

FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION

Mormons and Waldensians in Italy

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A historic event for the LDS Church in Italy took place in Rome on July 30, 2012. Giorgio Napolitano, president of the Italian Republic, signed legislation that recognized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with two other religious organizations, as full legal partners of the state. This *Intesa*, or “agreement,” has both legal and practical significance in that it gives the Church every right and benefit available to other similarly recognized religious institutions. Among other things, “the Intesa gave Church leaders unhindered access in their pastoral support for members in the military, in hospitals, and in prisons, and guaranteed confidentiality in their communications with members; permitted church members a modest tax deduction for charitable donations; provided authorization for LDS seminaries and institutes, with the possibility that courses might even

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be eligible for public school credit; allowed teaching of LDS religion courses in public school, if the Church decided to do so; stabilized the visa situation for missionaries and mission presidents and the granting of residency permits; and denied police and military the right to enter and search LDS Church buildings without authorization.”¹ As one of only eleven non-Catholic churches to have signed an Intesa with the Italian government, the Church achieved a status that symbolically and psychologically represents “a badge of authenticity and legitimacy—a public affirmation that the religious community has come of age and attained an equal standing in Italy’s public square.”² It was undoubtedly a historical milestone for Mormonism in Italy, which will be rivaled in significance only by the completion of the Rome Italy Temple, presently expected in 2016.

While the Intesa process took over fifteen years from the day of the application’s submission to the day in which the law took full effect, the whole history of Mormonism in Italy functions as the necessary background and foundation for this important achievement. It is a history with a large one-century gap within a 162-year timeframe extending from the day in which the first Mormon missionary set foot on Italian soil to Napolitano’s signing of the Intesa. Two phases are clearly recognizable: the first covering a limited fifteen-year period between 1850 and 1865, and the second ranging from 1965 to the present.³ A comparison of these stages highlights significant differences in context, focus, approach, and objectives to such an extent that any continuity between the nineteenth-century LDS presence in Italy and later twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Italian Mormonism is not immediately apparent. Yet our exploration of the recent path to the Intesa has revealed a somewhat surprising bridge between the two historical phases of Mormonism in Italy: the interactions, tensions, and interfaith relations between Mormons and Waldensians, which range from conflict to friendship and from competition to cooperation. Our analysis aims to shed light

on this intriguing and partially neglected dimension of the history of Mormonism in Italy and to examine some implications that these developments might have for the LDS Church's efforts to establish a stable presence in other emerging areas of international growth.

The historical origins of the Waldensians can be traced to Lyon (southern France) in the twelfth century when a man named Valdès (or Waldesius) and his followers distinguished themselves by preaching a form of Christianity that was based, among other things, on strict adherence to the Bible and on voluntary poverty.⁴ It did not take long for the group to be declared heretical by Catholic authorities and for Waldo and his "Waldensians" to have to relocate to the Piedmont valleys of present-day northwest Italy.⁵ Although persecution occurred in subsequent centuries, including an order of extermination issued against them in 1487, the movement managed to survive due in part to the isolation provided by their alpine surroundings.⁶ Following the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, Waldensian leaders joined the Swiss Reformed tradition of John Calvin and became, for all intents and purposes, a Protestant denomination. In 1848, Charles Albert, the ruler of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, extended civil rights to the Waldensians, who, for the first time in their history, were assured liberty of conscience.⁷ Only two years later, in 1850, the first Mormon missionaries arrived in Piedmont to begin their evangelization of a land that would officially become the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

Lorenzo Snow, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and one of the first Mormon missionaries to Italy, explained the decision to begin proselytizing among the Waldensians to be only partially due to the favorable legal setting brought about by Charles Albert.⁸ Snow was fascinated by the history of the Waldensians and in fact thought of them as "the rose in the wilderness or the bow in the cloud." When he visited a public library in Liverpool to obtain more information on this people, he read that they were a remnant of the primitive Christian

Church and that they “had been the means of preserving the doctrines of the gospel in their primitive simplicity.”⁹ He and other Church leaders such as Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young, and John Taylor saw striking parallels between the persecutions that both Mormons and Waldensians had had to endure. They undoubtedly felt that the doctrinal parallels between the two faiths—including a focus on Christian primitivism, a belief in the Apostasy, and the affirmation of spiritual gifts—would mean that the Waldensians would be receptive to the Mormon message.¹⁰ Consequently, the first phase of missionary work in Italy, which extended from 1850 to 1865, was almost exclusively concentrated in the Waldensian valleys of Piedmont.

Notwithstanding numerous obstacles—including language barriers, political and social hurdles, difficulties of travel on challenging alpine terrain, isolation, discouragement, and conflicts internal to the Church—the missionaries obtained a degree of success in nearly two decades of early Mormon proselytism in Italy.¹¹ Three branches would be established in the valleys and about 180 Waldensians would convert to Mormonism during the mission’s existence, although most joined in the first five years of missionary activities. About a third of all converts would emigrate to Utah, where they would contribute to the establishment of the Church in the West; the remaining converts were either excommunicated, returned to the Waldensian Church, or are unaccounted for.¹² While a harvest of less than two hundred souls, with about eighty representing permanent conversions, may appear meager, it must be remembered that the Waldensian population in the valleys only amounted to about twenty thousand individuals, a number that kept decreasing because of emigration. In other words, Mormon missionary activity was certainly noticed and, unsurprisingly, it encountered stiff opposition.

In 1851 in particular, following the conversion of some prominent families, Waldensian ministers began to actively counter LDS missionary activities through anti-Mormon literature, public debates,

and denunciations from the pulpit. Rumors and printed material stated that “the missionaries were agents sent to Italy to find polygamous wives for Mormon Church leaders in Utah;” Mormon meetings were occasionally disturbed and verbal threats exchanged.¹³ Pastors used both preaching and practical means to protect their flocks from the Mormon message. They reminded their parishioners about their ancestors’ sacrifices for the Waldensian faith in order to dissuade them from accepting a different baptism,¹⁴ and when crop failures and economic crises led many inhabitants to turn to the ministers for assistance, the clergy made help conditional on the person’s renunciation of Mormonism.¹⁵ Moreover, since a few hundred Waldensians were already emigrating every year in search of better opportunities, leaders in the valley were particularly wary of the Mormon focus on emigration to America.¹⁶ In the summer of 1854, this concern even reached the Piedmont House of Deputies, where Joseph Malan, himself a Waldensian, wondered whether the Mormons should be driven out “immediately.”¹⁷

While the 1850s conflict between the Mormon missionaries and the Waldensian pastors is undeniable, it rarely reached proportions where the elders or local members came to fear for their lives. Furthermore, when one looks at the history and size of this persecuted religious minority, Waldensian defensiveness in response to Mormon proselytizing efforts is certainly understandable. Yet defensiveness did not translate into refusal to extend basic religious freedoms to a competing religious group. LDS missionaries would not have been able to organize three branches and convert almost two hundred individuals had there not been a degree of religious freedom within mostly isolated valleys that were practically monolithic in terms of religious affiliation. In other words, when faced with the opportunity to show whether their protracted advocacy for religious freedom was purely self-interested or rather based on a deep commitment to a foundational human value, the Waldensians responded

by and large in favor of the latter. In fact, this was one of the main reasons missionary work began in the valleys of Piedmont; this kind of freedom of religion in nineteenth-century Italy was more of an anomaly than a standard. This same thought was expressed by those early missionaries who attempted to expand the work beyond the Waldensian valleys into Catholic Italy.¹⁸

Following the departure of the last Mormon missionary from the valleys of Piedmont in 1865, the LDS Church would not officially return to the land of Italy for a full century. The reasons for this absence are complex and can be traced both to factors within the LDS Church and to outside historical events that affected Italy's openness to Mormon proselytism.¹⁹ Among the latter, the Second Vatican Council, which took place between 1962 and 1965, is worth a brief mention. This ecumenical council represented an *aggiornamento*, or updating, of the Catholic Church's approach to the modern world, which had been mostly negative up to that point in time. Vatican II would bring about significant changes in the direction of greater openness. For example, in the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, the council affirmed unequivocally that every human being has a foundational right to religious liberty.²⁰ Interestingly, the Italian zone of the LDS Swiss Mission had been opened only a few months earlier, with missionaries being sent to seven Italian cities where LDS American servicemen or a handful of Italian members were already residing.

This second phase of missionary work in Italy began with great enthusiasm. In August 1966, following the Italian zone's considerable success, a separate Italian mission was organized.²¹ The country was rededicated by Elder Ezra Taft Benson during a small, private service in Torre Pellice, the Waldensian town in Piedmont that had been the residence of the earliest Mormon missionaries; the 1966 flood of the Arno River had prevented the ceremony from taking place in Florence, the originally selected location.²² Missionary work in Italy continued in its steady advance, notwithstanding difficulties in public



Elder and Sister Benson and President and Sister Duns at the mission conference held in Florence on August 2, 1966, to formally reestablish the Italian Mission.

relations, challenges in training native leadership, and other obstacles typical of an emergent-church setting. In 1971 a second Italian mission was created, and statistics indicate the presence of almost fifteen hundred members organized into twenty-five Italian branches and four servicemen's groups.²³ Two additional missions were created in the later '70s, bringing the total number to four (later consolidated



A photo of Torre Pellice in 1889, probably similar to what it would have looked like in the 1850s and '60s when the early Mormon missionaries labored there. Clearly seen dominating the skyline in the background are Monte Vandalino and the prominent rock protrusion called Monte Castelluzzo on its left slope, which was the location for the dedication of the country of Italy to missionary work by Elder Lorenzo Snow in 1850. (Carlo Papini, ed., Come Vivevano: Val Pellice, Valli D'Angrogna e di Luserna fin de siècle (1870–1910) [Torino: Claudiana, 1980, 1998], image 54.)

back to two), and visits by two Church prophets, Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball, galvanized the Italian Saints and brought added media exposure to the Church. Overall, the 1970s and early '80s were characterized by accelerated rates of conversion to Mormonism as demonstrated by the formation of the first two Italian stakes in Milan (1981) and Venice (1985).²⁴

This “golden” period of missionary work was followed by three decades of slower growth but increasing maturity, stability within the Church, and greater acceptance and integration into Italian public life. Presently, ten Church stakes dot the Italian map, and

evidence of the maturation of the local leadership can “be found in the calling of many Italians to senior positions in the church hierarchy: seven mission presidents . . . a Swiss Temple president . . . and numerous regional representatives, area seventies, and stake presidents.”²⁵ Landmark events also played a role in this slow but steady trajectory of growth and public visibility. A highlight of the 1990s was the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s European tour, which included a visit to Italy in 1998. President Monson’s 2008 announcement of the Church’s plans to construct a temple in Rome certainly marked a historic moment. More history was made in 2012 with the achievement of the previously mentioned Intesa and the signing of a contract between the Italian National Archives and FamilySearch, allowing for the complete digitization of the archives’ historical records.²⁶ The next milestone will be the temple’s dedication, which is anticipated to take place in 2016.

Although cursory and highly simplified, this sketch of Mormonism’s progress in Italy highlights a few significant differences between its early and later phases. The nineteenth-century Italian mission had less than a two-decade lifespan, whereas the later mission organization, begun about half a century ago, was to be permanent in nature. Similarly, the early organization of three branches within the Waldensian valleys was not as much a step in the establishment of a permanent Mormon presence in Italy as it was the response to a need to provide temporary spiritual shelter for members preparing to emigrate to Zion. Limited resources and the strongly millenarian view of the nineteenth-century Church gave such an urgency to the “gathering of the elect” that the Church did not set roots into Italian soil then like it would begin to do in the twentieth century.

Another big difference between the earlier and the later Mormon phases of evangelization was their area of focus. Nineteenth-century efforts were almost exclusively centered around a small Protestant minority in a very limited geographical location, whereas the “new”



*“The fountain of Carlo Alberto (1845), a rare example of a monument erected by a king in tribute to his people ‘who welcomed him with great affection.’ Having come to Torre Pellice the previous year for the inauguration of a Catholic church, he received such a warm and spontaneous reception from the Waldensian population that he was deeply moved. When the king learned, a little later, that the community council of Torre Pellice had decided to erect a monumental fountain in memory of his visit, he insisted on covering all the expenses and provided the wording for the inscription.” The fountain has since been relocated to the middle of the piazza among the trees. (Carlo Papini, ed., *Come Vivevano: Val Pellice, Valli D’Angrogna e di Luserna fin de siècle (1870–1910)* [Torino: Claudiana, 1980, 1998], image 53.)*

Italian missions expanded to reach all corners of the country, without concern for people's religious backgrounds or beliefs. In short, there appears to be a significant discontinuity between the two phases of the Mormon presence in Italy.

Yet one also finds points of contact between the first and the second Italian missions. One significant line of continuity emerges in the Mormon-Waldensian interactions that began in the nineteenth century and have continued into the twenty-first. To be sure, at the general membership level, such contact was and remains limited. Both Italian Mormons and Italian Waldensians are few in number, and the LDS Church does not presently have congregations in the Piedmont valleys where Waldensians are in highest concentration. Although a handful of Waldensians have joined the LDS Church in Italy and LDS missionaries have, as recently as the year 2000, spent some time in the proselyting areas of the "first" mission, the interaction between the Mormons and Waldensians has not primarily emerged through missionary activities. Instead, Church leaders and public relations representatives have made an effort to maintain and strengthen relationships with prominent Waldensians, even as present-day Mormonism has moved to bigger and greener "Catholic" pastures in its proselytizing endeavors. In short, Mormons and Waldensians have come to interact and to know each other not primarily as potential converts but as friends and partners in the defense of religious freedom and of other shared values.

For example, "many LDS members have benefited from receiving access to the Waldensian archives in order to get ancestral information for their own genealogical research, and the FamilySearch department has established very good relations with Italian Waldensians."²⁷ The sincerity of Waldensian friendship has also been demonstrated throughout the process that led to the Intesa between the Italian government and the LDS Church. Indeed, the support and mediation that prominent Waldensians offered spontaneously to Latter-day Saints

was a significant contributor to the success of the endeavor. This agreement was not finalized without having to surpass some hurdles, which took about fifteen years to be resolved. These difficulties varied in nature and were mostly unrelated to any specific doctrinal or practical concerns associated with the LDS Church. Anna Nardini, the Italian government representative who helped oversee the whole process, indicated that some politicians were not as concerned about the Mormons as they were about the possibility that granting full legal recognition to any religious group might eventually mean having to recognize all of them. In the months following the events of 9/11, this prospect was worrisome to some. Other politicians simply needed to become better educated about the LDS Church, and in this context, as Nardini highlighted, they greatly benefited from the exposure that Mitt Romney's 2012 candidacy for president of the United States gave to the Church and its teachings.²⁸ Yet explicit support and sustained advocacy from non-Mormons would still be needed to overcome the impasse of the Italian bureaucratic machinery.

Waldensians have been consistent advocates for the extension of religious equality to an increasing number of religious minorities. For example, before the June 1946 national assembly elections immediately following World War II, as Italy transitioned from a monarchy to a republic, the Waldensians (as well as other Protestants) issued a statement that was printed on posters and displayed in cities throughout the country. The statement asserted, among other things, that "authentic civil and political freedom cannot flourish unless there be the foundation of freedom of religion equal for all," and it called for the elimination of "every vestige of the old confessional state." It set forth three principles to achieve this goal: (1) "The full and complete freedom of conscience and of religion for all, so that anyone . . . can worship God and witness to God's truth as conscience directs"; (2) "The full independence of all the churches from the state"; and (3) "Impartiality and neutrality in matters of religion on the part of a non-confessional state."²⁹

Later, in 1984, being the first non-Catholic religious group to have reached an Intesa with the Italian government (following their merger with Italian Methodists in the '70s), the Waldensians did not see this achievement as a reason to retreat from direct involvement in other religions' efforts to reach the same objective. In fact, in 2008 the Waldensian-Methodist Church supported and participated in a Coalition for Religious Agreements that had been formed by the five religions that were seeking the Intesa, the LDS Church being one of the five.³⁰ Moreover, prominent Waldensians have repeatedly proposed and sponsored legislation aimed at extending and guaranteeing religious freedom for all. In 2007, Waldensian member of Parliament Valdo Spini sponsored a proposed law on religious freedom and in that context gave LDS Church representatives the chance to make their case publicly when they were invited, alongside members of other Italian religious minorities, to a parliamentary inquiry into the recommended legislation. At present, Waldensian professor Paolo Naso, from the La Sapienza University in Rome, is spearheading efforts for a new law on religious freedom in Italy in cooperation with representatives of different religions, including the Latter-day Saints.

In the specific context of the parliamentary process leading to the Intesa, Spini counseled and assisted LDS Church representatives at the early stages of the proposal.³¹ Another Waldensian member of Parliament, Senator Lucio Malan, was a key contributor to the success of the legislation in the months leading up to its signing. In fact, in 2011 Malan cosponsored the draft of the proposed agreements between the state and the five religions of the Coalition. He then proceeded to advocate for these proposals as they were being debated in the Italian Senate. Following the approval of three of these proposed agreements, the LDS Church being the recipient of one of them, Malan stated that the new legislation represented "three important steps for religious liberty in Italy." He also added, "I am especially

pleased to have worked for these measures since my religious community, the Waldensian Church, was the first to attain an Intesa in 1984 and from that time until now we have fought hard to guarantee the same right for others.”³² Indeed, although the Waldensians mentioned so far span the whole range of the political spectrum, they all share a solid commitment to religious freedom, which seems to be deeply ingrained in their Waldensian DNA. Thus, when asked about the meaning of being a Waldensian in the twenty-first century, Malan responded: “It means being a Christian with a responsibility not to stain the memory of our poor and humble ancestors. For many centuries they experienced persecution, discrimination, and poverty to be faithful to the gospel message. It is then our human responsibility today to prevent other religious groups from being similarly persecuted.”³³

Love for religious freedom has then been at the root of Waldensian involvement in the LDS cause, but the sincere friendship that has developed in the process between these Waldensian personalities and LDS officials should not be underestimated. Paolo Naso, Domenico Maselli, and Lucio Malan are considered “friends” by Giuseppe Pasta, a public affairs representative for the LDS Church in Italy, a feeling which is fully reciprocated. Malan highlights that he “would have done what he did for the Mormons no matter what, but the fact that they are so likable, courteous, devoted to their faith, and trustworthy citizens made it easier to advocate for them without any reservations.”³⁴ Parenthetically, Malan’s interaction with Mormonism is also strongly associated with the faith’s sacred buildings. When asked about his first contact with the LDS Church, he recalled attending the open house of the newly built Las Vegas Nevada Temple at a time when he was living in the United States. Malan also attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the Rome temple in October of 2010, presided over by President Monson himself. In that setting, the Waldensian senator hailed the groundbreaking as “a positive day for



Some representatives of the coalition and their political partners gather to discuss plans and strategy. Left to right: Giuseppe Pasta, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Ms. Maria Fala', vice-president of the Buddhist Union; Ms. Dora Bognandi, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; Mr. Franco Di Maria, president of the Italy Hindu Union; Senator Vannino Chiti, vice-president of the Italian Senate; Archimandrite Symeone Catsinas, Orthodox Church; Senator Stefano Ceccanti, PD Party; Mr. Claudio Tanca, APCO; Senator Lucio Malan, PDL Party. (Courtesy of Giuseppe Pasta, LDS public affairs, Italy.)

Italy because those who profess to obey the laws of the state and the laws of God make the country in which they live a better place.”³⁵ Certainly, relationships of trust of this kind emerge only through encounter, dialogue, and sincere desire to know and understand the religious “other.”

Many years have passed since the days in which Lorenzo Snow and his companions walked the Waldensian valleys of Piedmont. Few are familiar with the story beyond LDS Church historians, some Italian members, and the descendants of those early converts to



Mission histories record that thirty-five missionaries witnessed the rededication of Italy by Elder Benson near Torre Pellice, November 10, 1966. (Church History Library.)

Mormonism who emigrated to Utah. Malan, who grew up in that area, recalls hearing in his youth that the Mormons had renamed their local Monte Vandalino “Mount Brigham,” but beyond that the rest of the story was mostly unknown. The Mormons had come, converted some, had conflicts with the local pastors, and finally left. Yet, at the end of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the two groups would meet again, this time mostly outside of Piedmont and in collaboration and friendship rather than in conflict. These meetings culminated in one of the most significant achievements of the LDS Church in Italy: the signing of the Intesa with the Italian government. Certainly, those early Mormon missionaries could not have anticipated that descendants of the Waldensians among whom they had served would contribute to make the Church a full partner of the Italian state more than 150 years later.

To be sure, the significance of the Waldensian support for the achievement of the Intesa should not be singled out as the one

determining cause of its success. Catholics and individuals of different persuasions also courageously backed the legislation and gave their valued contribution to its success, and, although friendship and interfaith cooperation brought momentum to the proposal, the effective work of the LDS public relations team and extensive community and humanitarian service by Italian LDS members were no less significant. Indeed, interviews with government officials, legal scholars, and Church leaders and attorneys in Italy shed further light on how the LDS Church achieved the significant milestones of the Intesa with the state and the construction of a temple.³⁶

Several factors were key to the LDS Church's successful Intesa campaign. First, a focused, team-oriented, and patient strategy prevented the Mormons from becoming discouraged during the long process of pursuing the Intesa and allowed them to cross the finish line. Second, friends of many faiths (particularly Waldensians and Catholics)—individuals who were brave enough to take a public stand on behalf of the LDS Church—helped open doors and assisted in the advancement of the Intesa. Third, the Mormon campaign had important stakeholders in state government offices, the Senate, and the Chamber of Deputies who offered strong support. Allies outside of government—including noted scholars such as Silvio Ferrari, Massimo Introvigne, and Stefano Ceccanti—were also very supportive of the Church's effort.

Finally, the Parliament was generally willing (although there was some dispute on this point) to recognize Mormonism as a "Christian" faith—globally recognized and well-respected—which enhanced the Church's ability to advance with the other two Christian faiths in the Coalition, although not at the same pace. There was respect for Mormonism's reputation as a well-known, influential religious organization in the United States and for its support of principles of sound government and loyal citizenship. Moreover, as a member of the Coalition, the LDS Church was the

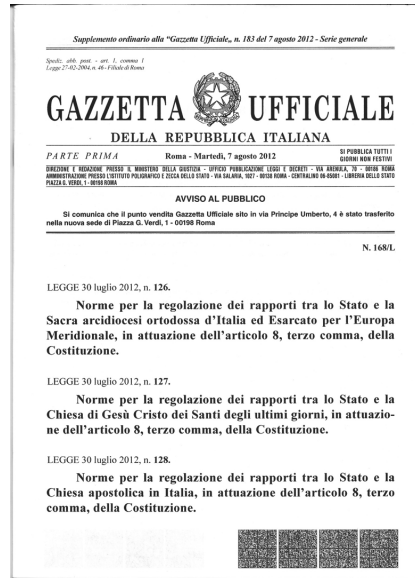
driving force behind the strategy, execution, government relations outreach, and communication plan that earned the admiration of other Coalition members and Italian politicians.

Conversely, political factors such as instability in the government and lack of political priority on the issue prevented some religious groups from attaining Intesa status. In general, these groups were not supported, and in some cases were explicitly opposed by certain political parties like the Northern League. Some churches did not succeed in their Intesa petitions because they lacked a champion willing to advocate their cause and because the state and political parties did not consider them strategically important. Because of Italy's prominently Catholic status, it is understandable that there were strong biases against non-Christian faiths (e.g., Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims) as well as against faiths considered to be opponents of the state (Jehovah's Witnesses).³⁷ Significant efforts were made by three groups who had previously achieved Intesa status (the Evangelical Federation, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Waldensian-Methodist Church) and by the three successful Intesa applicants (the Orthodox Church, the Apostolic Church, and the LDS Church) to bring the Buddhist Union and the Hindu Union along with them in the Senate. However, these two groups were handicapped because they did not have the resources to invest sufficient time, finances, and strategic positioning to follow up with key stakeholders regarding their faith-specific issues; hence, their agreements with the government required several additional months in order to be finalized.³⁸

The Mormon experience in Italy shows that religious equality in any country is not freely granted, and this is a lesson that may have implications for the Church's efforts to establish an enduring presence in other international areas. Religious liberty is a closely guarded commodity that the state distributes selectively and incrementally; political acumen and lobbying muscle, not a transparent legal process, determine the recipients. In other words, religious, ethnic, and other social

minorities attain their constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms not by merely requesting them but by proactively and tenaciously pursuing them, most effectively in league with individuals and groups who share a common cause. The kind of faith that produces miracles, such as signing an Intesa or building a temple, remains dead unless accompanied by civic activism, community service, interfaith outreach, and other works. Thus one of the lessons to be drawn from the Italian case, which could transfer to other emerging areas of Church growth, is that common political, legal, and social interests can be achieved by granting local leaders and members a more visible and substantive role in building coalitions at the community and national levels. In Italy, this approach proved to be crucial as it fostered mutual respect, achieved legal recognition, helped dispel stereotypes, and hastened social integration.

In conclusion, given the unique background of nineteenth-century Mormon-Waldensian interactions, it is both interesting and inspiring to recognize a line of continuity between the past and the present through these historical developments from which the Italian LDS Church has greatly benefited. The nature of these interactions



A copy of the Gazzetta Ufficiale (the official journal that promulgates acts of the Italian Parliament) containing the announcement of the LDS Church's Intesa with the Italian State, August 2012. (Courtesy of Giuseppe Pasta, national director of public affairs in Italy.)

certainly leads us to reflect upon the value of mutually respectful interfaith relations and upon the importance of going beyond self-serving motivations in order to fully embrace religious freedom. Indeed, such a context of understanding and cooperation can give proselytization a less-competitive flavor as various faith communities recognize that alternative religious messages can coexist and contribute positively to society.

Latter-day Saints have been counseled “to join with people of all faiths who feel accountable to God in defending religious freedom so it can be a beacon for morality.”³⁹ In Italy, the Waldensians continue to be leaders in these kinds of endeavors as well as being one of Mormonism’s strongest allies. When one recognizes that these Reformed Protestants were willing to respect the newly extended principle of religious liberty when the Mormon missionaries arrived in 1850, even at the cost of losing several of their own to the new religion and to the New World, this partnership acquires added significance. It functions as an instructive example of the widespread benefits that emerge from joining hands in advocating for religious freedom, and it provides an inspiring illustration of the need to go beyond conflicts or divisions in order to successfully meet the challenges of modern society.

Notes

1. James A. Toronto, Eric R. Dursteler, and Michael W. Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza: The History of the Latter-day Saints in Italy* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, forthcoming), 516.
2. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 497.
3. These dates focus on the time frame of organized missionary presence as opposed to official time length of administrative units. In fact, the “first” Italian mission would not be closed until 1867, but missionaries had ceased to operate in Italy by 1865. The “second” Italian mission would open in 1966, but an

Italian zone of the Swiss Mission had been organized eighteen months earlier in 1965.

4. The preferred phonetic spelling of the founder's name is Valdès, although he has also been referred to as Vaudès, Waldo, and even Peter Waldo. See Gabriel Audisio, *Preachers by Night: The Waldensian Barbes (15th–16th Centuries)* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011); also Giorgio Tourn, Giorgio Bouchard, Roger Geymonat, and Giorgio Spini, *You Are My Witnesses: The Waldensians across 800 Years* (Torino, Italy: Claudiana, 1989), 309. Other excellent general sources on the origins of the Waldensians and their establishment in northern Italy are Giorgio Tourn, *I Valdesi: La Singolare Vicenda di un Popolo-Chiesa* (Torino, Italy: Claudiana, 1977); Giorgio Spini, *Risorgimento e Protestanti* (Torino, Italy: Claudiana, 1998); and Augusto Armand Hugon, *Torre Pellice: Dieci Secoli di Storia e di Vicende* (Torre Pellice: Società di Studi Valdesi, 1980).
5. In English, both “Waldensians” and “Waldenses” are used, but the former term is preferred today. The Waldensians are called *Valdesi* in Italian and *Vaudois* in French. On the question of English terminology, see Tourn et al., *You Are My Witnesses*, 309.
6. See Euan Cameron, *The Reformation of the Heretics: The Waldensians of the Alps, 1480–1580* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); and Gabriel Audisio, *The Waldensian Dissent, Persecution and Survival, c. 1170–c. 1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
7. “History,” American Waldensian Society, <http://www.waldensian.org/3-history/>. See also Michael W. Homer, “The Waldensian Valleys: Seeking ‘Primitive Christianity’ in Italy,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 134–87.
8. For Snow's account of his activities, see Lorenzo Snow, *The Italian Mission* (London: W. Aubrey, 1851); and Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884). Concerning the Italian Mission, see Michael W. Homer, “‘Like the Rose in the Wilderness’: The Mormon Mission in the Kingdom of Sardinia,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 25–62; Homer, “The Italian Mission, 1850–1867,” *Sunstone* 7 (May/June 1982): 16–21; James A. Toronto, “A Continual War, Not of

- Arguments, but of Bread and Cheese': Opening the First LDS Mission in Italy, 1849–1867," *Journal of Mormon History* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 188–232; Diane Stokoe, "The Mormon Waldensians" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1985); and Flora Ferrero, "L'emigrazione valdese nello Utah nella seconda metà dell'800" (master's thesis, University of Torino, 1999).
9. Snow, *The Italian Mission*, 10–11. Numerous Protestant publications in the nineteenth century promulgated this ancient origins thesis regarding the Waldensians. See, for example, Alexis Muston, *Histoire des Vaudois des vallées du Piémont, et de leurs colonies depuis leur origine jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: F. G. Levrault, 1834); Mrs. William Fison, *The Evangelists of Italy: Or the Mission of the Apostolic Waldensian Church* (London: Werthein & Macintosh, 1855); and J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, 3 vols. (London: Cassell & Company). Other writers, many of whom were Catholic, sought to prove this thesis false. See, for example, André Charvaz, *Recherches Historiques sur la véritable origine dei Valdesi* (Torino: G. Bocca, 1838). For details of this historical controversy, see Homer, "The Waldensian Valleys: Seeking 'Primitive Christianity' in Italy."
 10. "Faith of the Church of Christ in These Last Days, No. IV," *The Evening and the Morning Star*, June 1834, 162; *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 5:342 (October 18, 1857); and *Journal of Discourses*, 24:352 (December 9, 1883).
 11. Homer, "Like the Rose in the Wilderness"; and Toronto, "A Continual War."
 12. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 99. See "Record of the Italian Mission," in Daniel B. Richards, *The Scriptural Allegory in Three Parts* (Salt Lake City: Magazine Printing Company, 1931), 301; also Italian Mission Manuscript History and Historical Reports (1849–1854), LR 4140 2, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
 13. Marie Madaline Cardon Guild, *Autobiography*, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 5–7.
 14. G. D. Keaton, "The Italian Mission," *Millennial Star* 16, no. 13 (April 1, 1854), 204–6.
 15. Samuel Francis, "Foreign Correspondence," *Millennial Star* 17, no. 29 (July 21, 1855), 454–55.

THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH

16. “Comunicazioni con l'estero, 1836–1899,” folder 1562, Archivio Storico del Comune, Torre Pellice, Italy.
17. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 152.
18. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 111; Samuel Francis journals, December 11, 1856, MS 8832, Church History Library.
19. Eric R. Dursteler, “One Hundred Years of Solitude: Mormonism in Italy, 1867–1964,” *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 4 (2011): 119–48.
20. Second Vatican Council, “*Dignitatis Humanae*,” Declaration on Religious Freedom, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.
21. Regarding the early years of the second mission in Italy, see James A. Toronto, “The ‘Wild West’ of Missionary Work: Reopening the Italian Mission, 1965–71,” *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 1–72.
22. James A. Toronto and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “The LDS Church in Italy: the 1966 Rededication by Elder Ezra Taft Benson,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2012): 83–100.
23. Leavitt Christensen, “Leavitt Christensen papers, 1960–1989,” MS 13473, Church History Library. Christensen served as a counselor in the Italian Mission presidency and later as the president of the Italian Mission.
24. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 350–73.
25. Toronto, Dursteler, and Homer, *Mormons in the Piazza*, 389.
26. “Italian Ancestors,” FamilySearch, <https://familysearch.org/italian-ancestors/>.
27. Giuseppe Pasta (director of institutional relations for the LDS Church in Italy), email to Mauro Properzi, June 26, 2014. For many years, Mormon historians have been given access to the resources of the Waldensian library and archives at the headquarters of the Waldensian Church in Torre Pellice. For the account of how LDS officials received authorization in 1947 from Virgilio Sommani—the moderator of the *Tavola Valdese* (governing committee)—to microfilm the baptismal, marriage, and death registers of Waldensian parishes in the valleys, see Archibald F. Bennett, “The Vaudois Revisited,” *Improvement Era*, January 1948, 12–14, 56–58.

28. Cons. Anna Nardini (coordinator of the Office of Institutional Relations, Presidency of the Council of Ministers) interview, May 27, 2014, interviewed by Mauro Properzi and James A. Toronto.
29. Tourn et al., *You Are My Witnesses*, 305.
30. Coalizione per le Intese Religiose, "Brief History," http://www.coalizioneintese.org/religiose.it/jsps/portal/coalizione/la_coalizione.jsp. Pasta highlights the role of Professor Domenico Maselli, Waldensian pastor and former member of the Italian Parliament, as "giving a great contribution in helping" the religious coalition reach its goals. Pasta, email, June 26, 2014.
31. Meeting report, Hon. Valdo Spini, July 25, 2007, Rome. Document in possession of the authors.
32. Dora Bognandi, "Libertà religiosa. Ora le Intese non sono più sei ma nove," *Unione Italiana delle Chiese Cristiane Avventiste del Settimo Giorno* (July 27, 2012), <http://www.avventistimilano.org/2012/07/liberta-religiosa-ora-le-intese-non-sono-piu-sei-ma-nove/>.
33. Senator Lucio Malan interview, May 28, 2014, interviewed by Mauro Properzi.
34. Malan, interview, May 28, 2014.
35. "President Monson Breaks Ground for Rome Italy Temple," October 23, 2010, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/president-monson-breaks-ground-for-rome-italy-temple>.
36. The analysis in this section is drawn primarily from information and observations provided by David Colton, the Church's legal counsel in Frankfurt, and Giuseppe Pasta, former national director of public affairs in Italy. Email interviews, July 27, 2012, copies in author's possession.
37. Nardini, interview, May 27, 2014.
38. The Hindu and Buddhist Intese were finally approved in February 2013. See Fabrizio Caccia, "Baggio, Guzzanti, e gli altri che hanno scelto il buddismo," *Corriere della Sera*, January 31, 2013, http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_gen_nao_30/baggio-guzzanti-convertiti_11c525a4-6aa7-11e2-9446-e5967f79d7ac.shtml; "Religioni: Zaccaria (Pd), Approvate Intese con Induisti e Buddhisti, Risultato Storico," *Agenparl* (Rome, Italy), December 11, 2012, copy in author's possession. See also Massimo Introvigne, "Italy Enters into Concordates with

THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH

Buddhists and Hinduists, Who Follow Mormons, Apostolic Pentecostals, and an Orthodox Church,” Center for Studies on New Religions, <http://www.cesnur.org/2012/mi1807.htm>; and <http://www.ashramgita.com/en/>.

39. Elder Quentin L. Cook, “The Restoration of Morality and Religious Freedom,” Brigham Young University–Idaho commencement address, December 16, 2011, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/the-restoration-of-morality-and-religious-freedom>.