

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: "LOUD-VOICED LOVERS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY:" THE AMERICAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION'S MISSIONS TO ITALY DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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Master of Arts, 2018

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This thesis explores the motivations behind the American and Foreign Christian Union's missions to Italy during the American Civil War. The AFCU was a missionary organization founded in New York City in 1849 with the ambitious goal of ridding the world of Roman Catholicism. It was born during a time of nativist fervor when American Protestants saw Catholic immigrants as a threat to American democracy. The AFCU believed they could solve the problem of Catholic immigrants by converting the Catholic world to Protestantism, starting with Italy. The leaders of the AFCU believed the world was engaged in a struggle between Liberty and Tyranny. The war against the Confederacy and the fight to free Italians from the tyrannical Pope were different fronts of the same war. The AFCU entire unsuccessful as a missionary organization. They converted virtually no one.

However, their publications were essential to helping American Protestants shape their identity.

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by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts, History
2018

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Dedication

For Sylvia, my anchor

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the guidance, encouragement, and patience of my advisor, Professor Stefano Villani. I would also like to thank Professor Holly Brewer for her inspirational research seminar and her continued encouragement through the writing process. I am also grateful for Professor Miles Bradbury's wisdom and inspiration.

I would also like to thank the history graduate student community for making me feel instantly at home in College Park. I will always be grateful for their friendship, energy, and support.

Of course, I would not have survived here for a second without Jodi Hall, the infinitely patient Program Coordinator. From helping me register for my first semester before I had even visited the campus to planning a timeline for submitting and defending this thesis, she has been there for me at every step.

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Introduction: “The Coming Struggle of Tyranny and Liberty”

In 1861, American men left their homes and their families in New York City for the most important mission they could imagine. They were to be soldiers in a war for Liberty, fighting Tyranny in its most terrible form. They were fighting for the very future of the United States and answering the most pressing political questions of their day. They were certain they would be emancipating men and women from bondage. If they succeeded, the future of the world would belong to free men. If they failed, aristocracy would remain in place. They set sail for Italy.

From 1849 until 1884, the American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) was an international and domestic missionary organization headquartered in New York City. Throughout the entire life of this organization, its leaders considered Italy their most important mission field. Even in the midst and aftermath of the American Civil War, the AFCU did not turn inward and focus on mission fields within the United States. Instead, its leaders doubled down on their commitment to Italy, writing frequently from American soil during their own country’s Civil War that the Risorgimento was the most important political event on the world stage. The formation of the AFCU was a nativist and anti-Catholic backlash to recent waves of Catholic immigrants arriving in New York City. The leadership of the AFCU believed that Democracy and Protestantism needed one another, and that they both required the participation of literate, educated, inquisitive men. American Protestants valued direct access to their God and their government. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, were illiterate, uneducated, and submissive. Not only did their faith

prevent them from developing the necessary qualifications of a good American citizen, it also prevented them from ever fully taking a pledge of allegiance to the United States, since they would always have an equally strong allegiance to Rome. On top of practicing a foreign and seemingly threatening religion, immigrants were also poor and leached off the hardworking American taxpayers. In response to their fear of immigrants, the American and Foreign Christian Union believed and promoted dangerous conspiracy theories about an impending Papal takeover of the United States.

One characteristic of Evangelical Protestantism is that it divides the world into those who have undergone the experience of salvation and those who have not. American Evangelicalism in the mid-nineteenth-century drew similarly strict lines of demarcation dividing good governments from tyrannical governments. For them, the world was fighting to free itself from the rule of aristocracy. The struggle for the Roman Republic was a part of the same war against the Confederacy in the United States. When the AFCU launched a missionary offensive into Italy, they did not see themselves as abandoning the cause of the American Civil War. They were waging the same war, if on a different front.

The story of the AFCU is largely missing from the religious history of the United States. Although the AFCU converted virtually no one, the organization was still an important part of American religious history. Their monthly magazine reached a sizable readership and they enjoyed the support of nearly every Protestant denomination. For American Evangelicals who had not yet met a Roman Catholic or traveled to Catholic Europe, the AFCU magazine was often their introduction to both.

This magazine was an important part of the American anti-Catholic literature of the nineteenth-century.

But more importantly, anti-Catholicism in the United States is largely missing as a central characteristic of American Protestantism. It is brushed to the side, if mentioned at all. However, the AFCU's very reason for existing was anti-Catholicism and their message resonated with mainstream American Protestantism. Anti-Catholicism was a larger part of the American Evangelical outlook than previous scholarship admits.

The sources supporting these arguments are primarily the magazines that the AFCU published monthly from 1850 until 1884. These magazines were the organization's main vehicles for spreading its message. Each issue contains editorials and historical sketches that serve as windows into the editors' worldviews. The magazines also contain letters from every mission field. This publication reached not only members of the AFCU but also their families, neighbors, and, in the case of clergy, their congregations. Additional sources for this paper include the AFCU's published books and various unpublished letters missionaries wrote to headquarters in New York City.

The first chapter gives a brief history of the Italian Risorgimento, as well as nativism and anti-Catholicism in the United States. The second chapter gives an overview of the AFCU's beginnings, structure, and mission work. This chapter argues that even though the AFCU seems like a transnational organization, it is actually primarily insular and nativist. The third chapter is a description of the

AFCU's monthly magazine. This chapter argues that the publication of the monthly magazine was the most important work the missionary organization did. The fourth chapter analyzes Italy as a mission field. This chapter answers the question of why American Protestants were so obsessed with the future of Italy at such a tumultuous time in United States history. The final chapter describes the strategies and tactics the AFCU used on the ground in the Italian mission field. This chapter argues that since the very first English-speaking missionaries to Italy were so obsessed with the idea of launching a Protestant invasion from the launching pad of Sardinia, that this is how they continued to see the rest of Italy as a mission field.

Chapter 1: “The Love of Religious Liberty:” The Situation in Italy and the Birth of the AFCU

On May 10, 1849, a committee of representatives from The American Protestant Society, The Foreign Evangelical Society, and the Christian Alliance voted to merge into a single organization, The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU). The object of the society, as stated in the Article II of its Constitution was to “promote the principles of Religious Liberty and a pure and Evangelical Christianity, both at home and abroad, wherever a corrupted Christianity exists.”¹ For all three organizations, this “corrupted Christianity” was Roman Catholicism. The mission of the American Protestant Society (1844-1849) had been to convert foreign-born American Catholics. The Christian Alliance (1842-1849) focused on converting Italian Catholics both in Italy and in the United States. The Foreign Evangelical Society (1839-1849) provided financial assistance to missionaries abroad in both Catholic and non-Catholic countries.² The AFCU absorbed the goals and tactics of each of these societies.

For the leaders and members of the AFCU, all Roman Catholic immigrants posed a serious threat to American civil and religious liberties.³ American Protestants

¹ “Union of the Societies,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 3.

² “History of the American and Foreign Christian Union,” New York University Archives, Guide to the Records of the American and Foreign Christian Union, accessed April 3, 2017. <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/archives/afcubiohist.html>.

³ “The American Archbishops Elect and Their Consecration Oath,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 9 (1851): 283. “Rome Hostile to the Freedom of the Press,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 11 (1851):

feared the rapid influx of Catholic immigrants for three main reasons. ⁴Protestants worried that European countries were intentionally sending their paupers, who were then living in crowded city slums at a great expense to hardworking American taxpayers. Protestants also worried that, because of their loyalty to Rome, Catholic immigrants would not be able to give their full allegiance to the United States.⁵ Finally, they feared that Roman Catholics would gain so much influence in the United States that their presence and participation would make American institutions less free.⁶

Although the AFCU sent missionaries across America and to countries around the world in an attempt to stop the spread of Catholicism in the United States, Italy was the most important mission field. The American and Foreign Christian Union was certainly not alone in its fascination with Italy. The events of the Risorgimento captivated the entire world. These events began with the first “shake up” of Italy’s traditional power structures under Napoleon.⁷ His regime abolished feudalism in Italy and began to attack the Church’s political and economic power.⁸

⁴ . "Letter from Dr. Achilli to One of the Secretaries of the Society," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 8 (1850): 341.

⁵ “Papal Emigration to this Country," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 4 (1850): 172. “Book Notices- The Pope, Or the President?," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* X, no. 2 (1859): 60.

⁶ "Papal Emigration to this Country," 173. "What is Protestantism?," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 9 (1850): 426.

⁷ Lucy Rail, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8.

⁸ Ibid.

After Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) instituted Austrian domination of most of Italy. The Kingdom of Sardinia remained relatively independent and served as a buffer-state between Austria and France, see Figure 1.1.⁹



Figure 1.1 Italy in 1816

The next milestone of the Risorgimento came in 1848 when a wave of major revolts broke out across the peninsula in Naples, Rome, Bologna, Florence, Livorno, Turin, Milan, and Venice. As a result of these revolutions, the rulers of the Two

⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

Sicilies, the Papal States, Tuscany, and Piedmont introduced constitutions. However, in 1849, the Austrian army crushed popular revolts and reaffirmed their domination of the peninsula. In the same year, the new president of France, Louis Napoleon, sent French armies to Rome to protect Catholics and restore the power of the Pope. The world watched as the Republican forces led by Giuseppe Garibaldi surrendered to the French.¹⁰

A “decade of preparation” followed the revolts of 1848-1849. This decade was characterized by repressive crackdowns on liberty in nearly every kingdom. Of the constitutions issued during the 1840s, only Sardinia’s remained in place. Although the government in Sardinia was not particularly radical, even moderate reforms were impressive when contrasted to the reactionary governments in the rest of the peninsula. Camillo Benso di Cavour became the prime minister of Piedmont in 1852 and was responsible for much of the economic progress and many of the liberal reforms in Sardinia.¹¹

Cavour’s political ambition was to rid Austria from northern Italy, but the revolts of 1848 had proven that Sardinia would not be able to win in a war alone against Austria. In 1858, Cavour and Napoleon III agreed to go to war with Austria to eject them from Piedmont, but only if Austria was the aggressor. In April 1859, Austria declared war against Piedmont. Two months later, the French and Piedmont armies defeated the Austrians. People in the central Italian states voted to be unified with Piedmont and under Piedmont’s rule. Cavour ceded Savoy and Nice to France,

¹⁰ Ibid., 20-25.

¹¹ Ibid., 27.

which had been one of the conditions of France allying with Piedmont against the Austrians. Though Cavour lost Savoy and Nice and failed to gain Venice, he still achieved his goals of defeating Austria and leaving Piedmont in charge of Italy.¹² In 1861, the Sardinian constitution of 1848 became the constitution of Italy and “the institutions of civil and religious liberty” were able to mature “under the fostering care of the Sardinian Government.”¹³

It is striking that during the 1860s and 1870s, in the midst and aftermath of the American Civil War, at a time when other religious leaders in the North were focusing missionary efforts in the South, that the AFCU was so outward-looking in its approach. At first glance, it is paradoxical to attempt to export American religion and democracy at this moment. Even so, the AFCU leadership considered Italy their most important foreign mission field. Their writings are full of nativist sentiment, but if they had been so concerned with converting Roman Catholics before they immigrated to the United States, the AFCU might have focused their efforts in Ireland and Germany, the countries sending the most immigrants to the United States during the mid-nineteenth-century.¹⁴

¹² Ibid., 29-31.

¹³ “Foreign Field- Italian Evangelization” *The Christian World* XVI, no. 5 (1865): 147.

¹⁴ During the late colonial period, Irish Americans had made up a majority of the Roman Catholics in the United States. Their numbers skyrocketed during the 1820s and 1830s as famine drove them from Ireland. During the 1830s, 200,000 Irish people came to America and by 1850, 961,719 Irish people were living in the United States. By 1860, that figure had risen to 1,611,304. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 541.

There are three reasons why the AFCU focused on the conversion of Italy when it did. First, since Rome was the center and seat of Catholicism, they believed that if Italy converted, the Roman Catholic Church would lose its power and influence in the world. Secondly, the political turmoil in Italy led the AFCU to believe that God was opening a door for Protestantism to spread to Italy. Lastly, they associated the temporal power of the Pope in Rome with the Confederacy. In other words, the Roman Catholic Church and slaveholders in the South were enemies of Liberty. In the minds of the leaders and members of the AFCU, Evangelical Protestantism was the religion of free men. Protestants from all denominations were called upon to fight for Liberty and against Tyranny wherever they existed, whether in Rome or in the American South.

For the members of the AFCU, all of humanity was divided into two groups: those who were “saved” and those who were not. True Christianity, they claimed, was unlike Roman Catholicism in that it was not something into which you could be born. Each person had to undergo his own conversion experience.¹⁵ For Evangelicals, this was religious “liberty,” for each man to be able to experience Protestant “salvation” on his own. This liberty was the foundation of good governments, which would in turn protect religious liberty. Protestant countries, like the United States, had good governments and free people. The inefficient, cruel, and

¹⁵ The members and leaders of the AFCU fit nicely into D.W. Bebbington’s definition of Evangelicals, as they certainly exhibit the four distinguishing qualities of conversion, activism, Biblicism, and Crucicentrism. See D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 3.

tyrannical reign of the Pope over the Papal States was the most extreme example of rule over an un-free people.

Protestantism, as understood by the leaders of the AFCU, was not just a religious expression, but manifested itself in “political institutions, in the moral character of the people, in their sciences and arts, in their restless activity and their unceasing strivings after progress, even in their trade and commerce, in railroads and steamboats, and in that almost invisible messenger of the air which laughs at time and space.”¹⁶¹⁷ Of course, the societal success of Protestantism was also “its chief danger.”¹⁸ Since the freedoms Protestant countries enjoy “are so fair and happy that they seem like Elysian fields to those who dwell in the Tartarus of spiritual despotism” the resulting emigration “sets with so strong a current from Catholic to Protestant countries.”¹⁹

Just as many missionaries to the American South believed that African Americans had been damaged by their experience of slavery and, as a result, had not developed to their full potential, many in the AFCU believed that because of the spiritual tyranny of the Catholic Church, Italians were ignorant and superstitious. The fault was “not in the genius, or the native taste, or the distinctive characteristics of the

¹⁶ "What is Protestantism?" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 17 (1850): 426.

¹⁸ “Remarks from Rev. Dr. Bacon at the Annual Meeting,” *Addresses of Rev. L. Bacon, D.D. and Rev. E. N. Kirk, at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Alliance* (New York: Christian Alliance, 1845): 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

people” but rather in the Roman Catholic “system itself.”²⁰ Italy was once home to a great civilization, but it had descended into darkness with the corruption of true Christianity.²¹ If the AFCU succeeded, Italians would not only be spiritually “saved,” they would also be capable of restoring their government and civilization.

One of the ways that the Roman Church had corrupted Italians was by making the men effeminate. It could not have been the climate, since that “did not render effeminate the old Romans for twelve centuries.”²² Instead, it was “the worthless governments with which this beautiful land has been cursed, and still more, a corrupted and worthless religion.”²³ Literature of the AFCU often described Italian men as meekly following their priests and as incapable of using their own reason and judgment. American Protestants often expressed criticisms of Italian immigrants in these gendered terms. For example, American Evangelicals saw themselves as rational and independent, with “manly” inquisitive minds, while Italians were emotional, superstitious, and subservient. The “peculiar timidity of the Italian character” was yet another obstacle to spreading the Gospel in Italy.²⁴ Protestants

²⁰ Nathan S. S. Beman, *The World a Missionary Field: Roman Catholic Countries, or The Roman Catholic Population of our World, Scattered Abroad Everywhere, as Furnishing a Missionary Field, A Sermon* (New York: American and Foreign Christian Union, 1859), 7.

²¹ “The Three Peninsulas- Greece, Italy, Spain,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XIII, no. 11 (1862): 329.

²² “Letter from Rev. Dr. Baird” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 12 (1851): 382.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “How Things Go At Florence” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 248.

were honest, independent thinkers, while Italians were submissive and their only loyalties were to their priests.²⁵

While women played important roles in other American missionary organizations, especially those sending teachers to the American South during Reconstruction,²⁶ women were not nearly as important to the AFCU's work in Italy. The AFCU missionaries to Italy listed in AFCU publications were men. Their wives and families sometimes accompanied them to Italy, and visited Italian women in their homes and read the Bible to them and to their children. Though this is certainly missionary activity, women were not active in the financial or infrastructural work of the AFCU. As a result, the organization referred to them "Bible Women" instead of missionaries. When the missionaries wrote home asking for money, it was often to support sending young men to Protestant seminaries.

All three of the organizations that merged to form the AFCU were interdenominational. In their publications, each of the three frequently reminded readers that Protestants from all denominations had an obligation to work together to oppose the spread of Catholicism in the United States. Although Protestant denominations might worship and organize their churches differently, they all

²⁵ "Papal Emigration to this Country," *The American and Foreign Christian Union I*, no. 4 (1850): 172.

²⁶ Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004): 1-2. Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

believed essentially the same doctrine.²⁷ This was not only the message published in their magazines and preached in their meetings; it was also reflected in their leadership. The leaders of the American Protestant Society, the Christian Alliance, and the Foreign Evangelical Society were primarily from Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches, but Baptist and Dutch Reformed churches were also represented.

Some historians portray the Plan of Union signed in 1801 as the first turn toward the ecumenism that would become prevalent during the mid-nineteenth century.²⁸ In this plan, Congregationalists and Presbyterians agreed to cooperate to convert the Old Northwest.²⁹ In an attempt to ensure that Calvinists inhabited the American West, the two denominations divided the frontier and agreed not to compete with one another for church membership. However, this agreement was only between two denominations and purposefully excluded all others.³⁰ “Union” here only meant not intruding on the other denomination’s territory.

²⁷ In the Annual Report from 1851, the editors wrote that while Rome is a visible church, Protestantism is the “invisible one catholic church of Christ.” “The Annual Report,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851).

²⁸ Bennett, for example, calls the Plan of Union the “first explicitly ecumenical and cooperative” effort. James B. Bennett, “Tensions Within: The Elusive Quest for Christian Cooperation in America” in *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*, ed. Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 138.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Book, 1964), 63.

The leaders of the AFCU would encourage a very different sort of Christian “Union.” The level of ecumenism in the writings of the AFCU, in which every Protestant denomination was on equal footing, was not present in the 1801 Plan of Union. For the leaders of the AFCU, every denomination needed to do far more than simply not “poach” one another’s flocks. For them, each denomination practiced an equally valid form of Christianity and they were all required to work side-by-side to convert the world.

Interdenominational Protestant societies that practiced the same level of ecumenicalism as the AFCU only emerged in the United States during the 1820s. Before this ecumenical turn, Protestant denominations were more likely to compete for membership than to cooperate on a project. As Roger Finke and Rodney Stark demonstrate, America was “churched” by several aggressive denominations in fierce competition with one another.³¹ Finke and Stark describe an American “free market of religions” in which evangelical “upstarts” (such as Methodists and Baptists) were the “winners” between 1776 and 1850.³²

Several factors in the early nineteenth-century drove American Protestant churches from fierce competition to the sort of cooperation typical of the AFCU.

³¹ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1.

³² Finke and Starke’s main argument is that when a sect became too comfortable in its environment it transformed from an upstart to a church, where it ceased to grow and eventually declined. *Ibid.*, 103, 148.

The stresses of rapid industrialization, the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, and the rise in immigration from Catholic countries all contributed to American Protestants' turn towards becoming more interdenominational. Historians have given different weight to these factors, but they agree that each was a catalyst in some measure.³³ Confronted with rapid and extensive urbanization, many Americans joined voluntary organizations as a response to the disruption of older institutions of community.³⁴ Protestants from different denominations joined forces to encourage Americans to conform to traditional Protestant morality and carry this morality to their countrymen spreading westward across the continent. They set up Sunday Schools and provided funding, Bibles, and clergymen to churches in the West.³⁵

The revivals held during the Second Great Awakening were interdenominational affairs, drawing leaders and participants from all evangelical Protestant denominations.³⁶ At revivalist meetings throughout the country, clergymen swept aside denominational differences and taught Americans that God's saving grace lay within reach of all who came to Christ.³⁷ Furthermore,

³³ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 4. Ira M. Leonard and Robert D. Parmet, *American Nativism, 1830-1860* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971), 25.

³⁴ Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 39.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bennett, "Tensions Within," 137.

³⁷ Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 40.

Evangelicals were sending missions to slaves, Indians and settlers in the American West. Voluntary societies were fighting for literacy, Sabbath-keeping, temperance, and an end to prostitution and slavery.³⁸ Their work was too great and too urgent to waste time on sectional disputes within Protestantism. When the American Protestant Society announced its merger with the other two societies to form the AFCU, the editors wrote that the “multiplication of agencies for doing good, though unavoidable to some extent, is an evil which is deeply felt by the Christian community and which out to be avoided wherever it can be wisely or justly done.”³⁹ During this time, American Protestants also united around a common enemy: Roman Catholicism. Anti-Catholic prejudice had come to the American colonies with the first Puritan settlers,⁴⁰ but it was largely dormant until large numbers of Catholic immigrants began coming to the United States during the 1820s.⁴¹ The ministers and community leaders who came to the American colonies had been raised in an England that was very bitter towards Rome.⁴² For them, Catholicism was an antinational force constantly threatening to overthrow the English government.

³⁸ Bennett, “Tensions Within,” 139.

³⁹ “Constitution,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 6.

⁴⁰ Billington, Higham, Leonard and Pramet, and Schrag all agree on this point. Higham writes that anti-Catholicism was by far the oldest and most powerful antiforeign tradition in early America. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1963), 3.

⁴¹ Billington and Higham use the terms “latent” and “recessive” to describe anti-Catholic sentiment between the American Revolution and the nineteenth-century. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 4. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 6.

⁴² Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 2.

Towards the end of the seventeenth-century, anti-Catholic sentiment increased in the colonies, and every Catholic was seen as a potential enemy whose papal allegiance might lead him to cooperate with French Canada or Spanish Florida against the settlers. However, in the years after the Revolution, Americans were too engrossed in the task of developing a country to reflect on the dangers of Popery. With immigration from Europe almost at a standstill from the Revolution until the nineteenth-century, the Catholic threat seemed less immediate.⁴³

Once waves of Catholic immigrants became coming to the United States from Ireland, American Protestants began to see Catholicism as a much more immediate threat. Catholic foreigners became easy scapegoats for the anxieties resulting from industrialization, urbanization, and sectional discords. During the influx of Catholic immigrants between 1820 and 1850, “German,” “Irish,” and “Catholic” all came to mean “un-American.” As interdenominational organizations gained influence, Protestantism had become synonymous with Americanism.⁴⁴

Poor Irish immigrants settled into overcrowded slums in Eastern cities, and Protestant Americans blamed them for increases in pauperism, labor-class rowdiness, and crime.⁴⁵ While some Irish immigrants already in the United States formed charitable organizations to help new immigrants upon arrival, these charities proved inadequate for dealing with the sheer number of immigrants. Irish immigrants remained in eastern cities, where municipal and state authorities cared for them.

⁴³ Leonard and Parnet, *American Nativism*, 4, 9, 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25, 43, 51.

⁴⁵ Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American Peoples*, 565.

Protestant Americans began to view them as an unfair burden on taxpayers and competition for factory jobs.⁴⁶

As these immigrants arrived in the United States, many Americans came into contact with Catholicism for the first time. In eastern cities, public confrontations between Protestants and Catholics broke out over issues such as the distribution of Bibles, religion in public schools, and the management of church property. For example, a controversy broke out within the Catholic Church in Philadelphia regarding whether the church property should be controlled by a trustee representing laymen or by the bishops of the diocese. The literature that came out of this debate pitted the autocracy of the clergy against the democracy of the congregation. For American Protestants who were unfamiliar with the Catholic Church before the controversy, the literature published during the debate showed the Church to be an enemy to democratic institutions and a dangerous influence in the United States. In another example, the American Bible Society tried to circulate the Protestant version of the Bible among poor Catholics, who refused to take them. This was taken as an affront to the Bible itself (instead of a refusal of one version of the Bible). This “attack” on the Bible interested Protestant churches in the No-Popery crusade. Those who did not witness these confrontations firsthand still read about them in books, pamphlets, and newspapers. These publications, many American’s first encounter with Rome, cast Catholicism in a negative light.

⁴⁶ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 35.

By 1827, thirty religious newspapers with distinctly anti-Catholic agendas had been founded in the United States.⁴⁷ The AFCU's monthly magazine was a part of this anti-Catholic literature.⁴⁸ In October 1829, Bishop John England of Baltimore called the first Provincial Council in America. The Bishop's plan for the council was to allay fears that Catholicism was a "foreign" religion by making a public show of announcing American-born bishops.⁴⁹ By showing Americans that the Catholic Church's hierarchy could be American, he hoped to stem the tide of nativist sentiment.

The conference, however, had the opposite effect. Seeing the Catholic Church in the United States assembled in all its glory caused simplicity-loving Protestant Americans to worry. Protestant Americans did not see a Roman Church attempting to make itself more "American." They saw a Roman Church stating in no uncertain terms that it was a substantial and growing part of American life. For American Protestants, the 38 decrees that the Council issued were even more troubling than the ostentatious display of the Council itself. These decrees urged parishes to start parochial schools, warned them against corrupted (Protestant) translations of the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 43- 44.

⁴⁸ For example, one "Introduction" promises to contain much information about the efforts to repel "Papal encroachments in our country on the subject of Public Schools, the tenure of Church Property, the Rights of Conscience and Religious Worship, as well as Religious Liberty in other lands." "Introduction" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 1 (1853): 1.

⁴⁹ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 37.

Bible, and approved the baptism of non-Catholic children.⁵⁰ Instead of quieting nativist fears, this council intensified them.

Protestant Americans worried that the intense allegiance Catholics had for the Pope would prevent them from true allegiance to the United States. Religious historian Peter R. D'Agostino argues that the indifference modern day American Catholics feel towards the Holy Father's relationship to modern Italy is a relatively novel luxury of the last fifty years. He argues that from 1848 to 1940, Rome was the center of the American Catholic world. During this time, Catholic identity, even in the United States, was marked by solidarity with the Holy Father. American Catholics protested the Risorgimento and showed public displays of solidarity with Rome, dividing them from their Protestant neighbors.⁵¹

As a part of this display of solidarity, Catholics around the world published literature painting Pius IX as a suffering hero. D'Agostino calls the period from 1848-1878 the "explosion of Catholic media." These Catholic publications created a "global family" and a "cult of Pius." Like Catholics elsewhere, American Catholics demanded restoration of the Papal States. Not only did they offer prayers and sacraments for the safety of the Pope, but American Catholics also raised and donated money to the cause.⁵² Understandably, this caused American Protestants to worry

⁵⁰ Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, 540.

⁵¹ Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ix, 2, 11-12.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20, 28, 31.

that Catholic immigrants could not be loyal American citizens while they still harbored such allegiances to Rome.

Both as individuals and as members of the Roman Catholic Church, it was difficult for Protestants to see Catholic immigrants as Americans. Protestants understood their faith to be the only one compatible with liberty and democracy. Protestants saw themselves as educated, curious, and rational. They stood as individual men with personal access to their God and to their government. Catholics, on the other hand, were uneducated, timid, and lacking a manly spirit of inquiry. Instead of exercising intellectual and spiritual freedom, they were submissive their priests and to the Church. Personal liberty, liberty of thought, even liberty of the press could not exist unless “guarded and upheld, and made to live by the vital energy of religious freedom.”⁵³

In a statement typical of the AFCU and its predecessors, the editors of the *American Protestant* wrote in 1849 that unlike Protestants, “no man becomes a Papist by candid conviction produced by sound arguments.” According to the editors, Roman Catholicism did not have its foundations in intellect and reason. The “strongholds of popery” were in “men’s superstitious susceptibilities, in the perversions of conscience and those faculties which are under the dominion of imagination.”⁵⁴

⁵³ “Annual Report,” *The Christian Alliance* (1845): 21.

⁵⁴ “Encouragement to Labor for the Conversion of Romanists,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 7.

An article in the September 1851 issue of the AFCU magazine rhetorically asks how American Catholics can submit to the Roman Catholic Church and uphold their duty as American citizens to defend and support the Constitution, especially religious liberty. The article asks “Can they serve two masters- the Constitution of the US and the decrees of the Pope? Which is the stronger cord which binds them?”⁵⁵ A similar article in 1857 concluded that the Romish Church could never be Americanized, but could only remain what it is- “Roman in its nature, character, and selfish spirit of universal domination.” Romanists could not become true and loyal subjects and citizens of the United States, as they would always hold a foreign allegiance.⁵⁶

Protestants not only worried that Roman Catholics would never be able to assimilate into American society; they also feared that the monarchs of Europe had plans to settle the Mississippi Valley with enough Catholics to establish Popery and despotism in the United States.⁵⁷ In 1834, Samuel F.B. Morse published a series of letters in the New York *Observer* under the penname Brutus called *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*. These letters linked immigration and Catholicism and accused the monarchies of Europe of opposing

⁵⁵ “The American Archbishops and Their Consecration Oath” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 9 (1851): 283.

⁵⁶ “Can the Romish Church Become an American Church?” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII, no. 8 (1857): 256.

⁵⁷ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 118.

American republicanism.⁵⁸ The AFCU inherited and also perpetuated this fear, publishing several editions of Morse's book during the 1850s.⁵⁹

During the 1830s, Protestants in eastern cities formed the first explicitly nativist organizations. The New York Protestant Association, established in 1836, was the first to gain national prominence. It quickly developed branches in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Trenton, and some smaller communities.⁶⁰ The AFCU and its three predecessors were part of this anti-Catholic movement born out of the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, rapid social changes, westward expansion, and a fear of Catholic immigrants.

Historians such as Billington, Higham, Leonard and Parmet, and Schrag have explained why Protestant Americans in the mid nineteenth-century so strongly associated Protestantism with their civil institutions, and why they felt so threatened by waves of Roman Catholic immigrants. They also explain why eastern cities, especially New York City, became the birthplaces of nativist organizations. However, the stories of the actual missionaries who worked in these societies are largely missing.

The American foreign mission enterprise, especially between 1880 and 1930, was a massive affair involving thousands of Americans abroad and millions more at

⁵⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁹ This fear is also expressed in a letter dated February 1851 in which the Catholic Church allegedly boasted about its progress in England and believed that the United States will be recovered next. "Letter from Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union II*, no. 4 (1851):1.

⁶⁰ Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 96.

home.⁶¹ William Hutchinson argues that the problem with studying missionaries has been that their stated purpose expresses service and sacrifice, while at the same time adopting a paternalistic attitude toward the religions that the recipient people considered their own culture. Since missionaries embodied such complexities, they may have seemed too admirable to be treated as villains, but too obtrusive and selfrighteous to be embraced as heroes.⁶² The easiest option has been to ignore them.

American and British missionaries shared many similar beliefs, especially a conviction that their countries played special roles in bringing Christianity and civilization to the world.⁶³⁶⁴ In recent scholarship, historians have explored British missionaries and their relationship to the Empire. Rather than portraying them as willing arms of an imperial project, historians have emphasized that British missionaries' feelings for the Empire itself could range from fierce loyalty to equally fierce resentment.⁶⁵ For British missionaries, there was plenty of room for antagonism between worldly (empire) and other-worldly (missionary) realms.⁶⁶

⁶¹ William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶³ In "the coming struggle" Britain and the United States would become allies, as they were they only countries in the globe granting true liberty of conscience. "The Coming Struggle" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII no. 9 (1857):

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⁶⁵ Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 2004), 43, 64, and 323-324.

⁶⁶ Hayden Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), 56.

However, the writings of AFCU missionaries demonstrate that American Protestant missionaries felt no such tension between their civil and religious missions. For Americans, civil and religious liberty were so intertwined that one could not exist without the other.

The AFCU missionaries felt an obligation to save and renovate the world, particularly Old Europe. This notion clearly echoed the original Puritan belief that their “city of a hill” could set an example for the world to follow. AFCU missionaries shared the Puritan settlers’ vision of converting the world and conviction that the United States had a special place in God’s plan to save mankind. In recent times, however, Hutchinson argues that in addition to seeing themselves as a “city on a hill,” Puritans also saw themselves as an “errand in the wilderness.”⁶⁷ They believed they had been called, not just to lead by example, but to actually transport the message to unknown and uncivilized places.

Hutchinson argues that the analogies between the Puritans and the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise are not exact, but that both groups share a similar zeal for expansion and evangelization, particularly in their belief “that Americans were under a special obligation to save and renovate the world.”⁶⁸ American missionary zeal has always consisted of these two methods- being an example of the perfect society, while also physically carrying the Gospel to unknown parts. The work of the

⁶⁷ Hutchinson, *Errand to the World*, 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

AFCU is important because it is one of the first instances of American Evangelicals viewing Europe as the “wilderness” into which they needed to transport the message of the Gospels.

American missionaries were also genuinely afraid that Roman Catholics would settle the western territories and usher in a tyrannical Papal regime in the United States. They worried that Catholics would flood eastern cities with schools, churches, and convents. American democracy was fragile and under threat from Rome. “So we, who are here to-night, well know that our country has at this hour no greater danger than that which presses in upon us from the Roman Catholic countries of the old world. This is a danger which we cannot think of averting; we must meet it. The mighty tide of immigration cannot be turned backward; nor would I ask to have it stayed; let us but do our part, trusting in God, and the God of our fathers will bear us safely through.”⁶⁹ “A resolution introduced by Rev. Mr. Dowling of New York at the Anniversary of the American Protestant Society “That the arrogant claims of the Roman Church for the possession of our country, in connection with her unchangeable character, demand the attention, and should awaken the slumbers of Protestantism.”⁷⁰

The only way to save American civil institutions was to stop the spread of Catholicism around the world by striking at its heart: Rome. This would not be an easy task, as their experiences led them to believe that the hostility to the Gospel was

⁶⁹ “Remarks from Rev. Dr. Bacon,” 13.

⁷⁰ “Anniversary of the American Protestant Society,” *The American Protestant*, I, no.1 (1845): 6.

more violent, bitter, and deadly among the “corrupted form of nominal Christianity” than even among the “Heathens.”⁷¹ Taken in this context, the AFCU’s vision of continental Europe as a mission field does not seem so striking.

There are two main phases to the American and Foreign Christian Union’s existence. Its first phase, the missionary phase, lasted from 1849 until 1884. During these first years, the AFCU sent missionaries all over the world and published a monthly magazine to keep members informed about various mission fields. In 1884, the Board voted to cease being a missionary organization. From 1884 until the present day, the AFCU has raised money to support American Churches where English-speaking Protestants travelling to Catholic countries can worship. At this time, the AFCU sponsors three such churches in Paris, Berlin, and Florence.

⁷¹ “American and Foreign Christian Union,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 134.

Chapter 2: “A System Invented and Patented in Hell.” American Nativism and the AFCU

The AFCU’s first decade of mission work was marked by a fierce and unfounded optimism. The leadership believed that political turmoil in Europe, particularly in Rome, was a sign that God was opening the door for Protestant missionaries to save the world from the errors of Popery. At first glance, the AFCU’s work seems transnational. The organization sent missionaries across the United States and around the globe. They funded missions to Europe, Canada, Mexico, Haiti, and South America.⁷² However, even though the leaders sent missionaries to every corner of the earth, they were always primarily motivated by an insular, nativist, anti-Catholic, and anti-immigrant sentiment.

The AFCU’s disdain for Roman Catholicism is evident in every one of their publications. The leadership of the AFCU did not consider Roman Catholics to be Christians, referring to them as “Romish” and their religion as “Popery.” An article from the magazine called Catholicism as the earth’s greatest curse, “a system invented and patented in hell.”⁷³ For these American Evangelicals, the Roman

⁷² “... in Canada among the French-speaking inhabitants; in South-America, in Ireland, in Belgium, and in France, with some lesser and scattered stations, such as Hayti, Sweden, etc.” “Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union” “The Annual Meeting” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 356.

⁷³ “The Home Field” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 3 (1853): 123.

Catholic Church was only a “true Church” in the way a rotten apple is a true apple, or a fallen angel is a true angel.⁷⁴ They often referred to the Pope as the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, and the Son of Perdition. The Roman Church was a “horde of spiritual vampires, who have for ages fastened themselves upon the heart of humanity.”⁷⁵

Roman Catholic countries around the world, and the immigrants coming to the United States from those countries, worried the leaders of the AFCU.⁷⁶ Roman Catholic structures of hierarchy presented a threat to their vision of the United States. Individual conversions were directly linked to saving American forms of government from the Roman Catholic threat.⁷⁷ Civil and religious liberty in the United States would be in peril if “submitted to the keeping or interpretation of Rome.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ “Is the Romish Church a True Church?” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 11 (1855): 32.

⁷⁵ “Nunneries in Piedmont- A Good Example” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 10 (1851): 318.

⁷⁶ “We need not go to Tuscany for evidence of the persecuting spirit of the ‘Man of Sin, the Son of perdition.’ It is at our doors... I ask, shall we close our mouths and fold our arms, and tamely submit to such abominations?... I say let these facts be known; let measure be taken to protect the lives of those who may be exposed to such persecution and slander in our midst.” “The Home Field” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 3 (1853): 123.

⁷⁷ In 1850, a statement from the Home Department published in the AFCU’s magazine claimed that “patriots... lovers of civil and religious liberty” were “fearful of the presence of millions who have been trained under than system which has so long and so securely sustained the despotic empires and kingdoms of the Old World.” “Home Department” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 6 (1850): 262-263.

⁷⁸ “Annual Report- Rev. Dr. Williams’ Sermon” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 163.

For Evangelical American Protestants, Roman Catholicism was absolutely incompatible with democracy.⁷⁹⁸⁰ They believed that “no man can be a genuine Roman Catholic, and, at the same time honestly attached to the principles of civil and religious liberty, as set forth in the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of these United States.”⁸¹ Roman Catholic teachings were “utterly subversive”⁸² and had no place in American life. Protestantism was more than just a religious confession, it was also “that which gave liberty, which made men free.”⁸³⁸⁴ On the other hand, the “very essence of Romanism was the giving up of a man’s individuality.”⁸⁵ Even if an individual Roman Catholic loved liberty, democracy, and the United States Constitution, he was still a threat to American civil and religious liberties. He could never be a truly loyal American because if the Pope ordered him to vote to make the United States less democratic, he would have to obey “under penalty of eternal condemnation.”⁸⁶

⁷⁹ “The Papal Church was the foe of religious liberty; they could not co-exist.” “The Annual Meeting” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 80.

⁸¹ “The Controversy at Utica, New-York” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 9 (1854): 381.

⁸² Ibid., 383. See also “The American Archbishops elect, and their Consecration Oath” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 9 (1851): 284.

⁸³ “The Annual Meeting” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 84 (1855): 244.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 246.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Many articles in the AFCU's magazine demonstrate the urgency with which its leaders believed that America needed to be protected from "Popish encroachments upon the property and liberty" of its citizens.⁸⁷ American Protestants lived in constant fear that the "movements of the Papal hierarchy in this country" sought to "obtain control of popular education" and "subjugate the laity, re-enacting here what it has long practiced elsewhere."⁸⁸ Adding to this fear of a papal takeover, the AFCU occasionally published Catholic voices weighing in on the subject. In one such article, the AFCU quoted a Roman Catholic newspaper in St. Louis, the *Shepherd of the Valley*, as writing that "The only safety for this country lies in the spread of the Catholic religion."⁹⁰ In 1853, the AFCU published a letter in the magazine from an American Protestant visiting Rome which stated that the "arrogance of the Romish Church is unbounded; they are boating over their progress in England as if the country was certainly to be theirs." Later in the same letter, the visitor writes "the United States they count upon with the same certainty, though at a more distant day."⁹¹

⁸⁷ "Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 356. "Introduction" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV (1853): iv. "Bishop Bailey- Papal Power Gradually Unfolding" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII, no. 3 (1857): 60.

⁸⁸ "The Annual Meeting" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 89 (1855): 242.

⁹⁰ "An Important Document: Rome's Teachings" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 3 (1852): 5.

⁹¹ "Letter from Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 4 (1850): 97. See also: "Romish Priests in England" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 4 (1853): 42.

East coast cities (such as New York and Boston) and settlements in the Midwest were the two main fronts of this internal struggle to protect the United States from a papal takeover.⁹² In eastern cities, the AFCU viewed Catholic immigrants as an uneducated, poor, and violent disruption to a formerly well-ordered society. The AFCU missionaries in these cities engaged almost exclusively with Catholic immigrants and their children.⁹³ “They have preached in the English, Irish, German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Bohemian tongues.”⁹⁴ Bible-women visited immigrant families in their homes and they encouraged them to attend Protestant churches and Sunday Schools.⁹⁵ Since the AFCU associated Roman Catholicism with ignorance and illiteracy, these missionaries hoped that by teaching immigrant children to read, and to read the Bible in particular, they would convert them to American Evangelical

⁹² “The service is performed chiefly in large towns in the United States, where the Papal population mostly accumulates” “Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 356.

⁹³ “And the *children* of Romish parents have not been forgotten, nor overlooked. Much attention has been given to them. Much kindness has been shown to them, and while multitudes of them through the spirit of kindness have been gathered into Sabbath and other schools, the way has thus been opened, in many cases, for the entrance of evangelical truth and influences to the hearts of the parents.” “Eleventh Annual Report” *The Christian World* XI, no. 6 (1860): 174.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “At this point the Board desire to say that hitherto it has been found most difficult to- indeed almost impracticable- to reach, generally, the female portion of the Roman Catholic population... They have, therefore, deemed it expedient to make an experiment in this direction, and they have employed a few *females* to act in the capacity of teachers and missionaries. As far as they have gone in this experiment the results are very satisfactory.” Ibid., 185.

Christianity. In the process, they would be preparing them to become loyal American citizens.

The AFCU missions to the Midwest also focused on immigrant families, although not exclusively. The AFCU feared that enough Roman Catholics would settle western territories that they would be able to vote a Catholic state into the Union.⁹⁶ However, they also worried that without established Evangelical churches, Protestant settlers would be in danger of falling prey to the teachings of Catholic priests. With this fear in mind, the AFCU missionaries ministered to Catholic immigrants, as well as to American-born Protestants.

The struggle to protect American civil and religious liberties took place on these two fronts within the United States. However, the foreign mission work of the AFCU was fighting the same fight. Even when the leaders of the AFCU wrote about converting the whole world to Evangelical Protestantism, the future of America was always first on their minds. A world without Roman Catholicism would be a world without Roman Catholic immigrants to the United States. Since American Protestants linked civil liberties with religious liberties, a world free from the chains of Popery would also be a world of free democratic governments.⁹⁷ For the AFCU, the very

⁹⁶ Samuel F. Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States* (New York: American and Foreign Christian Union, 1855).

⁹⁷ “That in the marked contrast everywhere presented in the social, moral, and political condition of Papal and Protestant countries, we have a most powerful and palpable argument for the cause of the American and Foreign Christian Union labors to promote, and one that comments itself to very lover of mankind.” “The Annual Meeting” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 242-243.

“germ of civil liberty” consisted of “deliverance from hierarchies and kings, &c. the world over.”⁹⁸ The Papacy was first among these dangerous hierarchies.

These domestic and foreign missions were similar in both their goals and their tactics. In each mission field, the AFCU deployed missionaries, built schools and churches, distributed Protestant Bibles and religious literature, and supported previously established Evangelical congregations. Both mission fields also existed, at least to some extent, to renew and energize the churches sending them out.

Missionaries assigned all over the world frequently wrote letters back to the AFCU headquarters in New York City. These letters were vetted through the Corresponding Secretaries, who edited them for publication in a monthly AFCU magazine.

Although these missions were so similar in their goals and tactics, two distinct departments within the AFCU ran the foreign and domestic missions. The AFCU’s governing body, a Board of Directors, appointed a Secretary of the Home Department and a Secretary of the Foreign Department each year. These two Secretaries led their departments independently of one another. Even when they would present Evangelical churches with one appeal for funding, donors would have to mark whether their money was for the Home Department or the Foreign Department. The “Form of Bequest” at the beginning of every monthly issue of the magazine had a blank space before the word “Field” where whoever was making the donation could write “Home” or “Foreign.”

⁹⁸ “God gave kings to men in his wrath, and all the kingly authority of the Old Testament terminated in the Lord Jesus Christ. All kingly authority since his day is a usurpation of His power.” *Ibid.*, 246.

The logic behind this organization dates back to the founding of the AFCU in 1849. The AFCU resulted from the merger of three missionary organizations: the American Protestant Society, the Foreign Evangelical Society, and the Christian Alliance. The three societies had existed separately for several years, each dedicated to the conversion of Roman Catholics either within the United States or abroad. Given the growing ideal of “evangelical union” during the 1840s, it is unsurprising that three societies with such similar goals decided to work together to achieve them.⁹⁹ In order to ensure that the work of all three organizations continued both at home and abroad, the leaders were determined to keep the Home and Foreign Departments “as distinct and separate in their business and their objects, as if no union had ever taken place.”¹⁰⁰ They wanted to have one office and present one appeal to congregations, but they were worried that combining the two actual missions would sacrifice the scope or aim of one.¹⁰¹

In order to maintain existing financial support at the time of the merger, each organization made a point to reassure its members that its primary mission would be carried on by the AFCU, and that the AFCU was just as worthy of support as each of the predecessor organizations had been. The Home Department continued the work

⁹⁹ Michael Richard Hans Swanson “Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America, 1820-1860” (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1971), 266.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ The founders of the AFCU hoped that this would relieve churches of “the burden of repeated solicitations” and would open their appeals to “all the churches in the land.” “Encouragement to Labor for the Conversion of Romanists,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 8.

of the American Protestant Society, while the Foreign Department continued the work of both the Christian Alliance and the Foreign Evangelical Society.

Since the American Protestant Society was completely dedicated to evangelization among Roman Catholic immigrants living in the United States, the AFCU's recurring themes of nativism and anti-Catholicism were already present in the writings of the American Protestant Society. Founded in New York City in 1844, the leaders were concerned that in the Evangelical "zeal for foreign nations" they "overlooked the vital importance of sustaining the institutions and of enlightening the minds in our own country."¹⁰² They believed that the foundation of both civil and religious institutions in the United States was the Gospel.¹⁰³ If pure Christianity were replaced with a nominal religion (Popery, for instance), the "temple of civil and religious liberty" in the United States would fall. However, if they did all they could do "to enlighten and to save the souls of Romanists" then they would be able to rescue their "beloved country from the perils that threaten her prosperity."¹⁰⁴ The linking of religious and civil liberties, and the idea that Roman Catholic immigrants were a threat to both, would live on in the AFCU.

The origins of the AFCU's Foreign Department can be traced to both the Christian Alliance and the Foreign Evangelical Society. The Christian Alliance was formed in 1842 to "promote religious freedom, and to diffuse useful and religious

¹⁰² "Design of the American Protestant," *The American Protestant Magazine*, I, no. 1 (1845): 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

knowledge among the native of Italy, and other papal countries.”¹⁰⁵ While the founders of the Christian Alliance imagined that the whole world would someday be converted to Protestantism, they focused their efforts exclusively on the conversion of Italy.¹⁰⁶ They saw Rome as “the seat and centre of spiritual despotism.”¹⁰⁷ If Rome converted to Evangelical Protestantism, the rest of Catholic Europe would soon follow, thereby eliminating the Catholic threat to American democracy.

To the leadership of the Christian Alliance, there was no greater danger to the United States than immigrants from Roman Catholic countries. They did not believe that Roman Catholics could ever become fully integrated into American society. Since “freedom” was “the great passion of this age,” Roman Catholics, still in spiritual bondage, could not begin to become free men, and therefore could not integrate into American society.¹⁰⁸ Such themes echo throughout the writings of the AFCU.

The writings of the Christian Alliance also contain many references to another theme that would become central to the AFCU: Christian unity.¹⁰⁹ In response to the

¹⁰⁵ “Constitution,” *The Christian Alliance* (1845): 3.

¹⁰⁶ In fact, this society had started out as the Philo-Italian Society in 1842 with the sole object of spreading “Truth” in the states of the Italian Peninsula. Swanson, “Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade,” 265.

¹⁰⁷ “Annual Report,” *The Christian Alliance* (1845): 11, 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

¹⁰⁹ The editors of the AFCU wrote in 1855: “It is also a union of Christians of all the leading evangelical denominations, who are thus combined to afford a practical proof that Protestants are really one in the great essentials of a scriptural and saving faith, and are united in spirit to confess, sustain, and spread those divine principles of gospel truth in which they are so cordially agreed.” “Questions

common Catholic criticism that Protestantism was all “division and confusion,” the Christian Alliance was committed to presenting a united Protestant front against Catholicism.¹⁰⁴ They argued that it was only a “misrepresentation,” promoted by the Catholic Church, that Protestants were not a united church. Instead, the leadership of the Christian Alliance articulated a vision of Protestantism in which the existence of denominations proved the underlying unity of the faith. Since Protestantism was “essentially the love of religious liberty,” of course different groups would worship differently. Protestants, they reasoned, believed in “the right of private judgment, in matters between God and the soul.” They called the superficial unity of the Roman Catholic Church a “grave-yard harmony,” that was more “degrading military drill” than religion.¹⁰⁵

The AFCU continuously made similar claims to be the “one catholic church of Christ.”¹⁰⁶ Evangelical Protestantism was “not a visible church at all,” but the “invisible: of every age, it matters not of what nation, or of what denomination.”¹⁰⁷

Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union.” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 353. In another example, “That the American and Foreign Christian Union is an illustration of the actual unity of Evangelical Christians of all denominations, in respect to the essential doctrines and principles of the Gospel...” “The Annual Meeting” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 243.

¹⁰⁴ “Annual Report,” 22.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁰⁶ “Annual Report- Rev. Dr. Williams’ Sermon” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 163.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Reinforcing this point, the first editions of the AFCU's magazine each contained historical sketches of different Protestant denominations in the United States. The AFCU did not consider any one denomination to be better than the others. As a result, the AFCU received support from many Evangelical churches, including Baptist, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, and Methodist Episcopal congregations, with its strongest support from Presbyterian and Congregation churches.¹¹⁰

The AFCU inherited both the ideology of the Christian Alliance as well as some of its tactics. The Christian Alliance focused solely on the conversion of Italy, where Protestants were not allowed to engage in overt missionary activity for the entirety of the organization's existence. Therefore, missionaries from the Christian Alliance mostly dealt in "behind-the-scenes" operations.¹¹¹ They distributed Bibles and gave financial support to previously established Protestant churches, two tactics that the AFCU would also employ. However, the Christian Alliance was never successful in raising large amounts of money from American Protestants and was the smallest of the three organizations at the time of the 1849 merger.

While the mission of the Foreign Evangelical Society overlapped the mission of the Christian Alliance, the Foreign Evangelical Society had plans to convert all of Catholic Europe instead of focusing exclusively on one country. The Foreign Evangelical Alliance was much more successful than the Christian Alliance in its fundraising approach. They appealed to the American virtue of thrift by claiming to have "most expeditious and frugal approach" to mission work. Instead of exclusively

¹¹⁰ "History of the American and Foreign Christian Union"

¹¹¹ Swanson, "Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America," 265.

sending foreign missionaries to locations where they might not be well received, the Foreign Evangelical Alliance also routinely sent money to aid Protestants already settled in Catholic countries. In many instances they preferred to sustain established churches rather than erect their own structures. This appeal to frugality was a successful pitch to American Protestants. In 1839, the Society raised just 6000 dollars. By the time of the merger in 1849, annual donations had quadrupled.¹¹²

Like the Foreign Evangelical Society, the AFCU developed relationships with previously established Protestant churches. The AFCU also supported other missionary organizations, both by raising money for their missions and by publicizing their good works in the AFCU magazine. However, the AFCU's relationships with previously established Protestant churches, as well as their relationships with other missionary organizations, changed over time. The trajectory of the AFCU's evolving relationships with other churches and missionary societies is a reflection of their own levels of confidence in their mission. At the beginning of their mission work in 1849, the writings of the AFCU are shot through with seemingly boundless optimism. They truly believed that God was opening doors for conversion around the world as missionaries around the world wrote back to headquarters in New York City with "the most encouraging news."¹¹³ Their missions were "full of *promise*" and their mission were "white unto harvest."¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 263.

¹¹³ "Eleventh Annual Report" *The Christian World* XI, no. 6 (1860): 173.

¹¹⁴ Emphasis in the original. "Our Plate for this month- Colonel Beckwith" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 12 (1850): 531.

This initial optimism is reflected in the AFCU's descriptions of themselves in relation to other missionary organizations. From its beginning, the AFCU gave financial support to other missionary organizations with similar goals. The leaders of the AFCU knew that there were already many American Evangelical missionary societies working around the world. They justified the existence of yet another missionary organization by arguing that the other societies did not sufficiently prioritize evangelization among Roman Catholics. While these other societies did good work, "the efforts for the evangelization of the Papal world" were not far reaching enough and only occupied "a subordinate place."¹¹⁵

In the 1855 Annual Report, the AFCU published a long list of the various missionary organizations in Great Britain, continental Europe, and the United States. This list was meant to encourage readers by presenting "an aspect of decided progress and marked success" and showing them that the energy of the church was not growing weaker, "but developing in new efforts, and wider enterprises than ever."¹¹⁶ In keeping with the AFCU's ecumenical outlook, these missionary societies were from many denominations, including the Protestant Episcopal Church, Baptist Churches, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Scottish Free Church.¹¹⁷ However, even though the AFCU encouraged its readers to support the work of other

¹¹⁵ "Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 8 (1855): 357.

¹¹⁶ "Survey of the Religious Societies of Protestant Christendom" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 1 (1855): 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

missionary organizations, they still believed in the central importance of their own work.

At first, the AFCU reported on other missionary organizations, but clearly believed in their own organization's superiority. Then, as they began to realize the enormity of the task of converting the entire Catholic world, their confidence waned. They began to change their attitudes toward other missionary societies. The AFCU magazine became less likely to criticize fellow organizations for ignoring the Catholic threat. The AFCU began to report on what good work other organizations were doing, even adding in a whole new section to the magazine dedicated to the work of other missionary societies, something which would have been unthinkable in 1850. During the 1870s, the AFCU's optimism dwindled and they begin to feature more articles about other societies' mission work.

While the AFCU's attitude toward other missionary organizations changed over time, its admiration of Roman Catholic converts to the Evangelical faith did not. The leaders and members of the AFCU believed that men who had been raised within Roman Catholicism would make for the best missionaries to fellow Catholics. Since the 'national spirit' of each country in the foreign field was so different, the AFCU kept converts in their home countries because they would be best able to minister to other Roman Catholics in that country. Although the relationship with native churches changed over time, the AFCU always placed a special value on converts to Protestantism.

While the tactics, optimism, and relative success of the AFCU varied over time, its actual organization changed very infrequently. Founded and headquartered

in New York City, Members of the AFCU gathered there for an annual meeting and election. Anyone who had made a donation large enough to become a Member, Member for Life, or Director for Life was allowed to vote on who would serve on the Board of Directors for the coming year.¹¹⁶ The AFCU's constitution required that one half of the Board of Directors were laymen and that at least eighteen of them resided in New York or its vicinity. The constitution also required that the Board of Directors be representative of several Evangelical churches. No more than eight Directors could be from any one Protestant denomination.¹¹⁷ This board of thirty-two Directors controlled the organization's funds, property and estate. In order to make a change to the constitution, two-thirds of the Directors present at a meeting had to approve the change.

Within fifteen days of the annual meeting, the newly elected Board would meet in order to elect officers for the year and make appointments to various

¹¹⁶ Individuals donated three dollars per year to become Members of the AFCU. Any person who donated a lump sum of 30 dollars became a Member for Life. A single donation of 100 dollars guaranteed a spot as a Director for Life. Life Directors earned the privilege of meeting with the Board of Directors to discuss important decisions. "Constitution" *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4. subcommittees. The AFCU leadership consisted of a President, several Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, a Recording Secretary, District Secretaries, and Corresponding Secretaries. The position of Corresponding Secretary was one of the most influential positions within this leadership structure. When letters came to New York City from around the world, the Corresponding Secretaries decided which ones

would be published in the magazine. After choosing which letters to publish, the Corresponding Secretaries decided on exactly which words would be published, sometimes editing out entire paragraphs, and sometimes changing just a few words. The most influential of the Corresponding Secretaries was the Rev. Robert Baird. Baird had been an influential member of the Foreign Evangelical Society at the time of the merger in 1849 and then served in the AFCU until his death in 1863. He not only edited letters from missionaries for publication in the magazine but also served as a general editor. He refused to let an issue of the magazine go to print without first having personally reviewed it. In addition to editing the magazine, he also published his own observations as monographs. Having crossed the Atlantic eighteen times during his mission work, he had a deep knowledge of Protestantism both in the United States and in Catholic Europe. His works *Religion in America* and *Sketches of Protestantism in Italy, Past and Present* were translated and sold throughout Europe and the United States.

Baird was born near Pittsburg in 1798 and, according to his son's biography of him, grew up reading in a devout Presbyterian family, reading the Westminster Catechism every Sunday night with his father and seven brothers and sisters.¹¹⁸ In his youth, Baird's parents often told him that he should grow up to be a minister. After his mother raised enough funds for his education,¹¹⁹ Baird trained for a career in

¹¹⁸ Henry M. Baird, *The Life of the Rev. Robert Baird, D.D.* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1866), 11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary.¹²⁰ Upon graduation, he began working in education instead of entering the ministry directly. He founded a grammar school and then served for five years as its principal. Although he would spend the rest of his life in the ministry, he never lost sight of the importance of education, especially the education of children.

Rev. Baird's first job in the missionary field was distributing Bibles for the New Jersey Missionary Society, where he was struck by the uneven quality of education students received in different parts of the state. He began publishing articles in newspapers about the need for a system of public schools. After working for the New Jersey Missionary Society, Baird became a general agent for the American Sunday School Union. During his five years working for the Union, he traveled widely within the United States reporting on religious facilities and corresponding moral conditions.¹²¹

His experiences during these five years informed the rest of his life's missionary work. In all of his subsequent writings he associated literacy and education with the development of strong Protestant faith. He was a constant advocate for Sunday Schools and often helped local ministers establish them. The *AFCU* magazine frequently equated ignorance and superstition with Roman Catholicism and education and free thought with Evangelical Protestantism.

¹²⁰ Henry Warner Bowden, "Baird, Robert," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
<https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.0800077>

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Another experience which colored his work with the AFCU was his time with the French Association, a society whose mission was to convert Catholic France to Evangelical Protestantism. In 1835, Baird began to work for the Association in Europe.¹²² By 1836 the organization changed its scope from the conversion of France to the conversion of all of Catholic Europe and became the Foreign Evangelical Alliance. Although the group increased the scope of their work, they still saw France as the starting point for the conversion of Catholic Europe. Once France was converted, they wrote, it would “extend its influence into Italy, Spain and Belgium.”¹²³ The AFCU would follow a similar strategy, focusing on key areas that they believed would be able to extend their influence elsewhere once converted.

Another theme of Baird’s early work that would influence the AFCU was his dedication to ecumenism. While Baird remained a Presbyterian his entire life, but he also considered most Protestant groups to be legitimate branches of Christianity, as long as they shared the same basic scriptural ideals and moral standards. During his time with the Evangelical Alliance, he sought to nurture cooperation among all nonCatholic Christians. This ecumenical approach, as well as the emphasis on the importance of education, and the dedication to the conversion of Catholic Europe are all themes that would continue in the AFCU.

¹²² Swanson, “Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade,” 266.

¹²³ “Appendix,” *Fourth Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1843), 64.

Chapter 3: “That Mighty Lever for Moving the Human Mind- the Press:” The AFCU’s Most Important Work- its Magazine

In some ways, the most important work of the AFCU was the publication and distribution of its monthly magazine. AFCU leaders and missionaries were not successful in converting masses of Roman Catholics to Evangelicalism, but they were able to reach a wide Protestant audience both with their magazine and with other published works. In this way, the AFCU was able to shape Americans’ perceptions of Catholics around the world. For Americans who would never meet a Roman Catholic person, or never travel to the Catholic countries of Europe, the magazine served as their main source of information about both.

The AFCU published a magazine every month from 1850 until the reorganization of 1884. It was called *The American and Foreign Christian Union* from 1850 until 1860, and *The Christian World* every month thereafter. Members, Life Members, and Life Directors each received a monthly copy and were encouraged to bind them into one “handsome” volume at the end of the year.¹²⁴ If only the members themselves are considered, the readership of the magazine seems unimpressive. However, many members shared the magazine with their families.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Though published monthly, it was by no means intended to be discarded when the new one arrived. The AFCU leadership hoped that the religious histories would be of lasting value to the readers. “Introduction,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* (1850).

¹²⁵ In the most interesting example of this, one man wrote a letter in 1857 stating that since his wife was a life member, and he would be reading her copy of the magazine, he would like his copy donated to Archbishop Hughes. “We, of course, desire the welfare of the Romish hierarchy, and feel assured that reading would promote it.” “Archbishop Hugh’s Life Membership” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII, no. 5 (1857): 205.

The AFCU also encouraged readers to share the magazine with friends and neighbors.¹²⁶ Additionally, clergy from many denominations used the stories and letters to educate their followers and encourage them to donate money.

The structure of the magazine varied very little throughout the years. Each issue was between 32 and 48 pages long.¹²⁷ Each year, the June issue of the magazine reported the outcomes of the annual meeting. This issue would contain speeches given by organizational leaders, election results, and any changes to the organization that would be implemented in the coming year. With the exception of this special June issue, most of the monthly magazine issues looked very similar. Every issue contained one engraving with an associated article explaining its significance.¹²⁸ Engravings included depictions of heroes of the Reformation, Waldensian Churches, and Biblical scenes. Figure 3.1 depicts the “very secluded and romantic locality” in the “Country of the Waldenses.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ “Introductory Remarks,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 1 (1851): 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ “Our Illustrations” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 1 (1850): 2.

¹²⁹ “The Waldenses: Pra del Tor: Our Plate,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 6 (1850): 242.



Figure 3.1 “The Waldenses: Pra del Tor: Our Plate”

The first few articles in each edition were usually related to current events of concern to the AFCU. For example, an editor reporting from a trip to a specific mission field, or a timely history of a country whose current political or religious events were of interest. Following the introductory remarks and articles, most of the magazine then fell into the Home Field and the Foreign Field. Each of these sections contained updates on missionaries’ progress, including how many Bibles they had circulated, how many churches and Sunday Schools they had established, and how many people were attending their services. These sections were usually comprised of letters from missionaries working in various home and foreign fields, sometimes signed and sometimes unsigned. These letters also asked for very specific financial

assistance, such as sending the amount of money to send one young man to a seminary, or buy a certain number of Bibles.

Hutchinson argues that the purpose of foreign missionary work is always partially to revive the church at home.¹³⁰ This was certainly true of the AFCU. The editors frequently wrote articles encouraging American Protestants to take a more active role in the missionary enterprise, both by donating money for specific missionary projects and by participating in mission work themselves. Many stories in the AFCU's magazine describe exactly how much money a mission church needed for a project, such as furnishing a new Sunday School classroom or educating one man at a Protestant seminary. Others describe specific personnel needs, such as a small town whose people are clamoring for a fulltime Protestant minister.

The AFCU's magazine also contained many articles that did not ask for money or volunteers. These articles were meant to educate readers and congregations, and incite fear of Roman Catholic immigrants. The topics of these articles, often in the first section of the monthly magazine included the religious and political histories of various Roman Catholic countries, the state of immigrant communities in the United States.

The leaders of the AFCU believed in the power of the written word as the best way to educate any person on any topic. For the leaders of the AFCU, the press was a

¹³⁰ Hutchinson, *Errand to the World*, 7.

“mighty lever for moving the human mind.”¹³¹ The Rev. Robert Baird especially believed in the power of the written word and the central importance of the magazine to the success of the AFCU. In his role as the Corresponding Secretary, he was responsible for reading every single letter coming from missionaries both in home and foreign mission fields. After reading each letter, he would personally mark them up, indicating which words, phrases, or even paragraphs he wanted omitted before the letters were typed and published in the magazine. He was so personally invested in the successful publication of the magazine, that whenever he was in the United States, he would travel to headquarters in New York City to personally oversee its publication.¹³²

While every issue of the magazine had a Home Field and a Foreign Field section, other sections came and went through the years. For example, during the first year of the magazine, each issue contained a historical sketch of a different Protestant denomination in the United States. The purpose of these articles was to promote “Christian Union” which they defined as “the spirit of brotherly love among all the children of God.”¹³³ In these sketches, the writers were careful to avoid weighing in on theological matters, or appearing to value one denomination over another. The

¹³¹ “Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 8 (1855): 355.

¹³² Swanson, “Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America,” 270.

¹³³ “To the Christian Public,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union*, 1, no. 1 (1850): 2.

churches were presented in the order in which the denomination came to America.¹³⁴¹³⁵

These historical sketches narrated the stories of the first members of each church coming to the United States, and described which American states and cities they were most prominent now, and how the churches were organized and led. Though the articles might point out an aspect of the faith that was especially important to the denomination, each church was treated as equally correct and valuable. For example, when discussing Baptist churches, on the issue of immersion baptism, the AFCU simply wrote that this was an issue “not so clearly settled by Scriptural authority.”¹³⁶ On the division between Old School and New School Presbyterians, the AFCU simply wrote that everyone was familiar enough with the differences and it would be best not to describe the disagreements in the magazine.¹³⁷ Protestantism, for AFCU, meant “nothing more or less than pure and living

¹³⁴ “We shall treat all denominations in the order in which they appear among us.” “Brief Sketches of the Several Religious Denominations in the United States No.

¹³⁵ ” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 1, no. 2 (1850): 64.

¹³⁶ “Brief Sketches of the Several Religious Denominations in the United States. No. III: The Baptist Churches,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 1, no. 5 (1850): 208.

¹³⁷ “Sketches of the Religious Denominations in the United States No. IV: The Presbyterian Church,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 1, no. 7 (1850): 307.

Christianity.”¹³⁸ Anyone who lived this Christianity, no matter the denomination, was part of this true “oldest church.”¹³⁹

Beginning in 1855, the AFCU included a “Juvenile Department” section to the magazine. The editors borrowed this idea from the French Evangelical Church of New York.¹⁴⁰ This section consisted of a fictitious conversation between a fictitious Evangelical father and his two sons. In each story, the sons ask the father about some aspect of the history or practice of Roman Catholicism. The father answers their questions and explains the errors of Rome while pointing out the merits of the family’s own faith. Of course, the editors did not specify which denomination the family associated with.

Another section that did not exist for the entire life of the magazine was the “Sunday School” section which began in 1865 and ended in 1868. This section of the magazine mirrored, but certainly did not replace, the Home and Foreign Fields. It was like the Home and Foreign Field sections in that it reported on missionary work in different fields across the world. Like the foreign field, it contained updates on missionary progress and appeals for very specific funding. However, the Sunday School section allowed the writers to focus on what many, including Rev. Baird,

¹³⁸ “The Mission of Protestantism,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 11, no.1 (1860): 4.

¹³⁹ “The Oldest Church” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 4, no. 1 (1853): 14.

¹⁴⁰ “Feuille Religieuse de Etats-Unis d’Amerique du Nord” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 1 (1855): 27.

considered to be the biggest barrier to the Gospel: ignorance. As discussed in greater detail below, the AFCU firmly believed that once people were taught to read the Bible themselves, they would be able to free themselves from the chains of Popery.

Throughout the AFCU's missionary phase, its magazine was reflected issues that were on the minds of American Protestants and their coreligionists around the world. Two examples of this are the plight of the Madiai, as we will discuss in Chapter 4, and the "persecution" of a wayward Catholic priest named Giovanni Achilli. In 1825, Achilli was ordained a Dominican priest and launched a career that would be marked by sexual misconduct at every step. In one of his first jobs, as a lecturer at the seminary in Viterbo, three women accused him of seducing them. In 1833, the episcopal court removed him from his priestly duties and made him pay a fine to one victim's father. He left the Dominican order and took a job at a convent in Naples. In 1837, a fifteen year old girl accused him of raping her. Following this accusation, along with multiple accusations of sexual misconduct from other women, the police expelled him from the city of Naples in 1840 and again in 1841.¹⁴¹

The Catholic Church permanently suspended Achilli from all priestly duties in 1841 and sentenced him to a three year penance at a remote Dominican house. While he was supposed to be serving this penance, Achilli travelled to Corfu, a British protectorate, and declared that he was a political refugee. He claimed that he had been persecuted by the Catholic Church for becoming a Protestant. Taking Achilli at

¹⁴¹ Sheridan Gilley, "(Giovanni) Giacinto Achilli" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55519>

his word, a secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society took Achilli under his protection.¹⁴²

From 1842 to 1849, Achilli travelled and lived in Zante, Malta and London. He helped start “Italian Churches,” contributed to religious magazines, and taught at a Protestant college. In 1849, he went to Rome to distribute a vernacular translation of the Bible along with his own Protestant writings. After the Roman Republic fell to the French, Achilli was imprisoned. The Committee of the London Society for the Religious Improvement of Italy and Italians sent letters to the French government asking that Achilli be released.¹⁴³

When the French government granted that request in 1850, Achilli returned to London as a Protestant hero and a martyr who had been persecuted by the Roman Inquisition. However, Nicholas Wiseman, an English Catholic Cardinal, brought Achilli’s sexual misconduct to light. Achilli and his supporters denied these claims and even took libel action against Wiseman. Although Achilli won this legal case, the trial greatly discredited him. He left London for the United States, leaving quietly in 1860 for Italy. The circumstances of his death are unknown.¹⁴⁴

From the moment he first claimed to be a persecuted Protestant until Cardinal Wiseman finally made Achilli’s crimes known, English-speaking Protestants were obsessed with the plight of the persecuted convert. Achilli established connections with both British and American Protestants, including the Rev. Baird. The AFCU

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

joined the chorus of Protestants who admired Achilli. Several books were published about him and many articles in the AFCU magazine told of his bravery and imprisonment.¹⁴⁵ Achilli's letters speak the same message of Catholic intolerance as many other voices in the magazine. In a letter Achilli wrote to Rev. Baird, he wrote that all Romans who desire to be Christians are as a consequence Republicans.¹⁴⁶ Predictably, the AFCU published articles criticizing the Roman Inquisition for its tyrannical nature and for arresting someone whose crime was nothing more than "having abandoned the heresies and delusions of the Roman Catholic Church."¹⁴⁷¹⁴⁸

In 1852, the Bishop of Savannah, F. Xavier Gartland, reprinted Cardinal Wiseman's allegations against Achilli. The AFCU, of course, assumed that Achilli was innocent of these charges, but "should it indeed be proved that while a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, Dr. Achilli was known to be guilty of immorality, such evidence will tell severely upon the discipline and morality of the Catholic Church. That he should have been retained for years in it under such imputations, would only

¹⁴⁵ "Dr. Achilli," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 1 (1850): 10-12. Achilli was not the only imprisoned priest that the AFCU reported on, but he was the one most frequently mentioned. In April 1850, an article told of nine to thirteen other priests who had been arrested for acting as regimental chaplains. "Escape of Imprisoned Priests at Rome," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 4 (1850): 173.

¹⁴⁶ "Between the Pope and the Republic there can be no middle form of government." "Letter from Dr. Achilli to One of the Secretaries of the Society," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 8 (1850): 341.

¹⁴⁷ "Dr. Achilli," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 1 (1850):

¹⁴⁸ .

be a clear indication of the corruption of the Romish system.”¹⁴⁹ The next year, the AFCU wrote of the “eminently favorable” ruling in Achilli’s acquittal.¹⁵⁰ However, his reputation had been tarnished enough through these accusations that he spent the remaining years of his life outside of the limelight.

Though some sections came and went, the AFCU magazine remained remarkably unchanged from 1850 to 1884. Even during the American Civil War, the magazine was still published monthly. Surprisingly, very few articles dealt directly with the war happening on American soil. If anything, the American Civil War seemed to most missionaries to be a terrible distraction from the far more important issue of converting the Catholic world. One article wrote that we must end the terrible war in our own country, because the Pope in Rome is rejoicing to see our great democracy struggling through hardships.

¹⁴⁹ “Dr. Achilli and the Bishop of Savannah” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 9 (1851): 277-278.

¹⁵⁰ “Movements of Rome” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 8 (1852): 269.

Chapter 4: “The Victims of Civil and Ecclesiastical Tyranny:” Italy as a Mission Field

The driving forces behind the AFCU were nativism and, more specifically, anti-Catholicism.¹⁵¹ With this in mind, it might seem counterintuitive that the AFCU considered Italy its most important mission field. However, from the formation of the AFCU in 1849 until it turned over the Italian mission to the Free Italian Church in 1871, discussed in detail below, this was the case. The AFCU predicted that if the Pope lost power in Rome, Catholicism would collapse around the world and give way to Protestantism. Roman Catholic structures of hierarchy would no longer be a threat to representative governments. The AFCU chose Italy as its most important mission field because it contained the physical headquarters and the symbolic heart of Roman Catholicism.

For Evangelical Protestants, Rome was not only the symbolic heart of Catholicism. It was also the place where the medieval corruption of true Christianity took place. It was where ancient Christians had been persecuted by the Romans and where the true Christians of the nineteenth-century were still persecuted by Romans who were every bit as pagan and just as hostile to Christianity.¹⁵² AFCU writings frequently stressed that Rome had once been a great civilization and home to true

¹⁵¹ Although closely related, the terms nativism and anti-Catholicism are not interchangeable. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1963), 5.

¹⁵² “Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 354.

Christians, but it had since fallen into tyranny and superstition.¹⁵¹ In the AFCU's narrative, "the old Romans were a great people" in a "beautiful land" who had been cursed by a "worthless government" and "a corrupted and worthless religion."¹⁵² These themes of corruption and purification fit nicely into the AFCU's understanding of religious history. Beginning with the Jewish people of the Old Testament, societies periodically turned away from God and needed someone to turn them back. For the leaders of the AFCU, God had chosen American Evangelicals to lead the purification this time.¹⁵³ They proposed to "bring about another Protestant reformation in the Papal world, like that which stripped Rome of at least half her strength in the sixteenth century."¹⁵⁴ In the second year of the magazine, each

¹⁵¹ The AFCU found evidence for this narrative in the Catacombs that showed "the purity of the Roman church" as opposed to "the superstitions of a later day." These superstitions included the "divine worship ascribed to the Virgin Mary" and the "excessive devotion to saints and martyrs which, commencing in the third century, became so prevalent during the Middle Ages." "The Catacombs of Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 1 (1851): 16.

¹⁵² "Letter from Rev. Dr. Baird" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 12 (1851): 382.

¹⁵³ "He considered that there is a necessity of re-commencing the Reformation. If the condition of the world be as this Society claims it is, there is as great a necessity for a reformation now as there was in the sixteenth century." "The Annual Meeting" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 244.

¹⁵⁴ "It proposes to do nothing but what has been once done already, by the power of God. It proposes to bring about another Protestant reformation in the Papal world, like that which stripped Rome of at least half her strength in the sixteenth century. Papists were then converted by millions, almost by nations. God, his grace, and his truth, are the same as they were then; and then need of reform is even greater than in the days of Calvin and Luther." "Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 354. Some examples include: "Our Illustrations" and "Leo the

Tenth” in *The American and Foreign Christian Union II*, no. 1 (1850): 2, 33. engraving was of one of the heroes of the Reformation so as to create “a little gallery of the heads of the men who were most prominent in the scenes of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.” See, for example, Figure 4.1.¹⁵³



Figure 4.1 “The Reformer Zwingli”

The AFCU’s magazines regularly featured stories and engravings of the heroes of the Reformation, such as Ulrich Zwingli.

Although the AFCU often compared Roman Catholicism to ancient paganism, it was always with a hopeful caveat.¹⁵⁴ They distinguished Italy from “the barbarous

¹⁵³ “Our Illustrations” *The American and Foreign Christian Union II*, no.1 (1851): 2.

¹⁵⁴ “The Three Peninsulas- Greece, Italy, Spain,” *The Christian World XIII*, no. 11 (1862): 329.

nations” of the world.¹⁵⁵ They likened their own strategy of starting their mission work in the heart of Roman Catholicism to the Apostles’ work of beginning their missions “at the centre of the civilized world” and working “outward towards the barbarous nations that lay beyond the circumference of the Roman Empire.”¹⁵⁶ The Roman Catholic Church might be in a state of superstition and disrepair at the moment, but its purification was on the horizon. The Second Reformation was at hand.

The AFCU was not the first group of English-speaking Protestants to see Italy as a mission field. British missionaries had viewed Italy as a mission field since the early nineteenth-century. Like the members of the AFCU, British missionaries believed that Italian government and society would improve immensely once Italian people cast off the chains of Popery and converted to Protestant Christianity.¹⁵⁷ British and American missionaries to Italy were similar in their millenarian belief that God had opened the door for the conversion of Italy, their conflation of civil and religious liberties, and their complete confidence that circulating vernacular translations of the Bibles would bring about mass conversion.

Like their American counterparts, British Evangelical Protestants believed in a

¹⁵⁵ “The Scriptural View of the Missionary Relation,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XIII, no. 10 (1862): 297.

¹⁵⁶ “Letter from Rev. Dr. Baird” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 12 (1851): 382.

¹⁵⁷ Danilo Raponi, *Religion and Politics in the Risorgimento: Britain and the New Italy, 1861-1875* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 75.

God who was active in human history. They saw the political upheaval of the Italian Risorgimento as part of God's plan to rid the world of the Roman Catholic Church's corrupted version of Christianity. The AFCU did not choose Italy at random; they were only responding to "the relative importance of the openings presented, and in deference to the indications of the Providence of God."¹⁵⁸ To them it seemed as though God had gone before them "opening the way, and calling us to 'enter in and possess the land.'"¹⁵⁹

Historian Danilo Raponi has already demonstrated in *Religion and Politics in the Risorgimento: Britain and the New Italy, 1861-1875* that Italy existed in the British imagination as a liminal space between the Occident and the Orient. He argues that the British perceived Italy's "backwardness" as fertile ground for an imperialism that stopped short of military interference, "but that culturally and religiously treated Italy as the 'Orient.'"¹⁶⁰ Italy was among the "semi-civilized" societies that had not yet adopted the intertwined virtues of liberalism, Protestantism, and free trade. Therefore, British missionaries to Italy saw themselves as exporters of both a superior religion and a superior civilization. The British obsession with 'The Italian Question' is a prime example of British cultural imperialism occurring not only in the British Empire itself, but also in a much wider area.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ "Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union," "The Annual Meeting," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 354.

¹⁵⁹ "Eleventh Annual Report" *The Christian World* XI, no. 6 (1860): 170.

¹⁶⁰ Raponi, *Religion and Politics in the Risorgimento*, 40.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

The writings of the AFCU demonstrate that American Protestants viewed Italy in a similar way. Like their British counterparts, American missionaries saw Italy as backwards and superstitious as a result of Papal tyranny. They felt the same “solemn responsibility” to “give the Gospel to Italy and other parts of the world.”¹⁶² Like the British, American missionaries believed that Roman Catholicism could not exist alongside representative government, and that the Pope must give up his temporal power and yield to a better form of government. The link between civil and religious liberties was as clear for American Protestants as it was for the British.

An unsigned article from the September 1850 issue of *The American and Foreign Christian Union* stated that throughout Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and North America, the effects of Protestantism were expressed “in the religious and political institutions, in the moral character of the people, in their science and arts... even in their trade and commerce, in railroads and steamboats.”¹⁶³ Civil and religious liberties were so intertwined that the Declaration of Independence was “nothing else than the application of the Protestant principle of religious liberty and the universal priesthood of Christians to the relations of civil and social life.” For the leadership of the AFCU, Protestantism was “the modern power of the world, the heart’s blood of modern history” in which “we all live and breathe.”¹⁶⁴ In an unsigned article, a great struggle had “commenced between the

¹⁶² “Miscellaneous- Italy- Forget her not in your Prayers and Contributions,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XII, no. 1 (1861): 25.

¹⁶³ “What is Protestantism,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 1, no. 9 (1850): 426.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Italian nation and Popery, her eternal foe- a struggle which must happily end in the overthrow of anti-Christian superstition and despotism.”¹⁶⁵ By bringing “all Papal countries under the influences of the Bibles,” they would “give them the liberty enjoyed in this country.”¹⁶⁶

Although American and British Protestants believed that Roman Catholicism was not compatible with representative government, they had different ideas of what a Protestant Italy might look like. Since 1608 British Protestants had made intermittent attempts to present the Church of England as an alternative to the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶⁷ Many British Protestants did not think that the ‘Italian mind’ would accept a non-denominational church with no structure or hierarchy. For them, the only hope for Protestantism in Italy would be the formation of an Italian Episcopal Church.¹⁶⁸ However, some disagreed and remained hopeful that Italians could become Protestants without replacing one ecclesiastical structure with another.

There was no such disagreement among the leadership of the AFCU. They clearly advocated for “American-style” churches in Italy. For the AFCU, “Americanstyle” churches meant churches with absolutely no ties to a state. The editors of the magazine frequently reminded their readers of “the evils arising from a

¹⁶⁵ “The Reaction in Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 3 (1850): 118-119.

¹⁶⁶ “The Annual Meeting,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 246.

¹⁶⁷ Stefano Villani, “Anglican Liturgy as a Model for the Italian Church? The Italian Translation of the Book of Common Prayer by George Frederick Nott in 1831 and its Re-edition in 1850” *Revue Francaise de Civilisation Britannique* (2017): 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

union of the Church and State.”¹⁶⁹ By allowing complete religious liberty, the United States allowed the “priesthood of Christians” to flourish in “civil and social life.”¹⁷⁰ In 1851, Rev. Fairchild, the Secretary of the Home Department wrote that American congregations should be established in both Paris and Turin. This would give a “real life” example of what “in the estimation of American Christians, a Christian congregation and an Evangelical ministry are.” It is interesting to note the urgency with which Fairchild believed that “American” congregations needed to be established in Europe. That he believes that American Ministers are the appropriate influence for “the recovery of Europe to the Gospel” speaks to the belief that Americans have a unique responsibility to save and renovate old Europe.¹⁷¹

For Evangelical Christians, religious liberty was the ability of every person to read the Bible and arrive at Protestant salvation for himself. A community of individuals who were allowed to spend their time “searching the Scriptures” would also be a community with “freedom of law and of life, of individual action.”¹⁷² The Evangelical belief that the words of the Bible were all anyone needed to arrive at salvation is best demonstrated in the work of colporteurs. This network of missionaries distributed vernacular Bibles all over the world. These colporteurs, and

¹⁶⁹ “Miscellaneous- Italy- Forget her not in your Prayers and Contributions,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XII, no. 1 (1861): 25.

¹⁷⁰ “What is Protestantism,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* 1, no. 9 (1850): 426.

¹⁷¹ “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 244.

¹⁷² “Annual Report- Rev. Dr. Williams’ Sermon,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 163.

those supporting them, had complete confidence that literate people had no need for priests, or other religious leaders, to interpret the Bible for them.

Founded in 1804, the British and Foreign Bibles Society (BFBS) was the most active colporteur network in Italy was the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS).¹⁷³ Following the example of the BFBS, the AFCU used this tactic throughout its mission work in Italy. The AFCU was unwavering in its belief in the power of the written word and “that mighty lever for moving the human mind- the press.”¹⁷⁴ The distribution of Bibles was an especially import tactic in the years before foreign Protestants were first allowed to establish their own churches in Italy.

Although there were no American missionary churches in Italy prior to 1861, American Protestants had been optimistic about the future of Italy since the election of Pope Pius IX in 1846. The last edition of the Foreign Evangelical Society’s annual report reveals much of this excitement, especially about the reign of Pope Pius IX, who they hoped would be “a constitutional king.”¹⁷⁵ Even the most ardently antiCatholic Americans saw Pius IX as an improvement. The leader of the American Native Party in Pennsylvania went so far as to admit “Pius is not a man so narrow and contracted as Gregory.”¹⁷⁶ During the years 1848 to 1850, 882 Americans traveled to

¹⁷³ Raponi, *Religion and Politics in the Risorgimento*, 74-75.

¹⁷⁴ “Questions Answered in Regard to the American and Foreign Christian Union” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 9 (1855): 355.

¹⁷⁵ “France and Belgium,” *Ninth Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co., 1848), 45.

¹⁷⁶ George Barany, “A Note on the Prehistory of American Diplomatic Relations with the Papal States,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 47, no. 4 (1962): 509.

Rome.¹⁷⁷ The diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies of these visitors reveal that they also thought Pius IX would be a significant improvement for the Papal States and Italy. They wrote that he had begun his reign with “benevolence and justice.” In a letter from another traveler, “One cannot see the present Pope without a hope for Italy.”¹⁷⁸

As early as 1847, some travelers began to see that Pius IX was coming to realize that “reforming the pontificate was no child’s play.”¹⁷⁹ However, American enthusiasm for the new Pope continued, at least for the time being. Although there had been American consuls in Rome since 1797, the United States formally established diplomatic relations with the Papal States in 1848.¹⁸² The first Charge d’ Affaires, Jacob L. Martin, died shortly after arriving and Lewis Cass Jr. replaced him. Cass’s official role was exclusively political. The Secretary of State James Buchanan wrote in 1848 in a letter to Cass that his efforts were to be “devoted exclusively to the cultivation of the most friendly civil relations with the papal government, and to the extension of commerce between the two countries.” He continued, “you will carefully avoid even the appearance of interfering in ecclesiastical questions.”¹⁸³ Cass’s office largely dealt with diplomatic issues for American tourists and expatriates, such as passports, visas, and citizen deaths.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ Howard R. Marraro “American Travellers in Rome, 1848-1850,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 29, no. 4 (1944): 470.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 475.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

While his official business in Rome was purely political, Cass opened his home to the Rev. George H. Hastings of the AFCU. Rev. Hastings opened the American Chapel in Rome in 1849 and maintained it there for two years before the Pope ordered it closed. The services were then transferred to the Cass's house, where they were allowed to take place since they were "beneath an American flag, as though

182 The United States and the Papal States had officially recognized one another for much longer. In 1784, the Papal States recognized the United States and opened ports "to the ships of the young republic of America." "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Papal States" Office of the Historian, United States Department of State.

URL: <https://history.state.gov/countries/papal-states>.

183 Ibid.

184 Stephen L. Dyson, *The Last Amateur: The Life of William J. Stillman* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014), 107.

on American ground."¹⁸⁰ The worship services held in the chapel were purely for the benefit of American Protestants traveling in Rome and no one else. This was in no way a mission church attempting to convert Italians.¹⁸¹ However, the AFCU frequently reported on them as though they were a gateway for the conversion of Italy. Although Catholic Italians were not attending the services, the AFCU still

¹⁸⁰ "Supplement to the Magazine," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 4.

¹⁸¹ With the exception of the Kingdom of Sardinia, American Protestant ministers could not hold religious services in Italy for the benefit of their countrymen unless in the house of a diplomatic or consular agent, beneath an American flag, as though on American ground. "Supplement to the Magazine," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 4. "View of Public Affairs," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 5 (1850): 239.

reported on the church as though it were a useful model of true Christianity in the heart of Papal territory.

One notable exception to the rules against Protestant worship was in the Kingdom of Sardinia. Sardinia had been home to a small French-speaking Protestant community, the Waldenses, since the twelfth-century. The Waldenses were the spiritual descendants of a twelfth-century wandering preacher, Peter Waldo. Waldo had been a wealthy merchant who had undergone a conversion experience in which he decided to sell his possessions and take up a life of poverty and preaching. The Catholic clergy allowed Waldo and his followers to continue traveling and preaching. However, since they knew so little about the faith, they needed to ask priests' permission before teaching. As Waldo's followers spread through northern Italy and southern France they mingled with other groups of heretics. Waldo's followers built churches and schools and survived until news of the Reformation reached them in the sixteenth century.¹⁸² They "joined" the Reformation and the Waldenses of Piedmont began receiving attention and support from the Church of Geneva.¹⁸³ For as long as they had lived in the valleys of Piedmont, the Waldenses had been allowed to worship in their small temples but they had not been allowed to start missions outside of the valleys.

However, the entire Protestant world was familiar with a much different origin story of the Waldensian church. In this mythical version, the Waldenses descended

¹⁸² Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 15-17, 21, 232-240.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 264-265.

from ancient Christians who fled persecution in Rome and established churches in the valleys of Piedmont. These Christians maintained their faith untouched by the corruption and superstitions of the Middle Ages. The Waldenses were an enclave of true Christianity in its “primitive simplicity.”¹⁸⁴ Since the seventeenth-century, British Protestants had supported the Waldenses financially and politically, but it was not until the early nineteenth-century that the English obsession with the Waldenses began. In 1814, a priest in the Church of England, Thomas Sims, visited the Waldenses and brought them to the attention of the English intellectuals.¹⁸⁵ Colonel Beckwith, see Figure 4.2, also visited and wrote about the Waldenses.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 145.

¹⁸⁵ Stefano Villani, “Anglican Liturgy as a Model for the Italian Church? The Italian Translation of the Book of Common Prayer by George Frederick Nott in 1831 and its Re-edition in 1850,” *Revue Francaise de Civilisation Britannique* (2017): 6-7.



Figure 4.2 “Our Plate for this Month- Colonel Beckwith”
Another English writer, retired Colonel John Beckwith (1789-1862), also visited the Waldeses and stoked interested in their church.

In 1848, Charles Albert in Piedmont introduced liberal reforms in the Kingdom of Sardinia. He lifted press censorship and allowed for provincial and municipal councils. These reforms were largely headed by educated nobles and professional men. In the new constitution, only two percent of the population was allowed to vote and Senators had lifetime appointments from the king. Although not entirely insurrectionary, Sardinia’s constitution elicited a strong reaction from the AFCU. This constitution’s very existence, in the only region in present day Italy with a native Protestant population, was further validation for the AFCU that religious and civil liberties were intertwined.

Although the Waldenses were only allowed to build churches within the Kingdom of Sardinia itself, the AFCU magazine regularly published articles about their work, especially between 1849 and 1861, when there was little else to report on mission work in Italy.¹⁸⁶ It is fitting for a group that so often conflated civil and religious liberties that they often praised the Waldenses's religion and Sardinia's constitution in the same breath.¹⁸⁷ The good Protestantism of the Waldenses and the good government of Sardinia reinforced one another.¹⁸⁸ In one article, the editors wrote that since the King of Sardinia could only act by consent of his ministers, he was "very much like the Queen of England." Taking their admiration for Sardinia's constitution one step further, the editors wrote that "in some respects, it is an even better constitution than England."¹⁸⁹ American Protestants not only sent financial

¹⁸⁶ "Brief Historical Notice of the Waldenses," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 4 (1850): 145-150.

¹⁸⁷ "View of Public Affairs," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 11 (1851): 364.

¹⁸⁸ In January 1852, magazine states that the Valley of the Waldenses is the wide door opening for the spread of the Gospel to Italy and also that it has "the best constitutional government in all the Continent." See "Foreign Field- Italy," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 1 (1852): 24. The AFCU frequently praised the religious practices of the Waldenses alongside the political practices of the Sardinia, writing for example, that Sardinia was "the only kingdom in the country where there is any real liberty." "State of Things in the Kingdom of Sardinia," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 1 (1853): 1. In another example: "The Kingdom of Sardinia presents a more hopeful appearance to the Christian than any of the countries of Papal Europe." "View of Public Affairs" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 11 (1851): 354.

¹⁸⁹ "General Survey of the Christian World with Reference to Religious Freedom-Present Aspects of the Field- Italy," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XII, no. 1 (1861): 8.

support to the Waldenses in Italy, but also offered assistance to Waldenses living in the United States.¹⁹⁰

Religiously, the Waldenses proved the existence of a coherent strain of nonCatholic Christianity.¹⁹¹ This “remnant church” validated Evangelical claims that their version of Christianity had apostolic origins and was in fact the one true church established by Christ.¹⁹²¹⁹³ The Waldenses were examples of the Christian faith in their lives of “simple-hearted devotion to God.”¹⁹⁴ In Figure 4.3, the Waldenses are depicted in the AFCU magazine at the Battle of Salabertrann in which they led a “heroic defense” of the Valleys. The accompanying article in *The American and Foreign Christian Union* states that “there are few instances on record of greater endurance and courage than that presented by this famous siege.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ George B. Watts, *The Waldenses in the New World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1941).

¹⁹¹ Cameron, *Waldenses*, 15-17.

¹⁹² “The Oldest Church,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 193 (1853): 14-17.

¹⁹⁴ “A Visit to the Waldenses,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 7 (1855): 320.

¹⁹⁵ “Explanation of the Plate,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 9 (1850): 337.



Figure 4.3 The Battle of Salabertrann

For British and American Protestants, God had preserved this ancient church until this moment specifically for the conversion of Italy and, later, the world. This contributed significantly to Protestant optimism since the Waldenses being “discovered” by British Protestants reinforced the Evangelical theory that God was opening a door for them through which they could convert Italy.¹⁹⁶ However, despite these British and American ambitions, the Waldenses did not see themselves as a missionary church or an Italian church, much less the future national church of Italy. Only in 1861, with prodding from English-speaking Protestants, the Waldenses began to learn Italian.

At the same time that Charles Albert was instituting constitutional reforms in

¹⁹⁶ “The Waldenseian Church at Turin,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 64.

Sardinia, Leopold II introduced similar measures in Tuscany. The AFCU closely followed these reforms, though instead of obsessing over a “native” church as they did in the case of Sardinia, the AFCU focused on the supposed “demand” for Bibles in Tuscany. However, in 1851 the constitutional liberties in Tuscany were rescinded and citizens were no longer able to purchase and read Bibles openly. On several occasions, *The American and Foreign Christian Union* narrates stories of people with Bibles being arrested in Tuscany.

No story was more famous than that of the Francesco and Rosina Madiai, a married couple who lived in Florence. The Madiai rented lodgings in Florence to English families visiting the city.¹⁹⁷ Rosa had lived as a lady’s maid in German, Belgian, and English families. Francesco had been a courier and even accompanied visitors when they traveled the rest of the European continent. Over the course of their extended contact with Protestant travelers and families, both husband and wife converted to Protestantism. Because of their association with English travelers and their conversion to Protestantism, they came under state surveillance.¹⁹⁸

In August 1851, husband and wife were arrested after the police searched their house for copies of the Bible and other proscribed books. They were both convicted of attempting to propagate the Protestant faith, an “indirectly political” illegal act. From her prison cell, Rosa sent a packet of letters via a friend to Sir Henry J. Cumming, in whose household she had lived for seventeen years as a lady’s maid.

¹⁹⁷ Anne Lohrli “The Madiai: A Forgotten Chapter of Church History,” *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 1 (1989): 31.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

Cumming then sent these letters to Viscount Palmerston. These letters received immediate attention at the Foreign Office. Palmerston wrote that Rosa had lived so many years in England, under the service of British subjects, that the British government should take a special interest in her case. Palmerston's appeal was successful. The British government and the British people took a great interest in the Madiai. Many British Evangelicals resolved to "aid and comfort their friends."¹⁹⁹

Historian Anne Lohrli has argued that the English interest in the Madiai case was a result of bitter anti-Catholicism and indignation at the arrest and imprisonment of their coreligionists. Additionally, English interest in the case was linked to their hopes for a free and unified Italy.²⁰⁰ Articles about the Madiai in the AFCU magazine and the published work about them demonstrate that American Protestants were interested in the Madiai case for the same reasons as their British counterparts. Like their British counterparts, American Protestants held meetings and asked government leadership to use its influence to persuade Tuscany to release the Madiai.²⁰¹ In 1853, the AFCU published a book called *The Story of the Madiai* which touched upon many of the themes Lohrli explored in British publications.²⁰² Stories such as the tale of

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 31- 35.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 30.

²⁰¹ "Great Public Meeting on Behalf of Religious Liberty," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 2 (1852): 74-75. "Rev. Dr. Bethune's Address," "Results of the Great Meeting in Metropolitan Hall" and "Public Meeting at Newark, NJ," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 3 (1853): 99, 104, 105.

²⁰² *The Story of the Madiai; with Notices of Efforts Made, in Europe and America in Their Behalf*, ed. Secretaries of the American and Foreign Christian Union (New York: Office of the Society, 1853).

the Madias were common between 1848 and 1861. Since Protestants had no mission churches of their own on which to report, the AFCU instead published every detail of the movements of the Waldenses and the crackdown on religious and civil liberties in Tuscany. However, in 1861, the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy meant that the AFCU was able to establish mission churches in Italy. This was an important year for the American Protestant imagination since they saw the “thrones of despotism in the old world are tottering and tumbling down.”²⁰³

Unfortunately for the AFCU, the opening of Italy as a mission field coincided with the outbreak of the American Civil War. The war, as well as competition from other missionary societies, decreased the amount of financial support available to the AFCU. Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal churches started independent missions to convert American Catholics. In response to competition for funding from other domestic missionaries, the AFCU drastically reduced its work in the United States. In 1860, the AFCU employed 73 missionaries working in 23 different American states. In 1861, that number dropped to just 23 missionaries in the entire country. This decrease in funding also led the AFCU to close several of its smaller foreign missionary outposts. They abandoned missions to Sweden, Haiti, Ireland, and Brazil entirely.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ “General Survey of the Christian World with Reference to Religious Freedom- Present Aspects of the Field” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XVII, no. 1 (1861): 1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Although the AFCU significantly downsized its missions elsewhere, they remained committed to ushering in the conversion of Italy. They saw themselves in a struggle against tyranny around the world, in Rome and in the American South. The temporal power of the Pope and the Confederate government were both enemies of liberty. Both forms of government were opponents of liberty and freedom. In 1857, the AFCU published an article called “The Popes and African Slavery” in which they wrote that the “Romish Antichurch” was the “mother” of the system of slavery.²⁰⁵ According to the article, “the origin of negro slavery among Europeans and their descendants in America” could be traced to the bulls of five of the Popes of the Romish Antichurch, who tyrannized over the consciences of men in the fifteenth century. For the AFCU, Romanism was identified with oppression “wherever it is known.”²⁰⁶ During the Civil War, this meant the American South.

The language the AFCU used to describe the Catholic Church equated it with a lack of freedom, writing for example, that once Italian Catholics “become enlightened” they will “emancipate themselves from the bondage of the priests.”²⁰⁷ For the leaders of the AFCU, Protestantism was associated with political freedom and with freedom of conscience. Each Protestant was imbued with a spirit of inquiry and empowered to read the Gospel for himself.²⁰⁸ Even though the AFCU saw the whole

²⁰⁵ “The Popes and African Slavery” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII, no. 7 (1857): 213.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

²⁰⁷ “Fifteenth Annual Report- Florence,” *The Christian World* XV, no. 6 (1864): 182.

²⁰⁸ “Encouragement to Labor for the Conversion of Romanists,” *The American Protestant Magazine* V, no. 1 (1849): 7.

world as a struggle between liberty and tyranny, the conversion of Italy always remained the most important front of this war. For the AFCU, the “greatest and most pressing question for Protestantism” was the conversion of Italy, even in 1861.²⁰⁹ By 1865, when the Civil War had ended, the AFCU wrote that the whole world could now focus on the most important issue of the day: the future of Italy.

²⁰⁹ “Evangelization of Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XII, no. 2 (1861): 37.

Chapter 5: “The Recovery of Europe to the Gospel:” Missions in Italy

From the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance, the AFCU inherited both their admiration of the Waldenses and their understanding of the world as centers of spiritual light spreading outward from these centers to their peripheries. From 1849 until 1861, the Waldenses in Piedmont were the only such religious “center” in Italy. Despite the fact that the Waldenses spoke French, during the “decade of preparation,” British and American Protestants became obsessed with the

idea of using Piedmont as a launching pad for their missions to the rest of Italy. As previously discussed, American and British Protestants saw Piedmont as the center of Italian cultural and political liberalism.²¹⁰ Since the constitution in Piedmont allowed for the circulation of non-Catholic religious literature, and Piedmont was already home to a native Protestant Church, the AFCU saw it as the open door through which Protestants would convert Italy. After the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, the AFCU turned its attention to creating other such spiritual centers in Rome and Florence.

The AFCU's overall strategy for converting Italy was to start from cities and radiate outward. The three main tactics the AFCU used were sending aid to previously established Protestant churches, providing Italians with vernacular Bibles, and teaching illiterate people to read. The first two tactics were already being used by the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance by the time of the merger. Since they were not allowed to establish their own missionary churches and schools for so long, it makes sense that the two tactics they were able to employ in Italy were aiding the few Protestants already settled there and publishing religious books in the Italian language. In a statement typical of this sentiment, the directors of the Foreign Evangelical Society wrote that in Italy "nothing scarcely can be done, save the publication and circulation of religious books."²¹¹

²¹⁰ Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2009), 65.

²¹¹ "Switzerland and Italy" *Third Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1842): 37.

While the Foreign Evangelical Society (1839-1849) and the Christian Alliance (1842-1849) reported that they sent missionaries to Italy, they could not name who they were sending, or discuss the details of their work. For example, the Foreign Evangelical Society wrote that in 1843 “a colporteur” had gone “into a city in Italy” and was arrested for having vernacular Bibles.²¹² However, the editors spun this unsuccessful story in a positive light, ending the story by stating that “both of the two magistrates” who examined the colporteur asked him for Bibles and “paid cheerfully the full value of the books, and rejoiced in the kind Providence which this put them in the way of possessing the Scriptures.”²¹³

Even when the Foreign Evangelical Society could not give such specific news of missionary successes in Italy, the editors often reassured readers that “if it were proper to remove the caution with which it is necessary to speak” they would be able to “state facts which would surprise and delight those who pray and wait for the salvation of that land.”²¹⁸ The leaders of the Foreign Evangelical Society believed that Italy was moving “toward progress- especially in the matter of religious liberty” with the same “spirit of restlessness and revolution everywhere so prevalent in Europe.”²¹⁹ In their relentless optimism they wrote that if it were not “for the Austrian bayonet” Italy would convert to Evangelical Protestantism “at once.”²²⁰ The writings of the AFCU contain similarly groundless optimism. It was obvious to the AFCU that Popery was “in its death struggle in Italy.”²²¹ The leaders of the AFCU

²¹² “Report- France and Belgium,” *Fourth Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1843), 30.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

speculated that if the church “did not make it a punishable offense, the whole people would become Protestant.”²²² Italians could not wait to be free from the “baptized Paganism” that was crushing “men’s souls to the earth.”²²³

Another theme of these articles is that Italians “have to be kept in connection with the Pope and the Romish system of religion, by French and Austrian soldiers

218 “Report- Italy,” *Seventh Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: Leavitt, Trow and Co., 1846), 41.

219 “Annual Meeting,” *Seventh Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: Leavitt, Trow and Co., 1846), 7.

220 Ibid.

221 “Nunneries in Piedmont- A Good Example” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 10 (1851): 317.

222 “The Italians Papists only Through Fear,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IX, no. 1 (1858): 30. In another example of this, a missionary (writing as simply “C.S.”) claimed that the people of Rome were so unhappy with the Catholic Church that they must all be on the verge of converting to Protestantism. “Foreign Field- Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 10 (1850): 469. “Nunneries in Piedmont- A Good Example” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 10 (1851): 318.

223 “Foreign Field- Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 10 (1850): 469.

quartered upon them!”²¹⁴ Every Italian family was mourning for some member in prison or exile, under the “terrors of Popery, backed up by French tyranny.”²¹⁵ In a

²¹⁴ The article sarcastically exclaims “an excellent religion that! And an ecclesiastics surely much loved!!” “Population of Rome,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union*, IX, no. 5 (1858): 137.

²¹⁵ “Foreign Field- Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 10 (1850): 469.

magazine article called “The Sorrows of the Pope,” the editors wrote that the Pope’s “stay in Rome is made safe only by the presence of the French regiments; and these are at least as much his gaolers as his guardians.”²¹⁶

The AFCU’s frequent claims that “many thousands” of Italians were “in reality Protestants” demonstrates a lack of understanding on the part of the missionaries regarding the actual concerns and loyalties of the Italian people.²¹⁷

While many Italians did critique some of the clergy, these criticisms were coming from Catholics who wanted to make changes to their Church, but had no intention of leaving it. Especially during a time of increased Marian devotion, the AFCU greatly underestimated the attachment of many Italians to their Catholic faith.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ “The Sorrows of the Pope” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 10 (1855): 474.

²¹⁷ “Discipline of the Catholic Church in Rome,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VIII, no. 6 (1857): 201. For example writing that “many thousands” are “in reality Protestants” when they were, in reality, Catholics with disaffection toward some Papal actions and some of the clergy. “Annual Report,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VII, no. 6 (1856): 175.

²¹⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 817-827.

One reason for this misinterpretation was that in other countries where Protestant missionaries were trying to bring about mass conversion, India for example, missionaries had established hospitals, schools, orphanages and churches for decades. They were offering Christianity alongside useful services. Additionally, many missionaries had spent nearly a lifetime working in one foreign field. Most of them dedicated huge amounts of time to learning different local dialects and forming relationships with the people they were ministering to. This sort of relationship did not exist between British and American missionaries and Italian Catholics. Many of the British missionaries in India could write about the nuances of several variations of Hinduism, and spent years studying languages, and tried to understand how to best lead Indians to the saving love of Christ. American missionaries in Italy, on the other hand, repeatedly made the same few observations about the Italians around them: that they were ignorant and superstitious, and that they would be cured of this once released from under Papal tyranny.

Another theme that emerges from the writings of the Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance is the special reverence for the Waldensian Church. As previously discussed, many American and British Protestants saw the Waldenses as the open door through which God would bring about the conversion of Italy.²¹⁹ The Foreign Evangelical Society and the Christian Alliance were no different. When one member of the Foreign Evangelical Society suggested that the

²¹⁹ “The Waldensian Churches; Letter from the Rev. Dr. Revel.” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 81. In another example, “Probably no other body of Christians of the same size in the world is charged with so important a mission as the Waldensian Synod. The Savior seems to be about to open

Waldenses should move to West Virginia, the committee rejected the idea. The leaders believed that the Waldensian church belonged in Italy to be “the pure light which had been so long burning in that benighted region” and “should yet be carried forth to illuminate all Italy.”²²⁰

From its founding, the AFCU was similarly committed to sending aid to the Waldenses.²²¹ The AFCU appealed for money for the Waldenses by reminding their readers that the “door is open in all directions in the Kingdom of Sardinia,” but that their poverty was great.²²² The AFCU saw Sardinia as the launching pad for their attempts at converting the rest of Italy. They were able to move to establish the first Protestant “mission churches” in Italy. The construction of an Evangelical church at Turin on 1851 was the first movement outward.²²³ This fit squarely within American

Italy to their efforts.” “The Synod of the Waldensian Church” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 9 (1854): 418.

²²⁰ “Annual Meeting,” *Eighth Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: Leavitt, Trow and Co., 1847), 7.

²²¹ “The Waldensian Church- Rev. Dr. Revel’s Mission,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IV, no. 9 (1853): 413.

²²² “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 12 (1855): 555.

²²³ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 192.

Protestant ideas that the Waldenses had a special role in salvation history. They would be the “source of light and salvation to all Italy.”²²⁴ The Waldenses were leading the charge into an important mission field.²²⁵

Between 1848 and 1861, the AFCU Corresponding Secretaries narrated the developments in Piedmont for their readership. The editors reported on the Waldenses’ growing school enrollment and church membership, often including the numbers of new students, teaching faculty, libraries opened, and church members.²²⁶ These detailed reports demonstrate just how carefully American Protestants were following the Waldenses’ progress. These reports also allowed the AFCU to ask for very specific monetary donations. For example, one article stated that the Waldenses needed \$16,000 for a project, but that the AFCU had only sent \$400 so far.²²⁷ Through the 1850s, the editors also frequently reminded readers that America was in a time of “abundant prosperity” and that it should not be difficult to find the money to

²²⁴ “Another Letter from the Waldenses,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* I, no. 9 (1850): 394.

²²⁵ Those “world-renowned Christians” continued to prosecute the work of evangelization in their own territory and beyond it. “Foreign Field- Piedmont,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* X, no. 6 (1859): 208. In autumn 1859, Signor Ferretti visited Italy and reported back to the AFCU that he had witnessed “a wonderful scene, an awakening” and that “better days for that long-afflicted land” were “drawing nigh.” “Foreign Field- Italy,” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* X, no. 7 (1859): 238.

²²⁶ In one of many examples, a magazine article reported that the Waldenses had built schools for 4,718 scholars and a popular library in each parish. The magazine also reported that they were building a new church in La Tour. “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 192-193.

²²⁷ “Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 193-194.

finish these churches.²²⁸ They contrasted American prosperity with the “great” poverty of the Waldenses.²²⁹

American Evangelicals followed along from home as the Waldenses developed religious infrastructure in their “chief place” of La Tour and then radiated outward into surrounding towns.²³⁰ The Waldensian “sphere of operation”²³¹ later became the model for how the AFCU conducted missionary operations throughout Italy. The construction of an Evangelical church at Turin was the first such movement outward.²³²

The purpose of these spiritual centers was two-fold. Not only would churches send missionaries out from these centers, the AFCU also hoped that converts and exiles from other parts of Italy would congregate in these areas, adding to the existing Protestant communities.²³³ On May 30, 1851, Captain John Pakenham of the

²²⁸ “The Waldensian Churches; Letter from the Rev. Dr. Revel” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 81.

²²⁹ “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 12 (1855): 555.

²³⁰ “The Waldensian Church at Turin” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 65.

²³¹ “Piedmont- The Waldenses” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* XI, no. 6 (1860): 196.

²³² “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 192.

²³³ As soon as the Waldenses opened the chapel in Turin, the AFCU reported that many exiles from all parts of Italy attended services there. “Foreign Field- Piedmont” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 7 (1854): 336.

English Navy wrote in a letter to the AFCU that Rev. Revel preached in Turin and attracted “a considerable influx of strangers.”²³⁴ In the same letter, Pakenham wrote that there was a moment of solemnity and of “swelling thanksgiving to God” when Revel announced that Turin now contained a Vaudois parish with the government’s consent.²³⁵

Readers of *The American and Foreign Christian Union* followed along as the Waldenses raised funds and then built the Protestant church at Turin.²³⁶ In addition to viewing Turin as the first stop on the Waldensian missionary enterprise, the AFCU also saw Turin as a strategically important European city.²³⁷ The AFCU mentioned Turin in the same breath as Paris, both as centers from which the Evangelical message could spread.²³⁸ Of course, Turin was also important as a place where political refugees from the rest of Italy could publish freely and debate public issues. After 1851 when Tuscany rescinded its promises of political freedoms, Turin became the center of Italian political culture.²³⁹

²³⁴ “Synod of the Vaudois” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 9 (1851): 286.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Once they completed building the church, a letter from Rev. Revel reassured them that the new church bore no resemblances at all to splendid “Romish” churches. “Foreign Field- Waldenses” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 3 (1854): 129.

²³⁷ “The New Waldensian Church at Turin” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 64.

²³⁸ “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 244.

²³⁹ Clark, *Italian Risorgimento*, 65.

In 1851 Rev. E. R. Fairchild, the Secretary of the Home Department, wrote that American congregations should be established in both Paris and Turin in order to give a “real life” example of what “in the estimation of American Christians, a Christian congregation and an Evangelical ministry are.”²⁴⁰ It is interesting to note the urgency with which Fairchild believed that “American” congregations needed to be established in Europe.²⁴¹ That he believes that American Ministers are the appropriate influence for “the recovery of Europe to the Gospel”²⁴² speaks to the belief that Americans have a unique responsibility to save and renovate old Europe.

From Turin, the Waldensian church spread to Nice (then part of Sardinia), taking control of a previously-built chapel there.²⁴³ They also established missionary stations in Genoa.²⁴⁴ By 1855, they had spread to Pignerol, Casale, and Favale. To the AFCU, the entire Kingdom of Sardinia was “white unto harvest.”²⁴⁵ In 1858, the AFCU reported that there were four distinct churches now operating out of Genoa:

²⁴⁰ “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 244.

²⁴¹ In this article expresses concern that “a wrong judgment is formed to a great extent among the people of Europe, as to American freedom and the cause of it.” “Dr. Baird’s Visit to Europe” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 245.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 9 (1854): 438.

²⁴⁴ “An Important Letter from the Waldenses” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 3 (1855): 102.

²⁴⁵ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 6 (1855): 289.

the Waldensian church, the Church of England, the Free Church of Scotland, and the Italian Congregation (Free Italian Church).²⁴⁶ The Free Church of Scotland was an especially active missionary church. As Presbyterians, they saw themselves as a potential model for what a non-Catholic Christian church could look like in Italy.

Although the Waldenses were especially important before American missionaries were allowed in Italy, they remained a vital asset even into the 1860s. The Rev. Francis Colton's unpublished letters from the late 1860s demonstrate an ongoing desire to work with the Waldensian church. For example, he often wrote that Americans should assume the expenses of Waldensian missions, while the Waldensians furnish the laborers.²⁴⁷ In Colton's opinion, the Scotch, English and American Christians should be responsible for financing the missions, because the Waldensians would always be glad to supply "fitting men for different departments of work."²⁴⁸ He described the Waldenses as "the most efficient and practical agent of Christian effort among Italians."²⁴⁹ He wrote that American, Scotch, and English Christians should work "under the direct supervision of the Waldensian Church."

One of his reasons for recommending that property would be better in the possession of the Waldensian Church was that "this is the only church, beside the Catholic, acknowledged by the Italian government." The other was that "a native

²⁴⁶ "Foreign Field- Italy" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IX, no. 3 (1858): 79.

²⁴⁷ Francis Colton to J. Glentworth Butler, 28 July 1868, Records of the American and Foreign Christian Union, MC 20, New York University Archives.

²⁴⁸ Colton to Butler, 23 September 1868, New York University Archives.

²⁴⁹ Colton to Butler, 25 October 1868, New York University Archives.

committee here on the ground can know the peculiar wants of a native mission.” In some descriptions of this “native mission” he seems to be demonstrating some degree of Orientalism in understanding Italian people. For example, he wrote of the “inherent jealousy and suspiciousness in the Italian character.” However, even though he uses words like “inherent,” he also describes Italians as “these poor blind children of a false religion” who were perfectly capable of seeing “the light.”²⁵⁰ In his unpublished correspondence with the AFCU, Colton describes his monetary needs with the same sense of urgency. In one letter, he even assures the Board that the annuity to be paid for the duration of an older man’s life will not amount to much, since it “cannot last long.”²⁵¹ He frequently reassured the Board that “Scotch friends would render assistance.”²⁵²

Even before 1861, Rome was symbolically and strategically the most important city, as we have already discussed in Chapter 4. If Rome converted not only would it become the second source of light radiating outward from a “religious center,” it would also be symbolic of the fall of the Roman Church. From 1851 until 1859, the AFCU magazine reported regularly on the American Chapel at Rome.²⁵³ The Rev. George Hastings opened the Chapel in the winter of 1849-1850 for the

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Colton to Butler, 28 July 1868, New York University Archives.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ “In Italy, with the exception of the Kingdom of Sardinia, no religious service could be held by an American Protestant minister for the benefit of his countrymen, unless in the house of a diplomatic or consular agent, beneath the American flag, and as if it were on American ground. This is true even in Rome, the

benefit of American Evangelicals. The AFCU believed itself uniquely suited to this mission since it catered to Evangelicals from every denomination.²⁶⁴

In February of 1851, the AFCU magazine reported that the government had closed this chapel. In a letter from Rev. Hastings to Rev. Robert Baird, Hastings blamed this on Catholic priests who were worried that the chapel was a Presbyterian Mission to Rome. Hastings reassured the priests that the Chapel was not part of a missionary sect, but a union of denominations.²⁶⁵ Nearly a year later, in January 1852, the magazine reported that the stories that the chapel had been closed were false and that Rev. Hastings had been preaching all winter.²⁶⁶ This series of articles demonstrates the unreliable nature of the intelligence coming out of Italy. If the AFCU headquarters in New York City had incorrect information about the only American Chapel in Italy, it is unsurprising that so many of their insights into Italian spirituality were so far off. Given the AFCU's spotty intelligence of their own work

Capital of the Christian World, as some vauntingly claim.” “Supplement to the Magazine” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* V, no. 2 (1854): 4.

264 “The American Chapel at Rome” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 2 (1851): 59. In 1852, the AFCU magazine reported that American, English, and Scottish Christians all attended services there during the winter. “The American Chapel at Rome” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 4 (1852): 119.

265 “Letter from Rev. Hastings to Rev. Baird” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 2 (1851): 60.

266 “Rome- the American Chapel” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 1 (1852): 24.

in Italy, it is reasonable that their insights into the Pope's personal sorrows and conversations with Cardinals were so far off.²⁵⁴

In AFCU published an unsigned letter from "an American who spent the winter in Rome" dated May 20, 1851.²⁵⁵ This American reported that "the sympathies of all Protestants have been enlisted in the maintenance of our simple public service."²⁵⁶ This statement says more about how Protestant missionaries saw themselves than it does about their actual behavior. A common trope Catholics employed against Protestants was that their religion was disunion, whereas the Catholic Church could boast of true unity. The Evangelical missionaries frequently wrote that while Rome might be the visible church, Protestantism was the invisible "one catholic church of Christ."²⁵⁷ However, though they frequently boasted in writing that there were no divisions within Evangelical Christianity, they did occasionally fail to act like it. They ran into conflicts with the American Episcopalian missionaries and declined to work together on the chapel.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ "The Sorrows of the Pope" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VI, no. 10 (1855): 474. In another example, the AFCU wrote that the Papacy lived in continual fear of popular outbreak. "Movements of Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* III, no. 2 (1852): 155.

²⁵⁵ "American Chapel at Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 7 (1851): 210.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ "The Annual Report" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 163.

²⁵⁸ "Letter from Rome" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 5 (1851): 182.

The third most important location for the AFCU imagination was Florence. As previously discussed, from 1848 until 1851, people in Tuscany enjoyed some newfound liberties, such as being able to have Bibles and non-Catholic religious literature. The AFCU did not name missionaries, but claimed to have two “laborers in north Italy.”²⁵⁹ Even after the constitution of 1848 was rescinded in 1851, the AFCU continued to publish letters from unnamed writers stating that there were many people with “interest in the Scriptures in Florence.”²⁶⁰ In 1851, an unsigned letter written to Rev. Baird mentioned six men who were persecuted in Florence for reading the Bible. The writer described a renewed interest in the Gospel resulting from the recent persecutions. However, he believed that because of the “peculiar timidity of the Italian character,” he did not expect results such as had been seen in Germany and England.²⁶¹ A theme of the AFCU’s reporting on Florence was this supposed “interest” in Scripture.

Clement William Welsh has speculated that Americans may have been holding church services in private homes in Florence when they started moving there in the 1850s. However, it was not until 1867 that the American Church in Florence officially opened its doors.²⁶² In 1856, the AFCU reported that in Florence there was

²⁵⁹ “Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 6 (1851): 192.

²⁶⁰ “Movements of Rome” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 11 (1851): 364.

²⁶¹ “How Things Go At Florence” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 8 (1851): 247.

²⁶² Clement William Welsh, *St. James Church: A History of the American Church in Florence* (Florence: Xenion, 2008), 11-12.

an Evangelical church of 125 members and “thousands” of other citizens were reading Scriptures “with increasing earnestness.”²⁶³ The AFCU claimed that thousands were reading Scriptures only seven months after it wrote that they had not even been able to provide a young minister to Florence to “visit the brethren from house to house, and break to them the bread of life.”²⁶⁴ This makes the statement, that “many thousands of its inhabitants are in reality Protestants”²⁶⁵ seem like it may be an exaggeration.

In addition to seeing spirituality as something that radiates from religious centers outward, the AFCU also believed that these centers were important for the missionary command structure. They believed that the most efficient way to organize missionaries would be to have centers responsible for the conversion of an area. Florence was one such center. The Rev. E. Edwin Hall was the first Secretary of the Committee at Florence.²⁶⁶ The Rev. Hall had proven himself as a leader during his time in Rome and the AFCU leadership felt confident that he knew both “the Italian language and the Italian people.”²⁶⁷ Under him, Florence was to grow into the center of the proposed Italian missions.²⁶⁸ His duties in Florence were to direct the AFCU’s

²⁶³ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VII, no. 10 (1856): 317.

²⁶⁴ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VII, no. 3 (1856): 81.

²⁶⁵ “Annual Report” *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VII, no. 6 (1856): 175.

²⁶⁶ “The Evangelization of Italy,” *The Christian World* XII, no. 4 (1861): 97.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ “Italy,” *The Christian World* XII, no. 3 (1861): 72.

efforts to employ Italian men as colporteurs, evangelists, and ordained ministers.²⁶⁹

He would be able to send them to reputable seminary, since, in the year before he arrived Rev. Revel had moved the Waldenses Theological Seminary from La Tour to Florence.²⁷⁰

This committee was composed of Italians, Americans, and English people. The AFCU planned to carry out all of its operations in Italy through it. They imagined it as the very heart of Italy, responsible for receiving funds, finding and employing missionaries, and keeping supporters outside of Italy informed. The Directors of the AFCU believed that what was giving missionary work its effectiveness in France, Belgium, and Switzerland was such committees within the mission field itself.²⁷¹

When Rev. Hall and his family arrived in Florence, he wrote back to the AFCU that he found Italy “wonderfully open to the glorious Gospel of our Lord.”²⁷² Thomas De Witt, President of the AFCU, wrote that the “door is now open to spread the Scriptures in all Italy” and who better to carry out this work than Americans? According to De Witt, American’s “brethren” in England were already responsible for more than two hundred millions of the human race, and French and Swiss Protestants

²⁶⁹ “Evangelization of Italy,” 97. “Foreign Field- The Society’s Agent at Florence,” *The Christian World* XIII, no. 6 (1862): 184.

²⁷⁰ “Foreign Field: Italy,” *The Christian World* XII, no. 1 (1861): 11.

²⁷¹ “The Evangelization of Italy,” 97.

²⁷² “The Italian Mission,” *The Christian World* XII, no. 9 (1861): 242.

were busy addressing their own burdens. American Churches then “ought to bear a great part in this work.”²⁷³

While in Florence, Rev. Hall served as the director of all the missionary efforts in Central and Southern Italy, while another missionary, Mr. William Clark, superintended efforts in Northern Italy from his station in Milan.²⁷⁴ Mr. Clark’s letters often included updates about small surrounding towns also, not just his primary assignment of Milan. The themes that emerge from these updates are that there are Evangelical converts living in these towns, but that they do not have the resources to start their own churches or send their own young men to seminaries. Mr. Clark’s also emphasized the fact that many people are purchasing Bibles and Protestant tracts. For the AFCU, this demonstrates that the Italian people value this literature and are not simply taking it because it is being given away. In January of 1865, Mr. Clark wrote that there was a great outdoor fair and they had set up a table for selling Bibles and other religious books, but that so many people had been buying them, that the priests became enraged and convinced authorities to shut them down.²⁷⁵

Mr. Clark’s letters back to the AFCU in NYC are full of the same optimism naively expressed by the other missionaries. He often sends stories about Evangelicals living in small towns wishing they could have their own school and church for instruction. He also views political events in Italy as “clear indications of

²⁷³ “The Evangelization of Italy,” 98-99.

²⁷⁴ “Annual Report- Italy,” *The Christian World* XVI, no. 6 (1865): 174.

²⁷⁵ “Foreign Field- Italy” *The Christian World* XVI, no. 4 (1865): 112.

God's favoring providence."²⁷⁶ He believed that the events transpiring were the "opening of our faith" for the "full blessings to Italy and Southern Europe." Like many other missionaries, he thought the "events now transpiring cannot be studied too much by the Church."²⁷⁷ His writings also associated the conversion of Italy to Protestantism with an improvement in society.²⁷⁸

Of course, Bibles and religious tracts are useless to people who cannot read them. The AFCU missionaries believed that the biggest obstacle to conversion anywhere in the world was illiteracy. According to the AFCU, the reason this was such a large problem in Italy was that the Catholic Church was actively hostile to learning. In 1858, the editors wrote that official reports from the Sardinian Government had confirmed their suspicions: in places where there were greater numbers of priests, there was greater illiteracy.²⁷⁹ The AFCU believed that once Italians were able to read the Bible for themselves, they would see the errors of Roman Catholicism. Another benefit of emphasizing the Bible was that they were able to simply call themselves "Bible-Christians" and not risk alienating those who were already prejudiced against Luther, Calvin, and Protestants.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ "The Foreign Field- Italy," *The Christian World* XVI, no. 1 (1865): 20.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ "The Foreign Field- Italy," 113.

²⁷⁹ "Foreign Field- Sardinia" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* IX, no. 12 (1858): 392.

²⁸⁰ "Annual Report- Milan" *The American and Foreign Christian Union* VII, no. 6 (1856): 176.

This idea of Italians being put off by foreign denominations is a recurring theme, especially when discussing the Free Italian Church. The AFCU first started reporting on the Free Italian Church in 1862.²⁸¹ The AFCU emphasized that these churches were “independent in the strictest sense” and only “sprung up here and there in the land.” They often lamented the fact that some Italians looked at the churches with suspicion, since they had “no conception of a church except in connection with some grand organization, like Episcopacy or Presbyterianism.” In nearly every report on the Free Italian Church, the AFCU emphasized that they had no book but the Bible and were “controlled by no superior earthly power.”²⁸² The Free Italian Church quickly became the preferred Italian church for American Protestants to support. Whereas the Waldenses were loyal to the Savoy monarchy, the Free Italian Church had no ties to a state. For the AFCU in particular, the crowning achievement of American Protestantism was that it had no ties to the government. The Free Italian Church seemed to offer a path toward “American-style” churches in Italy.

Articles and letters in the magazine often describe the leaders of the Free Italian Church as well-versed in the Bible itself, but lacking in formal education. Often, the magazine made appeals for funding to trade leaders of the Free Italian Church. Mr. Clark, the head AFCU missionary in Milan was the loudest voice advocating for the Free Italian Church. He describes them in nearly every letter,

²⁸¹ “The Foreign Field- Italy” *The Christian World* XIII no. 5 (1862): 145.

²⁸² “Letter from Italy” *The Christian World* XVII, no. 6 (1866): 191.

narrating their growing numbers of ministers, attendees, and people participating in the Lord's Supper at each service.²⁸³

Mr. Clark wrote a letter to the AFCU dated May 24, 1865 in which he described the creation of "The Free Christian Church in Italy."²⁸⁴ He wrote that the delegates from over thirty churches met and decided to form a bond of union which would leave each individual church with its independence, but adopt a "uniform and evangelical confession of faith." He wrote that should prove to Christians in America that their "dear brethren in Italy are worthy of their confidence, sympathy, and aid."²⁸⁵ In 1864, he encouraged members of the AFCU to consider assisting the Free Italian Church in opening "an institution for training teachers and preachers."²⁸⁶ Mr. Clark also wrote that this would be the most effective means for converting Italy because the church had "grown up spontaneously here in Italy; hence it is eminently Italian, and in accord with the genius of the people." He wrote that Italians had a peculiar sensitiveness to receiving a foreign religious system or denomination. "... it is not only folly but injurious to the work of evangelization to attempt to bring into Italy any system distinctively denominational."²⁸⁷ As Congregationalists, the Free Italian Church seemed the best hope of converting Italy to this vision. In the same

²⁸³ "Italy- Milan," *The Christian World* XV, no. 5 (1864): 149.

²⁸⁴ "The Foreign Field- Italy," *The Christian World* XVI, no. 9 (1865): 246.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ "News of the Churches- Italy" *The Christian World* XV, no. 3 (1864): 93.

²⁸⁷ "The Foreign Field- Italy," 246

letter: “Help the Italians, and leave them free to adopt their own religious forms, is the only way of success.”²⁸⁸ “Men must be raised up on the ground to carry forward this great religious reform.”²⁸⁹

Even after he retired to Guilford Connecticut, the Rev. Hall remained active in the AFCU. From his home in Guilford, he wrote often to the headquarters in NYC. He expressed deep regret when he was unable to travel to the AFCU meetings, even telling Rev. Scudder to replace him if he felt his position should be filled by someone who was able to attend all the meetings.²⁹⁰ He remained involved in the AFCU’s work in Italy, recommending to the Committee that they pay a man of ability, whose “services will be very useful in the work in Italy” for the work he has already been doing “in the valley.”²⁹¹ Hall also continued translating books that had been “instrumental in leading many learned priests out of the church of Rome.”²⁹² In 1872, he wrote that the names of places and persons given in an account of the work in Italy in the AFCU magazine had “revived anew the interest and affection I had for them

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ “News of the Churches- Italy,” 93.

²⁹⁰ E. Edwin Hall to Joseph Scudder, 10 November 1867, New York University Archives.

²⁹¹ E. Edwin Hall to A. E. Campbell, 28 January 1867, New York University Archives.

²⁹² E. Edwin Hall to Joseph Scudder, 29 September 1868, New York University Archives.

years ago.”²⁹³ He regretted to hear that missions in Italy had been “neglected, or given up to strangers.”²⁹⁴

²⁹³ E. Edwin Hall to S.W., 15 March 1872, New York University Archives.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The AFCU was a tremendously ambitious organization. Their stated goal was nothing short of ridding the world of Roman Catholicism. Not only did they believe that they would be able to achieve this goal; they thought they would achieve it quickly. The revolutions of 1848, the possibility of a Roman Republic, and the threat to the temporal power of the Pope all led the AFCU to believe they could be successful in bringing about a “second Reformation.” Their relentless optimism blinded them to the relative indifference many Italians felt toward the Catholic Church. In their hopefulness, they saw every Italian critique of the Church or its priests as a sign that Italy was full of “secret Protestants” who would convert as soon as there was any religious liberty in the country.

This was not at all the case. For all of their ambition and optimism, the AFCU was a hugely unsuccessful organization. They converted virtually no one. However, the work of the AFCU does deserve a place in the history of American religion. While they did not succeed at converting anyone, their writings were an important part of American Protestants forming their own identity during the mid-nineteenth century. Every single month, the AFCU published a magazine with editorials, history lessons, and letters from missionaries around the world. For Americans who might never travel to Catholic Europe, these letters and historical sketches presented them with the Catholic other, against which they were forming their own identity. The wide readership of the AFCU publications indicates that the anti-Catholic sentiment so prominent in their writings was a larger part of American

Protestant identity than previously thought. Clearly, their message resonated with many American Protestants.

The writings of the AFCU are also important because they represent a shift in American missionary identity. Americans have always thought of themselves as both a city upon a hill renovating Europe by their example and an errand into the wilderness physically delivering the Gospel to the North American continent. However, the mid-nineteenth-century missions to Catholic Europe represent a shift in this outlook. For the first time, Europe became the wilderness into which missionaries would have to venture.

The AFCU publications demonstrate the extent to which American Protestants in the mid-nineteenth-century felt they had to defend their religious liberties against an invading force. Not only did Americans believe that they needed to prevent Roman Catholics from gaining influence in the United States. They took this idea a step further in deciding they needed to defend American liberties overseas. Ensuring the political future of another country moved in a particular direction somehow became essential to protecting American's freedoms.

It is interesting that during the American Civil War, an organization like the AFCU would turn its attention to Europe instead of focusing on problems within the United States. However, the leaders of the AFCU saw no contradiction in exporting American religion and democracy during this tumultuous time for our own democracy. For them, the entire world was engaged in a struggle between Liberty and Tyranny. They were fighting the same war on different fronts. The focus on

Italy was also partially due to the political situation in Italy. The Risorgimento raised questions about the relationship between democracy and religion, further prompting many Americans to realize that Roman Catholicism was not compatible with civil and religious liberties.

The leaders of the AFCU sent missions to Italy with many of the same motivations as their British Protestant counterparts. Both groups saw the political turmoil of the Risorgimento as God opening the door for them to convert Italy. They both saw Italy as a once great civilization that had descended into ruin as a result of the Catholic Church and believed that God had preserved the Waldensian Church to serve as a launching pad to convert all of Italy. However, with the formation of the Free Italian Church, the AFCU became less focused on supporting the Waldenses. Compared to the Congregationalist Free Italian Church, the Waldenses were too loyal to the monarchy of Savoy. While British missionaries still favored the Waldenses, American sympathies and aid shifted to the Free Italian Church. It would be interesting to look more closely at the AFCU's shift from focusing on the Waldenses to supporting the Free Italian Church. For example, one could examine the financial records to see how quickly this transition occurred. Another question to investigate might be whether similar missionary organizations in the United States, or in other countries, also began supporting the Free Italian Church.

Another direction for further study would be to look more closely at the support the AFCU received within the United States. Was their support coming primarily from individuals within different Protestant churches, or did they have the

support of established denominations? It would be interesting to investigate if the support for the AFCU from individuals and from denominations changed over time. The AFCU often emphasized that it was an interdenominational organization. Many articles in the magazine emphasize that the work of converting the world was too great and too urgent to waste time on rivalries between denominations.

A limitation of this thesis is that it focuses on the AFCU itself without examining its relationship to other missionary organizations. It would be interesting to compare the amount of support the AFCU received to that of other missionary organizations and to note how that support changed, or remained the same, during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Many of the leaders of the AFCU were also involved in other religious organizations. A study of each leader could determine how their involvement in other organizations informed their work in the AFCU.

While this thesis focuses exclusively on the AFCU's perception of itself, the Catholic Church in America and around the world was having its own media "explosion." It would be worthwhile to study Catholic writings during the Civil War and determine how Catholics in America perceived nativist groups like the AFCU. It would also be interesting to research Catholic responses to the AFCU in Italy, if Italians paid attention to this group of unsuccessful missionaries at all.

Another possible project could involve using the same sources as this thesis, but paying closer attention to the AFCU's work in other mission fields, particularly its home mission fields. While the leadership of the AFCU saw Italy as a series of launching pads and peripheries, it is possible that they did not view all mission fields this way. Perhaps they only used this strategy in Italy because of the amount of

limitations on their mission work. Their strategies and tactics in other fields may have been very different.

Additionally, the same sources could also be used to study the work of women in the AFCU. In the Italian mission field, the “Bible women” were not listed as missionaries and were not paid for their work. The magazine does not portray them as independent missionaries, but as women who have followed their husbands to Italy and spend their days visiting Catholic women and children in their homes to read the Bible with them. In other mission fields, especially the home missions, the women might have played a larger role, or might have been perceived as more independent. Even without considering these other questions, the AFCU’s focus on Italy as a mission field is still an important area of study. Their motivations reveal how central anti-Catholicism was to American Protestant identity in the United States. Their wide base of support also reveals how mainstream anti-Catholicism was in midnineteenth-century America. Their focus on Italy during the American Civil War also shows how deeply they believed that the entire world was engaged in the same struggle for civil and religious liberties.

Ultimately, the American and Foreign Christian Union was extremely unsuccessful. Even during a time of political turmoil when it was possible for the Pope to lose temporal power, Italians remained Catholic. The AFCU’s failure in the Italian mission field is significant. Their disdain for Roman Catholicism made it inconceivable to them that any educated person would choose to be Catholic. The leadership’s arrogance and optimism blinded them to the attachment many Italians had to their faith. This critical misreading of the Italian population should serve as a

warning for those who attempt to spread American religion and democracy around the world.

Appendix A: American and Foreign Christian Union Publications (Chronologically)

Title: *The Teachings of the Roman Catholic Church Compared with the Holy Scriptures*

Author: Unknown

Date(s) Published: 1852

Description: This book is divided into twenty-three chapters. Each chapter addresses one or more specific doctrinal problems that Evangelicals had with Roman Catholic teachings. The topics for criticism include: not allowing the People to read Holy Scripture, that there are other Mediators between people and God besides Jesus, that the Virgin Mary was conceived without sin, and that people ought to worship angels.

Title: *The Story of the Madiai; with notices of the efforts made, in Europe and America in their behalf*

Editors: The Secretaries of the American and Foreign Christian Union

Date(s) Published: 1853

Description: A narrative of the imprisonment and trial of the Madiai. It also contains various world leaders' responses to the Madiai's imprisonment and trial.

Title: *A Narrative of the Conversion and Sufferings of Sarah Doherty: Illustrative of Popery in Ireland, and of the Power of Evangelical Truth*

Author: Introduction by Robert Baird and E. R. Fairchild (both were Corresponding

Secretaries of the American and Foreign Christian Union)

Date(s) Published: 1839 (by the Protestant Vindicator as a series of articles, and then as a monograph by the American Protestant Society), 1854 (by the American and Foreign Christian Union)

Description: The first chapter is a confession of Roman Catholic faith in the infallibility of the Pope, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Penance. Although it was not written by a Sarah Doherty, the author believed it was “the way in which Sarah Doherty would have expressed her belief.” The book then describes a Protestant family who lived in the same town as Doherty and taught her “true religion.” This Protestant family showed Doherty “the idea of family worship” in which they read Scripture, addressed God directly, and omitted any reference to the Virgin Mary or saints. This was “so gross and outrageously anti-Catholic,” to Sarah at first, but eventually see converted.

Title: *A Narrative of Iniquities and Barbarities Practised at Rome, in the Nineteenth Century*

Author: Raffaele Ciocci, Formerly a Benedictine and Cistercian Monk

Date(s) Published: 1854, 1856

Description: A description of the Catholic Church in Rome meant to serve as “a voice of instruction and warning to the American people.” This is meant to strike fear in the heart of Protestant Americans. It warns that “Propaganda have already proposed to establish the same dark despotism over the minds of freemen in this happy republic.” It was intended to show to errors of Rome and show Americans “what is coming, if the dominion of the man of Sin is established here.”

Title: *The Protestant Exiles of Zillerthal; Their Persecutions and Expatriation from the Tyrol, on Separating From the Romish Church and Embracing the Reformed Faith*

Author: Dr. Rheinwald, translated by John B. Saunders

Date(s) Published: 1855

Description: This book narrates the Roman Catholic persecution of Protestants in Austria. It describes Protestant babies being forcefully baptized into the Catholic Church without their parents present, Protestant children being heckled by their schoolfellows, and Protestants not being allowed in the Christian burial ground.

Title: *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*

Author: Samuel F.B. Morse, A.M. President of the National Academy of Design, and Professor of the Arts of Design in the University of the City of New York.

Date(s) Published: 7th edition, 1855

Description: Promotes the idea that Roman Catholics are a political danger to the United States. It argues that Popery is “a political despotism cloaked under the name of Religion” and that it has reason to attack the United States.

Title: *The Trial of the Pope, the Antichrist, or Man of Sin, for High Treason against the Son of God on the Testimony of the Sovereigns of Europe, the President of the United States, and the Reformers and Martyrs; before the Right Hon. Divine Revelation, the Hon. Justice Reason, and the Hon. Justice History.*

Author: Unknown

Date(s) Published: 1856

Description: A fictional trial meant to highlight the alleged “crimes” of various Popes beginning in the year 606.

Title: *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions*

Author: Unknown, the penname given is “Civis”

Date(s) Published: 1856

Description: A series of twelve essays which together argue that Romanism will have a negative impact on American Institutions. It argues that not only will Catholicism decrease American “Civil Liberty and Love of Country,” but it will also have a negative effect on morality and industry throughout the country.

Title: *The Doctrinal Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent; Translated from the First Edition Printed at Rome, in 1564*

Author: Preface and Notes by W.C. Brownlee, D.D. of the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church, New York

Date(s) Published: 1857

Description: The Preface argues that the Council of Trent was called under the false pretense of reforming the Catholic Church. Brownlee argues that since “an assembly of criminal intruders, and robbers of public property” would hardly meet to reform themselves, the council must really have been to “crush” the Reformation.

Title: *Our Country: It's Danger and Duty*

Author: Rev. Andrew A. Lipscomb

Date(s) Published: 1854, 1857

Description: In 1844, the American Protestant Society offered a one hundred dollar prize for the best treatise on the “influence of Romanism in our American Institutions.” This work argues that the entire history of the Roman Catholic Church shows it to be “the unchanging enemy of all true liberty, - both civil and religious.”

Title: *Secret Instructions of the Jesuits, Faithfully Translated from the Latin of an Old Genuine London Copy with Historical Sketch*

Author: W.C. Brownlee, D. D. of the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church

Date(s) Published: 1857

Description: This book begins with a brief history of the Jesuits which paints them in a very negative light. The books then presents these “secret instructions” in Latin on the left-hand page and translated into English on the right.

Title: *Saint Patrick and the Western Apostolic Churches: or, the Religion of the Ancient Britains and Irish not Roman Catholic; and the Antiquity, Tenets and Sufferings of the Albigenses and Waldenses*

Author: Rev. Dr. Brownlee and Rev. Alexander King

Date(s) Published: 1857

Description: This book argues that “the Saint Patrick of the primitive and ancient Irish Church is a totally different character” from the Roman Catholic saint.

According to these authors, the “ancient Christianity” of the Irish did not submit to a foreign authority.

Title: *Records of Facts Concerning the Persecutions at Madeira in 1843 and 1846; the Flight of a Thousand Converts to the West India Islands; and also, the sufferings of those who arrived in the United States*

Author: Rev. Herman Norton

Date(s) Published: 1857

Description: This book describes Catholic persecution of people who learn to read and begin reading Bibles. It also describes Bibles being burnt or hidden and Protestant converts having to flee.

Title: *Roman Catholic Countries; or, The Roman Catholic Population of Our World, Scattered Abroad Everywhere, as Furnishing a Missionary Field.* Author: A Sermon, by the Rev. Nathan S.S. Beman, D.D., Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Troy, N.Y.

Date(s) Published: 1859

Description: This book compares Protestant and Roman Catholic countries and demonstrates the need for missions to Papal lands. In a statement characteristic of the AFCU, the author writes: “Unroll, then, the map of Europe beneath your eye, and visit, in rapid thought, her various nations. You no sooner cross the line which separates a Protestant from a Papal country... than you find yourself half-way on your journey towards Paganism.”

Appendix B: Missionary Biographical Data

Name: Robert Baird

Born/Died: 1798-1863

Religious Affiliation/Education: Presbyterian/Princeton Theological Seminary Brief

Summary of Missionary Activity: Baird first began working for the conversion of Catholic Europe when he travelled to Paris in 1834 to work with the French Association.²⁹⁵ He served as a Corresponding Secretary for the AFCU where he was influential in selecting and editing the content of the monthly magazine. He frequently travelled the various mission fields in Europe and wrote reports on each country for the magazine.

Name: George H. Hastings

Died: 1854

Religious Affiliation/Education: Presbyterian/Lane Theological Seminary Brief

Summary of Missionary Activity: From 1847 until 1849, Hastings served as a missionary-chaplain in Marseilles under the direction of the Foreign Evangelical Society. His primary duties there were to minister to English and American residents and seamen. While journeying down the Italian coast as the chaplain aboard a frigate, Hastings reported to the Foreign Evangelical Society that the people of Italy were eager to read the Italian-language New Testaments and religious tracts he brought to

²⁹⁵ Swanson, Michael Richard Hans. "Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America, 1820-1860," (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1971), 266.

them.²⁹⁶ In the autumn of 1849, Hastings left Marseilles for Rome, where he opened an American Chapel.²⁹⁷ In 1852, Hastings returned to the United States because of his failing health.

Name: E. Edwin Hall

Religious Affiliation/Education: Congregationalist

Brief Summary of Missionary Activity: In 1861, after serving as the AFCU's chaplain in Rome for three years, Rev. Hall went to Florence to direct missionary efforts there.²⁹⁸ Many of Rev. Hall's reports dealt with how many Italian men he had working for him already, and how many more he was sending to school to be educated for missionary work. His "chief work" was to "find Italians suitable for missionary work."²⁹⁹ He also held services every Sunday for American and English visitors to Florence.³⁰⁰ Rev. Hall often wrote home to the AFCU asking for specific amounts of money to build churches and educate young men, or thanking donors and promising that their money was well used.³⁰¹ A theme of this letters is that there were

²⁹⁶ "Italy," *Ninth Annual Report of the Foreign Evangelical Society* (New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co., 1848), 47.

²⁹⁷ "The American Chapel at Rome," "Letter from Rev. Hastings to Rev. Baird," *The American and Foreign Christian Union* II, no. 2 (1851): 59-60.

²⁹⁸ "The Departure of the Rev. Mr. Hall" *The Christian World* XII, no. 6 (1861): 175.

²⁹⁹ "Foreign Field- The Society's Agent at Florence," *The Christian World* XIII, no. 6 (1862): 184.

³⁰⁰ "Foreign Field- Italy," *The Christian World Union* XIII, no. 9 (1862): 281.

³⁰¹ For instance, in 1862 he asked for fifty dollars per year to educate a "pious young man converted at Rio Marina." "The Foreign Field," *The Christian World* XIII, no. 10 (1862): 312.

many intelligent and promising young men willing to work for the Society. All that was needed from American Protestants is the means “to support all the wellqualified persons who ought to be employed.”³⁰²

Name: Francis Colton

Died: 1913

Brief Summary of Missionary Activity: In 1864, Colton became director and vice president of the First National Bank and later served as the United States collector of Internal Revenue. From 1866 to 1869, he served as the US Consul in Venice, writing for the New York Tribune on the topic of Italian Unification. After returning to the United States, he continued to write to the AFCU and express interest in the religious and political future of Italy, as previously discussed in Chapter 5.

Name: A.R. Van Nest

Religious Affiliation: Dutch Reformed

Brief Summary of Missionary Activity: Rev. A.R. Van Nest relieved Rev. Hall as the chaplain at Rome.³⁰³ Before moving to Rome, he had served at the American Chapel at Paris. Van Nest’s letters from Rome reflect the unfounded optimism of many missionaries in Italy. He wrote in 1865 that “Popery” was “losing its strength in Italy” and that “the people long for the withdrawal of the French troops.”³⁰⁴

³⁰² “The Work in Our Own Country,” *The Christian World* XII, no. 9 (1861): 243.

³⁰³ “Chaplaincy at Rome,” *The Christian World* XV, no. 11 (1864): 353.

³⁰⁴ “News of the Churches- Italy,” *The Christian World*, XVI, no. 9 (1865): 251.

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