OTHER BOOKS BY
JOSEPH I. DIRVIN, C.M.

St. Catherine Labouré of the Miraculous Medal

Woman Clothed With the Sun

Mrs. Seton, Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity

Louise de Marillac
Frédéric Ozanam
A LIFE IN LETTERS
Frédéric Ozanam 1813-1853
FOREWORD

The Council of the United States has taken on the responsibility of publishing an annotated English translation of selected correspondence of our Frédéric Ozanam. This praiseworthy effort is made possible by the unselfish labor of Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., who has translated the letters from the original French. We are deeply indebted to him and the Council of the United States for this opportunity to share our founder’s works with our brother and sister Vincentians and all persons.

The publication is timely in this Year of the Laity, for Frédéric Ozanam was truly an outstanding layman. In his message to the Holy Father in the Cause of Frédéric Ozanam, Cardinal Pironio, President of the Pontificum Consilium Pro Laicis, characterized Ozanam as a loving husband and father, an outstanding teacher, a learned scholar thirsting for knowledge, an apologist passionately defending the Church, a faithful friend, and a committed Christian. Cardinal Pironio went on to state that despite all Ozanam’s suffering “he was really the man of the Church in the heart of the world and the man of the world in the heart of the Church.”

As you read the intimate correspondence Ozanam had with his beloved family and friends, the saintliness of this sensitive man pours out of the pages. There is a quiet intensity, a deep love of Our Lord, and a clear realization that the role of the Society and its membership is vital in carrying out God’s mandate to care for His people in need.

Those who have read Ozanam’s biographies know of the breadth of his career accomplishments. A career that clearly could not have been telescoped into the few short years of his life were it not for his penetrating intelligence and fervent devotion to God and His people. In the pages that follow you will share the deeply emotional and spiritual presence that pervaded his vocation.

It is my devout hope that not only Vincentians but also other people living today everywhere who share this insight into the life of our founder will grow in faith and zeal because of the experience. I hope that you, like I, will be struck with the timelessness of his writing. Although much of what is chronicled here happened well over 100 years ago, you will find that the philosophy and challenges are as contemporary as if written today. He lives today in your works.

Amin A. De Tarrazi
President of the International Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Frédéric Ozanam was born April 23, 1813, at Milan—then under French rule—where his father was practicing medicine. Frédéric grew up in Lyon and had his early schooling at the Collège Royal de Lyon. He was a brilliant student with a far-ranging mind and enormous capacity for work, despite a frail constitution. It was, perhaps, this precocity—he was publishing in learned magazines at 16—that prompted a “crisis of doubts,” which caused great anguish to his deep and devout faith and which his mentor and spiritual guide, Abbé Noirot, helped him eventually withstand.

Frédéric entered the Sorbonne at Paris to study law in 1831. In the French capital he made the acquaintance and fell under the influence of the great Catholic minds of the day: Chateaubriand, Montalembert, Lacordaire, Ballanche, and Ampère with whom he boarded for a time.

There was much anti-Catholicism in the University, and professors were not above salting their lectures by attacking the Church or baiting believing students. Ozanam gathered some dozen-and-a-half such believers around him, and together they answered every attack, respectfully but firmly, to the admiration of their fellow students and the discomfort of the offending professors.

The young law student and a number of these young defenders of the faith also put their words into deeds with the formation of a Conference of Charity in May, 1833. With the formalization of the rules and purposes of the infant association in 1835, it took the official title Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which it had begun to adopt the previous year.

Ozanam took his law degree and began private practice at Lyon but soon abandoned it as he understood ever more clearly that his real interest lay in academics and that his true intellectual bent was for foreign literatures. Returning to the Sorbonne, he earned his first degree in literature in 1835 and attained the doctorate in 1839. After a year at Lyon as its university’s first chair professor in commercial law, he returned to Paris as a substitute professor at the Sorbonne, assuming the Chair of Foreign Literatures in his own right in 1844 at the age of 31.

Now his genius flourished in the fame of his courses and the intensity and originality of his literary criticisms and expositions. He was at home in the romance tongues, as well as German and English and classical Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He gained special renown as a Dante scholar, and his approach to the poet revolutionized subsequent research.

On June 23, 1841, Ozanam married Amélie Soulacroix. They had one daughter, Marie.
Besides Frédéric’s full intellectual life, he was on constant call to serve the Church, which he did not only by his complete dedication to the rapidly growing Society of Vincent de Paul but also as editor of the *Annales* of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith and liaison between its Paris and Lyon councils and in a host of ongoing delicate and often secret negotiations with the government in the Church’s behalf. He was, at the same time, a prolific contributor to the leading Catholic journals of the day.

Unfortunately his physical frame could not stand up to it all, and tuberculosis gradually sapped his energy and strength. He died quietly at Marseilles on September 8, 1853, at the age of 40.

The cause for the beatification and canonization of Frédéric Ozanam is currently in process at Rome.
1821-1836
3. To his father
January 16, 1821

Feast day wishes. Good resolutions.

Dear Papa,

I love you very much! In bringing you best wishes on our mutual feast day, I assure you it is with all my heart. I give you my letter, and you promise me Télémaque. I want to become very wise and very obedient, no more whining like the other day. I would hope that my wisdom and obedience bring you joy and happiness and a long life.

It was very good of you to allow me to dine at Madame Galline’s, for I had a very good time. I am not ungrateful, and I want my prompt obedience to show my gratitude.

Adieu, dear papa. I am, with respect, your dear son.

FRED.-ANTOINE OZAN.

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Original: Archives Laporte.

Notes:
1. The numbering of letters in this collection follows that of The French Critical Edition: Lettres de Frédéric Ozanam:
2. The title of a book Frédéric wanted.

6. To Auguste Materne
Cuires, September 12, 1829

Reply to Materne’s criticism of an article on Christianity’s freeing of slaves.

Dear friend,

Mama brought from Lyon the letter you happily decided to write me. Nothing startles me more than a letter from Materne. I begin to fear an accident or misfortune . . . I open the letter. I read and am agreeably surprised to find only the good
advice of a good friend. The only thing that bothers me is that you digress too much for me to know what your thoughts are. Get to the matter, lawyer.

I come to the case, which is very well pleaded. But I am sorry not to be able to discuss it with you face to face. I would agree with you that my intentions can be misunderstood. Nevertheless I think I expressed them very clearly since one of the first sentences says, “Let us weep for the misfortune of our oppressed brothers; let us weep for the cruelty of our brothers the oppressors.”

Further, I have clearly pointed out, as you yourself admit, the intellectual and moral slavery joined to bodily slavery; it is one of the dominant thoughts of my letter. I even added that Christianity, freeing people from intellectual and moral slavery and giving them the liberty of the children of God, ought also to free them from bodily slavery.

I made every effort, therefore, to show how I felt—making no case for the barbarians sympathetic to the Negro trade—that I was as horrified as you.

As for the object of the prophecy, I think it could be given the meaning I have attributed to it. For, as a famous author said (I think it was Newton), one should judge prophecies by the outcome. Prophecy foretelling a slavery in general terms and slavery being general and a real fact, nothing stands in the way, it seems to me, of the application I have made. My assertion is fortified by this observation, which I ask you to verify, that frequently the predictions in Scripture apply equally to two orders of phenomena, physical and intellectual. Such a one is the destruction of Jerusalem and punishment of the Jews. At the same time they were expelled and despised, they were struck with blindness and obstinacy. The same with this other scriptural prediction: “You shall eat your bread in the sweat of your brow;” which applies as much to the nourishment of the soul as of the body.

So much for useless words. You have, perhaps, the last issue of l’Abeille. My article is in it or has not yet appeared. If it is, you can judge without so much of my prattle; if it is not, all my arguments are vain and I willingly submit to the distinguished people who edit the journal. For, if as you tell me, this article might be contrary to justice and good morals, or if it could be wrongly interpreted, I a hundred times prefer that it not be printed. Had there been time, I would have withdrawn it to read it over with you. But, jacta est alea.

Let me now say that you have made me laugh by praising my zeal for reading the Holy Bible, by talking about my reputation, my numerous articles, by comparing my letter to the most orthodox philosophical systems, etc. . . . We are no longer in rhetoric class, so why so many oratorical pains in speaking to a friend? Do you know that even when you tell me foolish things, I take them as proofs of your friendship for me and your zeal for truth? Much more when you make observations both wise and friendly. Disputare philosophorum est. Did not Cicero debate with Atticus? Si parva licet componere magnis.

You recognize that we agree on one point: the danger of a false interpretation. A short conversation would put us in quick agreement on the others. Thank you for your good advice: next time I will be more careful. I wrote the article off the top of my head and in half an hour, and took it to M. Louet the same day. In the future I
will reread dispassionately articles written in a moment of ardor and let a night pass between composition and correction. In the meantime be ever sure that I will accept your advice with the greatest affection and try to profit from it, and am always

Your faithful friend,
A.-F. OZANAM

Address: To Monsieur, Monsieur Auguste Materne, at Collonges
Original: Archives Laporte
Notes:
1. Auguste Louis Materne, born at Lyon June 2, 1812, entered the Ecole Normale in 1832 and, after a university career without distinction, retired in December 1869 as censor of the Lycee de Versailles. He published classic translations of Latin, Greek, and German authors. His father was a Lyon businessman.
4. The die is cast.
5. Philosophers dispute.
6. Marcus Tullius Cicero, most eloquent of Roman orators, born 106 B.C.
8. If the little can be compared to the great.

11. To Auguste Materne
Lyon, May 5, 1830

Justification of a position taken in a poem on the Algerian expedition.

Dear Materne,

How could you wonder whether I would accuse you of indifference to our country? Oh how well I know you, and know well that if our minds do not always agree on some political matters, both our hearts at least beat together for our belle France.

But I must say that you surprise me greatly by finding me too rigorous in judging the Algerians, and while I have decided to make some changes in that regard, I think I should defend myself.

First, it seems to me that a war poem should deal in exaggeration and hyperbole in order to speak the language of orators. Poetry should be like a concave mir-
ror that exaggerates the size of things; and lyric poetry especially should, I think, be
the expression of exalted sentiment, of passion. But passions are pieces of glass that
highly exaggerate everything seen in passing. What is my error, then, if there is one?
It is to confuse the nation with the government. But I do that only in rhetorical
figure, as you know very well. For that matter, is it not true that politically the gov-
ernment is the representation of the nation? And is not war declared against a gov-
ernment always declared against the nation? Is there not such a solidarity between
the nation and the government, that one's mistakes are also the other's? When
Bonaparte destroyed Austria and Prussia, was it not the nation it struck in order to
punish the government? And if that is true for all peoples in general, is it not more
so for Algeria in particular where the dey is elected, where the people give a man
authority when he pleases them and the reverse when he suits them no longer?
Do you not see that the Algerians, who have already killed so many of their
governors, would kill the present one if he did not agree with their sentiments. If
then the Algerians have chosen a criminal to rule over them, and at present they
have, they are as criminal as he is.
You must not then make the mistake of thinking the Algerians so innocent. I
have it on very good authority that not only is piracy practiced in the government’s
name, but also that most of the country’s pirates work for themselves. Algeria’s
commerce consists entirely of piracy and the sale of slaves. And that is what makes
me tremble. I am overcome with horror when I think that you or I could some fine
day become the prey of these pirates if we had to embark on some voyage or when
I think that one of our relatives could be taken and sold to the Grand Turk for
his harem.
The Algerians have always behaved as they do today. If, then, the fault is with
the government, we must say that their government has always been to blame, and
the nation innocent, that that unhappy people, good as they are, have always been
so blind as to choose a government that deceives them and that they have done so
for 500 years. So for me, I find this argument to be more than a little absurd.
As for the sentiments you profess on the subject of the lottery, I am in perfect
agreement with you, loudly applaud the measures which have finally diminished
the number of lotteries greatly, and plead and plead for the memorable day when
that miserable siren will be forever exterminated.
I know that the lottery has caused more misery than piracy, and I do not main-
tain that piracy is the reason why the French lack bread, but I do think the pirates
have at all times wreaked havoc with commerce. I only meant to contrast the
wealth of most of these armed Algerian criminals with the poverty of so many hon-
est workers who are dying of hunger.
Let us pass on to this. . . . You believe that there is no reason for the war with
Algeria . . . but, then, is the insult to Provence’s ships nothing in your eyes? You
believe that it was done without taking a vote. I know it is true that it was not de-
creed by the Chambre, and according to the ever memorable Charter given us, the
right to make war and peace appertains to the king. On the other hand, does not
the multitude of volunteers, the enthusiasm of the soldiers and the sea coast towns,
and the agreement of the majority of newspapers show the will of the people? And because such and such a paper is of the opposite opinion, do you believe that such a war should be postponed until we have the assent of these gentlemen? You say that there is no point to it and you despair of the usefulness of the attempt. I think you are wrong. It is true, M. de Polignac\(^1\) belongs to the \textit{ancien régime}.\(^2\) He could even be an anglophile. But I also believe that M. de Polignac has not lost that old quality of honor common to all French from the most shrivelled marquis of '89 to the deputy of 1830. I believe that M. de Polignac, aspiring to make the Algerian War the most glorious event of his ministry, would not be so foolish as to take in regard to it artifi-

French steps contrary to his own interests. Oh my friend, I believe that patriotism
dwells in every French heart. And why attribute a bad intention before seeing the outcome? Patience! Do not try to judge men's thoughts categorically when only probabilities are available. Do not think, just the same, that I want to eulogize M. de Bourmont.\(^4\)

Finally, there is something in my heart I must get out: you condemn the religious motive at the end of my poem. I never wished to say that the war was undertaken for that motive, but I did think it really the secret motive of Providence which, by destroying Muhammadanism in Africa, would pave the way for civilization in that unhappy country. Besides, is it not worthy of Providence to bring to the attention of nations the chastisement of these great criminals, and is it not time that a really cruel people disappeared from the face of the earth? I hold that Providence here directs the arm of temporal power, and Providence has its own ways. How greatly have not the Mussulmen made Christians suffer? Is it not just that their turn should come? For the rest, since there is no philosophical exactitude present, I believe that the heroic belongs to poetry; and I only express sentiments that can be found everywhere in the Prophets.

I confess, however, that your comments have bred some serious doubts in me concerning my piece, and I have decided, after some partial changes, to show it to M. Noirot\(^5\) for a judgment of the whole thing: I have a rapport with him.

Do not be angry with me, dear friend, for having spoken frankly and for not taking your advice at once. I am very anxious to ask your advice again. Let us dare to contradict each other sometimes: truth and concord will end up by banishing strife. Let us open our hearts and discuss things with wisdom. Our friendship will only become firmer. Oh, yes, we shall always be friends! Right?

\begin{flushright}
A.-F. OZANAM
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\textit{Address:} To Monsieur, Monsieur Aug. Materne, poet, philosopher, etc. Lyon

\textit{Original:} Archives Laporte

\textit{Notes:}
2. Jules Armand, Prince de Polignac (1780-1847), president of the council and minister of foreign affairs under Charles X.
3. The government in France before 1789.
4. Louis, Compte de Bourmont (1773-1846), French marshal who commanded the French army in the Algerian War.

5. Abbé Joseph Mathias Noirot (1799-1880), longtime teacher of philosophy at the Collège de Lyon, exercised great influence over Ozanam, which many letters evidence. He became, in 1853, inspector general and in 1854 rector of the Académie de Lyon.

12. To Auguste Materne
Lyon, June 5, 1830

Ozanam recalls events of his own youth and analyzes his dominant traits of character.

Dear Materne,

A big thank you for your good letter and still more for the confidence you place in me. I want to think indeed that it is not your intention to flatter me, but only on condition that, when you have time, you will favor me with your judicious criticisms and share with me those pleasant compositions your modesty belittles and you hide.

For the rest, your closing comments prompt me to give you the following few biographical details of the years up to the present, and some psychological details of my personality. Without this occasion I would perhaps have put it off until later. Why put off strengthening the bonds of a friendship which has so beautiful and happy a future?

No, dear Materne, it is not the pleasant recreations spent with you, nor the family meals, nor the little get-togethers of friends that I reproach myself with. Far from me is such a thought. I believe as you do that adequate recreation is necessary and that the innocent pleasures of friendship accord highly with God’s law. Even more, I confess, and without doubt you already know, that the pleasures of the great world do not please me, so that whatever I say of it in my piece of verse must be considered hyperbolic and exaggerated by imagination: indeed, it can all be reduced to this single idea that all the pleasures I have discovered have never offered me true happiness. It is also true to say that I have seen many people hardly Christian and much given to pleasure, and these people were not happy. That is that.

Now I am going to tell you what I have been like up to today. Read to the end; the end is best.

They tell me that when I was a child, I was very good and docile, and they attribute it to the weakness of my temperament, but I see another reason. I had a beloved sister who taught me together with my mother, and their lessons were so good, so well presented, so well tempered to my childish mind that I found real pleasure in them. In sum, I truly believe that I was good enough then, save for some little faults, and I reproach myself for nothing of moment then. At seven I suffered a
serious illness. Everyone believes too freely that I did not survive except by a miracle. Not that I lacked care. My good parents never left my bedside for fifteen days and nights. I was about to die when, in my delirium, I asked for beer (N.B. I never liked it previously). And the beer saved me. I was cured. Six months later my sister, my good sister, died. I joined deeply in the common sorrow. Oh how sad I was.

I studied Latin, and in studying it I acquired malice. Truly I have never been as bad, I believe, as I was at eight. Nevertheless, a good father, mother and brother went on with my schooling. At that time I had no friends besides my family. I became bad tempered, arrogant and disobedient. I was punished, and grew obstinate under it.

I would write letters to Mama to plead for me. And then there began to run through my head all kinds of wicked ideas that I tried in vain to resist. That was when I was about to enter the college, at nine and a half. Little by little I became better. Example drew me from idleness, I liked my teacher very much, I made the acquaintance of the excellent Ballofet, any successes encouraged me, and I studied hard, but at the same time I began to be proud. It was high time for me to change from slops and stupidities, etc., etc. But I changed a great deal.

It was almost the same in the fifth, where I had a long illness and was obliged to spend a month in the country with a fine lady where I acquired a great deal of courtesy which was lost in great part afterward.

I relaxed a bit in the fourth, and in the third I recaptured my courage. It was then that I made my first communion. Day of happiness, may my hand wither and my tongue cleave to my palate if I ever forget it! I changed greatly then. I became modest, good, docile, and unfortunately also a little scrupulous.

You are a little more acquainted with my life since then; it suffices to say that since then I am more hardworking perhaps but remain still proud and impatient enough.

But I must go into some detail about a painful period of my life, a period which began when I was in rhetoric and ended this past year. From hearing about unbelievers and unbelief, I asked myself why I believed. I doubted, dear friend, and though I wanted to believe and resisted the doubt, I read every book where religion was proven and not one of them satisfied me completely. I would believe for a month or two on the authority of certain reasoning: an objection would leap to my mind, and I would doubt again. Oh! How I suffered, for I wanted to be religious. I buried myself in Valla. Valla did not satisfy me. My faith was not firm, and meanwhile I preferred to believe without reason than to doubt, because it tormented me too much.

I began philosophy. The thesis of certitude upset me completely. I believed for an instant I could doubt my existence and could not. I finally decided to believe. Little by little everything reasserted itself, and today I believe on the authority of the idea of cause.

During this time my imagination was active; criminal and licentious thoughts overwhelmed me in spite of myself. I wanted to banish them and was too occupied with them. My venerable confessor told me not to be upset, and I have not yet
succeeded, although they are rarer today. I flatter myself that such thoughts are not mine, nor from me. At least so I was told and am told still. Unfortunately I sometimes still allow myself to be entrapped.

I must tell you further, so as to hide nothing, that often these thoughts insinuate something of the sensual in my enjoyments, and sometimes distract my mind and my eyes. I must confess, however, that the dark passion of love has still no power over my heart and that I know only friendship.

For the rest I believe that I have always a good enough heart, cherish my friends, am habitually compassionate toward the poor, grateful to those who are good to me, and never hold a grudge.

That is what I was; this is what I am. I tell you everything without prejudice, the bad and the good.

As for the bad, I reduce it to four predominant faults: pride, impatience, weakness, and an extreme meticulousness. Pride and everything in its train: love of praise, difficulty in seeing my faults, sometimes a bit of arrogance. Impatience, only toward my little brother, who often riles me. When I speak of weakness, I mean human respect, little firmness in holding to a resolution, etc., and scrupulosity, extreme meticulousness, I mean regarding spiritual matters and exactness in composition. Add to these faults that of despising the neighbor a little too easily and you have my bad side.

As to the good in me, it is this: a heart which I think not perverse, an intention ordinarily excellent, but which often fails in certain circumstances, and a desire to do well which dominates me overall. I think I possess the two qualities which make a good Frenchman, patriotism and loyalty. I love my country very much and have ever abhorred duplicity. I hold to my . . . , and I am faithful to those I . . . loved, but on parting from a friend coldness pierces my soul without however preventing me from loving him always. I love . . . ' advice is given me, but friendly advice like theirs; I would prefer it to be harsher. I insist on preserving my freedom, however, and reserve the right to follow or not the advice given. I think I am grateful and am certain I keep secrets well. For the rest I am devoted to religion without being very pious, which is why I can sometimes be or appear intolerant. I swear that I love to work, but I let myself be distracted easily. To sum up, I think I could become either a very wicked or a very virtuous man. I hope I have now chosen the latter and will be all my life at least a good Frenchman, a good friend, and a good Christian.

There is your man: I have told all; I have opened my heart to you; you know me thoroughly. You now know whether you want to continue our friendship, break it off or deepen it. Whatever happens, I will always love you, always wish to remain and become ever more your friend.

A.-F. OZANAM

If you wish to continue your friendship, I beg you not to pamper me, to advise and never flatter me: be as frank as I have been in this letter, for I have given you the testimony of my conscience.
Address: Monsieur, Monsieur A. Materne, at Collognes


Notes:
1. I count on your discretion. (Note added by Ozanam.)
2. Pierre Ballofet (1811-1880) and Ozanam were students together at the Collège de Lyon and again at Paris where Ballofet studied law from 1834 to 1838 and was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. On his return to Lyon ill health forced him out of general practice of the law. A lifelong bachelor, he occupied himself “administering contested properties and following the various lawsuits they gave rise to” (Ballofet to Ozanam, August 10, 1845).
3. Père Joseph Valla is the author of a philosophy manual (Institutiones Philosophiae) for use in the schools of the Archdiocese of Lyon. Published in 1782, this work was frequently reedited until 1855.
4. Words illegible.

13. To Auguste Materne
Lyon, June 8, 1830

Pleasure of a mutual friendship. Benefits of a common faith.

Dear friend,

What good your letter, which I have just received, has done me. How happy I am! If you knew what it cost me to write my last letter. Dieu! I said to myself, if he should find me unworthy of his friendship! And I wished to erase something or to begin the letter over, not to tell everything at once but save the rest for another time. I trembled while mailing the letter to your home, then regretted having sent it. I waited anxiously for the reply. Was it a declaration of war? A formal break? My heart raced. I read the first lines and I am happy! I am happy to have told all, to have hidden nothing. I am relieved of a heavy burden. I breathe again, friend, I am content.

My friend! It is on June 8, 1830, at six o’clock in the evening that I say it with all the warmth of my heart. Oh! It is very true. I wanted you for my friend. I made overtures. I probed. I acted like Master Raton pulling the chestnuts from the fire. I asked myself, “Does he love you? Does he bother himself with my friendship?” I hoped. Today I am sure. Oh! Quam bonum et jucundum habitare fratres in unum.1

We will love each other all our lives, and our beautiful religion tells us that we shall love each other even beyond. Our religion! I need to say something more about it. I hold fast to religion out of admiration and reason but, as I have shown you, fail in fervor and charity. I suffer a great deal, but my wise director reassures me
by telling me that at my age these kinds of temptations are frequent, continual, and will disappear when I am formed. When I am formed. When will that day come?

Like yourself, I often find myself criticizing sermons, etc., whether on a point of politics or a scientific opinion, but I am always careful and do not allow myself too easily to judge others, especially as to their intention. I would like to have childlike submission to the Church and am trying to suppress rash judgments. I hope I finally succeed.

As to my religious duties, I make every effort to fulfill them exactly, especially confession, precisely because it costs me more. You would not believe how difficult it is for me to go to confession. My sloth complains, my pride groans, my scruples revive, I suffer. May God be understanding. I would put it off, but the more I put it off, the greater the pain. So I take the best remedy, which is promptness, and with the frequent repetition of the act, the less I have to tell, which bothers me less.

Oh! Dear friend, we both have a terrible conflict to endure. We have much to suffer. Let us join forces, helping each other, encouraging each other. Let us flatter each other no longer, but tell each other the truth. Good advice often, sometimes criticism, but always the criticism of friends. Let us look together for some eminently practical means of curing the ills we both experience. Let us unite in being good Christians. Such a union could not but be blessed from on high, and one day we shall attain, happy travelers at the end of our journey, that place where we shall congratulate each other for having passed every peril and be reunited in a friendship which brought us earthly happiness and contributed to the happiness beyond.

Write me your political, literary opinions, etc. I will write you mine. I will receive yours with pleasure, even if we are not in agreement. But by the way of orderly presentation we might quickly discover the point of argument and perhaps even end by agreeing. I truly believe we are made for each other! Let us not be afraid to tell each other the whole truth. I regret very much having sometimes hidden what I thought in order to seem to agree with you.

Send me, please, your pieces of poetry; I will receive them with thanks. What does opinion do to friendship? The sphere of friendship is well outside it.

Adieu, dear Materne. Your friend forever,

A.-F. OZANAM

I promise again my advice. Let us promise each other never to be offended over mutual advice. Let us ask it as a right and receive it as a benefit.

I forgot to give you the statistics of my biography: born April 23, 1813, I made my first communion May 11, 1826. I became your true friend June 18, 1830. I died. . . .

I forgot to tell you I am often melancholy enough by nature. There are days when I am depressed, when I want to weep without knowing why. But these are clouds which a friend dissipates very quickly.
Address: To Monsieur, Monsieur A. Materne, at Lyon

Original: Archives Laporte.

Note:
1. In the margin of the first page are the following lines which accord with this passage: “Of four people who know the depth of my soul, you are one and you see, except for particular circumstances, everything as clearly as my confessor does. Indeed, from the day we preferred each other, loved each other wholly.”

36. To Henri Pessonneaux
Lyon, November 1, 1831

Announces his departure for Paris.

Dear Henri,

I leave for Paris tomorrow, Wednesday, at seven o’clock in the morning by Royal Coaches. I arrive Saturday morning between six and nine o’clock at the Bureau of Royal Coaches, rue N.D. des Victoires, from which I will go to my pension, Mme. Lecomte’s, rue Neuve Saint-Etienne, n. 11 et 13.

I hope you can come to see me during the day on Saturday or at least early Sunday. I am charged with delivering two diamonds to you.

Adieu, your cousin and friend,
A.-F. Ozanam

Address: To Monsieur Henri Pessonneaux, at his father’s, Colonel M. Pessonneaux, rue Faubourg Poissonière, n. 7, at Paris.

Original: Archives Laporte.

Note:
1. Cousin and close friend of Ozanam, Henri Pessonneaux is known to us by the former’s correspondence. Mme. Ozanam included a short notice about her husband’s friend in the Lettres (1912, t. I., p. 282). He died in 1869 after an obscure life.

38. To his father
Paris, November 12, 1831

Visit to Ampère. Proposal to move in. Sends his account and projected expenses. Asks for a monthly allotment for recreation.

Do not be upset, please, good Father, if I so often take the liberty of writing to you. Beyond the comfort I find in chatting with you, I must keep you abreast of my affairs and today I have a very important reason for getting in touch with you.
Tuesday I went to pay a courtesy visit to M. Ampère, a member of the Institut, whom I had met at Lyon with M. Perisse. After giving me a most cordial welcome, he asked several questions about my situation in Paris, and the price of my pension, then getting up at once he took me to a most agreeable room occupied until the present by his son, and there: "I offer you," he said, "table and lodging with me, at the same price as your pension. Your tastes and sentiments are compatible with mine, and I would enjoy having the opportunity to chat with you. You will get to know my son who is very much involved with German literature, and his library will be at your disposal. You are simple, so are we. My sister-in-law, daughter and son dine with me, and would be good company for you. What do you think?" I replied that such an arrangement would be very much to my liking and that I would write at once for your advice.

Now, then, M. Ampère lives very close to the Ecole de Droit; it would take five minutes or less for me to get there. The room is nicer than the one I have here, on the ground floor with a garden, higher by two steps and very healthy since M. Ampère, the son, lived here until recently and only left to take up residence in town. M. Ampère is wealthy; his table ought to be well supplied. The company is excellent; I would learn elegance and Parisian manners, and at the same time I would have these two gentlemen whose acquaintances ... time for my second report I was obliged to reinforce my stomach with some pastries which were very expensive.

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<td>Institutes, Code, Breviary</td>
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<td>Note pads for two courses</td>
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<td>Paper, pens, fees, provisions</td>
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<td>Ink, inkwell, seals, ruler, crayon</td>
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<td>English handkerchiefs</td>
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<td>Lip salve</td>
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<td>Lecture hall subscription</td>
<td>4fr.</td>
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<td>Two former sessions</td>
<td>0fr.40</td>
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<td>Omnibus on a rainy day</td>
<td>0fr.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastry (today)</td>
<td>0fr.50</td>
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<td>Repair of my old hat</td>
<td>2fr.</td>
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<td>Cost of a brochure of M. de Chateaubriand for M. Bonnevie, who will reimburse you for it</td>
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So I have only 11 francs from which I must buy a little wood for here because it
gets cold in the evening, pay my next laundry, buy eyeglasses, advance 5 francs for a
boy's school entrance fee for M. Brun (who will reimburse you), etc. . . . Note that I
have not entertained myself, although there is here a magnificent panorama of the
battle of Navarin which I have not dared go to see because the entrance fee is 50
sous. However, I know I have spent a great deal, but what could I do? I would be
very obliged if you could give me a little allotment each month for my recreation, as
you did at Lyon; I have a great need to distract myself. It is very hard, being alone.

On another occasion I will share with you my comments and observations.
Today was the day for serious matters. Give Mamma, Alphonse and Charles a big
hug for me. The farther I am from you the more I feel my love for you.

Your son
A.-F. Ozanam


Notes:
1. "André-Marie Ampère, mathematical expert and French physician, born at Lyon. He discov-
ered the principles of electric telegraphy and the fundamental law of electrodynamics . . . (1775-
2. Jean-Jacques Ampère, son of the preceding, French litterateur and historian, born at Lyon (1800-
1864). Larousse.
3. Words illegible.

43. To Ernest Falconnet
Paris, February 10, 1832


Do not grumble, good friend, at my long delay in replying to you, especially do
not have any thought of forgetfulness on my part. Come, I never forget you. Every
day I think of you, speak of you often, and if I fail to write, it is for lack of leisure, not
of willingness. More recently I had intended to write you a long and philosophic
letter, when serious worry prevented my tackling the project. The negligence of a
traveler left me for fifteen days without news of my parents, and so greatly was I
upset that I could not write two lines in succession. Forgive me, then, dear friend.

Your letter gave me lively pleasure, which is one of the good things about
friendly chats. I see that you persevere in the paths of Catholic philosophy and that
you are preparing yourself to be one day its worthy defender. Good. Our ranks are
more numerous than we thought. I have found young people here of strong convic-
tion and full of generosity, who consecrate their reflections and researches to this
high mission, which is ours as well. Every time a rationalist professor raises his voice against revelation, Catholic voices are raised in response. There are many of us joined to this end. I have already twice taken part in this noble work by addressing written objections to these gentlemen. But we have especially succeeded in M. Saint-Marc Girardin’s history course. Twice he attacked the Church, first by treating the institution of the Papacy as passing, born under Charlemagne, dying today; second by accusing the clergy of having consistently favored despotism. Our replies read publicly have produced the greatest result, both on the professor, who has all but retracted, and on the audience, which applauded. Even more useful than this is to show the student youth that it is possible to be Catholic and have common sense, to love religion and liberty, and finally to draw it out of indifference to religion and get it used to grave and serious discussions.

But what is better and more comforting for Christian youth are the conferences established by Abbé Gerbet at our request. It can be said that light shines in the darkness, Lux in tenebris lucet. Every fifteen days M. Gerbet gives a lecture on the philosophy of history. Never have our ears been attuned to a story more sublime, a doctrine more profound. He has given so far only three sessions, and the hall is full, full of famous men and eager youngsters. I have noted Mmes. de Potter, de Sainte-Beuve, and Ampère the younger receiving with enthusiasm the teaching of this young priest. The Lammenaisian system expounded by him is not that of his provincial followers, but an immortal alliance of faith and science, charity and industry, power and liberty. Applied to history, it sheds light on it and reveals the destinies of the future. No charlatanism here: a weak voice, clumsy gestures, good, simple, quiet delivery, but by the end of his discourse his heart is on fire, his figure radiant, the light of fire on his forehead, prophecy in his mouth.

I urge you to subscribe to M. Gerbet’s lectures, which will be printed successively: the fifteen will cost 12 francs, post paid, and you will find something for the fullest nourishment of your soul.

In your last letter you spoke at length of politics. I approve your principles indeed. Nevertheless, I do not believe that French society has yet come of age. I do not believe that it can be left to itself without peril to its own proper growth. I believe its character to be such that it needs a monarchical regime to direct it in its wanderings and the heredity of the throne to maintain stability in its progress and unity in its diversity. I believe finally that, for the national destinies to be one, for the tradition of the past to be perpetuated in the future, it is necessary for a family to be its symbol and the scepter not pass from its hands. The king is then for me the symbol of national destinies, the old French idea presiding over the development of society, the representation of the people par excellence. On his forehead shines the glories of France ancient and modern. All our memories are brought together in his head. That is why I venerate and cherish him, whether on the throne or in exile. In exile a majesty no longer surrounds him. That is a misfortune.

It is time for me to give some details about the German books you spoke to me about. Novalis is being translated; our friend Materne is doing it. The works of Goerres are too essentially German to be put in French. Two works of [Moeller]
have been recommended to me, a life of Gregory VII and a life of Saint Athanasius; both are full of singular details, both written in a Catholic spirit by a Protestant author. I have ordered the first for myself, and the second for you. Saint Athanasius’s tome is one of the most obscure and most interesting; you will see that yourself as you read. The books will arrive here in about a month. I know that you work a great deal in German. Tell me something about your other activities. As for me, I am meanwhile translating a little volume of Benjamin (Bergmann). You understand that this still follows the plan of our common works.

I have not carried out your commission for the *Meditations* of Lamartine yet, but the *Harmonies* are to appear in 32 format for 7fr., and further, if you want to have all the author’s works, it is necessary to buy them collectively since the *Child Harold* and *Chant du Sacre* are not sold individually.

My affectionate regards to your mother, father and uncle, and to your sincere and persevering friendship from your devoted,

A.-F. OzANAM

I have had a letter from M. Noirot. I will answer him today or soon. In the meanwhile, if you see him, tell him about M. Gerbet’s course, and tell him that I have subscribed for six months to the *Revue Européenne* as he wished. Write soon.

M. Ault du Ménil, former officer and member of the Agence, has taken on a course in literature, in which he acquits himself with great talent and deep erudition. He expounds admirably the nature and destiny of Catholic literature and illustrates it by that of Spain. Finally, M. de Coux is beginning a course in political economy...
20 1821-1836

8. Frederick de Hardenberg, called Novalis (1772-1802), German poet, the most brilliant representative of romantic German lyricism.


10. Name added by the editor of the Lettres. Johannes Moeller (1806-1862), born at Munster, professor at Malines, then at the Catholic University of Louvain.

11. The work of Benjamin Bergmann had been condensed for French readers by Moris in the Journal asiatique, n. 823. The result of Ozanam’s work appeared in the Annales de philosophie chrétienne of March and November 1832 (Galopin, n. 50).

12. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), poet born at Mâcon. In 1830 his work opened the doors of the French Academy to him; in 1834 he entered the Chamber of Deputies. The independence he preserved in the Chamber under the parliamentary regime acquired for him a popularity that his posture in 1848 increased still more, but which dissipated after his alliance with Ledru-Rollin and the Days of July. Member of the provincial government, both constituent and legislative. He retired to private life on December 2, 1851.

13. Georges Leonard d'Ault du Menil, born in 1814, former corporal guard, ordinance officer to Bourmont in Algeria, decommissioned in September 1830. He collaborated in l'Avenir. Ozanam became acquainted with him again at Montalembert’s home. L'Agence pour le défense de la liberté religieuse was a creation of Lammenais and Lacordaire.

14. Charles de Coux (1787-1864), collaborator in l'Avenir, professor at Louvain. Collaborated with Ozanam in 1848 in l'Ere nouvelle. His course in 1832 was interrupted by the cholera.

15. Words missing.

44. To Ernest Falconnet
Paris, March 25, 1832

Reaction of Catholic students to Jouffroy’s course. Vanity of attacks against the Papacy.

Dear Falconnet

I am truly culpable for making you wait so long for my news. I am aware of it and confess it and am sure that you forgive me, since I repent of my fault and am ready to correct it.

I watch with pleasure and I might say even gratitude the interest you bring to our efforts to sustain the cause of the Gospel. I will continue to pursue this subject with you and let you know everything accomplished around us for the triumph of this divine banner. I told you about our skirmishes and rejoice to inform you that we have been joined several weeks now in a more serious battle. The chair of philosophy, Jouffroy’s course, has been the field of battle. Jouffroy, one of the most illustrious rationalists of our day, took the liberty of attacking revelation, even the very possibility of revelation. A Catholic, a young man, addressed some observations to him in writing, and the philosopher promised to reply. He waited for fifteen days, in order to prepare his arms without doubt, and at the end of that time, without reading the letter, analyzed it to suit himself and tried to refute it. The Catholic, seeing
that he was poorly understood, presented the professor with a second letter, which he paid no attention to; he only made mention of it and continued his defamatory attacks, asserting that Catholicism repudiated science and liberty. Then we enunciated our true beliefs. It was hastily endorsed with 15 signatures and addressed to M. Jouffroy. This time he could not dispense himself from reading it. The numerous audience, composed of more than 200 people, listened with respect to our profession. In vain the philosopher strove to respond, and confounded himself with excuses, assuring that he had not wished to attack Christianity in particular, that he had a high veneration for it, that he would be careful not to offend beliefs in the future. But he especially stated a remarkable fact, very encouraging for the present era: "Gentlemen," he told us, "Five years ago I received only objections raised by materialism; the spiritualist doctrines brought the liveliest resistance; today minds have changed greatly, the opposition is wholly Catholic."

It is pitiable to see this poor man flounder as he attempts to solve by the forces of reason alone the problem of human destiny: each day contradictions, absurdities, involuntary admissions escaped him. Finally he dared to affirm that it was unjust for there to be afflicted good men and affluent villains in this world. Yesterday he confessed that intellectual needs were immense and that science, far from meeting them, only succeeded in making the whole dimension plain and leading man to despair by showing the impossibility of arriving at perfection. He confessed that natural satisfactions did not suffice our spirit and that after having exhausted them he experienced a great emptiness and found himself relentlessly driven to look for supernatural illuminations. He finally acknowledged that reason could not attain a high degree of development so as to become the basis of our moral conduct. . . . You see how these three facts prove the necessity of a revelation. Oh dear friend, they are frustrated, these philosophers of rationalism; if you knew the monstrousness of their pride, the high idea they have of themselves, what scorn for others, what egoism fills their words and writings! If you could see them connive for the applause of the youth who listen to them and, in the middle of their bombast, be conscious every instant of their weakness, which proclaims the despair that devours them. Despair! If you could hear their attacks against Christianity slavishly disinterred from old Voltarian declamations and their extravagant propositions, if, for example, you could hear them say, in order to combat miracles, that the laws of nature are outside our ken and that consequently we could not appreciate derogations from them, and the resurrection of the dead presents nothing miraculous to the sages of today; friend, if you could hear, if you could witness all that, would you not congratulate yourself that Christianity has such adversaries?

Courage, then, for our adversaries are weak; courage, for the teachers of unbelief can be confounded by the least of our country vicars. Courage, for God's work is operative, it is operative in the hands even of youth: perhaps even our own. Do not be scandalized by what you might hear about the Pope's temporal affairs. Be convinced (1) that the temporal domain must be kept entirely distinct from the spiritual, (2) that the liberal papers grossly exaggerate, enlarging on the discontent of legations, and (3) that the Pope (I have this from Chateaubriand himself) is
 abreast of the age, that he wishes the good of his subjects, but is hindered on one side by the backward spirit of the Roman people, and on the other by the treasonable intrigues of the nobles and lawyers. Leo XII died a victim of his reforming spirit. Gregory XVI had begun to bestow signal benefits on the legations when French propaganda sowed revolt among them. Whatever happens, it is unimportant that the Pope lose the title of sovereign in the assembly of princes, he will always retain that of father in the assembly of peoples.

As for yourself, prepare yourself for the struggle by practicing that Gospel which you are called to defend; pray, pray for us who begin to man the barricades and who join hands with you (lacuna) . . . in a great and fraternal friendship . . . yes, you are already among friends here who do not know you but who await you and who will open their arms when you come to join them. Visit M. Noirot frequently. Take his advice, abuse his patience; I recently received a fine letter from him.

I have finished translating from the German an interesting little work of Bergmann on the religion of Tibet. I had begun the version of a Tibetan book which he translated into German. It is a genesis, a cosmogonic system which includes strong traces of revelation.

M. de Coux has begun his course in political economy, full of depth and interest. I have subscribed to it for you. They mob his lectures, because there is much of truth and life in them, a great perception of the affliction which devours society and of the remedy which can alone heal it. I read the works of M. Ballanche with pleasure, and hopefully with fruit. They reaffirm (with a certain number of errors intermingled) the philosophy of history. I read also the celebrated Vico. Finally, I am pursuing the study of Hebrew. Please, take up seriously historical and traditional research; everything is true.

I did not send your letter to Materne because it seemed to me to be wanting: you must speak to him with an open heart, sicut amicus ad amicum. Write to him in another, you will be sure to please him. I have posted by coach your two German volumes; their price is 12 francs; Papa will tell you when he gives them to you the amount of postage. Forgive me if religious matters have taken up my whole paper. What would you expect? It is the foundation and the crown, the A and Q, and ever reminds you of your friend,

A.-F. OzANAM

Reply at length when you have time. Give your parents my affectionate regards.

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*Notes:*
1. Théodore Jouffroy (1796-1842), philosopher, introduced Scottish philosophy to France.
2. Vincent François René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), writer born at Saint-Malo. He traveled in America, returned to France at the start of the Revolution, emigrated in 1792, lived in
England, returned to France in 1800 where, except in the beginning, he was on bad terms with Napoléon. At the Restoration he was ambassador to London, then minister of foreign affairs from 1822 to 1824. This great writer had elegance of style, richness of imagination, sensibility, passion, descriptive power and color. His work had considerable influence on the development of romantic literature.

3. Pope, 1823-1829.
4. Pope, 1830-1846.

5. Pierre Simon Ballanche (1776-1847) was a native of Lyon. Ozanam, who had visited him in 1831, is possibly the author of an article, L’Homme sans Nom, published by the Revue Européenne in June 1832 (Galopin, n. 52). Ballanche, a mystical writer and printer, was one of Mme. Récamier’s friends, and author of Essais de Palingénésie sociale. He introduced Ozanam to Montalembert’s house. Victor Cousin supported his candidacy for the French Academy (Cf. Barthélemy Saint-Hilars, Victor Cousin, t. II, p. 334).


7. As friend to friend.

8. Greek letters, alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.

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45. To his mother
Paris, April 8, 1832

The Cholera at Paris.

Dear Mama,

I received your good letter yesterday and do not have to tell you that it made me happy: it is so nice to chat together despite distance and to reflect that a hundred leagues are no obstacle to our conversation.

The cholera has taken a frightening hold. In the space of 14 days it has attacked 3,075 people, killing 1,200 of them. Yesterday there were 717 sick, and in the streets wagons loaded with five, ten or twelve coffins can be seen. Few wealthy people have been struck down, although it is said that it is cholera that M. Casimir-Périer has been ill of these last few days, that M. Lagarde, councillor of state, died of it, and that several medical students have succumbed, but M. Casimir-Périer could owe his illness to his constant labors, M. Lagarde to his voracious appetite, and the medical students probably to their carousing. Nevertheless, the calamity strikes with increasing force: it is feared that it will affect 20,000 people before it runs its course. It seems that it first struck only gambling halls, and that it was created and came into the world in order to punish our guilty city: people are alarmed. Business is down, strange rumors circulate everywhere. I am very much afraid of treasonable activity. More men would perish by the sword than by sickness. Last Sunday I saw revolutionary rabble. Never was there seen so frightful a mob. Some carried sticks and bats, some nothing; many shouted and raised such a tumult that you would have said all the devils of hell were concentrated there. It was a great pity to see this race of...
accursed men of whom the tallest was not 5 feet, with weak and ugly bodies, pale faces, sunken eyes with shifty glances, and the women who followed crying like furies, nothing more hideous than those women!

In the midst of these sad spectacles, charity is not wanting. I told you that our noble prelate has given over the seminary and his country house for hospitals and has contributed 1,500 francs to this unruly populace which a year ago violated his home, ransacking and ruining the archepiscopal palace and shouting death threats against his person. The Lazarists have also opened their house to the sick. Many pastors have given over their rectories. Confraternities of men and women have been formed to assist the unfortunate. Twelve thousand francs have been deposited in eight days with the Gazette de France for distribution by the Archbishop. Well! men who call themselves liberal and philanthropic have striven to malign this devotion, to pretend self-interest there where only charity operates, to spread abroad the grossest calumnies and blame the cholera on priests, doctors, royalists, and even (horrible thing) on the hospital sisters who sacrifice themselves for the relief of the unfortunate.

It is horrible. I wish that such wickedness were exposed to the eyes of the entire world and that a heavy weight of opprobrium and blame fall on them.

The conference to which I belong has voted a little preliminary fund of 15 francs for the poor to pay their debts. I wait anxiously for you to send the 18 francs for my subscription and with Falconnet’s 12 francs, I can make my offering of 4 or 5 francs. It is indeed right, when one has a Frenchman’s heart, to offer even weak assistance to poverty; not only is it right but even necessary, for people complain, “See, cholera does not afflict the rich, the rich depart and we are left alone in our misery,” and with that, if they see a mail coach for Paris passing by, they run after it with shouts, and if money is not given, it will be taken by force. I see the ranks thinning all around me, many young people leaving and going back to their families. As for me, I am very distressed. I know well that the life I lead and the air I breathe protects me more. Indeed my anxiety turns in the direction of Lyon, and the news that the cholera is at Toulouse hardly allays it. I spoke about it yesterday to M. Ampère. That brave man did not advise me to leave; he pointed out the danger of falling sick on the way with no way of assistance. He spoke of the uselessness of my presence in Lyon, of the misery I would put my parents in if I were to fall sick or die before their eyes, the risk of taking the epidemic along and of bringing it to our city. He found my plan, in the end, rather absurd. All that did not calm me. I am going to M. Durnerin today for his advice. I could not in any case leave Paris before Easter. I repeat, I am well and I have nosebleed often and in abundance. It is absolutely only solicitude for those dear to me that would determine me to set out, and if the cholera were very mild at Lyon, as it was in London, I would stay here. These are my decisions for the moment; they may perhaps change in two hours. Nevertheless I will do nothing without having received your formal advice. It is, nonetheless, very hard to be separated at such times. With all finality, please do not fear for me, I am no longer sick to my stomach.

I take only two meals. I would prefer three, but I do not wish to upset things. As
for mineral water, I do not think it necessary since the wine and water here are of excellent quality. Do not forget to get my money to me no later than Saturday the 14th so that I can pay my subscription. I embrace you with my whole heart and soul, and since I am of the opinion that my Charlot no longer has the fever, I send him a slap on the seat by way of a present. My regards to our relatives and friends—and a twist of the ear to Falconnet who does not write.

Your son who loves you,
F. Ozanam

Original: Archives Laporte.

Notes:
1. Casimir-Pierre Périé, wealthy banker and politician, born at Grenoble. Deputy of Paris and member of the liberal opposition under the Restoration, he became minister of the interior in 1831, repressed energetically insurrections at Paris and Lyon, supported Belgium against Holland, and stopped the Austrians by the Ancona expedition. He died of the cholera (1777-1832). *Larousse*.

2. Louis de Quelen, archbishop of Paris, born at Paris (1778-1839), took care of the sick during the cholera of 1832. *Larousse*. (Archbishop de Quelen also in 1832 gave initial approval for the striking of the Miraculous Medal, which the Blessed Virgin revealed in appearances to St. Catherine Laboure, a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, in 1830.)

3. Priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission, founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 1625, known popularly in France as Lazarists from their original motherhouse of Saint-Lazare and in America as Vincentian Fathers or Vincentians. Their motherhouse, to which Ozanam refers, was located when he wrote at 95 rue de Sévres. Although the house is still in existence and operative at that address today, the superior general and his council now reside in Rome. The Parisian house was where Ozanam and his companions were to establish the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in 1833.

4. Ozanam’s doctor.

5. His younger brother.

53. To Ernest Falconnet
Paris, January 5-8, 1833

Significance of the Feast of the Kings. Remedy Catholicism brings to the uncertainties of youth. Conferences of law and history. Evenings at Montalembert’s.

Dear Falconnet,

It is Saturday evening, midnight is about to strike, a new day will begin, a great and solemn day, the anniversary of the first homage rendered by the pagan world to infant Christianity. There is something of beautiful awesomeness in this legend of the three magi representing three human races at the crib of the Savior, something venerable in the family feast which consecrates joy, which casts lots in a cake and creates in its bosom a domestic royalty for a while so as to imitate those Eastern
royalties sent as ambassadors to the Christ Child. Whatever be the place of origin of this custom, even if it comes from the kings of the banquet among the Greeks and Romans, it is always a good occasion for drawing closer relatives and friends to open their hearts. I would love to be seated this day at the same table with those dear to me, with you for example, good comrade, and putting aside my philosophic gravity, shout with all the simplicity of my heart and capacity of my lungs: “The king drinks, the king drinks!” For I enter into everything old and folklorish and experience a depth of sympathy for this primitive naievete, for this good fellowship which fades every day the more counterfeit courtesy develops and takes over.

And you, good friend, would you join these joyous fetes, would you abandon yourself to gaiety and pleasure, or would melancholy ever press like a weight of iron on your soul? You have let me into your secret thoughts, you have told me of your wavering, of your joys and your sorrows. Are you still the same, now light-hearted, frivolous, ardent for whatever sparkles, eager for the liveliest recreations, rejoicing in movement and noise, and then fatigued, out of breath, sunken in inexpressible apathy, casting the most baleful glances on the future? Or are you becoming a man, ready to preserve that evenness of soul which brings happiness and security to life?

Oh, no, not yet, I know you well, not yet the calm and imperturbability of mature age. It is youth with its ardor and tempests: the time of great joys and great sorrows. Like the ship that puts to sea for the first time, unused to the waves which batter it, now it rides quick and light on the crests, now it sinks and disappears in the troughs until a firmer hand takes its tiller and guides it to port. That is what life is like for us beginners. Are we then irrevocably condemned to these anxieties which devour us, to these tortures which seize upon us, is there no way of bringing our heart a little peace and consolation?

Understand, good friend, we others need something to possess and transport us, something to dominate and elevate our thoughts. We need poetry in the midst of this prosaic and cold world, and at the same time a philosophy which gives some reality to our ideal conceptions, a combination of doctrines which are the base and rule of our studies and actions. We find this double benefit in Catholicism to which we bind ourselves for our own well-being. It is indeed the point of departure for all the workings of our intelligence, for all the dreams of our imagination, the central point to which they must tend; then that wavering disappears that brings us harm and leaves us helpless before our own weakness. But the realization of our own weakness being one of the principal sources of melancholy, the presence of Catholic thought in our soul is the first remedy to oppose it.

Is that all? Certainly not, in my opinion. Let us not confine our beliefs to a realm of speculation and theory, let us take them seriously, and then our life will be their continued expression. Let us never remain idle, building as it were castles in Spain and gigantic enterprises, but let us not leave our mind without pasture, either. Let us begin with strong study, in depth, on the matter most agreeable to our inclinations, but let us not entangle ourselves too much in revery and literature. These are excellent things, but they cease to have any value when they are not founded on precise ideas and understandings.
I know you must be bored with study! I have the same experience. But look on it as an obligation, as something that will not be useless to you some day. Try to use the spaces between the lines advantageously by reading in a good book or by literary composition, avoid the idle and often tasteless conversations of your colleagues. Take a firm stand; that is the way to settle all disagreements. Go as much as possible to the tribunal; it is my advice that you could do nothing better.

Finally, enjoy the pleasures of carnival; but in moderation, a little in the world, a great deal more with your relatives and friends. Watch above all that you are always in control, and especially that you are never caught napping by the thought "What now?" Do not seek to shine, that is the surest way. You have talent, facility, and will one day be successful; you have no need of those artificial resources that can on the contrary compromise your future.

Enough of reflections. Now I am going to give you a few words of what is going on around me so you will know something of the world I live in and you will live in.

As a lawyer and a man I will have three missions to fulfill in the world, three areas, so to speak, where I should work: in order to attain my end I should be legal consultant, man of letters, and social man. Here then is where my apprenticeship starts. Three things should be the object of my studies: law, the moral sciences, and some knowledge of the world looked at from the Christian point of view.

Three means have been given us at this moment of time by Providence to try out this triple career. There are the conferences of law, of history, and the meetings at M. de Montalembert's. The conferences of law are held twice a week. Controversial questions are argued. Two lawyers assist in each discussion, and a third has the function of public minister. The others judge both the basis of the case and the merit of the arguments. Reading is not allowed; generally one improvises, especially in reply to questions. There are some very spiritual young men who acquit themselves in an admirable manner. I have already spoken twice and notably this evening (March 8). I have substituted for the absent procurator of the king. Only an hour was given me to prepare. Although it appeared satisfactory enough, I thought myself very weak and hesitant because I did not feel myself master of my subject.

But the conference of history is another matter. Composed of forty members, it meets every Saturday. It is open to everything: history, philosophy, literature, all are acceptable. Every opinion finds an open door, and as a result there is very lively and well-intentioned rivalry. For, if one strives to do well, it is not to seek applause and praise, but to give more solid proofs for the cause one has championed. Then, after each effort has been presented, it is submitted to a committee, which criticizes it, discusses it, and names a reporter who is its voice before the conference. Nothing escapes the severity of its censure; serious probing takes place, and criticism, which is at times very malicious. Finally, a higher committee is established in order to give impetus to the whole conference, to indicate ways of perfection, to make detailed reports, and to unify the results of the common effort. There have already been very interesting disquisitions and some pieces of charming poetry; six or seven compositions are read each session. There has been a proposal that corresponding
members be named in the provinces. If you want to be part of it, let me know; you would have to take no further step. Only, when you wish, send me some little work of yours that I can read in your name at the conference.

There are the studies. Besides, there are evening gatherings for young people every Sunday at M. de Montalembert's. There is much conversation and good-natured summing up by bands of four or five. I intend to go from time to time. Last Sunday I saw Mm. de Coux, d'Ault de Menil, Mickiewicz, the famous Lithuanian poet, and Felix de Mérode, whom the Belgian nation wishes to have for king; Sainte-Beuve has come, and Victor Hugo6 ought to. These meetings breathe a perfume of Catholicism and brotherhood. M. Montalembert has an angelic appearance and a very instructive conversation. The points of doctrine on which Rome has asked for silence are not brought up; the wisest discretion reigns in that regard. But literature, history, the interests of the poor, and the progress of civilization are introduced. One is renewed, the heart is stirred up and lifts itself on high with a sweet satisfaction, a pure pleasure, a soul mistress of itself, resolutions and courage for the future.

But, here, I have run out of paper. Therefore I will close this letter, too long delayed. Please remember your friends at Paris and take heart in dreaming to rejoin them. Future for us young men is only what we are. Let us then bestir ourselves and resist boredom and torments. Let us reflect that the condition for progress is suffering and that friendship sweetens the sorrows we cannot avoid.

Let us walk in the right path, and we will lift a calm forehead to the face of heaven, and our conscience will be the guarantee of our happiness.

Adieu. To your parents my affectionate regards, to yourself my fraternal embraces.

A.-F. OzANAM

Henri is well. Materne has had a terrible sprain from which he is recovering.

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**Notes:**
1. The Gateau des Rois—the Kings' Cake—contained a favor or a porcelain figurine, etc., for which lots were drawn on the Feast of the Kings, or Epiphany.
2. A custom on the feast of the Epiphany whereby king and queen and royal family were chosen for the day.
3. Preleten festivities.
4. Charles, Comte de Montalembert, journalist and politician (1810-1870), one of the most brilliant defenders of liberal Catholicism.
5. Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), Poland's greatest poet, born at Zaosie (Lithuania). ("Pikewitz" in the copy.) The poet, then at Paris, was a friend of Montalembert.
6. Félix de Mérode (1792-1857), of an illustrious Belgian family dating from the twelfth century. Montalembert married his daughter in 1836.
7. Victor Hugo (1802-1885), the most illustrious of nineteenth century French poets, born at Besançon.
54. To Ernest Falconnet  
Paris, March 19, 1833

_Benefits of the exchange of ideas and sentiments. Meetings at Montalembert’s. Works of religious history._

Dear Ernest,

Did I tell you that your two letters gave me much pleasure? No, that would be too weak an expression to describe the feeling a man experiences when his friend opens his heart to him and lets him read it. Our friendship has never been troubled. Our souls are like two young stars which rise together and interface on the horizon: a light mist could pass between them and veil them for a few hours, but soon the illusion is dissipated and they reappear pure, white, shining upon each other, and renew their sisterhood. I confess that I was wrong to think what I thought and to write what I wrote. But listen, my friend, friendship is also a timid and jealous virgin, the least puff of cold freezes it, and I, a hundred leagues distant from my dear Ernest, during the time he is cast into the turbulence of feasts and enjoyments, during the time the world shouts so loud in his ears, could I not fear remembrance of me losing place in his mind, and that, too far away to make myself heard, my brotherly words would be lost on the road? No, I do not accuse you. I could understand in some way the possibility of your forgetting. I am your relative, your friend, but beyond that I am too little of anything to you to have the right to reclaim a privileged part in your affections.

The time is past when on a Sunday we found ourselves seated in the same parlor, dreaming the same dreams, wishing the same wishes, the one complementing the thought of the other, and both forming together a single intelligence of which you, you were the laughing, changeable, lighthearted part; I, the center of solid gravity, but heavy. Your ideas capricious, but full of grace and delicacy, your judgments often risky, but always original and sometimes right, were marvelously bound to my more serious, more rigid, more constrained thoughts. But, in the division the best part did not fall to me. Age, in narrowing so to speak the fluidity of your spirit, should give it day after day the equilibrium lacking to it; and I, in approaching the maturity of reason, should strive more and more after vivacity and guard ever less against accommodation. A time will come then when you could very well part company with me and never come to my aid again. That is all true, my friend; recall how in our intimate chats we would always begin by discussing how we could come to agree; then, when we were in agreement, you would wrap in turbulent reveries the principle I had proposed. I would formulate an idea, and you would pursue it and develop it in the most brilliant ways. Today study has given you the ability to formulate by yourself and for yourself; you have read well and worked much; for the year and a half we have been separated, you have made quick progress.

Not only have you caught up to me but have surpassed me in many ways. You
have occupied yourself a great deal with the great social problem of the betterment of the working classes while I have only wished to do so. You know German literature and philosophy much better than I, and you have acquired in proper usage a facility of word far removed from me; and what is much more praiseworthy, you have brought to your new studies in legal procedure a goodwill that will be rewarded later. As for me, on the contrary, except for certain perceptions of orientalism, some very vague ideas about law and legislation, a certain number of new notions of the philosophy of history, and a slight acquaintance with political economy picked up in the discussion of the conferences, these last 14 months in the capital have not yielded me very much fruit. And I know it is my own fault because I have let myself be invaded by a kind of softness and laxity hard to overcome. So you see how little I can offer you and what a weak contribution I can make to this association of two souls for the good called friendship. Do not suppose that I say all this out of jealousy or a fevered mind; no, I have spoken with an open heart. The time has passed when our mutual affection had for its object the giving of a further charm to our enjoyments; now it should be the source of mutual help, a serious alliance between those about to fight the fight of life, and I have wanted to discover what kind of an ally I could be of yours, so as not to let you build up hopes that it seems to be impossible to fulfill.

Meanwhile, if I have nothing of mine to offer, I take satisfaction in hoping that a day will come when I will not be useless to you and that when you come to Paris, I can introduce you to part of a new milieu where you will certainly not find brilliant fêtes, nor joyful tumult, but where you will be well served by an exchange of purer, sweeter, more fruitful enjoyments. You know what was, before my departure from Lyon the object of all my desires, that I aspired to the formation of a meeting of friends working together for the building up of knowledge under the banner of Catholic thought. The idea long remained sterile. One friend only introduced me to a literary group sparse in numbers, the last remnant of the old Society of Moral Studies, but its unscientific procedures left scarcely any place for philosophy or serious investigations. A small number of us of like mind regrouped. In a very short time there were fifteen members attending the gathering regularly, and the exalted questions of the future and the past began to lift their heads.

Today, thanks to the zeal of certain former members, numerous auditors assist at the meetings and the large room is crowded. We thought it proper to require very strict conditions for admission of candidates, yet applications multiply and we are taking in young men of superior talent. Some, precocious travelers, have visited many parts of Europe, and one has even been around the world. Some have profound theories of art; others plumb the problems of political economy. The greater number give themselves to the study of history, some to philosophy. We have even two or three of those chosen souls to whom God has lent wings and who will be poets one day if death or the temptations of life do not get in their way. The tumultuous realm of politics is foreign to our discussions. But beyond that, full and total liberty. Indeed, serious questions arise; some young philosophers call to account
the doctrines and works of Catholicism, and then seizing the inspiration of the moment, one of us faces up to the attacks, develops Christian thought badly understood, unfurls history to show glorious examples and, sometimes finding a source of eloquence in the grandeur of the subject, establishes on solid bases the immortal union of true philosophy with faith. Understand that it is not theological propositions, but the scientific and social import of the Gospel which are principally discussed. The lists are open and all opinions, for example even those of the Saint-Simonians, are admitted to judgment. At all times, since the Catholics are of equal number to those who are not, and show besides more ardor, zeal and assiduity, the intellectual victory is always decided in their favor; and also, there is among them a frank and intimate cordiality (with the others, always benevolence and courtesy), indeed a sort of totally special brotherhood.

There is a special dozen of us bound more intimately still by the bond of mind and spirit, a kind of literary order, devoted friends who have no secrets, who open their soul one after another to tell of their joys, hopes and sorrows. Sometimes when the air was purer and the breeze milder, by the light of the moon shining on the majestic dome of the Pantheon, in front of that edifice which seems to pierce the sky and from which its cross has been removed as if to destroy its influence, the policeman might cast an uneasy eye seeing six or eight young men, arms interlocked, take the air at a late hour in the deserted square. Their brow would be serene, their walk leisurely, their words full of enthusiasm, sensibility and comfort. They would be speaking earnestly of the things of earth and heaven, exchanging many generous thoughts, many pious recollections, they would be speaking of God, then of their fathers, then also of their friends left behind at home, then of their country, then of humanity. The stupid Parisian who passed them on the way to his pleasures would not understand their language. It is a language few people know here. But I, I would understand them, for I would be with them and, in understanding, would think and speak as they did and would feel my heart expand. It would seem to me that I could be a man and could, weak and pusillanimous as I am, catch some sparks of energy for the works of tomorrow.

Another source of life and virtue are the assemblies of the young and excellent M. Montalembert. There the most illustrious champions of the Catholic school open the treasures of their discussions to us. Sometimes those who have defended with the sword and watered with their blood the realm of their allegiance, young Belgian or Polish officers, distinguished diplomats, attend. Then, men of another school come as pilgrims from another empire to gaze for a few moments on the spirit of union and sweetness which reigns among their adversaries. Attendees include Beaufort, Ampere the younger, Alfred de Vigny, Ballanche, Sainte-Beuve, young Savigni de Merode, and d’Eckstein. Last Sunday Lerminier was there. I even spoke with him for a little while. Then there was a very interesting chat between him and M. de Montalembert. We stayed until midnight listening to them. Victor Considerant, one of the most able interpreters of the Phalanstère and a very able economist, was also there. A great deal was said about the actual misery of
the people and somber presages for the future drawn from it. For the rest, very little was said of politics and a great deal about knowledge. The young men are numerous, and M. Montalembert does the honors with a marvelous grace. He speaks very well and knows a number of things:

A swallow in flight
Has learned a great deal: whoever has seen much
Should retain much.  

That has been his fate, and he would be very unhappy, he who has traveled the world from Rome to Berlin and from Stockholm to Dublin, to have returned with empty hands. Join to that a well-heated punch and fine pastries and you would assure me that to be in such company is not so bad.

In way of comparison, as my interior and domestic life is relaxed and lazy, so my social life is active and pleasantly occupied. Two conferences of law a week where I am often obliged to plead, one conference of literature on Saturday where few meetings pass without my speaking or reading, Sunday at M. Montalembert's gathering, two or three times at M. Montgolfier's evening parties, some visits to M. Durnerin and M. Pessonneaux, such is the result of my locomotion.

Since I think it interests you, I will confide in you some of my actual travels outside the sphere of jurisprudence. I occupy myself by laying out in broad strokes a picture which I intend to paint some day, and at present I am visiting as a novice scout the miserable army of my intellectual faculties. Metaphor apart, I am doing for the conference an abridged history of religious thought in antiquity, and already China and India have passed through my hands. I discover from time to time immense mines which can be worked later on, and this learning, some of little importance, is of great use to me in reforming my general ideas. As for the rest, the result is always the same. After having traversed the avenue of the Sphinx, after having traced in imagination the long labyrinth of myths and allegories, the eye discovers at the foot of the sanctuary the mysterious genius of the human race which is the divine word. Pleasure gives me courage enough for these kinds of research, but when I must write down my thought, digest my sentiments, a great discouragement seizes me, and it is necessary for time and the hour to pressure me. Then I put my thought on the sheet of paper like the prisoner on the rack, twist it, put it to the torture, and stretch it with interpolated phrases until it has attained the respectable dimension of a chapter, which is at least ten pages.

There is where I stand, my friend, in better than average humor and uncertain health, calm mind and bad stomach. I often grumble and scowl but I always end up coming to terms with my venerable personality which would, however, make a poor father. I hope nevertheless to do a lot better: by redoubled effort I will earn success, and my friendship will not be unfruitful to those who cultivate it. I would be very unhappy if you thought for a moment that I had any disagreeable memories of my trip to Bourg. I thought nothing of it, and your secret stays in my heart, not as a burden, but as a counterweight in the balance. The rather cold style of some
of your letters hurt (not irritated) me. Your love of pleasure especially worried me, but your last two letters amply repaired the damage so far as the first point is concerned. The second no longer alarms me as much since I have confidence in God in your virtue.

And now, dear Ernest, our hands are more entwined than ever. The future is before us, gray as the ocean, but immense like it. Hardy marines, we sail in the same vessel and steer together. Before us religion, bright star given us to follow, before us the glorious wake of great countrymen and coreligionists; behind us our young brothers, more timid companions who await the example. Yes, Heaven has not given us the same blood, the same heart, the same thought and even the same age in vain. It is not in vain that it chose us, one at Milan the other at Thionville, to spend our childhood together. We took the road together; we will finish it together. Perhaps some day it will happen that some graces will be bestowed on us and we will be greeted as good men in the assembly of the wise. More seriousness for you, more ardor and energy for me, for both of us the lessons of our fathers, the example of our mothers, and the benevolence of heaven. In the end the time will come when we can talk of everything.

Adieu, excellent friend. Tell all your dear ones how deep is my respect for them, and for you my affection.

A.-F. OZANAM

No need to tell you that your errands are taken care of.

Notes:
1. Understand brotherhood. In French, étoile (star) is feminine gender, and Ozanam is forced by correct grammatical usage to write soeurs (sisters) rather than frères (brothers).
2. Saint-Simonism, called after the philosopher Claude Henri, Comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), and his disciples, taught that humanity must be a hierarchy effected by the principle “to each according to his capacity, to each capacity according to its works”; social tension must give way to universal association; hereditary property is suppressed; the state will be the proprietor of wealth and will distribute the instruments of work according to needs and capacities—thus will come about the reign of justice. Divided among themselves and condemned by the tribunals, the Saint-Simonians disbanded in 1833.
4. The Pantheon was originally the church of Ste. Geneviève. It became a church again after the Restoration, a Temple of Glory under Louis Philippe, when Ozanam was writing this letter, and again a church under Louis Napoléon, then reverted to secular usage under the Third Republic.
5. Alfred de Vigny, poet, novelist and dramatic author, born at Loches (1797-1863).
6. François Fridric, Baron d’Eckstein (1790-1861), of Danish birth, one of the precursors of liberal Catholicism.
7. Jean Louis Lerminier (1803-1857), professor of legislation at the Collège de France since 1831, was master of requests in the Council of State in 1838.
8. Victor Considérant (1805-1893), philosopher and economist, born at Salins (Jura).
9. *Fables*, La Fontaine. (Jean de La Fontaine, poet born at Château-Thierry in 1621.) t. 1, Fable 8.

55. To his mother
Paris, March 19, 1833


Dear little mother,

You are really very good to complain so of the delay of my correspondence with you and to insist so strongly that I do not make you lose your turn. Do not, however, be annoyed if I claim a certain injustice in that regard: many of my letters, though addressed to my father, are written equally for you, often even, besides the times when you read the words My dear parents, and when I write them, I truly do not know to which of the two I speak, one before the other. Used to including you in the same affection, is it not natural to include you in the same conversation? Indeed, you have that very delicate, very subtle faculty of even suggesting to me topics of conversation. You seem to be afraid that words fail me, and I do not know what to say to you, that I find myself compelled to write a letter and my thoughts dry up. Please believe, nonetheless, good mother, that it is not at all like that, that even beyond having to reply to questions you ask me, I find many things to recount to you, a wealth of ideas to confide in you, a wealth of affection to confide to your heart.

I will sketch for you the real state of my mind, very happy dweller in a weak house, which indeed recognizes its organs to be a little deranged but is not the sadder for that. I will describe for you the laziness which affects me and the efforts I sometimes make to conquer it, the good will that animates me, the irresolution and weakness which hold me back, my mediocre works, my slight successes, my moments of discouragement, and my quarter hours of ambitious hopes. I will then tell you the story of my petty self-love, its joys and disappointments, how satisfied it is when from the height of a conference bench or under the usurped robes of a lawyer it hears itself speaking, phrasing, making gestures for its own delight; and how it loves to see some forty people give it their attention, and sometimes their applause, to hear that it has spoken well on its feet, when it has had much trouble in untangling its tongue; how it is embarrassed in turn, when returning home, Dame Reason mocks it and says to it something like this: “Ozanam, my friend, you have spoken many words and very little of worth, you were a maker of phrases, a prattler; just between us, they listen to you because you have a good voice and speak with...
conviction. But what have you said that is new? What thought that was your own, what oratorical flight that was not an imitation? You have a certain store of great words and sentiments picked up here and there. When you have used it up, on what will your eloquence subsist? And you are a little ridiculous: the other day, for example, they interrupted you by clapping. You were very complacent until a friend unveiled the mystery: they were clapping because they thought you were finished, and that was all. In sum you are very windy, and if you sometimes win the cases you plead, you know very well that they always complain that you are too philosophical and too long. Finally consider what you have learned that is new, the four months you are here, consider what you have done.” And at this point the poor devil of self-love keeps a profound silence and disappears very quickly, very cast down, and ashamed until a new occasion.

Oh Monsieur Déric, the good God has given you a little perspicacity, and your parents a great deal of education. If you want to work seriously, you may perhaps be something in this world; at least you can one day earn what makes the soup boil, but you are really doing nothing, and if you work a little bit, it is owing to your conferences. There, enough grumbling, I will work better in the future: tomorrow I will get up at six-thirty in the morning—Hoom! What time is it? Oh, eight-fifteen. Farewell, my good resolutions of yesterday! Yet another day lost—already half gone—let us get quickly to work: O mon Dieu! How sick I am to my stomach! What do you say, then, Lallier my friend, let us do the rounds of a museum.—Here we are back again, four o'clock precisely then, two hours later, dinner, then the conference, then back to your place to fritter away an hour, and then to bed at midnight. . . . . Decidedly, Monsieur Déric, you are a sorry one! Mama says so!

However, there are many worse than I among all these shams who, instead of doing their law, take strolls. I have very simple and moderate tastes, a circle of friends who gather every day in worthwhile enterprises and whom I love as brothers, from the old childhood companion, good Henri; to Lallier, that excellent young man; Lamache the soul of an artist; and practically a knight, Cherruel, the converted Saint-Simonian, so pure, such a zealous Catholic. What delightful hours we have spent together speaking of country, family, religion, science, literature, legislation, everything beautiful, everything great, everything which ought to be treasured in the heart of man. What satisfaction to be with thirty young men at the famous M. Combalot’s sermon, or the evening gatherings at M. de Montalembert’s.

To see such eloquent, pious men so deeply obedient to the silence the Sovereign Pontiff thinks necessary to impose on them, to recognize in the young peer of France’s rooms the most illustrious lights of religious literature: Baron d’Eckstein who became a Catholic after deep study and who hides an immense learning under the veils of the most beautiful modesty; good M. Ballanche, most poetic when he does not go into hiding; M. d’Ault du Menil, ever the high officer under his citizen dress, bringing with him the smell of powder from Algiers, and with him the amiability of a Parisian litterateur; M. de Mérodé and Beaufort, the glory of Belgium;
Mickiewicz, the leading poet of Poland, brother of the famous Countess de Plater, who served as aide-de-camp to her husband and who herself fought with the courage of a lion and the piety of a crusader. And amid all that a charm of simplicity and evangelical sweetness. Men of genius chat familiarly with the greenest scholar, conversations of all kinds except for what is unworthy. And then to come home, five or six with arms interlocked, loving one another in life and death, and promising to carry back each to his own province some portion of that sacred fire they share. . . . Is that not time well employed? Is it not delightful, and leaves only a single deep regret, that of not going home to one’s family to share some of the sentiments with which the heart overflows?

It is all in order to love God, or at least one believes that he loves Him more than before because one feels a lively gratitude for Him, for Him who on this exile earth, in this capital of corruption, has reserved for us so large a share of happiness and life. It also makes one love more than ever a religion that makes all its children equal and gathers together the great and the small who, despite the proud disciples of egoism hating and quarreling among themselves, inspire you with so much love for humanity. And again, it causes one to love his parents, his friends, his province more than ever: parents because their lessons have conducted us in the right path and their affection kept us there, friends because they serve us as supports and mutual guides, province because one feels compelled to repay benefits received. As for certain enjoyments one has, something tells us that they are not those of the paternal abode, the native town, that they are only refreshment for the traveler, and far from love of home being weakened, it increases every day.

There is something approaching the state of my soul: much sentiment, a half measure of ideas, and very little action. If I worked a quarter of the time I spend reading, listening, speaking or dreaming, that would be excessive for me. Perhaps that is just as well. Perhaps store is being laid up for the future: perhaps it is good to spy out the land before deciding what to grow on it. Nevertheless, I have two persistent faults, weakness and prating.

I have a great need for others. I am so little able to be self-sufficient that if I had unworthy friends they could do with me whatever they wished, and I am forever following others, much more than anyone follows me. I am often afraid of being importunate. I lose time, and I even hurry over things a little, but no matter, I must speak and listen; I must have communication and contacts. Indeed, it is impossible for me to do passable work without having talked about it and discussed it with someone.

With all that, it is evident that I am a good enough child, but not at all a man of merit (as you would say), and I have a deal of self-love, but no esteem for myself whatever. I am not certain whether I am right or wrong to write you all this, but, good mother, I have too much need to unburden my heart, and I thought you would be interested in a bulletin of statistics on my moral state. Or rather I did not think about it at all; I began this chapter with the intention of writing two words: and behold four pages already: that is usual with me.
Let us get back to our subjects:

It is not I, good mother, who did the articles signed A and Z. I know nothing whatever about it; I have sent nothing to any magazine this year. I have indeed been asked to collaborate in the publishing of a new literary magazine and am not too sure whether I will. The gazette is advertised before its appearance as the work of young royalists. But it seems to me that literature and philosophy are no more royalist than republican, and I am too young to take such a political stance. Except for six essays read at the history conference, I have written nothing philosophical or literary this year, and those works were only the result of historical researches I have done.  

I see a lot of Henri and am careful not to neglect him, first because of the affection he bears me and secondly for my own advantage. We are often together and meet almost every Sunday at M. Montalembert’s.

My circulatory tiredness is all gone. The refreshing discipline of Lent has borne its fruit, but the poor stomach has become entirely demoralized, because, I think, of the irregular meals. I certainly do not have a good digestion and have a lot of colic. I have much to do this week so I have put off the leeches until next week. Unless Doctor Durnerin stops them entirely, seeing the change in my health.

On my return from Mass yesterday morning, I found my new coat and trousers awaiting me. I tried on the coat and Master Serre immediately pronounced it a very poor fit, extremely short in front, and suggested that I leave it with a tailor for alteration. Today Lord Henriet and friend Lallier have reversed the judgment and declared the coat very comfortable. It is indeed two fingers shorter in front than my old black coat, but they tell me that is the fashion, and as a matter of fact, yesterday in the Tuilleries gardens we saw several new coats very short in front. As far as the old black coat is concerned, although horribly ripped in the lining, it is still very good in the shoulders and sleeves, and Henri suggested that I have the lining repaired and a velvet collar put on, so that I should still wear it for a long time for ordinary wear and keep the new coat for special occasions. That seems very reasonable to me and since you wished to consecrate 140fr. for my coat and 33fr. for my trousers, 23fr. remain, half of which will suffice for this serious operation.

Therefore, instead of the 20fr. still to be sent me, it will be 35, but this is entirely up to you.

I have still forgotten to tell you that I had to pay a subscription fee of 15fr. in the month of April. Therefore, instead of 200fr. deposited in the bank, it should be 215. You could add without waiting for another occasion the 20fr. I need to pay the tailor and, if you agree to the repair of the old black coat, 15fr. more; therefore, I ask Papa to send me an order on the bank of 235 or 250fr.

It is a great deal, an enormous amount of money, but it is still 5fr. less than you had figured to spend on the coats, and besides, as I said, I will still be ahead by 70fr. when all is done. And you could hold something back from the 120fr. allowance in the future, so that the domestic budget will not suffer.
As for my departure from M. Ampère’s, I prefer to wait until the Easter holy days are over before leaving, since it is painful for me to leave this excellent man before he himself leaves us. For the rest I promise to observe your instructions carefully and especially not to waste money on dinners.

You have expressed the wish, good mother, that some young people occupy themselves in putting together a collection of songs appealing to young people. Such an enterprise seems to me very commendable and useful, and the influence of good and pious music on education is nearly incalculable. But such a work requires much refinement, freshness of imagination, and sureness of style that it should be trusted to no one but true poets. And there are very few of them. However, I will mention it to some of my friends, and perhaps we can put together some verses. . . . As for me, I no longer do them. I have too torturous and difficult a style in expressing my thought. Some day, perhaps, when my ideas are less vague and more mature, it will be easier to set them to meter and harmony. At present I sometimes have fancies that strike me as very poetic but I never have the courage to try to put them in verse.

Tell dear father that I have given his regards to M. de Moléon who is always most courteous, that I have not received at all the letter he sent me by accident, and that I will commend his business to M. Ampère.

I end this letter where I began it by excusing my delay; that is its motif. Yours which I waited to reply to had not come by yesterday noon: the mail leaves at one-thirty, and I wanted to see M. Durnerin who always leaves at one o’clock, thus forcing me to postpone until today the pleasure of chatting with you, a pleasure I have taken expansively and which will probably cost you 22 sous instead of 14, but you are such a good mother that you will hardly pay attention to that.

Adieu, Mama, all to all.

A.-F. Ozanam


Notes:
1. Apparently a reference to a family joke applying a fanciful title to Ozanam.
2. François Lallier, a Burgundian, met Ozanam at Paris, becoming one of his closest friends. He was one of the founders of the Conference of Charity, and composed (in 1835) the Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of which he was secretary from 1837 to 1839. Lallier (1814-1886) became in 1839 substitute judge of the tribunal of Sens, the city where he had married on April 22 of the same year Henriette Delporte (1815-1890), of whom he had a son, Henri (1840-1864), and a daughter, Lucie, who died at sixteen months on August 18, 1844. He became at Sens, judge (1852) and president of the tribunal (1857) until his retirement in 1881.
3. Paul Lamache (1816-1892), a Norman, one of the founders of the Conference of Charity. He taught law at Strasbourg and Grenoble.
4. Pierre Paul Cherruel (1809-1878) was one of the first members of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. A former Saint-Simonian, he was ordained a priest in 1843 and became chaplain of Saint-Louis-de-Français in Rome (1843-1846), when Ozanam came across him again as correspondent of l’Univers. Returning to Rome that same year (1847), he was an enthusiastic partisan.
of the Revolution of 1848. Curate at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette that same year; he was named vicar general of Perpignan (1854) by Msgr. Gerbet, who had known him at Rome. Relieved in 1858, he exercised the offices of chaplain of the Benedictines of Saint-Sacrament, curate of the Annunciation of Passy (1861), pastor of Saint-Honoré-d'Eylau (1862-1865), then of Saint-Germain-des-Pres from 1875 to his death (Arch. hist. dioc. Paris).

5. Abbé Théodore Combalot, writer and preacher, born in 1798.

6. Two brothers of Emilie de Plater, the "Polish Joan of Arc," frequented the salon of Montalembert; César and Ladislas. The former was particularly friendly with the master of the house. "He joins," said Montalembert, "an excessive religious fervor to a Romanesque courage." (Lecanuet, Montalembert, t. I, p. 356.)

7. Six works treating of the religions of China and India are listed in Galopin (p. 21).

8. Serre, a childhood friend of Ozanam, returned to Lyon and died young.


10. A friend of Ozanam's father.

58. To his mother
Paris, June 19, 1833


Dear Mama,

I promised to tell you about one of my days, and this promise is not the one thing in the world easiest to keep. For, first of all, as the wise man says, the just man sins seven times a day, and I, who am only half just, must sin fourteen times a day: there could then be fourteen stupidities to tell one after another, from the laziness that keeps me in bed in the morning, to the nonchalance which makes me lose track of time in chatting with some friend in the evening. What kind of day should I tell you about, what several obscure hours of the week, a ferial day,¹ or a day of annoyance and civil procedure? Or should it be a bright Sunday with its pious duties and calm recreations? Or, indeed, one of those rare days of festival and rejoicing such as can be spent with pleasant companions under clear skies in the midst of a blooming countryside, only once or twice a year?

Were I to tell you that on the day of Corpus Christi three young fools left Paris by the Champs-Elysées² at eight o'clock in the morning, I would perhaps arouse your curiosity. If I were to inform you that at ten o'clock some thirty students took part in the procession at Nanterre,¹ I would undoubtedly edify your piety. If I were to add that at six o'clock in the evening twenty-two of these same individuals refreshed themselves around a table at Saint-Germain-en-Laye,¹ I would interest you still further. Finally, if I were to reveal to you that at twelve-fifteen or thereabouts three adolescents rapped at the door of Rue de Grès, no. 7, that their spirits were gay, their legs a bit tired, and their shoes covered with dust, and that one of
them entered, chestnut hair, large nose, gray eyes and well known to you—what would you say at once, my good little mother?

You would say, “Oh, oh! There is something of foolish adventure here!” It seems very much like an escapade of foolish young men; were it not for the devotion of the procession I would put on my wide-eyed innocent stare.

Well, then, I see that I have touched a chord and have hit upon, of the 230 days of my pilgrimage in the capital, precisely the one which should interest you.

You know that at Paris, as at Lyon, but for much more plausible reasons, processions are forbidden, but, because it pleases certain troublemakers to shut up Catholicism in the temples in great cities, there is no reason why young Christians to whom God has given manly souls should deprive themselves of the more moving rites of their religion. Besides are there not some who longed to take part in the procession at Nanterre, Nanterre the peaceful village, native place of the good St. Genevieve?

The rendezvous was arranged, rather late it is true, and only among a small circle of friends. Sunday dawned serene and cloudless, as if heaven wished to celebrate its pomp.

I left in early morning with two friends. We stopped to breakfast at the Etoile Gate and were among the first to arrive at the rendezvous. Little by little the small group swelled, and soon there were thirty of us. To begin with the entire intellectual aristocracy of the conference: Lallier; Lamache, whose excellent historical works I showed you; Cherruel, Saint-Simonian convert; Delanoue, son of the former president of the royal court at Tour who writes beautiful verse; des Montis, the best child in the world but the most spiritual and most mischievous I have ever known; then M. Lejouteux and M. Levassor, both lawyers; then the Languedocians, Franche-Comtes, Normans and Lyonnais, especially Chaurand, Henri, Lagayte, [sic] Gignoux, and your very humble servant. Most sport moustaches, and five or six reach to five feet eight inches. We mingled with the peasants who followed the canopy. It was a joy for us to walk arm in arm with these fine people, to sing with them and to see them marvel at our good intentions and be edified by our religion.

The procession was numerous and full of an elegant simplicity, and there was a faith, a bit difficult to describe, of good old people who could not join in the procession, waiting along the way. It was for the most part in front of their houses that the altars were erected. The ceremony lasted nearly two hours.

Afterward we assisted at the high Mass, where the crowd flowed even outside the doors of the Church. After the Holy Sacrifice we gathered in the square, and one of us, Henri I think, proposed, that we dine at St. Germain-en-Laye. Six or eight cowards protesting the distance, we left them to talk, and twenty-two of us took to the road. Enjoyment doubled the swift pace, and all gathering strawberries in the woods, we came to our destination. We entered a church for fifteen minutes where they were chanting vespers. Then we visited the magnificent chateau so rich in memories, so proud in its antiquity. After enjoying ourselves on the immense terrace, we delivered ourselves all together to a respectable restaurateur who filled our insides at forty sous a head. This was the danger point of the enterprise: How
many virtues have fallen with the consumption of dessert! How much wisdom has
been shattered against a glass of frothy champagne! As for us, we were eating to
avoid the peril of delay, and the modest Maçonnais,10 doubly baptized by the
master of the place and ourselves, was the only liquor admitted to the festal board.
Since no one rolled under the table, no one loaded the shoulders of his comrades
with an importunate burden, we enjoyed the freshness of the evening, and the
moon did not fail to light our way under the trees. It was a delicious occasion. We
fulfilled our duties to God in rendering Him the homage due Him, to our brothers
by giving good example, to ourselves by witness of mutual friendship. We will long
remember every once in a while, chatting together about the satisfying impressions
of this day, regretting only the absence of those dearest to us. The visit ended, we
vanished from sight, some taking the coach to Neuilly, and I arriving at my resi-
dence with two others.—Monday was beginning.

My conscience, witness to all the emotions of my heart, knows how many
times I thought of you all that day, one of the most enchanting of my life.

No one, indeed, was overtired because of it, and the next day everyone was as
fresh as ever.

But, poor I, I always have to close with a few ominous words. I was very well,
and my throat ailment was gone, when last Sunday, on going to bed, I suffered light
palpitations. I was not upset at first, but they increased more and more, and as they
made me very tired, I went to M. Durnerin the day before yesterday. He told me
that it was of little moment yet and the cause was this agitation of the blood which
troubles me; consequently he ordered new and more severe bleeding, rest and
baths. However, as to the first of these, I would want to have my father’s advice,
especially since Lagayte told me not to act in haste. Here then, is what I experience:
a strong pressure alongside the heart, an area always sensitive and a little painful,
and concentrated pain sometimes (they are less today, but the pressure is more
bothersome). Heartbeats not violent but irregular. Otherwise, there is no problem
with the stomach, nor the head, but the throat problem has returned. I regret very
much having also to assail you thus with a list of my ailments, but I do not think I
ought to try any serious remedy without my father’s advice, and on the other side
this illness makes my work very difficult. Since I have experienced it, I have no long-
er exerted either body or mind.

A.—F. OzANAM

The 20th.—I want to say hello again before closing this letter. I received my
father’s this morning, and I replied on a little slip of paper, enclosed, where I join
with you in greeting him on his feast day. Meanwhile, my distress stays constant,
less pain but a persistent pressure.—Be of good cheer, nonetheless, I am not going
to die.

The 21st.—My letter not leaving until today, I reopened it to add a word: I no
longer have the heart beats, but the pressure is stronger. Lagayte is of the opinion
that it has nothing to do with the chest, but that it is all nerves. I always find myself
better after having eaten and slept. I am not upset about it, but it hampers me a great deal. I do nothing, and I would like Papa to give me a quick reply and tell me whether I should follow M. Durnerin in everything.


Notes:
1. Day on which religion prescribes the cessation of work, according to the customs of the Romans.
5. Gustave Colas de la Noue (1812-1838), a magistrate’s son, was the first recruit of the Conference of Charity, presented by Lallier. He died at 26.
6. Edouard Le Jouteux, from Languedoc, a colleague of Ozanam in the School of Law, was later a judge of the tribunal of the Seine.
7. Jean Dominique Chaurand (1813-1878), born at Lyon, made his law studies at Paris with Ozanam, his fellow student at the Collège de Lyon, was one of the first members and secretary of the Conference of Charity (from 1833). Back in Lyon in 1836 and a member of the bar of that city, he was the first treasurer of the Council of Lyon of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (1837). All his life he was busy with politics and good works. He was one of the founders of the Gazette de Lyon (1845) and a firm defender of legitimism and of the Pope.
8. Considered tall for those times.
10. A wine from the Maçon region.

67. To Ernest Falconnet
Paris, January 7, 1834

Regards and best wishes. Advice of reflection and calm. Difficulty in choosing a profession. They wish to make him a kind of leader of Catholic youth.

Dear Ernest,

Am I not culpable in your regard, and, always faithful to my principles of laziness, balk at writing a letter like a horse at a ditch to be jumped? However, this time I am less criminal than you might think: your letter only reached me on Christmas Day and I had to allow myself two weeks to reply, for I was very busy. Besides, the delay gives me the opportunity to wish you a happy new year and to enclose a friendly hug.

Indeed, happy new year, friend, that is, comfort, joy, happiness, a strengthening of your delicate health, success in your studies, and fulfillment of your hopes. It is to wish you a calm and virtuous soul, and as reward for your virtues the gift of the dreams of youth, beautiful and ravishing, your mind enriched with high and noble
thoughts, your sensibility firm in depth and power while growing wise and regulated, and your freedom disciplined for the battle of life! Oh! do not be afraid; think of the sacrifices of your good mother. Think of the care with which your father watches over your education. The merits of the one and the devotion of the other will not be lost. Happy child, Providence records the trials and labors of the authors of your days. On your head will be placed the crown due to them, and your happiness will be their recompense. Do you not see how God prolongs the life of her who is dearest to you in the world, in the middle of an illness fatal to so many others? It is because, to assuage her suffering, he lets her witness the happiness of her son. I am sure that she is party to this waiting, and you must make it worthwhile. May the remembrance strengthen and encourage you. Do not let yourself fall into your somber self-searching, into those melancholy reveries which unnerve the soul rather than lighten it, and repress every consideration which, rather than resulting in a positive resolution to do better, brings you doubt and negation.

You say that your future is clouded, and you believe the sun no longer shines clearly on my own. Oh, how wrong you are! I am undergoing at the moment perhaps one of the greatest anxieties of my life, uncertitude about a vocation. Let this be our secret, but the wavering and softness of my natural man is such at the time it is not study, but a kind of toil which has no charm for me and under which I am unable to succeed well without at every moment using up all the faculties at my command and concentrating all my strength.

I cannot occupy myself with anything without thinking of a thousand others, and in the meantime, as you know, no work can be great if it is not organized. Ignorant as I am, I have at times believed that I could be scientist and lawyer and mix the two professions together. Today, as I approach the end of my law studies, I must choose between the two vocations, and put my hand in the urn. Which will I draw, black or white? I am surrounded in this regard by attractions of every kind. People persuade, they quarrel with what I decided on, they place me in an opposite situation, they urge me toward a career foreign to my studies. Because God and education have endowed me with a certain tact, a certain appreciation of ideas, a certain breadth of tolerance, they wish to make me a sort of leader of Catholic youth in this country. Numerous young people full of merit accord me an esteem of which I feel myself very unworthy, and men of mature years have approached me. I must be at the head of all endeavors, and whenever there is something difficult to be done it must be I who bears the burden. Impossible to have a meeting, a conference on law or literature unless I chair it. Five or six groups of journals ask me for articles. In a word, a crowd of circumstances independent of my will assail me, pursuing me, turn me aside from the path I have laid out for myself.

I do not tell you this out of self-love, for on the contrary I know my weakness so well, I who am not yet twenty-one years old, and the pressures and eulogies embarrass me a great deal and even give me the desire to laugh at my own importance, but I have no reason to laugh and on the contrary suffer incredible torment when I feel all this smoke rising to my head, reining me in and making me neglect what until now seemed to me my career, to which I was called by my parents’ plans, and to
which I was very willing to apply myself. However, can the concourse of exterior circumstances be a sign of God's will? I ignore it and, in my uncertainty, go no further, nor pursue it, but I let it come, resist, and if the inducement is too strong, let myself go.

In the meanwhile I do what I can for my law, and although perhaps I devote too much time to science and literature, I do not leave off considering them secondary to the new order. And so, having passed my licensing examination once, I know no more of my future: everything is darkness, uncertainty to me, but what does it mean? Although I know what I am supposed to do today, how can I know what my duties will be in six months? Must the traveler see the end to discover and does it suffice for avoiding pitfalls to see even ten paces in front of him? Oh, my friend, I have written all this for you, for you alone, who have still three long years of study before taking a position and who are not disturbed by what you will do and what you will not do. Listen to the Master, look at the lily of the fields and the birds of the air; does the heavenly Father ever refuse them nourishment or clothing? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. See the Israelites on their pilgrimage: forty years they wandered in the desert on faith in the column of fire; in the fortieth year they attained the promised land.

Do not worry about your health; already you have grown better; and the trip to the Midi will consolidate it all at once. It is a particular phenomenon of our time that all young people are tired between 18 and 25. Materne, Pessonneaux, and many others are examples. I myself had four consecutive years of serious stomach disorders. But also, the time passes, the body grows strong, the nervous system is regulated and you acquire all the strength of manhood. Protect your chest, speak little, take milk and other sedatives, and avoid carefully every excess of work and pleasure and especially late hours. I am sure that your too many dances last year and too great literary activity have contributed to making you so ill. Write and reflect, try to acquire a serious manner, never plan anything without having thought it out well and be a little less easygoing. Avoid the phrase and whole expression of meaning for which you cannot fully account, and fight against the quickness of your imagination. Look at the great authors: they had none of that brilliance found in their own books. Their principal characteristic is a grave majesty which is only disturbed when there is reason. It is not the twirling mirror which fascinates the swallows, but the sun which attracts the eagle. Try to acquire that calm and serenity of soul which makes the great men of science, saints in the faith, and good constitutions in hygiene. Health, says Plato, is the harmony between all the power of soul and body.

Have a little circle of chosen friends; join especially with good comrades instead of the world’s social gatherings. Some hours spent together before the fire in familiar conversation with open heart does more good and gives more repose than an entire week of parties where you must do one of two things: be affected and harnessed in the forms of a stupid and cold politeness, or abandon yourself to the extraordinary customs that are not without peril. You know the world is a pyre of fire which wears down young lives, do not give it yours. If you believed in nothing, it
could be said to you: short and good, and *coronemus nos rosis antequam marcescant.*

But Christian and believing in God, humanity, country, and family, remind yourself that you owe your existence to them and not to yourself and that it would be a thousand times better to languish for half a century, giving others the example of resignation and doing a bit of good by it than to carouse for a few months of brilliant delights and die in delirium. But no, you, you do not languish; the fountain is too sparkling to run dry, your mind too quick to remain powerless. You will succeed, you will do great good; whatever be the career you map out for yourself, you will not slip in bull’s blood like Euryale. If the one you call Nisus is not present to you, it is because he was parted too soon; perhaps, also, his end may come too soon; but you, you also will come to it some day. Perhaps, too, like these two friends, some common sacrifice is in store for us, but is not sacrifice, for him who believes, the shortest path to the true end, immortality?

Dear friend, there is my advice. I do not, above everything, want to assume the air of giving a lesson. We are co-disciples, we are brothers. Neither do I presume on my right of age, and if I have spoken so, it is simply to say what is in my heart, and because between us I think vague sentimental disgressions absolutely useless and that it is better to make a few positive applications. Please do the same for me and tell me at this renewal of the year what reforms you would like to see in my character, work, and moral direction. Your advice will not fail in the balance because, together from earliest childhood, you should know me.

Thanks for the interesting details you give on the city of Aix, your habits, occupations, and little trip. I have spoken of you to the gentlemen of the *Revue europeenne* who told me to ask you to send something, especially the article you told me about. You will find it advantageous to join these honorable men, and besides, your published article will be paid for at the same rate paid others. As for me, I have already realized a bit of money for my article on China. I am about to do two more on India. One will be published in the December issue, the other in the next. Lalier and Chaurand are there bobbing away so that I must finish on pain of writing on diverse subjects. They have much affection for you; the one because he knows you, the other because he would like to. I will write more at length later.

I embrace you with a full heart,

A.-F. OZANAM

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*p. 79*

**Notes:**

1. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they fade.
2. Nisus, the young Trojan who accompanied Aeneas to Italy and whose friendship for Euryale has been immortalized by Virgil in the ninth book of his *Aeneid.* The celebrated episode is a masterpiece of pathos. The names of Nisus and Euryale have lived as synonyms for friends devoted even to death. *Larousse.*
3. “*Les Croyances religieuse de la Chine,*” in *Revue europeenne,* September 1833 (Galopin, n. 60).
To Ernest Falconnet
Paris, July 21, 1834

Happy accord in their religious and political opinions. Principles on which they rest. News of his health and studies.

Dear Ernest,

I have received two visits recently which gave me great pleasure. First, that of your excellent father, who found me in my retreat and showed the whole time of his stay the most cordial and touching affection. I would have liked to see more of him, to serve as his guide in his long Paris excursions, who so many times guided and protected us in our childhood walks; I would like to be of service to him, but my bothersome examination nails me without release to the chair, nor allows me to follow my heart.

The second visit came about the same time, yours, that is your package of nice letters, friendly and sincere chats I enjoy, the opening of your soul, details about yourself in which I am so interested—just what quenches my thirst. For understand, my friend, when two hundred leagues separate one, there is always the fear of being lost sight of, the doubts whether things will be the same upon one's return, the fear of no longer being understood: that is why I have in a way importuned you, why I have nailed my most intimate feelings to the door, and wished to strike the most sacred chord of your heart to see if it still sounds in unison with mine.

Now I rejoice at the experiment because I see that we are still as close to each other, still brothers in thought as well as by blood. I am happy to know after suffering as I have, seeking as I have, that you think as I do. Thus, without seeing each other, we have come, novice pilgrims, by the same routes to the threshold of the same temple.

Except, although it is not the place to explain my idea, I look at Catholicism in perhaps a more absolute way: I see formula as necessary to Christianity, just as Christianity seems to me the necessary formula for humanity. I believe the Church to be above the things of this world, but I recognize her right to mark out for herself the boundary of her intervention and power. I also believe worship to be the expression of faith, the symbol of hope, the earthly result of the love of God. For that reason I practice it as much as I can and according to the habits given me from childhood, and find in prayer and the sacraments the needed sustenance for my moral life amid temptations of a consuming imagination and fantasizing world.

As for political opinions, there, too, we agree, which is to say that with you I would like to see the abasement of the political spirit for the good of the social spirit. Like you I salute the banner of Lamartine and Sauzet, of Pages of Ariège, of Hennéquin and Janvier. I am without contradiction for the old royalism in every respect even if it is a glorious invalid, but I do not insist on it because, with its wooden leg, it cannot march in step with the new generations. I declare neither for nor against any government combination, but accept them as instruments for making man happier and better. If you want a formula, here it is:

I believe in authority as a means, in liberty as a means, and in love as the end.

There are two chief kinds of government, and these two kinds of government
can be animated by two opposite principles. There is either the exploitation of everyone for the good of a single person, the monarchy of Nero, a monarchy I abhor. Or there is the sacrifice of a single person for the good of all, the monarchy of Saint Louis, which I revere with love. There is either the exploitation of all for the good of a few, the republic of Athens and that of the Terror, and such a republic I condemn. Or there is the sacrifice of a few for the good of all, the Christian republic of the primitive Church at Jerusalem, and perhaps that of the end of time. Humanity cannot attain a higher state.

All government seems worthy of respect to me in so far as it represents the divine principle of authority; it is in this sense that I understand the *omnis potestas a Deo* of Saint Paul. But I think that in the face of power there must also be the sacred principle of liberty, I think its place should be energetically reclaimed, and I think the power which exploits rather than expends itself should be condemned with courageous and unyielding voice. Speech was given as the dike to hold back force, the grain of sand where the sea breaks.

Opposition is a useful thing and praiseworthy but not insurrection. Active obedience, passive resistance: the *Prisons* of S. Pellico and not the *Paroles d’un Croyant*.

But, we others, we are too young to intervene in the social struggle. Should we remain inactive therefore in the midst of a suffering and groaning world? No, there is a preparatory path open to us: before taking action for the public good we can take action for the good of individuals; before regenerating France, we can solace poor persons. I would further wish that all young people might unite in head and heart in some charitable work and that there be formed through the whole country a vast generous association for the relief of the common people. I will make you happy one day with what was done in this mode in Paris this year and last, and to the point that you consider whether you want to be a part of it.

Your father told me many interesting things about you. I noted behind the reticence of his speech how much satisfaction he had in speaking of his son, and how much more of hope for the future. Congratulations on your literary successes; while they must encourage you, I know well there are no risks of your becoming proud. Do not be upset over your bad nerves; I have frequently experienced the like, and it passes, they say, after 25 years of age. Try to study much, write little and get enough rest. Do not dry up the water too close to the source.

As for me, I have done very little this year, save for my law at which I have worked more than usually. At the moment I am taken up with material for the fourth examination, which is very extensive and gives me no leisure. I am writing in haste. It is one o'clock in the morning, and I must close this letter too short as to conversation and too long and discursive for a letter of courtesy. You will excuse both the one and the other, will you not? And then in less than a month we will speak at our ease about everything the pen renders so badly.

Adieu. Your cousin and friend for life,

A.-F. Ozanam
I have sent your article to the director of France Catholique who intends to write to you about it. The Revue européenne is being reorganized; after its realignment, I think it will be very satisfied to have you as collaborator.

Address: Monsieur Ernest Falconnet, Law Student, Toulouse

Notes:
1. Jean Paul Sauzet (1800-1876), Lyon lawyer, was Rhone deputy in 1834, keeper of the Seals in 1836, and president of the Chamber in 1840.
2. Jean Louis Pagès (1784-1866), lawyer at Toulouse, interned in 1815, deputy from the Ariège under Louis Philippe, and from the Haute-Garonne in 1848, he ranked among the adversaries of Louis Napoléon and the Empire.
3. Amedée Hennequin, born in 1812, brother of the Fourierist (from Charles Fourier, philosopher and sociologist), collaborator in the Quotidienne and Correspondant, one of the pioneers of social Catholicism.
4. Ozanam, in a letter to his father (n. 69, January 17, 1834) calls Janvier “one of the most noted provincial lawyers and a man of prodigious talent!”
5. Nero, Roman emperor from A.D. 54 to 68 (born in A.D. 37).
7. All power is from God.
8. Silvio Pellico, Italian litterateur, born at Salouces (1789-1854). He spent nine years in the prisons of Spielberg where he wrote the moving book Mes Prisons.

79. To Emmanuel Bailly
Lyon, end of October 1834

Founding of a charitable group at Nîmes by Léonce Curnier.

Mr. President,

I do not know whether you recall that a young man, one of my friends, who came to Paris this summer to assist at one of our reunions of charity, expressed a desire to associate with us by forming a similar work at Nîmes, his native place. The young man’s name is M. Léonce Curnier, he is the son of one of the better-known businessmen of Nîmes, and he is a businessman himself and is in constant contact with the working class of that city. His excellent heart could not spend time in this contact without being profoundly moved, for there, as in all commercial cities, the misery of the workers is extreme. He therefore bent his efforts to create a society of charitable young people. He informed me yesterday that his efforts had been crowned with success; there are seven of them under the presidency of a venerable ecclesiastic, and they will start their work at the end of November.
To encourage the first efforts of his co-workers and to clarify their first steps, M. Curnier asked me for a copy of an extract from the report read by M. de la Noue in the presence of the pastor of Saint-Etienne du Mont. Please send it to me at once. M. de la Noue would be willing to make a copy of the extract. I would not presume to give him this trouble for myself, but it is for the good God and the poor.

I ask the conference, also, to consider whether it would not be agreeable to draw up a corresponding list of members and add M. Curnier and his friends. M. Curnier deserves this title; he has promised to keep me, by an active correspondence at least, fully abreast of their works. You can well imagine that I would not keep such good news to myself.

M. Bietrix will remit to you my total alms for the past two vacation months. I shall remain one more month before returning to rejoin you. Time truly drags, for here I do nothing for poor people; I am an entirely useless servant, I do only what is enjoyable and taste in their entirety the sweets of idleness.

Be very sure, nevertheless, you, sir, and my good colleagues, that if my whole being is not among you, my heart is at least. Please do not, in your turn, forget me.

Your colleague who presumes to call himself your friend,

A.-F. Ozanam

I ask pardon for the negligence with which this letter is written, with great rapidity and in the middle of an animated conversation which surrounds me and in which I am obliged at times to take part.

Copy: Provided by the management of the journal La Croix. Another copy from Msgr. Gaston, Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Address: Copied at the beginning of the letter: To Monsieur, Monsieur Bailly, President of the Association of Charity, at Paris.

Notes:
1. Emmanuel Bailly (1791-1861), born at Bryas (P. de C.). His wife (d. 1870), whose maiden name was Vrayet de Surcy, was a native of Berteaucourt (Somme). Paris became their permanent home in 1825. Two of their sons (one, Vincent de Paul) entered the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption. Bailly had founded, under the Restoration, the Society of Good Studies (La Société des Bonnes Études), which became after 1830 the Conference of History (to which Ozanam belonged), itself the forerunner of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, of which Bailly is considered a cofounder and was the first president. Bailly ran the Tribune catholique (1832), which merged in 1834 with l'Univers Religieux of Abbe Migne. This was the origin of l'Univers of which Bailly was one of the chief editors until succeeded by Louis Veuillot in 1842.
2. Deduced from a letter from Curnier to Ozanam of October 12 (Lettres, 1912, t. I, p. 119) and preceding a letter from Ozanam to the same (of November 4).
3. Léonce Curnier, son of a silk manufacturer of Nîmes and relative of Msgr. Sibour (Marie Dominique Auguste Sibour, later archbishop of Paris), seems to have known Ozanam at Lyon. He had, in June 1833, assisted at a meeting of the Conference of Charity. Ozanam kept up a correspondence with him. He died in 1852, a candidate for the legislative elections in the Gard.
To Henri Pessonneaux
Lyon, November 2, 1834


Dear friend,

I received your good letter four days ago with gratitude for your friendship and for the promptitude with which you fulfilled your promise to write me. Thank you for taking care of my errands. I read with pleasure your details about M. Bailly and rejoice in the excellent dispositions in which you found him. But also, perhaps, he was the citizen-soldier that day and had put on with the martial uniform martial thoughts, which he left off the same evening.

Today is my turn to visit. As at other times, going to see you, I burst from the faubourg Saint-Jacques and hurried happily down the rue Neuve de Luxembourg without stopping at beckoning old bookstalls in the rue des Grès, nor at the splendid shops of the rue de Seine, nor at the engravings on the quai Voltaire, nor in the splendid walks of the Tuileries, so today my mind shakes off its usual idleness and pushes my pen and hurries toward you with all the celerity of the past. You may, perhaps, indict the small size of my paper and the brevity of my letter; and indeed you would be wrong, for just as a finely tapered pen can write a number of words in a limited space, so disciplined thought can be restrained to a smaller amount of words. It is time especially which is lacking and from which comes the classic accident of tearing the sheet of letter paper in two. Chaurand leaves tomorrow, and I do not want to miss such a good opportunity; and I am forced to write between vespers, which finished late, and the family get-together, which begins early.

I will speak of myself first. I continue to taste the pleasures of idleness, much like you, when you go to the review, like to watch the battalions succeeding one another and, when they are past, cast your eyes on another until the last one has gone, and then you are glad to have watched, although a bit regretful that there is nothing more to see. So I enjoy seeing my vacation days succeed one another and while two months have vanished, I reflect with pleasure on the third month which is beginning, and when all are gone, I will be happy with the moments of happiness God has given me, although a bit sad that those moments are over. In the meantime I vary my enjoyments: in the beautiful days of September there were the trips to the country, the pilgrimages of adventure, the happy strolls, the friendly conversations prolonged until the moon comes up, the sun, the greenery, the raisins, the autumn with all its treasures; then I went once to stay with the Chaurands on the secluded bank of the Rhone, in a desert place where all the voices of the wind could be heard, later under the roof of the great poet in the most beautiful valley which inspired such religious harmonies, and later still in your own room, my good Henri, through the amiable hospitality of your sister. Other times I would make only a passing visit to the countryside and return to close the evening with carefree comrades. Now the sky is gray and the streets filled with mush. It is cold and damp, and
the evenings are dangerous for weak chests. Nature is dead, but to compensate, society has aroused itself and redoubles its efforts to deceive itself about the sadness of approaching winter. It is the reign of industry. Industry built those pleasant fireplaces at whose corner it is so good to chat together, industry cuts in the forest the wood which flames so marvelously. Even better: in the form of a fine chef, it prepares excellent dinners. It builds edifices of farina and sugar. It dresses in the most seductive ways the bloody carcasses of animals. It makes the champagne sparkle and the coffee steam.

I am about to get to the point: all this was an introduction to tell you that since your departure I have not been lacking in galas. Last week especially was monumental in the gastronomic history of my life. Every day, except All Saints, I had invitations, and today again and tomorrow. They are the farewell dinners of friends: Serre, La Perrière, Chaurand, etc., etc.

Not just patés, nor fowl. In a word, were I not to find excellent company, I would be ashamed of myself, so plunged am I in good cheer and debauchery. But why be ashamed in dining rooms where I meet l’Abbé Noirot and the pastor of Saint-Pierre, Dufrène and the like? But in the course of things, after eating, one must digest, and digestion, difficult operation, demands rest, or even, if it sometimes inspires certain thoughts, they must be analogous. So the other day, having left one of these festive boards and passing in front of the college, I improvised the following verses, parodies of Rousseau. ̊

I submit these beautiful verses to your taste, but I truly believe them more proper for Marc’s Album than for a lady’s. But be sure that if I address you a like specimen of my works, it is only to let you see the unhappy results of the digestion of good dinners.

For the rest I am working scarcely at all and am not a great deal more philosopher than poet. I decipher, nonetheless, some pages of Plato. ̊ I read some excerpts of Klapstock, ̊ and I pursue my course of English lessons. I assure you, my dear, that I begin to understand and to write English. ̊ But . . . [enough] of this langue d’oiseaux, as Charles Quint would say; French is the language of friendship. However, if I knew a little Spanish I think I would oblige by writing to you in the tongue of Cervantes and Calderon. ̊ I very much regret not being able to satisfy my wish in that regard.

Do you not find me very silly? Do you not think this letter ought to be dated from Antiquaille? ̊ Alas, no, dear friend, all fools are not locked up, and there are more in the world than you would think. Those called wise men are those who have the longest lucid intervals. I will try, then, to have a lucid interval and speak to you a bit seriously.

These are the friends who have left: the Charaunds, the Serres, the La Perrières, already soldiers used to the discipline of study. But still here are entirely new recruits and in need of good advice: Ballofet leaves on the 4th and Falconnet, the 10th. I recommend them to your kindness: M. Bailly will have their address. Give them, please, all the directions they will need; they will be very useful to us one day. Bietrix whom you will have already seen brought us good news: M. Curnier has
established at Nîmes a little charitable society modeled on our own. The letter he wrote me burns with zeal: let us try not to grow cold, but remember that, in human affairs, success is possible only by continual development, and that not to go forward is to fall back. I then favor innovations, subdivisions of conferences, movement, and everything it pleases the benevolent brain of M. Bailly to produce. I hope for success to the point of bravery. I will accept whatever he wants me to do, but I will not go beyond it. I believe that is the surest means of staying within the paths of Providence. If, however, M. Bailly wishes something done, I think it should be done at once: you know the irresolution of this excellent man. On my side, I will pressure him as much as I can and intend to write him incessantly to that end.

As for myself, my poor heart is now tranquil. My imagination is calmed by the consoling word of Abbé Marduel.11 I rejoice in total physical, mental and moral repose. With a little piety, a little love of God, I would be happy. But I am ever dry and cold as marble. I close this letter—miserable provincial that I am: what news could I give you, fashionable Parisian, abreast of everything, at the center of European civilization?

They are pressing me besides, I must finish. Adieu, I embrace you. Write me soon, please. I enjoy your letters very much, and they do not cost you much, for you write very quickly. Adieu, I have talked about myself too much, on another occasion we will chat about you.

Your cousin,
A.-F. OZANAM

Address: To Monsieur, Monsieur Henri Pessonneaux, at Monsieur Pessonneaux, businessman, rue de la Chausée d’Antin, n. 8, Paris (Seine).

Original: Archives Laporte.

Notes:
1. Paul Brac de La Perrière (1814-1894), born at Sainte-Foy-les-Lyon, of which La Mulatière was then a part, belonged to a Catholic and royalist family of local influence. He studied law in Paris with Ozanam (1832) and was one of the first members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (although not one of the founders) and was its first secretary (1836-1837). Returning to Lyon in 1837, he made his law career there. He was the first president of the Conference of Saint-François at Lyon, then succeeded Arthaud as president of the Central Council of Lyon (1849).
3. Pessonneaux's brother.
4. Plato, Greek philosopher (c. 250-184 B.C.), was a disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle.
5. Frederick Klapstock, German poet (1724-1823), born at Quedlinbourg (Prussian Saxony).
6. Ozanam wrote the italicized words in English.
7. Charles V, king of France (1337-1380), came to the throne in 1364 and in 1375 reconquered all the provinces the English had captured. He extended the privileges of the University of Paris and founded the first national library. Ozanam makes a further joke in speaking of English as langue d'oiseaux (language of the birds), which is a title appropriated to French.
8. Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), Spanish writer, born at Alcalá de Henares, author of Don Quijote de La Mancha.
9. Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600-1681), Spanish dramatic poet, born at Madrid.
10. A reference to the Hospice d’Antiquaille at Lyon, which had a wing for mental patients.
11. Abbé Marduel was a curate of Saint-Vizier at Lyon and Ozanam’s first spiritual director. He moved to Saint-Roche in Paris, where his uncle, who was the pastor, called him. He lived in retirement in a small apartment on the rue Massilor, where he had numerous visitors who came for spiritual direction.

81. To Emmanuel Bailly
Lyon, November 3, 1834

He announces the departure from Paris of several comrades and recommends his friend Ballofet. He should extend the Association of Charity by dividing it into sections. Articles for the Revue Européenne and the Univers Religieux.

Sir,

You have accustomed us to look upon you as the rallying point, the advisor and friend of young Christian youth. Your past favors have given us the right to count on future ones. Those you have done for me encouraged me to hope for the same for my friends.

Several of my old comrades, good and religious men, are on the point of leaving for Paris. Were I leaving at the same time I would have had the pleasure of introducing them to you, but since they go before me, will you allow me to address them to you and to recommend them to your goodness? They will have need of the addresses of our mutual friends which you know, good advice from you, and after some time, perhaps, of being admitted to our conferences.

M. Ballofet, who is the bearer of this letter, is a childhood friend of mine and had all his schooling with me. A long illness prevented him from going to the capital earlier. He has always been virtuous and will be no different in his new state. His parents not being wealthy, he is little used to the ways of the world, and you will find him very simple and timid. He is not endowed with a brilliant imagination, nor a very striking mind, but has, what is much better, very good judgment, an open intelligence and studious tastes. He will be, I hope, after some time, a useful member of our conference of charity. I do not think, however, that it would be a mistake to talk to him about it right away.

Pessonneaux has given me your news, which I very much wished. He tells me that you are full of hope for the year about to start. I really believe that the time has come to extend the sphere of good, and if you were seconded by better helpers than we are, I think that the works you have undertaken, your conferences, taking on new forms, called for by new necessities, could render youth great services. The association is already numerous enough to be divided up in sections. The literary conferences, beyond their proper usefulness, could serve as the vestibule of the association of charity. They could be grouped together and multiply themselves more
and more. If you could see, sir, how our good provincial mothers of families rejoice to think that their sons are not lonely in the exile of the capital, that they have friends, and form themselves at the same time in knowledge and virtue! It is to you that they owe this joy. If the *Revue Européenne* is still in existence, I hope that it will transform itself and that, its problems overcome, it will enter upon a most brilliant career. Meanwhile, please send it the enclosed review of a work which had been sent me. I am going to send you two more reviews in my next letter. I remind you of the article for the *Univers Religieux* on the poetry of Silvio Pellico.

I will leave toward the end of the month, and then I will be able to give you fresh evidence of how much your kindnesses to me touch me, and how precious your affection is to me.

A.-F. OzANAM
Paris [sic], November 3, 1834

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Address: Copied at the beginning of the letter: To Monsieur, Monsieur Bailly, Place de l'Estrapade, n. 11.
Copy: Provided by the management of the journal *La Croix*—extract of Msgr. Gaston, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.
Note:
1. See the conjectures of Galopin, n. 90, 95, 96.

82. To Léonce Curnier
Lyon, November 4, 1834

On the foundation of the Conference of Charity at Nîmes.

Dear friend,

Your letter has filled me with joy. I have not kept this joy to myself. I have communicated it to certain of my friends who belong to our little society and who are here on vacation. I have written on the matter to members in Paris to give them this good news and to bring about the union you ask. I could scarcely give you information concerning it, I think, before a fortnight and did not wish to let so much time elapse without a reply. So allow me to congratulate you, for the present, on the good you have begun and on what you are prepared to do. You have found colleagues worthy of you, and you have found a wise guide. The field is before you; misery has ploughed deep furrows there; you will sow benefactions with full hands, and you will increase them and bring them to harvest. God and the poor will bless
you, and we whom you have surpassed will be eager and happy to count such brothers. The wish that we had is, then, fulfilled: you are the first echo to answer our feeble voice. Others, perhaps, will be raised soon. Thus the greatest merit of our little Parisian society will be to have given the idea of forming like ones. A thread suffices to begin a weave; often a stone cast into the water becomes the foundation of a great island.

I believe then that you have seized upon all that is good among us by taking up a charitable idea, which was already without doubt in your own soul, but which had not yet been expressed. I think knowledge of our organization and manner of acting is not of great use to you. Your city probably has different needs than the capital and provides different resources. The assistance bureaus are set up differently. Besides, in such a work it is necessary to give yourself up to the inspirations of the heart rather than the calculations of the mind. Providence gives its own counsel through the circumstances around you, and the ideas it bestows on you. I believe you would do well to follow them freely and not tie yourselves down with rules and formulas.

Besides, the end that we set ourselves in Paris is not completely the same as that you set yourselves, I think, in the province. In Paris we are birds of passage, separated for a while from the paternal nest, and upon whom, incredulity, that vulture of thought, swoops to take his prey. We are poor young minds, nourished in the lap of Catholicism and scattered among an impious and sensual mob. We are sons of Christian mothers, arriving one after another within alien walls where irreligion seeks to redeem its losses, and so it is necessary before everything else that these feeble birds of passage gather under a cover of protection, that these young minds find a rallying point during the time of their exile, that their Christian mothers have fewer tears to shed, and their sons return home just as they were sent. It is important then to form an association of mutual encouragement for young Catholic people where one finds friendship, support, and example; where one finds again, so to speak, a likeness of the religious family in which he had been nurtured, where the elders receive the new pilgrims from a province and give them a bit of moral hospitality. But the strongest tie, the principle of a true friendship, is charity, and charity could not exist in the hearts of many without sweetening itself from outside. It is a fire that dies without being fed, and good works are the food of charity. So it is in our own interest first of all that our association has been established, and if we assemble under the roof of the poor, it is at least equally for them as for ourselves, so as to become progressively better friends.

Perhaps this motive of personal interest, this egoism which is at the bottom of our work, might cause it to lose something of your esteem. As for you, you seem to me called to a more generous mission. You are in your venerable homes where your infancy grew and which your youth has not deserted, where you breathe a pure atmosphere, where you live amid good traditions and examples. The earth does not quake beneath your feet. You have no need of fresh efforts to strengthen you. Your faith and virtue have no need of association to maintain themselves, but only
for development. It is not a necessity for you; it is a free and spontaneous act of a firm will. You will act directly for the poor and not for yourselves. You will, besides, establish a permanent association, not renewed over and over like ours. You will distribute your benefactions in your own town and not in a strange city. Your work will then be at once more disinterested, durable, shining and powerful. You will be better able to select; you will walk more securely. We, on the contrary, are obliged by our situation to accept practically all who present themselves, as long as they are Catholic, without entering into an examination of their zeal or aptitude; we depend a bit on chance in distributing our alms, and we are sometimes rash in our new undertakings. You can stay less numerous, and when you are near more than a dozen, if you are united in true intimacy, you can do great good in a town of thirty thousand souls. We, on the contrary, are forced to expand, even at the risk of relaxation, to take into our circle the greatest possible number of young people.

I do not know whether I am expressing myself intelligibly, but I wanted to call your attention to the difference in goal, because that might call for a difference of means. I go into no more details about our little society in Paris. I think I said it all in conversation. That is all I can recall now, and M. La Noue's report will tell you more than I can. Since we came into existence we have distributed about two thousand four hundred francs, some books and a very great quantity of old clothing. Our resources are the following: first, from collections, we make among ourselves each Tuesday; second, from the alms of certain charitable persons who wish to assist thus in our works; third, from cleaning out our wardrobe. As it is possible that with the beginning of the school year our number will increase and rise to a hundred, we will have to divide up and form several sections which will have a common assembly periodically. When these new arrangements are taken, I will let you know. For, despite what I have said about the dissimilarity that seems to me to exist between our two societies, there must be no diminution of union and harmony. On the contrary, like divergent spokes touching the same center, so our varied efforts tending toward divers ends come together in one and the same charitable mind and proceed from the same principle. There must then be agreement among us in order to double our strength. There must be frequent communications which provide us a laudable example for good and render us a common joy in the success of each one. Thus, in writing to our little society of Paris, I asked that a list of active members be drawn up and your name inscribed on it, and afterward those of your friends when you will be good enough to let us know them. That is not academic formality, but a true correspondence in which you can count upon my exactitude, as I count on your friendship.

Pardon, dear friend, my temerity in giving you some advice. To tell the truth, they are not counsels, for I am not capable of counseling anyone; they are reflections I have had, and I pass them on to you for you to do whatever you wish. At another time it will be you in your turn who will communicate the results of your experience to me.

I thank you very much for Reboul's' beautiful verses. I have read them to sev-
eral friends who have greatly admired them. Mama, to whom I also read them, has asked me to thank you. When I am in Paris I in turn will send you some new literary works. Here on vacation I live like a Beotian. I do practically no work. I am out to pasture.

Adieu, good M. Curnier. Please do not forget me, and write when you can.

Your friend for life,

A.-F. OZANAM

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Notes:
1. Gustave de la Noue, who was apparently writing to Curnier from Paris.
2. Jean Reboul (1796-1864), born at Nîmes. A simple baker, he published poetry in which there is a true feeling for nature.
3. The word Beotian (from the ancient Greek country) signifies an uncultivated mind, indifferent to artistic beauty; the Beotians had the reputation of being uncouth.

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83. To Emmanuel Bailly
Lyon, November 8, 1834

Recommendation for M. Jouve, who could become a member of the “Charitable Society.”

I have the honor to present to you M. Jouve, a friend of M. Génin, who introduced him to me, and whom I know to be an excellent young man, a very talented and good Christian. I think he could satisfactorily take the place in the charitable society of M. Génin, who may not return to Paris.

Excuse me for writing only these few lines. I have just learned that M. Jouve leaves tomorrow and Génin is with me waiting for this letter. In any case, brevity here is not the fruit of dryness of heart, for no one, Monsieur, is more rightly and affectionately devoted to you than I.

A.-F. OZANAM

Génin sends his regards.

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Notes:
1. Ozanam evidently thought highly of this man, since he recommended him for worthy teaching posts (Cf. letters 376, 381, 455).
2. Auguste Génin (1810-1899), fellow student of Ozanam at the Collège de Lyon and at Paris (1833-
1834), one of the first members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, was president of the Conference of Saint-Pierre at Lyon from 1839 to 1849. Following several periods of trial as a court officer, he took careful measure of the state of things there and thought about entering the magistracy. He finally found a position in the new gas industry, somewhere around 1844, and made a fortune as executive of several companies.

85. To Emmanuel Bailly
Lyon, November 20, 1834

Article on Bacon for the Revue Européenne. Opinions of M. Noirot on this revue and on the literary conferences. Increase of the association of charity: it must be divided into groups.

Sir,

I had hoped to be with you by the first of December, but a light indisposition coinciding wonderfully with family enjoyments and idleness by the corner of the fire has made me decide to leave on the day when I had intended to arrive. So my vacation is prolonged, and I am afraid you will accuse me of sloth in the first degree if I do not repay some of my old debts to you. Here then is an article on Bacon's history for which the Revue Européenne has asked a receipt from me. The subject has perhaps, under my pen, stretched beyond measure; and you will perhaps find in it useless digressions, much heaviness of style, many negligences. I leave it entirely to the judgment of those gentlemen and am ready to make all the changes they judge convenient. I who have not counted for much yet in Paris, and am now a poor provincial relegated far from its movement and light, what can I do, or what claim have I to dare cooperate in the great works of the capital? Although to tell the truth, I am anxious to know whether the Revue Européenne still flourishes and whether its three hundred and seventy-seven subscribers still keep faith and send their money. Recently the professor of philosophy at the Collège, who is a very distinguished priest and to whom the young people of Lyon are obligated for the preservation of their beliefs, this professor who likes the Revue Européenne told me of some changes it should undergo, some ideas which perhaps will seem to you useful.

He would like to see this review, published every fortnight, devoted to a faithful analysis and reasoned criticism of the principal works and more noteworthy courses of the Collège de France and the Sorbonne. It could be used in the following way to challenge the teaching of Lerminier. The same issue could carry regularly one or two original articles, but the chief end, one which no other periodical magazine offers, would be to review everything of some value said or written, be it in the arts or the sciences. The same ecclesiastic insists on the usefulness of the literary conferences as a means of getting work done and bringing the young people together. I see
as a further purpose, what we found last year, a means of getting recruits for our association of charity. I found on my arrival here this association was known and that it inspired a great trust in mothers of Christian families. But do you not think that our charitable society itself in order to survive ought to make changes, and the spirit of intimacy on which it is built and the daily growth it should have can only be achieved by breaking it up into groups which would have a common center and from time to time general assemblies? I am very rash to propose my young man's ideas to you who have a long experience in charity and who are so radically acquainted with our needs and those of the poor. But, temporarily separated from these associations which are my total joy, I can not hold back at least from speaking of the matter, and I am confident that you will not be bored by conversation about charity. In truth, happy as I am with my family, the time of waiting to see you again is long, you who are so good to me and my friends and to whom you give such good example, especially Lallier to whom, please, give my affection. For the rest, I will drop in on you unannounced in two weeks. I am ready to bother you again with my importunities in order to have your counsel, strengthen my wavering resolutions, and to learn about life, so as to understand how to go through it doing the most good possible.

Excuse, Monsieur, the familiarity with which I write you. You have accustomed me to it by your benevolence and my heart is too full of this habit to agree to its loss. Be assured that it diminishes nothing of the respect with which I am

Your devoted servant,
A.-F. OzANAM
Lyon, December 20 [sic] 1834


Notes:
1. The copy reads December 20, but the text contradicts that date. On December 16 Ozanam attended a meeting in Paris where the Conference of Charity discussed the proposal of division.
2. Roger Bacon (1214-1294), English monk surnamed The Admirable Doctor, born at Ilchester, one of the greatest scholars of the Middle Ages.
3. Abbé Noirot.
Description of the Lyon student colonies at Paris. Regrets at not having heard Lacordaire. Lamartine’s speech in the chamber.

Dear Velay,

I am very late in replying to your letter of December 9, but I note that I am still within the week of New Year’s visits, and therefore come on time to present my affectionate greetings. I wish for you the happy days at Metz, the days not heavily encumbered with tiresome studies, that did not seem too long to you, and which left you some leisure to think about your friends the Parisians. As for them, I assure you they do not forget you, and if your military step no longer mounts the stairs of the Hotel des Ecoles, if your glorious sword no longer clangs on the tiles of our rooms, if we have no longer on Sundays your regular visit, you live in our memories, you interrupt our conversations. You are quoted, regretted; it is asked when you will return; and when one of your letters arrives for one of us, it is the custom to share it.

The Lyonnaise youth this year have formed three chief colonies in the Latin Quarter and laid the foundations of three glorious empires. To the north and within the confines of our faubourg, on the fifth floor and near the sky, the artists, eagles of genius, have suspended their aerie. LaPerriere is at their head and governs peaceably the flourishing state which he administers in conjunction with an old duenna in charge of Exterior Affairs, the Marine, and Public Works. I say marine, as applied to Wednesday and Saturdays, days on which the aforesaid duenna must purvey to the table of the aforesaid artists fried codfish and by chance sardines. Frenet, Lavergne, Alday and several others rally under this noble sceptre: religion of one’s birth and the cult of Ingres. Returning to the south and at the end of the rue de Tournon, near the great museum of mummies known as Luxembourg, several other illustrious sons of the department of the Rhone have chosen to sojourn: Ballofet, Accarias, Arthaud, etc., etc., living under the same roof and eating at the same table: much politics and literature are talked about there. The Divinity of the place is not yet known. To the east, finally, and near the Pantheon without doubt so as to take only a step after their death, in the immortal Palais des Ecoles, behind a polyglot barber, in the midst of an atmosphere of knowledge and beefsteak, rises the metropolis of the three colonies: Chaurand the megalosaurus, Bietrix surnamed Boirude, Gonon the grimacer, Serre the mysterious, Ravier, Besson and myself; we mold in this fortunate dwelling the model republic upon which France will be modeled some day. To pinpoint the philosophy and doctrine that rules there would be difficult. I have indeed Descartes and Malebranche in my library, but Bietrix has in his the Eau de Monte and the Elixir de Graves. He eats for reasons of patriotism a great deal of Lyon chestnuts. There are continual fes, but bellicose fes where disputes abound, and where Chaurand and Bietrix practice the strong-
est tyranny a bit on our shoulders. Certain wandering individuals prowl around these three principal centers: Falconnet, who thanks you for your kind remembrance; Gignoux, whose martial figure makes a remarkable contrast to our childish thoughtlessness; Pessonneaux, who dreams only of Spain and speaks only Andalusian. I would never end if I named them all, both as brilliant as the stars in the firmament of the capital, and as numerous as the grains of sand at the edges of this vast ocean of civilization. I ask you to reread Homer, Iliad, book II, verses 340 and following, and tell me whether his enumeration is more poetic than mine.

But also, Pegasus13 is like the geese: he cannot fly for long. From the heights of the epic I must come back to vile reality by admitting that these illustrious Lyonnaise are all more or less under the academic ferule and preparing for examinations. Enough then of statistics as to their number and let us speak of other things.

You regret missing, you say, the conferences of M. Lacordaire. Well, friend, console yourself. We hear him no longer. For reasons unclear to me and which charity does not permit me to sound, the evangelical chair is closed to him this year.14 It is a great grief to us who have need of the bread of the word, who had grown used to this excellent and hardy nourishment, to be deprived of it at a stroke, with nothing to replace it.

It has caused us even greater chagrin to see those of our errant brothers who, at this powerful voice, had taken the road to truth, return to their errors, shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders. Perhaps heaven wills this silence, this humiliation of Catholics as a greater sacrifice. Perhaps we have raised the forehead too soon. We put our pride in the word of a man and God puts His hand over this man's mouth, so that we will learn to be Christians without him, so that we will remember to deprive ourselves of everything except faith and virtue.

A slight compensation for these treasures of eloquence which M. Lacordaire lavished on us was offered me recently: I heard M. Lamartine in the Chamber. How grand and beautiful that day! How full of gravity, éclat and harmony was his speech! How far from the vague and evanescent theories they reproach him with! He was simple, logical, generous; more, he was charitable. He alone represented Christian thought in that debate. Odilon Barrot15 shouted louder. Berrier thundered more. But that calm reason, deep conviction, disinterest of all personal vanity, ardent love of the Good, in what noble and straightforward language it was expressed, how more worthy of admiration it was! Others were great lawyers; he alone seemed to me a great orator. The others could make more noise on the outside; none could better cast light within. The journals speak of the others a great deal, of him they have said little; the journals are echoes repeating words thrown to them, not following their good sense, but the strength of the lungs they proceed from.

I have not met M. Motet again. I was obliged to leave your letter for him. He will rejoin you soon. You will have companions to make those two years at Metz worthwhile for you! You yourself will certainly render them every service. You will have more leisure, I hope, than at the Ecole Polytechnique; you will be able to see other good and old friends from time to time, history and literature books. Then,
when you will have shaken off the last powder from the sieges, when you will have no longer any service but the brilliant service of the uniform, then you will be very happy, master of your time, delivered from the care of material existence, occupying an honorable rank in society, and will no longer have to engage yourself in intellectual and moral works. I am very envious of your lot from that point of view; I, poor devil, who will be ready to kiss the robe of judge advocates so they may throw me some morsels of cases to plead and who, while waiting for opportunity to come, will be tied to the judicial serfdom from morning until night, except to read from time to time Seneca's\textsuperscript{16} chapter on the contempt of riches. I am at present studying Hebrew and Sanskrit rather seriously, but how will it help a client, if you please, for his lawyer to know Sanskrit and Hebrew? It would be better to stick with the Code.\textsuperscript{17}

Wanting to send this letter in another addressed to my parents, I am obliged to abridge its size. But if paper fails, our friendship will never fail.

A.-F. OZANAM

I send the regards of all our mutual friends. Do not forget me while you are at Metz. Write us from time to time.

Address: To Monsieur, Monsieur Ferdinand Velay, rue de l'Arbre sec, Lyon.


Notes:
1. It is obvious from Ozanam's mention of its being still the week for New Year's visits in the first sentence, that this letter is misdated and should read January 5.
2. Joseph Ferdinand Velay (1814-1900), childhood friend and schoolmate of Ozanam at the Collège de Lyon, studied at the Ecole Polytechnique (Paris, 1830) and Ecole d'Application de Metz (1834), was lieutenant of defense at Montpellier (1837) and Salins (1840), then captain at Briançon (1841), Marseilles (1843), and Toulon (1844) from which he sailed for Algiers (1846). Back in France in 1849 he was stationed successively at Lyon, Entrevaux (1854), Draguignan (1855)—where he was promoted to battalion chief—Montmédy (1861), Ajaccio (1864), and finally Le Mans (1865) until his retirement in 1871.
3. The church law of the time decreed abstinence for both Wednesday and Saturday.
4. A fellow townsman, student and conference member of Ozanam, who died in 1840.
5. Claudius Lavergne (1814-1877), born at Lyon, painter and art critic, was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
7. Louis Accarias (1809-1878), childhood friend of Ozanam, lawyer at Lyon from 1837, member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and author of numerous works on economic and social questions.
8. Joseph Arthaud (1813-1883), childhood friend of Ozanam, pursued medical studies at Paris (1832-1835). A mental disease specialist, he served at Lyon's Hôpital Saint-Jean-de-Dieu (1835-1842), the mental department of the Hospice de l'Antiquaille (1842) which he headed in 1849. An early member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he helped establish it at Lyon (1836) and was president of the Conference of Saint-Pierre (1837) before succeeding Ozanam as president of the Central Council of Lyon (1838-1849).
9. The megalosaurus was a dinosaur of enormous height.
10. René Descartes (1596-1650), French philosopher and mathematician.
11. Nicolas de Malebranche (1638-1715), French Oratorian, metaphysician.
12. Mountain water and white wines.
13. The mythological winged steed ridden by classical heroes.
14. Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire (1802-1861), secular priest, later Dominican, born at Recey-sur-Ounce (Côte d'Or), one of the most brilliant preachers of the nineteenth century. Lacordaire had indeed been forced to halt the conferences he had given at Collège Stanislas, but Archbishop Quelen, after petitions from Ozanam and some companions, appointed him to the pulpit of Notre Dame on March 8, a month after this letter.
15. Odilon Barrot, lawyer and politician (1791-1873), born at Villefort.
17. The body of law.

90. To Léonce Curnier
Paris, February 23, 1835


Dear friend,

Here I am, embarrassed at my delays, very ashamed of having upset you by my negligence from lassitude, of the trouble of your having to write me a second time. It is the height of ingratitude on my part after all the proofs of friendship you have given me, and would be beyond pardon did not my silence have some plausible reasons. Here is the first one.

From the first days of my arrival here I thought of the report you had asked me for. But I never thought of it at a proper time. I forgot several times to speak about it to de la Noue; then M. de la Noue referred me to M. Bailly, our president. M. Bailly searched for the report among his papers, and after a time told me that the search was fruitless. So the document is lost. It is not a great misfortune for us: there was in this abridged history of our work perhaps proud thought. God, who wishes that the left hand not know what the right hand has given, permitted us to lose title to what might serve only to bestow on us ridiculous vanity. Charity must never look behind it, but always before, because the number of its past benefits is always very small, and the present and future misery it solaces is infinite. Look at the greatest society of charity in the world, the Church, which for eighteen hundred years goes on doing good and still has not a history, has not time to think of recounting the works she has done. The immense burden of the future presses upon her and wholly preoccupies her. On the other hand, look at the philanthropic associations: they are only a year in existence when they already have large volumes of resumés. Philanthropy is a vain woman for whom good actions are a piece of jewelry and who loves to look at herself in the mirror. Charity is a tender mother who keeps her eyes fixed on the infant she carries at her breast, who no longer thinks of herself, and who forgets her beauty for her love.

I no longer believe that this loss was harmful for us. It is better for you to raise
your work by your own strength, under the inspirations of your heart, under the
influence of local circumstances, under the direction of the venerable priest who
presides over you. With all that, you will have passed very easily from a model,
a very imperfect one for that matter. You will not be like us; you will be better than
we are.

This prediction is not flattery; it is the expression of what I felt while reading
your letter so brimming with charity, so full of that apostolic fire which has es-
braced the world and from which your soul has received so lively a flame. I would
have been an egoist and wicked had I kept all this rejoicing to myself. I was obligated
to bring your beautiful and generous words to our meeting: I read to my assembled
colleagues, in the presence of the pastor of the parish who graciously presided over
us that day, a large portion of your letter. The impression it made on them can be
conveyed only in these words of one of them: “Indeed, this is the faith, this is the
charity of the first centuries.” Oh, yes, my friend, the faith, the charity of the first
centuries! It is not too much for our century. Are we not, like the Christians of the
first centuries, thrown into the midst of a corrupt civilization, of a collapsing socie-
ty? Are we not as relegated to the catacombs in obscurity and beneath the con-
tempt of those who consider themselves great and wise? Cast your eyes on the
world around us. Are the rich and the favored much better than those who replied
to St. Paul: “We will hear you another time?” And are the poor and the populace
better instructed and are they better off than those to whom the apostles preached?

The savants have compared the state of the slaves of antiquity with the condi-
tion of our workers and proletariat and have found these latter to have more to
complain of, after eighteen centuries of Christianity. Then, for a like evil, a like
remedy. The earth has grown cold. It is for us Catholics to revive the vital beat to
restore it, it is for us to begin over again the great work of regeneration, if necessary
to bring back the era of the martyrs. For to be a martyr is possible for every Chris-
tian, to be a martyr is to give his life for God and his brothers, to give his life in
sacrifice, whether the sacrifice be consumed in an instant like a holocaust, or be
accomplished slowly and smoke night and day like perfume on the altar. To be a
martyr is to give back to heaven all that one has received: his money, his blood, his
whole soul. This offering is in our hands; we can make this sacrifice. It is up to us to
choose to which altars it pleases us to bring it, to what divinity we will consecrate
our youth and the time following, in what temple we will assemble: at the foot of
the idol of egoism, or in the sanctuary of God and humanity.

The humanity of our days seems comparable to the traveler of whom the Gos-
pel speaks: it also, although it took its way in roads marked out for it by Christ, has
been attacked by the cutthroats and robbers of thought, by wicked men who have
robbed it of what it possessed: the treasure of faith and love, and they have left it
naked and wounded and lying by the side of the road. Priests and levites have
passed by, and this time, since they were true priests and levites, they have ap-
proached suffering themselves and wished to heal it. But in its delirium, it did not
recognize them and repulsed them.
In our turn, weak Samaritans, worldly and people of little faith that we are, let us dare nonetheless to approach this great sick one. Perhaps it will not be frightened of us. Let us try to probe its wounds and pour in oil, soothing its ear with words of consolation and peace; then, when its eyes are opened, we will place it in the hands of those whom God has constituted as the guardians and doctors of souls, who are also, in a way, our innkeepers in our pilgrimage here below, so as to give our errant and famished spirits the holy word for nourishment and the hope of a better world for a shield.

That is what is proposed to us, the sublime vocation God has given us. Would that we were a little bit worthy of it and bent easily to its burden. I am speaking of us others, students of Paris, colony of the people of God in a foreign land. It seems that the spectacle of this corruption and misery should make us ardent and strong. It seems that having before us great vices and behind us great virtues, we should be like a serried battalion facing the enemy, ranked under the colors it loves. Unhappily, that is not so. I do not know what languor seizes upon us. I am not afraid to say of the greater number what is true of me in particular. We are stricken with a general discouragement; we fulfill our duties from habit; we carry out our good works by routine, but no more the enthusiasm, the ebullient proselytizing, the rays of charity which at the beginning came sometimes to illuminate and warm our souls. We are very numerous but we lose in intensity what we gain in expansion. There are ordinarily 50 to 60 of us at a meeting, but we do not know one another very well. The session is nearly always concerned with business, it seems long. It is not that our president is lacking in ardor and zeal. It is not that we no longer have a hard core of very charitable members. Rather, it is a general attitude of mind; an intellectual epidemic has struck us. To try to renew our forces, we are going to attempt some reforms. They will not begin for some days. Much has been discussed, but I fear it will accomplish little.

Meanwhile, I hope that God will not abandon us, especially if we have brothers who pray and merit for us. In the name of our society, then, I congratulate yours in its zeal and courage and thank it for the union it wishes to make with us. I ask that it give witness for us by mingling its prayers and good works with ours. Remember our weakness as we remember your ardor. You want to consider your society as a colony of ours: ask heaven then for the preservation and prosperity of your capital, lest it perish. In the beginnings of Christianity the communities of Asia sent the torch of the Faith to the peoples of Gaul, and when Gaul became Christian, Asia ceased to be. *Si parva licet componere magnis,* see that it is not so with our Parisian work, that for a long time yet, and always, if possible, it be in this town a home of religion where sons of Christian mothers can come together to preserve together heat and light, so as to increase them in one another and carry them back to their provinces.

I have no new literary news to give you, first because there is little of any importance and then because, closeted with studies far removed from the actual flow of ideas, I would be unable to give you very precise explanations. You would give me
great pleasure by sending something of Reboul’s, and greater still by coming to see us in Paris.

Adieu, do not forget me, but forget my negligence; I am the chief of those languishing and discouraged people I spoke of before.

Your friend for life,
A.-F. OzANAM

Your letter arrived too late for me to reply by the same courier.

Postal Cancellation: February 23, 1835, Nîmes 27.
3. Although small, it is possible to do great things.

97. To Léonce Curnier
Paris, May 16, 1835

He indicts his weakness. Great virtues and great men are necessary. We are punished for having put more confidence in the genius of our great men than in the power of our God.

Dear friend,

I was thinking of you and asking myself whether you could not be rightly annoyed at my negligence and delay; I was thinking of you the day your friend came to bring me your good letter, thus providing that, despite my faults, you were willing to remember me still.

Thank you for this remembrance and the excellent messenger to whom you entrusted it. I have met with much pleasure a young man honored with your esteem and affection. I first took in eagerly the news he gave me of you, and following that of the little society of which you are the founder. He informed me that it was prospering, that it had already twelve members, that it was embraced by the favor of ecclesiastical authority, and that even now should be functioning. I found in him the zeal of charity which without doubt animates all of you and with which you above all, dear Curnier, have seen fit to embrace your colleagues. I took him to our conference which is no longer small in number, but which is not yet great in its works. He attended one of our meetings; he saw us assembled in a place larger than that where you visited us last year and which is now too confining. He seemed edified at the number of members present; would that he were impressed favorably with their fervor! It is not that you have need of models; soon it will be you who give
them to us; but it would be good for you to hear that your brothers of Paris have not
degenerated and are still worthy of you.

Unfortunately, your friend and I did not meet every time we went to each oth-
er's lodging; we talked for only a few hours. But for both young men, both Chris-
tians, both happy to possess in you a mutual friend, those few hours sufficed to
establish between us a bond of brotherhood that absence will not break.

Your letter raises in me the very sweet hope of seeing you in Paris some time
next month. I would like to be able to find you a companion for London; I do not
know of any, but once here you yourself will easily find someone who suits you
among all the travelers who leave each day for England. Come then, dear friend,
we will be overjoyed to receive you. All my colleagues are well aware of what you are
doing at Nîmes; I have read some of your letters to them, and this reading has given
them the liveliest pleasure. You are dear to them all.

I think you were wrong to speak so little about yourself in your last letter and so
much about me. What I do is a very small thing. I have great difficulty in working.
The ideas I express with great effort are not mine, I try to become the echo of the
young Christian people among whom I live. But how weak this echo is, how cold
the words slowly put together, in comparison to that luminous faith, that overflow-
ing charity, that courageous hope which beats in souls like yours and those of the
many who resemble you!

If you knew how weak I am! How my good will is easily shattered by the shock
of circumstances! How I pass from ambitious presumption to discouragement and
inaction! What vanity of thought, what puniness of works! What daily abuse of
divine graces! What infidelity to generous inspirations! What loss of precious time!
Yes, I dare say it: Providence has embraced me with such great solicitude, it has pro-
vided me so handsomely with the benefits of education, it has lavished on me such
good parents, wise teachers, exemplary friends, that often I am led to reflect that it
wishes from me something more than common virtue; and meanwhile my laxity is
such that scarcely even this common virtue is mine, and my soul is like a sterile
shore which the waves of heaven overflow without fertilizing.

And at all times, in our day, great virtues and strong men are necessary. Un-
doubtedly the empire of evil is beginning to erode everywhere, and the time is com-
ing when the truth will be greeted by a new queen of the world. But so hard is the
earthly life of the human race, evil will not vanish from its midst; evil is ever present
somewhere on the earth, now as a tyrant, now as a slave. Never does it redouble its
efforts more than when it sees its tyranny slipping away. To seize again its fallen
sceptre, it girds all its strength. To every religious reaction there corresponds an op-
posite reaction of impiety. And so, as the desert encroaches on the impious idols of
the 18th Century, so the solitude of our temples is peopled anew, so indifference is
overcome and as M. Lacordaire thunders the word of God to a congregation of six
thousand men, crowding the great nave of Notre-Dame, rationalism does not re-
main idle. It multiples its periodical reviews, it organizes a seductive propaganda
among young people, it sends out its emissaries, it attacks our most illustrious men,
it triggers the defection of those who were once our glories, it dethrones the Abbé
de Lammenais from those heights where his genius and faith had put him; it makes us anxious about the virginal muse of Lamartine; it begins to wrap in a sinister cloud the reflections of the famous Abbé Bautain.¹

These things are sad, but they are true. We Catholics are being punished for having put more confidence in the genius of our great men than in the power of our God. We are being punished for being vainglorious in them, for having repulsed with a certain amount of fire the insults of unbelief and countered it, in order to justify ourselves in its eyes, with our philosophers and poets instead of showing it the eternal Cross. We are being punished for having protected ourselves with these intellectual reeds, however melodious they were: they have broken under our hand. It is high time we seek our help. It is not a fragile boat we should employ to travel the earth; they are wings, two wings which bear the angels up: faith and charity. Places which have fallen empty must be filled; in the place of genius which has failed us, grace must direct us; we must be courageous, persevering, loving unto death, fighting to the end. Let us not count on an easy victory: God has made it difficult for us so as to make our crowns more glorious.

Alas, dear Curnier, I do not know whether you experience what I do, but I sometimes feel so cast down and helpless that I need to write strong exhortations and resolves like these to get it out of me. I am like children who cry louder when they are frightened. I feel better when I unburden myself to the heart of a friend worth more than mine.

So, without being aware of it, you do me much good, and these lines of which you are the object, before reaching you, have reassured my heart some and quickened it for a while.

Adieu, the press of time prevents my being longer, I must take this letter to your friend. I wish that he could take with it some sentiment of the deep and warm friendship I nurture for you.

Yours for life,

A.-F. OzANAM
He apologizes for the delay in editing his work on St. Thomas of Canterbury, gives news of La Perrière and Curnier and asks, in the latter’s name, M. de Carné’s intervention in favor of a young poet.

Monsieur,

When I left Paris you kindly indicated that you would like me to write to you during vacation. I have not availed myself of this permission until now, and meanwhile trust that you have judged my heart too kindly to call my silence neglect. I had been told you were away and that you had a great deal to do, and was afraid my letters either would not reach you, or would arrive at an inconvenient time. Today a special circumstance obliges me to write you some lines: apologies I would make for the past, and a fresh act of charity in the present.

I was commissioned with a work on St. Thomas of Canterbury for the last issue of the Revue européenne. The work should have been done during my stay at Lyon. However, you may recall my hesitation about it: I drew back at the beginning before the difficulty of the subject, and believe I had reason to. However that may be, the first six weeks spent here have been entirely given over to the joys of arrival, the pleasures of family, and rest. Only the last four could be devoted to study. Even this study has been interrupted by serious enough illness, enforced absences, and diversions which agreeableness forbids me to evade completely. In the midst of all that the difficulties I had foreseen have proven to be greater still: I have encountered problems which demanded long and painstaking research, and it took a great deal of effort to match up all the disparate elements and lay out a plan of my work. I have begun to write and have already finished several pages; I should send them to you with M. Accarias. This delay should be the last. I should be able to do this, and could still keep that promise. However, in order to coordinate everything in a work of this nature, and in pursuit of my task, I may have need to go back over what is completed, and to change the same more than once. I am obliged, in the interest of my article, to keep it with me some days still. I am not unaware that I am encouraging a serious reproach of negligence and infidelity so far as my promises are concerned, and that this negligence and infidelity might even have a disagreeable effect on the people at the head of the revue. I assure you, nonetheless, that my conscience hardly reproaches me in the matter: I have done what I could, but I am absolutely helpless, as you yourself have seen happen more than once, and should know how discouraged I get, the complete blanks that strike me. Accept it, then, I dare ask, if your indulgence has molded me to promise still after having so many times reneged. If you know how much I have suffered all evening seeing that I could not send you at least a portion of this poor article! How ashamed I am! How severely I am paying for the follies of my self-love! I have been trying to accept it in a Christian manner with humility. I trust that you will be kind enough to accept it with charity, that you will forgive me, and still be patient with me. In the mean-
time, I would much rather that the issue would not wait on me, and would appear without me. Decide what is best to do; I do not think my article will be ready in its entirety before eight or ten days.

Our excellent friend La Perrière has better used the vacation time than I. He has taken up the abandoned construction of a chapel for the locality where he lives, pursued it with energy and brought it to completion. Last Sunday the chapel was blessed and the Holy Sacrifice offered. Seven hundred souls availed themselves of the benefits of religious instruction and the celebration of the holy mysteries. And our friend’s name is in every mouth. He was hailed with great and deserved praise in the church itself by the priest who blessed it. I witnessed the moment when La Perrière was about to be carried in triumph, and would have lent a willing shoulder. Several members of our Society assisted at this moving ceremony. I think you would do those who are currently in Paris a favor to tell them about their Lyon colleague’s beautiful deed.

M. Curnier of Nîmes, who founded in his town a little association of charity like ours, wrote to tell me that in the last six months they have effected seven marriages between persons living together. That is both a welcome piece of news and a good example. M. Curnier at the same time asked a favor of me which I am asking you to take up if it is possible, and which is in some way an act of charity. A poor young man, a poet and a Christian, has written a collection of verse with some remarkably strong pieces. He is counting on having his collection published soon. But he would like first to publicize it by putting one of his pieces in the Revue des deux mondes. He thought that M. de Carné1 might be able to obtain this favor for him; I do not know what you could do by speaking of it to M. de Carné. I am therefore taking the liberty of sending you the enclosed piece. I do not think M. de Carné has much influence with the Revue des deux mondes, but at least an approach would have been made, and this mark of interest would encourage the young author who appears to have a true heart.

Will you forgive me, Monsieur, for being so familiar with you? I do not know. But four years of your kindness have gotten me used to looking on you as a father, or, if you will, as an older brother, and despite the respect your virtues and merits inspire in me, they inspire affection and trust still more. I am about to come back to you again. This year will be the last: I intend to make it profitable, happy if at the end of it, I will be sufficiently nurtured by your lessons to be able to do some good.

Your devoted servant, and if you permit, your friend,

A.-F. OzANAM


Note:
To Léonce Curnier
Lyon, October 29, 1835

The Revue des deux mondes and M. de Carné. Congratulations on the progress of the Conference at Nîmes and on his friend's marriage. Uncertainty about his vocation.

Dear friend,

I received your good letter last Sunday and would have replied at once but waited to tell you that I have done what I could to carry out your commission. The verses you sent me contain great beauty, and yet I doubt whether it will be easy to have them published in the Revue des deux mondes. This Revue belongs to a certain coterie who arrogate to themselves the monopoly of publishing, and who are not readily accessible to newcomers. I know that a lot of patronage is necessary for entry to a few pages in this publication, and I do not think M. de Carné, a newcomer himself, enjoys great enough influence for his patronage to suffice. On the other hand, I know M. de Carné personally only slightly, and have had only rare and infrequent contacts with him, so that I do not know whether he is at Paris or where he lives. However, M. Bailly, whom you know, is very close to him and could thus serve as intermediary. I therefore took advantage of an opportunity today to send M. Bailly the piece of verse and asked that it be evaluated. I am certain of his promptitude in carrying out a commission and represented it to him as a good work and recommended it to him as coming from you. There, dear friend, is how I have played my part in this affair; I wish I were better able to fulfill your wishes. While waiting, accept my compliments on the poetic fruitfulness of your homeland. Flowers love the sun, and genius opens more brilliantly and strong under the vivifying climate of the Midi.

But, if poetry takes root easily under your native sun, and spreads vigorous branches there, it seems that charity also germinates there without difficulty; for the grain of mustard seed you planted last year is beginning to grow and will soon become, I hope, a great tree and the poor will rejoice in its shade. There are only twelve of you, you have been together only six months, and already, by your solicitude, seven marriages have been legitimized, grace has descended with the nuptial blessing on seven families, and numerous generations stemming from them will owe you, with the favor of being able to identify their fathers, the prosperity and virtues that God never fails to lavish on marriages contracted according to His law. The work you have done is very great; it suffices to honor your life. Your elders at Paris will be jealous, alas! Their successes far from equal yours. It is true that in a way we have not the advantages of position you have, we no longer have, like you, access to an ardent, passionate, profoundly sensible people, susceptible for that reason to moral and religious emotions. Our poor are cold and despairingly indifferent. They have natures used to material civilization, which are no longer disposed to take to religion, which no longer have a sense of invisible things, which hold out their hands to receive bread, but whose ears remain forever closed to the word we proclaim to them. O how often we speak kindly to people who drive us off
with sticks, even though we could go to others who would listen and understand! But no; these are beaten souls, who always receive us the same way, always with the same reserve at the end of a year as on the first day, who are very careful not to contradict a single thing we say, but who for all that change none of their ways. The good done is among ourselves, who support and encourage one another. We are still only in our apprenticeship in the art of charity. Let us hope that one day we will become able and assiduous workers. Then, in the different circumstances where Providence will have placed us, we will strive to be like those born more blessed and more virtuous around us; then, when you will share your successes with us, we will reply with ours, and from every spot in France there will arise a harmonious concept of faith and love and praise of God.

The great action you are contemplating at present will only serve to redouble your zeal and your strength. “When two or three are gathered together in my name,” says the Savior, “there am I in the midst of them.” It is in that divine name that you will prepare to unite yourself to a wise and pious wife: the promise will be accomplished in you both. In giving your love to someone who will be justifiably dear, you will not withdraw it from the poor and miserable whom you loved first. Love possesses something of the divine nature, which gives itself without diminishing, which shares itself without division, which multiplies itself, which is present in many places at once, and whose intensity is increased in the measure that it gains in extension. In your wife you will first love God, whose admirable and precious work she is, and then humanity, that race of Adam whose pure and lovable daughter she is. You will draw comfort from her tenderness on bad days, you will find courage in her example in perilous times, you will be her guardian angel, she will be yours. You will then no longer experience the weaknesses, discouragements and terrors which have seized upon you at certain times of your life: for you will no longer be alone. You will never be alone again, your virtue will be shared in legitimate hope, the alliance you are about to contract will be an immortal alliance: what God joins together, what He has insisted no man separate, He will not Himself separate, and in heaven He will invest with the same glory those who here below were companions in the same exile.

But I babble a tongue I do not yet know, I speak of things not yet revealed to me. Imagination has developed early in me, sensibility is very tardy; but if my age be that of passions, I am just beginning to feel their stirrings. My poor head has already suffered greatly, but my heart has not yet known any affections but that of blood and friendship. Nevertheless, it seems to me that I sometimes experience the early symptoms of a new order of sentiment, and I am afraid. I feel in myself a great emptiness which neither friendship nor study fill. I do not know who will come to fill it: will it be God? Will it be another creature? If it is a creature, I pray that she will not delay when I have made myself worthy of her; I pray that she will bring with her what is needed of temporal advantages and exterior charms so that she will leave no place for any regret; but I pray especially that she will come with a fine soul, that she brings great virtue, that she is a great deal better than I am, that she lifts me up and not drags me down, that she be courageous, because I am often timid, that she be
fervent, because I am often lukewarm in the things of God, that finally she be compassionate, so that I need not blush in her presence for my inferiority. There are my desires, my dreams; but, as I have told you, nothing is more hidden than my own future.

Be happy, you whose future is now laid out before you: Vivite felices quibus est fortuna peracta! But, when you have a free moment in the midst of your happiness, pray for me who does not yet know where I am bound.

Your friend,
A.-F. OzANAM

I am returning with a thousand thanks and excuses the second volume of Economie politique chrétienne which I am most sorry to have kept for so long.

Original: Archives Laporte, Excerpted ed.: Lettres (1912), t. 1, p. 164, under the date of October 20.

Note: 1. Be happy, whose lot is established.

113. To M. Gorse
Paris, January 4, 1836

Recalls their relations as students. Hope of a foundation of the Society of Charity at Tulle.

Dear friend,

In the midst of anxieties that must call on the exercise of your profession, in the bosom of the pleasures that you must draw from your family, now all at once active citizen and head of the household, is there enough leisure to think from time to time still of certain young people who knew you at Paris and who bound themselves to you with fraternal and Christian friendship? As for them, they do not forget you, they rejoice at the news which reaches them of your well-being, but they are often sad at seeing your place in their midst empty. The familiar voice, the warm heart, the fine mind which brought to conversation so much good sense and vivacity is missed. Need is felt for that faithful comrade with whom was found on every occasion useful advice and an encouraging word. Yes, my friend, we think of you often, you are always present at our meetings and take part in them by virtue of your remembrance. I especially, who was one of the first to meet you here, keep you
in the first rank of my affections. I place you among those virtuous co-disciples with whom Providence wished to surround me in order to render my sojourn in this capital less dangerous. Under this title I owe you even more than affection and esteem, I owe you gratitude.

Do not, then, be astonished if, at the renewal of the year, you receive my unexpected visit and I try to renew by writing the relationship that your departure seemed to rupture. Give me your news and let us try by a familiar correspondence to exchange as in former days our opinions. Our society has grown and continues to grow under God's blessing. Could you not find at Tulle something like it? Could it not join itself to us? Could not the almsgiving hands be thus united and intertwined despite distances? Would it not be well to form throughout all France a great benevolent and Christian conspiracy for the solace of men and the glory of God?

As for me, I fully intend, when I will be back in Lyon for good, that is in eight months, to preserve close contact with those of my friends who will remain in Paris and those who will have left with me. The sun moves on and the tempest is strong. There is need to feel remembered the ones by the others, to tell oneself that he is not alone. There is need of support, of comfort of prayers. The days of sadness and discouragement are numerous: in these days, then, friendship is precious, especially a friendship like yours. Keep it for me, then, and be assured of a cordial and total reciprocity.

All to you,
A.-F. OZANAM

Address: To Monsieur, Monsieur Gorse, Lawyer, Tulle.
Copy: Provided by M. Jeantin of Agen.
their number. The Battignoles are two steps from you and it will be a great joy for
the whole Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to be complete on that day.

Give my regards to your parents. Give my excuses to them for not visiting them
in a long while: I stand for this miserable examination on the 31st, and it gives me
the liveliest anxiety. Pray to the good God a little for me.

Your cousin,
A.-F. OZANAM

Original: Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Note:
1. Conference established May 25, 1835, by Félix Clavé. Clavé (1811-1853), one of the founders of
the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, left Paris in 1835 and after a troubled life died at Paris in 1853.

121. To his mother
Paris, July 23, 1836

Asks for news. His friends all passed their examinations. Feast of St. Vincent de Paul,

Dear Mama,

It is a long time since we have chatted together like this. What a pity that the
long letter you wrote me has been lost. The short one that replaced it comforted me
a bit and in the meantime, ingrate that I am, I have not yet answered it. It is also true
that I have much to do, and that is my only excuse. It is also true that I care less
about giving you my news than knowing yours. How is that dear health? Is it
stronger? Does it promise me a joyous arrival? Is little brother obedient and does his
docility lessen your anxiety a bit? Are you, in a word, well and happy? How are all
the others? Is Aunt entirely better? Is Uncle ever carefree? Was the famous sermon
of Alphonse successful? Does Charles bring courage and hope to his compositions?
And poor Papa who, when he writes to me never says a word about himself, is he
not exhausted with work and running around in the extreme heat at the beginning
of the month?

You reproached me, and Papa in his last letter renewed the just reproach, for
not speaking for a long time of my friends. Because of examination and thesis time,
friends see little of one another. Each one is a prisoner of his duty; fear makes an
egotist of him. They forget as far as possible all amiability and social grace, and dis­
agreeable people are nasty people. Meanwhile there are friendships which resist
even this experience and which need more frequent meetings. Thus I never stop
seeing either old friend Balloffet who came to visit only today, or cousin Henri, or Accarias, or Charaund or La Perrière, or Lallier.

Did I write you that Lallier had happily passed his second doctorate examination? Today Chaurand passed his first and is not less happy. Serre is preparing to receive his—we will be a legion of doctors. La Perrière is at the point of receiving the licentiate, whose pursuit the death of his grandmother obliged him to delay a great deal; he will scarcely be able to live until around the 1st of September. Accarias is rather close to the same. Henri, who has long legs, comes to see me more than I go to his place. I do not know any news of his poor parents. I do not know either whether Falconnet has returned from Dijon where he went to pass his fourth examination and thesis for license before he leaves. We have made several special visits to one another and see one another at general get-togethers: our Conferences of Charity.

Last Tuesday, the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, we were all together in the morning at Mass in the Church of the Lazarists where reposes the body of St. Vincent de Paul; and in the evening at M. Bailly’s to hear the reports of the different groups, to take stock of the status of different works, etc. The pastor of the parish, M. Demante, professor in the school of law, M. Binet, professor of astronomy at the Collège de France, and several other gentlemen who had been invited in order to collect their ecus, attended the meeting. The result of the report is that the Society consists of about 200 members visiting 300 poor families, and distributing each year a little more than 4,000 francs in domestic assistance, in the four corners of Paris.

Beyond that, we maintain a house of apprenticeship for printing where we lodge, feed, and instruct ten poor children, nearly all orphans. We pay two charitable persons a wage equal to a half-pension for each of them; meanwhile the establishment costs us pretty close to 250 francs a month. They learn printing in the fine studios of M. Bailly, and some of our members give them lessons in Scripture, calculus, sacred history, etc. An ecclesiastic friend of ours teaches them catechism. There are even two more advanced who understand a little Latin, which is necessary now in order to be admitted as editor and even as compositor in the better printing houses of Paris. They have to look after them a fine man and wife without children who are delighted with their adopted family. The husband is employed in a government bureau, the wife does not work; we give them lodging and a little indemnity of money besides. St. Vincent’s Day was a holyday for these children and a little supper was given them at which they marvelled. We have reason to hope that the establishment will prosper. Indeed, when it was founded, it seemed to me a great folly, since we had only 180 francs. Providence has provided.

I am now very much convinced that to do works of charity, it is never necessary to worry about pecuniary resources, they always come. Several of our colleagues have been charged by the president of the Civil Tribunal with visiting children detained at the request of their parents. They do what they can. They give them daily lessons, but it is an extremely unrewarding work. These poor unfortunates are corrupt for the most part right down to the bottom of the heart, and the longest time
of detention not exceeding three months, it is impossible to correct them. No matter, one continues to sow, leaving to God the care of making the seed germinate in His own time. If there is little consolation on this side, there are others. The abjuration of a poor, sick Protestant has been effected, and several poor dying souls have made their first Communion. Marriage in the Church and before the civil authority of persons who have lived together for a long time has been effected.

I speak to you freely of all these works because I know you are interested and because I have taken only a very small part in them. Nevertheless, since these are my friends' works, and we are of the same society, they appertain to me also in that sense. In this exchange of charity to which good will admits you, I give little and take much. It is not the same with Chaurand who, not content to contribute very actively to our works, works for others no less excellently as well. The government and ecclesiastical authority have been informed of the existence of our little society and have shown a great deal of satisfaction with it. We have among our colleagues a peer of France, nobles, distinguished artists, a musician who, every month, travels all of London for his concerts, employees of the ministries, former Saint-Simonians, many lawyers, physicians, students, small merchants and even shop salesmen. The only two things they have in common are youth and good intentions.

Shall I tell you now something of my own affairs? I should indeed advise you that I have not done prodigies of work this year; nevertheless, I have perhaps worked more than last year, but I have not come to the end of the task I set myself. I finished, only ten days ago, taking the necessary notes for my thesis on Dante. I am obliged to leave the writing of it to the vacation, and in the course of next year, I will sneak away from Lyon for a month or three weeks to get ready to take my doctorate in letters: I am too seriously involved with it to be able to renounce it. Now I am preparing my thesis in Law and unhappily new problems hold me back from progressing as quickly as I would like. For some days now we have had extremely humid weather. I took a chill which gave me very violent toothache, and following that much indigestion. It has been severe for three days: the suffering has diminished a bit, but a headache remains which makes work difficult and nearly fruitless. I will go to see M. Durnerin tomorrow for advice to put an end to it.

Perhaps, despite this delay, I will have finished my thesis in sufficient time to be at Lyon the 15th of next month and you can imagine how I am looking forward to it, but it is difficult, because the 15th is a Monday and theses can be defended only on Wednesday and Saturday. It will be necessary then, either to submit it on August 6th, which I find impossible, or obtain a turn by favor for the 11th or the 12th. Since the thesis I have chosen is wide-ranging and important, it well lends itself to the danger of being massacred: since it is my last experience, I would like to undergo it with honor. Whatever happens, little Mama, before a month we will see each other again and will embrace each other at our ease.

I have forgotten to write Papa that I had taken to M. Michaud the two volumes of Biographie universelle. M. Michaud sends his affection to Papa and at the same time his reproaches that he had not sent him articles but notes only, too short for
him to be able to use them. He wants Papa to send him some good, complete notices on the Italian doctors. M. Baillère has paid me the 192 fr. he owed Papa and I have given him a receipt. I am taking 117 fr. of it for my month of July; 75 is left. I have been informed that the doctoral thesis costs 268 fr. at the school, rather than the 250 for the license thesis, because the duration of the discussion being longer, the professors' fees are greater. With the 80 fr. for the cost of printing, then, I must have 348 fr. and if you are willing I will procure it next week at Mme. Chanhomme's.  

I think Papa should write in behalf of his work to M. Miquignon Marvis. I did not send him at the time the letter entrusted to me because his library was destroyed by fire and he would not be in any condition for business. Now the date of the letter is too old: there should be another.

Adieu, good mother; I would earnestly beseech you to remember me, but I do not think you could forget; thus, beseeching is useless. It only remains for me to kiss you in imagination while awaiting to do it soon in reality.

Your son who loves you dearly,
A.-F. OZANAM


Notes:
1. St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), born at Pouy (Dax), Light of the Clergy and Father of the Poor, founder of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers), the Daughters of Charity, and the Ladies of Charity, and patron of the society founded by Ozanam and his friends. Leo XIII declared St. Vincent Patron of All Organizations of Charity.
2. Antoine Marie Demante (1789-1856), professor of the faculty of law at Paris from 1821.
4. Ozanam defended his law thesis, Des Interdicto et des Actions possessoires, on August 30, 1836 (Galopin, n. 106).
5. Joseph François Michaud (1767-1839), litterateur, born at Albens (Savoy), author of the Histoires des Crusades, and one of the founders of the Biographie universelle, which bears his name.
6. From the internal evidence Baillère seems to have been, with his son or brother, Géner-Baillère, the publisher of Ozanam’s father's writings.
7. From the internal evidence of letters, M. and Mme. Chanhomme, possibly friends of the elder Ozanam, seem to have been Ozanam's bankers while he was a student at Paris.
Possibilities of assistance for a protégé of his cousin.

Dear friend,

I have just received your letter and your protégé: both have interested me very much. To the common blood and ideas which unite the two of us, it would be very agreeable for me to be able to add some good works in common and I promise to do all I can toward that. Unfortunately this is the time of year when our society of charity is reduced by vacations to a very small number of members, obliged to visit and assist a very great number of families. I will, meanwhile, gather information in order to find a place for M. Lefevre, but I have not much hope. I told him to come back to see me in a few days, then, if I have found a place for him, I will give him some monetary assistance which I could not offer him today. If he lives in the Roule and Tuilleries Quarter a section of our society established there could be recommended to him, if it is not also decimated like ours by the approach of autumn. In any case, after vacations, there will perhaps be a means of assuring him regular assistance. Also, dear friend, what miseries surround us, and how sad the heart not to be able to soothe them! What is our little obol cast into the great abyss of poverty? But are we not happy, nevertheless, to be able to offer this obol? So many have not the good fortune to give alms.

Adieu, then. Thank you for your fraternal communication. I would go to see you were I not excessively occupied with the composition of my thesis.

All to you forever. Your cousin,
A.-F. Ozanam

Copy: Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Notes:
1. Year written in parentheses in the copy.
2. The gentleman sent to Ozanam by Falconnet for assistance.
3. A small French coin.
125. To M. Gorse  
Paris, August 22, 1836

Announces his return soon to Lyon. Friendly regards.

Dear friend,

M. de S.-Avis shall not leave here without bearing some lines from me. These few lines will inform you that I am on the eve of taking the doctorate,¹ that this reason alone prevents me from writing you at greater length, and that I am about to return to Lyon where, deprived of the company of my Paris friends, I must seek consolation in a sustained correspondence with certain of them. You are indeed of that number and far more. Please—do not forget me, then, as I do not forget you. I believe that congratulations are in order on your new fatherhood, and I also rejoice in the merited successes you have had at the bar. Our little Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in which you are always interested, prospers: Lallier especially sends many affectionate regards.

Adieu, your friend,

A.-F. OZANAM

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Postmarked: Lyon, rue Pisay n. 5, September 2, 1836.
Address: Monsieur Gorse at Tulle  
Kindness of M. de Saint-Avis
Copy: Communicated by M. Jeantin of Agen.

Note:
1. Doctorate in law, defence August 30.

132. To Léonce Curnier  
Lyon, October 3, 1836

Recommendation for M. du Las de Montvert, director of the Université catholique, who is entering the Grand Seminaire de Nîmes. News of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and sends its rules.

Dear friend,

In the two short interviews permitted me on the occasion of your last visit to Paris, I expressed the lively desire to renew a correspondence which, during the preceding years, had pleased me a great deal, and which our occupations had slowed up a bit this year.

Here an excellent occasion is offered to me. One of my better friends in Paris,
M. du Lac de Montvert, director of the Université catholique, desiring to consecrate himself entirely to God, is preparing to enter the seminary at Nîmes, and he is very anxious, when he arrives in that town, to be put in touch with some young Catholics whom he can visit from time to time and who will inhabit his clerical solitude a bit. To whom could I recommend him better than you? To whom could I recommend you better than he?

Two copies have been sent you of the rule of our little Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which now consists of five conferences at Paris, one at Nîmes, one at Lyon and one at Rome: total, about 250 members. See how the good God has blessed it! Would that He continue to bless it and to reunite all who compose it in that bond of charity which absence can never break nor loosen. Would that He bless especially the friendship which unites the two of us, you and me, dear friend, and which I look upon as one of the greatest benefits with which He has favored my poor soul. Time, which presses, forces me to be short today. I will be longer another time, but I embrace you with all my heart.

Adieu, do not forget your very faithful friend,

A.-F. Ozanam

Address: Monsieur, Monsieur Léonce Curnier, at Monsieur Curnier's, his father, merchant, or at M. Sibour's, Canon, Nîmes (Gard).

Original: Archives Laporte.

Note:
1. Melchior du Lac de Montvert, one of the chief editors of l'Univers, assigned the religious section of the journal.

133. To Léonce Curnier
L'Ill Barbe, near Lyon, October 10, 1836


Dear friend,

The date of this letter will serve to excuse the paucity and raggedness of this half-sheet on which I write. In this small and verdant enclosure which the Saône embraces with its waters, closely watched prisoner of my poor mother, I must make weapons of whatever falls to my hand, and I would delay two days were I to wait to
search in the town for elegant vellum which alone would be worthy of being unfolded by your friendly hand. But I could not reconcile myself to such a delay, eager as I am to thank you doubly for the good visit you arranged for me and the amiable lines which accompanied it. Unfortunately my stay in the country did not permit me to see your cousin as frequently as I would have liked. Nevertheless, some short conversations sufficed to rediscover in him a great part of yourself: it is enough to tell you that he overwhelmed me. I especially saw him gladly for the long details he gave me about you, and your family as well as your town which is dear to you; and besides for the interest with which he informed himself of all that concerns me, letting me understand that he was charged to render an account to your friendship: he acquitted himself well.

It is then useless to speak here of my situation which has for the most part changed little for a year: the establishment of the Chair of Business Law, lengthily decided upon by our Municipal Council, belatedly sanctioned by the minister, seems to have trouble in being realized. The nomination of the professor will take place only in December and January next. I hope, meanwhile, not to have lost anything by waiting; and perhaps time has multiplied my chances. I do not deceive myself about the weight of the burden I ask to be laid on my shoulders, and I admit that I am often frightened at even the possibility of my success. The months preceding this vacation were passed in a number of professional occupations, in cases that the fragile health of my mother and our domestic affairs demanded from time to time, in the numerous trips my candidature demanded and in some study interrupted too often. Under this superficial badge of my existence, I unfortunately still find the same permanence of defects in my character and wandering of my mind. Always the troublesome contract of a lively imagination and a weak will. From that the constant failure to execute my better plans.

But I would be unjust to Providence if I were silent about the consolations that its hand was so willing to mingle with my trials. After those of religion, I must count among the first blessings those which I find in the benevolence with which I am surrounded. My father throughout his laborious career has planted the seed for his children; the public gratitude now falls again on our heads; I have ever been aware of it in the exception which has many times handsomely made up for me the vexation of official channels. I find these affectionate dispositions more living still in the very small circle of my friends and family; and I am happy in the thought that they remain ever faithful despite the absence of some of those excellent hearts who work in Paris, Renne, Toulouse, and finally Nîmes. Charity, then, makes itself the consoler of my afflictions, and I am very ungrateful not to correspond better by my efforts to its benefits.

A particular circumstance has especially marked with a long and pleasant remembrance the vacation which is coming to an end. My ecclesiastic brother, for whom laborious occupations made necessary a stronger distraction than usual, wanted to hike in Switzerland, and I was his natural companion. That pilgrimage in William Tell’s country was perhaps of special interest, in the middle of the political conditions in which we find ourselves; but, except for the ramparts of Geneva
manned by a most ridiculous militia and most peaceful cannons, this beautiful country only showed me an admirable nature and hospitable inhabitants. I could not but admire, besides the eternal snows, the black firs, rushing torrents, green pastures fresh and pure as the herbs of a garden, the crops cultivated with scrupulous care, and the multitude of little chalets of wood gracefully shaped by rustic architects, carved like the stalls of a cathedral, haven of strong, simple and good men. The time which hurried our work did not permit us to stop in the towns, but I think I saw in them all the seeds of the sorrows and vices which devour our civilization. Nevertheless a sign of happy augury is appearing on Switzerland's horizon: that is the progressive dissolution of Protestantism, daily overcome in two different senses by nationalists tendencies which reign in Lausanne and by Catholic tendencies which are awakening in the countryside of Berne. A large number of rural communities have replaced the cross on their steeplips, uncrowned for three hundred years, and no longer wait for the hour when governmental intolerance will cease to oppress them for recalling the priest, the true, the only shepherd, as they say in their simplicity, *him who has the true words.*

In a few days I will undertake a journey less rapid and more serious. Several affairs altogether oblige me to spend six weeks in Paris, and in four days, the steam train will carry me in the direction of that vast capital of which I spoke only evil formerly, but for which I no longer hold back from preserving a profound attachment since I have left so many friends there. I hope to publish while I am there a little work, miserable fruit of my solitary vigils and which perhaps recalls sadly the Lyonnaise air where it had birth. I will also see again some of those who encouraged with their advice and example my first steps in the adventurous career of knowledge. But especially I will visit again with old companions in study whose strength sustained my weakness, whose ardor and energy brought out what was in my mind only as a passing wish. I will visit again there the founders of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, now surrounded with the marvels of their success, counting three hundred associates in the capital and three hundred in the provinces. Allow me to believe that more favorable circumstances will permit you anew to increase this number and to cooperate with all the heat of your zeal with this movement of youth who are restored by it, and who perhaps will sooner or later restore our whole country to the paths of truth.

Although it be so of those around you, we know well that you, dear friend, have never grown cold, either in regard to God, or the poor, of yourself. Especially I who have ever responded so feebly to your expansive affection, I know how much I owe you, and unable to pay you otherwise, make payment in wishes for your welfare. These wishes, repeated before Him who can do all things, have nothing of the frivolity of regards which teem among those who are people of the world: they are prayers. And as unworthy as they are of Him who hears them, nevertheless, they appear agreeable to Him in consideration of him for whom they are said. May there be accomplished in you, dear friend, the habitual order of Providence who rewards here below the works of His servants! It is enough to say that you rejoice then in all the good things which can thrill the heart of the man of God. Preserve for me al-
ways a place in your affections, and to see for yourself whether I do likewise, come as soon as possible to visit our poor city.

Your tenderly devoted friend,
A.-F. OzANAM

My mother was extremely touched by your good remembrance.

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Address: Monsieur, Monsieur Léonce Curnier, Kindness of M. Brunel, Nîmes.

Original: Archives Laporte.

Notes:
1. His brother, Abbé Alphonse Ozanam.
2. William Tell, legendary hero of Swiss independence, beginning of the fourteenth century.
3. Probably Droit public: Des Biens d'Eglise, work which appeared in l'Univers religieux of April 20 through August 5, 1837 (Galopin, n. 110).

134. To Henri Pessonneaux
Lyon, October 21, 1836


Dear Henri,

A good many days have passed since you faithfully accompanied me to the coach which was to take me far from you. However, the days have not been so many as to make me forget the offices you rendered me during the leg problem which kept me prisoner in my room. I feel myself constantly burdened with a great debt of thanks and have already tried to acquit myself of it somewhat by telling all our mutual friends what you did for me. But actions are not requited with words. I would like to show you more solid evidences of gratitude. Especially at this time when your thoughts are undoubtedly on taking a temporary position lucrative and honorable at the same time, where the point of return could be favorable to your wishes, would I very much like to help as much as I can, which is little. If you wish I could write to M. Bailly to urge him to look for a position for you with one of those respectable and wealthy families he knows or his friends might know. We could also speak to M. de Montalembert about it. I could be wrong, but it seems to me it would be better to associate yourself thus with a family than give lessons to different people. You would have a more secure, calmer and more leisurely life; your moral worth and virtues would be better appreciated, things of great merit where education is concerned. There is no point in telling you, you know well, that your er-
rands were done on my arrival. I saw your cousin who keeps very well, but seems always preoccupied and rather sad. I saw Madame Gayet\(^1\) also, at Saint-Genis and had a long chat with her about you and your family; I gave her news of you, but now I would like to have some, for it seems like an age since I left. Write to me then, please, and tell me at length about the state of your health, studies, and projects; tell me about your parents for whom you know my respectful affection, and do not forget Marc and then our other friends; Quatruffo, Clave, Heim\(^1\), etc.

From my side I will bring you abreast of what is happening at Lyon. And first you should know that our city, independent of all its intrinsic merits, has been honored during the vacation with the visits of three illustrious strangers: Lallier, Dulac, and Le Taillandier.\(^1\) All three have been very satisfied with their visit and Lallier and Le Taillandier have received a lively desire to settle down here some day. We would have further need of you to strengthen an enterprise now in its infancy: the propagation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the establishment of a conference in Lyon. The conference is established, but its numbers are few. We are hardly a dozen, only eight members being most assiduous. We are meeting at Chaurand's on Tuesday evenings at 8 o'clock. We have, as at Paris, the table, the green cloth, the two candles, the goods, the old clothes, etc. . . . but the room is almost empty, the treasury also. We have experienced the little contradictions we foresaw. Some pious and some grave personnages are frightened. They have complained, and have said so, that a cabal of young Lammenasians who succeeded in imposing M. Lacordaire on the Archbishop of Paris want to take control of Lyon, that they have solicited all the Sisters of Charity in the city to draw up lists of poor, that there are at least thirty of them, that some of them are not even Christians, that they are about to discredit all other works of charity by the poor way in which they conduct their own, etc., etc. . . . Alphonse has tried to calm these recriminations a bit. I have done what I could for my side. Following the advice of our rule we have made ourselves small and humble, we have protected our inoffensive aims, and our respect for other works, except that we will not succeed, because we have no law of secrecy. We have for that matter done the proper thing by informing the pastor of Saint-Pierre that we are meeting in his parish. I hope we shall succeed despite the ominous prophesies, not through secrecy, but through humility, not through numbers but through love, not through patronage but by the grace of God. There is good will, there must be zeal; there are families assisted, there must be many more of them; there is room for every possible work of charity, and without them . . . We will recruit our forces from among certain Lyon residents, especially from most of the former Parisian members living here, and will reassemble all who have graduated from M. Noirot's philosophy class and will try to prepare these young men for their stay in the capital, and when they get there they will be recommended to you in order to make good and faithful confreres of St. Vincent de Paul. Isolated as we are, we feel our weakness more than ever, and the necessity of preserving proper rapport with the center of the society. We are proposing for this purpose to send four times a year at the times of the general assemblies a report of our works and the results we have obtained, hoping to receive from Paris in exchange
some good news and some good advice. It would be desirable that the same correspondence between the society of Paris and the conferences formed at Nîmes and Rome be established. A bond should be forged, too, among the members dispersed in the provinces, and too few in numbers to form conferences. Articles 1 and 2 of the Rule suppose in principle that every young Christian man, even if alone in a town, can associate himself with the work. Mr. Bailly or certain other people should draw up an instruction for young men who are in this situation. They could be put in contact with the Paris conferences or those in towns closest to them by means of reports, circulars, etc. See to it and do what your wisdom dictates, but do something. You are the head and the heart; we are the members. Speak about it either to your colleagues or to M. Bailly and write to me about it. I have already given it a great deal of thought.

Do not, meanwhile, go supposing that my thoughts are all of a serious nature. I am at Lyons nearly a month and a half and during all that time I have done scarcely anything but rest and amuse myself. After a stay of three weeks at Quillon where I kept Mamma, who has regained some of her health and strength there, company, I went on a trip with my older brother; we went together to Saint-Etienne and admired all the masterpieces which industry pompously displays on the way and within the walls of the city. We then traveled around a bit of the Beaufortais and Maçonnois areas and dined nine days ago today with M. de Lamartine. We breathed the good mountain air, fresh air, perfumed with thyme, serpail, genet and bruis. We saw in out-of-the-way places which the wind of Rationalism has not yet ruffled, believing and pious inhabitants, churches where the men were more numerous than the women, and who recalled somewhat, around some humble pastor, M. Lacordaire's audience of bald heads. Now, on my return here, I should find happiness and joy at the memory at least. Well, such is the infirmity of our poor nature, with so many reasons for contentment I am seized with a somber, melancholy humor... I do not know whether it is the proximity of the real life which saddens me so, but the bar seems constrained to me, the tumult of business insupportable, material life boring. The Chair of Business Law project is not abandoned. It is advanced by wise and benevolent hands, but it is advanced slowly. And even (dare I say it?) this position appears agreeable to me only because there is nothing exclusive or definite about it. More than ever I am afraid of all decision, all determination which would involve not turning back. The entire absence of vocation, or desires contrary to various vocations, strikes me more than ever. My spirit approaches repose only in thinking about work on the History of Religions that I have been considering for seven years.

Pray for my parents, too. I will do the same for you, as much as my poor heart can. My malaise is such that, despite the tender friendship which binds the two of us, I had trouble deciding to write and trouble to finish this letter. Reply soon and give me a little courage. Adieu, Your cousin,

A.-F. Ozanam

Genon, whom I am about to visit, and who is better, recommends himself to your remembrance.
135. To Emmanuel Bailly
Lyon, October 22, 1836


Monsieur,

Perhaps the respect which your multiplied duties merit should forbid me importuning you so often, and, at least command me to wait for your reply before writing you anew. But independently of the need I experience of conversing with you, here is an occasion which practically forces me to take up the pen again at the risk of making you curse my intemperate assiduity. A young man of our town is leaving for Paris, and is going to make a long stay there. He is good, a believer, and simple, and yet his family trembles, and it has reason, for this young man’s brother killed himself last year. This young man must be surrounded with friends who will make him forget so horrible an example, who will give him better brothers, present him in the faith and virtue, those two flowers a puff suffices to freeze. Some recommendations have been asked of me for him: to whom should I recommend him better than yourself, you who, with the good M. Ampère, have exercised such a happy protectorate over me, you whom so many mothers who know you bless because you have preserved the religion of their sons?

Receive then M. Auguste Stadery who bears this letter as you would receive me. His studies at l’Ecole Centrale des Arts will probably locate him in a quarter far from yours, but you have a long arm and a big heart. He undoubtedly fulfills all his Christian duties with a most fervent piety, and if you judge him suitable, you can little by little invite him to be a part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the conference closest to his dwelling. Then you could invoke on him the special benevolence of the president of that conference, you could inform yourself about him from time to time, you could look after him with paternal regard. Pardon me this
request: although your humility will murmur at it, God has so made you as to be
the moral tutor, the guardian of a great many of His young servants. It is a noble
ministry. Allow us to make use of it for those who follow us, as we have profited
ourselves from it. Frequently in the future these young men of Lyon, these sons of
the town of martyrs, will come to you. We have already a certain number here who
have had the pleasant experience of your advice and example, and we will be forced
to procure the same benefit for the generation of whom we are the elders. That will
be one of the principle ends of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul established in
this town in union with the society of Paris. Our work here is nascent, but it is
living. It is feeble, but it can become strong by preserving its bonds with the mother
work. It has need of that, if only to surmount the obstacles it meets here from good
people who are afraid.

It is our intention, then, to keep ourselves tightly bound to you. To this end, we
will address you at the times of the general assemblies, and on the first one,
December 8, will render an account of our operations. We hope that the two con-
fferences of Nîmes and Rome will do the same. You could, in return, send us some
advice from Paris along with some encouragement and news of general interest. It
would perhaps be useful also to bind together the dispersed members of the society
who live in the provinces and who are not numerous enough to form conferences.
It would sustain them in their isolation while waiting to have collaborators. In that
way, ten years from now, we could be more than a thousand, united in works and
prayers and the strength of this union would be very great. Could we not decide on
a short prayer that all members would say on certain days, and require all of them
to send once or several times a year reports to the central society? Look it up: arti-
cles 1 and 2 of the Rule lay down the principle. Do or have done something to put
the application in practice.

Let us work to increase and multiply, to become better, more tender and
stronger; for just as days follow one another, evil is seen to add to evil and misery to
misery, the disorder in society becomes more and more apparent; the social prob-
lems, the conflict between poverty and riches, between self-interest which wants to
take and self-interest which wants to keep, succeeds political problems. And the
confrontation between these two self-interests, the poor who have the force of
numbers and the rich that of silver, will be terrible if charity does not interpose,
become a mediator, if Christians do not dominate with all the force of love.6 Be-
yond doubt Providence does not need us for the execution of its merciful designs,
but we, we need it and it promises us its assistance only on the condition of our
efforts. Not without reason has it raised in you the thought of founding our work,
and that it makes it grow under your auspices. Carry on the work begun and work
for its propagation and consolidation; please, in the name of all our friends.

It is especially precious to me to preserve the intimate relations of mind and
heart with those I loved at Paris and who were willing to love me. I have told you
how precious to me was the daily reading of l’Univers.

I am grateful to M. Sainte-Chéron7 for the few lines he enclosed and thank him
again for the research he was kind enough to undertake on my behalf and the long
letter he wrote me. I would like to have something to send to l'Univers, but every-
thing here is calm, peaceful, and consequently of little interest to readers, people
who love new things, noise and sometimes a little scandal. Besides, claiming the
right of vacation and obeying my instinct for laziness, I have just spent here a
month of the most complete inertia of spirit. I have also betaken my leisure into the
environs of Lyon to considerable distances. I visited Saint-Etienne where I saw in-
dustry in all the apparel of its most laborious works, and carried away a sad impres-
sion, considering to what horrible toil millions of men apply themselves to put
bread between their teeth, and procure opulent well-being for a small number of
the fortunate; and how the intelligence must be brutalized and the heart hardened
in the midst of those machines and the immense deployment of material force.
Nevertheless among the innumerable factories which cover this part of the Depart-
ment of the Loire, there is one which singularly consoles the eyes of the Christian.
That is an iron foundry belonging to a pious and large Saint-Chamond family, the
Nerand family. Two hundred and fifty workers gather there to engage in the rough-
est work you could see, casting molds in order to refine and laminate the iron.
These 250 workers form a community to which only good men are admitted. The
strictest regularity governs their actions. They have their chapel and chaplain, and
good brothers attached to the establishment who instruct the children employed
there.

I also traveled extensively in the Maconnaise and Beaujolaise districts,
where nature still preserves an unhoped-for beauty and freshness under an autumn
sky, and where there are people as good and fine as the sun which shines on them.
Last Saturday I was in a village situated on a laughing lake formed by the highest
mountains in our Department: at the time for high Mass the church was invaded
by so close-packed a crowd that houses meanwhile were deserted. At the bottom
of the nave were the men, and they the more numerous. It was gratifying to see those
brown and sturdy figures, heads uncovered, grouped at the foot of the pulpit of the
good pastor, recalling a little in this regard the hearers of M. Lacordaire at Notre-
Dame. Those who go about saying the faith is dead in France have never seen, I
think, the good people of these countrysides, nor the good people of other coun-
trysides like them. There are people who only know Paris, and a certain circle of
men of this kind and stripe in Paris, who repeating themselves like echoes of an-
other, end up by believing innumerable things.

A few days ago M. Perisse received 50 copies of my little work from Debecourt.
M. Perisse wants to know how much of the price of copies is his. Overall he is very
disposed toward me and is actively engaged in selling them. I have been promised
two articles in two journals here, the Courrier de Lyon and the Reparateur. I hope
that you have no reason to repent of being responsible for this poor book, but
should not announcements and articles be placed in the Paris journals? Is some-
thing being done? No one can sell what is unknown. Please push M. Debecourt on
this matter. Mme. de Lamartine, at whose home I dined ten days ago, was very
complimentary of me: would that everybody thought as she does! If you are good
enough to reply, tell me whether we are having any success. Tell me also, please, the
present address of Abbé Gerbet; I want to write to him. Pardon the indiscretion of all these requests.

Lallier, Le Taillandier, Dulac, and Bonnety have stayed sometime at Lyon during vacation; they were all pleased with our town. Come yourself to see it one day; you will find beautiful views with glorious pasts, and many people closely attached to you, and among whom I beg you to account me in the front rank.

Your devoted and respectful servant,
A.-F. Ozanam


Notes:
1. L'Ecole Centrale was then housed in the Hotel Sale, rue de Thorigny. The nearest conference was that of Notre-Dame-de-Bonne Nouvelle, founded in 1835—if, however, Stadery lodged near his work.
2. The same thought is found in nearly identical words in several letters of the following months: to Lallier (November 5), Janmot (November 13), and Curnier (May 9, 1836).
3. Alexandre de Saint-Chéron. He had belonged to the Saint-Simonian school, and at the breakup of the group separated from d'Enfantin (Barthélemy Prosper d'Enfantin—[1796-1864] a founder of the school) to follow Bazard (Armand Bazard [1791-1832], founder of the political party called Charbonnerie française, and also a propagator of Saint-Simonism) whose daughter he married. Saint-Chéron had a good rapport with Guizot (François Guizot [1787-1874], statesman and historian, minister under Louis-Philippe), and collaborated with him in the Journal général de France (a doctrinaire magazine). Saint-Chéron became an ardent Catholic, and a director of l'Univers, entrusted with the political section of the journal in particular.

136. To François Lallier
Lyon, November 5, 1836


Dear friend,

I began to write to you on Tuesday evening. That was the feast of the Communion of Saints. Perhaps, and the supposition is not offensive, perhaps it is why by a singular exchange, at the moment I finished the first page of my letter, one from you arrived. And so your thoughts came to converse with mine at the right time, just
like those Sunday evenings when we gathered at du Lac’s or La Perrière’s. But never did clock answer clock in so different a chime than your letter, so welcome, to my unfinished one. Still preoccupied with the rather sad news La Perrière had had from you, I was bewailing and at the same time blaming your melancholy; and I was devoting long echoing thoughts to the subject and was making conjectures, in the style of the pastor’s homily on the gospel of the day. And behold, in one of those cheerful moments which seize upon you often in the wake of your periods of boredom, you write me a thousand happy things and chatter on affably like a man without care or things to do. Make me, then, burn the page I had scribbled to conform to your sadness and trace lines more agreeable to the present hue of your mind.

Your departure has left a great void among us and we are waiting impatiently to learn of your happy arrival: the loss of your sack is the only serious accident to trouble your trip, and I will be consoled about that if you have not lost at the same [time] your notes on the Lyon hospitals. If you found the grapes half grown, your work will be that much lessened, and I would be happy about it. It would seem that you can compensate for this poor harvest by harvests of another kind, and that pursuing the conquest of nature under every form, you harass the flying denizen of the air, now track to his subterranean lair the complacent fossil which allows itself to be handled. It also seems that the Beotians of your parts are acquainted with gold mines and prefer to see the Pactole rather than the Parnesse flow there. For that matter the torrent of wine which flows from the hills of Saint-Jacques might well carry along some scraps of precious metal, and from what you say, the citizens of Joigny have ecus because they save them and are afraid to spend them.

I am fully of your opinion and call it folly to fill one’s days accumulating what cannot be enjoyed, folly even to amass for one’s children. For children who see a mound of gold growing behind them are sorely tempted to sit by and fold their arms, and to build them a fortune is often to lead them to the sin of sloth. And then, children are sometimes hardly a respectful pretext; remove the veil and you will see underneath the selfishness which finds in propriety a means of extending and in some way immortalizing a character who is well pleased to have a great deal around himself in the present and to leave a great deal after himself in the future. Happily such does not apply to any of those to whom I owe love or respect, although the vice is common in Lyon.

I am filled with thanks to God for having brought me into the world in one of those situations on the border of hardship and of ease, which is used to privations without permitting enjoyment to be completely unknown, where one can go to bed with all his wants assuaged, but where one is no longer distraught by the continual clamors of necessity. God knows, with the natural weakness of my character, what dangers the softness of the wealthy or the abjection of the indigent classes would pose for me. I also feel that this humble position in which I am at present has brought me to serve like persons better. For, if the question which disturbs the world around us today is neither a question of political modalities, but a social question; if it is the struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much; if it is the violent clash of opulence and poverty which shakes the earth
under it, our duty to ourselves as Christians is to throw ourselves between these
two irreconcilable enemies, and to make the ones divest themselves so as to fulfill a
law, and the others accept as a benefit; to make the ones cease to demand, and the
others to refuse; to make equality as operative as is possible among men; to make
voluntary community replace imposition and brute force; to make charity accom­
plish what justice alone cannot do. It is then good to be placed by Providence on
neutral ground between the two belligerents, to have paths and minds open to
both, without being forced in order to mediate to ascend too high or to descend
too low.

Meanwhile, in writing this, it seems that I did some violence to myself, and the
numerous erasures encountered in the last lines give evidence that a contrary
thought distracted me. At the same time that I was recognizing in my past life provi­
dential conduct which I did not weary myself in admiring, I could not prevent my­
self from casting a defiant and rather somber look on the future. The moment of
choosing a destiny for oneself is a solemn moment, and everything solemn is sad. I
suffer from this lack of vocation which makes me see the dust and stones of all my
life's paths as well as the flowers on each. In particular, the one I am closest to now,
that of the bar, seems less enchanting to me. I have chatted with some business
men. I have seen the troubles to which you must resign yourself in order to obtain
employment, and the other troubles that go with the employment. It is customary
to say that lawyers are the most independent of men; they are at least as much
slaves as others, for there are two kinds of tyrants equally insupportable: the proce­
dural officers in the beginning, and the clientele later. I am still making myself un­
happy at the sight of my father, who needs rest, and my mother, who needs more
careful attention, being obliged to live still by work and economy because of me,
when I could have relieved them of supporting me and left them to enjoy the rights
of old age sooner if I had chosen a profession at the same time more comfortable to
my tastes. There is constant good will employed in providing a Chair of Business
Law for me, but up until now the employment is slow and cold, and I do not know
why I have little hope. Enough, dear friend, enough of my murmuring, enough of
the anxieties of a man of little faith; and if you wish that there be no blame
for having communicated them to you, receive them as a kind of confession,
as an avowal which asks for advices, friendly encouragement, and reproaches
when needed.

Do not think, however, that those troublesome preoccupations take up all my
time. My hours have passed by sweet and varied for some time. I have taken two
charming little trips with my older brother: one to Saint-Etienne where I saw the
miracles of industry, the other to the Maçon and Beaujolais region where I encoun­
tered, along with the hospitality of M. de Maubout and the society of M. de La­
martine, a beautiful autumn nature, and populations astonishing in their fidelity
to the faith and religious practice. I saw our dear Taillandier on his travels. I worked
a bit at the organization of our little Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. I brought
mama home from the country. But on the other side I have seen my older brother
leave for his missions, my little brother for his pension, Ballofet and some others for
Paris. Mama is constantly [weak], although not suffering as much. The bad weather prevented La Perrière and me from visiting each other as much as we would like. On the other hand, I have Chaurand and Dufieux for neighbors. I am leaving this evening with the latter to return for a day or two's stay with M. de Maubout who had strongly urged me to repeat [my] visit. There is good example for you.

It is possible that at Joigny you yet have to learn from me of two literary events which are undoubtedly old news in Paris, but which left a lingering bitterness with me; I speak of Jocelyn's being placed on the Index and the appearance of a new work by M. de Lammenais. Rome acted courageously in striking the first; she is hardly afraid of the other; she is not afraid of genius because more than genius is hers, the Holy Spirit which ever inspires her. But it is sorrowful to see genius solemnly desert her and defect, a traitor, to the enemy camp; useless traitor for, by renouncing the faith, he is renouncing his past and consequently his glory and strength, a double grief for those who loved him. And now, who will take the places such ones leave vacant? Where are the Ambroses, the Jeromes, the Augustines, who would come to seat themselves on the deserted chair of Tertullian? Who will dare pick up the lyre fallen in the dust and complete the hymn begun? I know that God and the Church have need of neither poets nor doctors; but those who do need them are the weak believers whom the defections scandalize; those who do not believe, and despise our poverty of intellect; ourselves who sometimes need to have in our sight greater and better men, whose foot traces the path for us, whose example encourages and bolsters our weakness. Young Christian people that we are, we cannot think of replacing these men; but can we not profit by it and fill to overflowing with numbers and work the void they left in our ranks?

This question, in which my own self-love finds something to its own advantage, is however raised especially in your interest. I have often admired in you a humble opinion of yourself, a despising of earthly things, whose excessive consequences I would often then deplore. Dante has said somewhere of the devil that he is an adroit logician, and it is true. From the most laudable principles he can draw the unhappiest results, which is why he can fasten on serious and just souls. He makes abjection of humility, and forms distaste for life from abnegation. At meditation he produces reverie, and from reverie boredom, lassitude and idleness. Is there not some of that in you? Be careful.

Yes, we are unprofitable servants, but we are servants, and wages are given according to the quality of work we are doing in the vineyard of the Lord in the portion assigned to us. Yes, life is despicable if we consider it according to how we use it, but not if we recognize how we could use it, if we consider it as the most perfect work of the Creator, as the sacred vestments with which the Savior has willed to clothe himself: life then is worthy of reverence and love. Let us pray for each other, dear good friend, let us conquer our boredom, melancholy and dissatisfaction. Let us go in simplicity where merciful Providence leads us, content to see the stone on which we should step without wanting to discover all at once and completely the windings of the road.

You know how hard it will be on me without you this year; let us often soften
the distance by thought, let us write, advise and support each other. I think you
need that, since you are human, but I need it still more.

When you are in Paris be my spokesman with all our old friends. Be kind
even to give the theses left with you to those who ask for them. Call, please, on
Debecourt and Bailly to find out whether it is selling. Do not fail to see Lachomette
if you can: you will be useful to him. Dufieux has also recommended a young man he
must look after to you. Let me know about our little apprentices. Do not forget to
tell your cousin and my own about me. Forgive so many errands.

I have had news of DuLac, and it is very good. La Perrière has sent you a reply.
All your friends here want to be remembered to you. My father and mother send
back in affection what you asked me to tender them in respect. Adieu, dear Lallier,
may I see you again soon.

A.-F. OzANAM

Address: Monsieur, Monsieur François Lallier, lawyer, doctor of laws, at M. Lallier’s, Dr. en medi-
cine, rue St. Jacques, Joigny Yonne.


Notes:
1. A small Lydian river which ran with gold and from which Croesus derived his wealth. According
to the fable it had this property because King Midas dipped his hand in it. Pactole is used today to
designate a source of wealth.
2. Local river. (?)
3. French coins.
4. There were three Maubout brothers, Jules, Alexis, and Melchior, all old friends of Ozanam. This
is undoubtedly Jules Chappuis de Maubout (1809-after 1875), a law student with Ozanam (1834-
1837) and former member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who largely shared Ozanam’s
thought as well as that of l’Ere nouvelle. Landowner and local notable, he shared his time between
a home in Maçon and his manor d’Escole (Saône-et-Loire, arr. et cant. Maçon, com. Berzé);
Alexis de Maubout (1803-1849). Melchior de Maubaut (b. 1812).
5. Alexandre Dufieux (1806-1857), Lyon friend of Ozanam, born at Vaise, entered his father’s firm,
took part in literary circles, urged on by the wish to defend his political and religious beliefs. Col-
laborated in Reparateur and the Gazette de Lyon.
6. Poem of love and sacrifice in the form of a confession by a poor country priest, by Alphonse de
Lamartine, Ozanam’s friend and supporter.
7. The Index of Forbidden Books: condemned works judged as harmful to faith or morals by the
Holy See. It has been suspended since Vatican Council II. The Index decree condemning Jocey
was issued on September 22, 1836.
9. St. Ambrose (340-397), Latin church father, Bishop of Milan, born at Treves. Following the mas-
sacre of Thessalonica, he imposed public penance on the Emperor Theodosius.
10. St. Jerome, doctor of the Church (c. 331-420), born at Stridons, was a vigorous apologist for the
Church and is the author of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible.
11. St. Augustine, doctor of the Church and Bishop of Hippo (354-430), one of the Church’s great
minds, author of the Confessions, The City of God, On Grace, etc. He was converted from a proflig-
gate youth by the prayers of his mother, St. Monica, and the sermons of St. Ambrose.
12. Tertullian (c. 160-c. 240), father of the Church, noted for his genius and powerful writing style,
born at Carthage. He abjured his faith for the Montanist heresy.
13. Boys raised under the aegis of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
Dear friend,

Here it is about two months since I received your good letter and perhaps you are addressing some lively reproaches my way for my delay. I find my excuse, however, in your far-ranging pilgrimages which have left me in total ignorance of where I could reach you. Your own mother was without news for a month. At length, a few days ago, there was news of your return to Rome and suddenly I am put in the way of paying you a visit. Poor visits made thus, in haste and blindly; stupid conversations in which one speaks only of oneself, replies to words already forgotten by the other correspondent, moralizes so as to make him laugh and laughs when one ought to comfort. Friendship is obliged, however, to remain content with this last resource remaining to it, that is, finding the words for the impressions of the hour and putting hearts in rapport and conversation in harmony.

I have an idea, then, that at the moment these lines will be reaching you, you will still be under the lasting influence of the fine trip that you just made through Umbria. It is indeed, if I am not mistaken, one of the most admirable countrysides of admirable Italy. The majesty of great mountains crowning sweet and smiling valleys, the changing climates descending in steps to give way to all the richness of vegetation, from the pine and hardwood to the orange and lily, the cities seated or suspended here and there in superb attitudes, and each city, each hill, each rivulet, each stone trodden on, full of memories. Spoleto, whose humble gates barred themselves to Hannibal, just as those of Capua opened at the very sound of his steps, the lake of Thrasympeno where two giants fought with strokes so terrible that, during the combat, a trembling of the earth tumbled towns and went unheeded, Orvieto and its Etruscan antiquities, heritage of a dead civilization that has left no history, the desolate lake of Balsano and the isle where a queen died of hunger, and then the Christian traditions which have purified and perfumed all these places; here the miracle immortalized by Raphael, or the marvelous legend of St. Margaret of Cortona, but above all, the great memory of St. Francis must be exalted.

I do not recall rightly whether it was at Foligno that was displayed the rosebush upon whose thorns he lay for a whole night and which has since bloomed with flowers constantly renewed. It was on Mount Alvernia that the glorious stigmata imprinted itself on his hands and feet. It was on these roads along which you passed that he went coaxing the little birds of heaven to sing the glories of the Lord, and buying at the price of his cloak the lamb the butchers were taking to slaughter. But it is Assisi especially that must be full of him, Assisi and its cloister which formerly enclosed six thousand monks, and its two churches, symbols of the two lives of the Saint, the earthly one and the other, the other immortal and resplendent; those
two churches where the good and pious painting of the Middle Ages has its development from birth to maturity, from Cimabue and Giotto to the time of Perugino and his disciple; for it seems that nature and history had done not yet enough for this blessed country and that art wished to shine there with a three-fold and no less brilliant aureole. The Umbrian school seems to me as to you, save the mistakes in which my ignorance traps me, to have advanced with him who painted the *Campo Santo*, in the true path laid out for it at the time of the Renaissance. You could not have crossed the thresholds of the sanctuaries of Assisi without reading the magnificent history of St. Francis in canto XI of Dante's *Paradise*.

Dante must be the necessary interpreter of Giotto, his contemporary and friend. What men, what painters, and what voices for celebrating the name of the Poor Man, a beggar who was taken for a fool! He was that, according to the word of M. Lacordaire; he was such a one, he was the fool of love. His immense charity embraced God, humanity, nature and, considering that God was made poor in order to live on earth, that the majority of humanity is poor, and that nature itself in the midst of its magnificences is poor, since it is subject to death, he himself wished to be poor: it belongs to love to assimilate the things loved into itself.

And we, dear friend, do we bear no resemblance to those saints we love, do we content ourselves with deploring the sterility of the present time, although each of us carries within his heart a seed of sanctity that the simple wishing will suffice to disclose. If we do not know how to love God as they loved Him, that should be without doubt a reproach to us, but yet our weakness is able to find some shadow of excuse, for it seems to be necessary to see in order to love and we see God only with the eyes of Faith and our Faith is so weak! Both men and the poor we see with the eyes of the flesh; they are there and we can put finger and hand in their wounds and the scars of the crown of thorns are visible on their foreheads; and at this point incredulity no longer has place and we should fall at their feet and say with the Apostle, 'Tu est Dominus et Deus meas.' You are our masters, and we will be your servants. You are for us the sacred images of that God whom we do not see, and not knowing how to love Him otherwise shall we not love Him in your persons? Alas, if, in the Middle Ages, sick society was not able to be healed except by the immense effusion of love shown in a special way by St. Francis of Assisi, if much later new sorrows cried out to the soothing hands of St. Philip Neri, St. John of God and St. Vincent de Paul, how much charity, devotion and patience do we not need at present to heal the sufferings of these poor people, poorer than ever, because they have rejected the nourishment of the soul at the same time the bread of the body was lacking to them.

The problem that divides men in our day is no longer a problem of political structure; it is a social problem; it has to do with what is preferred, the spirit of self-interest or the spirit of sacrifice, whether society will be only a great exploitation to the profit of the strongest or a consecration of each individual for the good of all and especially for the protection of the weak. There are a great many men who have too much and who wish to have more; there are a great many others who do not have enough, who have nothing, and who are willing to take if someone gives to
them. Between these two classes of men, a confrontation is coming, and this menacing confrontation will be terrible: on the one side, the power of gold, on the other the power of despair. We must cast ourselves between these two enemy armies, if not to prevent, at least to deaden the shock. And our youth and our mediocrity does not make our role of mediators easier than our title of Christian makes us responsible. There is the possible usefulness of our Society of St. Vincent de Paul. But why lose myself in vain words when you must have thought of all these things at the foot of the tomb of the holy Apostles when you slept on the heart of the mother Church of all the churches and felt the warmth of being so close to them and drew in their inspirations?

You have already done an excellent work in establishing the conference down there and were favored with an admirable instinct when you gave it for its purpose the visiting of poor Frenchmen in the hospitals of Rome. God will give you the blessing He himself gives to all first works: "Increase and multiply." To grow is not, however, important; there must at the same time be unity in proportion as the circle widens, each of its points connected with the center by unbroken spokes. There is a conference, as you know, at Nîmes; another is about to be formed at Lyon; we are fifteen, almost all old friends; we have much to do, and have done little. They are five conferences at Paris. There must now be correspondence to rally them all. I do not know whether you have the Paris rule; if you want it, I will have it sent. Besides, at Paris there are common feasts and general assemblies; it is possible to assist at Mass in a body on feast days, and to send to the general assembly a small account-rendered of operations up to then. We propose to do this for the next feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8. Can you not do the like and send for that day to M. Bailly (rue des Fossés S–Jacques, 11) a short account of how the state of your work came about? Our confreres at Paris would be very pleased.

I am very ashamed, dear friend, to use such urgent language when I myself am so cold and lax. You ask me what I am going to do, and I scarcely know myself. I have finished my fifth year of law and have received the doctorate; now here I am settled in Lyon where I am content. But there is no career for me here beyond the bar, and believing it too difficult for me, I am trying to prepare for another which suits me better: I mean teaching. It is possible that Chairs of Law or Letters will be established here, and I will try to be ready, and at the moment, I am busy with my thesis for the doctorate in letters which I could not pass this year for lack of time and for which I will return to Paris for some weeks. I think I told you already that one of my theses is on the Philosophy of Dante. This has led me to a long study of the poet whom I admire more and more. I am also studying his times, and am compelled to delve a bit into some of the obscure questions encountered there, and I cannot help but admire the action of the popes of the Middle Ages. I admire no less those of modern times and have read a very good book of M. Arthaud on the life and pontificate of Pius VII where I discovered some very heroic things that the world knows little about. Happy are those whose life can be consecrated to the research of truth, good, and beauty and whom the vulgar thought of monetary usefulness does not importune!
Even in this research one is sometimes seized with a skepticism which paralyzes
the intelligence: it happens to me when I consider the instability and dissimilarity
of human judgments in the matter of beauty. Fénélon \(^{18}\) compares gothic churches
to bad sermons; you make of St. Peter's a great colossus which does not make sense.
Which should I, an uninitiate, believe when the high priests dispute? Nevertheless,
up to the new order, and fearing neither the epithet of eclectic nor the reproach of
inclining to tripartite divisions, I admit three legitimate forms of Christian archi-
tecture: the Roman form of the beautiful churches of ancient Rome, the type of
which, from my memories, is St. Clement;\(^{19}\) the gothic form of the cathedrals of
Milan, Lyon, Paris; and the modern form of domes, a symbolic form realizing in its
own way an image of heaven which, essayed for the first time in St. Sophia of Con-
stantinople,\(^{20}\) repeated at Pisa and Venice, grew bolder at Florence, and finally came
to rest majestically as a crown on the brow of the Eternal City. For of all St. Peter's it
is the cupola only that I find irreproachable. It is the same with that of the Invau-
dides,\(^{21}\) the only one where the arch strikes me as perfectly harmonious. As to the
apparent mediocrity of the interior of the basilica,\(^{22}\) it is not to my liking, but the
effect, in sum, by virtue of which the grandeur of the church appears ever to in-
crease in the measure that one attends to the details, is such that one ends up by
being overwhelmed at its immensity.

Enough on that point; I no longer want to pick a fight with you on the subject
of the Italians. I could reply to the trait you have informed me of with one more
frightful, of which Chaurand, La Perrière and I have been witness at Paris. But to
what purpose to give thus a bad opinion of humanity? Let us not do as Cham; let us
rather cover its sorry nakedness.\(^{23}\) And let us leave one another more auspiciously,
since here I am at the end of this letter. You were not ignorant of the fact that Lallier
spent a month of vacation at Lyon. Your friends here embrace you, do the same to
our friends down there, especially Frenet and Lavergne. Remember me a little, too.

A.-F. OzANAM

Address: Monsieur, Monsieur Janmot, painter, at Melle Rosa, Via Capo de Case, 56, Rome, Italy.
Notes:
1. Louis Janmot (1814-1892), Lyon painter, pupil of Ingres. Two sketches of Ozanam, at 20 and 40,
are his.
2. Hannibal (247-183 B.C.), Carthaginian general. He wintered in Capua during his invasion of
Roman territory.
3. Raphael Sanzo (1483-1520), Italian painter, sculptor, and architect.
4. St. Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297), Franciscan tertiary. The legend relates that she was con-
verted from a sinful life when a dog led her to the shocking discovery of her murdered lover's
body.
5. St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), founder of the Franciscan Order.
7. Angiolotto di Bondone, called Giotto, Florentine painter born at Calle (1266-1336), friend of
Dante.
8. P. Vannucci, called Perugino, (1486-1524), Italian painter, born near Perugia, one of the masters of Raphael.


10. St. Francis of Assisi.


12. You are my Lord and my God.

13. St. Vincent de Paul constantly reminded his priests and Sisters that "the poor are our masters."


16. Dante Alighieri, greatest of all Italian poets (1265-1321), author of The Divine Comedy.

17. Pius VII (Chiarmonte), Pope from 1800 to 1823. He signed the Concordat with Napoleon in 1801, came to Paris to consecrate the emperor, was held prisoner at Fountainbleu, and did not return to Rome until 1814.


19. Roman basilica.

20. Byzantine basilica, now a mosque.

21. Hôtel des Invalides, Parisian monument built by Louis XIV as a home for invalid soldiers. Its architect was Jules Hardouin-Mansard.

22. St. Peter’s.

23. Reference to Genesis 9, 21ff. Cham saw his father uncovered while drunk and made fun of it to his brothers Sem and Japheth, who respectfully covered their father without looking on him. When Noah awakened and learned of the incident, he cursed Cham thus: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”