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THE
WALDENSIAN
CHURCH

CIOVANNI LUZZI



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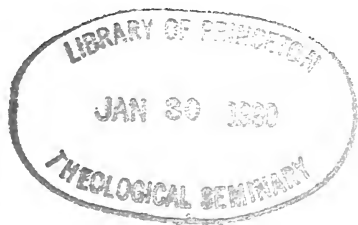
THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH

Her Work, Her Difficulties,
Her Hopes

By

GIOVANNI LUZZI, D.D.

President of the Waldensian Seminary
of Theology, Florence, Italy



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P R E F A C E

DR. LUZZI, the eminent preacher, scholar and author, came to this country on the invitation of Princeton Theological Seminary to give a course of lectures to the students, but the privilege of hearing him was eagerly sought by institutions of almost every denomination.

His limited stay in this country prevented his acceptance of many invitations but he lectured at the following places: Union Theological Seminary; Bible Teachers' Training School, New York City; Hartford Theological Seminary; Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts; Andover Theological Seminary, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Rochester Theological Seminary; McCormick Theological Seminary,

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Chicago; Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Professor Luzzi also made addresses in many cities at the meetings of the Branches of the American Waldensian Aid Society and it was especially for this organization that the lecture was prepared.

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HER WORK, HER DIFFICULTIES,
HER HOPES

I SHALL never forget that I owe to Princeton the privilege of being here among you to-day, thus realizing a dream often dreamt before, but never yet realized. I feel that to be among you is really a privilege and a pleasure, and I thank you most heartily for your warm and cordial welcome, which will in future be one of my most delightful recollections. Still, I must not and I do not forget that your welcome is given not so much to me personally, as to the more or less official representative of an old Church, of the oldest Protestant Church existing, and as I know you wish to hear something about her work, her

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difficulties, her hopes, I am glad to do my best to satisfy your desire.

First of all, a word about the extension of our work. Think for a moment of that huge boot, the characteristic configuration of Italy. Up in the North, near the Alps, is Piedmont; and in Piedmont are the Waldensian Valleys where the Waldensian people still live, the remnant of about thirty persecutions; the people who knew well the way to prison, to exile, to the stake, but who were never forgotten by the Omnipotent God. There, scattered in several valleys, of which the most important are those of Pellice, Angrogna and San Martino, are the old parishes which were persecuted either by the Popes, by the Princes of Savoy, by the Kings of France in their turn, or by all of them at the same time. To-day there are seventeen of those parishes, numbering alto-

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gether 12,934 communicants. They are self-supporting. The stipend of their pastors is paid partly by the parishioners themselves, who are for the greater part peasants and very poor, and the rest is made up by a fund which was started by the generous and personal contribution of no less a man than Oliver Cromwell. In those Piedmontese Valleys the Waldensian people found providential refuge four centuries before the Reformation; there they received encouragement and spiritual help by means of the Swiss reformers in the sixteenth century; there, because of the tyranny of Popes and the weakness of princes, they lived shut off as lepers until the 17th of February, 1848, when Charles Albert, the great-grandfather of the present king, granted the edict of their emancipation.

The truly missionary movement of the Waldensian Church in Italy began from that year,

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and the first mission church was built in Turin shortly after.

Then comes *Lombardy* with its flourishing churches which continue the work already begun there before the Reformation, by the sects severed from the Church of Rome. Then *Venice*, the Queen of the Seas, with her churches and "diasporas." In Venice the first printed Biblical texts were issued as soon as the art of printing was invented. Then *Liguria*, with Genoa, the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, which is also widely evangelized. Then *Tuscany*, the cradle of the modern Italian evangelistic movement, with the churches of Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Leghorn, Siena. Then comes *Rome* and the old Roman States where our work widens and deepens in proportion as it is opposed by the Vatican. Then the *Abruzzi*, and *Calabria* where the old Waldensian colonies of the fourteenth century were suffocated in blood, but

where the living testimony of the Gospel is kept alive to-day, especially by the emigrants who bring back with them the Gospel they have come to know in America. Then *Naples*, where, in the school of Juan Valdes, the heroic Italian reformers of the sixteenth century were prepared, where at the dawn of our political redemption the Gospel was practiced with power in the streets and in the squares, and where to-day it has won to Christ so many immortal souls. And last but not least there is *Sicily*, the Volcanic Sicily, red-hot in its passions and in its affections, with its beautiful churches, its flourishing schools situated in almost all the important cities of the island.

I do not want to tire you with figures, but in order to be short and exact, allow me to mention just a few.

Outside the Piedmontese Valleys, where, as I have already told you, we have seventeen par-

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ishes with 12,934 communicants, from Turin down to the furthest limits of Sicily, we count 42 churches, about 203 mission stations, 6,603 communicants, about 40,000 adherents, 136 workers and 2,192 in the day and 3,104 in the Sunday schools. We have a Faculty of Divinity, a College for classical studies recognized by the Government, some charitable educational institutions, a theological Review (*La Rivista Cristiana*) and an evangelistic weekly paper, "La Luce."

In 1883 the first Waldensian Missionary started for South Africa. Later on others followed him, directing their steps towards the land of the Basutos and towards the inhospitable banks of the Upper Zambesi, where to-day seven Waldensian missionaries preach the Gospel to the Barotse and to the thirty tribes subject to them. And the name Waldensian, herald of the Gospel of Christ, is honoured

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and blessed in several prosperous colonies : in Würtemberg, in South and North America, at Monett in Missouri, and in North Carolina, and among the fluctuating but numerous centers of Waldensian emigrants in France, Nice, Marseilles, Toulon and Lyons.

Such are the numbers ; and the numbers are small, especially when one considers that the Waldensian Church has been now at work since 1848 ; that is to say, for more than sixty years. But the development of the "mustard seed" is not susceptible to any numerical valuation ; and there is no human or mechanical dynamometer able to measure the mysterious process by which the leaven of the Kingdom slowly but radically transforms an individual, a family, or a country. In fact, consider, only for a moment, this : Italian converts who once upon a time were looked upon with suspicion, when they were not alto-

gether kept in quarantine as morally infectious, and boycotted in public offices and factories, are on the contrary to-day esteemed and sought after as men who honestly and conscientiously do their duty. All doors are open to them; their word is listened to with interest, their advice is accepted and followed, as the advice of people whom one can trust and in whom some authority is recognized. Their children are no longer only tolerated in the schools; they are loved, for, as a rule, they are worthy of being held up by the teachers as an example to others. The press also speaks well of them. The authorities protect them and hold them in high consideration. Public opinion has turned in their favour. If you ask those around you who the "Evangelicals" are, their answer almost always is: "What they are we cannot exactly say; but we know that they are much


better than we are"; and often you will hear people who have abandoned the Church of Rome say: "We do not belong any longer to the Church; but, if we wanted to, you may be sure that it would not be the Church of Rome; it would be yours we should join." While the cultivated classes apply to various pastors for Evangelical servants and nurses because they are known to be honest, diligent and dutiful, the Royal House, which is and must be Roman Catholic, also entrusts its own children to the care of Waldensian governesses. Who can say how far the modern trend of Italian thought towards positive spirituality is due to our Evangelical mission? Is not the modern Reform movement within the Church of Rome to a large extent due to Protestant influence? Whence the fear of the Vatican of Evangelical propaganda? The Vatican is not a child to be easily frightened; it

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is inured to all kinds of assaults and dangers, and does not tremble unless confronted with overpowering peril.

All these indirect results of our Evangelical mission in Italy are not susceptible to any numerical valuation; nevertheless they do not cease to be of incalculable value.

I

URELY the results in our mission field might have been and should be far more extensive and noteworthy. Let us now consider the causes that have prevented a greater accomplishment.

I

The first obstacle which our Evangelical work has found in Italy lies in the superficiality with which the Italian people in general treat religion. Luther, when visiting Italy, summed up his impressions on the spiritual condition of the country in the following phrase: "The Italians," he said, "are the most impious among men." Calvin, when he came to Ferrara to visit the Duchess Renata, encouraged the martyrs of Italy to die, in order to give, he said, "the crooked and perverse gen-

eration" in Italy an example of sincerity and magnanimity. And the famous phrase of Erasmus is well known: "Itali omnes athei"; the Italians are all atheists. Now, all those judgments are greatly exaggerated, for it is not true that the Italians are more "impious," more "crooked and perverse" than other nations; and it is false to say that they are all "atheists." The truth of the matter is that the Italians are a race of artists who very easily mistake an æsthetic for a religious impression, an artistic for a religious emotion. When entering a sumptuous cathedral inundated with light an Italian feels profoundly moved by the inspiring notes which come from a hidden orchestra and rise to heaven through the mysterious imposing naves of the church; he goes home perfectly convinced that he has fulfilled a religious duty and that he is therefore at peace with his conscience and with God. In

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the classical age of Italian art, with the exception of Michelangelo, who in all respects was an exceptional man, the poets who celebrated God in verse did not believe in God; the architects who designed temples rich and grand had no vision whatever of the spiritual temple which begins on earth and is completed in heaven; and the painters, who painted the famous Madonnas that have now become of world-wide fame, chose their models more than often from amongst the most debauched women of the time. And is all this to be wondered at when in that very age the Pope himself, in the Vatican, kept a lamp constantly burning before the portrait of Plato and attended the performance of an obscene play such as Machiavelli's "Mandragora"?

Now, this superficial conception of the "divine" and this mistaken ethical notion of life, which we find in all ages in the

mind of the Italian people, do not surely prepare the ground to receive with special favour the good seed of the Word of God.

II

A second obstacle lies in the reaction caused by Roman Catholicism in the land. The Italians, as far as religion is concerned, may be divided into four categories: the bigoted, who are the fewest in number; the earnest believers who have given up all superstitious practices and papistic absurdities, but who are unfortunately not as many as we would wish them to be; the rebels and the indifferent, who are of the larger number. Romanism, by exacting from the people a belief in too many things which, for the greater part, are absurd and incredible, has led the more warm-blooded ones, who are always ready to fight, to rebellion; and those more inclined to apathy and fond

of a peaceful life, to indifference. And you well know how difficult it is to move an indifferent nature. How psychologically true is the saying of our Lord to the Laodiceans: "I would that thou wert cold or hot!" As far as the rebels are concerned, those, namely, who by turning their back on Roman Catholicism bid good-bye to all religion, it is sometimes almost impossible to persuade them that Romanism is only a form of religion and not the only true religion; to convince them that a distinction has to be made between Roman Catholicism and the Christianity of Christ, and that the Christianity of Christ is still worth the consideration of a sensible man.

III

A third obstacle is in the moral condition of the people. You have no idea of the havoc wrought in the moral life of the country, especially in the South,

by papacy and foreign dominion. I have often thought that nothing could be more interesting than a psychological study of the various regions of Italy. Piedmont, for instance, over which the House of Savoy reigned, having been less than other regions at the mercy of the Pope and having been spared the experiences which other regions infested by foreign oppressors had to undergo, was able to keep itself a strong, independent and disciplined region; and there a widely spread and earnest evangelical work was possible. Lombardy, which has in its history so many glorious pages, ripened in times of great distress when it was in a thousand ways ill-treated by Austria, and was thus prepared to receive the Gospel. Genoa and Liguria, in spite of their having ever had the riches of the earth and of the seas more at heart than heavenly riches, were not inaccessible to the

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teaching of the Gospel. Tuscany had always worshipped art and conviviality; nevertheless, as I have already said, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was the cradle of our Italian mission work and had and has still several flourishing churches. But in the rest of Italy, in the Papal States, in Naples, in Sicily, where the Bourbons ruled in a way that Gladstone defined before all Europe as "The negation of God" and where often priests and friars led the bands of brigands which infested the country, papacy and foreign dominion have left traces which will take long to disappear. There, the populace, deceived by the priests, used to fly away in horror from the Protestants, thinking that they were monsters with only one eye on their forehead; and that, in the middle of the nineteenth century; there, our churches have been set on fire by the mob stirred up by the

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friars; there, our colporteurs have been stoned; there, people have swallowed and still swallow for special devotional purposes images of saints and Madonnas; there, the preachers make the crucifixes on the pulpits to turn their eyes round on a congregation who is out of its mind with fear; there, thieves and rascals of all kinds bear about their persons most religiously sacred images as amulets and have candles lit before their favourite Madonnas in order to be kept safe from the prosecution of the law; there, finally, the "camorristi" and "mafiosi" offer on the altars of their special churches part of the product of their thefts and murders, which quickly finds its way into the pockets of priests who are without conscience and without morality.

IV

A fourth obstacle to our work in Italy has been, up to the pres-

ent, the attitude of contempt which men of letters and of science, and socialism have assumed towards our movement. Our literature, up to a short time ago, has been pagan in its general tendency. The worship of form was enough; the idea, the substance, counted for little or nothing. It was a kind of rejuvenescence of the spirit of the renaissance. Science, till lately, was, one may say, almost exclusively materialistic. Büchner, Vogt, Molescott, Haeckel and Darwin, through ignorance or malice falsely interpreted and made to serve materialistic ends, were its prophets. Socialism, which about the end of the nineteenth century invaded Italy and influenced the masses, became at once atheistic. No one might then have been a socialist and a believer at the same time. To be an atheist was a "conditio sine qua non" to be a socialist. Italian socialism was the absolute negation of

the spirit, and the deification of the stomach. In no country, perhaps, was the word of the great thinker Robert Flint found truer than in Italy: "The fortune of Socialism, as commonly understood, lies in the poverty of its ideal." Now, it is clear that all those causes, combined, could not help, and in fact they did not help the creation of an atmosphere congenial to our work either among the cultivated class, or among the popular masses.

v

The last but not the smallest obstacle to our work in Italy was illiteracy. In a land where the "examining the Scripture" to ascertain "whether the things are or are not so" is made almost impossible or greatly restricted on account of the general educational conditions, one understands that a work of propaganda, bound to limit itself to the living word of a handful

of preachers, cannot make much progress. And in this respect the general conditions of Italy have been, up to now, much more serious than one imagines. The cause of it all is principally in the Church of Rome which, in order to better establish herself, has always encouraged ignorance rather than education. In fact, in those parts of the country where the power of Rome has been more felt, illiteracy has been and is still rampant. A few official figures will give you the undeniable proof of what I say:

In the whole kingdom in 1901 we reckoned an average of illiteracy of 48%:

In Turin of 21%.

In Milan of 17%.

In Florence of 19%.

In Rome and neighbouring provinces of 43%.

In Naples and surroundings of 54%.

In Sicily, Basilicata and Calabria of 75%.

II



N the strength of all I have said, I should not like you to be led to the conclusion that the condition of our work in Italy is a desperate one. Far from it. Never were the conditions of our work more favourable than they are at the dawn of the twentieth century; and the Italian evangelist had never better cause than he has at present to look into the future with serene eyes and with a hopeful heart. Here are the reasons for my bold statement.

I

The first lies in the Italian character. Do not think it a contradiction to what I said a few minutes ago. I accentuated then the fact of the havoc wrought by papacy and foreign dominion on the moral life of a

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large part of Italy; but here I must emphasize, as strongly as I did then, another fact; the fact that the Italian character is essentially good, most generous and noble; it is a character that when, either inspired by a high ideal or sanctified by the grace of God, transforms and elevates itself, becomes one of the most beautiful characters to be met with on earth. Think of the persevering power shown in the field of scientific research by this people. Whatever be the idea you may have conceived concerning our latest war, think of the heroic acts accomplished by land and by sea by the glorious sons of Italy. Think of the martyrs of our Italian reformation in the sixteenth century; of Pietro Carnesecchi who, when delivered into the hands of the Pope by Cosimo de Medici, went to the stake on Piazza Castel St. Angelo in Rome, clothed in his best and putting on a new pair of gloves just as

if going to a court reception and not to be burnt; think of Gioffredo Varaglia who, in Piazza Castello in Turin, answered the executioner who was begging to be forgiven by him for what he was on the point of doing: "Go on; do what you have to do. Not only you do I forgive but also those who have brought me to this. Do not be afraid; my blood will not be shed in vain"; think of Aonio Palleario who, a few hours before his being taken to the stake, wrote to his wife a letter which is a miracle of courage, faith and love, that even now moves one to tears.

I have been pastor in Florence for seventeen years, and I have seen in my church characters which, when sanctified by the grace of God, have become beautiful with extraordinary beauty. What cannot the grace of God do with a character such as the Italian, fine and delicate by nature, rich in poetic and

artistic sense, highly mystical and at the same time wonderfully practical, always ready to yield itself completely, unreservedly, to the person or the cause it loves? If in spite of all its political, religious and moral drawbacks the Italian character has brought forth what it has up to the present, what shall it not be capable of when it finds itself in a favourable environment with the chance of giving all that it is able to give? The Christianity of Christ will give that chance to the Italian character; or, rather, *we* shall give it that chance by heralding the Gospel of Christ in Italy.

II

My *second* reason lies in the evident and rapid decay of papacy, the everlasting cause of all the evils of Italy. Do not think I am exaggerating. Papacy has caused Italy to fall so often into the hands of foreign armies which have plundered

and ruined her; papacy was one of the principal causes whereby the Reformation could not take root in Italy; to papacy Italy owes her having been, to such a large extent, plunged in the grossest superstition and ignorance; papacy hurled its excommunication against all the patriots, against the King and the army who, on the 20th September, 1870, gave united Italy Rome as her capital; papacy has written in the Syllabus issued by Pius IX the following words which the whole world should know: "To whomever shall say that the Church can and must reconcile herself to progress and modern civilization, anathema sit (let him be cursed)." And is it really possible that an institution such as that can last? Is it possible that it can escape the judgment it deserves on account of all its past and present faults? Is it possible that an institution representing the kingdom of darkness

can overcome modern civilization which belongs to the kingdom of light? To believe as many do in the fatal eternity of the papal colossus is simply absurd. Has not humanity witnessed in the past the fall of many other and greater giants? The papal colossus, which began by being built on a religious basis and grew by means of worldly materials and intentions, has ended by being to-day nothing but a great political organization. And this organization which has always justly astonished the world on account of its compactness, begins to give way. It is tormented by a general internal discontent; it is being discredited in the whole Latin race; the farce of the imprisonment of the Pope does no longer move one even to laughter; it moves one to compassion. Pius X will be recorded in history as the least obeyed Pope that ever existed. I could quote at least *seven* of

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his last official utterances, which either nobody has taken any notice of, or he himself has been obliged to withdraw. You may know the prophecies concerning the Popes, attributed to St. Malachy, the Irish Archbishop of the twelfth century. After all they do not seem to be so fanciful as they are thought to be. St. Malachy prognosticated the pontificate of Leo XIII with the motto: *Lumen in Cælo* (a light in heaven); and in fact the coat of arms of the family of Leo XIII had a comet (lumen) in a blue ground (heaven). Pius X foretold as *Ignis ardens* (a burning fire); and in fact under his pontificate a religious turmoil has disturbed all Europe. The future Pontiff is prognosticated as *Religio depopulata* (Religion devastated); his successor as *Pastor bonus* (the good Pastor); the following Pope as *Pastor nauta* (the navigating pastor); and a-propos of this "Pastor nauta" they say that the Ameri-

cans hope that the Pontiff who has that motto will be a man who will sail to Rome from New York to assume the tiara. We, in Italy, think instead that the "Pastor nauta" will be an Italian Pope who will be obliged to pack up and embark for America. Be it as it may, the fact is that Italy, relieved of this awful incubus of papacy, will be better able than ever to breathe freely the pure and sanctifying air of the Gospel of Christ.

III

My *third* reason lies in a quantity of facts which, by reason of the shortness of time, I am obliged to group together. The great improvement attained in the general moral conditions of Italy in these last years is surely an undeniable fact. The Government is fighting bravely against evils such as illiteracy and immorality, and encourages in several ways those private societies which are willing to work

hand in hand with it to that end. Several wise laws with that aim in view have lately not only been promulgated but have also been enforced most energetically. Meanwhile, a something new has begun to be felt in Italy; it is the Italian conscience which is beginning to awaken; it is a new spirit brooding over Italy from the Alps to the extreme limits of Sicily; and as a result of this revival, the most important publishing firms of the country are issuing for the first time the translations of foreign works bearing on the great problems of the spirit; philosophical thought, up to now generally positivist, begins to bend towards higher, truly positive and Christian horizons; scientific thought is bidding good-bye to the old prophets of materialism; it no longer frantically condemns religion in the name of science, but allows that beside the phenomena to be ascertained by the senses,

there are other phenomena ; the psychical, the spiritual, the study of which must be left to religion ; it begins to understand that although Religion and Science have both Truth for their goal, still they march towards it by different roads ; so that nothing can be more absurd than their hostility towards each other ; it begins to understand that the best and only reasonable thing to do is to love and help each other, because science is as useful and needful to religion, as religion is to science. And even socialism begins to wonder if up to the present it has not been following a false track by so absolutely and exclusively asserting itself as an atheistic movement ; if it has not been wrong in neglecting, as it has done, religion as a transforming power of society ; and whilst the majority of Italian socialists already allow the compatibility of a religious belief with socialism in the individual,

not a few of them already advocate the cause not of papism (for no sensible person wants ever to hear the name *papism* mentioned again in Italy), but the cause of the Christianity of Christ, understood as a powerful social dynamic.

All these truly providential facts show that during the last ten or fifteen years a most receptive, favourable, promising ground has been prepared in Italy for the preaching of the Gospel.

IV

A *fourth* reason lies in *modernism*, that is to say, in the present attempt which is being made towards a reform within the Church of Rome. I shall not enter here into too many particulars on this important subject. Let this only be sufficient for the moment: that this modernism is not, as the Roman Curia defines it, "a cry of rebellion against religion," but a

cry of rebellion coming from the best and most spiritual part of the Roman clergy, against the worldliness, the overbearing spirit, the tyranny of the Vatican, and against the spiritual and moral corruption into which the Church of Rome, in our Latin countries at least, has fallen. Those men do not wish to leave their Church, they want to reform, to Christianize their Church; they know that to leave the Church now would mean to abandon her altogether to those who would utterly ruin her. They want to see their Church renovated which at present is governed not by Pius X; but by the Jesuits who surround him, in the same way as Girolamo Savonarola wanted to renovate the Church which was under the misrule of Pope Alexander VI. They want to give back to Christ the place that in the Church is only due to Him. They want the Saints and the Virgin Mary to be put back in

their own respective places. They want to do away with all kinds of superstition and materialism in the Christian worship. They want God to be worshipped again in and outside their cathedrals, "in spirit and in truth." They want the power of the Pope to be limited; they want him to become the Bishop of Rome and among all the other bishops nothing more than a "primus inter pares." They want the priests to be elected by the parishioners and not to be imposed on the parishes by the bishops. They want celibacy for the clergy to be voluntary and not compulsory. They want Rome to be recognized as the legitimate capital of the United Kingdom of Italy. They want the Vatican to give up all aspirations to a temporal power and to concern itself only with the spiritual welfare of the nation. They want finally the Gospel to have free course from the Alps to the furthest limits of Sicily,

and from sea to sea. The movement is vast; it has its representatives in the Vatican itself and has its roots planted in the remotest and humblest parishes. It is no longer the protest of a few sporadic cases which the gallows and the stake could once upon a time eliminate; it is a secret, strong, general protest, which a thousand gallows would be unable to extinguish; the protest which is undermining the whole papal institution, and which one day or other will overthrow the old and cracked edifice, out of whose ruins the pure renovated Church will arise, just as out of the ruins of the Jewish temple the first Church arose.

What will the future of modernism be? Will the modernists end by leaving the Church and forming a new Church, a Church of their own, such as for instance the Old Catholic Church? I do not think so. They are too attached to their own Church;

they do not want to leave her; they want to stay and have her given back to her primitive simplicity and spirituality. Will they end by coming over to us? to our Protestant churches? Some already have come and many more will undoubtedly come over to us; and we receive them with open arms; because we reckon those to be men of character who do not trifle with their own conscience; but the great bulk of them will not come over to us: for three reasons especially: first, because they think their form of Church organization to be more congenial to the Latin race than any other form; secondly, because accustomed as they are to the great idea of the Unity of the Church, they have no sympathy with our often so accentuated denominationalism; thirdly, because they consider our Protestantism too much as a foreign importation, and too young to be accepted by a race so old.

Will they succeed in their efforts? And why not? I am almost sure that in a few years the minority of to-day will have become a majority, that in a few years modernism will have grown so strong as to confront the arrogance of the Vatican; and in that solemn hour the Vatican will find itself before this tragic dilemma: either to Christianize itself or die. And if modernism were really to succeed in its efforts, what harm would there be in having in our Latin race a truly Christian episcopal Church working hand in hand with our Churches in view of the moral and spiritual redemption of Italy?

Meanwhile, I strongly feel that our modern Protestantism, which is the offspring of freedom and light, is bound to sympathize with a movement such as this, which is working from within the Church of Rome with the same aim in view, with which we are working from without. It

is bound to sympathize with these "dreamers," as they are called by some; "dreamers" who fight and suffer for the sake of an ideal, which is according to the mind of God, which Christ cannot but approve of, and which is certainly due to the inspiration of His spirit. History teaches us that the dreams of dreamers such as these become, sooner or later, to the astonishment of all, glorious realities; and this movement which is destined to hasten in Italy and in all Latin countries the coming of that Kingdom of God for which we Protestants of Italy have been working for more than half a century amidst so many difficulties, fills us with encouragement and with hopes of new, greater and more glorious triumphs.

v

Finally, we have a *fifth* reason for looking into the future with a serene and hopeful eye.

Is it possible, I ask, that God

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should forget Italy? This Italy, which He Himself has made so beautiful, the cradle of art, of music, of poetry? Is it possible that He should allow this Christian Church of Italy, founded most probably by the "sojourners from Rome" who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost and became afterwards the corrupt Church of the Popes, is it possible that He should allow her to perish in her corruption without any hope of being ever renovated? Did the martyrs of all centuries who died "greeting from afar" their spiritually redeemed fatherland, die then in vain? Is it then no longer true that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church? And why then was this Waldensian Church "snatched out of the fire" of thirty persecutions and for so many centuries preserved within the natural bulwarks of the Alps? And why was the edict of emancipation of 1848 granted to the Waldensian peo-

ple? Does God ever emancipate individuals or peoples without a special aim? And all those churches, all those mission stations scattered under the shadow of the Alps, the Apennines, at the foot of Vesuvius and Etna, are they not the earnest of even vaster conquests? Are they not the guarantee that Italy also will be some day or other traced on the map of the Kingdom of God as the most beautiful among its beautiful provinces? And is it not a symptomatic fact that this Waldensian Church, situated as she is on the border line between France and Italy, was not exterminated either by the whirl of French rationalism of the eighteenth century, or by that reaction against papal spiritual tyranny which is Italian unbelief? Should God for no purpose whatever have left to Himself in Italy a few thousand men who never bowed the knee to Baal? Why then this faithful remnant?

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Surely, in order to conquer Italy not for a sect, not for a special religious denomination, not for any special ecclesiastical organization, but for Christ.

I do not want to trespass on your patience. Perhaps I have already trespassed too long, and it is now time that I should stop. I cannot do so, however, before having thanked you for the love you have shown and still show to the old and glorious Waldensian Church which I have had the honour to represent lately in the United States.

Continue to her your affections; give your names and your support gladly to our American Waldensian Aid Society; do not withhold from her your sympathy; stretch out a helping hand to her when her appealing voice reaches you.

Many content themselves with considering Italy only as the garden of Europe, or as a colossal museum, or as an immense

favourite resort, or as a huge hotel; but to us she must be something nobler and greater than that. Now that Italy is politically united, she must become more than what she was once upon a time; namely, not only the cradle of art, but of an art essentially Christian; not only a teacher of civilization, but of a civilization inspired by the Christianity of Christ, a great nation, not with a greatness bound, as St. Augustine said, to be the principal cause of her ruin, but with a greatness productive of many and abiding triumphs in the Kingdom of God.

With that aim in view the Waldensian Church is working in Italy; and with that noble aim in view I exhort you to work with her. The goal is worthy of her and is worthy of you who are at the vanguard in the triumphal march of humanity towards freedom and civilization.

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And to your prayers, to your love and sympathy I strongly commend the Waldensian Church, the Church of the martyrs, the Church reformed at least four centuries before the Reformation, the Church which, gathering in her bosom the scattered remnants of the ancient protests which Rome had suffocated in blood, paved the way for the protests from which issued all the liberties we now enjoy ; the Church which is not my Church, which is not the Church of Italy, but which is your Church, inasmuch as she is the vanguard of the Protestantism of the world in the classical land of the Popes.

