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# The Pope and the Presidents: The Italian Unification and the American Civil War

Robert Attilio Matteucci, Jr.

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, rmatte3@tigers.lsu.edu

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THE POPE AND THE PRESIDENTS:  
THE ITALIAN UNIFICATION AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in

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by  
Robert Attilio Matteucci, Jr.  
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## ABSTRACT

The American Civil War and the Italian Unification occurred simultaneously, and the major parties involved – the American government, the Confederacy, the Italian state, and the still-independent Papal States – interacted with each other on numerous occasions. The revolutionaries of the Risorgimento served as promising recruits for the Union’s armies, especially Garibaldi himself, although only Italians already in America actually fought. Italy would receive ironclad warships from the wartime United States. Those actions, however, alienated the Papal States from the North, presenting the Confederacy a diplomatic opportunity. The positive position of Catholicism in the South permitted the Confederacy to act and the possibility of diplomatic recognition by Catholic countries in Europe, particularly France, provided the Confederacy with the motivation to reach out to the Vatican. While the Confederacy did not receive recognition, it did receive a letter from Pope Pius IX expressing his sympathies, which the Confederacy at times portrayed as a formal recognition. Armed with the argument that the Pope had recognized its sovereignty, the Confederacy tried to dissuade Catholics from enlisting in the Union military. Any successes, however, were too minor to be effective. During the war, a bitter debate developed in the press about the letter’s meaning, a debate that extended into the postwar period largely as a weapon against Catholicism, especially when coupled with the Pope’s postwar support for former Confederates. The distortion of the letter as a sign of recognition lived on in anti-Catholic rhetoric, sometimes supported even by members of the U.S. government. The argument, however, was later refuted by Catholic prelates and historians.

“The Pope and the Presidents” contributes to a growing scholarship on the internationalization of the Civil War by revealing the complex relationships between all the

parties in the Civil War and the Italian Unification. Taking the analysis a step further, it looks at these relationships in ways that many previous historians, ignoring the interactions of multilateral diplomacy, overlooked. It does so bringing together secondary research from scholars who examined the histories separately and using a wealth of newspaper articles and other documents now accessible through digitalization.

## CHAPTER 1 THE ITALIAN UNIFICATION AND AMERICA'S REACTION (1815-1865)

The history of the American Civil War has long been confined to narratives restricted to America's shores. When historians began introducing the international context of the war, those narratives too were restricted as histories of bilateral diplomacy, limited to the actions of the diplomats of only the parties of the Civil War and one additional nation. Diplomacy, however, can never be fully understood when only the two nations in question are considered. Rather, popular movements and conflicts exist with utter disregard for political borders; understanding transnational movements and multinational relationships are essential to understanding any diplomacy. Don H. Doyle took this into account in his recent book, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War*.<sup>1</sup> Doyle argues that the international, particularly European, debate between liberal republicanism and conservative despotism shaped the international reaction to and interaction with the American Civil War. At that time, liberalism could be seen as a transnational movement in Europe whose nations saw their own struggles in the conflict in America. The area where this was most poignant was in Italy in the midst of its own war of unification centered on the struggle between liberalism and despotism. The liberal Italian revolutionaries saw their own ideological conflict reflected in the Civil War and reached out to the Union that had effectively presented themselves as the liberal party in the Civil War.

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<sup>1</sup> Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015). Doyle's account of the diplomacy between the Confederacy and the Papacy differs in some respects from that developed here. Most notably, the topic of slavery is presented as Pope Pius's chief motivation for not recognizing the Confederacy; this thesis argues that that decision was made primarily to keep available the option of mediating the Civil War as a means of gaining international stature to defend against the Italian Unification. Since *The Cause of All Nations* appeared as this thesis was completed, Doyle's findings and interpretations have not been included or addressed.

“The Pope and the Presidents” looks at transnational liberalism from the opposite direction, focusing rather on the chief anti-liberal party in the Italian Unification, the Papacy, and its interaction with the Civil War. To understand the wartime actions of Pope Pius IX, particularly his famous sympathetic letter to Jefferson Davis, the Pontiff cannot be looked at in isolation. While a narrow history could see the Pope as choosing sides in the Civil War, it was the Pope’s position in the context of the Italian Unification and his overriding desire to survive that movement that drove his behavior. To understand why Pius IX acted the way he did, we must look at the context of the Italian Unification, how it affected the Pope’s priorities and how America’s association with that movement drove the Pope away from the Union. America clearly chose to support the Kingdom of Italy, acting largely with disregard for how that support would negatively affect relations with the Papal States. Throughout the war, America sought to recruit Italians and provided them with several ironclad warships. The Confederacy’s outreach to the Papacy must be examined to show how and why they chose to try to gain Pope Pius’s support. Although many historians have looked at the Papal-Confederate relationship exclusively bilaterally, the Confederacy did not limit its worldview. Rather, the Confederates saw the Papal relationship as key to taking advantage of another transnational ideology, Catholicism, by using Papal support to influence Catholic governments and peoples beyond the Italian Peninsula. This same argument also had domestic implications, making Papal diplomacy not merely a foreign affairs issue in America but a cultural and social issue about Catholicism on the home front. The earliest memories of the Papal-Confederate relationship after the Civil War were largely distorted to become a tool for use against American Catholicism until finally fading from popular memory.



The Italian Unification profoundly affected how the states on the Italian Peninsula conducted their diplomacy. No discussion of Civil War diplomacy regarding any of the parties of the Italian Unification could be complete without fully examining that event and how America reacted to it. The most fundamental aspect making interaction unavoidable between the Italian Unification and the American Civil War was their contemporaneousness. During the autumn of 1860, crowds gathered in the United States and on the Italian Peninsula to vote. These two elections altered the course of history. On Sunday, October 21, residents of the southern regions of the Italian Peninsula and the island of Sicily voted overwhelmingly to become a part of “Italy one and indivisible, with Victor Emanuel II and his legitimate descendants as constitutional monarch.”<sup>2</sup> Two weeks and two days later, voters in the United States elected their first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln. Happening just weeks apart, both elections radically affected the course of the subsequent decade. The contemporaneous nature of Italian Unification and the American Civil War significantly affected relations between the two war-torn regions. Those who sought to maintain a united America maintained a close relationship with those who sought to unite Italy. Likewise, those who dissented from national unity, the Confederacy and the Papal States in particular, also sought close relationships.

The elections on the Italian Peninsula in 1860, formally plebiscites or national referenda, marked the achievement of a major goal of the centuries-old political movement known as the

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<sup>2</sup> On the island of Sicily, Sicilians voted 432,053 to 667 in favor of a united Italy; in the former Kingdom of Naples, the peninsular region of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Neapolitans voted 1,302,064 to 10,312 in favor of a united Italy. It has been argued these votes are more a reflection of the local support for Giuseppe Garibaldi who had recently conquered the region and opposition to the former autocratic Bourbon monarchy than actual support for unification. Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), 82-83.

*Risorgimento*,<sup>3</sup> which sought a unified Italian Peninsula. Since the fall of the Roman Empire fourteen centuries before, foreign intrusions, deep regionalist sentiments, and powerful dynasties on the Italian Peninsula had precluded a unified state. The end of the eighteenth century, though, laid the foundation for change that would dramatically alter the Italian political landscape. The commercialization of agriculture undermined the powers of the local nobility and the Catholic Church which held feudal control over the economies of the peninsula. The rural poor became increasingly marginalized as a rapid increase in population further aggravated the political situation in the nineteenth century. No event, however, altered the course of the Italian Peninsula's sociopolitical structure more than French rule during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, resulting in bureaucratic centralization. Opposed by the established elites, the Napoleonic government opened new paths for political mobility to larger populations. The fall of Napoleon led to the restoration of many of the former powers that existed before the French conquest, as well as the extension of Austrian authority in the northern regions of Venetia and Lombardy.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the Napoleonic period in the early nineteenth century, Italy was divided into distinct regions and numerous governments. The northeast, including Venice and Milan, was ruled by the Austrian Empire and the northwest by the Savoy family, who ruled the Piedmont and Liguria regions as well as the island of Sardinia from their Piedmontese capital of Turin.

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<sup>3</sup> *Risorgimento* literally translates from Italian as “resurgence.” It was selected by pro-unification authors to be the title of the Italian Unification movement. It was chosen as a literary device to imply the unification was a “resurgence” to restore a glorified past of a free and united Italy acting against foreign and domestic oppression. Lucy Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society, and National Unification* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 12.

From 1849 until his death in 1878, the Savoyard monarch was King Victor Emmanuel II. South of these regions were a series of ducal city-states, such as Modena and Parma. To their southwest was the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Central Italy was the secular domain of the Roman Papacy, which also governed the Roman Catholic Church, the dominant religious institution both on the peninsula and throughout many countries in the world. Southern Italy and the island of Sicily were controlled by one man, the King of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a member of a foreign dynasty, the House of Bourbon.<sup>5</sup> For a visualization of the state of affairs on the Italian Peninsula beginning in 1815, see Figure 1.

It was in this post-Napoleonic climate that tensions over how the peninsula was governed, particularly its lack of national unity, resulted in action. Italian autocrats restored with Napoleon's collapse began to clash more frequently with increasingly liberal populaces. The early 1820s saw failed uprisings in the north and the south of the peninsula; in 1831, liberals briefly drove the Papacy from the Papal Legations, the Pontiff's northernmost territories of Umbria, the Marches, and Romagna. In 1848 and 1849 revolutions broke out throughout Italy, including one that would drive the Pope from Rome itself and alter the nature of his Pontificate. French and Austria military forces put down all of these insurrections.<sup>6</sup>

The 1848-1849 revolution in Rome, in particular, despite its ultimate failure, had an important impact on the course of Italian Unification and, as a result of America's reaction to the revolt, affected the relationship between the United States and the Papal States. The most notable

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<sup>5</sup> Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento*, xv.

<sup>6</sup> Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 11-13.



Figure 1: Map of the Unification of Italy, 1815-1870<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This is a map of the Italian Peninsula from the restoration of post-Napoleonic states to the completion of the *Risorgimento* in 1870. The dates listed are the years in which the particular region or country became a part of the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont (if annexed prior to March 1861) or the Kingdom of Italy (if annexed after March 1861). Fig. 1, William Shepherd, *Map of the Unification of Italy, 1815-1870*, 1911. Map. "File:Italy unification 1815 1870.jpg," Wikipedia, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

impact of the Roman Republic, the government declared by the revolutionaries who seized Rome, was the change it caused in the political positions of the Papal States' longest-reigning leader, Pope Pius IX. In 1846, the Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church had met at the Quirinale Palace in Rome to select a new Pope following the death of Pope Gregory XVI. Pope Gregory had ruled the Papal States autocratically, resisting all calls for liberalization and democratization for his secular government.<sup>8</sup> Feeling a need to change the manner in which the Papacy handled its secular lands, the College of Cardinals elected the liberal Cardinal Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti as Roman Pontiff. On June 16, 1846, he received the necessary two-thirds vote to become the next Pope, taking the name Pius IX (see Figure 2).<sup>9</sup> Born in the Marches to a noble though not wealthy family, Cardinal Mastai opposed the repressive nature of his predecessor's Pontificate.<sup>10</sup> Prior to his own Pontificate, the future Pope openly contemplated enacting limited political reforms noting, "I do not understand the quarrelsome attitude of our government which mortifies with persecution the youth which inspires our generation." He believed, "it would be so easy to make them [the young] happy and inspire their confidence and love."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The desire for a liberal pontificate was strong but not universal. A popular tradition holds that Cardinal Karl Guysruck of Austrian-controlled Milan was entrusted by the Austrian Chancellor, Klemens von Metternich, with a veto of the candidacy of Cardinal Mastai. Frank J. Coppa, *Pope Pius IX: Crusader in a Secular Age* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 42; E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1954).

<sup>9</sup> Cardinal Mastai chose the name Pius IX in order to commemorate Pius VII, who reigned from 1800 to 1823. Both men had served as the Bishop of Imola in Romagna; as bishop, Pius VII had supported and made possible Mastai's vocation to the priesthood. Coppa, *Pius IX*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Coppa, *Pope Pius IX*, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Coppa, *Pope Pius IX*, 39.



Figure 2: Pope Pius IX<sup>12</sup>

Pius IX, as Pope, acted upon these feelings. He instituted the *Consulta di Stato*, a representative body that would advise the Papal government. He took action against Austrian authority in Italy, popularizing himself as a liberal. His secular subjects, however, struggled to feel the effects of his reforms. His policy on freedom of the press mirrored that of his autocratic predecessor, Gregory XVI. Despite opening all but one position, the Secretary of State, to laymen, not a single position was actually filled by a non-clergyman. Efforts for liberalization occurred but only slowly. As revolutionary activity became widespread in the beginning of 1848,

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<sup>12</sup> Fig. 2, *Pope Pius IX*, 1878. Photograph. "File:Pius ix.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

three laymen were appointed as ministers to appease those demanding reforms; more laymen would later achieve positions as well. In an unprecedented act, on March 14 of that year, the Pontiff promulgated the *Statuto Fondamentale*, which served as a Roman Constitution. However, the changes proved insufficient; more people demanded Italian unification and republicanism. In September, Pius IX appointed Pellegrino Rossi to lead the Papal government. Rossi proved an effective leader and was trusted by the Pope. Then, everything changed on November 15: Rossi's throat was slashed and he bled to death during an attack by enraged Romans as a republican mob began to seize the city. Ministers and Cardinals fled Rome: the protests had turned into a revolution. On November 24, the Pope, disguised as an average priest, fled Rome for the fortress of Gaeta in the neighboring Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.<sup>13</sup>

The fall of Rome in 1848 and the subsequent proclamation of a Roman Republic affected Pius IX's Pontificate as well as its relations with the United States. The proclamation of a republic in Rome in the place of a theocracy placed the United States in a difficult diplomatic position. The American consul, Nicholas Brown, in charge of the American delegation at the time, acted in accord with American ideology. He immediately told the revolutionary government that "so deeply rooted in every American heart (is) the love of liberty" that the American people "will at once hail with joy the Independence of the Roman Republic long before their diplomatic agents can have time in due official form to give expression to the generous sentiments of their constituency."<sup>14</sup> Despite Brown's urging, however, formal American recognition never came. The United States government was more practical than

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<sup>13</sup> Coppa, *Pope Pius IX*, 55-91.

<sup>14</sup> Leo Francis Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX," *The Catholic Historical Review* 9, 1 (April 1923): 108.

ideological. James Buchanan, the future American President and, at the time, Secretary of State in the Polk Administration, stated that the Roman Republic's "recent origin and the almost insuperable difficulties by which it is surrounded, render it extremely doubtful whether it will be able to maintain itself."<sup>15</sup> The United States allowed Lewis Cass, Jr., the American Minister who arrived on the peninsula during the crisis, to choose which government to present himself to: the new Republic or the exiled Papacy. The situation, though, did not remain stable long enough for Cass to make his choice. Despite formal recognition never happening, America stood alone in its diplomatic wavering; the Papacy did not forget.<sup>16</sup>

No nation recognized the Republic, as intervening events prevented even America from doing so. The French remained loyal to the Papacy and restored the Papacy to Rome. On July 3, 1849, the French Army entered Rome; on April 12, 1850, Pius IX entered Rome as a restored leader.<sup>17</sup> The Roman Republic's greatest impact, however, was in the reaction of Pius IX himself. The day that Rossi died was the last day that anyone could say that Pius was a liberal.

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<sup>15</sup> Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX," 108.

<sup>16</sup> Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX," 110.

<sup>17</sup> At this point in time, the Orleanist July Monarchy of King Louis-Phillipe I had been overthrown in the Revolutions of 1848. France was then the French Second Republic led by President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1852, President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte would declare himself Emperor Napoleon III. John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the French Revolution to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 684-685, 794-795; Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX," 110.



His Pontificate turned reactionary; he resisted pressure for political and social liberalization, both foreign and domestic pressures, and drastically expanded the powers of the Papacy.<sup>18</sup>

Liberalism encouraged the uprising that drove Pope Pius from Rome, so the Pope opposed liberalism and a united Italy at every turn. As efforts for unification gained greater popular support throughout the peninsula, in Rome the Pope became increasingly conservative and autocratic in his opposition. After the rebellion, the Pope retaliated by opposing everything related to the failed Roman Republic. America had shown some degree of support for the Roman Republic and its liberal ideology, so the Papacy's relationship with the United States suffered as a result. As long as the French expressed willingness to militarily uphold the Pope's secular control of Rome, the Pope was free to continue in his opposition to liberalism.

Beyond the walls of Rome, early successes were achieved in the attempts to unite the Italian Peninsula in 1859. War had broken out between the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, with the latter gaining the support of Napoleon III's Second French

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<sup>18</sup> Pope Pius IX's greatest example of conservatism was his profound *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) wherein the Pope viciously attacked liberalism, nationalism, and democracy. While it is clear these sentiments drew from his experiences in 1848, he applied his beliefs universally, attacking the very principles of separation of Church and State not only in Italy but worldwide. No example is clearer in Pius's treatment of Papal power than in the results of the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) which he called. The principle doctrine that derived from that council was the dogma of Papal Infallibility. The dogma states that "the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith and morals." Coppa, *Pope Pius IX*, 147, 167-168.

Empire.<sup>19</sup> The constitutional monarchy of Piedmont under Victor Emmanuel II held the ideal government on which unification could be centered, already controlling several regions, Piedmont, Liguria, and Sardinia, and being sufficiently democratic to attract the republicans. As such, Piedmontese, French, and pro-unification Italian volunteers captured Lombardy in central-northern Italy from Austria. They also captured Modena, Parma, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the Papal Legations, all but the latter holding decisively pro-Austrian sympathies. While treaties permitted the annexation of Lombardy, Modena, Parma, and Tuscany, the annexation of the Pope's lands needed greater justification.<sup>20</sup> In November, 1860, a plebiscite took place, overwhelmingly demanding that the Legations remain under the control of Piedmont. As such, all of northern Italy came under the *de facto* and *de jure* rule of Victor Emmanuel II.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The French alliance with the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont was in part a result of Piedmont handing over the sovereignty of Savoy and Nice to the France; the Emperor himself was a supporter of Italian unification: he lived in Italy as a Bonapartist exile after his uncle, Napoleon, was deposed. Paradoxically, he also was a strong supporter of the Catholic Church, protecting Papal control over Rome. Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 75-79.

<sup>21</sup> In the Papal Legations, the residents of the Marches voted 133,765 to 1,121 and the residents of Umbria voted 97,040 to 360, agreeing to "be part of the constitutional monarchy of King Victor Emanuel." This election, however, was more than a choice between unification and Papal secular authority. It was also a contest between the church and feudal landowners. Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 84.

The events in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies took a very different path. Giuseppe Garibaldi, from the historically Italian city of Nice, led the Expedition of the Thousand.<sup>22</sup> With poor-quality weaponry and an army comprised almost entirely of students, Garibaldi was far more successful than expected. Landing in Sicily in May 1860, by August he and his men, aided by local uprisings, seized the entire island. Naples, the capital of southern Italy, fell in early September; by October, all of southern Italy was under Garibaldi's control as the deposed king fled to the besieged fortress of Gaeta and then to Papal Rome. Garibaldi then placed Italian Unification ahead of republicanism. This decision was finalized with the plebiscite of October 21 wherein the people chose to become subjects of Northern Italy's king;<sup>23</sup> for a romantic representation of the unification of the Piedmontese-controlled Northern Italy and the Garibaldi-controlled Southern Italy, see Figure 3. Victor Emmanuel II and his Piedmontese constitutional monarchy controlled the entire Italian Peninsula, Sicily, and Sardinia with the exceptions of Austrian-ruled Venetia and the Papal States, then comprising only Rome and its immediate surroundings. Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont-Sardinia was crowned "King of Italy" in March of 1861.<sup>24</sup>

With the creation of the Kingdom of Italy upon the coronation of its King in 1861, the Italian Unification was well underway; the only significant areas that remained outside of the

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<sup>22</sup> The actual size of the army is known to have been at least 1087, with a few dozen additional unnamed soldiers, one a woman. Three-quarters came from Lombardy, Liguria, and Venetia in northern Italy; about 100 volunteers came from southern Italy and Sicily. Garibaldi originally desired to reclaim his hometown of Nice from the French, but was persuaded to take advantage of an uprising in Sicily to rid the peninsula of the Bourbon autocracy. Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 80-83.

<sup>24</sup> Riall, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 14.

movement's grasp was Rome, Venice, and their surrounding areas. The process that brought together much of Italy had profound implications on the future of diplomacy between the parties of the Italian Unification and those of the Civil War. The Italian Unification was driven by the ideals of liberalism, an ideal once held even by Pope Pius IX albeit in moderation. Ultimately, one event in the Italian Unification had a particularly lasting impact: the revolution that formed the Roman Republic. Although a failure, the Roman Republic was part of a larger movement that would, a decade later, attain significant success under the auspices of the Kingdom of Sardinia.



Figure 3: Garibaldi meeting with Victor Emmanuel in Teano<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The October 26, 1860, meeting of King Victor Emmanuel II (right) who ruled most of northern Italy and Giuseppe Garibaldi (left) who ruled all of southern Italy was the formal submission of the south to the King, acting upon the plebiscite held five days prior. This is a romantic image painted by former Italian Unification soldier and artist Sebastiano De Alvertis. Painted around the time of the completion of the *Risorgimento* in 1870, it is symbolically portraying the union of the Italian Peninsula. Fig. 3, Sebastiano De Alvertis, *Meeting with Victor Emmanuel in Teano*, circa 1870. Painting. "File:With Victor Emmanuel.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

Its liberalism brought it the support of the American agent in Rome; while the federal government did not wholly endorse that position, the United States, unlike all the other states represented in Rome, did not choose to follow the Pope into exile. The Pope reacted to the failed revolution by opposing everything the Roman Republic embodied, particularly liberalism and a united Italy. America's actions towards the Roman Republic would foster tension in the American-Papal relationship that would only grow with America's later closeness to the united Kingdom of Italy.

The plebiscites that justified the coronation of the King of Italy were not the only elections in the fall of 1860. That November, people gathered in the United States to vote in an election that would likewise affect the unity of their nation. The election of Republican President Abraham Lincoln brought the decades-old slavery debate in the United States to a head. By April 1861, only weeks after Victor Emmanuel II was crowned King of a mostly united Italy on March 7, eleven Southern states had seceded from the Union. On April 11, the newly appointed representative of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Chevalier Joseph Bertinatti, announced to President Lincoln that Victor Emmanuel II had been crowned King of Italy and that the Kingdom of Italy had been formed; within hours, in the early morning hours of April 12, Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter igniting the American Civil War.<sup>26</sup> American diplomats found themselves navigating complex political relationships as a new nation, the Confederate States of America, sought its own independence.

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Lanman, *Biographical Annals of the Civil Government of the United States: During Its First Century* (Washington, DC: James Anglim, 1876), 622.

At the onset of the war, the United States of America found itself in a favorable political position in its relations with Italy as Italian republicans in particular supported the American government. The United States, therefore, looked to Italy for help. After the Battle of Fort Sumter in April 1861, the Union courted Giuseppe Garibaldi (see Figure 4), asking him to fight in the Union Army. Having a figure like Garibaldi as a prominent member of the Union Army would provide an effective propaganda tool in garnering the support of Europeans as well as recent European immigrants, as Garibaldi remained popular throughout Europe. Further, the success of Garibaldi's Expedition of the Thousand only a year before undoubtedly showed the world his military skills. Garibaldi's conditions, however, were difficult for Abraham Lincoln to



Figure 4: Giuseppe Garibaldi<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Fig. 4, *Giuseppe Garibaldi*, 1866. Photograph. "File:Giuseppe Garibaldi (1866).jpg." *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

accept. The Italian revolutionary demanded an immediate declaration that the American Civil War was being fought for the goal of abolishing slavery and that Garibaldi himself would serve as overall commander of the American military. Even had the Union entertained the conditions, it was ultimately Garibaldi who put an end to the offer; Garibaldi was in ill-health and insisted that whatever military activities he could conduct would be directed at taking Rome and Venice for a united Italy.<sup>28</sup> Although not willing to fight, Garibaldi's support for the Union did not waiver. In April 1862, the United States Ambassador to Italy, George Perkins Marsh, met with Garibaldi. Marsh noted that the Italian revolutionary "manifested the same warm interest he has always shown in the triumph of the Union cause, and the same high respect for the wisdom of the present administration which I have the pleasure of hearing expressed in every quarter with which my position brings me into relation."<sup>29</sup>

As Marsh testified, Giuseppe Garibaldi's support for the Union was not unique. In the autumn of 1862, Colonel Giovanni Battista Cattabeni offered to organize four battalions of five hundred experienced soldiers each to fight for the Union Army. Claiming the support of the Italian King, Cattabeni promised that his troops would obtain their own weaponry; his only request was that the United States provide transportation for the two thousand men to travel to America. The request was declined by the Union, citing Constitutional questions regarding

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<sup>28</sup> Frank W. Alduino and David J. Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Grey* (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007), 31-35.

<sup>29</sup> United States Department of State, "Message of the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Third Session of the Thirty-seventh Congress (1862)," in *The Foreign Policy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2003), 579.

providing the funds.<sup>30</sup> Italians who did not need such transportation – those Italians living in the United States – formed their own regiments and fought for the Union. Most notable was the Thirty-ninth New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, comprised of 1,086 immigrants from eleven different European nations, including one company of Italians, founded just weeks after the war began. The regiment was nicknamed the “Garibaldi Guard.” One important aspect of the Thirty-ninth New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment was its regimental colors, the three flags flown by and representing the regiment (see Figure 5). The first was an American flag with the phrase “Garibaldi Guard” inscribed upon it. The second was a Hungarian flag inscribed with *Vivere aut mori* on the obverse and the phrase’s translation, *Conquer or Die*, on the reverse. The most significant flag, however, was the third. It was an Italian tricolor inscribed with the phrase *Dio E Popolo*, meaning *God and the People*. This flag was the same that was flown by Garibaldi himself in the revolutions of 1848, most notably during the Roman Republic.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Alduino, 51; United States Department of State, “Message of the president of the United States, and accompanying documents, to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the first session of the thirty-eighth congress (1863),” in *The Foreign Policy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 2003), 1155-1156.

<sup>31</sup> Alduino, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Grey*, 52.



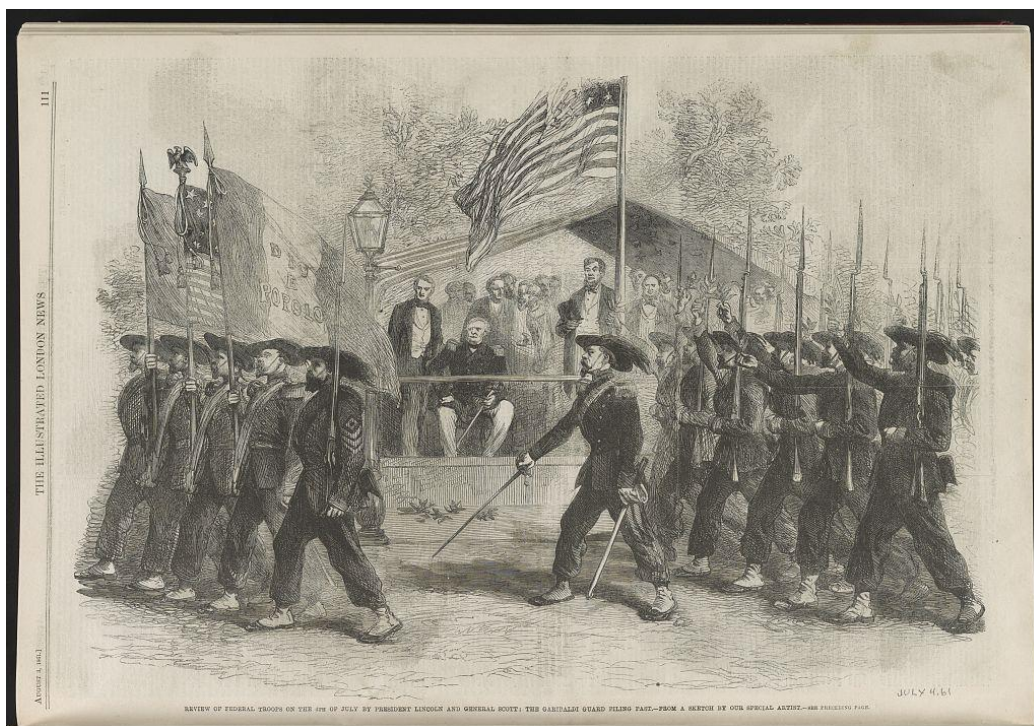


Figure 5: Review of Federal Troops on the Fourth of July by President Lincoln and General Scott: The Garibaldi Guard Filing Past<sup>32</sup>

The relationship between the United States and the Italian Kingdom was not one-sided. The Union appeared eager to demonstrate its affinity for the Kingdom of Italy. Naval visits provided an ideal opportunity for displaying the good relations between the two nations. Two such visits occurred in November, 1863. First, the Italian steam frigate *Don Giovanni* visited the port of Boston with the crew being hosted by dignitaries including Governor John Albion Andrew of Massachusetts.<sup>33</sup> Within a week, the line-of-battle ship *Re Galantuomo*, a prize of

<sup>32</sup> Not only does this figure depict the troops of the Garibaldi Guard, but it also clearly displays the three regimental colors. The flag in the front is the flag flown by Giuseppe Garibaldi himself during the revolution of 1848. Fig. 5: Edmond Ollier, *Review of Federal Troops on the Fourth of July by President Lincoln and General Scott: The Garibaldi Guard Filing Past*, circa 1880. Print. "File:March past of the 'Garibaldi Guard' before President Lincoln, 1861-1865 (c1880).jpg" reproduced from the Illustrated London News, *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

<sup>33</sup> "Visit of Italian Naval Officers to Boston," *New York Herald*, November 6, 1863.

Garibaldi's conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, arrived in New York with 350 officers and crew. During this visit, New York shipbuilder William H. Webb delivered an important product that the Italians had purchased: an ironclad warship. This ship, the *Re d'Italia*, would be among Italy's first ironclads, iron-plated warships that drastically revolutionized naval warfare by outcompeting previous wooden ships. The ceremonial commissioning of this historic ship took place in the port of New York before the watchful eyes of America's largest city. The *Re Galantuomo* would then escort the newly-christened ironclad to Italian waters.<sup>34</sup> In the following months, the event was repeated once more when Webb provided the Italians the ironclad warship *Re di Portogallo*.<sup>35</sup>

The Italian relationship with the United States was so close that the Italians felt no hesitancy in both purchasing ships from one participant in the Civil War and in commissioning those ships in American waters. This showed the disregard Italy felt towards the Confederacy. Italy was willing to purchase military vessels and operate proudly in the largest cities in the North. At the same time, the sale of the two ironclads to the Royal Italian Navy demonstrates that the United States was willing to cement its close relationship with Italy by significantly arming them. In doing so, the Union was also showing a willingness to indirectly oppose through military aid the enemies of Italy and the Italian Unification, namely the Austrian Empire and the Papacy. The intended audience for the sale, however, was not simply Italy or even Austria and

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<sup>34</sup> "Our Italian Visitors: The Italian Line-of-Battle Ship *Re Galantuomo*, The Object of her Visit, The *Re d'Italia* to be Convoyed to Italy, The New American Built Italian Iron-Clad," *New York Herald*, November 6, 1863.

<sup>35</sup> "Our Italian Visitors: The Italian Line-of-Battle Ship *Re Galantuomo*, The Object of her Visit, The *Re d'Italia* to be Convoyed to Italy, The New American Built Italian Iron-Clad," *New York Herald*, November 6, 1863.

the Papacy. Rather, by constructing numerous formidable ironclads and selling two of them rather than entering them all into service in the United States Navy in the midst of the Civil War, the Union made a symbolic gesture to the powers of Europe. The Civil War was not a total war in the North. The Union could still expand its armaments if necessary as it had the capacity for surplus production exemplified by the vessels sold to Italy. The Union's sale of ironclad warships to Italy therein served as a deterrent to rival powers such as the British and the French if they chose to take advantage of America's wartime weaknesses.<sup>36</sup>

As the Civil War progressed, Italy served as a valuable ally to the United States benefiting the Union in several ways. Over the course of the Civil War, this relationship was manifested in several ways. In terms of troops, many Italian immigrants and immigrants from nearly a dozen other European countries fought under the heroic image of Giuseppe Garibaldi. American shipbuilders provided ironclads to their Italian friends; in return, the United States was able to express that its abilities were not entirely limited by the Civil War. Italians in Italy offered their services to the Union and the Union sought the service of Giuseppe Garibaldi, but neither of these two efforts ultimately succeeded as the Union rebuffed the efforts of the Italian soldiers and Garibaldi rebuffed the efforts of the Union. The mere offers, though, revealed how

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<sup>36</sup> The timing, although likely coincidental, is certainly symbolic. November 1863 was the two year anniversary of the beginning of the Trent Affair. That diplomatic incident, centering on the Union seizure of Confederate diplomats assigned to the European powers from a British ship, the *RMS Trent*, arguably brought Great Britain to the brink of war with the United States, only ending when the Union released the Confederate diplomats to continue their mission. The threat was certainly not empty as the British Empire had significant military forces in British North America. The French Empire, likewise, were building a sizable force in Mexico. With such a foreign presence on America's borders, the message the Union sent by revealing its capacity for producing surplus ironclads even in the middle of a war served as a notable deterrent. For an overview of the Trent Affair, see: Norman Ferris, *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977).

close the relationship between the Union and the Kingdom of Italy were – so close that volunteers in Italy openly desired to fight and die for an ally while the Union was willing to look beyond its borders to Italy for military leadership.

The closeness between the United States and the Kingdom of Italy, however, was not without its negative consequences. The Union-Italian friendship had a chilling effect on America's relationship with the Austrian Empire in particular. Realizing that naval superiority would be important in the event of an Italian conquest of Austrian-ruled Venice, the sale of American ironclads to an Italian government seeking unification was seen as worrisome to the defensive Austrians.<sup>37</sup> In reaction, the Austrians found themselves more willing to enter into negotiations with the Confederate States of America, particularly through selling ships to them. The negotiations were between Confederate agent Louis Merton and, later, Captain Caleb Huse and Austrian Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, the future Emperor of Mexico. The negotiations centered on Confederate attempts to purchase ironclads from the Austrians. The Austrians were hesitant; they feared an impending conflict with Italy and, unlike the United States, did not wish to sell ironclads to navies beyond the Imperial Austrian Navy itself. As such, the Austrian government refused to sell ironclads or allow private Austrian shipbuilders to sell ironclads to the South, instead suggesting the Confederates purchase several available wooden ships – a steam frigate, two corvettes, and an assortment of nearly two dozen smaller vessels and

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that the two United States-built ironclads, the *Re d'Italia* and the *Re Portogallo*, were to augment ironclad warships then-still being built in France for the Royal Italian Navy, the *Roma*, the *Panezia*, the *Regina Maria*, and *Don Louis*. "Our Italian Visitors: The Italian Line-of-Battle Ship *Re Galantuomo*, The Object of her Visit, The *Re d'Italia* to be Conveyed to Italy, The New American Built Italian Iron-Clad," *New York Herald*, November 6, 1863.

gunships. The Confederacy ultimately decided that the prices set for the wooden ships were increasingly unfeasible as the war progressed.<sup>38</sup> While the Union's relationship with Italy caused tension with the Austrian Empire, tension that materialized in Austrian offers to sell ships to the Confederacy, the failure of the Confederacy to act upon those offers meant that the Union's problems with Austria bore no concrete repercussions in the Civil War.<sup>39</sup>

Even as America's support for Italy created tension between the United States and Austria, another country on the Italian Peninsula turned to America for support in the midst of the *Risorgimento*: the Most Serene Republic of San Marino. San Marino was and still is an independent nation of twenty-four square miles; at the time, only about a thousand families nestled in the central Italian Apennine Mountains. The tiny state holds the distinction of being the world's oldest continually operating republic with a republican tradition dating to its founding in 301 A.D. by Christians fleeing Roman persecution and its current constitutional rules dating to 1600. With its long history of independent republican traditions, San Marino did not desire incorporation into a larger Italian kingdom. The Sammarinese were likewise opponents of regional despotism and naturally opened their borders and extended their protection to liberal pro-unification figures such as Giuseppe Garibaldi while he was fleeing the collapsing

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<sup>38</sup> Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *Ironclads at War: The Origin and Development of the Armored Battleship* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2008), 91.

<sup>39</sup> In an interesting twist of fate, the American-built Italian ironclads *Re d'Italia* and *Re Portogallo* would meet the steam frigate almost sold to the Confederacy, the Austrian *Radetzky*, in open battle in 1866 off the Austrian-ruled Dalmatian island of Lissa (modern day Vas, Croatia). The wooden *Radetzky* supported a fleet of Austrian ironclads as they engaged a fleet of Italian ironclads including the *Re d'Italia* and the *Re Portogallo*. In this, the first battle between ironclad fleets, the Austrians proved victorious in battle, succeeding in even sinking the Union's first wartime ironclad sale, the *Re d'Italia*. Greene, *Ironclads at War*, 119.

Roman Republic. Since San Marino's very founding by Roman Christian refugees, San Marino has had a long tradition of accepting the exiled. San Marino hoped that its treatment of Italian unifiers would preserve it from the unification. In an attempt to augment Sammarinese safety, San Marino reached out to President Abraham Lincoln, the leader of one of the few other republics in the world at that time.<sup>40</sup>

On March 29, 1861, the Regent Captains, the two elected Sammarinese executives, wrote a letter, in both Italian and imperfect English, to the American president, erroneously addressed to New York rather than Washington. "It is a some while since the Republic of San Marino wishes to make alliance with the United States of America in that manner as it is possible between a great Potency and a very small country."<sup>41</sup> The letter further relayed that the Council of San Marino had extended Sammarinese citizenship to President Lincoln. In his reply in early May of that year, Lincoln, addressing the Regent Captains as "Great and Good Friends," wrote that "although your dominion is small, your State is nevertheless one of the most honored, in all history. It has by its experience demonstrated the truth, so full of encouragement to the friends of Humanity, that Government founded on Republican principles is capable of being so administered as to be secure and enduring."<sup>42</sup> As such, Lincoln looked upon the small republic

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<sup>40</sup> Don H. Doyle, "From San Marino, With Love," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> As quoted by Don H. Doyle, "From San Marino, With Love," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011. Note that the several grammatical errors are original to the Regent Captains; in their letter they wrote, "We have wished to write to you in our own hand and in English, although we have little knowledge and no practice in the language."

<sup>42</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To the Regent Captains of the Republic of San Marino," in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler, 4 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 360.

with its significant longevity as an inspiration in the face of America's own crisis. He further thanked the Council of San Marino for "the honor of citizenship it conferred upon me."<sup>43</sup> While Lincoln's letter certainly signaled his affection for that nation and his acceptance of citizenship was groundbreaking, Lincoln's assistance was ultimately not needed and the United States was never forced to choose between its affection for the small albeit republican San Marino and that for the liberal Kingdom of Italy. Garibaldi chose to lobby on behalf of the tiny state and the Italian kingdom never annexed San Marino.<sup>44</sup> As such, the Union's relationship with the Sammarinese was unlike that with Austria. America's closeness with Italy was, for San Marino, not seen as a constraint as it was for Austria. Rather, America was a natural ideological ally of the small nation and the Union's close relationship with Italy was a further asset in seeking friendship with Italy.

While San Marino was spared from Italian Unification, the *Risorgimento* ultimately did bring much of Italy together under a single government united around the constitutional monarch centered in Piedmont. A mixture of Piedmontese soldiers, French interventionists, and Italian republicans notably under Garibaldi fought and, in 1860, succeeded in uniting most of northern Italy and all of southern Italy into one nation, the Kingdom of Italy. Throughout the American Civil War, that kingdom, particularly its liberal elements, grew close to an embattled republic on the other side of the Atlantic, the United States of America, and that closeness was mutual. The crowning of Victor Emmanuel II as King of Italy, however, marked only a partial completion of the Italian Unification. Austrian-ruled Veneto, San Marino, and the Papal States remained

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<sup>43</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "To the Regent Captains of the Republic of San Marino," *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 4: 360.

<sup>44</sup> Don H. Doyle, "From San Marino, With Love," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011.

outside the grasps of the *Risorgimento*. Italy's close relationship with the Union, therefore, worsened their relations with the opponents of Italy. Austria reacted to the Union-Italian closeness by opening dialogue and offering to sell some ships to the Confederacy. San Marino, in contrast, drew closer to the United States to help fortify its own position amidst the Italian Unification. The Confederacy's inability to purchase Austrian wooden ships and the Austria's unwillingness to do anything greater, along with Garibaldi's protection of San Marino, blunted the negative impacts of the Union's relationship with Italy with regard to Austria and San Marino. The Papal States, in contrast, reacted to the Union-Italian relationship coldly and showed far greater warmth to the Confederacy than others. In the end, the United States felt that its closeness to Italy was more valuable than any of the real or potential negative consequences that relationship might have caused.



## CHAPTER 2 THE CONFEDERACY AND THE PAPAL STATES

The Papacy's reaction to the Civil War was complex and often misunderstood, and its true nature would be debated for decades after the war ended, the Papal States ceased to exist, and the Italian Unification attained its ultimate success. The Pontiff's relationship with the parties in the Civil War began in the context of an already strained relationship between the Union and the Papacy, a relationship born in the Pope's strong anti-unification, anti-liberal reaction to the Roman Republic. The Union's close ties with the Kingdom of Italy, a kingdom openly desiring to conquer Rome, threatened America's relations with Pope Pius IX. Rather than reaching out to America as a potential ally, the Papal States reacted coldly, much like the Austrian Empire had. From the Vatican's perspective, the United States attempted, unsuccessfully, to employ Giuseppe Garibaldi, a revolutionary who actively sought the Pope's secular downfall; further, an American regiment fought for the United States under the same flag that was flown by the Roman Republic, the same people who drove the Pope into exile a decade earlier.

In the context of a weakened Union-Papal relationship, the Confederacy had the opportunity for diplomatic outreach to Pope Pius IX. The two states shared many things in common: they were both entangled in conflicts where their opponents were trying to subjugate them into larger liberal nations. As a result, the Pope offered his sympathy, but little more. Despite Confederate hopes of Papal recognition, which brought with it the hope of French and Catholic European recognition and even intervention, Pope Pius never recognized Confederate independence. The Confederacy, however, would try to distort the Pope's sympathy into an argument that the Pontiff did recognize the Confederacy for Catholic audiences in the North and

in Ireland. The Papacy, in contrast, had its own motivations: preserving the temporal authority of the Pope. To that end, mediation provided the Papal States with a purpose in the international community that would justify their existence. To that end, the Pope needed to maintain good relations with the United States, preferably a relationship so trusting that the United States would submit itself to Papal mediation. This, however, was hampered by the nature of Union diplomacy.

For the formal policy of the United States toward the Papal States, American Secretary of State William H. Seward, on April 29, 1861, instructed Rufus King, the new American representative in Rome, that he must assure the Pope that the United States “will not violate the friendship already so happily existing by any intervention in the domestic affairs of the States of the Church.” King was to request of the Pope that he remain “a friend to peace, to good order, and to the cause of human nature, which is now, as it always had been, our cause.” The Vatican should also “exercise its great influence in favor of a course of natural justice among nations.”<sup>45</sup> The United States wanted Papal neutrality in exchange for American neutrality in Italian Unification.<sup>46</sup> Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, the Cardinal Secretary of State, second in authority

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<sup>45</sup> United States Department of State, “Message of the President of the United States to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the second session of the thirty-seventh congress (1861),” in *The Foreign Policy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 2003), 291.

<sup>46</sup> This sentiment echoes the overall nature in which the United States had dealt with the Papal States: they treated it as relations with a sovereign country, not as relations with the Catholic Church. Secretary James Buchanan in the first instructions to the first minister to the Papal States:

only to the Pope himself, advocated neutrality, noting that Catholic Americans would not take part in the conflict as Catholics, but only as citizens (see Figure 6). There was, however, a commonality in the outlook of the Papacy and that of the United States. In 1848, it was an insurrection that toppled Papal authority in Rome, just as it was an insurrection in the United States that threatened American unity. Cardinal Antonelli expressed this common distrust for popular uprisings in a private meeting with the American minister, John P. Stockton.<sup>47</sup> Cardinal Antonelli further argued that “the government of his holiness concerns itself mainly in spiritual matters, but we are the supporters of law and order everywhere.”<sup>48</sup>

These Papal communications during the opening weeks of the war reflect the same principle held by the United States during the revolution of 1848 in Rome: do not recognize a revolutionary state until it has proven that it is capable of surviving. As the war continued, the survivability of the Confederacy became more and more apparent to the Papacy. Simultaneously, rather than maintaining strong relations to ensure Papal support for the North or at least

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There is one consideration which you ought always to keep in view in your intercourse with the Papal States. Most if not all the governments which have diplomatic representatives at Rome are connected with the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church. In this respect the government of the United States occupies an entirely different position. It possesses no power whatever over the question of religion. [...] Your efforts, therefore, will be devoted exclusively to the cultivation of the most friendly civil relations with the Papal government and the extension of commerce between the two countries. You will carefully avoid even the appearance of interfering in ecclesiastical questions where these relate to the United States or any other portion of the world.

Stock, “The United States at the Court of Pius IX,” 105.

<sup>47</sup> David J. Alvarez, “The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 69, 2 (April 1983): 230.

<sup>48</sup> United States Department of State, “Message of the President of the United States (1861),” 292.



Figure 6: Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli<sup>49</sup>

neutrality, the United States unofficially severed relations with Pius IX, thanks to incompetent or absent ministers. Rufus King, the incoming United States Minister to the Papal States, never reached Rome. Upon hearing of the outbreak of war, he took a leave of absence to serve as a Union general. Former Wisconsin Governor Alexander Randall was then selected to become the United States' representative in the summer of 1861; Randall delayed his departure for the Italian Peninsula. After Secretary Seward's personal intervention, Randall finally arrived in Rome in late May of 1862, the first minister in Rome in one year and one month. Upon arrival, Randall judged himself unfit for duty as he spoke no foreign languages and lacked the social skills

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<sup>49</sup> Fig. 6, Josef Mukařovský, *Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli*, 1876. Print. "File:Giacomo Antonelli Mukarovsky.png," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

necessary for a royal court; he departed by that summer. His successor, Richard Blatchford arrived by mid-November.<sup>50</sup>

With American diplomatic relations with the Papal States practically nonexistent for the first year and a half of the American Civil War, a fine opportunity presented itself to Confederate diplomats. While the relationship between the Union and the Papacy was maintained because the Pope did not wish to forsake an increasingly victorious government, it was ultimately a relationship built on uncertainty. American liberals nearly recognized the Roman Republic that murdered a close associate of Pius IX. Nor did America hide its desire to see the anti-Papal, Garibaldi fighting amongst its ranks. The Confederate States of America, therefore, had an opportunity to establish cordial relations with Pius IX.

As the tensions between the United States and the Papal States presented the Confederacy with the opportunity for a diplomatic coup, the unique position of the Papal States as the head of the Roman Catholic Church complicated the abilities for nations with a Protestant majority to enter into diplomatic relations. The United States had dealt with this issue when, in the late 1840s, the State Department had refused to enter into relations with the Papacy as a religious power out of respect for the principle of the separation of church and state; they would only negotiate with the Pope as the secular head of central Italy.<sup>51</sup> The Confederacy, in contrast, sought to negotiate with not only the secular rulers of the city of Rome but also those same rulers in their capacity as leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, whose members were widespread in

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<sup>50</sup> Alvarez, "The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War," 231-237.

<sup>51</sup> For further details, see footnote 45. Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX," 105.

the North and in Europe. This approach was only possible for the Confederacy because of the unique position of Catholicism in the South. Despite being overwhelming Protestant, a relatively positive attitude towards Southern Catholicism allowed Confederate diplomats to act far more freely in their interaction with the Papal States, especially with that nation in its capacity as the head of the Catholic Church, than could have been allowed in more nativist regions. The Catholic population was small throughout the United States, 12.1 percent in the North in 1860 and 5.4 percent of the South. The smaller Southern Catholic population meant that, for many Southern Protestants, Papal diplomatic relations were an abstract matter of foreign policy rather than an action that would threaten Protestantism on the home front. Further, Catholics in the South, despite the smaller population, had held the most political liberties. By 1835, no Southern state maintained constitutional restrictions on Catholics and anti-Catholic violence was less widespread than in the North. Partly, this is because several southern states, particularly Maryland, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, and Florida, had native-born Catholic populations, especially in New Orleans, which at one time had the largest Catholic population in the country. In the South, to be a Catholic did not necessarily mean that you were an immigrant, as it often did in the North.<sup>52</sup>

Catholics too acted to reinforce their regional loyalty. The future Confederate envoy to the Papal States, Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina, advocated strongly for the Confederate cause from the very beginning of the war. Upon evacuating Fort Sumter, then-Captain Abner Doubleday, a Union officer at the fort, noted that, “It is worthy of remark that,

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<sup>52</sup> Dennis C. Rousey, “Catholics in the Old South: Their Population, Institutional Development, and Relations with Protestants,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24, 4 (Fall 2006), 5.

after we had left the harbor, Bishop Lynch, of Charleston, threw the Catholic influence in favor of the Secessionists by celebrating the Southern victory by a grand *Te Deum*.”<sup>53</sup> The bishop also made several speeches calling for the Catholic men of Charleston, many of them Irishmen like himself, to enlist in the Confederate Army; his recruiting was noted for its success. As such, he earned the respect of many Southerners regardless of religion.<sup>54</sup>

Further, the anti-Catholic nativism that swept much of the United States in the decade before the Civil War was less persistent in the South and several key Southern individuals had escaped it. Confederate President Jefferson Davis, for example, despite his Episcopalian faith, attended St. Thomas College, a Catholic institution.<sup>55</sup> A larger example of the influence of Catholicism on Southern politics can be seen before the war, in 1848. In that year, the legislature of Louisiana passed a resolution “commendatory of Pope Pius IX, and in favor of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the court of Rome.”<sup>56</sup> This act of the Louisiana Senate and House of Representatives praised Pope Pius IX for his then-reform-minded approach to the governing of central Italy and declared the state’s support for such endeavors. The resolution went as far as to “hail him as the instrument destined by Divine Providence to accomplish the

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<sup>53</sup> Abner Doubleday, “Memoir of Abner Doubleday,” in *Reminiscences of Forts Sumter and Moultrie in 1860-61* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1876), 174.

<sup>54</sup> David Gleeson. *The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 150-154.

<sup>55</sup> William J. Cooper Jr., *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 17.

<sup>56</sup> Legislature of Louisiana to U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. *Resolution of the Legislature of Louisiana Commendatory of Pope Pius IX, and in favor of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the court of Rome*, April 28, 1848, in Proquest Congressional, *Congressional Documents*, last modified 2006, [congressional.proquest.com](http://congressional.proquest.com).

political regeneration of Italy.”<sup>57</sup> The unique position of Southern Catholicism even within the Southern political establishment allowed the Confederacy to pursue close relations with the Pope without risking domestic anti-Catholic fervor in response.

While the tension between the Union and the Papal States presented the Confederacy with the opportunity for diplomacy and the position of Catholicism in the South made it possible, the Confederacy also had the motivation to reach out to Pope Pius IX. The Papacy, a government that controlled only one naval boat and too few troops to be able to maintain its own sovereignty without French support, retained many appealing characteristics for the Confederacy. The support of the Papacy, the Confederacy hoped, would greatly diminish the enthusiasm of Catholic German and Irish immigrants for serving in the Union Army. Further, powerful Catholic political forces in Maryland and Missouri might become increasingly supportive of secession. Catholicism was also a highly influential religion in Europe. With the support of the Pope, Confederates hoped that Catholic European nations might begin to recognize the Confederacy, particularly France which already had troops in nearby Mexico.<sup>58</sup>

Simply being recognized by the Pope, however, did not guarantee universal or even widespread support in Catholic European countries. France, in particular, had a lengthy history of conflict between two ideological factions within its Catholic population, the pro-Papal ultramontane faction and the nationalist Gallican faction. The Frenchmen who held the

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<sup>57</sup> Legislature of Louisiana, *Resolution of the Legislature of Louisiana Commendatory of Pope Pius IX*. It should be remembered that these comments came before the rise and fall of the Roman Republic and, therefore, before Pius IX experienced a political conversion as a result, changing from the liberal reformer the resolution praises to a steadfast conservative.

<sup>58</sup> John Bigelow, “The Southern Confederacy and the Pope,” *The North American Review* 157, 443 (October 1893): 462.



ultramontane ideology advocated for direct Papal control of the Catholic Church in France as well as recognized the Pope's right to direct intervention in the political affairs of European nations. Gallicanism, in contrast, supported greater autonomy for the French Catholic Church, deriving its own name from that of ancient Gaul, an older name for what is now France. This desire for autonomy from Roman control extended into politics, as many Gallicanists refuted Papal political influence. As such, many Gallicanists supported, or at least did not oppose, Italian unification. It should be remembered that Gallicanism was, in fact, an ideology deriving from the Catholic Church and whose adherents were themselves Catholics, up to and including French Catholic bishops. This religio-political dichotomy repeated itself throughout much of the Catholic world.<sup>59</sup> As such, Confederate hopes to use Papal recognition to bring about diplomatic recognition from Catholic nations hinged on the balance of power between the ultramontane factions and the Gallicanist factions in France or their equivalents in any given Catholic country; even an overt and emphatic announcement of Papal support for the Confederacy would not necessarily draw the diplomatic recognition of every Catholic-dominated nation.

While Papal recognition was certainly not a one-step solution to the Confederacy's diplomatic woes, it nonetheless held valuable potential. The ideal situation for the Confederacy was not just an international consensus to bring about domestic pressure, but rather for a pro-Confederate military intervention, most notably by the French who were well-situated. In December 1861, a dispute over the failure of Mexico to pay its foreign debts resulted in a multinational presence in the Confederacy's southern neighbor. When intimidation failed, the

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<sup>59</sup> Antoine Dégert, "Gallicanism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909): 351-356; Umberto Benigni, "Ultramontanism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), 125.

military campaign commenced. The invasion, however, progressed further than several nations were willing to go. The British and Spanish forces withdrew as it became clear that Napoleon III did not desire simply to seek restitution of the financial debts but rather to conquer the entire nation. In June of 1863, three months before Jefferson Davis penned his letter to Pope Pius IX, French troops seized Mexico City. At the height of the French occupation of Mexico, the French Imperial Army had over 40,000 troops in that country and in April 1864 went so far as imposing a hand-selected emperor, the Austrian Archduke, Maximilian.<sup>60</sup> With such events occurring across the Confederate-Mexican border, Confederate diplomats wanted the French, with an army already present in the region, to aid them in their own war. Further, despite the relatively small size of the French forces, many Confederates remembered that it was with the aid of the French military that the Patriots won the American Revolution.<sup>61</sup>

Confederate negotiations directly with the French government did not progress to diplomatic recognition let alone French military aid. Using the pressure of the Papacy, however, might have proven to be a more fruitful tactic in rousing French support. After all, French willingness to support the Papacy militarily had been well fortified when the French government sent its armies into central Italy to restore Pius IX to his Papal throne in 1849, bringing an end to the Roman Republic. Further, once the French returned the Pope to his temporal power, they remained, posing a potent deterrent to any military attempts at unification. The significance of the Papal influence should not be underestimated. In France, the former President and later

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<sup>60</sup> James Robbins Jewell, "French Imperialists and Mexican Republicans: Dangers Along the Southwestern Border During the Civil War," *Journal of the West* 51, 3 (Summer 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Phillip Thomas Tucker, *The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain: Father John B. Bannon* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 163.

Emperor Napoleon III had been involved in pro-unification politics while in exile in Italy following the collapse of his uncle Napoleon I's empire. In 1859, Napoleon III used his forces to fight alongside the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia against the Austrian Empire, eventually aiding in the conquest of Lombardy for the cause of the Italian unification.<sup>62</sup> As such, Pius IX receiving protection from the French Army, an army who directly aided the Pope's enemies elsewhere on the Italian Peninsula, showed the extent of the political influence of the Papacy, particularly through the religio-political ideology of ultramontanism.

During Napoleon III's reign, ultramontane French political forces wielded significant influence, challenging the French *Italianissimes*, the Gallicanists who aggressively desired support for a united Italy. The conflict between the ultramontane and the Gallicanist *Italianissimes* divided French political parties and even French Catholics. To compromise between the competing political interests, the Emperor decided to support Italy in places where its growth would not directly threaten the Papacy, but where it did threaten Rome, France would support the Pope.<sup>63</sup> As such, Papal recognition of the Confederacy might have only had limited influence in France, restricted to the ultramontane politicians, albeit the ultramontane political forces could have succeeded in a persuading French action as it did in central Italy.

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<sup>62</sup> The French involvement in the Italian-Austrian War of 1859 (also known as the Second War of Italian Independence) was not without payment. France was "given" by Piedmont-Sardinia the coastal city of Nice and the Alpine region of Savoy, both of which remain a part of France to this day. The former was particularly vexing for the revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi. Garibaldi was born in Nice and showed much anger when his hometown was left outside the borders of a united Italy. Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 78, 80.

<sup>63</sup> James McMillan, *Napoleon III: Profiles in Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Although Papal support could not guarantee Catholic European support, it could lead to significant success in pursuing that goal. As such, the Confederacy had strong motivations to seek diplomatic recognition from the Papacy. Catholicism was a powerful political force in many Catholic countries, particularly in Europe. Papal support for the Confederacy, therefore, could serve as leverage pushing European leaders to follow the Papal example and endorse Confederate independence. The ultimate endorsement, however, could only fully be done by the French Emperor given his position in neighboring Mexico: military intervention. Papal support, even if it had happened, should not be exaggerated though. Catholics, then and now, do not follow the political authority of the Pope absolutely as though he were a universal dictator of Catholics. Political divisions existed throughout the Catholic world, especially in France, between the supports of the Pope politically and those who restricted his influence to only matters of religion. As such, even the strongest and most unambiguous letter of Pope Pius would only rouse Catholic support where the Pope's political supporters held political control of their nation's foreign policy. That possibility of support, though, if it did materialize as a result of Papal recognition, could have altered the course of the war.

Armed with opportunity as a result of American-Papal tensions, ability as a result of the position of Catholicism in the South, and motivation as a result of the Union's recruitment of Catholic immigrants and particularly the geopolitical position of Catholic France, the Confederacy began to engage diplomatically with the Roman Pontiff in 1862. As part of a larger effort to gain recognition for the Confederacy from various states throughout Europe, Confederate President Jefferson Davis appointed three commissioners to represent the Confederacy in Europe: Pierre A. Rost, William L. Yancey, and Ambrose Dudley Mann (see

Figure 7).<sup>64</sup> The last would eventually travel to Rome and prove decisive in Confederate relations there, acting as the messenger and an interpreter of messages between the Papal and Confederate governments.



Figure 7: The Hon. A. Dudley Mann, one of the three commissioners of the Confederate States of America to Europe<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph O. Baylen and William W. White, "A. Dudley Mann's Mission in Europe, 1863-1864: An Unpublished Letter to Jefferson Davis," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 69, 3 (July 1961): 324.

<sup>65</sup> Fig. 7, John Watkins, *The Hon. A. Dudley Mann, one of the three commissioners of the Confederate States of America to Europe*, 1861. Print. "File:The Hon. A. Dudley Mann, One of the Three Commissioners of the Confederate States of America to Europe.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

The attempts at gaining diplomatic recognition for the Confederacy from the Papacy began in response to an event on October 18, 1862, when Pius IX sent two letters to America: one to the Archbishop of New York, John Hughes, and the other to the Archbishop of New Orleans, Jean-Marie Odin.<sup>66</sup> These men served as the archbishops of the largest dioceses in the North and the South, respectively. By late 1862, the bloodshed caused by the war led Pius IX to call for peace; the letter sent to both sides of the conflict served that purpose. The letter to Archbishop Hughes, for example, urged him “to exhort, with your eminent piety and episcopal zeal, your clergy and faithful to offer up their prayers, and also apply all your study and exertion, with the people and their chief ruler, to restore forthwith the desired tranquility and peace by which the happiness of both the Christian and the civil republic is principally maintained.” Pius IX asked that he take “every pains[sic], besides, to cause the people and their chief rulers seriously to reflect on the grievous evils with which they are afflicted, and which are the result of civil war, the direst, most destructive and dismal of all the evils that could befall a people or nation.” Archbishop Odin received the same message.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Both Archbishop Hughes of New York and Archbishop Odin of New Orleans were foreigners by birth, the former being an Irishman and the latter being a Frenchman. Archbishop Hughes served as archbishop from 1842 until his death in 1864; Archbishop Odin served from February of 1861 until 1870. Both men were staunch supporters of Pius IX and their respective governments. Archbishop Hughes helped represent Union interests in Europe during the war and Archbishop Odin was a noted supporter of the Confederacy. Anthony B. Lalli and Thomas H. O’Connor, “Roman Views on the American Civil War,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 57, 1 (April 1971): 24; Willard E. Wight and Jean-Marie Odin, “A Letter from the Archbishop of New Orleans, 1862,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 2, 2 (Spring, 1962): 129-130.

<sup>67</sup> “Some Civil War Documents: A.D. 1862-1864,” *The American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 14 (1903): 264-266.

Although New Orleans had already been under Union occupation for five months when Pope Pius wrote his letter to the Archbishop of that city, Confederate President Jefferson Davis decided to respond personally to the Pope, writing in September of 1863. Davis did not do so simply as a gesture of politeness or gratitude but rather as part of a concerted diplomatic effort to gain the Pope's favor and, ideally, full diplomatic recognition. One important figure in this decision was a Confederate Catholic chaplain, born in Ireland and living in Missouri, Father John Bannon. Father Bannon was approached by the Confederate government and asked to lead a mission to Ireland to try to dissuade Irishmen from immigrating to the North and enlisting in its military. The timing was important as manpower was increasingly an issue as Irish immigration to the North continued and even grew as Northern recruitment efforts expanded. Before departing for Europe, Father Bannon met with Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin and President Davis in Richmond in the opening days of September, 1863. The priest, in those meetings, suggested that the Confederacy open discussions with Pope Pius IX with the intention of gaining Papal diplomatic recognition to not only aid in his counter-recruitment in Ireland but also as part of a larger Confederate diplomatic effort to gain widespread recognition in Europe.<sup>68</sup>

Davis's heartfelt expression of thanks to Pope Pius IX on September 23, 1863, was coupled with his own prayers for peace: "we have offered at the foot-stool of our Father who is

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<sup>68</sup> Tucker, *The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain*, 162-163. It should be noted that while Tucker heavily cited the writings of Father Bannon, his analysis has a tendency to exaggerate the influence of Father Bannon, likely a result of too readily accepting Father Bannon's boasts as wholly accurate or seeing certain events or decisions as wholly the result of Father Bannon's influences that were more truthfully only partly the result of the priest's influences. It should be noted though that while some of Tucker's assertions should be tempered, one should not overreact by underestimating the influence of Father Bannon either.

in Heaven prayers inspired by the same feelings which animate your Holiness.”<sup>69</sup> He echoed the Pope’s own call for peace as requested of the two archbishops. In doing so, President Davis presented himself and his nation as righteous peacemakers that had no part in the cause or perpetuation of the war. Given the nature of a two-sided war, Davis was suddenly redirecting the Pope’s call for peace from being aimed at both sides of the conflict to solely the Union. Further, Davis’s argument expounded on the very heart of Confederate motivations in regard to the conflict, stating that the Confederate people “desire no evil to our enemies, nor do we covet any of their possessions, but are only struggling to the end that they shall cease to devastate our land and inflict useless and cruel slaughter upon our people, and that we be permitted to live at peace with all mankind, under our own laws and institutions, which protect every man in the enjoyment not only of his temporal rights, but of worshipping God according to his own faith.”<sup>70</sup> Davis cunningly stressed that freedom of religion for Catholics, among others groups, was at the very core of the Confederacy’s existence, insinuating that, as the war was one for independence, such freedom for Catholics was not present in the Union.

In October, Father John Bannon arrived in Rome to meet with the Pope before traveling to Ireland. In his talk with Pius IX, the Irish priest from Missouri defended the Confederacy, argued for the moral superiority of the Confederate cause, and attacked the Union’s use of foreign soldiers. Father Bannon felt the Pope reacted positively to the Confederate cause.<sup>71</sup> It has been suggested that at this meeting, Father Bannon hand-delivered President Davis’s letter to the

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<sup>69</sup> “Some Civil War Documents,” 268-269.

<sup>70</sup> “Some Civil War Documents,” 268-269.

<sup>71</sup> Tucker, *The Confederacy’s Fighting Chaplain*, 167-168.



Pontiff,<sup>72</sup> but that occurred more formally a few weeks later. In November 1863,<sup>73</sup> A. Dudley Mann presented a copy of Jefferson Davis's letter to the Pope in an audience with Pius IX and Cardinal Antonelli. At that meeting, Mann reiterated many of the arguments Father Bannon made, using the opportunity to further weaken the Papal-Union relationship by attacking the Northern policy of recruiting European, mostly Catholic, immigrants into the Union Army to serve, as Mann and Father Bannon argued, in the most dangerous positions as cannon fodder. Mann defended the Southern institution of slavery, arguing the central government could not act on the issue because of the separation of state and centralized powers and that Southern slaves lived better lives than free blacks.<sup>74</sup> London newspapers reported on the meeting.<sup>75</sup> They

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<sup>72</sup> "Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie," *Civilian and Telegraph* (Cumberland, Maryland), April 14, 1864, quoting the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*. Tucker (167, 171) does not definitively state that Father Bannon delivered the letter, although he does repeatedly suggest the possibility that it could have been delivered by him, either solely or in addition to A. Dudley Mann. Evidence from the Confederate records shows directions from Secretary Judah Benjamin to Mann directing him to deliver the letter from Jefferson Davis to Pope Pius. As such, Tucker's suggestion of the possibility that Father Bannon solely provided the pope with the letter is inaccurate. Likewise, many historians (eg. Alvarez, Stock) solely credit Mann with the delivery as a result of Benjamin's letter; the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, as quoted in an April, 1864, syndication, does attribute the delivery to Father Bannon, conflicting with historians who solely reply of Benjamin's letter. While a statement in an Ohio newspaper is certainly not definitive, it does suggest that Tucker's assertion that Father Bannon and A. Dudley Mann both delivered the letter may be closer to accurate. A further claimant of delivery, albeit wholly in jest, is John Slidell, who is sarcastically attributed with the delivery of the letter to the Pope to highlight Slidell's personal immorality. "Jeff. Davis and the Pope," *Daily Kansas Tribune* (Lawrence, Kansas), February 4, 1864.

<sup>73</sup> There are conflicting reports regarding the exact date of the meeting, possibly due to the meeting being conducted over several days or confusion between a meeting with the pope and meetings with Cardinal Antonelli. It has been listed as November 9 (Alvarez), November 11 (Tucker), and November 17 (*Daily Ohio Statesman* quoting an unnamed newspaper in London).

<sup>74</sup> Alvarez, "The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War," 241-242.

<sup>75</sup> The articles in the London newspaper were reported in the United States on December 31, 1863, in the *Daily Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, Ohio).

characterized the meeting far more directly. They reported that the Confederate purpose was more radical than simply an attempt to strengthen relations; rather, they wrote that the Confederacy openly invited the Pope to mediate the Civil War. In reply, “The Pope is reported to have answered to the envoys of President Davis, whom he received with affectionate simplicity, that he would feel himself happy to fulfill [sic] such a holy mission of his ministry, if President Lincoln, following the example of Mr. Davis, would consent to accept the paternal intervention of the Vicar of Christ.”<sup>76</sup> The article never received widespread syndication and conflicted in some details with other known facts, principally the date of the meeting, but it did reveal a certain understanding of the Papal-Confederate relationship: the sense that the Papacy wanted to support the Confederacy.

On December 3, Pope Pius IX replied to Jefferson Davis directly. In his letter, the Pope thanked President Davis for sending his envoys and for his response to the Pope’s letter to the Archbishops of New York and New Orleans. In summarizing his letter to the American archbishops, the Pontiff expressed his own intentions toward the Civil War. “They should employ their most earnest efforts, in our name also, in order that the fatal civil war which is arisen in the States should end, and that the people of America made again enjoy mutual peace

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<sup>76</sup> *Daily Ohio Statesman*, December 31, 1863.

and concord, and love each other with mutual charity.”<sup>77</sup> Noting his own desire for peace, the Pope acknowledged and praised President Davis’s desires as expressed in the president’s letter to the Pope: “it has been very gratifying to us to recognize, Illustrious and Honorable Sir, that you and your people are animated by the same desire for peace and tranquility which we had so earnestly inculcated in our aforesaid letters to the Venerable Brethren above named.”<sup>78</sup> In reference to the North, the Pope wrote, “Oh, that the other people also of the States and their rulers, considering seriously how cruel and how deplorable is this intestine war, would receive and embrace the council of peace and tranquility.”<sup>79</sup> Pius concluded by promising Davis his continued prayers for peace and saying that he also prays “to the same most merciful Lord that He will illumine Your Excellency with the light His divine grace and unite you with ourselves perfect charity.”<sup>80</sup> The letter did acknowledge a Confederate desire for peace and, by its request

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<sup>77</sup> “Correspondence between His Excellency President Davis and His Holiness Pope Pius IX,” *Daily Progress* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 25, 1864. As the letter of Pope Pius IX was originally written in Latin and was received by different people in different ways, there is no official translation. That being said, the version used for these quotes is the version that appeared in Southern newspapers. Ultimately, the variations between the letters were minimal, with the translation appearing in the Northern press being arguably least accurate as it passed from Latin to English through France. One pronoun in that translation was also replaced with its noun creating, although not necessarily inaccurately, an emphasis that was not present in the Latin. This is further discussed below. With the other translations being largely inconsequential, the translation that appeared in the Southern press holds the distinction of being both contemporary and likely the version read by many members of the Confederate government; the other translations were written after the war concluded.

<sup>78</sup> “Correspondence between His Excellency President Davis and His Holiness Pope Pius IX,” *Daily Progress* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 25, 1864.

<sup>79</sup> “Correspondence between His Excellency President Davis and His Holiness Pope Pius IX,” *Daily Progress* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 25, 1864.

<sup>80</sup> “Correspondence between His Excellency President Davis and His Holiness Pope Pius IX,” *Daily Progress* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 25, 1864.

for the Union to embrace peace, it suggested that the North lacked such a desire. The Pope held a unique political position in writing his letter; he could empathize with the Confederacy. Pope Pius was, like the Confederacy, embroiled in a conflict that sought to unite a nation by seizing his country. Further, the United States, like the Italian Kingdom, was seen as a force of liberalism, trying to impose liberal abolitionism upon the South, as the Confederacy argued, whereas the Italians sought to impose liberal democracy and constitutionalism. Despite sympathy the Pope expressed, the letter took no direct side in the war other than a wish for its peaceful end, albeit in a manner sympathetic to the Confederacy.

It was not the content of the letter, however, that drew the attention of millions but its salutation. Pope Pius IX addressed his letter “to the Illustrious and Honorable Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America.”<sup>81</sup> By calling Davis the “President,” A. Dudley Mann immediately concluded that the letter served as a formal recognition of the Confederacy. If Jefferson Davis’s title of President of the Confederate States of America was recognized as legitimate, then the body that presented Davis with that title, the Confederacy itself, must therefore be legitimate too. If a nation refused to recognize the independence of the Confederacy, meaning that the Confederate government was itself illegitimate, then its president would, in effect, be the president of nothing, legally speaking. Therefore, it could be argued that to recognize the legitimacy of Jefferson Davis as a President would, by extension, recognize the government over which he presided. As such, Mann wrote Davis that “this letter will grace the archives of the Executive Office in all coming time. It will live, too, forever in [hi]story as the

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<sup>81</sup> “Correspondence between His Excellency President Davis and His Holiness Pope Pius IX,” *Daily Progress* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 25, 1864.

production of the first Potentate who formally recognized your official position and accorded to one of the diplomatic representatives of the Confederate States an audience in an established Court Palace.”<sup>82</sup>

Mann, however, was known to exaggerate even the smallest trivialities.<sup>83</sup> Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin (see Figure 8) viewed the salutation differently. He noted that “this phrase of [Pius IX’s] letter shows that his address to the President as ‘President of the Confederate States’ is a formula of politeness to his correspondent, not a political recognition of a fact.”<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, in 1864, the Confederacy sent the Bishop of Charleston, Patrick N. Lynch (see Figure 9), to Rome to represent the Confederacy. The United States, closely watching the situation, demanded assurances that the acceptance of Bishop Lynch would not be a sign of the Papacy’s recognition of Confederate independence. Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli then comforted the United States by insisting that Bishop Lynch would only be received as a Catholic Bishop, not as a Confederate diplomat.<sup>85</sup>

While the Pope’s letter expressed sympathy towards the Confederacy, that expression never resulted in serious action. The Pope’s intentions toward both sides of the Civil War were far more complex than simply disliking the Union and showing sympathy for the Confederacy.

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<sup>82</sup> “Some Civil War Documents,” 273-274.

<sup>83</sup> A. Dudley Mann had served as Assistant Secretary of State at the same time that Jefferson Davis served as Secretary of War; they developed a personal friendship. As such, Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin was forced to tolerate Mann’s exaggerations as Mann’s influence was the result of Davis’s favor. Baylen, “A. Dudley Mann’s Mission in Europe, 1863-1864,” 324.

<sup>84</sup> “Some Civil War Documents,” 272.

<sup>85</sup> Lalli, “Roman Views on the American Civil War,” 24.

While the animosity and compassion did exist and guide the Papacy's diplomacy in many respects, larger geopolitical strategies blunted the impact of Pope Pius's emotion. As such,

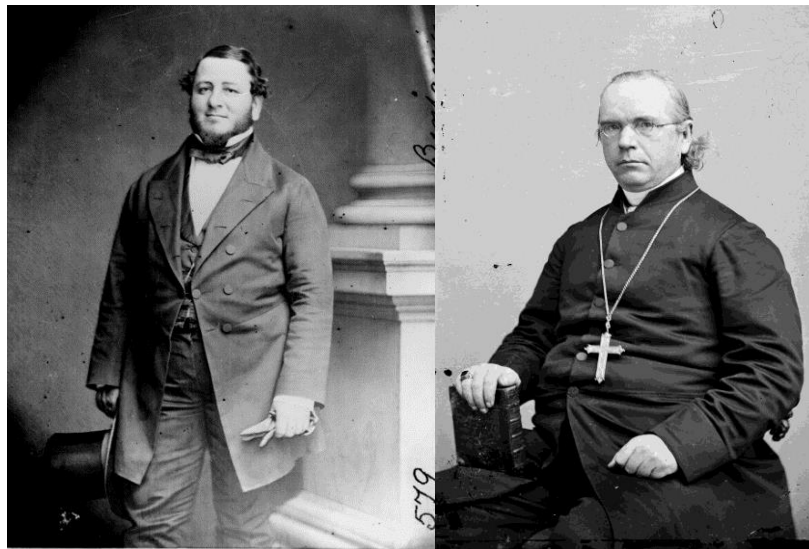


Figure 8: Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin<sup>86</sup> (left); and Figure 9: Confederate Representative to the Papal States Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston<sup>87</sup> (right)

Southern sympathies in the Vatican did not bring substantive support. Northern victories, particularly the fall of New Orleans, began to shift Papal opinion towards an inevitable American reunification. Furthermore, for the Papacy, the offenses of the United States with the *Risorgimento* were minor relative to larger geopolitical threats. Cardinal Antonelli made the Papacy's desires known in 1862, saying that the United States "should in some way cripple England."<sup>88</sup> England had, since the reign of King Henry VIII, been a strong rival to Papal influence in Europe. As such, a united and strong United States would be a valuable

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<sup>86</sup> Fig. 8, Mathew Brady, *Judah Benjamin*, circa 1860-1865. Photograph. "File:Judah Benjamin.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

<sup>87</sup> Fig. 9, Mathew Brady, *Bishop Lynch*, circa 1855-1865. Photograph. "File:Patrick Lynch bishop - Brady-Handy.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

<sup>88</sup> Alvarez, "The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War," 235.

counterweight to British power.<sup>89</sup> Both Pius IX and Cardinal Antonelli believed that the British sought to undermine the Pope's secular control over the Papal States.<sup>90</sup> As such, the Pope's view of the United States was paradoxical. The Papacy disliked America in part because of its closeness to Italy and, on the other hand, the Papacy tolerated America as a counterweight to Britain. Pope Pius IX, therefore, could see value in whoever won the Civil War.

The internal conflict in the Pope's view of the Civil War, sympathy towards the Confederacy and begrudging tolerance of the Union, actually served the Papacy's ultimate strategic interests. Maintaining amicable relations with both sides of the American Civil War was a necessity if the Papacy was to fill its desired role: mediator. The Pope saw Great Britain, which controlled Canada, and France, which recently invaded Mexico, as too close to the combatants to provide unbiased mediation, as well as too powerful and wanting to see a weaker America. As such, a neutral smaller European power, such as the Papal States, could mediate more effectively.<sup>91</sup> In addition to genuine Christian morality, the pleas for peace that the Pope issued served as a request to cease combat so that a mediator could end the political dispute without more bloodshed. This desire is reiterated in the reports originating in the London press, previously discussed, in which Confederate envoys asked for papal mediation; Pope Pius's response was wholly positive, albeit pointless without Union cooperation.<sup>92</sup> For Pius IX,

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<sup>89</sup> Part of this effort was through Cardinal Antonelli advising the United States to take a conciliatory attitude towards Britain in the wake of the *Trent* Affair, as British intervention in the Civil War would only serve to further weaken America at the benefit of the British Empire. Alvarez, "The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War," 235.

<sup>90</sup> Alvarez, "The Papacy in the Diplomacy in the American Civil War," 233.

<sup>91</sup> Lalli, "Roman Views on the American Civil War," 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Ohio Statesman*, December 31, 1863.

mediating the American conflict could greatly help his position on the Italian Peninsula.

Understanding both parties through his own participation in governing a country, Pius hoped to show that a secular state ruled by the Pope could provide a beneficial service to the international community. If so, then there would have been an increased possibility for him to overcome the threat of Italian unification through greater international support.

The Papacy, therefore, interacted with the parties of the Civil War in a complex manner. Sympathy towards the Confederacy and animosity towards the Union drove the Pope to personally write a sympathetic letter to Jefferson Davis. That letter, however, never amounted to the recognition some desired; the Pontiff was unwilling to sever its links with the Union despite the tension. In the context of the Italian Unification, the Pope could further the survival of his secular rule by gaining the confidence of both sides and helping to negotiate peace between them. The Union's refusal to negotiate an end of the war, however, rendered the Pope's goals unattainable. The sympathy the Pope showed towards the Confederacy never amounted to full recognition, concrete actions, or even open support.

Although not amounting to actual recognition, the ambiguity of the Pope's letter presented the Confederacy with the opportunity to behave as though the letter was an expression of recognition. The Confederates nevertheless failed to convince the ultramontane factions of France and other Catholic European nations to militarily aid or even just recognize the Confederacy. Catholic German and Irish immigrants as well as Irishmen in Ireland, in contrast, did prove to be susceptible to the Confederacy's use of the letter when foreign governments were not. As such, the Confederacy, through the manipulation of the Pope's letter, made several efforts to reduce the enlistment of Catholic immigrants both in America and in Ireland. These actions began in the pro-recognition interpretations of the Pope's letter made by Confederate



newspapermen and quickly gained governmental participation in the actions of the Confederate agent in Ireland.

Not only did the largely positive position of Catholicism in the antebellum and wartime South enable the Confederacy to approach the Papal States diplomatically, it also found expressions in how the people reacted to that relationship. The Confederate press not only actively accepted their government's relationship with the Catholic Church, they praised the relationship, particularly the letter Pope Pius IX wrote to Jefferson Davis. For example, although noting dissention, a correspondent of the *Times-Picayune* in occupied New Orleans, the center of Southern Catholicism, noted that "one of our journals asserts that the address, 'Illustrious and Honorable President,' is a virtual acknowledgement by that distinguished personage of the 'Independence of the Southern Confederacy.'"<sup>93</sup> The praise for the content of the letter was even extended to the quality of the Pope's writing skills. While publishing the widespread Southern translation of the letter, the *Way of the World* of Greensboro, North Carolina, added to the standard introduction a praise of the letter as "something so high-toned, so noble and characteristic" in the quality of the letter beyond simply its content.<sup>94</sup> The *Richmond Dispatch* went even further, describing the letter as "a masterpiece of composition, one of the very happiest efforts of a pen which 'touches nothing that it does not adorn.'"<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "Letter from Antelope," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), January 26, 1864.

<sup>94</sup> "Correspondence between President Davis and Pope Pius IX," *Way of the World* (Greensboro, North Carolina), February 4, 1864. For another example, see the *Richmond Whig* as quoted in "The Rebels and the Pope," *Cleveland Daily Leader*, February 17, 1864.

<sup>95</sup> "Pius IX," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 3, 1864.

As a result of the Pope's supposedly pro-Confederate position, the Southern press fiercely defended the Pontiff. The *Washington Chronicle*, edited by John W. Forney, a close friend of President Lincoln, issued one attack that several Confederate papers felt needed repudiation. In the pro-Union article, Forney's paper argued that the tone of the Pope's writing will find no sympathy among "loyal Americans," particularly noting that the Pope's expression that the North would come to desire peace as insinuating that the Northern population is composed of warmongers, in addition to the letter's pro-Southern statements.<sup>96</sup> Decrying the "harsh terms" expressed about the Pope's letter, one Confederate paper attacked the *Chronicle* saying, "The *Chronicle* is Lincoln's dirt-thrower, and Forney is his lick-spittle, and yet Forney was once supposed to be a white man, and tolerably decent."<sup>97</sup>

Several other newspapers wrote lengthy articles analyzing why the letter was written and what it meant. Perhaps, given the smaller Catholic population, the Southern press felt a greater need to explain why the Confederacy chose to engage diplomatically with the Papal States. One article written to explain why a relationship with the Pope was sought systematically explained the role of the Pope in diplomacy. It noted the prevalence of Catholicism in Europe and elsewhere. It further showed how, in the hierarchical Catholic Church, the words of the Pope would be held in higher regard than those of pro-Union clerics such as Archbishop Hughes of New York. With those arguments made, the newspaper revealed how they would dissuade Catholic immigrants from enlisting in the Union's armies.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser* (Edgefield, South Carolina), February 10, 1864.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Journal* (Wilmington, North Carolina), February 8, 1864.

<sup>98</sup> "Pius IX," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 3, 1864.

The Confederate press even took steps to exaggerate that relationship by claiming that the letter was a formal recognition, although it was not. Although some of this mischaracterization could have been a result of ignorance, for some it was undoubtedly intentional. While the lack of a formal and explicit recognition would blunt the impact of the Pope's words to diplomatic audiences, outright exaggerations could be unhesitatingly accepted by those with little care for formality or the resources to question the documents: the Irish and German Catholic immigrants in the North and in Ireland. The Confederate press was certainly aware that a pro-Confederate interpretation of the letters would have a deterring effect on the Union enlistment of Catholics.

One Southern Catholic more than any other took full advantage of treating the Pope's letter as though it constituted recognition: Father John Bannon of St. Louis, Missouri (see Figure 10). After serving as a Confederate chaplain in the besieged port of Vicksburg, Father Bannon was sent to Ireland to attempt to curtail Union recruitment there, as previously discussed. With the approval of Archbishop Sean Cullen of Dublin, Father Bannon hung bills in Dublin churches and sent letters to the country parishes in which he emphatically defended Southern nationalism and decried what he described as Northern mistreatment of Catholics and their use of Irishmen as cannon fodder.<sup>99</sup> Although no nation recognized the Confederacy as a result of the actions of Pope Pius IX, especially as the Pope failed to explicitly and unambiguously recognize the Confederacy, Father Bannon was able to make the argument that the Pope had extended support and recognition widespread in Ireland. A Catholic newspaper in Cincinnati, the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, was actually confronted with a handbill from Ireland that presented the letters between the Pope and Jefferson Davis and claimed Pope Pius's support and advocacy for

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<sup>99</sup> Tucker, *The Confederacy's Fighting Chaplain*, 169-178.



Figure 10: Antebellum image of Father John Bannon of St. Louis<sup>100</sup>

the Confederacy. The handbill was signed under the pseudonym “Sacredos,” Latin for “priest.” The Cincinnati newspaper immediately identified it as the work of the Confederate agent in Ireland, Father Bannon.<sup>101</sup> This handbill was likely Father Bannon’s most forceful work, his “Address to the Catholic Clergy and People of Ireland.” In it, the Confederate priest potently argued that “As a priest of the Catholic Church, I am anxious to see the desires of the Holy Father realized speedily, and therefore have taken this means [the poster] to lay before you the expression of his sentiments on the subject of the American War, knowing that no Catholic will persevere in the advocacy of an aggression condemned by his Holiness.”<sup>102</sup> In arguing so, Father Bannon manipulated Pope Pius’s condemnation of the war into a Pontifically-ordained duty for

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<sup>100</sup> Fig. 10, Tucker, *The Confederacy’s Fighting Chaplain*, 5.

<sup>101</sup> “Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie,” *Civilian and Telegraph* (Cumberland, Maryland), April 14, 1864. The article quotes the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*. Note that Father John Bannon’s name is misspelled as “Bannan” in the article.

<sup>102</sup> Tucker, *The Confederacy’s Fighting Chaplain*, 176. Bracketed text was inserted by Tucker.

all Catholics to avoid the war, which meant in the circumstances in Ireland the avoidance of Union recruiters.

While Father Bannon made many forceful arguments against Irish enlistment, a pro-recognition interpretation of the Pope's letter to President Davis was widely used in dissuading Irish recruitment. The Pope's letter, along with Father Bannon's larger efforts and a pro-Confederate article in Irish newspapers by exiled Irish nationalist John Mitchell, were singled out in a *New York Times* foreign correspondent's article as among the principle means dissuading Irishmen from entering the war;<sup>103</sup> a similar understanding of relative importance is noted in the *London Times* while assessing Irish placards.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the prominence of this argument is noted by the fact that the handbills printed and distributed in Ireland could even be found in the Union, as noted in the aforementioned *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* article.<sup>105</sup> Beyond the Confederate interpretations of the Pope's letter that were presented to the Irish people, several Irish newspapers themselves engaged in the debate by providing the letters free of interpretation for Irish readers. On January 3, 1864, the *Irish Times* of Dublin published, without interpretation or analysis, the text of Jefferson Davis's letter to Pope Pius IX and the Pope's response.<sup>106</sup> On January 9, 1864, the *Irish People*, also of Dublin, followed suit publishing the same.<sup>107</sup> The letters themselves were taken from the Parisian newspaper *La France* which published French

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<sup>103</sup> "The American War in England," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, February 23, 1864.

<sup>104</sup> *The Times* (London), March 8, 1864.

<sup>105</sup> "Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie," *Civilian and Telegraph* (Cumberland, Maryland), April 14, 1864.

<sup>106</sup> "The Pope and President Davis," *The Irish Times* (Dublin), January 3, 1864.

<sup>107</sup> "The Pope and President Davis," *The Irish People* (Dublin), January 9, 1864.

translations of both Jefferson Davis's letter originally written in English and Pope Pius's letter originally written in Latin; the Irish newspapers used a widely transmitted English translation of the French translation, albeit keeping to British spelling conventions.

The attempts by Catholic clerics such as Father Bannon and Bishop Lynch to lessen Irish enlistment in the Union Army and increase Irish enlistment in the Confederate Army shows that the Confederacy believed that many Catholic immigrants or would-be immigrants would hold the ultimately inaccurate opinions of the clergy in high enough regard to influence their decisions to enlist. If this belief was as true and as universal as the Confederacy's desires, a Papal declaration of recognition and support for the Confederacy had a significant potential in actually influencing the military course of the war by hurting Union recruitment. While there are some indications that Irish immigrants and German Catholic immigrants enlisted at disproportionately lower levels,<sup>108</sup> demonstrating why some Catholic groups enlisted in fewer numbers is impossible. It is also difficult to argue that all Catholic groups enlisted at lower rates than Protestants. While many Catholics undoubtedly chose not to enlist on the basis of the Confederate interpretations of the Pope's letter, it is impossible to enumerate how many Catholic Northerners who did not fight in the Civil War chose not to do so as a result of this one motivation, either alone or in association with other motivations. In Ireland, while Father Bannon did not end Irish immigration to the North, Confederate diplomats in London believed, although the figures were certainly inflated, that the priest may have cut Irish recruitment by the Union by

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<sup>108</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 606.

as much as two-thirds.<sup>109</sup> The claims of the Confederate agents are, like the numbers regarding American enlistment, difficult to verify. It is impossible to count how many Irishmen considered immigrating to the North then later changed their mind as a result of this one argument. The exaggerations of the Confederate agents do, though, reveal that to some extent Father Bannon's arguments did have some success, albeit unmeasurable. Although diplomatic efforts failed in Catholic Europe, the Pope's letter to Jefferson Davis, even though it did not actually constitute recognition, did have some implications on the Civil War by causing some Catholics not to enlist as a result of the misrepresentation of the views of Pope Pius IX. While several newspapers in the United States and the British Isles corroborated the influence of Father Bannon's use of the letter, unfortunately little evidence has survived to definitively state or disprove the exact degree of influence that the Papacy's alleged sentiments had on Catholic enlistment. The influence of both those in America who chose not to enlist and those in Ireland who decided not to come as a result of the letter was likely very small.

The reaction of Northern Catholics to the Confederate allegations regarding the Pope's letter, at least the reaction of those Catholics of a high enough profile to have their sentiments preserved in the Northern press, stand in sharp contrast to the Confederacy. Those surviving Catholic voices are those of the editors and writers of Catholic newspapers, people who spoke directly to the Catholic communities and, to a certain extent, for those communities. Given their positions as newspapermen, they publicly spoke in manners far more politically engaged than that of Catholic prelates who often self-censored their words and kept their politics private. For

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<sup>109</sup> David Gleeson, "Irish Rebels, Southern Rebels," *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict*, edited by Susannah Ural (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 144-145.

their efforts, Catholic newspaper articles on the topic of Papal recognition in particular were widely syndicated in non-Catholic newspapers across the North. As such, these newspaper writers were portrayed in the Union as a representative voice of Catholics.

The *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, a voice for Northern Catholics, had several articles that had been widely syndicated in non-Catholic newspapers. One noteworthy syndicated article was the aforementioned article written in response to claims made by Father Bannon in a handbill written on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean that was presented to the newspaper. The *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* responded combatively, accusing the Southern agent of lying about Papal support for the Confederacy in order to provoke an anti-Catholic backlash in the North. With that reasoning, Father Bannon and other Catholics touting the Pope's letter as recognition were accused of placing the Confederacy above the good of the Catholic Church, "The gratification of their political prejudices and the preservation of slavery, with all its vile associations, appear to be nearer the hearts of some men than the diffusion of the Church or the preservation of what she has already acquired."<sup>110</sup> The article was reported in other newspapers, such as in the *Civilian and Telegraph* of Cumberland, Maryland, under the title "Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie."<sup>111</sup>

Elsewhere, the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* reacted defensively. When confronted with the accusation that the Pope recognized the Confederacy, the Northern Catholic newspapermen

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<sup>110</sup> "Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie," *Civilian and Telegraph* (Cumberland, Maryland), April 14, 1864.

<sup>111</sup> "Catholic Opinion of a Copperhead Lie," *Civilian and Telegraph* (Cumberland, Maryland), April 14, 1864.



chose to defend the Pope and, by extension, all Catholics in the Union by emphatically dismissing the pro-recognition interpretation of the letter. “The correspondence between Mr. Jefferson Davis and Pope Pius has been published. The Pope, like everyone else, is anxious for peace, but is *no advocate of rebellion at home or abroad*. WE KNOW WHAT WE STATE TO BE TRUE.”<sup>112</sup> Emphatic in their defense, they wisely noted Pope Pius’s own fear of Italian pro-unification rebellions in central Italy. Their defense was used as a pseudo-official American Catholic response to the controversial Papal letter, being widely syndicated across the North.<sup>113</sup>

Syndication, however, does not necessarily mean inserting articles without commentary. The *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph* of Ashtabula, Ohio, for example, prefaced its syndication noting how pro-Confederate Northern newspapers saw the Pope’s words as expressing a sympathetic attitude toward the Confederacy. The Ohio newspaper then used the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*’s article as an authoritative refutation of that interpretation.<sup>114</sup> The *Lewisburg Chronicle* of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, stated that the Catholic newspaper’s article would be of little comfort to Confederates and Northern Copperheads, likewise seeing authority in the words of the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*. Then the Pennsylvania newspaper listed several Northern

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<sup>112</sup> *New York Times*, January 24, 1864; *National Republican* (Washington, DC), January 25, 1864; *Hartford Daily Courrant*, January 26, 1864; *The Nashville Daily Union*, January 30, 1864; *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph* (Ashtabula, Ohio), January 30, 1864; *Lewisburg Chronicle* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania), February 2, 1864. The emphasis is original to the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* as noted in the *New York Times* syndication of January 24, 1864.

<sup>113</sup> *New York Times*, January 24, 1864; *National Republican* (Washington, DC), January 25, 1864; *Hartford Daily Courrant*, January 26, 1864; *The Nashville Daily Union*, January 30, 1864; *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, January 30, 1864; *Lewisburg Chronicle* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania), February 2, 1864.

<sup>114</sup> *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph* (Ashtabula, Ohio), January 30, 1864.

Catholics devoted to the Union – Orestes Brownson, General William Rosecrans, and General Thomas Meagher. In doing so, the *Lewisburg Chronicle* defended Catholics by noting their contributions to the Union and expresses the hope that all Catholics would heed the writings of the *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* and be like those named Catholic defenders of the United States.<sup>115</sup>

The letter of Pope Pius IX, however, could not be restricted only to its intended Irish and American Catholic audiences. As such, the letter and its mere suggestion that it was possible that the Papacy could have recognized the Confederate States entered the wider American media. There, the letter itself and the arguments it initiated gained significant attention in both the North and the South. The earliest reports of the letter appeared in the United States on January 14, 1864, with the simple syndicated foreign news report stating, “The *La France* publishes the recent correspondence between Jeff. Davis and the Pope. The latter addresses Davis as an “illustrious president” and expresses much friendliness.”<sup>116</sup> This statement was widely reported throughout both the North and the South. The next day several newspapers published the full text of the letters from *La France*.<sup>117</sup> Albeit distinguished from the Irish newspapers by the lack of British spelling conventions, the letters maintained the same translations from English and Latin to English through French. This translation was widespread in the Northern press through

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<sup>115</sup> *Lewisburg Chronicle* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania), February 2, 1864.

<sup>116</sup> “Additional Foreign News,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), January 14, 1864.

<sup>117</sup> “Jefferson Davis and the Pope,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 15, 1864. In addition to the text of the letters in this exclusively Northern syndication of this translation, the article includes no analysis beyond on the simply introduction acknowledging the letters’ origins: “According to the Paris journal, *La France*, the following important correspondence has taken place between President Davis and the Pope.”

repeated syndications. Starting ten days later on January 25, separate translations of the letters appeared and were widely syndicated in the Southern press, with the addition of the Pope's letter to the archbishops, with the Pope's letter translated directly from the Latin, and with Jefferson Davis's English-language letter left unaltered.<sup>118</sup>

Although the translations differed in some words and sentence structures, the translations were remarkably similar in content, especially as the Northern translation entered the English language indirectly. The most significant translation issue occurred when the letter was translated from Latin to French for *La France*. While the letter is indisputably addressed "To the Illustrious and Honorable Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America," that phrase is not repeated in the text of the letter itself. Rather, the Latin phrase used the three times in the letter when Pope Pius references Davis is "*illustre et honorabili viro*;" French newspapers translated incorrectly into French as "*illustre et honorable president*." Directly translated from Latin as *man*, in this context *viro* would best be rendered as *sir*, making the proper address as "illustrious and honorable sir." While the French translation of the phrase is not necessarily inaccurate in context, although certainly not literal, it reinforces the notion three additional times that the Pope referred to Jefferson Davis as a president. Further, as the Southern press, using a direct translation, used *sir* rather than *president*, the stressing of the Pope's use of Davis's title

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<sup>118</sup> "Correspondence between President Davis and Pope Pius IX," *Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), January 25, 1864. In addition to the text of the letters in this exclusively Southern syndication of this translation, the article includes no analysis beyond a brief narrative of the letters' origins: "The following correspondence between the President of the Confederate States and his Holiness Pope Pius the Ninth, was elicited by the published letter of the latter, dated in October, 1862, to the Catholic Archbishops at New York and New Orleans, enjoining them to employ their prayers and influence for the restoration of peace."

was only present regionally in the North.<sup>119</sup> Although it cannot be verified beyond contemporary speculation, the *New York Times* Parisian correspondent labeled *La France* a secessionist newspaper and suggested that the letters reached the French newspaper from Confederate agents. As the translation error in the letters occurred during the translation from Latin to French, that error occurred as a result of the actions of either the French editors, who were accused of being pro-Confederate, or the alledged Confederate distributors. If the characterizations or suggestions of the *New York Times* are accurate, it can be insinuated that the letters were intentionally translated to add emphasis to Pope Pius using Jefferson Davis's title.<sup>120</sup>

The emphasis added by repeatedly calling Jefferson Davis president, as found in the translation of the letter through the *La France* article distributed through the Northern press, likely contributed to increased speculation in the North that the Pope's letter constituted actual recognition. The pro-recognition interpretation of the letter was further fueled by its convenient blending of two major Northern ideologies: hatred of the Confederacy and hatred of the Catholic Church.<sup>121</sup> As such, the Northern press often began to read the Pope's letter and wishfully saw in it a hint of Papal support for the South, ranging from formal recognition to mere sympathy. The ambiguity of the letter, however, made arguments for its intent as recognition difficult to

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<sup>119</sup> "The Correspondence Between Jeff. Davis and the Pope," *New York Times*, January 15, 1864.

<sup>120</sup> "The Correspondence Between Jeff. Davis and the Pope," *New York Times*, January 15, 1864.

<sup>121</sup> For further background on the rise of anti-Catholicism, particularly as expressed in the Know Nothing ideology, the popularity of the ideology, and its survival in various forms to the Civil War period, see: Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

effectively argue. Some, therefore, made the argument subtly; the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, for example, simply presented the letters without analysis or explanation yet under the heading, “Recognition of the Confederate Government by the Pope in Rome – Important Correspondence.”<sup>122</sup> The *Daily Kansas Tribune* attempted to formulate a well-reasoned argument to condemn the Pope. By arguments of analogy, the Kansas newspaper condemned Jefferson Davis as Satanic; Pope Pius, in contrast, as a man of religion was expected to behave like Christ. In one analogy, Jefferson Davis’s letter to the Pontiff, being vile lies in the opinion of the Union newspaper, was akin to Satan’s temptation of Christ in the desert. While excusing the Pope for his lack of divine omniscience, Pope Pius is nonetheless contrasted with Christ for believing and expressing sympathy for the Satanic Confederate.<sup>123</sup>

Others derided the Pope for his inability to effectively act on behalf of the Confederacy regardless of even the formal granting of recognition. The *Burlington Weekly Free Press* of Vermont stated that, “We think Jeff. must be a little ‘cracked’ if he attaches any value to the service of Pope Pius IX.”<sup>124</sup> *Harper’s Weekly* provided an illustration to express this sentiment (see Figure 11). Entitled “Cold Comfort,” the cartoon depicts Jefferson Davis holding the Pope’s letter while shivering in ragged clothing. As such, it vividly showed that kind and sympathetic

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<sup>122</sup> “Recognition of the Confederate Government by the Pope in Rome – Important Correspondence,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 19, 1864.

<sup>123</sup> “Jeff. Davis and the Pope,” *Daily Kansas Tribune* (Lawrence, Kansas), February 4, 1864.

<sup>124</sup> “Jeff. Davis and the Pope,” *Burlington Weekly Free Press*, January 22, 1864.

words, even with the use of formal title, means nothing to a people lacking the basic necessities of clothing and food.<sup>125</sup>

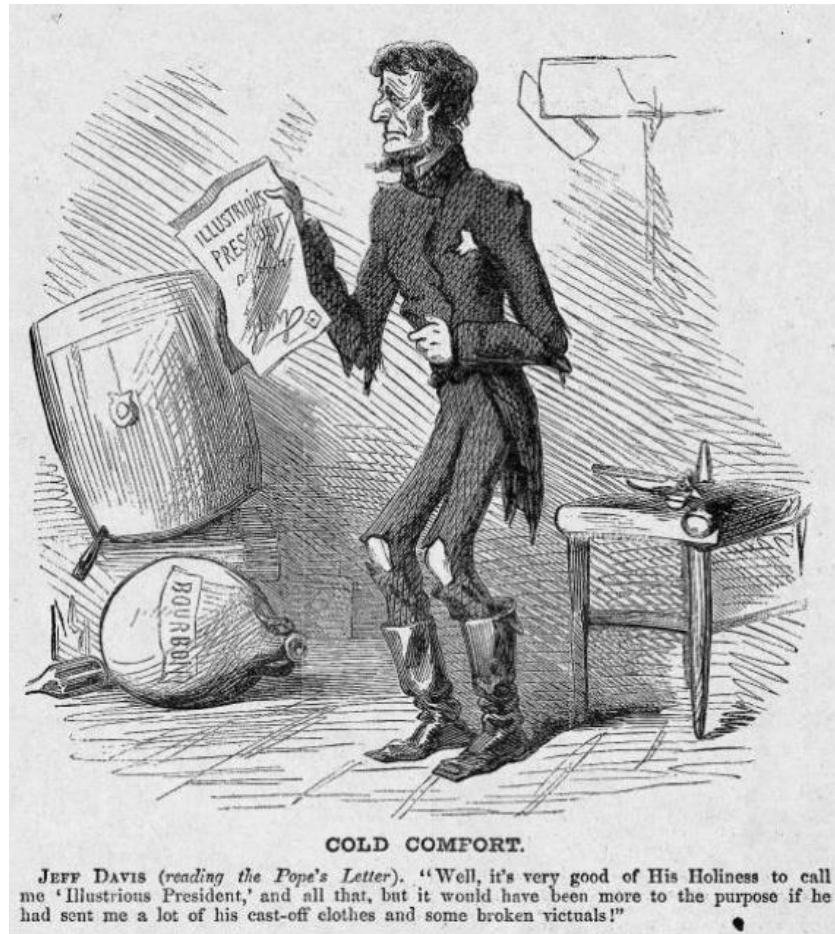


Figure 11: Cartoon appearing in *Harper's Weekly*, January 30, 1864<sup>126</sup>

Some in the North, however, made arguments defending the Pope. Entitled "Pope Pius for the Union," one widely syndicated article condemned the letter as a forgery by contradicting

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<sup>125</sup> "Cold Comfort," *Harper's Weekly* (New York), January 30, 1864. The caption reads: "Well, it's very good of His Holiness to call me 'Illustrious President,' and all that, but it would have been more to the purpose if he had sent me a lot of his cast-off clothes and some broken victuals!"

<sup>126</sup> Fig. 11, "Cold Comfort," *Harper's Weekly* (New York), January 30, 1864.

Pope Pius's alleged sympathy for the South. Researching in the letters the State Department submits annually to Congress, the author found and quoted a letter sent the previous April by the American Minister in Rome, Richard Blatchford, to Secretary of State Seward. In it, Blatchford relayed that Pope Pius and Cardinal Antonelli "are decided friends of the Union, and ardently desire that its integrity may be preserved," noting that Cardinal Antonelli in particular was especially hopeful of a Union victory.<sup>127</sup> While the assessment was made by Blatchford from his discussions with the Cardinal Secretary of State,<sup>128</sup> the author was wrong in assuming that it must have rendered the Pope's letter a forgery. The author ultimately failed to take into account the increasingly complex and even paradoxical diplomatic position in which the Papacy found itself.

Unfortunately for the Pope's defenders in the broader Northern press, the writer of "Pope Pius for the Union" was not alone in being hampered by factual error when defending Pope Pius. A writer in the *Cleveland Daily Leader* accepted the Pope's letter but chose to read into its words a tone of sarcasm. The author cited one line from the letter in particular, when he says the Pope asks Jefferson Davis "to exert himself to bring about the end of the fatal civil war in order *that the people may obtain peace and concord and dwell charitably together.*" The author suggested that for Davis to adhere best to this command, the Confederate would need to withdraw from the war and flee to the Pope's side in Rome.<sup>129</sup> The issue, though, was that the author had taken the

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<sup>127</sup> "Pope Pius for the Union," *National Republican* (Washington, DC), January 20, 1864.

<sup>128</sup> United States Department of State, "Message of the president of the United States (1863)," in *The Foreign Policy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 2003), 1154.

<sup>129</sup> "Jeff. Davis Knocking at the Vatican," *Cleveland Daily Leader*, January 18, 1864. Emphasis is original to the newspaper, not the original letter being quoted.

quote out of its context. Rather than asking Jefferson Davis to do all he could for peace, Pope Pius was simply summarizing the request he had previously made to archbishops of New York and New Orleans; the Pontiff has asked them, not Davis, to act in favor of peace. The Pope, in contrast, had accepted Davis's words that the president already truly desired peace.

One constant appeared in the Union press about the letter Pope Pius IX wrote to Jefferson Davis: the lack of a consensus on the meaning of the letter. Throughout the North, newspapers saw the words of the Pope and reacted differently. Some saw the letter as formal recognition; those who saw that in the North condemned Pope Pius for it. Others acknowledged the sympathy but viewed it as irrelevant or worthless to the Civil War. Some fought the accusations of recognition, with the Northern Catholic newspapermen notably doing so more accurately than the non-Catholic newspapermen. All these varying newspaper articles provide a glimpse into how the Northerners looked upon the Papal-Confederate relationship. In contrast, the South saw what they wanted to see: recognition. Rather than arguments over meaning, the South uniformly looked to the Pope's words as that of a friend. As such, in the North and South, this particular relationship was not left only to politicians and civil servants; rather, it became a public debate on the meaning of words. After the war, that discussion would remain enlivened for half a century and become a conversation on the place of Catholicism in America. During the war itself, however, the relationship did not bear the fruits that the Confederacy had hoped. No nation acted diplomatically as even the Papacy backtracked. Catholics in America did enlist in lower numbers, possibly as a result of this diplomatic conversion, as did Catholics in Ireland, almost certainly in part as a result of this diplomatic conversion. The lower Catholic enlistment, however, was ultimately not low enough to alter the course of the American Civil War.



The role of the Papacy in the Civil War was very complex and often wishfully or intentionally misunderstood. Pope Pius IX did write a letter to Jefferson Davis that was sympathetic to the Confederate cause and did address Davis by his title. The Pope, however, would go no farther and never recognized the Confederate States of America. Rather, the Papal States and the Confederacy had different expectations of each other; the Union, in contrast, simply acted with disregard towards the Papacy, seeing it only as a weak government surrounded by the Union's Italian ally. For the Pontiff, he could relate more easily to the Confederacy yet did not have the freedom to forsake his relationship with the Union, fearing the British as a greater threat and seeing America as increasingly winning the war. With pro-unification Italians surrounding Rome, he hoped that he could justify his political Pontificate by mediating a solution to the Civil War. To do so, the Pope needed amicable relations with the North and the South, a further reason for his refusal to sever ties with the Union and his reaching out to Jefferson Davis. The Confederacy, in contrast, wanted to use the Pope's support to rally Catholic Europe, in particular the French Imperial Army in Mexico, to its cause. Another goal was using the Pope's support to dissuade Catholics from joining the Union Army. The former failed when no recognition came, but the Confederacy was able to use its press and its agents overseas to foster the exaggerated narrative that recognition had come in order to dissuade Union enlistment. To that end, the Confederacy succeeded in dissuading some, but not nearly enough to change the outcome of the Civil War.

### CHAPTER 3 THE POSTWAR LEGACY OF WARTIME DIPLOMACY

The conclusion of the war ended with a decisive Union victory. That neither severed the complex relationship between the Papacy and the former Confederacy nor ended its legacy. The longest-lived legacy of the Papal-Confederate relationship was in its recollection by the American people. Many distorted the meaning of the Pope Pius IX's letter to Jefferson Davis while some defended the Pontiff. Some did so to support their anti-Catholic motivations. The efforts the Papacy would offer toward several former Confederates contributed to this use of the distortion of the interchange.

The most notable expressions of the postwar relationship between the Papacy and the former members of the Confederacy occurred in 1866. Pius IX sent Jefferson Davis an autographed photo of himself while Davis was imprisoned after the war. On the photo, the Pope offered the former Confederate the words of Christ that the oppressed should turn to God and that he would give them rest, handwriting in Latin Matthew 11:28, "Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et ego reficiam vos, dicit Dominus."<sup>130</sup> Davis would later express empathy towards

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<sup>130</sup> A tradition has developed that, along with the Pope's signed photograph, Pope Pius wove by his own hand a crown of thorns and presented it to the imprisoned Jefferson Davis. While the pope's letter certainly shows his admiration and pity for the captured president and the crown of thorns did and still does exist, the Pontiff did not go as far as to present Davis with an item that would depict Davis as Christ-like. Rather, scholarship has recently showed that Varina Davis attributed the crown of thorns to herself when, in 1899, she presented, among other things, the pope's photograph and the crown of thorns to Memorial Hall in New Orleans. The Pope's signed photograph is not debatable as it was attested even in Rome by Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò. Kevin Levin, "Update on Jefferson Davis's Crown of Thorns," *Civil War Memory Blog*, September 27, 2009.

Pius, seeing the Pope and himself in similar circumstances, “the one ‘the prisoner of the Vatican,’ the other the prisoner of Reconstruction.”<sup>131</sup>

In addition, the Church became involved in the aftermath of the Lincoln assassination. John H. Surratt, a Catholic accused with his mother and several friends of conspiring to kidnap and assassinate President Lincoln, was pursued by Union forces in the aftermath of President Lincoln’s assassination. Rather than being captured, tried, and hung like his mother, Mary Surratt, John Surratt managed to escape with the aid of the Catholic Church. He was smuggled to Rome where he ultimately served Pope Pius in the Papal Zouaves (see Figure 12, John Surratt in his Papal Zouaves uniform). American pressure later resulted in his flight from Rome and eventual seizure and deportation to the United States. While the Papacy did not save him from an American trial, it delayed it. As the sentiment of the American public was decidedly different when John Surratt was finally tried, Surratt was eventually freed without a conviction.<sup>132</sup> In one sense, by delaying his trial until a more favorable time, the Catholic Church ultimately saved John Surratt’s life. While the Pope’s actions toward Jefferson Davis certainly showed personal affinity between the two figures, the acceptance of John Surratt into the Papal military fostered the belief that the Pope’s sympathy was more widespread among former Confederates than just toward the Confederate President.

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<sup>131</sup> Kieran Quinlan, *Strange Kin: Ireland and the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 113-114.

<sup>132</sup> Lorretta Clare Feiertag, *American Public Opinion on the Diplomatic Relations between the United States and the Papal States (1847-1867)* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1933), 135-137.

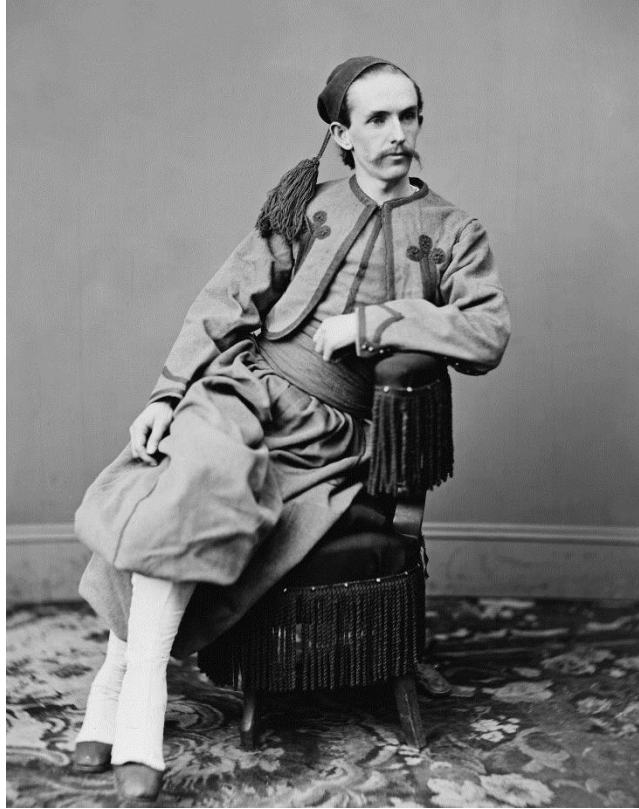


Figure 12: John Surratt<sup>133</sup> in his Papal Zouave uniform

In 1867, American politicians finally chose to act on the alleged Papal support for the Confederacy, both during the war and afterward. The American Civil War ended in 1865, but the struggles of the *Risorgimento* continued, enabling a victorious United States to decide how to treat Pope Pius as part of America's postwar diplomacy. With the war over, the United States began to take a harder approach towards the Papal States. One event brought the American-Papal tension to a head. In 1867, Congress actively sought to sever political relations with the Pope. Protestantism, being illegal for locals in the Papal States, was practiced in the embassies and

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<sup>133</sup> John Surratt was alleged to have conspired to assassinate Abraham Lincoln. As such, he fled after Lincoln's death to the Papal States. There he served in the Papal Zouaves until being returned to the United States; he is pictured here in his Papal uniform. Fig. 12, Mathew Brady, *John Surratt*, 1867. Photograph. "File:John Surratt.jpg," *Wikipedia*, April 8, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.

consulates in Rome. For the United States, the Minister's house served as the location of religious services for those American Protestants visiting Rome. While the Anglican Church and the Scottish Presbyterian Church were ordered to meet only outside the ancient walls of Rome in 1867, the American Protestant Church moved its location for an entirely different reason – Protestant visitors became too numerous for the Minister's house. As such, the Minister rented an additional building to facilitate worship. Congress, claiming that the Papacy forced the American Protestant Church to leave the walled city, closed the American Legation in Rome, despite the Minister's repeated efforts to correct the false information. Congress's insistence on closing the American Legation, and thereby ending any diplomatic relationship with the Papacy, was based on several factors, most notably the United States' strong support for the Italian Kingdom which sought Rome as its capital. Removing the Legation was therefore a preparation for the anticipated move of the American embassy to Rome once the *Risorgimento* was complete.<sup>134</sup> There was, however, an underlying factor. Part of Congress's anger at Pope Pius was rooted in his wartime actions or at least what people thought he has done during the war. *Harper's Weekly* expressed this sentiment in a February, 1867 article: "As it was the only Government in the world to recognize the Southern Confederacy, so now the Papal Government is the only one which denies the right of worship to American Protestants in Rome."<sup>135</sup>

The shutting of the American Legation in Rome was the only political action taken against Pope Pius IX. In 1870, events changed in such a way that made American retaliation against the Papacy moot. A Prussian invasion of France forced Emperor Napoleon III to

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<sup>134</sup> Feiertag, *American Public Opinion on the Diplomatic Relations*, 148, 165.

<sup>135</sup> "Pope Pius IX: Expulsion of Protestant Worship from Rome," *Harper's Weekly* (New York), February 9, 1867.

withdraw the French forces protecting the Pope in Rome, partly for the need of the soldiers and partly to appease the Kingdom of Italy to convince them not to ally with Prussia. With the recall of the French army, Italian troops were able to seize Rome on September 20, 1870; from that point until a final treaty in 1929, Pope Pius was effectively a prisoner within the walled Vatican City. As such, political relations between the United States and the temporal powers of the Papacy ceased to exist, and would not resume until President Reagan reestablished relations in 1984.<sup>136</sup>

The end of diplomacy did not mean an end to the discussion, though. For a half century after the American Civil War, newspapers regularly discussed one aspect of the wartime relationship: the letter that Pope Pius IX wrote Confederate President Jefferson Davis. It should be noted that the discussions did not appear perpetually; rather, newspapers reiterated their discussions of the letters in waves. The mid-1870s, the late 1880s, the early 1890s, and the late 1890s stand out as periods when the controversy over the meaning of the letter was most frequently discussed. The precise timing of the individual waves was mostly driven by individual newspapermen and Protestant ministers as part of the local discussions on the place of Catholicism that were syndicated across the nation.

The waves collectively, however, began in the context of growing anti-Catholicism in the United States. In 1875, around the time of the first post-war discussions of Pope Pius IX's letter, President Grant delivered a speech, first to a reunion of the Army of the Tennessee and then to

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<sup>136</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, United States State Department, "U.S. Relations With the Holy See," *State.gov*, last modified October 31, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3819.htm>.

join session of Congress. Grant's proposal was that states should be compelled to provide public education and that that education should be free of all religious influence.<sup>137</sup> In the weeks afterward, Congressmen James G. Blaine of Maine proposed a constitutional amendment to that effect, mandating that states provide no taxpayer money to any religious institution, particular schools.<sup>138</sup> The Catholic Church had, in the United States, established countless schools for the education of Catholics, particularly but not exclusively because of the use of the Protestant Bible in public schools. In several states where Catholics held political influence, these schools operated with government funding. The increases in Catholic immigration into the United States, particularly from Southern and Eastern Europe, caused many to fear growing Catholic influence as their increasing numbers gave them increasingly greater political power, particularly as Catholic schools produced educated Catholics outside the control of the Protestant establishment. Congressmen Blaine tried to capitalize politically on these anti-Catholic fears by proposing a constitutional amendment that both gave the appearance of promoting religious liberty and played to the anti-Catholic sentiments of the electorate.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> It was not until *Everson v. Board of Education of the Township of Ewing* in 1947 that the Supreme Court, in their ruling, "incorporated" the guarantee against the establishment of religion from the First Amendment, thereby applying its restrictions to the state governments. While the Blaine Amendment would be unconstitutional today, prior to 1947 no law restricted states from funding religious schools. *Encyclopedia of Education Law*, edited by Charles J. Russo, 1 (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2008): 312-314.

<sup>138</sup> The text of the Blaine Amendment read, "No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in any State for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefor, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations." Steven K. Green, "The Blaine Amendment Reconsidered," *The American Journal of Legal History* 36, 1 (January, 1993): 38.

<sup>139</sup> Green, "The Blaine Amendment Reconsidered," 38-69.

While his amendment ultimately failed, as did his aspirations for the presidency, the Blaine Amendment brought the issue of Catholicism in America into the open. Nativism had returned, as organizations such as the Order of American Union, the Alpha Association, and the American Protective Association were formed to combat Catholicism in America. It was in this backdrop of anti-Catholic public opinion, specifically starting around the time of the Blaine Amendment, that the Confederate argument that the Pope's letter recognized the Confederacy's sovereignty was revived. In the political climate at the time, the argument held a different meaning – Catholics, as a result of their adherence to an allegedly pro-Confederate Pope, were inherently disloyal to the United States.

That argument against Catholicism was aided by Pope Pius's postwar actions. The events surrounding the flight of John Surratt, supported by the photograph sent to Jefferson Davis by Pope Pius IX, built on claims of Papal sympathy and recognition and led anti-Catholics to conjure wild conspiracy theories. Most notably, a former Catholic priest who converted to Presbyterianism, Charles Chiniquy, openly argued in 1886 that the Catholic Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, conspired with the Surratt family and the other assassins to murder Abraham Lincoln. He went as far as to call John Wilkes Booth a "tool of the priests."<sup>140</sup> Chiniquy was able to justify his conspiracy view to the American people by his personal relationship with Lincoln, although exaggerated; in 1855, Lincoln represented Chiniquy as a lawyer in a minor court case.<sup>141</sup> The ultimate justification, though, was an examination of both

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<sup>140</sup> Charles Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome: The life story of Pastor Chiniquy, who was for twenty-five years a priest in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1886), 711-736.

<sup>141</sup> Chiniquy, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, 617-629.



the actual and exaggerated relationship between Pope Pius IX and the Confederacy.<sup>142</sup> This justification was repeated as late as 1922 by other anti-Catholic advocates, especially former Catholic priests.<sup>143</sup>

The assassination conspiracy largely remained a minor argument, though, reserved for the most extreme anti-Catholic of advocates. Newspaper articles rarely went as far as Chiniquy had in claiming that the Jesuits assassinated Abraham Lincoln. Nevertheless, they still attacked Catholics for the alleged wartime relationship between the Confederacy and the Papacy. Each of the waves of the discussions appearing the press began in a similar manner. There would be a public discussion of the letters, most often in the context of a general attack on the loyalty of Catholics in America. Then someone, either a newspaperman or another interested party, would search for the letters, finding them in the records of the Confederacy confiscated by the Union and held at the Department of the Treasury or the Department of War. The resulting published letter was then included in an article often entitled as evidence of Papal recognition of the Confederacy, albeit without any explanation of how the vague letter was a recognition.

Although a syndicated article on the topic in 1897 tells that the discussion began internally among the American Catholic community,<sup>144</sup> most mentions of the claim that the Pope recognized the Confederacy began with anti-Catholic writers and speakers. For example, in

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<sup>142</sup> Chiniquy. *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*.

<sup>143</sup> For a further example of the Jesuit assassination conspiracy theory, from 1922, see: Burke McCarty, *The Suppressed Truth about the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Washington, DC: Burke McCarty Publisher, 1922).

<sup>144</sup> "Pope Pius to Mr. Davis," *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Va), July 26, 1897.

1875, a syndicated article from the *New York Observer* told how, upon mentioning the letter in the context of a discussion on the loyalty of American Catholics, the newspaper was challenged to produce the letter; it did so after finding it among the captured records of the Confederacy.<sup>145</sup> Upon finding the same records the following year, a syndicated article from the *New York Times* was entitled, “How the Pope Recognized the Southern Confederacy: His Letter to Jeff Davis.”<sup>146</sup> Captain Patrick O’Farrell, a Catholic himself, investigated the letter at the War Department and published his findings in a syndicated newspaper article upon hearing the claims of Papal recognition of the Confederacy mentioned at memorial service at the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. by Dr. Luther T. Townsend.<sup>147</sup>

In addition to Chiniquy and Townsend, other Protestant preachers also made the claim that Pope Pius supported the Confederacy. Reverend John Lee of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Chicago presented the argument in 1894 when discrediting Catholics in a debate on public school education, directly tying the argument that the Pope recognized the Confederacy to the aftermath of the Blaine Amendment. After arguing that Catholics cannot be entrusted with educating children as, he argued, the Jesuits planned and promoted the Civil War, he was challenged to provide proof; the Pope’s letter was his evidence.<sup>148</sup> While all other anti-Catholic writers were certainly aware of the debate over Catholic influence in education, they engaged in

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<sup>145</sup> “The Pope to Jefferson Davis,” *Sedalia Democrat* (Sedalia, Missouri), February 6, 1875.

<sup>146</sup> “How the Pope Recognized the Southern Confederacy: His Letter to Jeff Davis,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Illinois), August 26, 1876.

<sup>147</sup> “Pope Pius and Jefferson Davis,” *Scranton Republican*, July 27, 1897.

<sup>148</sup> “The Jesuits and the Civil War: The Authority of Rev. John Lee for Saying They Promoted Secession,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Illinois), September 2, 1894.

the argument indirectly by attacking the Catholic Church generally for disloyalty during the war. Lee, in contrast, was acting not simply religiously in challenging Catholicism; he had a defined political goal in his presentation of the Pope's letter, arguing for the separation of Catholicism from education.

White Protestants were not alone in using the Pope's letter to condemn Catholicism. While largely staying out of the debate, at one point a writer in the black community in Utah directly addressed the letter: "Even the Pope of Rome pronounced his august blessings upon Jefferson Davis in 1863, and his Holiness Pope Pius IX, wished Mr. Davis the greatest success in his undertaking. This being true it is no wonder that there still lingers a spirit among the professing followers of Jesus that the negro should not be endowed with the right to worship the Virgin Mary nor to dip their hands into the holy water with their white brethren."<sup>149</sup> As such, the writer argues that the localized bigotry in some Catholic churches was actually systemic, rising to the level of bigotry in the Papacy itself, as evidenced by the Pope's supposedly pro-Confederate sentiment.

In these articles, it is important to note that the translation was different than those that appeared in the North and the South during the war. The translation used was one produced after the war and taken directly from the original Latin. As such, it did not transmit the mistranslation of *viro* as *president* from the French translation used by *La France* and did not independently repeat that error. The authors of this translation were the officers of the United States Department

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<sup>149</sup> "The Negro and the Catholic Church," *Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City, Utah), February 25, 1899.

of the Treasury, the department that maintained the Confederacy's captured documents.<sup>150</sup> As it was also the holder of the letter, and as the newspapermen and researchers consistently went to them for the letter, the federal government held a significant level of control over how the letter was released. One figure who took advantage of this discretion was Albert W. Crites of Nebraska, the chief of the Division of Captured and Abandoned Property at the Treasury Department. He included A. Dudley Mann's preface to the letter which was sent, with the letter, to Jefferson Davis. In it, Mann viewed the Pope's letter as official recognition, declaring that "this letter will grace the archives of the Executive Office in all coming time. It will live, too, forever in [hi]story as the production of the first Potentate who formally recognized your official position and accorded to one of the diplomatic representatives of the Confederate States and audience in an established court palace, like that of St. James and the Tuileries."<sup>151</sup> As such, the newspapers that received Mann's preface with the requested Papal letter did not receive an ambiguous set of writings but rather clear evidence that at least some in the Confederate State Department viewed the letter as recognition.<sup>152</sup> Crites's views, however, were not universal among federal employees. In 1894 and 1903, the War Department was asked about the letters by interested parties. Each time, the War Department refused to pass judgment on the meaning of

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<sup>150</sup> United States Department of War, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, edited by Fred C. Ainsworth, (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1900), 401.

<sup>151</sup> "Pope and President: Pius IX's Recognition of Jeff Davis - A Letter Unearthed at Washington," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), January 25, 1887.

<sup>152</sup> "Pope and President: Pius IX's Recognition of Jeff Davis - A Letter Unearthed at Washington," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), January 25, 1887.

the Pope's letter. Rather, they provided the ambiguous letter and, in 1894, suggested pursuing the issue further at the State Department.<sup>153</sup>

Unlike several Protestant preachers, black newspapermen, and government officials, some came to the defense of the Pope and, by extension, American Catholics. W. E. Curtis of the *Chicago Record* systematically and authoritatively sought to dispel the accusations. He noted that, the British, French, and Brazilian Empires and the Spanish and Dutch Kingdoms, recognized the belligerency of the Confederacy without acknowledging the Confederate claims to independence. He further cited Dr. Jose Ignacio Rodriguez, described as a recognized authority on diplomatic history. Curtis cited the works of Rodriguez where the historian explained the history of the letters and included a copy of them, albeit using the wartime translation originating in *La France*.<sup>154</sup>

In 1909, the Catholic Church put forward a compelling response to the accusations. Cardinal James Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore and the most powerful Catholic leader in the nation, addressed the issue in an article in the *North American Review*. In it, he detailed the role of Catholicism in the history of the United States and noted the patriotism within the American Catholic population. The issue of the claims of recognition had spread beyond simply anti-Catholicism or education: some questioned whether Catholics should even participate in government. Those who made the argument feared that had Lincoln been a Catholic, he would

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<sup>153</sup> "Memorandum: Recognition of Confederacy by the Pope," in *RG 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Administrative Precedent File, 57A-6002, 58 Civil War, June 14, 1894*; "Memorandum: Recognition of Confederacy by Pope Pius IX," in *RG 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Administrative Precedent File, 57A-6002, 58 Civil War, March 19, 1903*.

<sup>154</sup> "The Pope and Secession: The Attitude of the Vatican Toward the Southern Confederacy," *Wilmington Messenger* (Wilmington, North Carolina), July 23, 1899.

have had to recognize the Confederacy once the Pope supposedly did. Cardinal Gibbons responded forcefully that “a Catholic President would act, under the circumstances, precisely as Abraham Lincoln; he would treat the recognition with a respectful silence, and continue to prosecute the war to the best of his ability. If he acted otherwise he would be a traitor to his conscience and his God, to his country and to the Constitution which he had sworn to uphold. And he would have Catholic theological teaching at his back.”<sup>155</sup>

Cardinal Gibbons’ defense of Catholicism from the claims surrounding the Pope’s letter notably differed from that of others. Rather than attacking the meaning of the letter like everyone before him, Cardinal Gibbons proposed that even if the recognition had happened it would not have had any real effect on Catholic Americans. Ultimately, the opponents and supporter of Catholicism in the United States, before Cardinal Gibbons, made one significant error: they ignored the agency of individual Catholics. They believed that the meaning of the letter determined the loyalty of Catholics, holding that Catholics were more politically loyal to the Pope than their own country. Those who saw the letter as favoring recognition believed Catholics had been disloyal by virtue of the actions of the Roman Pontiff; those who saw the letter as a polite gesture argued that Catholics were loyal during the Civil War. In his argument, Cardinal Gibbons showed that ideology and morality was far more diverse. While the Pope was to be obeyed on moral issues, so were oaths made to the United States before God. As such, the choice for a Catholic to fight for the Union or refuse to enlist was far more of a personal choice

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<sup>155</sup> James Cardinal Gibbons, “The Church and the Republic,” *The North American Review* 189, 640 (March 1909): 333.

than many were willing to acknowledge; the words of the Pope, even if they were a formal recognition, would impose few if any real obligations upon American Catholics.

Discussions of the meaning of the letter waned after 1910. There is no clear reason why this happened but several possibilities do exist. First, the nature of Cardinal Gibbon's argument rendered the debate about the letter largely irrelevant as he held that a Catholic president would act the same regardless of what the Pope said about the Confederacy. Second, the length of time since the events themselves made them less relevant to younger generations. In 1923, Leo Francis Stock, a young professor at the Catholic University of America, analyzed the letters and events surrounding them.<sup>156</sup> This marked an important milestone as it shows that the discussions became less public in nature and more a topic of debate in the historical community, particularly for Catholic historians. As such, refutations of the anti-Catholic historical arguments were now issued by Catholic scholars rather than newspapermen. A third possibility was the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan. While strongly anti-Catholic, the Klan was also of Southern origin. While attacks against Catholicism certainly would draw their attention, the argument that the Pope was a close supporter of the Confederacy would be counterproductive as it would elevate Catholicism for a Southern audience. In the end, the topic drifted from popular discussions, likely as a result of a combination of some or all of the above-mentioned reasons. While anti-Catholicism existed significantly in the United States for decades after, including the arguments that continued that challenge the capability of Catholics to serve as the President of the United States, the argument that Pope Pius IX recognized the Confederacy ceased to be among the arguments used against

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<sup>156</sup> Stock, "The United States at the Court of Pius IX."

American Catholic. Only rarely in anti-Catholic books written after 1910 or in the occasional anniversary article did the topic of the Pope's alleged recognition surface again.<sup>157</sup>

Postwar discussions of the war and even most wartime newspaper articles were constrained. They failed to see the Pope's letter in the full context of the connection between the American Civil War and the Italian Unification. Throughout the Civil War, that war and the Italian Unification served mostly to complicate diplomatic relations among all parties. The revolutionaries of the *Risorgimento* proved desirable recruits for the Union's armies, although only those already in America actually fought. The North alienated the Papal States; the Pope's personal sympathies lay with the South. Pius IX, however, remained true to his concern with a secular domain. Papal mediation of the American Civil War was more valuable to the Pontiff than an elevated Confederacy, even despite his personal sympathies. Even he, the longest-reigning Pope in recorded history failed to retain Rome by 1870. The Confederacy achieved from the Papacy the closest thing to recognition that it had achieved from any nation: the possibility that a statement could at least be misinterpreted to mean recognition. Armed with the argument that the Pope did recognize their sovereignty, the Confederacy actively sought to dissuade Catholics from enlisting in the Union military and met with some success. That success, however, was too minor to be effective and the argument failed to convince any Catholic nation to recognize or aid the Confederate States of America. During the war, Pius's letter led to a bitter debate in the press as to its meaning, a debate that extended into the postwar period largely as a

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<sup>157</sup> For example, see: "The War Day by Day Fifty Years Ago: Jan. 15, 1864 - A Correspondence Between Pope Pius IX and Jefferson Davis, Relating to the War, Was Published in a New York Newspaper - Attitude of the Pope Toward the Belligerents," *Washington Herald*, January 15, 1914; "This Was The Civil War," *Pampa Daily News* (Pampa, Texas), December 1, 1863.



weapon to attack Catholicism. While it outlived most debate about Civil War foreign policy, because it was part of a larger debate over the presence of Catholicism in the United States, it too eventually faded from the popular mind.

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<sup>158</sup> These newspaper articles were discovered through the following searchable digital newspaper collections: *Chronicling America*, [www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/](http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/); *America’s Historical Newspapers*, [www.infoweb.newsbank.com/](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com/); *Newspapers.com*, [www.newspapers.com/](http://www.newspapers.com/); *Harper’s Weekly*, [www.harpweek.com/](http://www.harpweek.com/); and, to a lesser extent for primary sources, JSTOR, [www.jstor.com/](http://www.jstor.com/).

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## VITA

Robert Attilio Matteucci, Jr., was born in North Wildwood, New Jersey. In 2012, he received a Bachelor of Art degree from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, majoring in History and Politics. As an undergraduate, he interned at the British House of Commons in London for a semester. He is a candidate to receive a Master of Arts degree in History at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in May 2015.