

The Roman Question

The Battle for Civilization, 1815–1878

On 29 November 1847, several thousand New Yorkers gathered at the Broadway Tabernacle to honor Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti. His popular “enlightened policy and liberal measures” boded well for champions of the movement to unify Italy. Mayor William Brady presided as Protestant clergy rubbed shoulders with Gotham’s redoubtable Roman Catholic bishop John Hughes. An ebullient audience applauded letters celebrating Mastai-Ferretti. Former president Martin Van Buren heralded the “patriotic head” of the people of Italy. Vice President George Dallas admired the “sublimity of his genius; . . . the unassailable purity of his life; . . . [his] rare combination of intellectual and moral excellences, fitting him for the love and leadership of a reviving people.” Secretary of State James Buchanan discerned in Mastai-Ferretti “an instrument destined by Providence to accomplish the political regeneration of his country.” Horace Greeley waxed non-nativist as he read the address to this “Heaven-appointed instrument” of a “wise and beneficent policy.” It was a remarkable sight, indeed, this Anglo-Protestant embrace of the man who had ascended the papal throne in 1846 and taken the name Pius IX.¹

The first eighteen months of Pius IX’s pontificate (1846–78) inspired dreamy hopes for a new dawn in the interwoven stories of liberty and of Italy. The possibility that the Vicar of Christ might baptize the liberal-national struggle to oust Austrians from Italy captivated Europeans and Americans. The Risorgimento, the movement for Italian unity and independence between 1815 and 1870, mediated the Church’s rendezvous with progressive ideas in the nineteenth century. Pius did not encounter liberalism in abstract theological manuals or philosophical disputations but in the blood-drenched collision of armies that determined the earthly destiny of his sacred home.

During Pius’s long pontificate, the ideology of the Roman Question took shape. After Napoleonic Europe crumbled, monarchs reclaimed their losses at the

Council of Vienna (1815). Over the next three decades, Italian Catholics nurtured visions of Italian unification under the auspices of the papacy. But the revolutions of 1848 that erupted throughout Europe ended this flirtation between liberal nationalism and Catholicism and set the Church on a course of reaction. Radical democrats struggled unsuccessfully against moderate liberals for leadership of the *Risorgimento*, which culminated in the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. In the process Pius lost most of his Papal States, a territory that stretched across the center of the Italian peninsula from Rome to Ancona and as far north as Bologna. He condemned the Italian kingdom, Liberal Italy, with reckless fury. Finally, on the 20th of September in 1870, Italian troops broke through the ancient wall near the Porta Pia, conquered papal Rome, and transferred Italy's capital from Florence to the Eternal City. Pius dramatized his intransigent protest, proclaimed himself a "prisoner in the Vatican," and awaited the downfall of the demonic state that had incarcerated him and the "real Italy," the Catholic nation.

Americans participated in these events. The Roman Question, the contested status of the papacy in Liberal Italy, generated an ideology of protest and subversion against the usurper state throughout the Catholic world. American Catholics, like Catholics elsewhere, demanded the restoration of the Papal States. The pope's temporal power was a necessary precondition to his spiritual autonomy, argued Catholics who denounced Liberal Italy as an evil and monstrous injustice. In addition, the restoration of papal Rome held the key to the preservation of civilization. In contrast, American Protestants and Jews celebrated Italian liberty, unity, and independence. For them the blow struck against papal tyranny was evidence of the millennial march of progress from the New World to the Old. Consequently, the conquest of the Papal States strengthened boundaries separating Catholics from other Americans. The explosion of Catholics' communication media from 1848 to 1878—newspapers, periodicals, devotional texts, transatlantic correspondence—facilitated the dissemination of the ideology of the Roman Question and the rise of a popular cult to Pius, a suffering Christ figure crucified on the modern Calvary called the Vatican.

The Neoguelf Origins of the Ideology of the Roman Question

Catholics created the ideology of the Roman Question out of ideas and symbols prevalent during the Restoration (1815–48), when Catholic romantics embraced the great themes of the *Risorgimento*—liberty, unity, independence. Italy, they believed, was a Catholic nation with a universal mission. Influenced by liberal ideas their French rulers had impressed upon them, Italian Catholics harmonized romantic and liberal values into suggestive histories of how downtrodden Italy might revive past glories through reform of state and Church. However, even



Map 1. Italy before Unification

as romantics prophesied an Italian resurgence, despots backed with the force of arms kept Italy divided.²

Pope Gregory XVI (1831–46) ruled his Papal States without a constitution, and his encyclical “*Mirari vos*” (1832) did not hide his disgust for the new ideals animating Europe. He condemned liberalism, freedom of thought, and freedom of the press and supplied American nativists with evidence of Catholic hostility to



Map 2. The Process of Italian Unification

democracy. Austrian military dominance over the Italian peninsula may have inspired romantic musings about barbarian invaders of late antiquity, but realists scoffed at the idea that an independent or liberal Italy was in the making. Austria ruled over Lombardy-Venetia and had close ties to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchies of Parma and Modena, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The House of Savoy's stranglehold over the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (hereafter, the Kingdom of Piedmont) further ensured division and absolutism.³

Still, dreamers wrote, preached, and painted a national past. Where did they turn for paradigmatic precursors for this most unlikely national resurgence? Ancient Rome, an obvious repository of Italian greatness, lost appeal after the Napo-

leonic interregnum tainted the propaganda value of classicism. Few doubted Italian preeminence in the Renaissance, but its political failures had ushered in foreign servitude. Consequently, advocates of the national idea plundered the Middle Ages in their search for Italy. Even if reaction reigned in Gregory's Papal States, papal Rome had once been a source of Italian unity and civilization. Catholic ideologues for a united Italy, the "neoguelfs," who took their name from the Guef supporters of the medieval papacy against northern European imperial intrusions into Italy, envisioned a reinvigorated papacy at the center of European civilization and Italian national history. On the theological level, neoguelf writers debated the nature of papal and national sovereignty. On the ethico-civic plane, they highlighted the centrality of Catholicism as the source of civilization. Appealing to history, neoguelfs contended that the papacy was the center of any proper rendering of the Italian past.⁴

Historian Francesco Traniello explains how neoguelfism took both liberal-nationalist and absolutist formulations during the Restoration. In *Du pape* (1819) Joseph-Marie Compté de Maistre argued that the sovereign gave the nation "its social existence and all of its resulting goods." Medieval popes, he contended, had defended the liberty of Italian princes from Germanic imperial domination. The pope, in fact, was the custodian of the very idea of sovereignty. To attack the pope's temporal sovereignty over the Papal States was to assault all sovereigns and civilization itself. Alessandro Manzoni, by contrast, opposed de Maistre's theocratic ideal. In *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia* (1820), Manzoni claimed national identity existed independently of political power. When the Lombard invaders subjugated the Latin people on the Italian peninsula after the fall of the Roman Empire, the conquered nation did not assimilate. While de Maistre portrayed the pope as the defender of Italian princes, Manzoni depicted the pope as "an object of veneration" to the oppressed Italian nation suffering under the Germanic heel. Manzoni likened Italy to Israel in bondage inside Egypt. The Italian nation had turned to the pope as a religious symbol of hope, not as a temporal ruler.⁵

Neoguelfs improvised creatively upon such formulations before 1848. They called for a confederation of existing Italian states under the presidency of the pope, and they accepted the idea of a constitution. Most neoguelfs aligned themselves with moderate liberals (henceforth, the "moderates") and remained stalwart enemies of republican democrats (henceforth, the "democrats") like Giuseppe Mazzini. Deeply concerned for the freedom of the Church, neoguelfs criticized state control over Church property, ecclesiastical appointments, and papal communication networks. In the eighteenth century, such Erastian arrangements had interfered with the Church, undermined Catholic morality, and led ecclesiastical leaders to neglect spirituality. Thus, neoguelfism proposed Church reforms that would trigger the renewal of Italian society.

Neoguelfism shared affinities with “ultramontanism,” an international movement that rallied Catholics to the pope as the source of Church liberty and independence against the absolutist state. For a brief moment during the Restoration, some ultramontanes called for a separation of Church and state as a way to free the Church from the state. But after repeated papal condemnations of liberalism and the separation of Church and state, ultramontanism in the late nineteenth century grew into a mass phenomenon perpetuated through popular devotions that cultivated affections for the Holy Father, his absolute authority over the Church, and the restoration of the Papal States.

During the 1840s, neoguelfs inspired hope for the Risorgimento as both a political and spiritual awakening. In *The Five Wounds of the Church* (1848), Father Antonio Rosmini lamented divisions within the Church as well as state influence over bishops and priests. He believed a vernacular liturgy would enhance lay participation in the mass, and he called for laity and clergy to select bishops. Rosmini urged clergy to withdraw from temporal concerns and for the Church to reject state privileges and make itself accountable to the laity, not to the state. Once liberty permeated the Church, Rosmini hoped it would revitalize the nation, which would thrive within a united federation of Italian states.⁶

In 1843, famous Piedmontese priest and statesman Vincenzo Gioberti published *On the Moral and Civil Primacy of the Italians*, an 800-page neoguelf manifesto. He exalted papal Rome as the center of civilization and the Italian nation. Catholicism, with the papacy as its universal guide, had created the Italian nation, the papacy’s vehicle to spread civilization. “The Italians, humanly speaking, are the Levites of Christianity; being specifically chosen by Providence to have among them the Christian Pontificate.” And “if in the proper religious sphere the Pope no longer belongs to Italy alone among the nations, . . . in the civil sphere he was the creator of Italian genius.” Gioberti linked the resurgence of Italy, “a nation of priests,” to Christian themes of redemption and resurrection. There were no racial overtones to Gioberti’s idea of the nation, a people forged in history through God’s Providence. The nation grew organically out of family, village, and province and was not the last point of providential social development. Just as war had aggregated nations under the umbrella of the Roman Empire, in the Christian era the papacy linked nations into a spiritual imperium, without negating national aspirations for independence. Gioberti called for a confederation of Italian states under the presidency of the pope who would initiate liberal reforms within the confederation without limiting the autonomy of existing rulers.⁷

During the first two years of Pius’s pontificate, neoguelf ideas seemed prophetic. Wishful Catholics, liberals, and Protestants fantasized how Pius would bless a national war against Austria. When the consecration was not forthcoming, the 1848 Italian revolution quickly took an antipapal turn. The moderates’ search for national leadership shifted from the papacy to the monarchy of Pied-

mont. After 1848, neoguelfism laid the foundation for the Catholic “anti-Risorgimento,” and its root ideas became building blocks of the ideology of the Roman Question. Thereafter, neoguelfism offered a Catholic alternative to both the moderate and democratic imaginings of an Italian nation, and American Catholics embraced neoguelfism in their blistering anti-Risorgimento crusade for three generations.⁸

Before the revolution of 1848, the *United States Catholic Magazine* endorsed Gioberti’s *Moral and Civil Primacy* and the myth of Pius IX as an Italian Moses. “Pius IX is . . . destined to be in the hands of divine Providence the restorer of Italian nationality and the saviour of Italy.” Pius had “lately recognised—at least virtually—the democratic principle of popular representation,” while Austria stubbornly remained “the avowed enemy of all reform.” The *Catholic Magazine* framed the events in terms pilfered from Italian neoguelfs. “The old struggle between the Guelfs, . . . the ardent friends of Italian liberty, and the most uncompromising champions of Italian nationality,” and the Ghibellines, who “had secretly or openly advocated the cause of the German emperors, and had sought to establish a foreign despotism on the ruins of Italian freedom,” was again unfolding. The *Catholic Magazine* backed Gioberti’s moderates against the democrats, “revolutionists,” who were “the greatest curse to Italy” and “the greatest pests of any well organized society.” Although “we dearly . . . prize republican institutions, we do not suffer our enthusiasm to betray us into the absurd belief that such institutions are adapted to the temperament and character of every people.”⁹

The *Catholic Magazine*, captive to the myth of Pius IX, described Gioberti’s work as if it represented the pope’s mind. Pius was enacting a “LEGAL revolution, . . . a confederation similar to that of the Swiss cantons, or of our own glorious union.” The *Catholic Magazine* thoroughly endorsed Gioberti’s neoguelfism. “Why should not Italy be free and independent? . . . Is she not the mother of empire, the fountain of civilization, the land of genius, the home of the fine arts, the parent of inventions, the birth-place of Dante, of Tasso, of Galileo, of Columbus, of Michael Angelo? . . . Why should she, who has ever been the greatest benefactress of the human race, be herself deprived of the blessings she has so freely communicated to others? . . . She must and will rise again.”¹⁰

In 1848, Catholics in America were not alone in their support for a Risorgimento led by moderates against Italian democrats. All Americans reacted with ambivalence to the European conflagrations of 1848. They feared social anarchy, the loss of commerce, and the immigration of reckless revolutionaries fleeing bloody European paroxysms. But after 1848, Catholics exited from American debates comparing the merits of democrats and moderates in the struggle for Italian redemption. American Catholics instead clung to the Vicar of Christ, their Holy Father, who condemned moderates and democrats alike as conspirators against the pope and Catholic Italy.¹¹

Roman Revolution, Republic, and
Reverberations in America, 1848–1850

Pius IX, bishop of Rome, successor of the apostle Peter, exercised spiritual sovereignty over the Church and reigned absolutely over the Papal States as the *papa-re*, the pope-king, like his predecessors had since the early Middle Ages. Except for a brief diplomatic mission to Chile as a young priest, Pius lived his entire life within the Papal States, serving as archbishop of Spoleto and bishop of Imola before he, the ninth child of a count, became the pope in 1846. In the first eighteen months of his pontificate, Pius raised expectations that he might baptize Lady Liberty. He granted amnesty to political prisoners and selected a popular secretary of state. He established commissions to enact administrative reforms, relax press censorship, and study economic and judicial modernization. He relaxed harsh restrictions against Jews. Laymen took significant positions in his government, and he granted his admiring subjects a constitution with a two-house parliament. These concessions accompanied Pius's heartfelt proclamations of Italian patriotism.¹²

As the bombast at the Broadway Tabernacle suggested, hopes ran high. From Rome in May 1847, Margaret Fuller, transcendentalist and feminist, described the “present Pontiff” as “a man of noble and good aspect, who . . . has set his heart on doing something solid for the benefit of Man.” On 7 December, President James Polk recommended U.S. diplomatic relations with the Papal States, noting “the interesting political events now in progress [there].” After completion of his tour as consul in Genoa, Charles Edwards Lester, the great-grandson of Jonathan Edwards, felt himself “in the presence of a man Heaven seemed to have chosen to lead the human race out of the house of bondage” when he had a private audience with Pius.¹³

American Catholics relished their leader's liberal credentials. Alongside fellow citizens, they disparaged evil Austria and “illiberal ecclesiastics and laymen” in Rome who dared to obstruct Pius's reforms. Catholics boasted how Louisiana's legislature applauded “the noble efforts of Pius IX to reform ancient abuses and to promote the happiness of his people.” His “kindness to the poor outcasts of the Ghetto has made him almost an object of worship to the Jews,” Cincinnati's *Catholic Telegraph* assured its readers. “Some even imagine that he is their long expected Messiah.” Catholics welcomed the Sicilian uprisings in January 1848, certain a papal endorsement would follow. On 10 February, Pius's ambiguous blessing of Italy gave them reason to fantasize. “It is a great blessing among the many which Heaven hath imparted to Italy, that scarce 3,000,000 of our subjects have 200,000,000 brothers of every nation and of every tongue. This will ever be her defense, so long as the Apostolic See shall reside in her centre. Oh then, Great God, shower thy blessings on Italy and preserve for her this most precious boon of all, Faith!”¹⁴

The Sicilian revolt inspired liberal demands elsewhere. Rulers of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Tuscany, and Piedmont and Pius in his Papal States granted constitutions. King Charles Albert of Piedmont accepted the *Statuto*, which would become the Constitution of the Kingdom of Italy and remain in force until 1947. Conservative by any lights, its first sentence read: "The Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion is the sole religion of the State." But it still granted equality to religious minorities and freedom of the press and assembly. The *Statuto* created an elected Chamber of Deputies and a Senate of life peers appointed by the king. Its property restrictions limited the franchise to 2 percent of the population. Under the *Statuto* the monarch was both the head of state and of government who appointed and dismissed ministers. He could veto legislation, make war, forge treaties, and issue royal decrees. The king also retained the power to choose the prime minister, who selected a cabinet.¹⁵

Constitutions, however, did not quell the revolutionary impulse. In February, Parisian insurgents brought down King Louis Philippe, and Louis Napoleon became president of a French republic. In March, Prince Klemens von Metternich, the towering symbol of Restoration absolutism, fled an uprising in Vienna, and the Hungarians clamored for their liberty. Exploiting Austrian vulnerability, Milan and Venice revolted and demanded independence. Lombard priests fought alongside their people with the backing of Milan's archbishop. Provisional governments controlled parts of Lombardy and Venetia when Charles Albert, ambitious to annex Lombardy, led his army to drive out the Austrians. Pius blessed papal troops under General Giacomo Durando as they left Rome to protect the northern border of the Papal States. Durando, however, rallied his 12,000 volunteers to aid their "Lombard brothers" in a "war of civilization against the barbarians" of Austria.¹⁶

Jesuit historian Giacomo Martina, Pius's most distinguished biographer, describes the pope's tormented equivocation at this fateful moment. A genuine patriot who was eager for Italian independence, Pius was also aware of his duties as the Vicar of Christ. "How could the head of the Church," Martina asks, "launch a war against a Catholic nation that had neither attacked the Papal States nor brought any harm to religion?" On 29 April 1848, Pius delivered his famous allocution that stunned liberals and provoked the resignation of his cabinet. He denounced the scheme to place the pope at the head of an Italian confederation and withheld support for a national war against Austria. Interpreting the allocution as a repudiation of an independent Italy, the revolutionaries turned on Pius. His expression of sympathy for designs "to form from Italy a nation more united and compact" on 2 May and his request to Austria to withdraw from Italy fell on deaf ears.¹⁷

As the national forces faltered on 25 July when the Austrians defeated King Charles Albert at the battle of Custoza, unrest grew in Rome. Democrats lost faith

in the moderates who controlled Pius's government. On 15 November, a democrat had Minister of the Interior Pellegrino Rossi assassinated. Under the advice of Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, the Vatican secretary of state for the next quarter of a century, the pope fled to Gaeta, a fortress near Naples in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, where he remained until April 1850. King Ferdinand II, an ardent opponent of reform, welcomed Pius and promised to aid in his restoration.¹⁸

Democrats from all over Italy flocked to Rome. On 9 February 1849, a Constituent Assembly proclaimed the Roman Republic, with executive power invested in a triumvirate comprised of Giuseppe Mazzini, Aurelio Saffi, and Carlo Armellini. The Republic declared the end of the pope's temporal power, secularized Church property, and instituted freedom of worship. Pius condemned the sacrilegious regime and called upon Catholic powers to restore him to his throne. Notwithstanding Giuseppe Garibaldi's courageous military leadership, the Republic fell in July. Austrian forces secured the northern Papal States, and Louis Napoleon, dependent upon French Catholic support at home, betrayed his fellow republicans and ordered his army to conquer Rome. After Pius returned from exile to his Eternal City, French troops remained to preserve order while Austrian forces patrolled the rest of the Papal States.¹⁹

Catholics in America learned of Pius's travail through newspapers, sermons, circular letters, and mass meetings as the ideology of the Roman Question began to take shape. The Catholic press impassioned its readers, whose inchoate commitments became pointed propositions. Reporting on European events, the press articulated shibboleths that crystallized into familiar symbols and communicated partisan readings of history. It awakened in Catholics a familial consciousness. They belonged to a global family; they were children united under their suffering Holy Father.

Pius's allocution of 29 April and exile to Gaeta provoked an American Catholic rethinking of Roman events. The *Catholic Telegraph* defended Pius's decision not to lead a war against Austria. The pontiff "has had the greatness of mind to withstand the seductions which Italian nationality necessarily held out to an Italian sovereign of great capacity." After Pius's flight, the *Telegraph* turned on its former Italian champions. "The guilt of the Roman, and generally of the Italian liberals can hardly be exaggerated." The "blood-stained city, in old times the Babylon of the Apostles," was "afflicted with a new Paganism." On 9 December 1848, before editor Father John Roddan of Boston's *Pilot* had learned of the pope's exile, the *Pilot* was still applauding revolution. "Liberty rose again and shouted on the banks of the Po," it cheered when the Lombards launched an offensive against Austria. The *Pilot* encouraged an assault upon "the ferocious despotism of Ferdinand [II]" at the very moment when the Bourbon monarch sheltered the pontiff from republican ruffians! But when Pius's reversal of fortune became known to Roddan, he condemned the republican democrats who "have been disgracing

themselves and horrifying Europe by their bloody doings.” Triggering Catholic-liberal polemics with hyperbolic rhetoric, Roddan reported that the democrats “have been laying hands on priests, murdering them, and throwing their bodies in pieces into the Tiber!”²⁰

As American bishops learned of Pius’s exile, they issued circular letters directing the faithful to receive Holy Communion and practice devotions on behalf of their persecuted pontiff. Their letters, read at all Catholic services, interpreted the Roman events within a biblical idiom. Rome, Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Baltimore explained, “might yet become for [Pius] another Jerusalem, and the hosannas of the day give way to the shout of the deluded multitude—‘Crucify him!—Crucify him!’” But this “apparent triumph of the Powers of Darkness” was “vain and illusory!” God would vindicate Pius as God had glorified the crucified Jesus. Eccleston directed all Catholic sisters to recite the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary daily and receive a weekly communion for the pope.²¹

The Catholic press sentimentalized and personalized these revolutionary political events, offering an emotional rendition that made an adulatory cult to Pius accessible to women and men, children and adults. In February 1849, both the *Pilot* and *Catholic Magazine* ran an article, “The Private Life of Pope Pius IX,” that described his “delicate complexion” and his “simple and natural” gait, revealing “an easiness full of good nature.” His “countenance . . . strikes one by its great expression of kindness, intelligence and disinterestedness; his features are eminently sympathetic.” The details aroused empathy. How could this holy gentleman with “inexpressible charm” ever merit such barbaric treatment?²²

In January 1849, Bishop Hughes of New York preached a widely publicized sermon. His neoguelph reading of history condemned the Risorgimento. Although a “wicked world” comprised of “sacrilegious usurpers” had attacked the “Lord’s anointed,” popes had suffered at the hands of tyrants before, only to civilize their oppressors. “Something providential” was behind “the decline of the Roman Empire,” when Italians turned to the pope as a source of unity and protection against the barbarian invaders and established the Papal States. From papal Rome, “Europe was civilized.” In response, the *New York Herald* accused Hughes of turning against “the cause of popular liberty and human rights, now in the first throes of parturition in Italy.”²³

American Catholics vilified the Roman Republic and asserted Pius’s untainted credentials in the face of criticism that he had betrayed Italy. The *Episcopal Recorder* contended, “the interests of Rome . . . and of Italy are on one side; and the interests of the popedom are on the other side. . . . [Pius’s] conscience perverted by his religious views and sympathies, compels him to sacrifice the cause of his country.” But the *Catholic Magazine* counterpunched. Pius “ferverly desired, and still prays for, the unity and independence of Italy.” But he had been “assailed in the rear by license—red-republicanism,” whose advocates “are the men who ban-

ished the Pope and are now clamoring for his blood." These "envious and blood-thirsty demagogues" were not "champions of the unity and independence of Italy! No! Rome has changed, not the Pope." The *Catholic Magazine* took "the Protestant press" and "our secular journals" to task. They naively "suppose that every popular excitement in European countries must necessarily be a national movement in favor of liberty. Thus, however seditious or mobocratic in their character, the political fanaticism and anarchical raving which have recently disgraced the Roman and Neapolitan territories, are actually blazoned forth by a portion of the press alluded to, as acts of 'the people.'"²⁴

Catholics surely had Margaret Fuller in mind. Her twenty-four dispatches depicting the dramatic Roman democratic experiment for Greeley's *Daily Tribune* of New York appalled Catholics. A participant-observer in the Republic, Fuller served as the director of the Hospital of the Fate Bene Fratelli, tending republican wounds while her Italian husband battled French troops intent upon restoring Pius to his throne. Her abiding faith in the Roman people inspired desperate calls for American solidarity with the fledgling Republic. After Pius's April allocation, she scorned his "final dereliction . . . to the cause of Freedom, Progress, and of War." Now the fate of Rome "lies wholly with the People and that wave of Thought which has begun to pervade them." Fuller fulminated, "the only dignified course for the Pope to pursue was to resign his temporal power. . . . No more of him! His day is over." Pius had been "most cowardly" when he made "promises he never meant to keep, stealing away by night," and then denouncing his foes.²⁵

Fuller's epic dispatches described how the Romans grew into republican greatness, only to confront the cold indifference of England and the United States and the betrayal of pseudo-republican France. The battle between the Romans and France was a "struggle . . . between the principle of Democracy and the old powers. . . . That struggle may last fifty years, and the earth be watered with the blood and tears of more than one generation, but the result is sure. All Europe . . . is to be under Republican Government in the next century." After the French conquest of Rome, Fuller sniped, "How the Jesuits smile, with thin lips and eyes down-dropped, and think how much better Ignatius knew the world than Jesus of Nazareth." She prophesied, "the next revolution, here and elsewhere, will be radical. Not only Jesuitism must go, but the Roman Catholic religion must go. The Pope cannot retain even his spiritual power. The influence of the clergy is too perverting, too foreign to every hope of advancement and health."²⁶

Catholics were aghast at liberal and Protestant suggestions that the poping was an outdated institution in the progressive nineteenth century. Bishop Hughes insisted barbarism had overcome Roman insurgents who ventured outside the canopy of civilization when they attacked papal Rome. "They wield the stiletto, and sacrifice by assassination the human victims who are to propitiate the goddess of Young Liberty in Italy." Under Mazzini and Garibaldi the Repub-

lic had established a “reign of terror over the Roman people.” However fanciful these Catholic inventions of violence may have been, Hughes did have a point when he indicated that “no ambassador from foreign countries has recognised” the Roman Republic, “except it be the female plenipotentiary who furnishes the [Daily] Tribune with diplomatic correspondence.” Although Americans applauded revolt against despotism, they also feared revolutionaries. Notwithstanding Fuller’s literary skills, most Americans favored Risorgimento moderates to democrats, and the U.S. government never recognized the Roman Republic.²⁷

Consul Nicholas Brown in Rome had welcomed the Republic. “So deeply rooted in every American heart is the love of liberty,” he assured the new government on 11 February, “that the [American] nation will at once hail with joy the independence of the Roman Republic.” Secretary of State Buchanan, however, instructed the U.S. chargé d’affaires, Lewis Cass Jr., not to present his credentials to the Republic. Buchanan “considered the speedy restoration of the Pope highly probable.” Cass concurred. On 9 April he wrote, “the chances for Italian freedom are but few; and the possibility of that most beautiful of all dreams—the independence of a united country—as far from realisation as ever.” When the Republic fell, Brown could do little more than offer passports to republicans whose lives were in danger.²⁸

Liberal-Catholic sparring intensified over the initiation of a Peter’s Pence collection to support the pope in exile. The American Church collected \$25,978.24. Greeley insinuated that the collection was for “Pius IX, in his present struggle against the Roman Republic.” The *New York Herald* feared the Peter’s Pence might “be expended in paying Russian, Austrian, or French soldiers for slaughtering the people of Rome and forcing upon them a sovereign and a form of government which they had repudiated.” On 27 July 1849, the *Daily Tribune* published a long dedication to “the martyrs of human liberty who fell during the siege . . . as defenders of Rome against the machinations of despotism.” America’s flirtation with the liberal pope had come to a definitive and bitter end.²⁹

Catholic Intransigence and Revival in the 1850s

After his return to Rome in April 1850, Pius IX projected his condemnations of the Roman Republic onto the broad canvas of liberalism and “modern” civilization. He restored absolutism, denied his subjects a constitution, strengthened the Roman Inquisition, forced Jews into the ghetto, and punished revolutionaries. Alert to the value of international public opinion, Pius convinced the general of the Society of Jesus to permit a *collegio* of Jesuits to devote themselves to journalism on behalf of the papacy. They founded *Civiltà Cattolica*, a formidable arsenal of words and ideas in the Holy See’s war against liberalism, pluralism, and democracy. *Civiltà Cattolica* taught that the only true civilization was Catholicism

grounded in the authority of papal Rome. The temporal power, at this dangerous moment in history, was an absolute necessity to protect the Church and civilization itself from secularization and degeneration. “It is today an indisputable fact that the world has no other civilization than European, and in Europe civilization has been Christian, Catholic, Roman. . . . Where Roman influence ends, there civilization meets an unsurpassable dam” beyond which lies barbarism.³⁰

Civiltà Cattolica flourished during the Catholic revival of the 1850s, while Austrian and French arms bolstered the pope-king. The Austrian concordat of 1855 granted the Church unprecedented privileges. Its terms outraged Protestants and liberals. In December 1852, President Louis Napoleon became Emperor Napoleon III. Pius smiled upon him, aware that Napoleon’s power rested upon Catholic support and thus upon France’s defense of papal Rome. Liberals and Protestants looked on in horror. Laden with privileges, the Church in Austria and France revived. Ultramontane devotionism flourished throughout Europe and North America, and the Catholic world rallied around papal Rome. On 8 December 1854, in “*Ineffabilis Deus*,” Pius proclaimed Mary’s Immaculate Conception, a popular concession to a worldwide cult to the Virgin. Pius became a global icon of priestly piety, while Protestants and liberals cringed or laughed. When he reestablished the Catholic hierarchies in Holland and England, critics cried “No Popery!” louder than before. Nativism intensified in the United States as Know-Nothings shuddered at the sight of Celtic arrivals with rosary beads overrunning the Protestant Israel.³¹

Archbishop Hughes’s sermon on the occasion of Pius’s return to Rome captured the sense of redemptive suffering so central to ultramontane devotionism, even as it provoked angry responses from liberals and Protestants. Hughes likened Pius’s exile to Jesus’s Passion. The analogy resonated with impoverished Irish Catholics fleeing famine, only to find themselves in a hostile Anglo-Protestant Boston or New York. With unprecedented zeal they offered their affections to the crucified Jesus and their tormented Holy Father. The cosmic victory of both Jesus and Pius assured their spiritual children that pain and deprivation were meaningful. Hughes taught his flock that it participated in “the aspirations and the joyful feelings of two hundred million hearts” from “all round the globe.” Catholics everywhere were part of the mystical body of the Church that “accompanied [Pius] with her tears and with her prayers.” Catholics everywhere suffered vicariously with Pius, “the illustrious victim,” through his wretched exile and humiliation. “For if it be a duty of the members of the Church, that when one member suffers, all the members shall sympathize, how much more, when the visible head of the Church himself is selected, as it were by a general conspiracy of this world, as a victim of suffering for the whole body?”³²

Hughes emphasized the sacred character the Holy Father endowed the Eternal City, a home to all his children. Catholics “from the uttermost boundaries of

this earth, had been accustomed to converge upon one spot, to behold the visible head of the Church; that spot being Rome — sacred, and in spite of recent atrocities, holy and ‘Eternal City.’” The Papal States “belong . . . to all Catholics. . . . They have belonged to [the Catholic world] right from the beginning. . . . They were set apart expressly that there might be one spot on the earth from which the vicar of Jesus Christ could give out the supreme voice of the Church of God with freedom, without restraint.” Indeed, “there is no Rome without the Pope.” And upon papal Rome, civilization depended. “If Rome had a Pope no more, civilized Europe would perceive missing from the headship of safe guidance one who had guided her up through darkness and barbarism.”³³

Rome and Italy meant something quite different to other Americans. William Lloyd Garrison and Lyman Beecher, for instance, identified Mazzini as Italy’s true symbol. Beecher went to London to meet the exiled legend in 1846, plotting to disseminate Protestant Bibles in Italy as a prelude to the conversion and liberation of the nation. Samuel Morse and Theodore Dwight, who formed the American Philo-Italian Society in New York in 1842, also linked evangelical fervor to faith in the Risorgimento. Dwight’s *The Roman Republic of 1849* (1851) warned, “the evils and atrocities of the papal system are too great to be easily believed.” In 1855 Dwight celebrated the sixth anniversary of the Roman Republic at the Broadway Tabernacle, where Italian exiles, Protestant ministers, and Gotham notables insisted, “the Constituent Assembly of the Roman Republic . . . is the only legitimate authority in that State.” In 1861 Dwight translated into English the autobiography of Garibaldi, whom Dwight called “Italy’s Washington.”³⁴

Two events in particular during the 1850s brought the 1848 Italian revolution to the United States. In 1853 and 1854, the North American sojourns of Father Alessandro Gavazzi and Archbishop Gaetano Bedini generated civil unrest and crystallized Catholic loyalties to the symbols of papal Rome. Then, in 1858, the Roman Inquisition kidnapped six-year-old Edgardo Mortara, an Italian Jewish boy whom Pius refused to return to his parents. The ensuing international debates strengthened boundaries separating Catholics from their American neighbors.

Gavazzi, a Barnabite priest, took up the revolutionary cause in 1848 and preached to enormous crowds on behalf of war against Austria. Arrested by pontifical police, he escaped to assist the faltering Roman Republic. Under the aegis of the U.S. consul in Ancona, Gavazzi fled to England, where he contacted dissenting Protestants and earned his living on the lecture circuit speaking against the pope. After “not a few ministers and committees from various [Protestant] denominations [in England] . . . had recommended their transatlantic friends to support my missionary visit,” Gavazzi arrived in New York City in February 1853. His antipapal tirade delighted Philadelphia’s nativists, who awarded him a gold ring. In New York he mingled with Italian exiles who relished his assaults

on popedom at the Broadway Tabernacle and the Stuyvesant Institute. Gavazzi's diary recounts violent clashes with "Irish papists," the "ignorant fanaticism of [Irish] women," and his frequent harangues against Bedini, a diplomat in Pius's secretariat of state, who also arrived in the United States in 1853.³⁵

Bedini likewise inflamed passions. The Vatican had assigned him to Bologna in 1849 to bring order to the second city of the Papal States as Austrian arms crushed the liberal revolution. Named papal nuncio (ambassador) to Brazil in 1852, Bedini was directed to visit England, Ireland, and the United States before departing for points south. His association with the papal restoration tarnished his reputation among lovers of liberty who assailed "the Bloody Butcher of Bologna" during his American sojourn. Nativists and German and Italian exiles assaulted the symbol of papal Rome verbally and physically. The discovery of an assassination plot targeting Bedini so frightened Archbishop Francis Kenrick of Baltimore that he urged the nuncio to depart. "Members of secret societies are found everywhere," Kenrick shivered. Hughes, on the other hand, deterred an early departure. "For God's sake, for sake of the Holy Father, for sake of the Catholic portion of the people in these United States," the irascible Irishman wrote, "do not allow the object of your mission to be thwarted, defeated, crushed, and turned into ridicule by the machinations even against your life of a few miscreant and outcast Italians in the vile and dark recesses of New York." Wheeling's bishop encouraged Bedini to focus upon "the joy with which Catholics have every where welcomed your approach. . . . Instances of persecution attach Catholics more strongly to their Church."³⁶

The Catholic laity embraced the persecuted symbol of the pope, as their letters reveal. William Read of Baltimore consoled Bedini. "At the moment when you are exposed to daily neglect and insult, the hearts of Catholics are only more united in attachment to the Holy Father whom you represent." Adeline Whelan assured the weary traveler that her prayers to the Virgin "shall be often upon my lips and in my daily remembrance of the Holy Father in these days of trouble and of trial." She concurred that "the unjust accusations of the enemies of the Church but serve to render you more dear to the children of faith." Another Catholic wrote Bedini how "the remembrance of your kindness and beneficence will live always in the heart of your devoted children." He comforted the nuncio. "Our prayers will be daily offered for your safe arrival in Rome, then they will not cease, but during the whole of our lives we will pray for blessings, health and happiness for our beloved Nuncio." Anticipating Bedini's visit to Pittsburgh, John Mitchell implored the dignitary to save a "portion of your valuable time to share with us in our own little family circle." William Oram, a school teacher in Detroit, confessed, "there was a time . . . when my feet were out of the true church, when my soul was blackened with heresy; but, thank God, that time is changed and that now I am in the

ark of safety." Oram had "chosen an asylum with my God" and asked Bedini to "present my name to our common Father" for a papal benediction.³⁷

Bedini issued a positive report on the American Church to his superiors. He stressed the importance for American Catholics to see firsthand "the esteem and veneration which the first Envoy of the Holy See had for their Pastors. . . . Thus, they appreciated my mission as a manifestation of the special benevolence of the Holy Father." He noted the "festive receptions and the joys of every Catholic heart" at the presence of a papal representative and recorded the "desperate persecution by revolutionary refugees from Europe and by an apostate [Gavazzi] who led and inflamed them." Bedini affirmed, "the person of the Nuncio became more endeared to the Catholics" as he suffered, "and so the true fruit of the persecution was not wanting." Like Gavazzi, Bedini was struck by the "most ardent devotion" of Irish clergy for the Holy Father and the respect and power they commanded over their people. The Irish "see in their priests not a simple minister of Religion, but their father, their magistrate, their judge, their king, their 'Papa,' their idol."³⁸

The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara also widened the gulf separating Catholics from other Americans. Even as the event inflamed liberal, Jewish, and Protestant passions against the temporal power, Catholics defended their Holy Father. In June 1858, the Inquisition in Bologna seized young Edgardo from his home amid the wails of parents and siblings. The Mortaras later learned that their Catholic servant claimed to have baptized Edgardo in 1852 when he was an infant. The Inquisition, backed by Church law and the pope, scuttled Edgardo off to the House of the Catechumens in Rome. Jews throughout Europe and America petitioned their governments to exert pressure upon Pius to have the boy returned to his family. European statesmen clamored against the inhumane act. Sir Moses Montefiore, a wealthy British Jew, with backing from France and England, went to Rome on an unsuccessful mission to restore Edgardo to the Mortaras. Pius's intransigence in the Mortara case became a symbol of the anachronistic character of papal Rome when Pius's international prestige ebbed and friends were in short supply.³⁹

Catholics faced off against their American neighbors. On 17 December 1858, Archbishop Kenrick wrote the rector of the North American College in Rome, "the country has been convulsed with the Mortara excitement, the press encouraging the Jews, who held several meetings, and called on the President to remonstrate." Jews and Protestants held rallies in New York, Boston, and San Francisco. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise thundered in Cincinnati's *Israelite* against "the Pope and his numerous, soul-less lackeys." The servant who performed the ostensible baptism, Wise insisted, was "the hired tool of some priest, who is himself the tool of his superior and who again may be the blind tool of a Jesuit, who in his

turn is the instrument of the inquisition, which sacred office is the handmaid of the Pope, who again is the subject of the Jesuits.” New York’s *Jewish Messenger* excoriated “those Roman Catholic soul-snatchers, the priests.” Leaders of two St. Louis Jewish congregations warned, “if the Pope gives sanction to such acts of fanaticism—the Roman Catholic clergy here, obeying his laws as supreme, will be guided by the same principle, and similar acts will occur.” *B’nai B’rith Magazine* decried the “remnant of medieval barbarism, which still clings to our own age.”⁴⁰

Catholics portrayed Edgardo as a pious Catholic boy transformed by divine grace, infused through the surreptitious sacrament. His stubborn parents, who refused to follow him into the Church, saddened their child. “It is with great joy that this child entered the institution of the Catechumens,” contended Baltimore’s *Catholic Mirror*. Edgardo was delighted to learn of his father’s visit. “He imagined he should be able to convert his father. . . . But when he found [his father] deaf to all his prayers, he began to weep bitterly. . . . And they want a child of such quick faith to be delivered up to the Jews! That would be a cruelty without a name, and the most open violation of that principle of liberty of conscience which the Liberals have ever in their mouths.” The *Catholic Mirror* reminded “readers of foreign journals” to “recollect that an immense proportion of them in France and Germany belong to Jews. Hebrews and Protestants will hunt in couples when Popery is on foot.” The *Catholic Freeman’s Journal* of New York, responding to the *Jewish Messenger*, insisted that Edgardo, age six, was “a lad of eleven years,” whose father, “after an interview with the Pope, and long conversations with his son, acquiesced . . . in the arrangement.” A Catholic pamphlet published November 1858 claimed it was repulsive that a Christian government should be expected to “leave a Christian child to be brought up a Jew.” The pamphlet boasted, “the Holy Father’s protection of the child, in the face of all the ferocious fanaticism of infidelity and bigotry, is the grandest moral spectacle which the world has seen for ages.”⁴¹

The Catholic press chose this moment to narrate morbid tales about Protestant kidnappings of Catholic children. The *Catholic Mirror* predicted, “evangelical perverters will have the pious audacity to deny” this practice, “ready as such persons always are with excuses for the abduction and enslavement of Catholic children in this free country.” The “kidnapping evangelizers” received instructions from the American and Foreign Christian Union in New York, and their labors extended across the continent. German Catholics concurred. Cincinnati’s *Der Wahrheits-Freund*, after lambasting “the anti-Catholic American press” for using Edgardo “as one more pretext to attack ‘Catholic bigotry and papal tyranny,’” wondered “how many [Catholic] children here in this country have been taken to the House of Refuge,” an American orphanage for impoverished youth. “And isn’t it true that at many of these Houses of Refuge Catholic children receive a

Protestant education and become Protestant. . . . This is going on in a country with the slogan 'Equality of all religions' written on its banner."⁴²

Shrewd observers discerned how liberals employed the Mortara case as a weapon against the temporal power of the pope. *Brownson's Quarterly Review* reckoned Piedmont, England, and France were holding "the temporal government of the Pope up to public execration, as a pretext either for interfering with its internal administration, or for divesting the Pontiff of his temporal sovereignty." But most Catholic writers lost sight of the political snare the Mortara case created. The *Pilot* degenerated into anti-Semitism. "From that dark hour when the Jewish mob pronounced a malediction upon their misguided race . . . the Jews appear to have been the subjects of a spell from which their own efforts and the kindness of those who have taken pity upon them, have been unable to effect their deliverance. . . . To the enmity excited against them as the descendants of those who crucified our Lord, they have been hated by all classes of people as usurers are always hated."⁴³

London Oratorian Frederick William Faber, who sold 45,000 ultramontane devotional books in the United States by 1869, likened Pius under attack during the Mortara case to Jesus. Faber's widely circulated *Devotion to the Pope* (1860) discussed "the instinct of [Jesus's] Church for the interests of little children. For their souls [the Church] fights with the governments of the world; she lays herself open to attacks; she perils her peace; she forfeits the patronage of the great; . . . she is contented to look unintelligibly fanatical or pretentiously false, to those who cannot believe in the sincerity of such a purely supernatural zeal." Defending the pope's refusal to return Edgardo to his family, Faber drew an analogy between Pius's suffering and the crucified Jesus. "Men may load him down with indignities, as they spat into his Master's Face. . . . In every successive generation Jesus, in the person of his Vicar, is before fresh Pilates and new Herods. The Vatican is for the most part a Calvary. Who can behold all the pathetic grandeur of this helplessness, and understand it as a Christian understands it, and not be moved to tears?"⁴⁴

The Kingdom of Italy in the 1860s

In the 1850s, the Kingdom of Piedmont emerged as the hope of Italian liberals. It alone among Italian states had preserved a constitution after the revolutions failed. When King Charles Albert abdicated, his son, King Vittorio Emanuele II, took an oath to honor the 1848 constitution. Piedmont permitted thousands of exiles from throughout the peninsula to reside within its borders, where a free press and liberal political culture thrived. In the 1850s, property owners and moderates, joined by democratic converts to the Piedmontese monarchy, forged the

Destra, the Historic Right, a conservative faction of liberals who governed Piedmont and later the Kingdom of Italy until 1876. Although the overwhelming majority of Destra leaders were Catholic liberals, the ideology of the Roman Question became a weapon of resistance against Piedmont's political elite and later against Liberal Italy after 1861.⁴⁵

In 1852 Camillo Benso di Cavour became the prime minister and leader of the Destra. A brilliant student of government, he modernized Piedmont, liberalized trade, and urged state support for railroads and irrigation projects. With liberal institutions and an image of reform intact, Piedmont won the admiration of England, the United States, and France. Horace Greeley believed Piedmont to be “a chief point of interest in continental Europe for lovers of liberty.” George Perkins Marsh claimed Piedmont was “waging a noble struggle, and I have been surprised to find how deep a root the true principles of human freedom have struck in the breasts of her people.” By contrast, the pope and American Catholics condemned Piedmont for anticlerical, that is, liberal, ecclesiastical legislation. In 1850 Piedmont suppressed Church courts and prohibited Church organizations from acquiring property without government consent. In 1855 Cavour gained supporters from the Sinistra, the Left, when Piedmont suppressed religious congregations not engaged in teaching, preaching, or hospital work and sold their property to secure stipends for secular clergy and to enrich state coffers.⁴⁶

Cavour's ambitions were modest compared to the outcome of the events he set in motion. With no faith that Italians could “make Italy” alone through revolution and no desire to unify the entire peninsula into a single state, Cavour plotted Piedmont's annexation of Lombardy. Toward this goal, he sought French support against Austria. In July 1858, he met Napoleon III in Plombières to plan a future northern Italian kingdom under Vittorio Emanuele II. They also envisioned Tuscany uniting central Italy and the proclamation of Pius IX as honorary president of a confederation of Italian kingdoms. For Napoleon's support, Cavour offered France Piedmont's province of Savoy. After Cavour instigated an Austrian declaration of war, a massive French army entered northern Italy and defeated the Austrians at Magenta and Solferino in June 1859. But then, without notifying Cavour, Napoleon abandoned the plans of Plombières and reached an accord with Austria at Villafranca. However, Piedmontese supporters had already nurtured uprisings in the northern Papal States. After holding plebiscites, Piedmont annexed Lombardy and the Romagna (which was in the Papal States) and ceded Nice and Savoy to France. By 1860 King Vittorio ruled all of northern Italy except Venetia. For his robbery of the Romagna, he earned Pius's excommunication.⁴⁷

Americans organized to back their Italian champions. Encouraged by Cavour, New York Italians raised \$10,623 for Piedmont's army. Hungarians and Poles held rallies to support the Risorgimento as the press castigated Austrian despotism in

favor of Italian liberty. President Buchanan wrote Lord Clarendon, “the sympathy for poor down-trodden Italy is very strong in this country and our people would hail her deliverer with enthusiastic applause.” Catholics, in contrast, held anti-Risorgimento rallies and processions and collected money for the papal army. English-, German-, and French-speaking laymen organized “monster meetings” of thousands in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, Louisville, New York, Buffalo, Savannah, Boston, and Pittsburgh to communicate their solidarity with the pope. On three occasions in January, six Southern bishops preached in English, French, and German at open-air sessions in New Orleans. Catholics marched with their fraternal societies throughout the Crescent City as the laity gathered 10,000 signatures for a resolution of “veneration for the persecuted Father of the Faithful.”⁴⁸

The ideology of the Roman Question took its classic form in a letter to Pius published by nine bishops in the Northeast in January 1860. The American neoguelts described the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century and his translation of imperial headquarters to Constantinople (Istanbul). “The people of Italy,” left without leadership and protection, “raised their hands to the Sovereign Pontiff calling upon him to be their temporal savior.” Central Italy “was not usurped by the Holy Father. It was rather forced upon him by the wishes and clamor of a neglected and ungoverned people.” Pepin and Charlemagne in the eighth century “made him a donation of this same territory.” Thus, the pope was a popular ruler, “democratically” chosen by the “Italian people.” A legitimate sovereign who did not “usurp” another’s land, he humbly accepted God’s will—the burden of temporal sovereignty hoisted upon him by neglected Italians. Thereafter, these Papal States belonged to all Catholics. “We [American Catholics] are an integral portion of 200,000,000 Catholics, whose eyes are constantly turned to the See of Peter. . . . There is a territory in which we have a supreme interest. It is called the States of the Church. . . . The moment we tread its soil we feel that we have entered on ground which is and ought to be common to the same two hundred millions of our fellow Catholics.” When “in the States of the Church,” Catholics are “not on a foreign soil.”⁴⁹

The bishops put forth a conspiracy theory, one also prevalent throughout the Catholic world and central to the ideology of the Roman Question. Hidden forces had deceived the Italian nation to overthrow papal authority. In an immediate sense, this claim challenged the legitimacy of the plebiscites in the Romagna. But the bishops anchored this claim to a full-blown theory of history. Secret forces conspired to assault God, the pope, and the Church. These powers were behind the Protestant Reformation, the European Enlightenment, and the nineteenth-century liberal revolutions, which would ultimately culminate in socialism, communism, anarchy, and the Antichrist. Luther’s appeal to conscience, Voltaire’s invocation of reason, and Mazzini’s hymns to nationality were mere pretexts in

a revolt against God. When pressed, Catholics identified the clandestine agents with Jews or Masons, who enlisted Protestants or liberals to do their bidding. The bishops explained:

It is well known that, for a period of forty years or more, there have been two governments in the States of the Church. One, the open, mild, paternal government of the Holy See. . . . The other was a subterranean government, organized and supported by arch-conspirators. Its decrees were never published, but its secret enactments were carried into execution . . . by the prompt use of deadly weapons. . . . The free sentiment of the people in the [Papal] States has been . . . stifled and repressed. . . . Take away the fear inspired by the subterranean government . . . and the people of the Romagna will be perfectly contented under the mild government of the Sovereign Pontiff.⁵⁰

In his March 1860 lecture “Italy, Past and Present,” Bishop Martin John Spalding of Louisville elaborated upon the ideology of the Roman Question. Italy, he explained, with Rome at its center, had been a beacon of civilization. “Europe owed, and still owes, its Christianity and its civilization to Italy. From Italy went forth the Cross.” Claiming Rome “is the capital of Italy, and also the capital of Christendom,” Spalding explained that “along with Christianity, we owe our civilization to Italy. . . . The first great law school was established at Bologna; the first great school of medicine at Salerno.” From Italy came the telescope, the microscope, the convex and concave lenses, and “the mariner’s compass.” Rome was still the “centre of civilization,” but the “great bane of Italy has been foreign intervention.” Pius IX “is an Italian—his people are all homogenous.” But “these very men who cry out so much about nationality, are themselves foreigners. . . . [Napoleon III] is a foreigner. . . . Victor Emanuel is a foreigner—a Savoyard.”⁵¹

The ideology of the Roman Question vilified four individuals as the personification of modern evils. King Vittorio, the transalpine usurper in rebellion against God, won excommunication through his “malignant bigotry against the everlasting Catholic faith.” His only American friends were Protestants who “would make a god of him” if he were “a scion of the egotistical Anglo-Saxon race.”⁵² Garibaldi, “foremost among the bloodiest hounds of the Roman Republic,” gave Catholic children nightmares. His “robberies, cruelties, and debauchery” and his hatred of “Christ and His Church” had made this “modern Attila” a “by-word of infamy.” His band of bloody followers were “more ferocious than Hottentots.”⁵³ Mazzini “taught Europe that secret assassination is the law of humanity.” “A murderer in principle and a bandit by choice,” he “calculated to defy God, betray man, overturn humanity itself. . . . In lieu of civilization, Mazzini would have thrust Europe back into barbarism.”⁵⁴ Although “Protestant opinion” ranked Cavour

“amongst the most conscientious living Christians,” Catholics knew he “had no more religion or conscience than a Turk.” This “cunning unscrupulous Calvinist” possessed a “vandalistic determination to destroy the temporal power of the Holy See.” His designs on Rome as the capital of Liberal Italy conjured up Catholic invective. “The ferocity of Alaric, of Attila, Totilla . . . did not do more to the Eternal City than the Calvinist Cavour would, if he had the power, in order to strip the Papacy naked.”⁵⁵

Notwithstanding their common evil credentials, all was not well among these liberal demons. Garibaldi, much to Cavour’s horror, directed his revolutionary fervor to Sicily in May 1860 to exploit an uprising in Palermo. Leading a poorly armed volunteer force, he defeated the Neapolitan army and launched an assault on the mainland. In October he crushed the Bourbons at Volturno and held plebiscites that led to the Piedmontese annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. King Vittorio’s army was now compelled to march further into the heart of the Papal States in order to prevent Garibaldi’s conquest of papal Rome, an exploit that might lead to war with France and Austria. Without so much as a pretext, Piedmont conquered and annexed Umbria and the Marches. Garibaldi greeted King Vittorio near Teano on the Neapolitan border, left Rome to the pope for the time being, and acknowledged the king’s authority over Italy. Only Austrian Venetia and papal Rome remained unredeemed.⁵⁶

Americans cheered Garibaldi as he overturned Bourbon despotism. They proudly recalled how the great general had lived for a time as a candlemaker on Staten Island after the 1848 Italian revolution. The *New York World* boasted of “the gratifying consciousness that our country had the honor of giving to such a noble-hearted man a refuge from persecution, and an asylum which their insatiable enemies dared not to invade.” In September 1860, Charles Eliot Norton, the eminent liberal Dante scholar, wrote, “the progress of Garibaldi is just now even of greater interest to us than that of our own [presidential] campaign. It is a fine thing to be living in times which can produce such a man. . . . The new birth of Italy is already the grandest event of the modern period.”⁵⁷

While the United States government recognized the northern Italian kingdom and Americans held mass meetings to applaud Italian unity, Catholics echoed the pope’s insistence that Italy’s new subjects were victims of force. During Garibaldi’s campaign the *Pilot* described marauding Red Shirts in Catholic Sicily as unwelcome foreigners who violated Sicilian patriotism and offended their Catholicism. The plebiscites orchestrated to legitimate Piedmontese annexations were a hoax. “The polls have not been free, . . . the soldiers of Victor Emmanuel, aliens, incompetent persons, were allowed or forced to vote.” The unification of Italy was “a train of lawless inhuman, tyrannical acts, . . . a scourge upon the good Italians, a trial of their faith.” Peter’s Pence collections soared to aid the Holy

Father—\$4,300 from the diocese of Buffalo, \$1,597 from Savannah, \$2,500 from New York, \$300 from St. Mary's Total Abstinence Society of New York. The bishop of Philadelphia sent Pius a list of donors eighty pages long.⁵⁸

The day following the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy on 17 March 1861, Pius delivered an allocution starkly contrasting “modern civilization” to “true [Catholic] civilization.” In this dry run of his “Syllabus of Errors” of 1864, Pius pummeled “progress and Liberalism.” Modern civilization stood opposed to “the rights of justice and of Our holy religion” and favored “non-Catholic religions, while it opens access to public offices even to infidels.” In short, “this [modern] civilization plunders the Catholic Church” while the “Holy See . . . has been in all times the protector and the initiator of true civilization” and the defender of the true, that is, Catholic, Italy. “How could [the Holy Father] ever abandon [the principles of Eternal justice] so as to imperil our Holy Faith, and bring Italy into imminent danger of losing that brilliant distinction—that glory which for nineteen centuries has made it shine as the centre and principal seat of Catholic Truth?” Italians were loyal to the Church, but they had been hoodwinked “by crafty men.” Indeed, “We have received from [the peoples of Italy] many hundreds of thousands of affectionate letters . . . to lament over Our cares, Our troubles, and Our anguish, to assure Us of their love.” Three years later in the “Syllabus of Errors,” Pius would issue his weighty condemnation of the proposition that “the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to, and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.”⁵⁹

Although American Catholics universally condemned Liberal Italy, Italian Catholics were divided. Italian “intransigents” called for a restoration of the Papal States and eagerly awaited the downfall of Liberal Italy. Intransigent editor Giacomo Margotti launched his famous formula on 8 January 1861, *nè eletti, nè elettori*. “In the next elections we want to be neither the elected, nor electors.” His call for abstention from national politics as both voters and candidates galvanized intransigents against “legal Italy,” prison warden of “real [Catholic] Italy.” The Vatican backed abstention. In 1874 the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary declared participation in national elections *non expedit*; in 1886, the Holy Office condemned it as *non licit*. The Vatican only eased this prohibition in 1905 and did not eliminate it until 1919. Catholic power in Liberal Italy was thus limited to municipal politics.⁶⁰ Italian “conciliationists,” by contrast, sought to reconcile the Church with Liberal Italy. A minority frequently attacked in the intransigent press, conciliationists worked on the municipal level against anticlericalism and Masonry. Although some American Catholics shared the conciliationist position that the Church ought to adapt to modern civilization, American Catholics in the nineteenth century universally supported the intransigent position on the Roman Question.⁶¹

Violence within Liberal Italy in the 1860s made it vulnerable to Catholic charges that the state had in fact imprisoned the nation. Piedmontese officials

sent to the *mezzogiorno*—the Italian south—to represent the authority of the new state depended upon an army of 100,000 men to establish order in the face of local uprisings and brigandage. The invocation of martial law, suspension of civil liberties, and summary executions led to more Italian deaths than all the wars for national unification. Rashly imposed, highly centralized state administration alienated southern Italians who considered the state a colonial power that taxed and conscripted them unjustly and that undermined their local traditions. Although American Protestants and liberals enjoyed an image of the *Risorgimento* as a popular national revolution against autocracy, in reality shrewd Piedmontese diplomacy and the support of foreign arms had made Italy. Italian elites exploited local resentments and rebellions to create a nation-state. This *rivoluzione mancata*, a passive or failed revolution, in Antonio Gramsci's terms, neither overturned a hierarchical social order nor popularized a national consciousness. Consequently, Catholics and liberals (and later socialists) struggled for cultural hegemony over a divided nation within the centralized state whose oppressive policies often deviated from liberal ideals.⁶²

The intransigent condemnation of Liberal Italy, however, should not blind us to the fact that the *Destra*—the conservative and moderate liberals who governed the Kingdom of Italy until 1876—included Catholic liberals who hoped to see the Church reformed and revitalized. On 11 October 1860, when Cavour insisted Rome must eventually become the capital of Italy, he argued that true religion could only flourish in a liberal environment. The *Destra* rallied around his shibboleth, “a free church in a free state,” and admired American style church-state separation. In this spirit, Cavour negotiated with Pius IX. He offered the pontiff the external signs of sovereignty and Church property for bishops, seminaries, and clergy engaged in pastoral work. The state would withdraw from ecclesiastical matters and leave the Church in freedom. In turn, the pope must renounce the temporal power. In response, Pius unleashed condemnations. Cavour died several months later.⁶³

In December 1864, Pius IX shocked the world with “*Quanta Cura*,” supplemented by the “*Syllabus of Errors*,” marking what historian Owen Chadwick calls “a turning point in the history of the Church.” Although the *Syllabus* was drafted before 1864, the September Convention of 1864 provoked its promulgation. In the September Convention, Napoleon agreed to withdraw his troops from papal Rome, and King Vittorio promised to move the capital of Italy from Turin to Florence and not to occupy Rome, a promise he later broke. The *Syllabus* condemned eighty propositions, including the separation of church and state, freedom of worship, freedom of the press, denial of the temporal power, and, most famously, reconciliation with liberalism, progress, and modern civilization. The staggering document made life difficult for American Catholics.⁶⁴

As Protestants decried papal arrogance, Archbishop Martin John Spalding of

Baltimore defended the Syllabus with a Catholic argument for American exceptionalism. Spalding contended that the errors the Syllabus condemned applied to the “self-styled” liberals of Europe, who were “really infidels,” and not to American advocates of liberalism. “To stretch the words of the Pontiff, evidently intended for the stand-point of European radicals and infidels, so as to make them include the state of things established in [America], by our noble Constitution, in regard to the liberty of conscience, of worship, and of the press, were manifestly unfair and unjust.” While King Vittorio, Cavour, Garibaldi, and Mazzini were infidels, the American founding fathers “acted most prudently and wisely” when they endorsed religious freedom. They “certainly did not intend, like the European radicals, disciples of Tom Paine and of the French Revolution, to pronounce all religions, whether true or false, equal before God.” The American founders were “neither Latitudinarians nor infidels; they were earnest, honest men; and however much some of them may have been personally lukewarm in matters of Religion, or may have differed in religious opinions, they still professed to believe in Christ and in His Revelation.” The Holy Father surely could not have meant to condemn them or the U.S. Constitution.⁶⁵

Spalding’s American exceptionalism comprised two dubious claims. The first related directly to the ideology of the Roman Question. Like Pius, Spalding (and Catholic intellectuals right up through John Courtney Murray, SJ, in the 1960s) insisted European moderates were in fact violent revolutionaries and perfidious infidels bent upon destroying the Church. In fact, Italian moderates were generally Catholic liberals or conservative monarchists eager to preserve social hierarchies and some Catholic privileges. What really made them treacherous to Catholics was their willingness to question the wisdom of the temporal power as it existed under Pius IX. Spalding’s second claim, that America’s Founding Fathers were orthodox Christians, was erroneous. Primarily deists and rationalists, their understanding of scripture and revelation was heterodox, and they had no soft spot in their hearts for Roman Catholicism.⁶⁶

This Catholic argument for American exceptionalism became a distinctly American appendage to the ideology of the Roman Question that functioned to protect American Catholics. When Protestants or liberals claimed Catholics were against liberalism and thus anti-American, American Catholics contended they were only against Europe’s “false” liberalism or Protestant distortions of liberalism. When the Vatican suspected American Catholics of deviation from its blunt antiliberal pronouncements, Catholics insisted that Vatican officials just could not understand that the American political tradition and environment was totally different from European liberalism. This explains why American Catholics relentlessly lambasted Liberal Italy, viciously ridiculed liberal values operative in Italian society (including religious liberty), and cultivated avid ultramontane loyalties to

the Holy Father as a temporal ruler, while they simultaneously extolled the wisdom of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The 20th of September 1870

In 1866 the Italian government applied Piedmont's ecclesiastical legislation to all of Liberal Italy. The Vatican and American Catholics cried foul as religious congregations were suppressed, their lands auctioned, their personnel pensioned off. The government abolished chairs of theology in state universities, provided religious instruction in public schools only when parents requested it, and required civil matrimony. Thanks to an alliance with Prussia in a war against Austria, Italy annexed Venetia. Only papal Rome remained outside of King Vittorio's dominions. When French troops left Rome to honor the September Convention, Garibaldi seized the moment, but papal troops defeated him, and the French rushed back to repel him again at Mentana in 1867. Although Napoleon left forces to protect the pope, France abandoned Rome for good when the Franco-Prussian war erupted in 1870.⁶⁷

Garibaldi's failed conquest of papal Rome inspired the *Freeman's Journal* and St. Louis's *Guardian* to urge American Catholics to join the papal Zouaves. Volunteers stepped forward, but Archbishops Spalding, John Purcell, and John McCloskey explained to the Vatican the dubious legality of such a venture and the danger it posed for the American Church. They also confided their fear that the publicity would provoke an even larger force of American volunteers to join Garibaldi. The Vatican agreed that American Catholic money, rather than men, would satisfy Pius.⁶⁸

American Catholic press coverage of the First Vatican Council (1869-70) dramatized the ideology of the Roman Question in the months before the conquest of papal Rome. While bishops debated the council's proclamation of papal infallibility, the press highlighted how papal Rome, the center of civilization, was no mere provincial city. "A Coptic Deacon is vainly attempting . . . to learn from a Roman prelate . . . what route he must take to the College of Propaganda; . . . a Vicar Apostolic from China is embracing a missionary to the Indians on Lake Erie. . . . It is only in Rome that such incidents are possible." The council brought together an "assemblage of dwellers in all lands, of strangers from every shore. . . . Here in this City of Rome is held the new Pentecost, the assembly of people from the farthest ends of the earth." Rome hosted "the piety of the world." When Pius appeared in public, "a gentle murmur of expectation, . . . swells like the sound of the sea until it reaches the enthusiastic cry of *Viva il Papa Re! Vive toujours Pie Neuf!* Long live the Pope King! . . . Romans, Neapolitans and gay Frenchmen and sedate Germans, Irishmen and Spaniards, are all unanimous in the one great expres-

sion of affection for the Holy Father, and in love for the Papal power.” Predictably, Protestants ridiculed the spectacle.⁶⁹

After unsuccessful efforts to reach a settlement with Pius IX and after negotiations with European powers to assure their noninterference, the Italian government ordered its troops to conquer papal Rome. The council ended abruptly as forces under General Raffaele Cadorna broke through the ancient Roman wall near the Porta Pia on the 20th of September 1870, and the temporal power came to an end. While the army protected the neighborhood around the Vatican from riotous Romans, Pius proclaimed himself a “prisoner in the Vatican.” Not until 1929 did a pope venture outside Vatican grounds. Five popes reiterated Pius’s dramatic ascription, claiming they too were prisoners, like the rest of Catholic Italy, of the Savoy monarchy that had usurped the temporal power. The image of imprisonment had a profound impact on the Catholic imagination. Pius, like Jesus and like St. Peter, was now in chains.⁷⁰

Catholics communicated solidarity with their Holy Father. Archbishop John Williams of Boston wrote: “How many trials and sorrows have pressed on your paternal heart during the course of your long pontificate, which may be truly said to have been rendered glorious, no less by the sufferings which you have heroically endured . . . for God’s holy church! . . . The overthrow of the temporal power” that made “[you] a prisoner in your own Capital” has “shocked the hearts of your faithful children throughout the world, and fills them even now with grief and indignation.” Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston lectured in New York City and reiterated the ideology of the Roman Question. “It is necessary for [the pope] to possess [the temporal sovereignty], both for the liberty and interest of the Church, and for the interest of the world. . . . [He] may be a prisoner, and his limbs fettered by chains, yet that authority of his . . . is loved and received with joy and devotion.” Spalding returned from Rome to Baltimore to meet 30,000 demonstrators in favor of Pius. On Thanksgiving Day, 50,000 marched in Washington. Grand protests followed in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Buffalo. Ellen Ewing, Catholic antisuffragist and wife of General William Tecumseh Sherman, piqued the Italian minister when she flew the papal flag from her Washington home.⁷¹

Future “liberal” episcopal leaders rallied to Pius and established their intransigent credentials in the 1870s. Father John Ireland, the outspoken “Americanist” archbishop of St. Paul, led a procession of 7,000 through a Minnesota snowstorm in January 1871 to protest the seizure of the temporal power. He called the “spoliation of the Holy See, the most glaring of modern international crimes” and insisted that the pope must not be “under the sway of an earthly power.” James Gibbons, vicar apostolic of North Carolina and future cardinal-archbishop of Baltimore, issued a pamphlet justifying the temporal sovereignty through a neoguelf reading of the history of civilization. At Pius’s funeral mass in February

1878, Father John J. Keane, future rector of the Catholic University of America, bishop of Richmond, and archbishop of Dubuque, pillaged the Roman republicans of 1848 who “turned Rome into a pandemonium of blood and worse than heathen orgies.” Pius, “a father more than a sovereign,” had possessed “wisdom and an influence more than human.”⁷²

German-speaking Catholics were not to be outdone. “We have a great and holy duty, during these days of persecution, to defend our Holy Church . . . [and] to fight bravely for . . . the visible head of our Church on earth, the suffering Pius IX.” Louisville’s *Katholischer Glaubersbote* prophesied, “the Church will emerge victorious from this struggle.” Ridiculing King Vittorio’s conquest, the *Glaubersbote* asserted, “If Victor Emanuel has the right to conquer the Papal States . . . then Napoleon had the right to take over Germany!” *Der Wahrheits-Freund* listed seventeen times papal Rome had been sacked since the fifth century. Still, “Rome has been under the control of the pope” for fifteen hundred years, and Pius “does not have to worry about . . . our devotion to him.”⁷³

Protestants predictably applauded King Vittorio and welcomed the end of the temporal power. Chicago’s *Northwest Christian Advocate* sighed, “it is indeed time that the old popedom (as an element of the civil system of Europe) were swept away. It has long been simply a mischief and a disgrace in European civilization — an obsolete, medieval anachronism; a monstrous detraction from Christianity.” The confident Methodists conjured up God’s wrath. “The Pope, boasting at Rome of his infallibility . . . [is] to-day humbled to the dust, confounded before all the world. . . . How are the mighty fallen!” New York’s *Christian Advocate* identified the liberal idea of progress with God’s will against the papacy. “The civil sovereignty of the Pope has been annihilated, and thereby the greatest drawback on European progress for a thousand years has been cast off. . . . The trustful faith of the friends of liberty has not been fallacious.”⁷⁴

Rev. William Pratt Breed and Rev. J. M. Macdon thought likewise. Preaching on Luke 14:11 — “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” — at the West Spruce Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Breed charged that the dogma of papal infallibility had exalted “an erring, sinful man into a moral and spiritual dictatorship over the Christian world!” But “the Pope was brushed from his throne as a fly is brushed from the brow of a giant!” Papal Rome nurtured “beggary, robbery, licentiousness, and murder,” but now Jews have their rights restored, “Protestant worship is enjoyed and God’s holy word is sold even in Rome!” Macdon, expounding in the Presbyterian *Princeton Theological Review*, cited the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse to explain why “the definition of the dogma of infallibility, and the lapse of the temporal power . . . have occurred so closely.” Surely, this “is not to be viewed in the light of an ordinary concurrence or sequence of events.”⁷⁵

American friends of Liberal Italy gathered to counter Catholic protests. Arthur

Coxe waxed concerned to the organizer of a celebration at the Boston Music Hall in February 1871. “American sentiment and sympathy must ever be with any people claiming the right to choose their own rulers and to resist the imposition of a detested Sovereign by foreign bayonets.” But “at this moment,” Coxe complained, “an organized attempt to produce the very opposite impression in Europe is zealously promoted in all our chief cities, with a view to intimidate Italian patriots and to encourage those who would revive the despotic system of 1815.” Josiah Holland “heartily rejoice[d] in the consummation of the wishes of the Italian people.” He only wished King Vittorio took a harder line with the pope. “There seems to be no menace to the Unity so happily achieved except in the desire of the king and his government to conciliate the papal interest. . . . If Italy could only know that her safety depends entirely on the universal education of her people outside of priestly prescription and authority.” Asa Smith of Dartmouth College alluded with alarm to Catholic publicity. “It would be sad, indeed, if the people of Italy should hear from our shores only such voices as have been strangely lifted up in certain gatherings.”⁷⁶

Julia Ward Howe composed a “Hymn for the Celebration of Italian Unity” sung at the Academy of Music in New York on 12 January, where eminent Americans gathered to toast the end of papal Rome. Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulists and editor of the *Catholic World*, mailed the book of addresses and letters from the New York gathering to fellow Catholic convert Orestes Brownson. Hecker marveled, “Every day my admiration increases at the attitude of the Holy Father in his defense of those principles which underlie the political order and natural morality. . . . He is resisting the destruction of all human society. The only power on earth that has had the courage to stand up against violence and injustice in the political order. Wonderful mission for God’s Church!” Brownson found it “sad and discouraging . . . to see a large number of the most distinguished and influential men of a great nation . . . assisting, by their presence, addresses, letters, or comments, to applaud events notoriously brought about by fraud, craft, lying, calumny, and armed force.”⁷⁷

On 13 May 1871, the Italian government unilaterally passed the Law of Guarantees to regulate the position of the Holy See and the Church within Liberal Italy. It remained in force until February 1929. The Law of Guarantees deprived the pope of his territorial sovereignty, although it affirmed that his person was “sacred and inviolable.” The pope retained possession of the Vatican, the Lateran palaces, and his villa at Castel Gandolfo. It protected papal communication networks so the pope could carry out his international spiritual mission. The law assured passage for cardinals to all papal elections and freedom of association for consistories and councils. The pope was permitted his own telegram system, and the secretariat of state—the papal diplomatic corps—was unobstructed. Italy also promised the

pope an annual allowance of 3,225,000 lire to compensate for his loss. Under the law the state no longer required an oath of allegiance from Italian bishops and no longer reserved the right to hinder the promulgation of ecclesiastical laws. The law also abolished the *exequatur* and *placet* required for state recognition of ecclesiastical acts but retained them for the allocation of benefices and episcopal palaces. This gave the kingdom something short of a veto power over episcopal appointments that it was expected to soon relinquish but never did.⁷⁸

The Law of Guarantees approximated Cavour's liberal ideal of "a free church in a free state." It fell short of "disestablishment," or separation of church and state, because it did not revise the first sentence of the constitution, the Kingdom of Piedmont's Statuto of 1848, which still read: "The Catholic Apostolic and Roman Religion is the sole religion of the State." Under the Law of Guarantees the Church had more freedom than in the preunification states, but it also lost some of its privileges. The Destra mistakenly hoped the law would stimulate progressive developments within the Church. Some leaders of the Destra, advocates of Rosmini's suggestions for Church reform, wanted the state to impose the elective principle on the Church. Marco Minghetti, for instance, insisted that once the administration of parish property was under lay control, the hierarchy would be obliged to listen to the laity. He urged the state to compel the Holy See to reinstate a system whereby laity and priests elected their bishops. Similarly, Carlo Cadorna insisted the law did not permit the state to adequately protect the laity and lower clergy from authoritarian ecclesiastical superiors. He feared that only intellectually narrow and intransigent clergy would receive promotions and that the patriotic clergy—of which there was no shortage on the front lines in Lombardy in 1848—would disappear.⁷⁹

Pius, in any case, would have none of this. On 15 May, in "Ubi Nos," he rejected the Law of Guarantees, which intolerably relegated the status of the Holy See, an international institution, to a matter internal to Liberal Italy. Notwithstanding its name, it guaranteed neither the safety nor independence of the Holy See. Neither Pius nor his successors ever accepted their annual allowance. As Martina explains, "Ubi Nos" "constituted the basis and the justification for Catholic intransigence during the rest of the nineteenth century."⁸⁰

American Catholics followed Pius's lead. The *Catholic World* insisted, oddly, one might think, for a "liberal" Catholic journal, that by permitting free "discussion of religious questions" the Law of Guarantees "deals the most powerful and insidious blow at the spiritual power of the Pope in spiritual matters, encouraging his people to spiritual defection." Father J. J. Prendergast proclaimed that the Law of Guarantees "guarantee[s] nothing." He employed a metaphor popular among nineteenth-century American Catholics eager to make the pope's temporal power seem reasonable to their Protestant and liberal neighbors. Although he professed

to admire Italy and to desire “its happiness and glory,” Prendergast insisted, “the existence in the interest of the world of a religious District of Columbia within her borders” would never “be an injury to her.”⁸¹

The ideology of the Roman Question contended that the attack on the pope’s temporal power harmed the Church and made civilization itself vulnerable to barbarism. Not surprisingly then, Catholics discerned moral degeneration in Italy and Rome, once authority passed from pope to king. Suddenly “blackguardism, ruffianism, and [a] riotous disposition” infected the Romans. “The wine shops were filled,” littering the streets “with the choicest specimens of Italian blasphemy,” while “the woman were nearly shameless under the influence of wine and the new liberation.” In “picture-shops, . . . portraits of the Pope” were replaced with “the saints of the new worship, the gods of the Italian Kingdom—Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel, . . . and this class of men.” Amid this sordid affair, “in his own City of Rome,” an aged Pius IX suffered. “The criminals . . . have returned. . . . The followers of Victor Emmanuel and of Garibaldi are now let loose on Rome, and turned this city into one of the most dangerous cities in Europe, where assassination is the order of the night, and where robbery has become an art.”⁸²

The unrelenting attack upon Liberal Italy was integral to the ideology of the Roman Question. Participation in this assault allowed Catholics in America to express loyalty to Pius and to criticize liberalism without directly maligning the liberal values of their own society, which they insisted was ontologically different from Liberal Italy. Catholics agreed with Paulist Isaac Hecker: “designing men” had unjustly usurped Rome “under the cloak of Italian unity.”⁸³ The plebiscites in support of unified Italy were a sham,⁸⁴ public morality had disappeared from once utopian papal dominions,⁸⁵ and Liberal Italy was a criminal entity overseen by murderous pagans who plundered religious houses and in so doing robbed Catholics throughout Christendom.⁸⁶ Indeed, “Victor Emmanuel’s assault upon Rome” had culminated in “a government of banditti bound together by the desire of plunder, a country where no protection is given to citizens, but where brigands, cutthroats and communists act without fear of punishment; where murder and robbery are legalized; where oppression and persecution are applauded; where beggary and starvation are rampant; where assassination and perjury [*sic*] are prevalent [*sic*]; where irreligion and immorality are openly practiced; where everything sacred and venerated are ridiculed [*sic*] and caricatured [*sic*].”⁸⁷

As Pius’s pontificate came to end, American Catholics proclaimed him a saint. America’s preeminent nineteenth-century Catholic historian, John Gilmary Shea, vindicated Pius as a miracle worker tormented by demonic forces. Shea’s popular biography, a powerful narrative conveying the ideology of the Roman Question, assured readers, “there is not a Catholic family in which the little ones do not recognize the portrait of our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, and look upon it with affection and reverence. The war which the world has waged upon him so unre-

lently as Pope and Prince has drawn all faithful hearts to him.” Justifying the kidnapping of the Mortara child, insisting the “Syllabus of Errors” drew a “similar distinction” between “true liberty and license” as the “constitutions of the American States,” castigating Mazzini as “the chief of the enemies of Christ,” and denouncing the Republic of 1849 as an eruption of evil in which “every church showed that the reign of the Antichrist had begun,” Shea insisted that “the zeal for a united Italy was rooted mainly in a hatred of the Catholic Church.” His biography mirrored others that solidified the normative Catholic understanding of Pius’s pontificate in the United States.⁸⁸

Reflecting on “the rising generation in Italy” in 1875, the *Milwaukee Catholic Magazine* summed up this arsenal of invective toward Liberal Italy. The “deterioration of the moral sense produced by irreligion,” it explained, “is accompanied by an increase of the perils to which youthful morals are exposed, whereby the depravity of the pupils is largely facilitated.” This “degeneracy of the Italian youth” resulted from “the adoption of the modern spirit of Liberalism, and . . . the rejection of the old spirit of Catholicism.”⁸⁹

American Catholics knew this “rising generation” was on the move. The ideology of the Roman Question took its classic intransigent form just when a trickle of relatively self-sufficient Ligurian immigrants to the United States was growing into a tidal wave of southern Italian sojourners, all raised in the wicked environment of Liberal Italy. Their “degeneracy” was not a product of racial inferiority, as heretical scientists working from atheistic naturalistic premises claimed. The Catholic nation disembarking in New York or New Orleans was in flight, escaping the prison of Liberal Italy. If the newcomers failed to respect clergy, did not know the catechism, and exhibited a bewildering absence of enthusiasm for their Holy Father, it was because they were victims in need of re-Christianization and civilization. Hopefully, as members of a Catholic nation, their “instinctive” loyalties would reemerge under the influence of the sacraments. For some, however, the damage done under the House of Savoy was irreversible. Ensnared by “secret societies” and radical sects, they had become enemies of the Church, the pope, and God. They were no longer real Italians.

THE IDEOLOGY of the Roman Question emerged out of creative, if reactionary, uses of neoguelph ideas about the papacy, Rome, and Italy. American Catholics clashed with their liberal, Protestant, and Jewish neighbors over the meaning of Rome and Italy. They made the ideology of the Roman Question their own, insisting that all Italian liberals were anti-Catholic, antireligious barbarians, who used nationality as a pretext to attack the pope and the Church. The call to restore the temporal power of the pope was an invitation for Europe to return to civilization, stem barbarism, and recognize the true meaning of liberalism personified by Pius himself. American Catholics employed tortured apologetics to

distinguish the American liberal tradition from its degenerate European version and thereby to protect themselves against Protestant accusations of disloyalty to the United States.

Until the Great War broke out in 1914, American Catholics maintained their relentless assault upon Liberal Italy, the state that enslaved their Holy Father and the Italian Catholic nation. The presence of Italian immigrants, missionaries, sisters, and state representatives within the United States after 1861 complicated matters considerably. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the contest for hegemony over the Italian nation unfolded not only in southern Europe but also in vast diasporas within dozens of states on five continents, where millions of Italians settled. This new international battlefield of Catholic warfare with Liberal Italy, in principle, changed nothing. American Catholics continued to clash with their liberal and Protestant neighbors through ritual and debate, over the meaning of Rome, the pope, and Italy. In so doing, they performed and strengthened the ideology of the Roman Question.