

## Adolphe Monod and the deaconesses of Reuilly



The community of the Deaconesses of Reuilly was founded in 1841 by Antoine Vermeil (1799-1864) and Caroline Malvesin (1806-1889). Vermeil was a minister, first in Bordeaux and, from 1840 on, in Paris. Malvesin was a schoolteacher in Bordeaux and a parishioner of Vermeil's church. Adolphe Monod moved to Paris shortly afterwards, in 1847. Have there been any connections between Monod and the young community?

As far as I can see, Adolphe Monod has not been personally involved in the institution, but he took an interest in it and encouraged its founders, both directly and indirectly. Gustave Lagny, the historian of the Deaconesses, was of the opinion<sup>1</sup> that Monod “turned out to be a faithful, strong and valuable supporter of the young Community and its founders”

As a matter of fact, there were several points of contact:

- First, Adolphe Monod and Antoine Vermeil knew each other since their studies in Geneva, and they stayed in touch during the rest of their life. Vermeil was among those who accompanied Adolphe when he was dying, and so was Louis Vallette, the assistant and successor of Vermeil. More details can be found in my notes on Vermeil<sup>2</sup> and Vallette<sup>3</sup>.
- Secondly, Monod has had a deep impact on the inner life of Caroline Malvesin, in particular by his occasional preaching in Bordeaux, and he has exchanged letters with her. More details can be found in my note on Miss Malvesin<sup>4</sup>.
- His brother Gustave (1803-1890) was a “consulting physician” of the Deaconesses<sup>5</sup>.

When the Deaconesses were attacked by both the liberals (led by Athanase Coquerel (1820-1875) and by some evangelicals (above all Valérie de Gasparin (1813-1894)), Monod appears

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<sup>1</sup> Gustave Lagny, *Le Réveil ...*, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/vermeil\\_en.html](http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/vermeil_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/vallette\\_en.html](http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/vallette_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/malvesin\\_en.html](http://www.monodgraphies.eu/abc/malvesin_en.html)

<sup>5</sup> Gustave Lagny, *Le Réveil ...*, p. 165

not to have voiced his support to the deaconesses, but to have encouraged their leaders. At least this is what Gustave Lagny suggests:

“Many in our Churches perceived what was specious and unjust in the critique of Mrs de Gasparin and Athanase Coquerel. Even when they did not directly support the cause of a community of deaconesses, they expressed their friendship to our Community or to its leaders, and the warmth of those expressions was as great as was their grief to see how much both were misunderstood. Among those supporters we will cite only a few great names: Adolphe Monod, Henri Grandpierre, Jules Pédezert ...”<sup>6</sup>

Finally, one may add that Henri Morin M.D. (1830-1899), the husband of Mary Monod (1831-1890) and thus Adolphe’s son-in-law, was the official physician of the institution from 1858 to 1899<sup>7</sup>. Another daughter of Adolphe, Sarah Monod (1836-1912) also had strong ties to the Deaconesses and in particular to their first Superior; it was her who wrote the booklet “La sœur Malvesin, diaconesse, 1806-1889” (“Sister Malvesin, deaconess, 1806-1889”) published in 1893.

To sum up, in view of the documents in my possession, one cannot affirm that Adolphe Monod was an ardent defender of the Deaconesses. However, he had strong ties with the men behind the institution, the pastors Vermeil and Vallette, and he encouraged them in difficult times. The fact that his brother Gustave, his daughter Sarah and his son-in-law thoroughly committed themselves to the Deaconesses also appears to indicate that the Monod family as a whole cherished this institution.

#### Sources:

- Sarah Monod, *Adolphe Monod, I. Souvenirs de sa vie. Extraits de sa correspondance*, Paris, Librairie Fischbacher, 1855, 479 p. A partial English translation is available : *Life and letters of Adolphe Monod, pastor of the Reformed Church of France*, London, J. Nisbet & Co., 1885, 426 p.
- Gustave Lagny, *Le réveil de 1830 à Paris et les origines des diaconesses de Reuilly*, Paris, Association des diaconesses, 1958, 195 p. (réédité en 2007 par les Editions Olivetan)
- Caroline Malvesin et Antoine Vermeil, *Correspondance 1841*, Lyon, Editions Olivetan, 2007, 230 p.

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<sup>6</sup> Gustave Lagny, *Le Réveil ...*, p. 129

<sup>7</sup> Gustave Lagny, *Le Réveil ...*, p. 165