



THE WALDENSIAN REVIEW



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Summer 2010

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From the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Thank you to those of you who found the time to send me your views and suggestions for the *Waldensian Review* and its future. Thank you also to those who spoke to me about it. Well done to those who spotted the 'esoteric' remark that slipped through the proof correcting. All the others, according to the old Italian saying '*Chi tace acconsente*', 'Who doesn't speak agrees', I assume like the magazine as it is and don't think there is need to change it or improve it.

If necessary many would be happy with just one issue a year provided that size and content did not change too much.

What in the end was decided at the Committee Meeting in March is that we shall have one printed 16-page magazine per year (in late Spring or early Summer) and a 2-4-page newsletter before Christmas.

This should keep everyone happy and up to date about what is going on in Italy and in the Waldensian Church. It should also save us some money.

Indeed the financial situation is a bit worrying and not just for the Waldensian Church Mission. All the Churches are feeling the pinch and we have just found that **there are no grants available to help us with the support of 'our' student Luca Ghiretti who is to spend one year studying for an MA in Pastoral Theology at Wesley House in Cambridge.**

He'll be coming at the end of September and we are asking everyone to help us in supporting Luca's final year of training for the Ministry.

As I have previously explained in these pages, we as a Committee have chosen to help in those fields where the Waldensian Synod has voted **not to** provide any State money. It is my personal opinion that that Synod decision ought to be re-examined. However, meanwhile we try to help Church life and Evangelisation, which is what Italy really needs. We have therefore decided to fund once again the youth Bible studies in Sicily. These are accompanied by regular meetings and social get-togethers for young people from all the churches throughout Sicily. We have also sent a donation towards the repair of the old windows in the 19th-century church of Riesi, since the situation had become so bad that in winter the building could not be properly heated and was getting increasingly damp and damaged.

Once again thank you for your continued concern and interest, your prayers, and your financial help. **I myself look forward to seeing you on 9 October at our annual AWAYDAY so that I may have the opportunity of thanking you in person for all your steadfast support.**

ESN, Editor

Cover photo: Procession to the church where a service would mark the fast as part of the protest against a very unpopular Immigration Law proposed by the Government.

AWAYDAY 2010

**9 OCTOBER, 10.20–4.00 French Protestant Church, Soho Square,
London**

10.45 am Rev Mike Thomason: My life as an Army Chaplain so far
...

Mike Thomason is a URC minister and Army chaplain. For the Waldensian URC Fellowship he led several youth trips and during one of them he met his future wife.

11.50am Professor Janet Soskice: The path that led me to writing *Sisters of Sinai*

Janet Soskice is Professor of Philosophical Theology at Cambridge University and her book on the Scottish twins has been a great success.

1–2 pm Lunch (bring your own, drinks provided)

2 pm AGM

Erica Scropo Newbury and **Eric Murray** will report on the Synod, the Waldensian Church and Italy and the work of the Mission

Mark Stephens will report on the financial situation.

Luca Ghiretti, the Italian Methodist student at Wesley House, will give a short address to the gathered friends.

Tea, bookstall, CALENDARS and delicious Italian '*biscotti di Debora*'.

Please PUT THE AWAYDAY IN YOUR DIARIES NOW SINCE, in order to save all funds for the Mission, WE ARE NOT going to SEND reminders or INVITATIONS!

WALDENSIAN CALENDARS 2011

Very beautiful again, stunning views of the Waldensian Valleys and Bible verses in five languages as usual. Still cheaper than commercial counterparts £7.50 (p&p included).

Please SEND cheques (payable to **Waldensian Church Mission**) to: **Milvia Walker, 19 Forest Approach, Woodford Green, IG8 9BW**. REMEMBER to include your address!

You can have them sent directly to your friends:



If you want to do it cheaply yourself you can roll them up in some brown paper. Once in place they will fall flat and make a special addition to any kitchen, study, hall ...

From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

It has been a delight to write reporting on the Waldensian work we've helped develop and sustain in Italy and Sicily, a real privilege. But this year I want to share a stark fact which won't surprise you. We are facing financial difficulties. No, we are not insolvent! But donations are dropping severely and general income from shares and legacies have more than fallen. So we have to tighten up on what we are doing, sustain what we have committed ourselves to, and be careful about what new work we can undertake. It means too that we shall have to take steps to replenish the funds that we have to rely on, and that can't be a bad thing because when expansion comes we need the funds to do it with!

So what are some of the steps we are taking? One idea is to limit the Review to one edition per year, designed to review the work we have done and plans for the future, and it will come before the AGM with details of dates, speakers, etc. Then in place of the autumn one, we could have a slim broadsheet, appeal based, news about the calendars, etc. ... Erica raised a range of exciting possibilities about the Review in the last issue, and about ways in which individuals and churches could help us. Look it up and see what you could do, and get in touch with her.

Then we are usually committed to a major project too. This year it is in supporting Luca Ghiretti, the student minister coming to Wesley House, Cambridge. The Waldensian Church finds this part of a student minister's training so important in developing all that the Church does. It is well known for its evangelical and spiritual outreach, and also increasingly highly regarded for its work in the community. So much so, that last year the President of the Senate said in his letter of greeting to the Waldensian Synod that they were regarded as the Protestant Conscience of Italy. No mean accolade! And we play our part in helping build up its growing ability to meet the needs of the modern world. So I am asking you now: 'Please see what you can do and give to help us'.

*God bless and keep you,
Yours,
Eric Murray*

AWAYDAY 2009



Dr Denis Alexander.

On 2 October we had another inspiring talk by a member of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion: this time it was by its Director, Dr Denis Alexander. As an evolutionary biologist and a Christian, Dr Alexander spoke about the 'theme of the year': Darwin and Evolution, claiming that there is no need to choose between Creation or Evolution, mainly because they are two very different things. It is the dogmatic perspective of secularists such as Dawkins, who see God and Science as rivals, which has created a previously non-existent problem. All this has also engendered an equally dogmatic counter-

part: 'Creationism'.

The point is that the same problem can be analysed from different points of view and at varying levels and this applies also to the *Book of Life*, which can be observed and analysed from Scientific, Ethical, Aesthetic and Religious points of view, all of which are equally, if differently, important but which are certainly not in conflict with one another. Religion answers different questions from Science and scientists can only describe and interpret the *how* of what God has created. *Why* the Creator did what He did is considered second-guessing that does not concern serious Science. We are made in His image, not Him in ours. Neither is it the task of scientists — who anyway would not have the means — to prove the existence or non-existence of God. For us believers, God is the Composer and the Conductor while Creation, in which He is immanent, is still a work in progress which is happening all about us now.

The idea that Science and Religion must be in conflict is a recent assumption, which stems from a misplaced idea concerning the nature of both Science and Religion. At the same time the image most atheists have of God is often a risible parody of some tribal totemic divinity in which no Christians could recognise anything they believe in.

Science and religion have been intertwined from the beginning of human thought and the birth of modern Science goes back to Newton's deeply rooted religious beliefs. Even in more recent times, Evolution did not create any conflict within the Churches: on the contrary, Darwinism was widely accepted into Christian theology soon after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 and indeed since then historically mainstream religions have had little problems with evolution. It is only in the late 20th century, significantly with the increased secularisation of Western societies, that 'Creationism' has become an issue. Indeed this has been mainly as a response to the rise of 'Evolutionism' as a secularist cult.

It is certainly possible to be a scientist, even an evolutionary biologist and a Christian, which indeed many are, and be the story-tellers of God. Whether

or not scientists believe in God, though, is irrelevant since their job is to investigate what exists, and not why it exists at all. Moreover, of course, Evolution cannot teach us morality and indeed a lot of other things too. However we now find that Evolution has been treated as a secular philosophy and made into a 'theory of everything', which can explain the ills of human society or indeed claim to be the basis for a plethora of differing ideologies and schools of thought, which are of course often mutually exclusive: capitalism, communism, racism, militarism ...

Evolutionary biology really is the biological theory describing how God created all living things. If there really is a lesson to be learnt it is the danger of extrapolating scientific theories into areas in which they have very little or nothing to contribute.

For a Christian biologist, it is in no way contradictory to accept the evolutionary process as the best explanation for the origins of biological diversity on this Planet. Natural selection is a great reproductive success and the extinction of species of animals and plants is central to evolutionary history.

If Evolution is not central to Creation and is still continuing to happen, what is the point of 3.5 million years of Evolution? Christians should not misuse the Bible by trying to treat it as a scientific textbook; something which did not happen until only thousands of years after the first chapters of Genesis were written. The biblical creation tells us timeless truths about God's purposes for His Creation, and for humankind in particular, but it is anachronistic and misconceived to assume those texts resemble modern scientific research papers.

Believing in evolution does not in any way undermine the uniqueness of humankind and the reality of Evil and the Fall. The Genesis account portrays Adam and Eve as Neolithic farmers. It is perfectly feasible that God bestowed His image on some *Homo Sapiens* already living in the Near East to generate what John Stott has called *Homo Divinus*.

John Calvin was the first Christian theologian to see Science as an approach to explore and understand God's Creation and John Wesley was a great believer in it. The many Christians active in the biological sciences are struck with wonder in uncovering God's creative actions in their daily research.

'We do not look for God in the gaps of our scientific knowledge', concluded Dr Alexander, 'but instead worship God for the



A meeting of the Waldensian Church Mission in the French Protestant Church.

whole of His created order, including those remarkably evolutionary processes that God has used and uses for His creative purposes’.

ESN

A slightly different version of this article appeared in Riforma in the Spring and Richard has translated it for our readers. Peter Ciaccio was ‘our’ student in Salisbury for the year all Waldensian and Methodist ministers must spend abroad studying and working. He is now pastor in Forano Sabina.

The English Waldensian Church Mission generously donated the following equipment for showing films to the Waldensian Church of Forano, a village between Rome and Naples: a video projector and a Home Theatre unit suitable for DVDs, and six speakers to provide surround-sound. The Youth Group for whom this gift was intended have in turn ‘regifted’ this gift to the local Church and, having erected the screen in the church hall, they organised an inaugural showing for a conspicuous number of church members. In honour of the brothers and sisters who financed this gift an English film – *Elizabeth*, directed by Shekhar Kapur in 1998 – was shown, which narrates the religious contentions following the death of Henry VIII. This provided the opportunity for the young and not-so-young to study this important period of history. Indeed, the film provided an opportunity to illustrate and discuss historical events that the director had assumed would be obvious to an English audience, but which were an real eye-opener to this Italian audience. The young people also provided hot chocolate and sweets in exchange for a small offering, which went towards fundraising for a visit to English churches that they are organising.

The film project is ongoing with collaboration between the Youth Group and the Sunday School, in which the Youth Group put on films suitable for the younger viewers of the Sunday School.

Your gift to us has not only permitted the Church Hall to become a meeting place and activity centre for the young people of the village of Forano, but is also a substantial benefit for the use of the entire Waldensian community. Moreover, it is a gift that enhances the possibilities for the Waldensian community to better organise conferences and meetings of all sorts. Thank you from all in Forano.



Eva, Daniel and Peter.

Rev Peter Ciaccio

Twenty-two years on

Twenty-two years ago I became the Executive Secretary of the English Committee of the Waldensian Church Mission. After a few years in Italy – in Torre Pellice to be precise – I had spent one (July 1986–August 1987) in Cambridge where Viola and Tancred attended Primary School while I was on maternity leave, Cressida having been born in November '86. Richard was supposed to commute but luckily the foreign lecturers of Turin University were on a long strike, having not being paid for months, and he could spend months on end with us.

I was the equivalent of a sixth-form teacher and also the director of a new radio station which a group of young Church members had just set up in the Waldensian Valleys. Its name was Radio Beckwith in honour and remembrance of the legacy of the English General Charles Beckwith, the great benefactor of the Waldensians who, I am sure, would certainly have approved of this modern medium for communication and evangelisation.

Radio Beckwith – which celebrated its 25th birthday in 2009 – at the beginning was desperately poor and was very grateful to receive a donation from a mysterious English friend who turned out to be ... the Waldensian Church Mission. A group of English people connected to the Mission had been on a visit to the Valleys, and having noticed the name of the radio had asked to visit it and had obviously been positively impressed.

Radio Beckwith is now a well-established broadcasting station in the north-west of Italy, the Waldensian–Methodist Church supports it, it has some good-

quality equipment, the pastors of the Valleys broadcast a weekly service and several religious programmes, people of different ages for different reasons listen to it and support it and it is going from strength to strength. It proves very popular in broadcasting the ice-hockey matches live – Torre Pellice is in the national A Division – but also public speeches and events, important services, such as the opening of the Synod or the service on the 17 February Emancipation Day, as well as church or secular concerts. It has also provided vital help and information during natu-



*Richard Newbury and John Bremner at Serre,
Angrogna.*

ral disasters such as the 2008 flood in the Pellice Valley which resulted in four deaths. Still, it needs, and always will need, all possible help because maintenance and upgrading are very expensive. Moreover they still have to realise their dream of being able to broadcast as far as Turin and to cover the whole of Piedmont!



Debora Bonnes, Daniele Pevarello, Rev Tim Macquiban and the Editor.

Anyhow, to return to my story; at some point someone from the Radio asked me to thank the Committee, which I duly did. I later received a visit from Rosemary Farrer, who was then the Editor of the *Waldensian Review*, and eventually there was an article about the Radio and its director. In my interview I had expressed our intention of bringing up our family in Cambridge, and in 1988 the Committee invited me to apply to be the Executive Secretary, since Bishop Ward was going to retire. About 20 years later I was unofficially told that there had been some controversy about my nomination since I was an Italian and a woman, but Prescott Stephens with his usual farsightedness and Peggy with her broadmindedness had been paramount in supporting me.

Unaware of all this, I was thrilled to be chosen, but I hadn't a clue of what my post would imply. I knew I was inheriting an important task; being a Waldensian brought up in Turin and in the Valleys and where so many buildings 'speak English' (the main church, the Waldensian College, the Houses of the Tutors in Torre Pellice, the hundreds of little Beckwith schools scattered throughout the mountains, the temple of Rora', the main Waldensian church in Turin...) I knew what the Committee had done in the 19th century. I also knew of the help provided during the Allied occupation of Italy and after the war, but being on the other side – that of the givers compared to the receivers – was a different thing altogether. I was humbled by being the successor to people such as Canon Gilly and General Beckwith himself. Consequently I was eager to do my best and very keen to learn.

Everyone was so kind and helpful and full of understanding – Peggy and Prescott Stephens, Rosemary Farrer, George and Sheila Dunn and Alec Carter, who had been in the committee for a long time, as well as those who, like myself, were new arrivals: Jonathan Calvert and Eric Murray. The list could go on forever. We soon had Ted Bishop, Tim Macquiban, David Thompson, Peter Meadows, Pamela Cressey, Milvia Walker, Albert Bertin, Mark Stephen

and our then 'baby' Nicola Raddon ... Not to mention the so many friends and supporters ...

The timing could not have been more challenging: 1989 was the 300th anniversary of the Glorious Recovery of their Valleys by the exiled Waldensians, and there were going to be big celebrations for the whole summer, culminating in a special Synod and an International Conference held by the Society of Studi Valdesi. I was asked to organise a trip to the Valleys and a Pastor's Tour in England. I devised a programme that I thought spectacular: a two-week trip by coach visiting Protestant France (the place where the Waldensians originated), arriving in Geneva and then retracing as much as possible the route followed by the Army of 1000 men led by Pastor Arnaud through the Alps in 1689. It was exciting, but challenging, and ... I received the first of the many cold showers which would over the next 22 years so often dampen my enthusiasm. A few people responded to my proposal and they were as excited as I was. However, they were not enough to fill a coach and make the trip reasonably priced. Prescott and Peggy decided to make everyone reach Turin by their own means and from there they would lead them across the Waldensian Valleys. Before that memorable August, though, I was faced with another challenge: the Pastor's Tour that used to take place every two years. I believe it was a tradition started after the war. The Pastor would tour around England talking about the Waldensians, illustrating one or more projects and collecting funds. The issue was then to find a non-smoking pastor with good English. Giuseppe (Zizzi) Platone had just come back from a year in the States, was, and is, a good communicator and seemed to me ideal. The reunions were then rather grand: a weekend at Pilgrims Hall or a similar Christian holiday centre, talks, speeches, lunches, dinner with many friends staying overnight or just one day, and a large party arriving by coach for the Saturday afternoon AGM. Donations and collections were proportional to the numbers of visitors.

I thought that an injection of new young (then!) Waldensian enthusiastic blood would stimulate the Mission to further efforts and that things would go



Villar Pellice: gathering for the traditional evening for the foreign guests at Synod.

from strength to strength. The British loved Italy and were Protestants: I would combine the two and make everyone interested in the Waldensian Church and its history, be eager to help its work and to visit my beloved Valleys or holiday in one of our great guesthouses ... Well, it did not really work out that way and I have often felt demoralised or asked myself what I had done wrong or how we could all have improved our way of doing things.

The thing is that the problems of the Waldensian Church

Mission and the Waldensian Church are part of the general decline in 'traditional' church attendance and in the 'traditional' way of being interested in the Christian belief. Moreover the young people in British churches are very attracted by African, Asian or South American missions and projects, but seem to have very little interest in anything European, Church related or not. This is something we should all be thinking about.



Professor Ricca with pastor Pasquet and his wife Giulia.

Altogether, though, looking back over these 22 years there is a lot to be proud of. To start with we have been able, thanks to your donations and a few legacies, to help many different projects and engage in outreach. Just to mention a few: we have contributed to the building of the new churches of Marsala and Trapani in Sicily, we have helped nursery schools in Sicily and other parts of southern Italy, we have supported hospitals, nursing homes for the elderly in the Waldensian Valleys and elsewhere, and homes and schools for children in need. We have funded Bible studies groups for young people in Sicily, we have continued to help Radio Beckwith, which has been an essential part of the life of the Waldensian Valleys for 25 years and is popular both with the old and the young. We have funded the year abroad, which is an integral part of Waldensian pastoral training, of Massimiliano Pagliai, Davide Rostan and Peter Ciaccio, who are all now ordained ministers. We have had several very successful Pastors' tours, our guests being Giuseppe Platone, Emidio Campi, Claudio Pasquet, Giorgio Bouchard, Christian Gysin, Giuseppe Ficara and Davide Ollearo. We received visits from two Moderators: Franco Giampiccoli, who came to Cambridge and London and had a memorable reception at the Methodist Central Hall; and Gianni Rostan, who came to Cambridge on his way to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We have sent the Young People's Group of Wesley Church (Cambridge) to the Waldensian Valleys and to Sicily. Through our connection two members of Cambridge Methsoc [the University Student Society], Alastair and Rachel (now since their marriage both) Morris, went after graduating from Cambridge University to do voluntary social work and teaching in the Centro diaconale La Noce in Palermo for one year. We have morally supported (and helped with a little pocket money in his first year) our brilliant Waldensian scholar researching for a PhD at the Faculty of Divinity of Cambridge University, Daniele Pevarello. We have established excellent connections with the URC Waldensian Fellowship, the Huguenot Society, the Cromwell Association (with whom in 2005 we joined forces in

order to celebrate the Lord Protector's intervention, thanks to which the massacre of the Waldensians in 1655 was halted). We have had many excellent speakers: Franco Reale, who is now pastor in Spain; Prescott Stephens, Clare Packenham, John Bremner, Derryck Evans, David Thompson, Tim Macquiban, Richard Grocott, Colin Smith, Leslie Griffiths, Bill Pickering, Peter Meadows, Claudia Lupi, John Polkinghorne, Tobias Jones, Denis Alexander and many more.

We have been able to participate by sending at least one representative nearly every year to the Synod of the Waldensian Church, thus making friends with many Waldensians from all over Italy as well as with other International supporters, and establishing links and connections with other Societies and fellowships supporting the Waldensian Church. For many years now I have now been the Editor of the Waldensian Review and Anne Chippindale has been my faithful and patient right hand in producing it. Last, but not least, my husband Richard has been a constant help and inspiration, particularly in moments of need. Being Italian I tend to panic and flip while he always manages to keep a level head.

Above all we have met, and we have been supported by, so many wonderful people, the thought of whom makes me now regret the initial low tone of this article. However, this ambivalence does reflect my attitude some of the time. Nevertheless it is been an immense privilege to be able to serve in this Mission for so long, and I could not but be profoundly grateful to the blessings of the Lord for letting us still be here despite difficulties, challenges and hard times.

ESN

Mabel Evans (1930–2007)

Mabel was the perfect friend and supporter whether to human beings, churches or causes. Whenever she could she would help without making a fuss and one could always count on her solid yet unobtrusive presence. She certainly was not a retiring person. She had strong and highly motivated views on everything, from religion to politics to literature to rugby, and she would air them with determination whenever convenient, but without trying to impose them and always in a humorous and pleasant manner.

She was a great friend of the Waldensian Church and a good connoisseur of its history, being an historian herself and of the kind that never stops learning and researching. She could just as well be found reading in the University Library as at a charity bazaar serving tea; in both places at her ease and with the same attitude: doing whatever was necessary in the best and quickest way possible. This obviously was part of how she saw her role as a Minister's wife, who nevertheless also maintained an independent life and many interests and friends from all paths of life.

I had a special friendship with Mabel because of her love and knowledge of Italy and all things Italian. She was fluent in the language and knew Italian history and literature well, so therefore we always had something to talk about and we shared many views and tastes. She was part of a delightful conversation class I had of gifted and cultivated students/friends, who were of the kind you only find in Cambridge and with whom we read together Primo Levi's books and conversed about the beginning of what is now known as the Berlusconi era. Whether it was a grammar rule or a particular character in *La tregua* or the description of a recent trip – she was an enthusiastic traveller – Mabel's contribution to the discussion was always positive, valid and at the same time light-hearted.

Her ready humour made her presence so welcome everywhere.

Mabel would never miss a Waldensian gathering, even when far away, and she would always talk about the Church and the Valleys with great affection. Her personality was as large as her person was diminutive. She has left a big hole in our meetings. Yet we can nevertheless console ourselves with so many happy memories.

ES



In the garden of 'Casa Valdese' in Torre Pellice during a trip of the URC Waldensian Fellowship. Mabel Evans is on the right.

Book Review

Janet Soskice. *Sisters of Sinai: How two lady adventurers found the hidden Gospels*. Chatto & Windus, pp 338, £18.99

Janet Soskice, Professor of Philosophical Theology at the University of Cambridge, is the author of the double biography of two very special Victorian ladies. These are the Scottish twins Agnes and Margaret Smith, who are better

known to the wider world as the Lewis and Gibson 'Cambridge' benefactors and scholars; this despite obviously not having attended any University themselves, having being born in 1843. Their mother had died soon after their birth and their father, a rich lawyer, educated them as if they had been boys: they studied Latin, Greek and foreign languages. For each new language the twin girls learned the prize was a trip to the country where it was the native tongue. However, at the age of 22 these prodigious linguists were left orphans — and very rich.

To assuage their grief, the sisters took a trip up the Nile after crossing Europe by every means of transport; and all this accomplished with only the company of an ex-teacher as chaperone. Back in London, they decided that for their future trips they would need more languages. Hence they set about learning Arabic and modern Greek.

Between their travels and study Margaret managed to become engaged, for 13 long years, to James Gibson, a Presbyterian minister who would eventually become her husband, only to die three years later, in 1886. During a visit to Cambridge, the twins met the Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Samuel Savage Lewis, who was also an antiquarian and an experienced traveller. Samuel and Agnes married some months later. The couple built a spacious house, where Margaret also lived with them, and this household became a magnet for friendly scholars and learned visitors. Unfortunately, after three happy years of marriage, Agnes too became a widow. The twins, now approaching 50, decided it was time to make their long dreamt of trip to Mount Sinai. Agnes learned Syriac, hoping to find more ancient manuscripts in the monastery of St Catherine's, which had already revealed some of its precious contents. The trip would be adventurous, including a nine-day crossing of the desert by camel, with no certainty of then being welcomed by the Orthodox monks. Nevertheless, intrepid as ever, they went ahead; and not only were they treated as revered guests, but they were also allowed to inspect the contents of that elusive 'dark closet'. In this, hidden underneath some lives of women saints, they uncovered some manuscripts of the true Gospels. The twins took 400 photographs. However, then started the most onerous part of their journey. These two women had to try to make Cambridge academia recognise the importance of their discovery. The story at this point turns into a learned thriller, as we follow an ill-assorted caravanserai of eccentric ladies and distinguished professors back into the desert. We also meet another Cambridge 'First' to match the effrontery of these female intruders: Solomon Schechter, the University's first Jewish don.

How will it end? You can of course read the book yourselves, or come and listen to Professor Soskice at our AWAYDAY on Saturday 9 October 2010. And purchase the book with autograph on the day!



ES

Italy, the crucifix and Europe

The battle against the crucifix being hung in public and secular buildings has been long and painful and reminds me of the conflict between secularists and creationists over Evolution. For Protestants, a *crucifix* signifies a dead Christ, while the empty *cross* signifies the Resurrected Lord. The Protestant position is that, with the separation of church and state, neither should appear in a public building such as a school. This story is unfortunately very typical of how Italy never changes old laws even when kingdoms and regimes fall and new laws are enacted.

The original rulings over the crucifix in public buildings go back to the 1848 'Statuto', as the Constitution granted by the edict of the King of Savoy Carlo Alberto was called. The *Statuto albertino*, whilst on the one hand granting civil liberties to the Jews and the Waldensians, on the other hand proclaimed Roman Catholicism as the one and true State religion; hence making hanging the crucifix compulsory in all public buildings. This was enacted as a compromise in order to appease the illiberal side of the RC Church which was outraged at the idea of freeing the Jews and the 'heretics' from their ghettos.

Then in 1860–70 came Italian Unification and the creation under the House of Savoy of the Kingdom of Italy with Rome as its capital. This profanation of the Papal States and capital led Pius IX to excommunicate Italy, from the King and the Prime Minister down. The new Italian Kingdom was fairly liberal and crucifixes were hung only where they belonged: in Catholic churches.

This remained the case until Mussolini came to power in 1922, and this free-thinking former Socialist and now founder of Fascism needed Catholic support. Crucifixes started creeping back and eventually, with the Concordat of 1929 between the Fascist regime and the Vatican, every single room in every public building (schools, universities, hospitals, courts, prisons, police stations, post offices, railway stations, army barracks ... etc) had to have its crucifix — paid for with tax payers' money.

Even when Mussolini was overthrown nothing changed. With the votes of the Communist Party (Italy's other religion), which also wanted to win acquiescence from the Vatican, the Christian Democrat Party defeated the liberal minority parties, which were opposed to the continuation of a Concordat signed between Mussolini and Pius XI. More or less the same thing happened when the Concordat was revised in 1984, the positive side being however that at last at the same time the Waldensians were granted freedom of religion! At least on paper ...

For every time someone brought up the issue of the crucifix in public buildings as being in conflict with the Republic's Constitution (signed in 1948), which declared all religions to be equal, the matter was dismissed as either not urgent or irrelevant or not convenient at that time ... Even the Waldensians, who were, and are, against it and were, and are, always keen to fight for a

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

INCOME	2008	2009
Churches	576.92	320.51
Individual Donations	884.00	773.50
Tax Refund	155.69	193.21
AGM	119.36	110.00
	1735.97	1397.22
Vaudois Clergy Trust	1196.85	1317.21
Publications	516.00	381.50
Dividend & Interest	4368.65	3498.29
	<u>6081.50</u>	<u>5197.00</u>
TOTAL	7817.47	6594.22
EXPENDITURE		
Payments to Italy		
Student	672.00	
Riesi		2500.00
Sicily Training Course	1000.00	1000.00
Pastor C Pasquet	1000.00	
Radio Beckwith	1000.00	500.00
Flood Relief	750.00	50.00
	4422.00	4050.00
Review	428.00	950.00
Sec/Post/Stationery	2190.10	2719.05
Publications	791.82	312.86
Sundries	208.62	156.60
	<u>3618.54</u>	<u>4138.51</u>
TOTAL	8040.54	8188.51
NET EXPEND	-223.07	-1594.29
Opening Bank Balance	5437.75	5214.68
Income	7817.47	6594.22
Expenditure	<u>-8040.54</u>	<u>-8188.51</u>
Closing Bank Balance	5214.68	3620.39

good cause, also on behalf of others, had more important and urgent issues at stake. The main one for them was the implementation of Article 8 of the 1948 Constitution and the consequent drawing-up and signing of the 'INTESE': their own agreement between the Waldensian Church and the Italian State. This finally took place **36 years!** after the promulgation of the 'Costituzione'.

(To be continued)

ES

Government gives to Waldenses

Too good to be true? No! For every donation which you make to the Waldensian Church Missions, the Government will add a further 28%, providing you are a tax-payer.

Since 5 April 2000 the new Gift Aid scheme has replaced Deeds of Covenant and the process is much simpler. This applies to all donations of any size or frequency. Thus a gift of only £1 made once will be increased by 28% as will a monthly donation of £100.

All that is required is for the donor to complete a simple declaration in the form given below and to forward this to the Treasurer whose address is on the inside of the back page. Once this form has been completed it covers all future donations by the same person. Unlike Deeds of Covenant, you are not committed to regular giving for a number of years.

Some of you have already completed such a form, but for those who have not, I would urge you to consider seriously this opportunity for the Waldensian Church Missions to benefit from the Government's generosity, but more importantly, to enable our giving to our friends in Italy to be increased.



WALDENSIAN CHURCH MISSIONS

Registered Charity No. 277255

GIFT AID DECLARATION

To: **Waldensian Church Missions, 5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 3TA**

I (title) (name)

(address)

.....

Postcode Tel. no.

would like all donations I make to Waldensian Church Missions from the date of this declaration to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand I must be paying income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount being reclaimed by the Missions. I understand that I can cancel this Gift Aid declaration at any time.

Signature of donor Date

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, 49 Byron Court, Stockbridge Road,
Chichester PO19 8ES.

Chairman: The Rev. Eric Murray, 137 Elmbridge Avenue, Surbiton KT5 9HE.

Telephone 0208-399-8740, email ericmurray137@talktalk.net

Executive Secretary: Erica Scropo Newbury, 85 St Andrew's Road, Cambridge
CB4 1DH. Telephone 01223-315753, email ericascropo@hotmail.com

Hon. Treasurer: Mr Mark Stephens, 5 Woodgate Close, Woodgate, Chichester
PO20 3TA. Telephone 01243-545877, email marklynne5@btinternet.com

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.

Treasurer: Mr Derek Seymour, 'Tanglewood', Pottery Road, Dun Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin, Republic of Ireland. Telephone 01-2850776

The Waldensian Review is sent twice a year to those who are interested in the
Waldensian church in Italy, its history and present-day work and witness.

tick

☐ Change of address:

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PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE TREASURER AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE

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You are My Witnesses: the Waldensians across 800 Years

by Giorgio Tourn and Associates — £9 *plus postage and packing*

The Waldensians' "Glorious Recovery" of their Alpine Valleys

The legendary "Recovery" with a brief summary of the previous 500 years
by Richard Newbury — £1 *plus postage and packing*

Love never fails

by Tullio Vinay — £5 *plus postage and packing*

The Waldensian Story: A Study in Faith, Intolerance and Survival

by Prescott Stephens — *Reprinting*

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