

The Reception of the Nazarene Movement in France

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Abstract

SAINT MARTIN, Isabelle: The Reception of the Nazarene Movement in France

The purpose of this overview is to examine the reception of the Nazarene movement in France by first recalling how art criticism interpreted the works and theories of Nazarene painters. Then by addressing the question of the existence of a French Nazarene movement, which is currently being debated in modern historiography. And finally by looking at how Nazarene compositions, engravings in particular, had a direct influence on the production of religious paintings, stained glass and other illustrated works of devotion throughout the 19th century. If Nazarene art had little direct impact on major religious paintings in France, and if its reception was controversial with art critics, Nazarene theories nevertheless made a lasting contribution in defining an ideal model of Christian art, whose criteria were posited by Montalembert and Rio. Their influence was to be felt in debates and controversies on the subject of religious art throughout the century.

Keywords: Christian art, France, 19th Century, Art theory, Nazarene movement

As part of this research is revolving around the work of Führich and the Nazarenes, this overview of the French case aims to discuss the reception of the movement in France and to point out the paths that may be pursued in order to understand the significant and influential aspects of this movement.

Three lines of approach can be applied: first, by recalling how art criticism interpreted the works and theories of Nazarene painters; then, by addressing the question of the existence of a French Nazarene movement, which is still being debated in modern historiography; and finally, by looking at how Nazarene compositions, and engravings in particular, had a direct influence on the production of religious paintings, stained glass and other illustrated works of devotion throughout the 19th century.

The critical reception of the Nazarene movement in France

The story of the Nazarenes has already been the subject of numerous studies. Although long neglected by art historians, who privileged the avant-garde, the Nazarenes have found renewed interest today, an interest that takes into account their role in the 'first secession as part of modernity (in the modernist art movement?).'¹

¹ See HOLLEIN, Max – STEINLE, Christa. *Religion macht Kunst. Die Nazarener*. Köln : Walter König 2005; NERLICH, France. La peinture en Allemagne au XIX^e siècle. Religion et politique : les Nazaréens et l'école de Düsseldorf. In: *Perspectives*, No. 2, 2008, p. 307-336; GREWE, Cordula. *Painting the sacred in the age of romanticism*. Farnham : Ashgate 2009; GOSSMAN, Lionel. *Unwilling Moderns. On the Nazarene artists of the early nineteenth century*. Online, url:https://www.princeton.edu/~lgossman/nazarene_essay.pdf; THIMANN, Michael. *Friedrich Overbeck und die Bildkonzepte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Regensburg : Schnell + Steiner 2014.

In the first decades of the 19th century, a group of young painters, who had gathered in Vienna in 1809 and went to Rome in 1810 to found the Brotherhood of St Luke, proposed challenging the criteria of academic art, which they believed had undergone a long period of decline since Raphael. Aspiring to re-create the purity of the Quattrocento, they championed a sense of lines, simple and sharply contoured forms, and bright colours applied to a flat surface, to the detriment of the effects of and a move away from perspective or chiaroscuro that stood to distract from the mystical inspiration of their works. They also chose to live in an artistic fraternity and not separate life from art, and to work together while adhering to a more or less monastic model of life, which since the Middle Ages had been regarded as the ideal of a Christian life. The impact of their aesthetic choices was felt internationally, though their new aesthetic theories were met with a mixed response.

The reaction of writers and art critics

The response to the Nazarenes in France varied. Figures like Chateaubriand and Baudelaire had reservations about this art form, which seemed to regress to the past or appeared too “philosophical” (which to them seemed like a regression into the past or looked too “philosophical”), while others, like Théophile Gautier and Stendhal, acknowledged the importance of artists such as Cornelius and Overbeck. Like Goethe, who was not keen on the Nazarenes, Chateaubriand was baffled by the Nazarenes’ desire to return to the art of Italian primitives and to see Raphael as the high point but also the beginning of the decline of Christian art. While serving as ambassador to the Holy See in 1828, Chateaubriand questioned their motives: *“This honourable error of the new sacred school is no less an error; it would follow from it that rigidity and poor formal design were proof of intuitive vision, yet that expression of faith, notable in the work of pre-Renaissance painters, is not because the figures are posed stiffly, as motionless as the Sphinx, but because the painter believed as his century did. It is his thought not his art that was religious.”*²

The reputation of the Nazarenes was already well established by the time Chateaubriand published *Mémoires d’Outre Tombe* (1849 – 1850). Nevertheless, later, in 1856, Théophile Gautier stated: *“Cornelius’s fame is European-wide. [...] Yet one may say that, while illustrious, he is not well known in France, other than through engravings.”*³

One may indeed observe that, in France, the works of the Nazarenes were known first and foremost through prints from engravings.⁴ From early on the Nazarenes placed importance on creating print reproductions of their work, graphic (print) reproductions as a way of circulating their creations and developing popular awareness (of their work). Since they also contributed to the revival of frescoes in the 19th century, access to their original works was all the more removed.

² Transl. by A. S. Kline, 2005 – reproduction permitted for non-commercial purposes. Source: online, url: <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Chateaubriand/ChateaubriandMemoirsBookXXIX.htm>. *Mémoires d’Outre Tombe*, 1849 – 1850, après une diffusion en feuilleton dans le journal *La Presse*.

³ GAUTIER, Théophile. Pierre de Cornelius. In: *L’Art moderne*, Paris, 1856, p. 235

⁴ See VAISSE, Pierre. Frankreichs Kenntniss der deutschen Romantiker. In: *Marianne und Germania 1789 – 1889. Frankreich und Deutschland :zwei Welten-eine Revue*, cat. Exp., Berlin : Martin-Gropius-Bau 1996, p. 235-242.

Yet, as Sabine Fastert pointed out, one must take into account travel (as instrumental in spreading awareness of this group/of the work of this group): this was a time when Rome was part of the European ‘Grand Tour’. Impressions (Written records of people’s impressions?) and travelogues at the time contributed significantly to the aesthetic reception of the Nazarene movement. Their major works in Rome were visited by illustrious travellers and praised widely. A prominent example is the cycle of frescoes devoted to the story of Joseph at the Casa Bartholdy (1817), which were discussed as early as the 1820s and 1830s. Notably, a strong controversy emerged around a critical review of these works by E.-J. Delécluze, which appeared in the *Journal des Débats* in 1829.⁵ As a former pupil of the Neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David, he was shocked by what he called the ‘gothic’ aspects in the treatment of outlines, costumes and attitudes. His criticism in return sparked a debate and a response from German critic Ludwig Schorn in *Kunstblatt*, who highlighted the misunderstanding of Nazarene art and concluded: “*But the French know only mannered grace, not one that is unconscious and natural.*”⁶

Regardless of this, around the same time Stendhal praised Veit’s frescoes in his travel diary on Italy (1827 – 1829) and wrote: “*One of the shortcomings of Parisian conceit is not to know this school.*”⁷ The *Revue de Paris* (S. Albin) also published a glowing review of Cornelius’s works in 1838.⁸

In January 1845, the painter Amaury-Duval addressed in his travel itinerary of Italy, and while in Italy went to see Overbeck’s fresco of St Francis receiving the indulgence. The work was also mentioned (in an article) by Théophile Gautier (published) in *Le Figaro* on 26 November 1836, in which he pays tribute to Overbeck’s works, considered “an almost celestial painting”⁹ or “the most symmetrically Gothic composition” he had ever seen. The contrasting response to the Nazarenes can also be explored in the many studies on German paintings published in the 1840s,¹⁰ such as those by A. Raczynski, H. Fortoul, or A. Michiels. In 1859, the critic Léon Lagrange devoted a long article in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* to Overbeck’s studio. Despite significant praise, it ends on a critical note:

*“Overbeck hates the flesh, and he is afraid of nature. Like the mystics of the Middle Ages, he sees in the flesh a living scandal, and nature is, in his eyes, always sensual. Accordingly, he never calls on the nude model. From this, [grew] a convention of shapes and movements quite analogous to academic convention, and designed to replace it in religious painting.”*¹¹

Hence, what Lagrange sees in Overbeck’s (more or less mastered) form of stylistic imitation is the emergence of a new conformity, something for which the religious art inspired by the Nazarenes was often criticised. He also expressed one small reservation in his compelling analysis of Overbeck’s

⁵ DELÉCLUZE, Etienne-Jean. Nouvelle école allemande. In *Journal des Débats*, 23 octobre 1829.

⁶ Quoted in FASTERT, Sabine. Rome, lieu de rencontre. La réception de l’art nazaréen en France. In: *De Grünewald à Menzel, l’image de l’art allemand en France au XIX^e siècle*, FLECKNER, Uwe – GAEHTGENS, Thomas (eds.). Paris : de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme 2003, p. 373-403.

⁷ STENDHAL. *Promenades dans Rome* (1853). In: Paris, Maspéro, vol. I, 1980, p. 228 (10 mars 1828).

⁸ See ALBIN, Sébastien. Pierre Cornelius. In: *Revue de Paris*, no. 60, 1838, p. 229-242.

⁹ GAUTIER, Théophile. Peinture catholique. In: *Le Figaro*, November 26, 1836.

¹⁰ RACZYNSKI, Athanase. *Histoire de l’art moderne en Allemagne*. 3 vols. (1836-1842); volume 1836, which mentions a visit to the Casa; FORTOUL, Hippolyte. *De l’art en Allemagne*, 2 vols., Paris 1841-1842; see also the critics of MICHIELS, Alfred. *Etudes sur l’Allemagne, renfermant une histoire de la peinture allemande*, (1840), 2 vols., Paris, 1845.

¹¹ LAGRANGE, Léo. L’Atelier d’Overbeck. In: *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 15 mars 1859, vol.1, t. I. 321-335, 334.

masterpiece, then visible in his studio, *The Triumph of Religion in the Arts*, by regretting that the painter did not find a simpler form of symbolism: “An explanation becomes necessary and not everyone understands it.”¹² This criticism of the painting, that it is not sufficient in itself and calls for commentary, is in a way also apparent in the impression the painter Flandrin came away with after he visited Overbeck’s studio: “He does not want to do painting, but to render his ideas, to write ...”¹³

Among the criticisms raised about the Nazarenes, the subordination of art to an external purpose is the most salient. This analysis is comparable to the basic criticism expressed by Charles Baudelaire in *Philosophical Art*. In this short essay published in 1868, a year after the death of the author, the Nazarenes and French followers (of the movement) are accused of confusing writing and painting. Philosophical art is “a visual art which purports to replace the book, that is to say, to compete with printing in order to teach history, ethics and philosophy”¹⁴. This ambition is seen as a regression of pictorial art. Moreover, “Overbeck studying beauty in the past only to better teach religion”¹⁵ was in opposition to the concept of “disinterest” in true art, according to/espoused by Baudelaire, who was inspired by a Kantian vision of aesthetic judgment. Baudelaire’s criticism was probably composed after the International Exhibit of 1855 in Paris, which featured many German artists, and his main arguments reflect the perceptions of the day about German art and criticisms widely shared in the 1850s.¹⁶

This primacy of intent over the pictorial may be apparent in some writings by Overbeck. When after 1819 many Nazarenes left Rome to pursue individual careers, Overbeck (1789 – 1869) stayed in Rome, where, having converted to Catholicism in 1813, he remained true to his ideal, which he gave visual expression to in *The Triumph of Religion in the Arts*.¹⁷ This famous composition took combined inspiration from Raphael’s *Disputation of the Holy Sacrament* and *School of Athens*. The Madonna and Child on top, enclosed in a perfect circle, symbolises this poetic ideal and represents an allegory of the Church that Overbeck rallied to. In order to “facilitate understanding by all of the work facilitate an understanding of the work as a whole”, the artist gives a lengthy analysis of this “Magnificat of art”, where the poetry is represented by “the Virgin Mary herself busy writing her sublime hymn, because poetry is the center of all the arts, as the mystery of the incarnation of the son of God in Mary’s womb is the center of all religious ideas”.¹⁸ In this gathering of artists at the foot of the Virgin / Poetry, art “does not purport to be placed as an idol on the altar: it aspires instead to be the servant of the sanctuary”.¹⁹

¹² Ibid, p. 327.

¹³ *Revue du Lyonnais*, 5e série V, janv.-juin 1888, p. 347-348, Hippolyte Flandrin à Louis Lacuria, Rome, 25 mai 1833 et voir cat. exp. *Hippolyte, Auguste et Paul Flandrin. Une fraternité picturale au XIX^e siècle*, FOUCAULT, Jaques et Bruno (eds.). Paris : RMN 1984.

¹⁴ BAUDELAIRE, Charles. *L’art philosophique, Curiosités esthétiques*. In: *Œuvres complètes*. PICHONIS, Claude (ed.). 2 vol. Paris 1975-76, vol. II, p. 598-607.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ce que démontre ZIEGLER, Hendrik. “L’art philosophique” de Charles Baudelaire : Genèse et mutation d’un paradigme des écrits sur l’art en France entre 1855 et 1878. In: FLECKNER, GAEHTGENS, 2003, p. 143-166.

¹⁷ 1840, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Francfort.

¹⁸ OVERBECK, Le Triomphe de la religion dans les arts. In *L’Institut catholique*, I, 1842, p. 192-203. “la Vierge Marie elle-même occupée à écrire son hymne sublime, car la poésie est le centre de tous les arts, comme le mystère de l’incarnation du fils de Dieu dans le sein de Marie est le centre de toutes les idées religieuses”, p. 194.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 201-202. “ne prétend pas être placé comme une idole sur l’autel : il aspire au contraire à être le serviteur du sanctuaire”.

The renewal of Christian art

If art critics remained argumentative (debated the nature/value of Nazarene art) in the major press of the day, the idea of art in the service of religion was, on the contrary, actively advanced by proponents of a revival of Christian art, and it is in this constituency that the most favourable reception of the Nazarene can be found.²⁰ The Count of Montalembert, future leader of the Catholic Party, discovered his passion for the works of Overbeck when he travelled as a young man to Lübeck (1828) where he saw *L'Entrée du Christ à Jérusalem* d'Overbeck²¹ and then to Rome (1830). His friend Rio, who was the author of several volumes on the history of Christian art, was equally influenced by German philosophy and art criticism and by the discovery of Nazarene painters. They will be associated. He associated them] with a revolution in the history of taste and writing about the history of Christian art that brought the Italian primitives back into the limelight, at the expense of the Renaissance masters, regarded as too sensual and too close to pagan inspirations. The basic criteria of what he deemed to be “authentic” Christian art deemed were similar to those of the Nazarenes. Helped by Montalembert’s very complementary review, *Christian Art*²² by Rio enjoyed wide success. The book/work was read by Overbeck, who bought “a supply of copies intended for German artists, for their return journey”.²³ The conception of a true Christian art, which comes from Lagrange’s article in 1859 The idea of true Christian art expressed in the above-cited article by Lagrange from 1859 reveals the influence..., cited earlier, shows, for example, the influence of Rio’s and Montalembert’s writings²⁴.

Montalembert became enthusiastic about Overbeck’s works. He also saw a confirmation of the artist’s talent in his living figure (in his life), which was a pure reflection of his faith: “*It is the man himself, apart from all his works, who is admirable. A head of purity and lovely expression, expressing all that is the highest and most austere in piety, the beauty of a saint. This is how holy he is.*”²⁵

²⁰ See FOUCCART, Bruno. *Le Renouveau de la peinture religieuse en France (1800 – 1860)*. Paris : Arthema 1987.

DRISKEL, Michael. *Representing Belief. Religion, Art and Society in Nineteenth-Century France*. The Pennsylvania State University Press 1992. SAINT-MARTIN, Isabelle. *Art chrétien/art sacré. Regards du catholicisme sur l’art (France, XIXe-XXe siècle)*. Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes 2014.

²¹ See FOISSET, Théophile. Le Comte de Montalembert. In: *Le Correspondant*, July 1872, p. 201.

²² First published in 1836, then a revised edition in 1855, and in 4 vol., Paris : Hachette, 1861 – 1867.

²³ RIO, Alexis-François. *Epilogue à l’art chrétien*. In Paris, Hachette, 1872, t. II, p. 27.

²⁴ Later, in 1864, Lagrange joined the Catholic magazine *Le Correspondant* founded by Montalembert.

²⁵ MONTALEMBERT, Charles de. *Journal intime*. In GUILLOU, Louis Le – TAILLADE, Nicole Roger (eds.). Paris : CNRS, 1990, vol. II, p. 192.



Steinle inv.

Paris. A. Boblet, 1839

LA SAINTE VIERGE

Selon l'art régénéré en Allemagne, au XIX^e Siècle

Bouchardon inv

Paris. A. Boblet, 1839

LA SAINTE VIERGE

Selon l'art prétendu religieux en France, depuis Louis XIV

1 a,b Montalembert, *Du Vandalisme et du catholicisme dans l'art* (fragments), Paris, 1839. Ill. n° 3 et 4. Edmé Bouchardon (1698-1762) – Edouard Von Steinle (1810-1866)

As with the themes found in passion paintings and devotional booklets, where the face mirrors the soul, a work of art was supposed to reflect the purity of its inspiration. This is reflected in Overbeck's *Self-portrait with Bible*, a subject Overbeck treated in both a painting and an engraving.²⁶ The attitude and physique of the hero-figure become the visible manifestation of his ideal. Similarly, on reading Rio's book, a critic lauded him for showing that "*the soul and beliefs of the artist is reflected in his works; [...] style, in the arts as in literature, is the man himself*".²⁷ Montalembert also received drawings

²⁶ Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869), *Selbstbildnis mit der Bibel*, 1809, gravure 18,7 x 16,3 cm, Museen für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck, *Selbstbildnis mit Bibel vor der Staffelei*. 1809, Lübecker Museen, Museum Behnhaus Drägerhaus.

²⁷ DU BOYS, Albert. *De l'art chrétien, Comptes rendus du livre de M. Rio*. Paris, 1861, p. 2.

from Overbeck for his book on St Elizabeth of Hungary, which was published in 1836 and was a real bestseller at the time, with editions in several languages.²⁸

Having praised the book by Rio, which celebrates the Italian primitives and the Umbrian school in particular, Montalembert does not stop at assessments of the history of Christian art, but calls for a reform of the art of his time, claiming “*there is no religious art in France; and that which bears its name is but parody, derisive and sacrilegious*”.²⁹ The edition of *Du Vandalisme* (1839), in which he assembled several articles, is accompanied by engravings by Overbeck, such as a *Christian Family Carrying Their Cross*,³⁰ and makes two significant comparisons. The first, in architecture, contrasts Notre-Dame de Lorette, deemed a pagan basilica, with the gothic style of Sainte Chapelle. The second, in the graphic arts, contrasts two line drawings of the Virgin, one displaying “*the pagan taste in the centuries of Louis XIV and Louis XV*”, and the other a taste nurtured by “*the study and love of truly Christian times*” (fig. 1): “*To make an even more striking contrast, we chose one of the most famous works of classical Gallicanism the Virgin by Bouchardon*”, a sculpture he described as “*stupid*”, and a simple sketch of a living young painter from Vienna, Mr Steinle, “*a little known but worthy pupil of Overbeck*”, which he highly praised.³¹

He therefore invited French artists to follow the Nazarene or the Italian primitive model, but with independent and original creations, and not to pursue imitations or pastiche.

Putting theory into practice: a French Nazarene movement?

In emulation of the illustrious *Lukasbrüder*, young French artists gathered under the impetus of Lacordaire, *who re-established the Dominican Order in France*, to form, in 1839, the Brotherhood of St John the Evangelist.³² Going further than Overbeck and his fellow artists, they gave themselves a rule of life and an overriding mission: “*French artists, being affected by the spectacle presented by the world, have decided to contribute to its regeneration through the Christian use of art.*”³³ Their religious commitment extended beyond artistic issues and had a pastoral dimension. The Brotherhood’s goal was “*the sanctification of art and artists through the Catholic Faith, and the propagation of Catholic Faith by art and artists.*” This missionary perspective was accompanied by an ideal so high that the Brotherhood was, in a way, outpaced by the very zeal of its members, many of whom donned the Dominican habit in the 1840s.³⁴

²⁸ See *Leben der heiligen Elisabeth von Ungarn, Landgräfinn von Thüringen und Hessen (1207 – 1231)*, STÄDTLER, J. Ph. Aachen/Leipzig : Jacob Anton Mayer 1837.

²⁹ MONTALEMBERT, Charles de. De l’état actuel de l’art religieux. In *Revue des deux mondes*, 1st Decembre 1837, p. 592-616, republished in: *Mélanges d’art et de littérature*, Œuvres, tome VI, Paris : J. Lecoffre 1861, p.165.

³⁰ MONTALEMBERT, Charles de. *Du Vandalisme et du catholicisme dans l’art (fragments)*, Paris, Debécourt, 1839.

³¹ Ibid. ill. No. 3 et 4. BOUCHARDON, Edmé (1698 – 1762) – STEINLE, Edouard Von (1810 – 1866). Montalembert. « De l’état actuel... », Œuvres, t. VI, 198.

³² See FOUCART, 1987; CAFFORT, Michel. *Nazaréens français. Théories et pratiques de la peinture religieuse au XIX^e siècle*, Rennes : University Presses de Rennes, 2009.

³³ *Règlement de la Confrérie de Saint-Jean l’Évangéliste*, Paris, 1840.

³⁴ Indeed, the first disciples of Lacordaire joined the master, like Hippolyte Requedat who took the habit in 1839 as in 1841, the architect Louis-Alexandre Piel, painters Hyacinthe Besson, Antonin Danzas and Paul Bonhomme.

The Brotherhood's impact on the artistic plane was hence limited, but it was to have a greater influence on the symbolic plane of building an ideal Christian art. Other groups formed in imitation of this Brotherhood, such as the Brotherhood of the Blessed Angelico of Fiesole, which brought together writers and drawing artists, but which, like the first brotherhood, had faded by 1844 into the third order of St Dominic.

A successor to this brotherhood, the Society of St John for the Encouragement of Christian Art, was chartered in 1872, and retained the mission of regenerating art, but without affiliating itself with any religious third order. The seal of the Society bore the motif of the Last Supper by Flandrin in the church of Saint-Séverin, in which John is leaning against the chest of the Lord as a "*symbol of art drawing its inspiration from the heart of Jesus, and as a tribute to the genius of the most Christian painter produced by France in our time*".³⁵ During the 19th and 20th centuries, however, the Society became far more eclectic than its predecessor and allowed into its midst a variety of trends and styles.

Can one then speak of a French Nazarene movement, as the master of the stained glass windows Claudius Lavergne had hoped, saying in 1855 that "*France, like Germany, has a tribe of Nazarenes*"?³⁶ Some scholars, such as Henri Dorra, had taken a great interest in this issue as early as 1977.³⁷ He studied the influence of the Nazarenes on painters from the city of Lyon (e.g. Hippolyte Flandrin, André-Jacques-Victor Orsel, Emile Signol, Michel Dumas, or Louis Janmot). Links were also made between the art of Ingres himself – and even more so his pupils,³⁸ such as Eugène-Emmanuel Amaury-Duval, Victor Mottez, Henri Lehman – and having met Overbeck or Cornelius in Rome. Bruno Foucart, ten years later, was more circumspect³⁹ and emphasised the greater diversity of positions shown by French painters, including Flandrin. Critics considered him more pious than his master Ingres, who was too sensitive to the aesthetics of Raphael. However, his piety was quiet, even though after he died in 1864 he was presented/hailed as the new Angelico. But he expressed clear reservations about Overbeck's archaism. So should we take the words of Lavergne literally? Michel Caffort⁴⁰ has defended this position for several years in his studies of not just Amaury-Duval, Orsel, Signol or Perin, but also less known artists such as Adolphe Roger, Jean-Louis Beazard⁴¹, Louis-Joseph Hallez, Claudius Lavergne, Gabriel Tyr, Savinien Petit, Pierre-Auguste Pichon

³⁵ ROGER, Abbé C. *Essai historique sur la Société de S. Jean*, 1913, p. 12-13. His motto is the same as Lacordaire, inspired par St Bernard : *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed, nomini tuo da gloriam*, Verset du Psaume 115 – 113.

³⁶ LAVERGNE, Claudius. *Exposition universelle de 1855. Beaux arts, compte-rendu du journal L'Univers*. Paris : Bailly, 1855, p. 126.

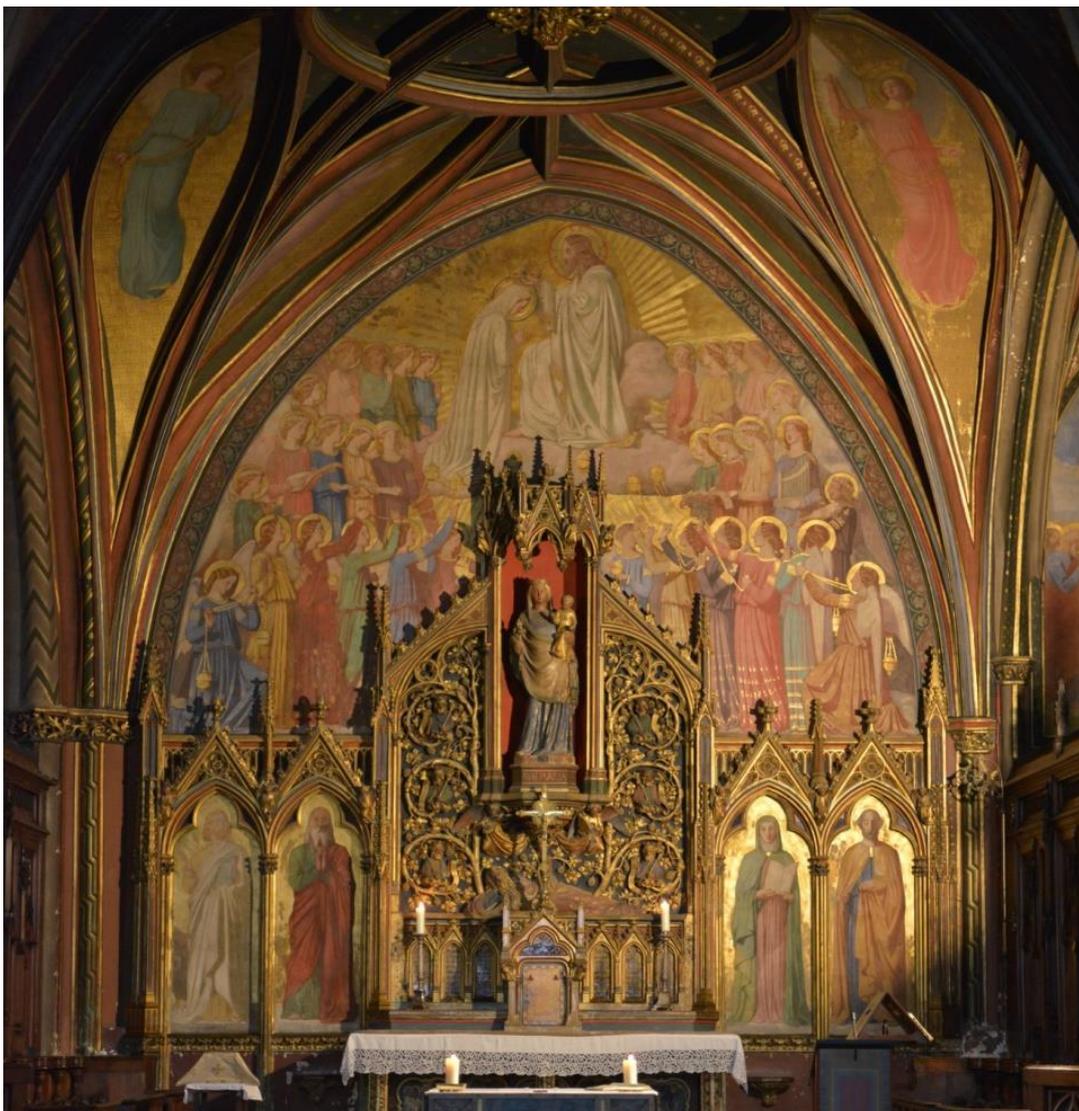
³⁷ See DORRA, Henri. Die 'Französische' Nazarener. *Die Nazarener*, cat. exp. Francfort-sur-le- Main, Städtisches Kunstinstitut, 1977, p. 337-354. VAISSE, Pierre. Y a-t-il une Ecole de peinture lyonnaise au XIX^e siècle. In: *Le temps de la peinture : Lyon 1800 – 1914*, cat. exp. Lyon, musée des Beaux-Arts, 20th April – 30th July 2007, RAMOND, Sylvie et al. (eds.), Lyon 2007, p. 17-25.

³⁸ Many are not from Lyon, see TERNOIS, Daniel. Le Préraphaélisme français. Postface à *L'Atelier d'Ingres*. Paris : Arthéna 1993, p. 385 – 403; VIGNE, Georges. LAVALLÉE, Marie-Hélène. *Les élèves d'Ingres*, catalogue de l'exposition, Musée Ingres, 1999.

³⁹ FOUCART, Bruno. *Hippolyte, Auguste et Paul Flandrin. Une fraternité picturale au XIX^e siècle*, cat. exp., Paris : Musée du Luxembourg, Lyon : musée des Beaux-Arts, 1984-1985. FOUCART, 1987, p. 270-279.

⁴⁰ CAFFORT, Michel. *Nazaréens français. Théories et pratiques de la peinture religieuse au XIX^e siècle*, Rennes 2009.

⁴¹ See RYKNER, Didier. Jean-Louis Beazard (1799-1881). Catalogue de l'œuvre. In *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (année 2001), Paris 2002, p. 241-299.



2 a,b Eugène Amaury-Duval (1808 – 1885), Coronation of the virgin, (full and detail) 1844 – 1845, Paris, Eglise Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, chapelle de la Vierge.

or Louis-Charles-Marie de Bodin, count of Galembert, amongst others. The tribe gathered, which was never an organised group and at best a movement, retained a certain diversity⁴² in terms of the quality and reputation of the artists involved and in their stylistic approaches and even the intensity of their Christian faith. The sense of line, the taste for flatness in colour applications and simplified forms feature in very different ways in Signol or in Perin, for example. The latter⁴³ worked with Adolphe Roger et Victor Orsel, for example, on decorating the neoclassical church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, and according to Montalembert, they saved this overly pagan edifice with the murals they created in the chapel areas for baptism, marriage, and with their paintings of the Holy Virgin.⁴⁴ The decision to create mural paintings with a very smooth finish in order to convey the idea but not the illusion of space expressed a willingness to harmoniously embed a painting in a church building.

There is no denying that there were works in France that were inspired by the Nazarenes, which is apparent, for example, in the *Annunciation* by Amaury-Duval and his *Coronation of the Virgin* (1845), which also paid direct tribute to Fra Angelico.⁴⁵ (fig. 2) Yet, is this sufficient to group all the artists mentioned here under such a demanding banner? The question is debatable, for the Nazarene qualifier implies more than a common interest in a primitivistic style. It is accompanied by the idea of a religious quest and a quasi-mystical conception of art that were far from being shared by all the painters who, at one time or another during their artistic residence in Rome (a near requirement for their training then), may have visited Overbeck's studio.

But the position of the other artists mentioned here was often less militant and sometimes more nuanced. The religious sentiment of Orsel, for instance, is quite complex as



3 André-Jacques Victor Orsel, 1795 – 1850, *Le Bien et le Mal*, 1829 – 1832, musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon

⁴² See Didier Rykner's review : <http://www.latribunedelart.com/les-nazareens-francais-theorie-et-pratique-de-la-peinture-religieuse-au-xixe-siecle>

⁴³ SERULLAZ, Arlette. Un Ensemble de dessins d'Henri Alphonse Périn (1798 – 1874) pour l'église Notre Dame de Lorette à Paris, une acquisition du département des Arts graphiques du Louvre. In: *Revue du Louvre*, 1999/5, 53-57.

⁴⁴ See MONTALEMBERT, 1839, p. 179-180.

⁴⁵ Eugène Amaury-Duval (1808 – 1885), *Coronation of the virgin*, 1844 – 1845, Paris, Eglise Saint-Germain-l'-Auxerrois, chapelle de la Vierge. Vivant Denon acquired for the Louvre works by Sieneese masters and by Giotto and Fra Angelico (including his *Coronation of the Virgin*), which were presented at the "primitive schools" exhibit at the Louvre in 1814. Schlegel's famous comment on the *Coronation of the Virgin* was published in French in 1817 with engravings.

evidenced by interpretations of his painting *Good and Evil*⁴⁶ (1832, fig 3), which are diverse and sometimes tied up with the spiritualist outlooks that thrived around him in Lyon in the 19th century.⁴⁷ By opposing the fates of two young girls (in this painting?), one listening to the voice of the angel, the other that of the devil, subject to multiple interpretations, the painting may strike us as a visual manifesto whose Nazarene inspiration, notably to Pforr (*Shulamit and Mary*), had been enlightened by Henri Dorra and Gilles Chomer. However, the painting harboured many other influences. In a lengthy analysis, Etienne Cartier (1859), one of Rio's followers, discussed not just the originality and unity of the composition, but also the rich sources of inspiration the artist drew on, among them the bas-reliefs of the Parthenon, Michelangelo, and Rubens, but also a selection of carefully ordered pictorial references to the conflict between good and evil, which could be interpreted as an aesthetic choice: "*The young woman who reads the book of wisdom, is she not the kin of Fra Angelico's holy women or Francia's virgins? She who was seduced, does she not have some connection with the courtesans of the Venetian school, and the Christ who is judging, does he not have the majesty of Byzantine Christs and the simplicity of those of Giotto?*" It is thus, he concludes, "*that taste must use without servitude any lessons from the past*".⁴⁸

Orsel and Overbeck, like many others artists of the time, painted the same model, a young Italian woman, *Vittoria Caldoni*,⁴⁹ a few years apart from each other. With Orsel⁵⁰ the model's life becomes more clearly apparent, and the painting's treatment provides a picturesque dimension (and there is a picturesque dimension to the approach to the painting). In this head and bust portrait set against a dark background, the face is modelled naturalistically, and her clothing serves as a study in the depiction of folds and shadows. The intense gaze of the young woman beckons and moves the viewer (fig. 4).

By contrast, in Overbeck⁵¹ (fig. 5), the spare style of drawing amplifies the regularity of the model's facial features. The stylisation of the garment with its neat folds accentuates the effect of symmetry. The melancholic pose (hand on cheek) of the young Italian woman, whose silhouette is clearly cut out against an agrarian landscape rendered in light colours, is more suggestive of an allegorical figure than a realistic individual portrait. Some have interpreted Overbeck's approach as a biblical reference to the figure of Ruth.⁵²

⁴⁶ André-Jacques Victor Orsel, 1795 – 1850, *Le Bien et le Mal*, 1829 – 1832, musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon.

⁴⁷ See DORRA, Henri. *Le Bien et le mal*, d'Orsel. Tableau de manière symbolique au musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon. In *Bulletin des musées et monuments lyonnais*, 1975/1, p. 291-302; HARDOUIN-FUGIER, Elisabeth. Symbolisme maçonnique au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon : Orsel, Janmot, *Bulletin des musées et monuments lyonnais*, 1978, p.193-206 ; DRISKEL, p. 114-115, points of view that M. Caffort does not seem to share. He sees especially the permanence of a strict conception of Christianity.

⁴⁸ CARTIER, Etienne. *Le Bien et le Mal*. Tableau de M. V. Orsel, Gravure de M. Vibert. In *Extrait du Correspondant*, Paris, 1859, p. 1-16.

⁴⁹ See CHOMER, Gilles. *Le Séjour en Italie (1822 – 1830) de Victor Orsel*. In: *Lyon et l'Italie, six études d'histoire de l'art*, CHOMER, Gilles – PÉREZ, Marie-Félicie (eds.), sous la direction de TERNOIS, Daniel. Paris : Editions du CNRS, p. 181-211, who for his part stressed the proximity between Orsel and Overbeck on this topic.

⁵⁰ Orsel, *Vittoria Caldoni*, musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, vers 1825 – 1826, 63.5 x 50 cm.

⁵¹ Overbeck, *Vittoria Caldoni d'Albano*, 1821, München; Neue Pinakothek, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 65.8 cm.

⁵² See DAVIS, Charles. "Auf den Spuren der Nazarener : Re-reading Vittoria Caldoni: Friedrich Overbeck's "Portrait" in the Neue Pinakothek". Online – url: <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2013/2253>, who does not include Orsel's portrait in his corpus. See also on this the allegorical lecture by THIMANN, 2014, p.104.



4 Victor Orsel (1795 – 1850) Portrait de jeune italienne (Vittoria Caldoni), vers 1825 – 1826, Huile sur toile - 63,5 x 50 cm, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Interest in the Nazarenes could thus lead to very different stylistic interpretations. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the piety of Louis Joseph Hallez (1804 – 1882), who was indeed aligned with Overbeck. A prolific drawer, Hallez produced a large number of religious illustrations for the famous Catholic publisher Maison Mame.⁵³ (Tours). This leads us also to examine also the influence of etching.

⁵³ SAINT-MARTIN, Isabelle. Illustrations religieuses et ouvrages de prestige : Hallez, Doré, Tissot... In: *Mame. Deux siècles d'édition pour la jeunesse*, BOULAIRE, Cécile Rennes (ed.), 2012, p. 465-475.



5 Friedrich Johanna Overbeck, Vittoria Caldoni d'Albano, 1821, München; Neue Pinakothek, oil on canvas, 89,5 x 65,8 cm

The reach and influence of the Nazarenes through engravings

The Nazarenes also viewed themselves as missionaries. As is well known, they encouraged engravings as a way of advertising their original paintings and disseminating good-quality religious images, as opposed to the oversentimental and mediocre illustrations known as “*images saint-*

sulpiciennes".⁵⁴ The most important is Schnorr von Carolsfeld's famous *Biblia Sacra*⁵⁵ (1850 – 1860), which enjoyed very wide distribution internationally and was very well received in France, where it competed with Gustave Doré's publication (1866). A few years earlier, Montalembert recommended Overbeck to the romantic editor Curmer for his *Life of Christ*⁵⁶ (1843). At the same time the *Pater Noster* designed and engraved by Führich (1826), with a detailed commentary from Anton Müller, was translated into French by Demarteau and published in Prague in 1840.⁵⁷ Some of those Nazarene models found an application in the abundant production of stained glass windows in the 19th century. For example, around 1855 the stained glass workshop of Carmel du Mans contacted Overbeck, who asked his pupil Franz von Rhoden to draw cartoon models under his direction for the factory of Le Mans.⁵⁸

A review in the *Bulletin catholique du Diocèse de Montauban* underlined the reference to most of the cardboards to Overbeck, "the grand master of the current German religious school".⁵⁹

One other famous example is Führich's *Way of the Cross*⁶⁰ from 1844 – 1846 for the Church of Sankt Johann Nepomuk in Vienna, which was engraved by Alois Petrak (born in Königsberg in 1811) and was then published in Regensburg by G. J. Manz, and which became a staple of several parish churches. At least a dozen versions of the *Stations of the Cross* were surveyed, have been identified in France, in the north as well as in Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrenees, Brittany, and Poitou (more have probably been destroyed or not yet identified). Some of these may just be simple framed prints done for poor parishes, others coloured engravings, and in other cases paintings inspired by Führich – for example, the 1854 painting in the Church of Notre-Dame-des-Anges (Tourcoing). The Stations of the Cross commissioned from Bruno Chérier (1817 – 1880)⁶¹ were inspired by the Stations etched by A. Petrak. They accurately reproduces the engraved compositions while sometimes changing the colours of the clothes and placing some secondary figures in the shade. Grimouard de Saint-Laurent, a specialist in Christian art and iconography, praised Führich's work but regretted "some confusion among whom the essential character is not clear enough (some confusion about who the central character is, which is not clear enough): this is due to the excessive [number] of secondary characters, and to too [and the

⁵⁴ On criticism from several members of the clergy and Léon Bloy or Joris Karl Huysmans, see SAINT-MARTIN, 1861, p.158-161.

⁵⁵ See GREWE, 2009, p. 220-251.

⁵⁶ See PAGE, Alexandre. Friedrich Overbeck illustrateur : La passion de notre seigneur Jésus Christ publié par Léon Curmer (1843). In: *Revue Circé* n° 5, online, url: <http://www.revue-circe.uvsq.fr/friedrich-overbeck-illustrateur-la-passion-de-notre-seigneur-jesus-christ-publie-par-leon-curmer-1843>.

⁵⁷ *Pater noster*, en 9 feuilles dessinées et gravées à l'eau forte par Joseph Führich; accompagnées d'un texte détaillé par MÜLLER, Antoine, traduit en français par Demarteau, Nouvelle édition, Prague, les héritiers de P. Bohmann, 1840.

⁵⁸ See LUNEAU, Jean-François. L'influence allemande dans le vitrail français du XIX^e siècle. In: *Art, technique et Science : la création du vitrail de 1830 à 1930*, Liège : Commission royale des Monuments, Sites et Fouilles, no. 7, 2000, p. 129-137; ARRONDEAU, Stéphane. *Le vitrail au XIX^e siècle, les ateliers manceaux*, cat. exp. , éditions Cénomane, Le Mans : musées du Mans 1989.

⁵⁹ *Bulletin catholique du Diocèse de Montauban*, 1878, no. 21, p. 331-333, quoted by Luneau, 1827, installé à Toulouse, (1862 – 1891) 1878 for the neogothic church of Laguépie.

⁶⁰ SCHRÖDER, Klaus-Albrecht. *Joseph Führich – die Kartons zum Wiener Kreuzweg*. (Katalog zur Ausstellung "Joseph Führich - die Kartons zum Wiener Kreuzweg" in der Albertina, Wien, 2. August - 13. Oktober 2005). Wien : Brandstätter 2005.

⁶¹ See GUILLOT, Catherine. *Bruno Chérier (1817 – 1880). Peintre du Nord, ami de Carpeaux*. Lille : Presses du Septentrion 2010, p. 56.



6 Louis-Anselme Longa (1809-1869), église Saint-Jacques de Tartas (Aquitaine), Stations of the Cross, after Führich (Base Palissy, Inventaire)

exaggeration of pronounced expression of their vulgar and rude feelings...".⁶² Bruno Chérier also made smaller versions of Stations of the Cross in the North. In another example, in Saint-Michel de Laballe, (Aquitaine), the Stations of the Cross (ca 1857) reproduce all the engraved compositions of Führich, while also deleting some secondary characters and replacing the landscape backgrounds with a background of gold in a uniform grid. This (work) can be attributed to the French painter Louis-Anselme Longa (1809-1869), who copied Führich's Stations of the Cross twice in 1857 (at La Madeleine de Mont-de-Marsan) and 1856 (at Saint-Jacques de Tartas, fig. 6).⁶³

The dissemination of these prints was thoroughly organised. Following the Exhibition of 1855, which brought together many German paintings, the publishers Schulgen and Schwann⁶⁴ produced an information notice on Overbeck and German painting and a catalogue of engravings. It was published by the Society of Düsseldorf for the Propagation of Fine Religious Illustrations, which specialised in the distribution of Nazarene prints, and included many engravings modelled on Führich's work (etched by Petrak), among them the Stations of the Cross. There were also publications that became even more widespread by way of collections intended for families. One of them was an illustrated book of catechism by Abbot Lambert for the diocese of Paris, which appeared in plain and deluxe editions, and which contained engravings by Luddy and Kipp from the Düsseldorf School. His inspiration was not only the Nazarenes and the choice to feature inset reproaches Nathan evokes the examples of the Casa Bartholdy or the Bibel of Schnorr, but also the paintings of Raphael in the Vatican. Nevertheless, Führich's direct influence can be observed in a drawing of the Annunciation (in the catechism?) which is based on the high top part of a famous engraving by Führich, *Die Menschwerdung Christi* (1838) (fig. 7), thousands of copies of which were distributed.⁶⁵ This inspiration can also be detected in a stained glass window in Limoges (Chapelle du Grand séminaire,

⁶² GRIMOUARD DE SAINT-LAURENT, Henri. Le chemin de la croix au point de vue de l'art chrétien. In: *Revue de l'art chrétien*, March 1859, p. 115. "une sorte de confusion au milieu de laquelle le personnage essentiel ne se dessine pas assez : cela tient à la trop grande multiplicité des personnages secondaires, à l'expression trop accentuée de leurs sentiments vulgaires et grossiers"

⁶³ See www.culture.fr, Base Palissy, Région Aquitaine, Inventaire général du patrimoine culturel, église Saint-Michel de Laballe, written by Jean-Philippe Maisonave and église Saint-Jacques de Tartas, recently restored, written by Renaud Benoit-Cattin.

⁶⁴ See BOUNIOL, Bathild. *L'Art chrétien et l'école allemande* (avec une notice sur M. Overbeck suivi du catalogue de Schulgen et Schwan, éditeurs de l'œuvre d'Overbeck). Ambroise Bray : Schulgen et Schwan 1856. There is here an aesthetic kinship confirmed by the fact that the deluxe edition of the Catechism of the Diocese of Paris, illustrated by Father Lambert, published by Belin, The Prior and Morizot, is also included in the catalogue of Schulgen et Schwan, 1856.

⁶⁵ GRASSL, Paul. Der Ratschluss der Erlösung (Phil 2, 5-8) im Bilde dargestellt in Dorschhausen, Landsberg, Einsiedeln und Führich. In: *Die christliche Kunst*, vol. 30, 1933/1934, p. 121-128.

circa 1903) by Félix Gaudin from a cardboard of Raphaël Freida⁶⁶ (1877 – 1942) (fig. 8), who is even closer to this original choice, for the time, to depict the Holy Trinity⁶⁷, and they are maybe still more to identify.



7 Führich, Die Menschwerdung Christi, 1838

These religious publications intended for personal prayer, these illustrated catechisms, whose lessons were to be learnt by heart by children, and the parish setting that the faithful would have seen Sunday after Sunday, enable one to offer some insight into the customary visual culture of Catholics in the 19th century. More so probably than Salon paintings or aesthetic debates, such modest pieces, stained glass windows and frescos are valuable in helping us to learn about the images that pervaded the daily lives of the faithful. They allow us to gauge the profound influence that certain Nazarene models had on the preferences of religious sponsors, all the more so in that they could feel confident in following the recommendations of artists who advocated an ideal of Christian art.

If Nazarene art had little direct impact on major religious paintings in France, and if its reception by art

critics was mixed, Nazarene theories nevertheless made a lasting contribution to defining an ideal model of Christian art, whose criteria were posited by Montalembert and Rio. Their influence was to be felt in debates and controversies on the subject of religious art throughout the century. It even inspired the conception of art defended by the young Maurice Denis⁶⁸ at the end of the 19th century.

⁶⁶ See LUNEAU, Jean-François. *Félix Gaudin, peintre-verrier et mosaïste, 1851-1930*, Clermont-Ferrand 2006, p. 579. This reference to Führich could here complete the rich study by J.-F. Luneau.

⁶⁷ On the subject of the Holy Trinity pictured as three human figures, see BOESPFLUG, François. *Dieu dans l'art. Sollicitudini Nostrae de Benoît XIV (1745) et l'affaire Crescence de Kaufbeuren*, Paris : Cerf, 1984.

⁶⁸ SAINT-MARTIN, Isabelle. Des "Notes sur la peinture religieuse" (1896) à "L'Esthétique de Beuron" (1905) : théories de Denis sur l'art sacré autour de 1900. In: DENIS, Maurice. *L'éclosion d'une vocation artistique (1885-1905)*. In: *Les Amis du vieux Saint-Germain*, n° 51, 2014, p. 103-122.



8 Raphaël Freida (1877 – 1942), *Le Sacerdoce du Christ*, Chapelle du Grand séminaire, Limoges, v 1903 (vitrail de Félix Gaudin), copyright: J.-F. Luneau

Cite:

Saint Martin, Isabelle. The Reception of the Nazarene Movement in France. In *Forum Historiae*, 2017, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 76-92. ISSN 1337-6861.

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