

ADOLPHE MONOD'S
FAREWELL TO HIS FRIENDS
AND TO THE CHURCH.

Translated from the French.

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PREFACE,

MR ADOLPHE MONOD was withdrawn from the Church the 6th of April 1856, after many months of great suffering. During the last two years of his life his ministry was interrupted more than once—sometimes for complete repose, sometimes only partially, notwithstanding the progress of disease and suffering.

It was towards the end of September 1855 that Mr. Monod and his family learned all the gravity of his complaint. Without altogether losing either the wish or even the hope of recovery and of seeing the Lord accomplish in his favour that which human science could no longer expect, he prepared in peace for his change, should such be the will of God, and felt an increasing desire to live nearer to Him. When a friend and colleague in the ministry mentioned to him the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as an efficacious means of grace, too often neglected, advising him to have frequent recourse to it, he willingly adopted the advice. He resolved to partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, and to admit a few friends to partake of it with him. But he earnestly desired to do still more, and, encouraged by a trial he had made of his strength in twice addressing a lengthened exhortation to his family some days before, he determined to take this opportunity of saying a few words to the friends who might assemble around him once a week. Such was the origin of these meetings, the first of which took place on the 14th October 1855, and they were continued without intermission till the 30th March 1856.

Mr Monod availed himself of these opportunities of continuing to preach the gospel, and to exhibit also the enlarged spirit of Christian liberality by which he was animated, and that characterised him, not only as belonging to his own Church, but as belonging to the great universal Church of the faithful. All those agreeing with him in faith, whatever might be their particular denomination, were considered his brethren; and pastors of the Reformed, of the Lutheran, of the Independent, and of the Wesleyan Church, alternately presided at this banquet of brotherly love, beside the bed of their sick and dying brother. Thus, to the satisfaction of still labouring for the gospel, he added, that of labouring for that Church of the future which all foresee, as he himself said, and after which he so ardently aspired.¹

The service was performed in the invalid's chamber. Upon a table near the bed were placed the bread and the cup; the officiating pastor took his place beside the table, and the family, with a small number of friends, thirty or forty persons, occupied the rest of the room on these occasions. The space was too small to receive at once all who expressed a wish to be present,² but the audience was varied each time, so as to admit the greatest number possible. The service consisted in prayer, the singing of a hymn, reading a chapter in the Bible, and the distribution of the bread and wine. Then Mr Monod spoke, and those only who heard him, especially in the latter days, can form any idea of the peaceful serenity of manner, the deep expression of Christian love for those he was exhorting, and often of the energetic and impressive eloquence characterising these addresses. But at the same time the spontaneousness of

the service precluded all pretension to oratory, and it was no longer the eloquent preacher, but the suffering brother near his end, giving his brethren the counsels drawn from his own experience, with a simplicity and familiarity which the reader will find perfectly preserved. Sometimes, however, led away by the impulse of the moment, all his natural and fascinating eloquence returned. Prevented from exercising an active ministry, he loved this new one, though so limited by his weakness, and by the difficulty of the surrounding circumstances. Too weak to speak for a length of time, it may easily be supposed that he was incapable of the fatigue of a long preparation, and he was obliged to satisfy himself with meditating for a short time upon the subject which he intended to develop. These subjects were furnished by some personal experience, or some new reflections to which the events of the preceding week had given rise; his sufferings, too, often suggested him a subject, and he took pleasure in showing how the Christian ought to glorify God by the way in which he bears them.

Finding that his life was prolonged, and that God called him both to suffer and to testify from the bed of suffering longer than he had anticipated, he wished to maintain a certain order in his exhortations, classing some under the title of a dying man's regrets, in which he drew advice for his hearers from his own past experience; and others under that of results, showing how that experience had settled his faith. After having endeavoured for a time to prepare beforehand what he wished to say, finding it too fatiguing, he returned to his former plan.

It is wonderful that, suffering as he did, day and night, and often very intensely, Mr Monod could bear the fatigue of having a number of persons around his bed every Sunday, during a full hour, besides that of speaking even for a short time, after the exertion of preparing what he intended to say. We have already seen how he took advantage of the short intervals of pain for preparation.. But the fatigue of speaking was great, though the organs of speech had maintained a singular vigour; and though it was astonishing to find so strong a voice in so feeble a body, yet the effort it cost him could not fail to irritate him, and thus increase the pain. But God dispensed to him every Sunday, as on every other day, the measure of relief, or the measure of patience and energy that he needed. Sometimes the pain was suspended, or at least diminished, and sometimes he was enabled to surmount it, so as to be able to speak; but during the hours that followed, his sufferings were often aggravated, especially at the beginning; he knew this, but cheerfully resigned himself to it. "I suffer much," said he, one Sunday evening, "but I know that it must be so on Sunday night; it is a sacrifice I willingly offer to God." Another day in prayer he said—"If every week I must obtain by redoubled sufferings the privilege of announcing Thy Word, may Thy will and not mine be done." On the 25th November he said (we like to borrow his own words as they show more clearly in what light he considered his new ministry)—"I suffered much this morning, and it was to be feared that I should not be able to speak this afternoon; but God suspended my sufferings, during an hour, to allow me to glorify Him; and He granted me the favour of exercising this little ministry, which is

so great a consolation for me." And again the 2nd March, a month before his death, he said—"Another Sunday in which God has allowed me to address a few words to our little assembly, notwithstanding my increasing weakness, to which my feeble voice bore testimony. May He deign to support me to the end, and grant me the grace, if it be possible (for I wish not to dictate to Him), to cease to proclaim His name only when I cease to live."

God did support him to the end, and granted him the last grace he asked. From the Sunday 14th October, the service was performed every Sunday without intermission during nearly six months. The 23rd March, Easter Sunday, he gave his last discourse upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, after some hesitation it is true, and with so much difficulty that he seemed ready to faint in pronouncing the last words. The 30th of March, though his weakness had so rapidly increased during the preceding days that he was incapable of taking almost any food, and his difficulty in speaking was extreme, scarcely knowing whether he should be able to make himself heard, he collected the little strength he had to glorify the everlasting and infinite love of God, and terminated with a prayer of thanksgiving his ministry upon earth. From the 30th of March to the 6th of April his decline was much more rapid, and he had scarcely strength to speak even to his family; it was asked whether it would not be wise to countermand the meeting proposed for that day; but that day, before the usual hour, God had called His servant to Himself, thus answering the prayer he had so often expressed: "May my life terminate only with my ministry, and may my ministry end only with my life."

But it may be asked how the discourses contained in this volume could have been preserved, since, as already stated, not one was written beforehand by the author?

From the beginning, Mr Monod's children, either from notes taken down with care, or from memory, wrote them out so accurately that sometimes scarcely anything was wanting, and the correctness with which they produced them increased with habit. This was at first done without Mr Monod's knowledge, and always without his aid. The only discourse corrected by him is the twentieth, entitled "The Scriptures." He had it read over to him twice, and corrected it with care, making some changes in it; on this occasion he was surprised to find how exactly his words had been taken down.

Thus the compilation was little more than the copying of the notes taken by several persons, one person completing them with the assistance of the others, or by the help of memory. For the last discourses a degree of exactness was thus obtained, almost verbal. The first only was written entirely from memory, but those who heard it will find nothing that they will not recognise as exact; and we are well assured that in the whole volume, if Mr Monod's words are not always exactly reproduced, nothing will be found that he did not say. A few, very few, passages required slight changes to make the sense clear, but even these corrections of a text, which, after all, was not written by the Author's own hand, are very few in number.

The texts of Scripture placed at the head of each discourse were read by the officiating pastor, and the greater number, especially the latter part, were chosen by Mr Monod, and read at his request before he spoke.

We trust that this volume may contribute to the glory of God, and the advancement of His reign: and while we remember the man to whom we owe so lovely a testimony to the power of faith, let us look to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. We must not forget, said Mr Monod, on Sunday evening 2nd March, to water with our prayers what we plant in the Lord's name, and let us ask Him not to allow idle curiosity nor even the kindest human feelings to take the place that the pure desire to glorify God ought to occupy, either in him who speaks, or in those who read. It is in this spirit that we wish to offer this volume to the people of God, and we trust it will be received in the same spirit, with a holy jealousy to give all glory to Him from whom comes all good. But we may be allowed, in offering it, to call upon those who read to admire the goodness of a faithful God. It is now nearly a year since the Church became alarmed for Mr Monod's life, and began to pray that God would prolong the existence of His faithful servant, on whom He seemed already to have set the seal of eternal life. After eight months of incessant prayers, and months of unspeakable suffering, Mr Monod was withdrawn; but these prayers were not in vain, for he felt, as he himself said, that he was borne upon the prayers of God's children. In taking away successively his health, his ministry, and his life, God determined to answer otherwise his prayers and those of his brethren for him. He intended him to be an example for His people, that, as it is said in the epistle to the Hebrews, "He being dead, yet speaketh to them."

Mr. Monod's ministry required the seal of this last and cruel disease. Those who heard him in the days of his vigour, and those who saw him in the clays of suffering and weakness, can judge whether the orator, in all the strength of body and liberty of mind, spoke more profitably to their souls than the suffering and dying Christian. In this sickness in which God so strikingly showed the power of faith, He allowed him to speak in His name every Sunday. This was granted to the last, and this little book is the fruit of it, a humble but eloquent testimony to the power of the Gospel, without a parallel perhaps in the annals of the Church, in which we find repeated Sunday after Sunday, and by a man who was expecting death, without daring to wish for it; and repeated, with increasing firmness, patience, peace, and joy, the same doctrine of the Gospel as he had known it, preached it, lived it, during the twenty-five years of his ministry! Glory be to God!

In a sermon preached on Christmas Day 1854, from the text, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also," Mr Monod, who had been suffering from the beginning of the spring, uttered some words that we desire to repeat here, in order to show how God verified in his person the words which He put into his mouth.

After showing that a crucified life is the true life of the Christian, and of the minister of the Word of God in particular, he closed this part of his discourse by these words, "And if amongst the crosses that you are called to bear, there

is one that seems, I do not say heavier than the others, but more compromising to your ministry, and likely to ruin for ever all the hopes of your holy mission—if outward temptations be added to those coming from within—if all seems assailed, body, mind, spirit—if all seems lost without remedy—well, accept this cross, shall I say, or this assemblage of crosses, in a peculiar feeling of submission, hope, and gratitude, as a trial in which the Lord will cause you to find a new mission. Hail it as the beginning of a ministry of weakness and bitterness, which the lord has reserved for the last, because the best, and which He will cause to abound in more living fruit than your ministry of strength and joy in days gone by ever yielded.”

FOOTNOTES

1 It may not be uninteresting to the reader to find recorded here the names of the pastors who alternately presided at these services. They are Messieurs Frederic Monod, Guillaume Monod, Meyer, Grandpierre, Gauthey, Vaurigaud (de Nantes), Valletta, Armand Delille, Vermeil, Fisch, Jean Monod (de Nismes), Edmond de Pressense, Petit, Paumier, Zipperlin, Hocart, Louis Verna, Boissonnas, and Vullies.

2 In the month of March Mr Monod's increasing weakness did not allow him to have so many people in his room during an hour or more; and at the last four meetings they were obliged to stand round his bed to hear his exhortation, and then withdraw into another room where the bread and wine were distributed, and carried to him by the officiating pastor.