pp. 79–104 (p. 82); Irving, ‘Mormonism and Latin America’, p. 7.

Smith's foundational First Vision was the notion that Christ's church had been lost from the earth and that the existing sects "were all wrong; ... [and] all their creeds were an abomination."⁷²

For early Mormons, Roman Catholicism held a privileged place in their apostasy narrative, and "represented a unique evil."⁷³ It was the Mother of Harlots, the Whore of Babylon, or as the Book of Mormon termed it, the "great and abominable church," which until at least the middle decades of the twentieth century, was widely equated specifically with Roman Catholicism.⁷⁴ As one early publication explained, the Catholic Church was the "Mother Church," which was "so corrupt, and so far apostatized from the Church [of Christ], that a reformation was not only needed, but absolutely necessary."⁷⁵ Mormons did not limit error just to Catholics, the Protestant children of the "Mother Church" were also misguided: Joseph Smith made this clear when he stated, "the Catholic religion is a false religion, how can any true religion come out of it?"⁷⁶

These views clearly inhabited the cultural mindset of Mormon missionaries and travellers as they entered into Catholic lands. As he set out on his mission to "dark and benighted Italy," Lorenzo Snow declaimed,

⁷² JS—History 1:19. See also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), p. 15.

⁷³ Grow, 'The Whore of Babylon', pp. 143–144.

⁷⁴ 1 Nephi 6:12; 10:16; 13:6; 13:32; 14:9; 22:13. The persistence of Mormon anti-Catholic ideas is evidenced in the controversy over the repeated identification of "the church of the devil" and "the great and abominable church" of 1 Nephi 13–14 with Roman Catholicism in the first edition (1958) of Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*. These references were subsequently expurgated from the second edition (1966). Compare Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 108, 129–130 (among many similar references) with the second edition, 1966. See also David John Buerger, 'Speaking with Authority: The Theological Influence of Elder Bruce R. McConkie', *Sunstone*, 9 (March 1985), pp. 8–13 (p. 9); Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), pp. 49–53. For a very early example of the conflation of Catholicism with the "great and abominable church," see Benjamin Winchester, *History of the Priesthood* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bickling, and Guilbert, 1843), pp. 79–82.

⁷⁵ *Millennial Star*, 1 (1840–41), p. 235.

⁷⁶ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 375.

To the land where the 'Mother of harlots' claimed the right 'above all that was called God,' and ruled with a rod of iron, where, under her scathing hand, not long since the 'bloody inquisition' sent terror into the springs and fountains of life! How formidable the mission! How character-proving the situation!

Regarding the Italians, he wrote:

My heart is pained to see their follies and wickedness—their gross darkness and superstition. ... They are clothed with darkness as with a garment ... They do wickedly all the day long, and are guilty of many abominations. They have turned their backs upon Thee, though they kneel before the image of Thy Son, and decorate temples to Thy worship.⁷⁷

His sister, Eliza R. Snow, the leader of the Mormon women's association, attended a mass in Milan, and commented "I can see no hope for millions of people under the training of the 'Mother of Harlots,' and the influence of priestcraft, but through the ordinances of the dead," referring to the Mormon practice of performing vicarious ordinances for the deceased in their temples.⁷⁸

Another Italian missionary, Samuel Francis recorded similar views: "I had heard many times of the inquisition, and secret murders, and other diabolical means the Catholics made use of against those who opposed the Catholic faith."⁷⁹ In similar fashion, following a visit to Italy, the president of the European Mission, John Widtsoe, remarked

The spiritual condition of Italy is deplorable. The Catholic Church dominates the country. Its methods are plain. It keeps the people in ignorance, appeals to their superstitious fears, feeds them with pomp and show, and thrills them with make-believe miracles. Its sexless priests are everywhere. ... The

⁷⁷ Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 116, 134 and 120.

⁷⁸ Grow, 'The Whore of Babylon', p. 146.

⁷⁹ LDS Church Archives, Samuel Francis, Journal, MS 8832, pp. 69–70. This voyeuristic fascination with the Inquisition was shared by many travellers, including Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, Chapter 26.

membership may be honest enough, but the leadership are plain cheats, or of little intelligence.⁸⁰

In Rome he reported looking “at the wonders of the city, made ugly by the evil that is centred there ... [in] the heart of Catholicism.”⁸¹ Such views were not limited to Italy: Moses Thatcher commented on Catholic Mexico “Whatever may have been the condition of the Indian races occupying Mexico at the time of the conquest; we know that the thralldom of their bondage has, under the Catholic rule, been fearful since.”⁸² Similarly, following his 1867 visit to a Catholic Swiss canton, Karl G. Maeser noted:

the countless arrangements of devotion at the road sides, and at all crossings of the streets, where crosses, little temples, &c., showed us that their faith in Christ had degenerated into the plainest idolatry, without sense or reason. There will be a poor show here, probably for a long time to come, for the light of truth.⁸³

And a 1929 article in a Mormon youth publication commented, “it is in the Catholic world that dictatorship mostly flourishes ... Italy, Spain, Poland.” The reason was clear:

Catholicism builds on [coercion]. Its adherents are not free. They are taught to cease thinking for themselves and to look to some man, or some men, as their mediators between God and themselves, and there can be no doubt that this mental condition is favorable to political and military dictatorship.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ LDS Church Archives, Widtsoe Family Papers, MS 5417, John A. Widtsoe, Letter to First Presidency, July 2, 1932.

⁸¹ John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1952), p. 206.

⁸² Kenneth W. Godfrey, ‘Moses Thatcher and Mormon Beginnings in Mexico’, *BYU Studies*, 38 (Winter 1999), pp. 139-155 (pp. 139-140); Grow, ‘The Whore of Babylon’, pp. 144-145.

⁸³ *Millennial Star*, 91 (1929), p. 652.

⁸⁴ J.M. Sjodahl, ‘Signs of the Times’, *Juvenile Instructor*, 64 (March 1929), pp. 145-146.

Some LDS leaders attributed meagre Italian interest in the Mormon gospel to racial factors.⁸⁵ In 1936, Reinhold Stooft, the former president of the South American Mission reported that the majority of converts in Argentina were Italians and Spaniards.

There may be some who think that the ideal field of labour in which to find the scattered blood of Israel is the northern countries. For them it may be a consolation to know that a few centuries after Christ's birth tribes from the north invaded Spain and Italy, and it may be that their remnants are the ones who today follow the voice of the Good Shepherd.⁸⁶

Stephen L Richards spoke a decade later of Argentina's cultural diversity where "many nationalities were represented, with a preponderance of the brunette people from Spain, Italy; and the Mediterranean countries." He wondered "how susceptible these people" would be to embracing the gospel, and what his experience might suggest about the possibility of taking the message to "Spain, Italy, Portugal, and adjacent countries. ... I thought I could see in the disposition, customs and practices of these South Americans some of the reasons which have impeded gospel work among them."⁸⁷

Doubts about Catholic susceptibility to Mormonism are clearly evident in the geography of early missionary efforts. In the decades after the church was organized in 1830, the majority of the regions opened to missionary work were Protestant or possessed a Protestant majority - Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, and Germany. In England, converts came almost entirely from Protestant sects; a study of a sample of 298 converts, reveals 58 were formerly members of the Church of England, 70 Methodist, 31 Baptists, and only two were Roman Catholic.⁸⁸ Even in the few instances in which predomi-

⁸⁵ Armand L. Mauss, 'In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race', *Journal of Mormon History*, 25 (1999), no. 1, pp. 131-173.

⁸⁶ *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4-5 April 1936 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1936), p. 87.

⁸⁷ *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1-2 October 1948 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), pp. 147-148.

⁸⁸ Malcolm R. Thorp, 'The Religious Background of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837-52', *Journal of Mormon History*, 4 (1977), pp. 51-65 (pp. 52-54,

nantly Catholic countries were opened, the missionary effort was limited almost entirely to Protestants. For example, on Malta missionaries baptized 58 people: all but four were British and likely Protestant.⁸⁹ Converts in Paris, Le Havre and Boulogne-Sur-Mer were almost entirely foreign-born Protestants, usually English or Swiss. In 1867 when Franklin D. Richards visited the tiny branch in Paris, he reported that there was not a single French man or woman among them.⁹⁰ In Mexico too, the majority of the converts from the first missionary attempts from 1874 to 1889 were Protestants. This pattern persisted into the twentieth century: the first converts in South America in 1925, were six German-speakers.⁹¹ Leonard Arrington attributes this to the fact that missionaries, who did not know the languages of the people they encountered, “worked primarily with British residents in these countries.”⁹² Of course, in the case of Italy, from the beginning, the missionaries thought that its minuscule Protestant population would be their most likely source of success. Lorenzo Snow believed the Waldensians were “like the rose in the wilderness” and that they, not the vast Catholic majority, represented the most likely potential converts. He hoped that once a beachhead was established, that the Waldensians would then become the means for taking the gospel to some portion of the Catholic population.⁹³ In general, however, during the church’s first century, Mormon leaders “regarded the world’s Catholic countries with

58–60); also Tim B. Heaton, Stan L. Albrecht and J. Randal Johnson, ‘The Making of British Saints in Historical Perspective’, *BYU Studies*, 27 (1987), pp. 119–135 (pp. 121–122).

⁸⁹ Cottrell, ‘History of the Discontinued Mediterranean Missions’, p. 42; John DeLon Peterson, ‘The History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South America to 1940’, M.A. thesis (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1961), pp. 5–6.

⁹⁰ Moss, *The International Church*, pp. 40–41; *Millennial Star*, 29 (1867), p. 605.

⁹¹ Tullis, ‘Reopening the Mexican Mission’, p. 446; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, p. 235; Peterson, ‘The History of the Mormon Missionary Movement in South America’, pp. 44–102.

⁹² Arrington, ‘Historical Development of International Mormonism’, pp. 12–13.

⁹³ Homer, “Like the Rose in the Wilderness”, p. 32; Michael W. Homer, ‘Seeking Primitive Christianity in the Waldensian Valleys: Protestants, Mormons, Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses in Italy’, *Nova Religio*, 9 (2006), no. 4, pp. 5–33 (pp. 5–6, 10–11).

frustration” because of the minimal success encountered in their few attempts to evangelize Catholics.⁹⁴

As this overview suggests, when seeking to understand the reasons for the century of Mormon retreat from Italy following some initial proselytizing successes in the 1850s, the explanation must be sought in Utah rather than in Italy. There was no legal impediment that would have prohibited a Mormon return, at least not until the 1929 Lateran Accords, indeed numerous other Protestant sects established footholds in the country in the decades following the Mormon departure. The determination to disengage in the late 1860s was much more a result of events in Utah such as the Utah War, the polygamy controversy, and serious financial turmoil. Even more, the decision was a by-product of cultural attitudes among the leadership and general membership of American saints. While the Mormon Church remained committed to missionary work throughout this period, there were deep-seated prejudices against Italians and Roman Catholicism that informed Mormon views, and these functioned as a brake on any plans to return to the peninsula. Despite being highly marginalized themselves within broader society in the United States, Mormon views of Italians and Roman Catholicism were in many ways identical to those of their Protestant fellow citizens. Mormons, like many of their fellow Americans, saw Italians as degenerate, irresponsible, and unworthy heirs of their great Roman and Renaissance forbearers. In addition, the Mormon position was informed by their religious attitudes towards Roman Catholicism: Mormons believed that Catholics were not susceptible to their message, and the limited success of the first, brief attempt to evangelize Italy in the 1850s, combined with failures in other Catholic countries seemed to clearly bear this out. While all Christians were apostate, for Mormons, Catholics were particularly benighted, and highly unlikely to accept their message. The deeply rooted cultural attitudes towards Italians and Catholics ensured that for an entire century there would be no Mormon presence in Italy, until 1964 when changing attitudes towards missionary work in the post-war LDS leadership made the spectre of taking their message to Italy once again viable.

⁹⁴ Grover, ‘The Maturing of the Oak’, p. 80.