

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS LAW JOURNAL

SUMMER 2005

VOLUME 3

NUMBER 1



Antoine Frederic Ozanam: Building
the Good Society

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Fides et Iustitia

ARTICLE

**ANTOINE FREDERIC OZANAM: BUILDING
THE GOOD SOCIETY**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Antoine Frederic Ozanam embodies the best of the Catholic intellectual tradition. He earned doctorates in law and literature by the age of twenty-six. He translated intellectual insights into practice as he endeavored to help build the good society. As a twenty-year-old law student in Paris in 1833, he founded the St. Vincent de Paul¹ Society; it soon became the largest Catholic charity in the world, with a million members serving the poor

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1. St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660) was the French founder, in 1625, of the Congregation of the Mission, Catholic priests making special outreach ministry to the poor.

in scores of countries.² He founded it not by drafting sophisticated corporate charters and negotiating favorable tax arrangements but, rather, by direct personal witness. He and a few fellow law students began carrying free wood and coal for fuel to the poor in the Paris tenement slums in 1833. His life was a dramatic fusion of intellectual accomplishment and direct, personal action to alleviate the poverty of the least amongst us. Thus, his life and his legacy have special resonance for law students today. He did not defer social action until he was professionally established. Rather, he saw the cold misery of the poor in Paris as a twenty-year-old law student, and he carried fuel to them in their tenements. His personal example reminds us to seize the moments available to us.

What follows is a study of Ozanam's important academic and professional writing found in his legal lectures, essays, and personal letters. His writing formed much of the groundwork for Catholic social-justice teaching about workers' rights, including the right to a natural wage (which is essential to human dignity) and the right to join labor unions.

Drawing on Catholic natural law and jurisprudence, he pioneered the concept of the natural wage. He also called for voluntary labor unions. Ozanam's work on the natural wage became the conceptual platform for the minimum wage law and the Fair Labor Standards Act, which were enacted by the Roosevelt administration during the New Deal.³ More contemporaneously, the legacy of Ozanam's natural wage principle is visible in the living wage initiatives that have been successfully implemented into law in many municipalities throughout the United States.⁴

Condemning slavery well before the Civil War, Ozanam's concepts of free, dignified labor, of the natural wage, and of voluntary unions helped set the stage for the great Catholic social encyclicals⁵ on the rights of workers, beginning with Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (On Labor) in 1891.⁶

2. See St. Vincent de Paul Society Archdiocesan Council of San Francisco, *St. Vincent de Paul Society At Home and Abroad*, <http://www.vincent.org/index.htm?svdp.htm> (accessed Nov. 18, 2005); CMGlobal, *Congregation of the Mission: General Curia*, <http://www.famvin.net/cm/curia/vincentiana> (accessed Nov. 18, 2005); The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*, <http://www.svp.ie> (accessed Nov. 18, 2005).

3. 29 U.S.C. §§ 201–219 (2000).

4. See generally William Quigley, *Ending Poverty as We Know It* (Temple U. Press 2003) (cataloging a comprehensive, insightful assessment of the living wage movement).

5. For a definition of encyclical, see Garry Wills, *Politics and Catholic Freedom* 96–97 (Henry Regnery Co. 1964) (defining encyclicals as authoritative but not dogmatic letters of unity from the popes and designed to elucidate and clarify, which began to be written during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIV in 1740).

6. Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html). For other great social encyclicals on workers' rights, see Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html); Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (1981) (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html); Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (1987) (available at <http://www.vati->

Ozanam's personal practice of bringing direct relief to the poor, in addition to the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, has legacies as different, and as related, as the philosophy and practice of personalism at the heart of the Catholic Worker movement,⁷ and in the interesting worker-priest phenomenon in France fifty years ago.⁸

Beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997, this married Catholic lawyer and commercial law and literature professor, who died at age forty in 1853, is on the path to canonization as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. His contributions to social justice, and to applied workers' rights to decent compensation and working conditions, are worth timely and continuing study and reflection.

II. ANTOINE FREDERIC OZANAM: A LIFE

A. *Family Life and Early Years*

Ozanam came from an established Catholic family in Lyon, France, with many generations of doctors and lawyers. The family lineage is traceable to 43 B.C., the year of the death of Jeremiah Hosannam.⁹ In the seventh century, Samuel Hosannam had his Jewish family baptized into the Catholic Church by the local bishop, whom they sheltered from hostile royalty; the family name remained Hosannam until Frederic's grandfather began using the Ozanam form.¹⁰

Despite the anti-Catholicism in the revolutionary French Republic,¹¹ his father, Jean-Antoine Ozanam, joined the army in 1793, was wounded five times, and served with distinction until 1798, when he left the army as a captain.¹² Jean-Antoine married Marie Nantas on April 22, 1800 in Lyon,

can.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html); and Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991) (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html). For comprehensive literature on the Catholic social encyclicals, see Kevin J. Doyle, *The Shifting Legal Landscape of Contingent Employment: A Proposal to Reform Work*, 33 Seton Hall L. Rev. 641 (2003); David L. Gregory, *Reflections on Current Applications of Catholic Social Thought*, 1 Vill. J. Catholic Soc. Thought 647 (2004); David L. Gregory, *Catholic Social Teaching on Work*, 49 Lab. L.J. 912 (1998); David L. Gregory, *Catholic Labor Theory and the Transformation of Work*, 45 Wash. & Lee L. Rev. 119 (1988); Lucia A. Silecchia, *Environmental Ethics from the Perspective of NEPA and Catholic Social Teaching: Ecological Guidance for the 21st Century*, 28 Wm. & Mary Envtl. L. & Policy Rev. 659 (2004); Lucia A. Silecchia, *Reflections on the Future of Social Justice*, 23 Seattle U. L. Rev. 1121 (2000).

7. For discussion of the practice and philosophy of personalism in the Catholic Worker movement, see generally David L. Gregory, *Dorothy Day's Lessons for the Transformation of Work*, 14 Hofstra Lab. L.J. 57 (1996-1997).

8. *Infra* pt. III D.

9. Albert Paul Schimberg, *The Great Friend: Frederic Ozanam* 21 (The Bruce Publ. Co. 1946).

10. *Id.*

11. *Id.* at 5 n. 5 (Jean, Ozanam's father, was particularly repulsed by Napoleon taking Pope Pius VII into captivity.).

12. *Id.* at 3.

France; he was twenty-seven, she was nineteen,¹³ and they were both devout Catholics. After prospering in the silk business in Lyon, he went bankrupt and moved to Milan, Italy. Walking nineteen miles every day to medical school in Pavia from Milan, he completed his medical training in two years and became a doctor at the age of thirty-eight.¹⁴

Born in Milan at midnight on April 23, 1813, Frederic was his parents' fifth child.¹⁵ Of fourteen children, four lived to maturity. Alphonse, his older brother, became a priest; his younger brother, Charles, became a doctor; sister Elisa died at age nineteen, when Frederic was seven.¹⁶ In October 1816, when he was three, his family moved to Lyon, France from Milan.¹⁷ In Lyon, his father became the doctor at the municipal hospital.¹⁸

Ozanam was a brilliant student at the Royal College of Lyon. It was during this period that Ozanam met Abbe Noiroi, who served as his teacher, mentor, and spiritual director, and with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship. At sixteen, he had the typical teenager's crisis of doubting his faith, but he persevered through this crisis with Noiroi's help and guidance.¹⁹ Also during this period, Ozanam published some poetry and political essays in *The Bee*, a review journal of the Royal College of Lyons.²⁰

He graduated at the top of his class in July 1829, and, for two years afterwards, worked in Lyon as a clerk to an attorney.²¹

B. Paris, and Professional Education

In 1831, Ozanam arrived in Paris from his home in Lyon, ready to begin his studies at the University of Paris École du Droit (School of Law).²² At first blush, there was nothing remarkable about him. He was not handsome or elegant.²³ Rather, he was scholarly, introspective, abstract, of average height, and he had long, unkempt hair.²⁴ He was pale, nearsighted,

13. *Id.* at 4.

14. *Id.* at 5–6.

15. *Id.* at 7.

16. *Id.* at 10.

17. *Id.* at 7.

18. *Id.* at 8.

19. *Id.* at 22–29; Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* 9 (The Bruce Publ. Co. 1966).

20. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 2; Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 29.

21. Sister Emmanuel Renner, *The Historical Thought of Frederic Ozanam* 3 (The Catholic U. of Am. Press 1959).

22. *Id.* at 6.

23. Apparently, Ozanam's adulthood reflected that little had changed. Philosophy Professor Elme-Marie Caro at the French Academy described the adult Professor Ozanam at the Sorbonne in the mid-1840s as "'neither handsome, elegant, nor graceful. His appearance was commonplace, his manner awkward and embarrassed. Extreme near-sightedness and a tangled mass of hair completed a rather strange ensemble.'" Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 155–56.

24. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 1.

and thin.²⁵ He was a shy, homesick provincial, repulsed by the anti-Christian secularism of Paris.²⁶

Tumultuous Paris was filled with poverty²⁷ and intrigue.²⁸ It had recently been rocked by the July 1830 Revolution, which sent into exile the Bourbon King Charles X, brother of King Louis XVI who had been executed in 1793. The 1830 Revolution ushered in the “July Monarchy” of Bourbon King Louis-Philippe, who reigned until he fled for exile in London in the Revolution of February 1848.²⁹

France never fully recovered from the French Revolution, especially from its madness and bloodlust. The revolutionaries almost literally ate their young; they sent one another to the guillotine (including Robespierre and St. Just) and installed a prostitute on the altar of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in pagan repudiation of the Catholic Church. Catholics—who were associated, fairly or unfairly, with the reactionary and repressive *ancien régime*—were special targets for extermination by the Revolution, with many put to mass murder.³⁰ Deep strains of anti-Catholicism remained overt throughout the social, cultural, and intellectual life of Paris in the 1830s, much of it the vestiges of infuriated reaction to the deposed Catholic Bourbon King Charles X. Until he was deposed in July 1830, he acted as though the French Revolution of 1789 had never occurred. He subscribed to the theocratic principle of “the union of altar and throne,” and he made sacrilege a crime, imposed heavy censorship, and placed the Church in charge of education.³¹ Anticlericalism was a predictable part of the 1830 insurrection; seminaries were attacked, and a mob demolished the palatial residence of the archbishop of Paris in 1831.³² French Catholic conservative royalists hated the Revolution and denounced it as demonic, immoral, and evil.³³

Despite the madness of the Revolution, pervasive modernist change resumed its own revolutionary pace as France continued its cultural transi-

25. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 38.

26. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 1–2, 8. He wrote to a cousin, Ernest Falconnet, a month after arriving in Paris: “Paris displeases me because there is no life, no faith, no love; it is like a corpse to which I, young and alive, am attached. . .” *Id.* at 8.

27. With a population of 27,500,000, estimates of those in poverty ranged from four to ten million. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 204.

28. See e.g. Honore de Balzac, *The Human Comedy* (Little, Brown & Co. 1902) (Honore de Balzac (1799–1850) captured the ambiance and ethos of Paris in the 1830s in his more than ninety novels); see also Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (Charles E. Wilbur trans., Random House 1992).

29. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 6, 98.

30. Some of the frenzy has been powerfully captured in art and culture. See e.g. Francis Poulenc, *The Dialogue of the Carmelites* (J. Machlis trans., Ricodi 1986) (an opera exploring the journeys of faith of Catholic Carmelite nuns sent to the guillotine for the crime of being Catholic).

31. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 7.

32. *Id.* It is worth noting, however, that there was restored respect in workers’ quarters for the Church and for parish priests during the February Revolution in 1848. *Id.* at 40.

33. *Id.* at 84–85.

tion to a secular and pluralist order, and its concurrent economic and social transition from a rural to an industrial and urban society.³⁴

Academic and intellectual life was especially anti-Catholic. Ozanam regarded Voltaire as the root of French anti-Catholicism—he wrote, “‘All irreligion in France . . . still follows Voltaire. . .’”³⁵ The Saint-Simonian³⁶ Utopian Socialists and the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte posed as alternative humanistic religions superior to orthodox Catholicism.³⁷ They offered the false promise of new religions ushering in a golden age; Ozanam, eighteen years old, published essays in refutation.³⁸

Close Catholic friendships grounded his spiritual life and facilitated and inspired his work. Fortuitously, as a young law student in Paris in 1831, Ozanam met Andre Ampere, who was regarded as “the Newton of electricity.”³⁹ Ozanam also subsequently developed a lifelong friendship with Ampere’s son, Jean-Jacques.⁴⁰ A dinner invitation soon turned into residency with the elderly Ampere and his family during his studies in Paris. Ampere was a leading scientist, erudite scholar, and, perhaps most important for the eighteen-year-old Ozanam, a “pious Catholic.”⁴¹ With a letter of introduction, Ozanam met Francois Rene de Chateaubriand on New Year’s Day 1832.⁴² Chateaubriand was the leading Catholic public intellectual and Romantic writer of the period. His book, *The Genius of Christianity*, published in 1802,⁴³ “began a religious revival in France.”⁴⁴

Ozanam’s personality blossomed through such friendships, and his contemporaries came to describe him as ardent, kind, and zealous.⁴⁵ He quickly formed friendships with other Catholic students, who banded together in part because the government of King Louis-Philippe, suspecting they plotted the restoration of the deposed Catholic Bourbon King Charles X, spied on them.⁴⁶

He was soon recognized by his fellow Catholic students as their leader, “*primus inter pares*” (first among equals).⁴⁷ After a lecture at the College of

34. *Id.* at 6.

35. *Id.* at 66.

36. The Comte Claude de Simon (1760–1825) was a leading French socialist who fought with France in the American Revolution. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 29–30.

37. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 8–9.

38. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 5.

39. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 2.

40. *Id.* at 3.

41. *Id.*

42. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 42.

43. *Id.*

44. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 4–5.

45. *Id.* at 4.

46. *Id.* at 9. Ozanam wrote to his mother in 1834 of the anti-Catholic environment in Paris. “We are surrounded by political parties who, because we are coming of age, want to draw us in their armies. . . . There is no literary meeting at which spies of the government . . . might not be present.” *Id.* at 10.

47. *Id.* at 11.

France, wherein the speaker was mocking the book of Genesis, Ozanam first met Vincentian priest and friend Father Lallier, with whom he subsequently founded the apostolate known as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and with whom he became a lifelong friend.⁴⁸ Ozanam and his Catholic friends formed study groups to defend Catholicism against the host of intellectual assaults.⁴⁹ In 1834, he firmly and audaciously led a letter petition to the conservative archbishop of Paris suggesting particular homilists to preach Lenten sermons at the Cathedral, rather than the insipid and ineffective designees of the archbishop; perhaps even more incredibly, the archbishop, after initial resistance, adopted Ozanam's suggestions and, in 1835, appointed the homilists Ozanam had recommended.⁵⁰ The Lenten sermons suggested by Ozanam became so successful that they were institutionalized annually thereafter at the Cathedral. They featured Pere Lacordaire, who went onto become the greatest preacher of the era and who reinvigorated the Dominicans—the Order of Preachers—in France. Though a decade older than Ozanam, Lacordaire continued a lifelong friendship with him.⁵¹

C. *Founding the St. Vincent de Paul Society*

The St. Vincent de Paul Society began in the spring of 1833, when Ozanam and several Catholic student friends began meeting regularly for prayer, debate, and discussion at the home of Emmanuel Joseph Bailly, a forty-year-old Catholic owner of a print shop and publisher of a newspaper.⁵² They initially called their group “The Conference of History and Literature.”⁵³ They also agreed to contribute to a fund, which they would then personally distribute directly to poor people in Paris.⁵⁴ By the following May, the Society had become so popular among the Catholic students at the University of Paris that Bailly's home could no longer accommodate all of the members at their meetings.⁵⁵

In May 1833, Ozanam and friends reoriented The Conference on History and Literature to focus on charity to the poor.⁵⁶ Thus began the St. Vincent de Paul Society, named in honor of St. Vincent de Paul, probably by Bailly, whose brother was a Vincentian priest.⁵⁷

48. *Id.* at 12–13.

49. *Id.* at 13–14.

50. *Id.* at 16–17.

51. *Id.* at 17.

52. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 66.

53. *Id.* at 56–61.

54. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 20.

55. *Id.* at 23.

56. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 64–65.

57. In addition to Ozanam and Bailly, there were four law students and a medical student meeting in May, 1833 to found the Society. Other than the forty year old Bailly, they were nineteen to twenty-two years of age. *Id.* at 66–68. None were wealthy; they were all middle class. *Id.* at 234.

A fundamental principle of the Society is its premium upon direct, personal interaction with the poor, and not on bureaucratic and anonymous administration of programs— “it was a basic rule of the Society that the members must personally visit those they were assisting.”⁵⁸

Ozanam and his friends began bringing wood and coal to the poor for fuel.⁵⁹ In a letter to a cousin, he explained his hopes:

[W]e are too young to intervene in the social strife. Shall we remain inactive in the midst of a world which suffers so grievously? No, there is another way open to us . . . we can endeavor to do good to some individuals. Before regenerating France we can help at least a few of her poor. Thus I hope that all young people with similar desire will unite for charitable purposes and form a vast generous association for the comfort of the masses.⁶⁰

Ozanam’s vision of a worldwide “network of charity” quickly became a reality.⁶¹ By 1855, there were 2,814 local conferences of the Society located throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Asia, Africa, and much of Europe.⁶² Today, there are more than a million members of the Society working on every continent. It continues to be lay-led. It continues to offer the opportunity to actually do something tangible and real in the alleviation of poverty and suffering, and to directly practice the corporal works of mercy.

Christian charity was thus very different from philanthropy for Ozanam. He wrote,

[P]hilanthropy is a pride for which good actions are a kind of finery and which loves to look at itself in the mirror. Charity is a tender mother who keeps her eyes fixed upon the child that she carries in her arms, who no longer thinks about herself and who forgets her beauty in her love.⁶³

“It is a truism of Christianity that the real beneficiary of charity is he who gives rather than he who receives: of this Ozanam was deeply aware, writing movingly and beautifully of it.”⁶⁴ He never sought to eradicate poverty.⁶⁵ It was embedded and intractable; and, as a spiritual matter, a world

58. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 41. As a practical matter, Ozanam and his colleagues had entre for contacts into the slums of Paris by Sister Rosalie of the Daughters of Charity, a Vincentian religious who lived and worked in the Mouffetard quarter working class slums of Paris since entering the order in 1801 at the age of fifteen and who, at her death in 1860, was known as the Mother of the Poor of Paris.

59. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 62. “This wood and coal an orator has called the ‘symbolic fuel which would start throughout the world a huge conflagration of charity.’” *Id.* at 75.

60. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 9.

61. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 25.

62. *Id.* at 25. For more on the phenomenal and rapid international growth of the Society during Ozanam’s life, see Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 106.

63. *Id.* at 41.

64. *Id.*

65. *Id.* at 125.

without poverty would make the virtue of charity largely moot. He sought, however, to ameliorate and relieve poverty and suffering individually whenever and wherever possible.

Ultimately, charity is a powerful manifestation of love. Ozanam summarized,

Our faith is weak because we cannot see God. But we can see the poor, and we can put our finger in their wounds, and see the marks of the crown of thorns. . . . They [the poor] suffer that which we cannot suffer, they are among us as messengers of God to test our justice and our charity, and to save us by our works.⁶⁶

D. *Professional and Academic Life*

In 1836, after receiving in August, his doctorate in law with honors, Ozanam returned to his parents' home in Lyon. He had resolved as a teenager to devote his intellectual life—in whatever form of vocation and career path it may ultimately take—to further Catholicism and the work of the Church, and to demonstrate the truth of Christianity by and through history.⁶⁷ The next four years in Lyon were not nearly as exhilarating or as interesting as his student years in Paris (1831–1835), which he called his “golden years.”⁶⁸ His father died in 1837, and his mother in 1839.⁶⁹ Dissatisfied with the single life, he struggled to find his vocation, and seriously considered joining the priesthood.⁷⁰

Ozanam became a lawyer to please his father, and in this profession he achieved early success and recognition. His heart, however, was not in the practice of law;⁷¹ even as a student, he had written to his mother,

[I]f some recreation is to be allowed me, let me work in literary matters, which will adorn dry jurisprudence. . . . I shall not at all neglect my legal studies for that. . . . Thanks be to God, I am not to be a solicitor, but a barrister, and so far a pleader. Therefore, I must cultivate literature, the mother of eloquence.⁷²

In his first year of law practice in 1837, he made twelve court appearances, three of them in civil matters, and he won all of his cases.⁷³ He found collecting his fees another matter, however: “Fees come with difficulty . . . and the relations with business people are so unpleasant, so humiliating, and so unjust, that I cannot bring myself to develop them. . . . This profession

66. *Id.* at 42.

67. *Id.* at 60–61, 65–66.

68. *Id.* at 58.

69. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 121, 127.

70. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 50–51, 57; see also Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 123.

71. Kathleen O'Meara, *Frederic Ozanam, Professor at the Sorbonne: His Life and Works* 132 (3d Am. ed., The Catholic Publication Socy. Co. 1883).

72. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 87.

73. *Id.* at 120.

upsets me too much.”⁷⁴ He had such difficulty collecting fees that he also tutored three students to supplement his income.⁷⁵ He was decidedly unenthusiastic about the grim, difficult, fee-collecting business dimensions of a tedious law practice.

In the spring of 1837, while practicing law in Lyon, he also began commuting to Paris to begin working on his dissertation on Dante for his doctorate in literature.⁷⁶ He received the doctorate in 1839.⁷⁷

At the age of only twenty-six, he was a brilliant scholar, with doctorates in both law⁷⁸ and literature, and was fluent in several modern and classical languages. He coupled his intellectual gifts with a prodigious work ethic.⁷⁹ The college at Lyon created a chaired professorship in commercial law for him in 1839.⁸⁰ Beginning on December 16, 1839, the twenty-six-year-old professor gave forty-seven lectures through the balance of the next academic year.⁸¹

On June 23, 1841, he married Marie-Josephine Amelie Soulacroix, the twenty-one-year-old daughter of the rector of the academy at Lyon.⁸² They were married in the Church of St. Nizier in Lyon by Ozanam’s brother, Alphonse, the priest.⁸³ During their honeymoon in Rome, they met with Pope Gregory XVI; Ozanam gave the pope a copy of his doctoral dissertation on Dante.⁸⁴ The Ozanams had a happy marriage; on the twenty-third of each month, in honor of the date of their wedding anniversary, he gave his wife flowers.⁸⁵ They had one daughter, Marie, born in 1845.⁸⁶

His greatest academic love was for history and literature, not law, and he gained a position as a lecturer teaching those subjects at the University of Paris in 1840. In 1844, he was appointed the chaired professor of foreign literature at the University of Paris.⁸⁷ Ironically, for this leading Catholic

74. *Id.*

75. *Id.* at 123.

76. *Id.* at 120. His Latin doctoral thesis was *Di frequenti apud veteres poetas heroum ad inferos descensu*; his French doctoral thesis was *De la Divine Comedie et de la philosophie de Dante*. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 12.

77. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 125–27.

78. On April 13, 1836, he submitted two theses, one on Roman law (*De Interdictis*) and one on French law (*De la Prescription à l’effet d’acquérir*), and received his doctorate in law with honor. *Id.* 113–14.

79. Aue, *supra* n. 19, at 62–63.

80. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 127.

81. *Id.* at 130.

82. Heinrich Auer, *Friedrich Ozanam, der Gründer des Vinzenzvereins: Ein Leben der Liebe* 55 (Freiburg i. Br: Caritasverlag 1913); see also Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 144–45 and Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 14.

83. CMGlobal, *Frederic Ozanam: His Piety and Devotion*, <http://www.famvin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana/1997/97-3-ramson.html> (accessed Nov. 18, 2005).

84. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 145–46.

85. *Frederic Ozanam: His Piety and Devotion*, *supra* n. 83, at <http://www.famvin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana/1997/97-3-ramson.html>.

86. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 55. See also Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 154–55.

87. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 55.

intellectual, his professional education and his professional life and work were at France's leading secular—and often overtly anti-Catholic—university.⁸⁸

He was not disengaged from the people; indeed, the contrary was true. In 1846, with his health declining and after a full schedule of lectures as a chaired professor at the University of Paris, he gave free evening lectures to workers in the crypt of the Church of St. Sulpice.⁸⁹ A biographer concluded:

It is not surprising that Ozanam should have been a popular speaker with the working-men. He counted himself one of them, and his eloquence had in it a note of real personal pride when it dwelt upon the dignity and power of labor, of human toil in every field.⁹⁰

He was a fearless, engaging⁹¹ speaker and an excellent, conscientious teacher.⁹²

The balance of his short life, until his death in 1853 at the age of forty, was spent teaching and writing, with particular emphasis on the literature of the Middle Ages. His view, set forth comprehensively in his book, *Civilization in the Fifth Century*⁹³ (1852), was that of the Catholic Romantic, regarding Christianity historically and empirically as most beneficial to improving the human condition, and, therefore, as the truest, most useful, and most reasonable of all of the world's religions.⁹⁴ Refuting Edward Gibbon's condemnation of Christianity as the purported cause of the collapse of Roman civilization and, hence, the Dark Ages, Ozanam posited that Christianity instead set the stage for the flourishing of culture and civilization during the early Middle Ages, and, thus, was the cause of the best features of civilized modernity.⁹⁵ "Liberty . . . is, according to Ozanam, not alien to Catholicism, but a product of the historical influence of that religion."⁹⁶

His most significant scholarship was on Dante, who was the subject of his doctorate in literature, and his letters and essays, which total about ten volumes.⁹⁷ Ozanam died before completing his survey of medieval literature. He lamented the unfinished state of much of his scholarship shortly

88. *Id.* at 74–75. In 1844, Lenormant, a Catholic professor colleague, was publicly harassed throughout his lectures and resigned his position despite Ozanam's support.

89. O'Meara, *supra* n. 71, at 188.

90. *Id.* at 189.

91. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 31.

92. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 156–57. He brought students to the Church, receiving one letter from a student: "What a great number of sermons failed to do for me, you have done: you have made me a Christian! . . . Accept this expression of my joy and gratitude." *Id.* at 157.

93. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 55, 137–38.

94. *Id.* at 65.

95. *Id.* at 67–68.

96. *Id.* at 88.

97. *Id.* at 55. The title of his dissertation was *Dante and Catholic Philosophy in the 13th Century*. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 340.

before his death.⁹⁸ Because of his early death, his hopes for election to the Académie française, the most intellectually elite circle in France, were not realized. He sought public office only once: reluctantly, at the urging of friends, and only four days before the election in the spring of 1848, he became a candidate to represent Lyon in the National Constituent Assembly. He lost.⁹⁹

His greatest academic contributions to social justice lie in his published lectures and essays. Perhaps his greatest talent as a lecturer was his “great natural eloquence.”¹⁰⁰ Ampere said that Ozanam “prepared his lectures like [they were] a benediction and delivered [them] like an orator.”¹⁰¹

E. Early Death and Partially Unfulfilled Promise

After the Revolution of 1848, he sadly realized that his life’s work of urging liberal Catholic action to alleviate the plight of workers and the poor would find no traction in reactionary France. No political or social program with any liberal tint apparently had any viable future. He did not witness, however, the continued and dramatic growth of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, his most enduring legacy.

He did not despair. Ozanam continued to proselytize (via his newspaper and journalistic essays) the idea, which was then decidedly out-of-fashion and dangerous, that the masses of the people—the “barbarians”—remained the best future hope for social liberty and democracy, and he continued to urge the Church to ally with the poor and the workers. He “did not trim his sails to fit the times,” and, consequently, many powerful interests considered him suspect.¹⁰² His Catholicism was impugned as heretically weak, warped, and unapologetically liberal by reactionary Catholic elites in the wake of the Revolution of 1848; they accused him of deserting the Church.¹⁰³

Always a tireless and prodigious worker, he was physically exhausted in 1846. He spent the next year traveling and resting with his family in Italy. His health did not fully rebound, and the kidney disease that killed him in 1853 had probably begun by this time.¹⁰⁴ He nearly died of pleurisy and fever during the Easter season of 1852.¹⁰⁵ His younger brother, Charles, a medical doctor, thought Ozanam might also have contracted tuberculosis.¹⁰⁶

98. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 59.

99. *Id.* at 107.

100. *Id.* at 78.

101. *Id.*

102. *Id.* at 130.

103. *Id.* at 130–32.

104. *Id.* at 139.

105. *Id.*

106. *Id.*

In early 1853, living near Florence, Italy, kidney disease manifested itself in his swollen legs.¹⁰⁷ He was no longer able to teach and write, although his book, *Civilization in the Fifth Century*, was published in 1852. He spent time whenever he was able in libraries, and three months before he died, he published his book, *A Pilgrimage to the Land of the Cid*, based upon notes taken during his trip to Spain in 1852.¹⁰⁸ He was understandably frustrated by his inability to pursue his teaching and writing. He wrote to a friend, "I see everything black when I dream of my lost career, of a sad existence as an invalid and my family abandoned to all the danger of a somber future."¹⁰⁹ He died in Marseilles, France, on September 8, 1853, unable to complete a return journey to Paris.¹¹⁰ He was beatified and declared Blessed by Pope John Paul II on August 22, 1997, at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris.¹¹¹

III. THE SOCIAL JUSTICE VISION OF OZANAM

Ozanam's socio-political-economic view was rooted in his classical liberal, social Catholicism, which was grounded in St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy of the common good. He was opposed to laissez-faire free markets, which he believed exacerbated rather than ameliorated poverty. At age twenty-one, he wrote, "I do not repudiate any form of government; I regard them as different instruments to make men better and happier. I believe in authority as a means, in liberty as a means, in charity as an end."¹¹² The notion of the common good was a cornerstone of his vision: "[T]he sacrifice of each for the advantage of all: that is the Christian republic of the primitive Church of Jerusalem. It is also perhaps that of the end of all time, the last and highest state to which humanity can aspire."¹¹³

In 1838, he wrote to an artist friend traveling to Italy:

The question which divides men in our day is no longer a question of political forms, it is a social question—that of deciding whether the spirit of egotism or the spirit of sacrifice is to carry the day; whether society is to be a huge traffic for the benefit of the strongest, or the consecration of each for the benefit of all, and above all for the protection of the weak. There are many who already have too much, and who wish to possess still more; there are a greater number who have not enough, and who want to seize it if it is not given to them. Between these two classes of men a

107. *Id.* at 140.

108. *Id.* at 144–45.

109. *Id.* at 140–41.

110. *Id.* at 145.

111. CMGlobal: The Congregation of the Mission, *Congregation of the Mission: General Curia*, <http://www.famvin.org/cm/curia/vincentiana/1997/97-6-sheldon.html> (accessed Nov. 20, 2005).

112. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 213.

113. *Id.*

struggle is imminent, and it threatens to be terrible—on one side the power of gold, on the other the power of despair. It is between these two opposing armies that we must precipitate ourselves. . . .¹¹⁴

A. *The Natural Wage*

From his lifelong commitment to and understanding of the poor, coupled with his Catholic liberalism, Ozanam was convinced that the ideals—liberty, equality, and fraternity—of the revolutions that roiled France beginning in 1789 and continued into his lifetime (those of 1830 and 1848), were not fundamentally political; rather, he believed they were social. For Ozanam, the core problems were unemployment, poverty, and insufficient wages for the working poor.¹¹⁵

In his twenty-fourth of forty-seven published lectures on commercial law given as a professor at Lyon, Ozanam developed his central thesis of the *salaires naturels*—the natural wage, a concept that became the precursor to the minimum wage and the living wage movements.¹¹⁶

Because most French Catholic elites aligned themselves with reactionary royalists and not with the poor masses, the country remained unstable and volatile. Ozanam believed that the masses, not the upper classes, were the true allies of the Church; he wrote, “[T]he Church would do better to support herself upon the people, who are the true ally of the Church, poor as she is, devout as she, blessed as she by all the benedictions of the Savior.”¹¹⁷

In his essays in the wake of the Revolution of 1848, Ozanam chastised the middle class for abandoning and betraying the working class in the Revolution of 1830, which he believed led inexorably to the renewed warfare of 1848.¹¹⁸ Ozanam described himself in 1850, at age thirty-seven, as “worn out in the service of my faith.”¹¹⁹

From these experiences, Ozanam developed his concept of the natural wage. He understood the congruence between work and proportionate, just compensation as rooted in Christianity’s manifest superiority to pre-Christian slavery: “[S]alary is the price of work,” he wrote, “all pain merits salary.”¹²⁰ Arguing Pope Leo XIII’s famous formula in *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 that labor and capital need one another, Ozanam insisted, “[S]alary must be proportionate to profit.”¹²¹

114. O’Meara, *supra* n. 71, at 108.

115. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 106, 125.

116. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 9, 12.

117. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 106.

118. *Id.* at 123.

119. *Id.* at 132.

120. Frédéric Ozanam & J-J Ampère, *Oeuvres complètes de A.F. Ozanam* (4th ed., Lecoffre 1872–73).

121. *Id.*

In his twenty-fourth lecture at Lyon, he reminded his audience that the one who “regenerated the hidden world is a divine person who was hidden for thirty years in the workshop of a carpenter.”¹²²

He propounded the workers’ right to form voluntary unions, and he saw the natural wage as an important instrument to combat poverty. “The workingman, he believed, was by nature entitled, at a minimum, to a wage sufficient to provide for the necessities of life, the education of his children, and for the support of his old age.”¹²³

Opposed to free-market *laissez faire*, Ozanam’s advocacy of the natural wage for workers became a cornerstone of liberal, social Catholicism.

For the modern Social Catholics of France considered their propaganda essentially as an attempt to revive and apply the kindly medieval Christian doctrines enforcing the duty of charity, the sinfulness of avarice, the dignity of human labor, and the social responsibility of property, as substitutes for the individualistic counsels of the classical Liberal economists. If the Social Catholics were quick to discern the potential merits of the trade-union movement, it was because they admired the medieval guilds.¹²⁴

Importantly, Ozanam’s notion of the natural wage was not synonymous with the minimum wage. The latter is pegged to subsistence existence and is usually much less than what a worker needs to rise above poverty, as experience in the United States has painfully demonstrated for several decades. Ozanam’s natural wage does not depend on any particular mechanical, quantitative formula. Instead, the natural wage is a dynamic reality, based on human dignity and the common good, and is intended to provide the worker with sufficient wages to house, educate, and feed the family, as well as to provide for retirement security. Ozanam, for example, regarded the natural wage as an absolute condition for retirement, which, in turn, he regarded as “sacred property.”¹²⁵

B. Workers’ Rights to Form Unions

Ozanam’s socio-political-economic vision was markedly opposed to the *laissez-faire* markets that concentrated wealth, oppressed workers, and exacerbated poverty.¹²⁶ He believed that enhancing workers’ rights to decent wages and to organize into unions were legitimate, affirmative instruments that could alleviate poverty.

Ozanam did not propose a mature conceptual architecture of sophisticated labor unions peacefully engaged in productive collective bargaining

122. *Id.*

123. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 212.

124. *Id.*

125. Ozanam, *supra* n. 120.

126. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 206–07.

of labor contracts with corporate private-sector employers. Nor did such notions develop fully until a half-century later in Pope Leo XIII's great labor encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. But these notions were previewed, in part, in the thought of Frederic Ozanam. An historian of the Social Catholic Movement in France concluded that Ozanam "might have used the same words" as did Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*.¹²⁷ An active member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Giuseppe Toniolo, professor of political economy at the University of Paris, became the leading Italian authority on Catholic social teaching, and was consulted for technical assistance by Pope Leo XIII as he drafted *Rerum Novarum*.¹²⁸ Thus, it is certainly fair to say that Ozanam developed some of the key precepts of fair wages and labor unions that were more fully elucidated in *Rerum Novarum*.

He personally witnessed searing examples of desperate mobs in action during the 1830 and 1848 insurrections, and he was well aware of the violence of the mobs during the French Revolution. Rather than being reflexively repulsed, Ozanam appreciated that the masses were capable of galvanized social action for the collective good through, for example, the collective action of the voluntary labor union.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was not designed or intended to be any sort of indirect mechanism to mollify and placate collective labor. Systematic social reform was never the objective of the Society; rather, the Society sought direct, immediate, and personal charitable relief of the individual poor.

That the charitable activities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society did not provide any solution to the problem of the urban poor is unquestionable. Christian charity could do little more than pick away at the edges of this desert of human misery that was the life of many of the lower class.¹²⁹

Grinding poverty, exacerbated by the neo-liberal laissez-faire insouciance of the government, virtually guaranteed constant ferment and inherent volatility. "Faced with misery in the midst of opulence, with a government indifferent and even hostile to their interests, exploited by the prosperous upper class, the workers responded with a bitter hatred of society."¹³⁰ Collective labor action, from Ozanam's experience, took literally to the streets, and was a direct threat to the government, indeed, to the entire social order. This was not confined to Paris. In his hometown of Lyon after the Revolution of 1830, the silk workers regularly demonstrated in the streets to protest their abysmal economic living and working conditions.¹³¹

127. *Id.* at 308.

128. *Id.* at 315-16.

129. *Id.* at 35.

130. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 34.

131. *Id.*

In 1834 one of these street disturbances grew into a virtual civil war on a small scale as the silk workers and the army engaged in a battle of several days' duration in which artillery and other weapons of war were used against the rioters.¹³² Ozanam . . . reported in a letter to a friend upon the evidences of battle visible in Lyon. The desperate situation of the workers is shown by a banner carried by them which read, "To live working or to die fighting."¹³³

He wrote, in 1840, that more than 60,000 workers in Lyon were completely demoralized.¹³⁴ The French upper classes stubbornly refused to recognize, let alone address, "the basic problem of employment for the workers."¹³⁵

C. Ozanam's Theory of Work

Ozanam regarded work as "the common law of mankind; it is the law of the mind as well as of the body."¹³⁶ He defined work as "the act which defends the wishes of man, applying his abilities to the satisfaction of his needs."¹³⁷

Living most of his adult life under cynical governments that fostered a political economy of neo-liberalism antithetical to the poor and to the alleviation of their plight, Ozanam was repulsed by the grasping bourgeois materialism of society. Materialism then, as now, was the prevailing cultural aspiration.¹³⁸

Poverty in Paris in the 1830s was palpable and pervasive.¹³⁹ Paris was fully comparable to the destitution of Charles Dickens's London of the same period. But, after all, "poor and suffering" could describe most of the human condition throughout most of history.

But the tectonic social shifts of the embryonic Industrial Revolution were inexorably underway, as Europe shifted from a rural, agricultural society to an industrial, urban economy. Ozanam sensed it; so did Karl Marx; and later, so did Pope Leo XIII. Beyond his obvious grounding in the scriptures and in the magisterium of the Catholic Church, Ozanam was an exquisitely astute observer of his times.

In 1824, when Ozanam was eleven, after the elimination of Napoleon, the Bourbons returned to the throne of France. Under Louis XVIII, the deep and old hostilities of the masses toward the Church, which the people per-

132. *Id.*

133. *Id.* at 34-35.

134. *Id.* at 35.

135. *Id.* at 123.

136. O'Meara, *supra* n. 71, at 190.

137. Ozanam, *supra* n. 120.

138. *Id.* at 34.

139. One sixth of the population of some quarters of Paris was on relief. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 31. In 1836, 30,500 men in Paris had no regular work, and 50,000 were entirely unemployed. *Id.* at 31-32. Factory workers' children had an average life span of less than two years. *Id.* at 32.

ceived as the ally of the corrupt *ancien régime*, resurfaced. In 1830, a revolt caused the abdication of the Bourbon Charles X, the successor to Louis XVIII, and the ascendancy of the Bourbon Louis-Philippe.¹⁴⁰

King Louis-Philippe's purportedly liberal, economically laissez-faire, middle-class government, from 1830 to 1848, was a corrupt fraud.

In actuality, the implied impartiality and nonintervention of the government in disputes between employers and workers was a fiction, for the power of the State was used entirely to strengthen the position of the moneyed class. The attitude of the July Monarchy to the poor was expressed by Guizot, the leading minister of Louis-Philippe, when he answered the complaints of the poor against the privileges of the rich with these words, "Get rich yourselves."¹⁴¹

While the neo-liberal bourgeois government of Louis-Philippe sought to control and suppress the seething masses who were detested by the elites, Ozanam predicted cataclysmic disaster, due to the ever-skewing disparities between the privileged and the poor. He foresaw deeper class warfare a decade before Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. In a letter to Father Lallier, Ozanam summarized the stark stakes: "It is the battle of those who have nothing and those who have too much; it is the violent collision of opulence and poverty which makes the earth tremble under our feet."¹⁴² From 1846 through 1847, the French economy collapsed into economic depression, and the famine began in Ireland. Widespread and deep poverty was immediate and pervasive in the European life and its theoretical consciousness.

Ozanam did not romanticize the poor, recognizing that their own ignorance and immorality contributed significantly to their predicament.¹⁴³ Although he was an incisive and astute assessor of the plight of the poor and of the workers, Ozanam proposed no broader social solutions.¹⁴⁴ He never developed any platform for realistically defusing tensions.

While he was opposed to socialism per se, he appreciated the integration of the otherwise potentially atomized individual into the broader community of caring persons. Ozanam saw that a person will often subordinate pure self-interest and take on duties and responsibilities for the greater good of his family.¹⁴⁵ He accepted the legitimacy of private property, provided that the property owner was careful not to be seduced by greed and materialism.¹⁴⁶ "Ozanam's economic theory, then, was that private property was a right and individual liberty a necessity; nevertheless, the voluntary sacrifice

140. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 201.

141. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 34.

142. *Id.* at 36.

143. *Id.* at 122.

144. *Id.* at 125-26.

145. *Id.* at 37.

146. *Id.* at 37, 122.

of a part of this right for the good of society was desirable, even imperative." Family and private property were necessary; the former was indispensable.¹⁴⁷ He distrusted government, but admitted, grudgingly, that a legitimate government can have a necessary leadership role.¹⁴⁸

His theory of work was rooted in the classic Catholic conception of the common good.¹⁴⁹ He considered work as the "law of regeneration" applicable to everyone. Likewise, everyone, in their own way, was called to work: "Useless servants of God we may be . . . lazy ones never."¹⁵⁰

Ozanam also believed that work could be inherently good and dignified, and that all workers should be treated with dignity. He summarized, "All can do honor to the work-room by probity and sobriety, by the charity which respects masters, unites companions, protects apprentices."¹⁵¹

He understood free labor as reflecting the essence of Christianity, triumphing over the slavery of paganism.

His works abound in fine passages on labor as one of the regenerating forces of the world, and of arguments and examples tending to show how the laborer, oppressed and despised by Paganism, was rehabilitated by Christianity. "Let us see what Christianity has done for the *ouvriers* . . . Free labor has no greater enemy than slavery, consequently the ancients, who held to slavery, trampled free labor under foot; they spurned it and stigmatized it with the most offensive names."¹⁵²

Until Pope Leo XIII's first labor encyclical in 1891, the Church institutionally and officially remained silent on workers' rights throughout virtually all of the nineteenth century and for much of the Industrial Revolution. The Church's institutional silence makes Ozanam's accomplishments all the more startling, and perhaps explains why the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was so immediately attractive to so many persons with material means. Working from classic, timeless Catholic precepts, he galvanized—virtually overnight and by his personal example—a worldwide and enduring movement to alleviate poverty.

Workers, infuriated with the reactionary Church that was allied with the repressive Bourbon Charles X, directed much of their rage against the Church during the 1830 Revolution. Due perhaps in part to the social outreach to the poor by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, however, some degree of reconciliation occurred between labor and the Church, which was, during the Revolution of 1848, perceived by many workers as an ally and friend.¹⁵³

147. *Id.* at 38, 122; see also Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 67.

148. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 38.

149. *Id.* at 37.

150. *Id.* at 61.

151. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 246.

152. O'Meara, *supra* n. 71, at 189.

153. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 40.

Workers who sacked the residence of Archbishop de Quelen of Paris in 1830 respectfully attended his funeral in 1840.¹⁵⁴ Catholicism was reinvigorated, and thousands returned to services in Paris alone.¹⁵⁵

In the Revolution of 1848, the Church in Paris was closely allied with the revolutionaries in the streets. The 1848 uprising was directed only against the unpopular monarchy of Louis-Philippe, and not also against the Church (unlike in 1830). King Louis-Philippe had not been popular with the Church, and many bishops, including Ozanam's Archbishop Affre of Paris, endorsed the republican revolutionary government after Louis-Philippe fled for exile in England.¹⁵⁶ Archbishop Affre allowed churches to be used as hospitals to treat the wounded and to collect money for their support. During the street fighting in Paris in February 1848, fighters went to mass, and "revolutionary pamphleteers and agitators spoke of Jesus, the proletariat of Nazareth, and announced that the victory of the Republic was the coming of the kingdom of God."¹⁵⁷

But during June 22–25, 1848, the army sealed off and methodically crushed the workers' barricades throughout Paris, destroying any viable liberal Catholic and workers' alliances in France for a century. Perhaps most poignantly, Archbishop Affre, accompanied by Ozanam to the barricades to mediate a ceasefire, was shot dead when gunfire erupted.¹⁵⁸ Affre's last words were "At least let my blood be the last that you shed."¹⁵⁹ De Tocqueville estimated that one hundred thousand workers were involved in the summer street battles against the army in Paris, a conflict that was the starkest class warfare, literally, to have thus far occurred in Europe.¹⁶⁰ More than sixteen thousand were killed, and the army took another fourteen thousand as prisoners.¹⁶¹

Working-class consciousness consequently became radicalized with the communist Left over the next several decades, and abandoned as futile any liberal Catholic-centrist alliance. After June 1848, the rest of France—peasant, bourgeois, and aristocrat—became very conservative, and Napoleon III ruled until 1870.¹⁶²

Ozanam was disillusioned by the violence, the anarchy, and the fighting in the streets.¹⁶³ This violent "barbarian invasion"¹⁶⁴ was hardly his

154. *Id.* at 95.

155. *Id.*

156. *Id.* at 105.

157. *Id.*

158. *Id.* at 116. In 1871, his successor as Archbishop of Paris was kidnapped and murdered by radical insurrectionists during the Paris Commune.

159. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 221.

160. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 112–17.

161. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 219.

162. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 112.

163. *Id.* at 113.

164. *Id.* at 114.

vision of a liberal Catholic workers' coalition. In April 1848, he became a member of the Parisian National Guard, consisting primarily of upper class elites. Temperamentally and physically unsuited for military duty, he willingly joined; fortuitously, he was not in combat in the streets of Paris.¹⁶⁵

Unlike many of his formerly liberal Catholic colleagues, Ozanam did not despair or lose hope in the ultimate possibilities of broad social justice for workers through liberal Catholic apostolates and alliances. He remained convinced that the poor's and the workers' causes, albeit not always their means, were just. In September 1848, he wrote that he continued "to believe in the possibility of Christian democracy."¹⁶⁶

In newspaper essays concurrent with the Revolution of 1848, he renewed his "journalistic campaign of social justice for the workers."¹⁶⁷ He regarded economic misery as the source of the waves of insurrection; in late 1848, two hundred and sixty-seven thousand people in Paris suffered from hunger and, in one representative Paris district where street fighting was concentrated against the army, seventy thousand of ninety thousand people required public assistance.¹⁶⁸ He urged a "crusade" of "charitable agitation" and a reform of institutions after the Revolution.¹⁶⁹ Shortly thereafter, however, he despaired about the ineffectiveness of sociopolitical journalism to influence substantive change, and, for the five remaining years of his life, he did not actively pursue any active journalistic role.¹⁷⁰

Ozanam, perhaps, put too much faith in technology—he did not foresee the dehumanizing negatives of the mechanization of work accelerated by the Industrial Revolution. He most immediately hoped that mechanization would substantially relieve workers from the drudgery and danger of much of early nineteenth-century work.¹⁷¹

Ozanam certainly developed broad social awareness of the necessity of justice for workers, belief in the possibilities of social progress, and social consciousness of the plight of the urban poor.¹⁷²

D. *Subsequent Influences*

Ozanam's influences on the practice of personalism continues most tangibly today in the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and in symmetrical groups such as the Catholic Worker movement.

His concept of the natural wage was a precursor to the minimum wage movement during the New Deal, and has a continuing legacy in the contem-

165. *Id.*

166. *Id.* at 121.

167. *Id.* at 124.

168. *Id.*

169. *Id.* at 126–27.

170. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 190.

171. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 94.

172. *Id.* at 90.

porary living wage initiatives successfully implemented in many municipalities throughout the United States.

A century after his death in 1853, the worker-priest movement in Belgium and France put into practice his counsel of priests devoting themselves to the poor.¹⁷³ He wrote, concerning the priests,

[B]usy yourselves always with the servants as well as with masters, and with workers as well as the rich; it is henceforth the only way of salvation for the Church in France. It is necessary that pastors give up their little bourgeois parishes, flocks of the elite in the midst of an immense population which they do not know.¹⁷⁴

He also wrote, in 1848, "If more Christians and especially the clergy had been concerned with the problems of the workers for the past ten years, we would be more certain of the future."¹⁷⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

Ozanam is a complex, courageous figure. He is an important role model for those striving to build the good society, coupling academic and intellectual insight with direct, personal action. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is his most impressive achievement. His intellectual contributions to social justice, especially the notion of the natural wage and the advocacy of greater workers' rights, also have a powerful, tangible legacy worthy of study and continued effectuation today through, for example, the living wage initiatives.

He was a champion of classic liberalism, not to be confused with the more narrow political liberalism.¹⁷⁶ He unequivocally aligned himself with liberal Catholicism, seeking harmony, rather than intractable opposition, between the Church and modern society.¹⁷⁷ "From the period of his arrival in Paris, Ozanam was heart and soul devoted to the liberal Catholic movement. His historical studies convinced him that the Church had to work in the modern world. . . ."¹⁷⁸ As one biographer summarized, "Catholic Liberalism meant that the adjective 'Catholic' governed the noun 'Liberalism,' and indicated unquestioned doctrinal orthodoxy, submission to the teaching

173. The worker priest movement in Belgium and France (1943–1954) began with priests sharing labor with and among the people incarcerated in Nazi forced labor camps during World War II. Their mission was the Christianization of the working classes. After the war, many priests continued their apostolate of living and working secular jobs among the general populations, rather than living apart from the people in clerical rectories. Because of concerns with affinities with the Communist Party, Pope Pius XII suppressed the movement in 1954. See generally Oscar L. Arnal, *Priests in Working Class Blue: The History of the Worker Priests (1943–1954)* (Paulist Press 1986).

174. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 107.

175. Renner, *supra* n. 21, at 65; see also Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 209.

176. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 83–84.

177. *Id.* at 79–80.

178. *Id.* at 81.

authority of the Church, and a correct, indeed ardent, attachment to the Sovereign Pontiff.”¹⁷⁹

Ozanam urged that the Church reconcile itself with modern society, and accept the legitimate achievement and fundamental principle of the French Revolution, liberty, as fully compatible with Catholicism. Ozanam was a champion of liberty, which he believed was fostered and developed especially by the Catholic Church in the early Middle Ages, and, more recently, was advanced as one of the legitimate features of the French Revolution. He understood liberty not as raw exultation of individual absolute autonomy, but, rather, as positive, social regard for one another.¹⁸⁰

He opposed the reactionary Bourbon motif of Charles X, deposed in 1830. He rejected the Bourbon theme of the purported union of the throne and the altar,¹⁸¹ and he advocated the separation of church and state as conducive to liberty.¹⁸² He considered himself a monarchist in the abstract, but pronounced democracy more workable and acceptable.¹⁸³ His adult life was bracketed by the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the latter of which swept Europe and crushed the liberal Catholic French alliance Ozanam worked so hard to foster all his life.¹⁸⁴

He believed in vigorous, intellectual, respectful, rational engagement in debate and discussion as the best means to address those opposed to Catholicism. He rejected invective, polemics, and condemnation. He believed in his opponents’ right to speak.¹⁸⁵ He subscribed to the Augustinian notion that truth is integrated, and that all truths, even those completely divorced from all religion, will lead to the source of all truth—to God. He wrote, “[I]t is not permissible to deny any truth, however profane, however embarrassing . . . God is at the end.”¹⁸⁶

While these are unproblematic axioms in the contemporary liberal state, and in the Catholic Church after Vatican II, they were hardly so in France and in the Catholic Church in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷ Pope Pius IX had yet to condemn many of the tenets of modernism and liberalism in the *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864, and the Papal States were a temporal

179. Schimberg, *supra* n. 9, at 225.

180. Auer, *supra* n. 82, at 89.

181. *Id.* at 85. He compared the old royalism to a “glorious invalid,” which, with its “wooden leg, cannot march at the same speed as the new generation.” *Id.* at 87.

182. *Id.*

183. *Id.* at 86.

184. *Id.* at 100–03. During the spring of 1848, Ozanam wrote an essay, “The Danger and Hopes of Rome,” arguing that a good new liberal order would confidently emerge from the dissolution of the former regime, just as the fall of Rome led to the civilization and culture of the Middle Ages.

185. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 14.

186. *Id.* at 61, 70.

187. *Id.* at 81. Pope Gregory XVI condemned *L’Avenir* (The Future), a liberal Catholic newspaper urging the Church to come to terms with the French Revolution. The paper was the project of some of Ozanam’s friends at the University of Paris in the early 1830s.

presence in European politics. Slavery continued in many parts of the world, and the Civil War in the United States did not occur until eight years after Ozanam's death.

Liberalism was deeply suspect in many royalist and conservative quarters of the Catholic Church of nineteenth-century France; however, the conservative Archbishop de Quelen eventually became a supporter of Ozanam, and his successor, Archbishop Affre, publicly endorsed Ozanam's work and writing.¹⁸⁸

More broadly, however, the Church's antipathy toward liberalism accelerated dramatically during the reign of the charismatic Pope Pius IX, who, ironically, was initially perceived as liberal when he began his papacy in 1846.¹⁸⁹ Two years later, during the instability of the Revolution of 1848, Pius IX fled from Rome.¹⁹⁰ Sadly, any realistic prospects for the flowering of liberal Catholicism in France were completely crushed when the army ruthlessly annihilated the working poor in pitched street battles throughout Paris in June 1848.¹⁹¹ Napoleon III, who then seized control of the government, cemented the conservative alliance with the completely disillusioned former liberal (and henceforth archconservative) Pope Pius IX, when his French army drove the Italian republicans from Rome and restored Pope Pius IX to the Vatican from exile in 1849.¹⁹²

Even the St. Vincent de Paul Society was suspect in some reactionary quarters for its hints of liberalism, perhaps even for being revolutionary; it was banned in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1852 for alleged liberalism.¹⁹³ Reactionaries feared that the charity of the Society might be used to further political, secular agendas opposed to prevailing power.

Ozanam testified that one of the obstacles to the extension of the Society was the vague fear that under the veil of charity there was a political end. For this reason the leaders of the organization made every effort to divorce it from all political connections; all Catholics were welcome to join, no matter what their political philosophy or position.¹⁹⁴

Paradoxically, Ozanam, one of the Church's great champions and its premier practitioner of Catholic social teaching through the work of the Society, operated firmly within the liberal intellectual motif to provide the platforms for the natural, living wage and for the rights of workers.

188. *Id.* at 95.

189. *Id.* at 96. The Church's distrust of modernism and liberalism did not dissipate substantially until Vatican II.

190. *Id.* at 98.

191. *Id.* at 97.

192. *Id.* at 119.

193. Auge, *supra* n. 19, at 27.

194. *Id.*

At a time when the Catholic Church was on the defensive and under assault, especially in France, Ozanam was unfailingly optimistic, affirmative, and progressive. Indeed, the “positive character” of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, in those challenging first few decades, was its, and perhaps Ozanam’s, most significant feature.¹⁹⁵ Unlike many liberal French Catholics (to say nothing of conservative royalists), he did not fear and loathe the poor; he literally embraced them. “Ozanam can be placed beside his astute Catholic contemporary, Alexis de Tocqueville, in his conviction that the future is in the hands of the masses, for better or for worse.”¹⁹⁶ Even after the Revolution of 1848, Ozanam championed democracy, “not simply as a political system, but as a new, popular, mass, egalitarian society.”¹⁹⁷ He urged that Catholics ally with “the barbarians,” a term that he understood to mean—not ‘anarchists’ or ‘extremists’—but, rather, the democratic masses of the people.¹⁹⁸

Perhaps there was considerable utopianism and naiveté in much of Ozanam’s worldview, in believing that private charity could significantly ameliorate deeply embedded structural poverty.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, he firmly believed that the widespread practice of direct, personal, individual charity to individual poor was the best hope for avoiding social disaster.²⁰⁰

The primary means by which Ozanam hoped to improve the life of the urban poor was the widespread practice of Christian charity. It was upon this virtue that he placed his chief hope for the future. Catholics, through the practice of charity, must mediate and reconcile the conflicting interests of the rich and the poor; this was an idea that constantly reoccurred in his correspondence in the years prior to the Revolution of 1848.²⁰¹

After the Revolution of 1848, Ozanam remained hopeful, though chastened by the realization that the struggle for social justice would be longer and much more difficult than he had initially imagined in the 1830s and 1840s.²⁰² In his book, *Civilization in the Fifth Century*, he wrote,

It remains therefore to leave a place for liberty in human destiny, and consequently a place for error and crime. There will be some days of sickness, some lost years, some centuries that do not move forward, some centuries that retrogress. . . . In these periods of disorder God lets the people be masters of their own acts, but He has his hand upon society; He does not permit it to deviate beyond a certain point, and it is there that He awaits it in order to

195. *Id.*

196. *Id.* at 86.

197. *Id.* at 103.

198. *Id.*

199. *Id.* at 38–39, 42.

200. *Id.* at 38.

201. *Id.*

202. *Id.* at 136–37.

lead it by a painful and shadowy detour to this perfection that they have forgotten for the moment.²⁰³

Liberalism simply did not have sufficiently deep roots in France after the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, or 1848 to allow Ozanam's agenda for workers' rights to gain positive traction. His idea of the masses of the people—the “barbarians”—being the future of liberty and democracy was, at best, deeply suspect among the French and Catholic elites. Other than perhaps a few years in the 1840s, when Ozanam and the supportive archbishop of Paris coalesced around liberal Catholic ideas and initiatives, the Catholic Church in France remained aligned with conservative, reactionary, and royalist power.

Through the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Ozanam helped French Catholics develop a social conscience.²⁰⁴ And, even if the Society did little to ameliorate embedded, structural poverty, it unquestionably alleviated many individual instances of suffering and want.²⁰⁵

Ozanam is a refreshing exception to another norm. In the Catholic litany of saints, very few are married laypersons. Likewise, especially before Vatican II, very few married laypersons founded and led major Catholic organizations. One of the early and enduring attractions of the Society has been its lay character and leadership.²⁰⁶ Ozanam found great solace and spiritual strength in his family life, and refined the necessity of selflessness in marriage to spur his ideas regarding external charity.²⁰⁷

He did not live to see *Rerum Novarum* promulgated, which incorporated his advocacy of the natural wage and of broader workers' rights. He would have been pleased to see the practice of personalism given deeper philosophical structure by Edmund Mounier in his journal *L'Esprit* in the 1920s and 1930s. He would have been even more gratified to see the practice of personalism given renewed vigor by French peasant expatriate Peter Maurin, co-founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality for the poor and homeless in New York City in 1933.

He would have been pleased to see French worker priests living and working among laboring and poor people a century after his death. He would have been profoundly disappointed when they were suppressed by the hierarchy. He would have been pleased to see the living wage initiative, based on his theory of the natural wage, successfully moving forward in many municipalities in the United States today.

Ultimately, Ozanam was an exemplary Catholic scholar and eloquent public intellectual in a cultural milieu often overtly hostile to the Catholic Church. He fearlessly championed workers' rights, and his concept of the

203. *Id.* at 138.

204. *Id.* at 41.

205. *Id.* at 42.

206. *Id.* at 29.

207. *Id.* at 57.

natural wage took root in the great labor encyclicals and in secular wage legislation that continue to resonate today in the living wage initiatives. He was, however, that rarest of intellectuals: one who served—directly and personally, and throughout his entire adult life—the immediate needs of the poor. The poor were not an abstraction; they were, and are, his brothers in Christ.