

## Adolphe Monod

Three days ago, the *Journal des Debats* has announced the death of Mr Adolphe Monod. His funeral has taken place on Tuesday at 1 o'clock. The crowd was large, our loss is immense. All protestants, even outside France, know what Mr Adolphe Monod meant to the French protestant churches, and even to those outside the protestant churches; all those who have heard his voice or read his writings, all those whose spirits lift themselves up high enough, all those who have enough of the Gospel spirit to acknowledge Christian life and eloquence, in whatever communion they are found, will share our deep regrets. As all admit, the excellent man whom we have lost was one of the foremost Christian speakers of his time. It often pleases God to bestow his force onto humble instruments which then accomplish real miracles through him and for him, and each of whose victories benefits their master all the more as they have at first overcome their proper inadequacy in his name. But often, in order to honour his law and his church before the world, it also pleases him to attract a man who would have made himself known anyway, who would have been one of the elect of human glory, even if he had not been an elect of divine truth, and who attests to the religion of the simple and the weak that it also fits the strongest intellects and the greatest hearts. Then haughty and self-serving mankind, seeing its rebellion defeated by those whom it was tempted to despise, and abandoned by those in which it hoped to exalt itself, pushed to its limits by this double refusal of its self-adulation, admiring in the God who called the little children to himself and bent over their little heads the very God who, when he was still a child, proudly spoke with the puzzled Pharisees, has to acknowledge as its king him who dominates it where it thought it was powerful and supports it where it felt weak. The Christian faith, eloquence and humility of Mr Adolphe Monod, and above all his humility, which both veiled his rare and original talents to himself and enhanced them in the sight of other people, made of him one of those impressive examples, one of those living lessons that humiliates all those who despise the Gospel. It is one of the prominent features of Mr Adolphe Monod that he was an original thinker and speaker and at the same time a very constant, scrupulous, I would even say passionately obedient disciple of the Gospel. No one has attached himself more strongly to the "rock of ages" of which an English poet speaks. No one has made more living waters flow from it. He was a submissive Christian, using the riches of a very independent and creative personality for the benefit of the task that had been assigned to him. He himself has unknowingly explained his own merit when, speaking of St Paul, he tried to explain, how God keeps the human personality intact in those who he chooses to be his spokesmen and whom he has sealed. "The Spirit of God, so he says, unites himself with the spirit of man when he inspires him, very much like the divine nature unites itself with the human nature when it incarnates. If the Son of God who is present in Jesus-Christ does not hinder the son of man from participating in the pain of bringing forth salvation, the divine word vibrating in the human word of the apostle does not hinder the human word from participating in the labour of announcing salvation. God and man in the first case, the spirit of God and the spirit of man in the second, do not attenuate each other, they remain intact, side by side. Thus any word taken randomly on any page written by our apostle, although it is found in the celestial regions of the divine spirit, can nonetheless be traced in the inmost depths of the human spirit, in the lessons of experience, in the bitterness of trial, in the shaping and development of the new man, in the long apprenticeship of spiritual life." What Mr Monod said on the inspiration of St Paul also holds true for the eloquence of Mr Monod. May others tell the continued efforts, the ardent pursuit of truth and the inner conflicts that strengthened and softened this austere and tender soul for the exercise of the sacred ministry – whoever has heard sermons of Mr Adolphe Monod can testify that the more the text was well-known and the more the thoughts were literally drawn from the text, the more the listeners were surprised by the unexpected life

that the very person of the speaker imparted to his discourse. A very clear structure, a very broad vision, a very penetrating look at the hidden corners and trickery of the hearts, thousands of poetic or fixed expressions of Holy Scripture that almost unintentionally escaped his memory and amplified the authority of his word, great mastery in choosing examples in the history of the old covenant and Christianity as illustrations, a deep feeling of the fears and weaknesses of this time, the boldness to come straight to the point where he felt reason was most embarrassed, a very fine and creative language, sometimes a whiff of grave and painful irony directed at human folly, and above all, the pressing need to persuade, to win souls, the persistent fear of not having done enough to snatch sinners away from the false security that is their ruin and to lead them to the faith that saves them, the kind insistence of this Christian who appeared to consider his own salvation as much in danger as that of his brothers if he did not give his utmost to and for them, and finally, at the end of each sermon, once the subject had been dealt with, the emotional appeals of three or four successive perorations, increasingly pressing and beautiful – all this has contributed to making him one of the foremost preachers in the protestant Church. All his sermons that have been printed stand that test and will stand the test of time. But his penetrating accent, his serious, tired face, illuminated by a secret fire, his trembling and sincere voice, his sober gesture, the part of eloquence that we call action and which in him deserved that name, perhaps more than in anybody else, because he was so anxious to act with his word and to fill all the hearts with the Gospel! The power of his thoughts and of his style was yet multiplied by all this: to know the power of his preaching, you had to attend. When he heard of Mr Monod's death, one of his regular listeners during his last years told me that after a long absence, after 18 months abroad, he had heard Mr Adolphe Monod preach on "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!" on the day after his return. The preacher had brilliantly exposed how all desires of happiness, of light, of love, of purity, which are the glory and torment of man, cannot be satisfied but in God. As he had just reached the age where all thirsts arise and where the soul that has not found the real and living water will accept any illusion, this young listener told me that Mr Monod's speech had made such an impression on him that none of the older masterpieces of the Christian pulpit had been able to satisfy him in the same way since then. More than six years later, he was still was able to recite long passages in order to make us understand and share his lasting emotion, as if he had heard the speaker just before. Mr Adolphe Monod has succeeded in leaving such a spur in many a heart. To use his own words, he may "take place among the Chrysostoms or Whitefields which hundreds of souls will greet on the last day as their spiritual fathers, because they had used the beautiful gifts that nature had bestowed upon them to serve Jesus-Christ". He has died at the age of fifty-four, after a long sickness and cruel sufferings which he bore not only with an invariable willingness but which he dominated so much that he could still teach some faithful friends gathered around his bed. All week long he gathered his forces so that he could use them on his last Sundays in that way, and when the time had come, he explained, prayed, comforted, with his unfading and soft voice, his mind as sure and his faith as tranquil as ever, as if he did not need all his strength for his own trials. Thus he was faithful to himself and to his work until the end. The faces of those who came together last Tuesday, deeply moved, to honour his memory, as well as the speeches given in the name of the national Church, the Lutheran Church and the Free Churches, clearly expressed that everybody considered his loss as a common bereavement shared by all protestants, because a great light among them has faded away, and as a personal bereavement caused by the death of a friend.

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