

Adolphe Monod – a short biography

Adolphe Monod was born on January 21, **1802** in Copenhagen where his father, Jean Monod (1765-1836) was pastor of the French-speaking Reformed Church. His mother, Louise-Philippine de Coninck (1775-1851) was the daughter of a rich businessman. Adolphe was their sixth child after Frédéric (1794-1863), Henri (1795-1869), Adèle (1796-1876), Edouard (1798-1887) and Guillaume (“Billy”, 1800-1896). There were four more sons and three more daughters: Gustave (1803-1890), Waldemar (1807-1870), Marie (1809-1886), Edmond (1811-1811), Horace (1814-1881), Elisa (1815-1867) and Betsy (1818-1894). As Edmond died a few weeks after his birth, the brothers and sisters formed a band of “Twelve” comprising eight boys and four girls.

The family moved to Paris in **1808**, after Adolphe’s grandfather had lost all his possessions. Jean Monod had accepted a calling to become pastor of the Reformed Church in the capital of France.

There the children received an excellent education, in particular by the German pastor Küster.

In **1820**, Adolphe and Billy began their theological studies in Geneva, following the example of their elder brother Frédéric. Adolphe had declared his willingness to become a minister as soon as in 1817.

Three years later, in **1823**, the brothers met Thomas Erskine who significantly influenced Adolphe’s spiritual development, in Geneva.

After he had finished his studies and had been ordained in **1824**, Adolphe went back to Paris where he deepened his linguistic and exegetical skills. This was a time of increasing spiritual turmoil for him.

In **1825**, Adolphe and Billy went on a trip to Italy. Adolphe decided to stay in Naples to take care of the small French speaking church. He still underwent a great spiritual crisis.

In **1827**, he again met Thomas Erskine. This encounter allowed him to overcome his doubts and to surrender to God. He had a conversion experience on July 21, 1827.

Monod then went to Lyon where he became the third pastor of the Reformed church. It is not a big surprise that the ardent young convert soon was in conflict with the local church council whose members still were attached to the somnolent Enlightenment christianity. He was asked to step down as soon as in **1829**. In this year he also married Hannah Honyman (1799-1868) of Scottish descent.

In **1831** the conflict between Monod and the church council reached a summit when the young pastor refused to administer communion to certain members of the Church. In **1832** Monod was revoked by the French government.

He then decided to stay in Lyon and to take care of a free church that had been established by a group of dissidents. Four of his children were born in Lyon: Mary (1831-1890), Marguerite (1832-1887), William (1834-1916) and Sarah (1836-1912).

Monod pursued his work in Lyon until November **1836**, when he received a call to be a professor of ethics and homiletics at the Montauban faculty. He stayed there for almost eleven years, during which he twice changed chair: three years after his arrival he became professor of Hebrew and later on he took a New Testament professorship. During his stay in Montauban, Monod preached often, even outside Montauban. His reputation as a great pulpit speaker spread very quickly.

His family also grew during this period: Emilie (1838-1920), Constance (1840-1841) and Camille (1843-1910) were born during those years.

In September **1847**, Monod accepted a call to be a deputy pastor in Paris, in the same church as his elder brother Frédéric (Temple de l'Oratoire). It was a period of increasing struggle between the orthodox and the liberal parties within the Reformed church of France. Adolphe appears to have tried to bridge the gap, but he was not able to avoid the schism. His brother Frédéric left the Reformed church in **1848** and founded, together with Agénor de Gasparin, the "Union of free evangelical churches of France" (Union des Églises évangéliques libres de France). Adolphe stayed in the Reformed church and took the position left vacant by his brother.

This bitter conflict and the great burden his work as a minister laid on him appear to have exhausted Monod and ruined his already poor health. In **1854**, he had to take a six-month sick-leave, and in 1855 he definitely retired from his position. He died on April 6, **1856**, from a liver cancer.