



THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



No. 108

Spring 2005

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From the Editor

Dear friends and supporters,

Once again a big Thank You for your support in donations and prayers for the work of the Waldensian Church in Italy. Radio Beckwith still needs all the support we can provide and the new church in Trapani can do with a few finishing touches, such as benches and Communion glasses. This sounds trivial but in Italy they cannot find the tiny ones we use in this country — the Catholic Church has not yet joined us in Communion in both kinds! — and I thought we could launch a collection for providing as many churches as we can with a proper Communion kit.

We have some sad news: Peggy, the beloved wife of Prescott Stephens, died in February after many years of suffering. Richard and I were able to attend the moving and warm service for the celebration of her life in their beautiful old parish church of St Thomas à Becket in Framfield. You'll be able to read about Peggy in the next issue.

In March we lost another friend: Professor Giorgio Vola, the expert on Cromwell and the Waldenses. He had phoned me on Sunday 13th in order to organise a lecture on this subject, only to die of a heart attack the following day.

WALDENSIAN AWAY DAY & AGM 2005

Saturday 21 May 10.30–4.30
at Wesley Methodist Church, Christ's Pieces, Cambridge

Rev. Dr **Leslie Griffiths** will talk about: *The Slaughtered Saints: why bother to remember them?* **Peter Ciaccio**, Italian Methodist minister in training, will tell us of his experience in this country, at Sarum College, Salisbury. Rev. Dr **Bill Pickering** will give a talk illustrated with slides on **Canon Gilly**, English Parson quite extraordinary. We'll hear about projects, the financial situation, future trips and you'll be able to watch an extraordinary **film** on the Waldenses shot in **1924**, lost and then quite recently found in New York! Furthermore, we'll be able to tell you about other events regarding the commemoration of **1655**. **We hope as many of you as can will join us to hear such inspiring speakers for what will be a stimulating and memorable day !!!**

Cover photo: Peggy and Prescott Stephens

Life goes on, though, and we are blessed with two happy pieces of news: Claudia Lupi, the Italian pastor who attended our Away Day last year and is now a Methodist minister in London, has had a beautiful baby girl called Micol. Alistair Morris and Rachel Bowes, who were also at our gathering, were married at Girton College Chapel in Cambridge on 2 April.

This year is full of anniversaries: The Waldensian Faculty of Theology and the Publishing House *Claudiana*, one of the oldest in Italy! both celebrate their 150th. Furthermore, the founder of our Committee, Canon Gilly, died in 1855. **His life and work as well as the Easter massacre of the Waldenses in 1655 and the rescue provided by Cromwell's England will be commemorated at the Away Day.**

E.S.N.

From the Chairman

Dear Friends

You will be delighted to know that the Trapani Church in Sicily is nearly finished, and a big celebration is planned later in the year. The committee has taken a particular interest in supporting the Waldensian work in Sicily, being well aware of the difficulties faced by the church folk there as well as the opportunities which abound. We are pleased that now in Trapani they have a centre in which they can worship God and where they can meet the needs of people much more adequately.

We have been able to welcome Peter Ciaccio, the student from the Waldensian Theological Faculty, at the committee and hear at first hand his impressions about his stay and his studies. Supporting the ministry in the training abroad is a valuable part of the work we undertake, as well as funding the work in the field.

Two of our trustees have decided that they must retire from the committee, Sheila and George Dunn. They have worked with the committee over many years, and more than earned our thanks. Fortunately we shall still see them at the Away Days and Annual Meetings.

Sadly I must report the death of Peggy Stephens, the wife of Prescott Stephens our President. With her long links with the committee and great support for its work she will be missed. She has not been well for some time now, and our sympathy has been expressed to her family. We are blessed indeed in the people who serve on this committee, and by the work they have done over the years, and are ever mindful of the support we receive from so many of you our supporters.

God bless and keep you,

Eric Murray

Synod 2004

The Synod opened on Sunday 22 August with a service in which Marcello Salvaggio was consecrated to the ministry, and Alessandra Trotta was presented with a Bible to mark the fact that she had become a deaconess. She was also one of the Presidents of the Synod. The sermon was preached by Professor Yan Redalié on Luke 19: 1–10 — the Gospel for Zacchaeus.

The Bible Studies for the week were based on the theme of the vocation of the Church, both in relation to the world and to its own members. The passages studied were Jeremiah 1: 4–19, Matthew 25: 14–30, 2 Corinthians 11: 16–33 and Ephesians 4: 1–16. A new hymn, from the recently concluded World Alliance of Reformed Churches' General Council meeting in Accra, was used on each day; its theme was a celebration of life and it was based on Ghana's most popular contemporary dance.

The Scrutiny Committee's Report to the Synod, containing its assessment of the Report of the Tavola, was introduced on Monday morning, and most of the rest of the day was taken up with a debate on what was called the crisis facing the Church. This was seen in four main ways: the lack of new lay leadership in the Church; the working out of the Church's pastoral role; difficulties facing youth centres and theological faculties; and difficulties in exercising the diaconal role of the Church. They also outlined four paradoxes: that at a time when religion was in the forefront of people's minds, numbers were falling; the Waldensian name was better known in Italy now than ever before; the finances were better than ever before because of the new church tax; and local churches were less well attended.



In essence, the Waldensian membership has now dropped below 20,000, taking it back to where it was in 1979 when the Methodist membership of *c.* 7000 was added to the Waldensian total. It was noted that the places in which membership was increasing were mainly those where there was an immigrant population, particularly from Africa; and so there were obviously many places where membership was declining. By comparison with some Churches in the UK the percentage decline (*c.* 1%) seems quite modest; but it led to an extended discussion of what was happening to the Church. As is customary on

David Thompson speaking at the Synod.

such occasions, many speakers commented that numerical growth was not the primary criterion of the Church's health — a point that is rarely made when membership is actually growing. But others were concerned that the distinctive characteristics of the Waldensians may be being lost, such as the concern for education and biblical knowledge. Some felt that the better ecumenical relations which now existed in Italy had obscured the protestant witness. It was also clear that the shock felt by many at the decision last year to hand over Waldensian hospitals to the state still resonated among some.

The Committee noted that the idea of 'one Church together' was not as easy to achieve as it seemed; in particular the unity of the Church depended upon a unity of intentions. Four principles were mentioned here: the importance of not leaving anyone behind; the realisation that we are not the centre of the world; the need to communicate the protestant vision of society and the world to Italy; and attention to communication. Several questions were asked about what a unity of intentions might mean: what would it mean in multi-ethnic congregations? what did it mean in training, given the different ministries involved? what did it mean for diaconal ministry? what did it mean for the sharing of the money received from taxes? and what did it mean for the balance between Waldensians and Methodists in the Church? Inevitably this debate did not result in any clear conclusions.

The reports on particular aspects of the Church's life were dealt with more briefly. In relation to training for the ministry it was noted that, given the fact that the main growth in congregations came from African members, it was necessary to provide more training in African culture. The other main need was more effective training in conflict management. However, one of the difficulties faced by the Church was the number of people wanting to become pastors without long experience of church life. The Synod had been presented with proposals for changes in the Commission on Pastoral Formation, which would have involved changing the name of the Commission to a Commission for Ministry. It was felt that there needed to be greater clarity about the purpose of the revision. In the event it was agreed that the In-Service Training Committee should become a permanent commission, which would supervise the whole process of ministerial training; there should also be co-operation with the Permanent Commission for Diaconal Formation. The Tavola was also invited to consider the future pattern of churches and districts, the economic position of ministers and the precise method of reorganisation to be adopted.

There was also discussion of communications, and how the Church might achieve a higher profile. There was a website, but no press office, and some thought that more effort should be made in this area. The magazine *Riforma* was doing quite well. A major change in the Church's relation to its publishing house, Claudiana (one of the oldest in the country), is under consideration, whereby Claudiana might become an independent company; approval was given in principle but a number of issues still have to be worked

out. Under administration it was noted that it had been decided to use only two-thirds of the new church tax income for projects at home, and to use the remainder for work abroad. A report was received from the recently concluded meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed churches in Accra. Congregations were urged to study the Letter to the Churches and to consider the issues related to economic justice and ecology which had been raised at the meeting.

Those of us from overseas were taken on an excursion to Turin, where we saw the central Waldensian church and also the main historical sites in the city centre, including the Mole Antonelliana, Italy's highest building. We were all very well looked after by the Church, and a significant range of guests from Europe and further afield spoke at the special dinner on Tuesday evening. All in all it was a great opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

David M. Thompson

A Tribute to Mr Norwood

Hugh Copley Norwood was born on 29 June 1934. Educated in Northern England, he obtained his BA at Bristol University in 1958. He was a Fellow of the Royal Town Planning Institute, but most of his life and career have been spent abroad. He first worked in Malawi (Central Africa) as Town Planner (1965–1973). Then he was Lecturer in Planning at the University of Papua New Guinea (1975–1979) and finally (1979–1989) Senior Lecturer in Planning at Massey University (New Zealand).

He returned to England in 1989 and worked as Town Planner from 1989 to 1998. In that year he visited Northern Italy to study architecture and stayed one week in Torre Pellice. After that journey he began investigating the complex life of Canon William Stephen Gilly, both in England and Piedmont, with the intention of publishing a biography. During his retirement, notwithstanding this new interest, he also continued to remain passionately involved in planning as a consultant.

He published 24 articles on planning in Tropics, conservation of historic buildings, books, and about Gilly. He also edited publications and wrote a short book (monograph) about Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea). He died suddenly on 18 June 2004 while he was in Italy for his research purposes.

I had the opportunity to know Mr Norwood in the year 2000, thanks to our beloved Gilly, who was the subject of my graduation thesis. Mr Norwood has been and is a very important figure for me, to whom I owe much and without whom I would not have been able to write a biography of Gilly so detailed and rich in new elements. In fact, since 1998, Mr Norwood had begun to analyse both the multifaceted English life of this Anglican canon, and what has been termed his 'Waldensian hobby', carrying out extensive re-

searches in archives and libraries of Great Britain and Italy, which displayed many unknown particulars about the life and the activities of this industrious minister of the Church of England. So between Mr Norwood and myself there began a strict and advantageous collaboration, in consequence of which we regularly corresponded while he was away from the Valleys and met whenever he stayed at Torre Pellice, to help one other in exchanging material, information, questions, point of views about our darling, and allowing each other to use all this and what each of us wrote for our respective work.

As I already said, Mr Norwood's research on Gilly has brought to light a great number of new elements about the life of this canon, friend and important benefactor of the Waldenses and I really hope that one day, not too far distant, his work can be finished and published, as was his heart-felt desire. To give an idea of its extraordinariness, it is enough to remember the discovery of Gilly's family tree in West Suffolk County Record Office, and that of the chalice presented to Gilly by the Waldenses in 1844, which is now part of the treasure of the cathedral of Wellington in New Zealand.

In reality what Mr Norwood has represented to me goes further than that all this, since he has not been only a mentor, but also a friend, who has left a deep sign in my life with his energy, his great culture, his curiosity and his enormous wish of life. Unluckily I will never be able to thank him enough, nor repay him for what he has done for me.

Mr Norwood will be greatly missed by all who knew him and I extend my deepest sympathy to his wife Marilyn, to his daughters Vanessa and Juliet and to his son Charles.

Viviana Genre

The story of the Bertin family chapter 7

Our Father had a strict code of loyalty to his Vaudois roots, even though his knowledge of his sect's history was not too deep. His own Father, whom Elena and I can remember (he died in 1933), was apparently well-versed in Biblical knowledge, and was for a while a Sunday-school teacher. At times Father would state that it was an aspiration of his parents that one of their sons would possibly one day become a pasteur, and that Giacomo (or Jacques as he was always addressed) was the son who would, or could, satisfy the dream. For a very poor family this was, and remained, merely a dream. At no time did our parents even consider the possibility of "Italianising" our family name to BERTINI, and our religion was sacrosant (no pun intended here!). Even though they always expressed sentiments of gratitude towards Great Britain for having earned their living and saved their family here, they never naturalised. They also thought it correct to let their two children decide on their own nationality, British or Dual (i.e. British and Italian). We both opted for British.

Of the many Italian organisations in this country, some cultural, others religious, a few purely sporting, our Father only joined one, the “*Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso*”, or Italian Mutual Aid Society. He joined when he came to Great Britain, in 1911, and he would always point out that when Lloyd George introduced his National Insurance Bill (1911) contributions to “*La Mutua*” counted as National Insurance contributions. The said Society was wound-up in 1944 . . . the date is a mere coincidence. Oddly, considering that he had been for 3 years in a crack Bersaglieri regiment . . . they always marched “at the double”, he never joined any sporting activities.

On this note it seems strange now that even a walk of two hours to visit relations and friends in the Valleys, under a blazing sun, was considered normal, the return would again be on foot. Also there were far less asphalted roads than there are now. Elena and I experienced these visit-orientated walks many times.

It now seems rather strange to my sister Elena and myself, that during her widowhood of almost 18 years, Mother never again visited her beloved Valleys. She would quote anecdotes, recite some poems in French, Italian or San Giovanni patois, and mention scores of people whom she had known or met. Occasionally she attended our Swiss Church, and more often the Scottish Presbyterian Church (now a United Reformed Church). Our Father always said that the services there were analogous to the services in the Vaudois churches. On a few occasions Serenella, Elena and I would attend, also on the mid-week Social Evening. For the record, some of the Vaudois pastors preached at the Scottish Church, during their London-stage of the yearly visits. Parishioners always complimented these pastors on their knowledge of the English language. On one occasion which we remember well, Pastor Ernesto Ayassot told the assembly that he had accidentally thrown his speech (sermon) into our coal fire. On conclusion of his talk, Reverend James Fraser

made a charming, and accurate, comment . . . “Pastor Ayassot put his speech into the fire, but in the event he has put fire into his speech.”

One novelty in Autumn 1968 was that one of us was going to Germany. My stay was for 10 days at the gigantic



*Caption to come from
Albert*

Photokina exhibition in Cologne, my specific task being that of a quadri-lingual translator (English, French, Italian and Spanish). The hours were extremely long, and the only break was one afternoon to visit, as my director put it, "The famous cathedral, and the Zoo" . . . he knew my interests.



Caption to come from Albert

During the 1960s there arose a series of difficulties and a virtual "schism" in our Swiss Church. This involved personalities, the choice of member for the "Consistoire", the lack of contact between parishioners and the "governing body", i.e. Consistoire. In 1962 the Church celebrated

its bi-centenary. The main positive result was the formation of a Parish Council as a form of intermediary between the church-goers and the Consistoire. Both Serenella and Elena were active in forcing-through new legislation . . . I was not too sure. Elena, and later myself, were elected to the Parish Council, I became assistant treasurer and in 1973 for the first time ever (and still the only time) a totally non-Swiss person was elected to the Consistoire, i.e. myself, also becoming co-treasurer. In 1993, after exactly 20 years service, and with a year's notice, my resignation was tendered, to allow for younger people. Elena had been a very successful Sunday School "*monitrice*", and the Church Archives were left for me to sort-out whenever a person wanted to trace an ancestor's connection with the Church.

In the '70s, our Mother made a couple of journeys (with me, by train) to Gardone Riviera, on the west side of Lake Garda. There she and our Father had passed some enjoyable holidays. The small town and the nearby Salò were prominent during the short-lived (1943–45) puppet Italian Social Republic.

Serenella and I were very fortunate, and grateful, to have been given 2 trips of virtually one week each, to visit by car, a specific area of Italy. Serenella's Aunt Anna (her Mother's younger sister) first made this gesture in 1971, when she repeated the itinerary, plus many additions, of the "battlefields" trip my Father had taken me to 32 years earlier. The second trip, a year later, was to Cattolica where I had been with the Ballilas in 1936, i.e. 36 years earlier. This time we also saw San Marino, Urbino, Ravenna etc.

Towards the end of her life, our Mother attended a “day-centre” near to her home. She was treated with much love, care and courtesy. Here it is to be appropriate to say that my sister Elena who lived with our Mother, manifested the highest devotion and daughterly love. In her last few weeks our Mother was in hospital but barely recognized us. We pointed out to her that I was taking part in the prestigious Mastermind Quiz, and that my specific subjects were Mussolini, and later on Garibaldi and the Risorgimento, but clearly it meant nothing to her.

The end of her terrestrial journey came on the morning of Sunday 23 February 1968. She was 88½ years old. Her funeral was conducted by Pasteur Philippe Von Orelli of the Swiss Church (his first official service in London) and Rev. I. Kardos of the United Reformed Church. Perhaps a worthy dedication to her memory could be

LIFE’S WORK WELL DONE,
LIFE’S RACE WELL RUN
LIFE’S CROWN WELL WON
. . . NOW COMES REST.

Perhaps I should point out that Elena and I are agreed that, by to-day’s standards, our parents were far too strict and too puritanical with their children; also they were apt to belittle signs of serious illnesses. These two negative traits are however completely dwarfed by the qualities which our parents demonstrated. On our side my sister and I failed to give to our parents any further descendants. Elena never married but has always led a very active life. Apart from her full-time employment in Social Welfare and her passion for opera and ballet, she was a truly spectacular Tours Leader for well over 30 years, this being during most of her official fortnight holidays. The venues were many and varied and often fulfilled her linguistic abilities. Serenella and I unfortunately never had any children.

This series of short articles on my family and its Vaudois connections ends by sheer coincidence in the year 2005 which, as mentioned in the “*Review*”, marks two prominent anniversaries regarding Vaudois history. Firstly, the 350th anniversary of the “Piedmontese Easter” massacre in 1655, which prompted Oliver Cromwell’s intervention, and John Milton’s famous sonnet “Avenge, O Lord”. Secondly, we have the 150th anniversary of Dr William Stephen Gilly’s death, in 1855; he had been instrumental in presenting (and actively helping the Vaudois cause) the situation in the Valleys to the British public.

It seems to me that two other anniversaries merit at least a mention. The year 1855 saw the first use in battle of Italy’s most famous regiments, the Bersaglieri, outside of the Italian peninsula. They were sent and led by their founder, Alessandro la Maronora, and included some Vaudois, including one of my maternal family’s members. The Sardinian army achieved one notable victory at the Tchernaya (in Italian, Cernaia) river. Their presence in the Crimea led indirectly to Italian unity by means of Count Camillo Cavour’s far-sighted diplomacy. The other anniversary (albeit a now-rare 21st year

one) is the agreement of 1984, signed by Bettino Craxi and the then Vaudois Moderator (1979–1986) Giorgio Bouchard, giving full equality to the Vaudois Church.

May I perhaps be permitted to mention this year two anniversaries occur in my own personal life . . . my and Serenella's 50th wedding anniversary and my own 80th birthday towards the end of the year, 'Dieu Voulant'.

Albert Bertin

Religious change and the Waldensians: Some preliminary sociological questions and the work of Euan Cameron

All churches undergo changes in the course of time. In some the changes have been gradual, as in the case of the Church of England since the seventeenth century, though people would argue that in recent decades the changes have been rather fast. Other churches have undergone more rapid changes, as one has seen in the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. What, then, of the Waldensian Church situated today in Italy with a strong following in the Piedmont valleys? It has a long history, as is indicated by its name, for its origins go back as far as the late twelfth century and are directly attributable to Peter Waldo (or Valdesius) of Lyons. His followers, sometimes known as the 'Pauvres de Lyon', grew rapidly and soon became condemned as heretics. Despite their own practices and beliefs they remained attached to the Catholic Church, not least in attending mass. The question arises: how did a medieval sect, branded as heretical, become a Protestant denomination, only slightly different from, say a Presbyterian or Congregationalist church?

This question of change, so well known to many historians of Waldensianism, is implied in Euan Cameron's *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe*, published in 2000.¹ The author has established himself as the leading scholar of the Waldenses in the English-speaking world. His speciality extends from the time of the origin of the Waldenses, around 1180, to the early sixteenth century when great changes among them began to take place. He first established his reputation with the publication of an earlier book of 1984, *The Reformation of the Heretics: The Waldenses of the Alps, 1480–1580*.² In it he challenged some of the conventional views of what became known as the synod of Chanforan (near Torre Pellice) held in 1532, when Reformation fathers from Switzerland met with Waldensian leaders, with great consequences for the medieval movement. In all his work Cameron, trained in history in Oxford, relies on a large number of primary sources, but he never treats them as 'gospel' for sometimes he challenges their validity, authenticity and logic. In his book, *Waldenses*, he does not need to show how the Waldensian church at the present time differs radi-

cally from its medieval roots. The changes are all too obvious to anyone who has a working knowledge of the contemporary church and compares it with what Cameron writes about the medieval Waldensians.

Cameron covers the movement as a whole, examining its existence not only in Dauphiné, Lombardy, Languedoc and the southwestern Alps, but also in Germany and eastern Europe. He deals with each region where the Waldensians gained ground and delineates differences in specific beliefs and practices. Such are the differences that the Waldensian movement can never be seen as a coherent whole. Its organisation was somewhat loose as it depended on itinerant preachers, later called *barbes*, and its followers adopted an anomalous position of being half in and half out of the Catholic Church. The movement was never institutionalized with anything approaching a hierarchical structure or a clear-cut creed by which members might be identified. There was self-identity but no uniform rationale for it. The Waldensians were far from being systematic theologians. They were on the whole an ill-educated assortment, usually farmers, servants or innkeepers by occupation. The movement never drew members from the nobility.

Realizing that there have been variations of belief and practice in different areas, the following generalizations, however, can be made about the Waldensians.

1 They followed a strict ethical doctrine that forbade members of the sect to swear, either in terms of blasphemy or in the taking of legal oaths. Here was an attempt to clean up the language of the day. Something of that language, in England at least, can be gleaned from reading Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Oaths of many sorts were commonly used and hence they were said to lose their seriousness and solemnity.

2 Waldenses were opposed to executions. On account of this they attacked the Roman Catholic Church in its policy of violent persecution.

3 They rejected purgatory because it denied the absolution of sins. When a person died they believed that he or she went straight to heaven or hell. Masses for the dead were therefore valueless.

4 The movement relied on itinerant preachers who were celibate. They encouraged their adherents to confess their sins to them after which they were given penances. The 'laity' were married and supported the preachers by way of hospitality. The preachers frequently travelled in pairs, pretending they were pedlars.

5 The Waldensians usually held their religious meetings in private or in secret places. There were occasions during the Inquisition when suspicious minds labelled such meetings as sexual orgies. The meetings usually centred on sermons given by *barbes*. The *barbes* also heard confessions and gave penances.

Characteristics of a different kind should be mentioned. As was noted earlier, Waldensians tended to be present at mass at the local church on a Sunday and also went on feast days. They were not strongly anti-clerical, at

least in the early days, but were opposed to the higher authorities of the Catholic church and the priesthood where they saw either of these associated with sexual immorality and wealth. However, unlike the Donatists, they did not hold that the efficacy of the mass depended on the moral virtue of the priest.

The basic outlook of the Waldensians might be summed up as a religion of good works based on the Sermon on the Mount. Cameron has epitomised the Waldensians as those who 'were not engaged in a constant struggle to be different from and opposed to catholicism in all things; rather they were travelling alongside, in the same direction, but aware of themselves as a distinct and better class of Christian'.³

So the Protestant Reformation bursts in on the medieval scene. Little imagination is required to see the contrast between the theology of a Calvin or a Zwingli, who developed their Reformation ideas and practices in university cities, with the relatively simple religious thought that existed among the Waldensians. Or again, between the worship in Protestant churches in Paris or Geneva and the 'churchless' religious meetings of the persecuted Waldensians scattered in villages in high, isolated valleys. In joining themselves to the Reformation fathers one wonders if the Waldensians really knew what they were letting themselves in for. Radical changes in belief and practice would have to be embraced by Waldensians when they became Protestant: almost as great as for Catholics becoming Protestant. Further, the changes would be overwhelmingly in one direction only, for the Reformers were hardly likely to take unto themselves even one or two Waldensian ideas. It would seem to be a case not only of fundamental change but of absorption, of the large swallowing the small. At least that is how it appears at first sight to an outsider. Why the two sides took the steps they did is surely because they 'needed' one another. The Waldensians had suffered centuries of persecution. The common bond of persecution is often overlooked by historians. Both groups were threatened by Catholic oppression and cruelty: here they had a common enemy. Further, it gave the Protestants a link with the past, to martyrs who had preceded them. The more each could support the other so much the better. Apart from the threat of persecution the Reformers occupied a precarious position in Europe and therefore they were eager to have within their ranks all the followers they could muster. Further, both parties had in common the yearning to use vernacular religious language and to rest their theological case on the Bible.

When the Rev. W.S. Gilly (1789–1855), prebendary of Durham cathedral, first encountered the Waldensians in Italy in 1823 and the Vaudois (as the French Waldensians are usually called) near Briançon in 1829, there was no doubt in his mind that these isolated groups stood firmly within the Reform tradition. Through him the plight of the poor Protestants in the Alps became widely known among the English in the nineteenth century from the very popular books that he wrote about them.⁴ So amazed was he by what he saw that for some time he believed that the groups, hidden high up

in the mountains, were indeed descendants of early Christians. He argued that all down the ages they had maintained a 'pure' Christian belief and practice against great odds in the face of a hostile Catholic church and cruel persecution. We know, of course, that what he found was not a hidden, pristine, early Christianity but something, as indeed he realized, that was identified with the faith and practice of the Reformers. This he understood, but he thought that what confronted him was a form of Christianity that had changed only very insignificantly over a period of something like 2000 years. Waldensianism had preceded Waldo! As he became more aware of the history of the valleys and of the Waldensians within them, he admitted in the 1840s that he could no longer support this far-fetched position, which had also been adopted by others before him.

A key question for the historian and sociologist is: how did the changes take place among the Waldensians in matters of belief, practice and organisation during the years between the period of the Synod of Chanforan and the early nineteenth century?⁵ Answers can be sought at two levels. The first comes from the writings of the Protestant leaders from outside the region, for example, from Switzerland, as well as from records concerning the local *barbes*, and Protestant ministers who replaced them. The second level relates to the laity, traditional Waldensians, who may not have had much say in the matter of religious change and who found themselves forced to adopt strange practices and beliefs. One wonders in fact how much power they had in making the final decision to combine forces with Protestants. In the matter of the first level, Euan Cameron in his book of 1984 provided a considerable amount of information about the early period up until the end of the sixteenth century.⁶ From reports of ministers and Catholic clergy he shows that there was quite a lot of opposition to what had descended on the Waldensians. As so much material, by way of written accounts, comes from ministers, it is difficult to know what really went on in the minds of the laity. This is the second level to be considered. Calling to mind the conservative mentality of mountain dwellers, one imagines that the changes were slow and that there was opposition to them, as Cameron shows. Traditional Waldensian beliefs doubtless lingered on for a long time. We know, for example, that the 'old' people in the French valley of Freissinières prefer, to this day, to be called *Vaudois* rather than Protestant, though they are in fact members of the Eglise Réformé de France. One would like to have more information on what aspects of Protestantism the local Waldensians found most difficult to accept. Did any of them, feeling that the changes demanded of them were too great, become Catholic rather than Protestant? What were their reactions to the new ministers? How did they like worshipping in their new *temples*? We are aware that in some places such reactions were hostile. How did they respond to the persecutions which occurred from time to time from the beginning of the change to Protestantism to the final deliverance from oppression? Freedom of worship for the French was heralded by the Revolution of

1789 and for the Italians by a change in law in 1848. In this period the persecuting authorities tended to target the ministers rather than the laity — a common tactic of persecutors generally. The question remains: how far and for how long did ‘old Waldensianism’ linger on, high up in the mountains? It is something that has still to be fully explored. Evidence is difficult to obtain, especially as Waldensianism was an oral religion, but we hope historians will be able to throw light on the subject. Further, the case of the Waldensians becoming Protestant is particularly interesting, for unlike certain European countries, the secular arm had no place in enforcing Reform belief and practice on the population.

The question of radical change among Waldensians has caused emotional outbursts among both scholars and devotees. It is utterly impossible to deny that there were sweeping changes from the period 1532 to the early nineteenth century, when the state of the Waldensians and Vaudois could be examined objectively and in detail. There has been the tendency to encapsulate the change by such phrases as ‘the demise of Waldensianism’ or ‘a sudden break’ or ‘a continuum, with 1532 as a turning point’. In a parallel case, could one, should one, seek similar phrases in describing Vatican II? Such brief evaluations are to be avoided, for they gain nothing: they do not advance knowledge. In the main they only reveal the ideological standpoint of the writer. As we have suggested, there is still much to be discovered about the religious change of the Waldensians, particularly amongst the lay people and from oral traditions. Until then one must develop a neutral, ‘scientific’ language and certainly not hasten from the particular to the general, as some historians tend to do or allow their readers to do.

Given the range of place and time involved, the medieval historian, as Cameron admits, has to specialise. However, perhaps William Bartlett’s 1830s engraving on the cover of Cameron’s book *Waldenses of Dormillouse Church and manse*, which had been built near Briançon at the head of the Freissinières Valley by the Vaudois under Catholic duress 70 years before and then after the French Revolution conceded to the local Vaudois, synthesises as an image the extensive changes that were undergone by the Waldensians/Vaudois.

W.S.F.Pickering

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- 1 Cameron, E. 2000. *Waldenses. Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- 2 Cameron, E. 1984. *The Reformation of the Heretics. The Waldenses of the Alps, 1480–1580*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 3 Cameron 1984: 119.
- 4 Pickering, W.S.F. 1995. *What the British found when they discovered the French Vaudois in the nineteenth century*. Privately published. It should be noted that Gilly also referred to the Waldensians in Italy as *Vaudois*.
- 5 See the contribution to these questions in Audisio, G. 2000. ‘Des Pauvres de Lyon aux Vaudois réformés’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 217: 155–66.
- 6 Cameron 1984: chapters 12 & 13.
- 7 Pickering 1995: 35–6.

**WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS, VAUDOIS PASTORS FUND
& CANON ARMSTRONG BEQUEST - SUMMARY ACCOUNTS
INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2004**

INCOME	2003		2004
Churches	644.62		804.62
Individual Donations	1397.45		1592.92
Tax Refund	169.23		
Penny Boxes	100.40		79.80
AGM	58.50		72.00
	2370.20		2549.34
Publications	837.50		185.50
Vaudois Clergy Trust	1163.76		1201.77
Dividends & Interest	3757.43		3766.96
	5758.69		5154.23
TOTAL	<u>8128.89</u>		<u>7703.57</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Payments to Italy			
Pachino			500.00
Trapani	3569.80		
Scicl			500.00
Student	1586.00		812.00
Radio Beckwith	1000.00		3000.00
Turin Church	1000.00		
	7155.80		5112.00
Review	830.00		830.00
Delegations	538.54		214.42
Sec/Post/Stationery	2434.76		2193.84
Publications	479.13		345.90
Sundries	66.73	4349.16	129.21
			3713.37
TOTAL	<u>11504.96</u>		<u>8825.37</u>
NET EXPENDITURE	-3376.07		-1121.80
Opening Bank Balance	10834.73		7458.86
Income	8128.89		7703.57
Expenditure	-11504.96		-8825.37
Closing Bank Balance	<u>7458.66</u>		<u>6336.86</u>

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The Waldensian Church

It is the native Protestant Church of Italy whose origins pre-date the Reformation. It arose from an evangelical movement founded in the 12th century by Waldo, a rich merchant from Lyon, who was to inspire St Francis: he gave all away to the poor and started preaching the Gospel in the vernacular, which caused conflict with the Papacy. Travelling in pairs the Waldensian itinerant preachers, having learnt the Scriptures by heart, set off to found underground communities from Sicily to Russia. The ensuing persecution by the Inquisition drove them into their mountain fastness in the Alpine Valleys of northwest Italy, where they remain in what are still called the Waldensian Valleys. At their Synod in 1532 they voted to join the Genevan Reformation, a decision that brought even more persecution upon this exposed outpost of Protestantism. Their sufferings were recorded in Milton's famous sonnet "On The Late Massacre in Piedmont". Their survival down to the present has been a remarkable testament of faith.

The Waldensian community was emancipated in 1848, but did not reach full freedom until 1984. Since the Italian unification in 1860 they have established churches throughout Italy and, following emigration, in the USA, Argentina and Uruguay. In 1979 the Italian Methodist Church combined with them and they hold a common annual Synod, which is the controlling authority of the Church and takes place in Torre Pellice. The Churches of Rio de la Plata have their own Synod, Board and Moderator.

The 60 parishes have founded 120 outreach activities ranging from schools, hospitals, children's and old people's homes, radio stations, and ecumenical community centres, often catering for the needs of the most deprived and mafia-ridden parts of Italy, especially the disadvantaged South and the new immigrant communities.

The Waldensian Church has a theological college in Rome, a publishing house, Claudiana, and a weekly paper, *Riforma*.

The English Committee of the Waldensian Church Missions

This was founded in 1825 as a support group for the Waldensian Church in Italy. Since 1979 its finances, together with those of the Vaudois Pastors Fund, have been administered by Trustees under the terms of the Scheme drawn up by the Charity Commission and dated 18 January that year.

The Committee seek to arouse interest and financial support in England and Wales for the Waldensian Church. Twice yearly we publish a *Waldensian Review* and occasionally other literature. We also arrange meetings for Waldensian pastors visiting this country and support students of Theology who want to spend the compulsory "year abroad" studying in this country.

There are similar Waldensian support groups in Scotland, Ireland, USA and in various European countries.

The English Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions

Established 1825

President: Mr Prescott Stephens, 'Brook House', Hempstead Lane, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 3DL. Telephone 01825-762780

Chairman: The Rev. Eric Murray, 137 Elmbridge Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 9HE. Telephone 0208-399-8740

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The Scottish Waldensian Missions Aid Society

Chairman: Revd Ian Douglas, 49 Northesk Road, Montrose, Angus DD10 8TZ, Scotland.

Secretary and Treasurer: Mr D.A. Lamb, SSC, 36 Liberton Drive, Edinburgh EH16 6NN, Scotland. Telephone 0131-664-3059

The Irish Committee in aid of the Waldensian Church Missions

Chairman: The Rev. Robert Dunlop, The Manse, Brannocktown, Co. Kildare, Republic of Ireland.

Convenor: The Rev. J.S.B. Drennan BD, 92 North Circular Road, Belfast BT14 6TN, Northern Ireland.

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