

This is a transcription of the first of 3 broadcasts from the French Catholic radio station, Radio Notre-Dame, devoted to Frédéric Ozanam. It is a conversation between two historians: Jean-Paul Clément, presenter of the “Histoire d’en parler” [History to talk about] programme, and himself an historian specialising in the writer Chateaubriand and the 19th century in France, and Dr Mireille Beaup, from Paris III university, qualified in Italian and specialising in Ozanam. In this first broadcast, we learn about the young Ozanam at a time of great intellectual excitement, we hear about his education and meet the people who made an impact on him. We learn especially a little more about Abbé Noiroi.

Jean-Paul Clément: Dear listeners, no doubt you will be a little surprised today that, after Claudel, I ask you to take a step back, right into the 19th century, the middle of the century, to be with a writer of particular interest, rich in thought, and in the work he achieved: I want to talk about Ozanam.

And we will see that Ozanam is not so far removed from the present day, quite the contrary in fact.

In particular, on relations between Church and State, teaching within the University itself, and on many other matters.

In order to consider Ozanam, and talk about him, over 3 broadcasts, I have as my guest, I am delighted to say, Madame Mireille Beaup.

Mireille Beaup is a great expert on Ozanam. In fact, dear Madame, in 2003 you published: “Ozanam, holiness of a layman”, then the cycle of lectures, on the advice, I believe, Cardinal Lustiger...

Mireille Beaup: In fact, it was he who asked me to deliver this course.

Jean-Paul Clément: Precisely. “Le Paradis de Dante”, “Le Purgatoire” or “L’enfer”, [Dante’s Paradiso, Purgatorio and Inferno] and then another on Ozanam in 2017 called “Frédéric Ozanam, Homme de lettres, chercheur de Dieu” [Frédéric Ozanam, Man of letters, searching for God]. Which publisher did you go to?

Mireille Beaup: Paroles et Silence [Speech and Silence].

Jean-Paul Clément: You have also taught in state universities, in the Université Catholique de l’Ouest, and at the Cathedral School, and finally in a number of places where your voice has been heard and where you had the opportunity to speak about Ozanam and also about Marsilius of Padua, Machiavelli’s “The Prince” and other writers. And what struck me was to learn that your doctoral thesis was on the subject of Ungaretti.

Mireille Beaup: Yes, that’s so.

Jean-Paul Clément: “Le temps et l’Eternité” [Time and Eternity] And I wondered, to start things rolling, how did you move from Ungaretti to Ozanam?

Mireille Beaup: I think the reason for this move was something that happened in 1997, at the time when Pope John Paul II beatified Frédéric Ozanam. At that time, I was teaching Italian, so very interested in Italian literature, especially Ungaretti, whom I knew, who was still alive when I was a student. And during the beatification ceremony, I heard the homily given by Pope John Paul II who made me understand, who showed me, that Frédéric Ozanam was not just this Christian known as the founder of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, but he was also a

great scholar, he had been the leading teach of Italian at the Sorbonne, and I naturally felt a great empathy with him. So I read the correspondence, which had just been published in 5 volumes (around 1500 letters) and I was won by the character of this man, a very rich character, who was as comfortable in his Christian faith as in his university teaching. So as that chimed so well with my own experience, I considered doing some more work on his life, and I wrote these two works.

Jean-Paul Clément: I consider this a very spiritual move, I would like you to emphasise it. And then perhaps we can go on in this first part, today, to describe the brief but very intense life of Ozanam. I would simply like to mention something I said about two or three years ago. I said this: *"In Ozanam's time, (we are speaking here about Ozanam's active period, intellectually active, that is the time of the July Monarchy, then the 1848 Revolution) forward-looking Catholics willingly met with followers of Saint-Simon or the successors of Fourier: there were meetings with Louis de Carné and Armand Bazard, the incumbent pope of the Saint-Simoniens, they met Prosper Enfantin, aspirant to the title of Supreme Father; and at the home of Montalembert could be found Victor Considérant who published 3 volumes of socialist thinking at the Phalanstère bookshop, and who agreed with the young Christians in denouncing the distress of the people, making sinister predictions from it. They were angry with the selfish regime of the time (...) and reflecting sometimes on Romanticism, they established a Romantic gospel for the world (and the reign)."* So after this short introduction, sorry for quoting myself, I am now going to hand over to you to tell us something of the brief life, to take a title from Manuel de Falla, *La Vida Breve*, of Frédéric Ozanam. Over to you. We're all listening.

Mireille Beaup: This whole movement of ideas around the thinking of Victor Considérant, Saint-Simon, this birth of a new religion, greatly interested Ozanam, since he wrote *"Réflexions sur la Doctrine de Saint-Simon"*, which was recognised in his time - he was very young. And even people such as Lamennais, Chateaubriand and Lamartine congratulated him. So Frédéric Ozanam wrote his first works, his first articles, in the magazine at his school, the *"Collège Royal de Lyon"*. Frédéric Ozanam was actually born in Milan in 1813. His father was a doctor in Milan, and came to Lyon in 1815, so Frédéric Ozanam went to school in Lyon.

Jean-Paul Clément: He is really a Lyonnais. I think in fact he preferred Lyon to Paris, didn't he?

Mireille Beaup: His heart was in Lyon, and I think that many of his friendships were in Paris. And intellectual life rightly interested him, but he remained a Lyonnais to the end. His family remained in Lyon and he went back there. He often wrote in some journals, and so parts of his life were closely linked to the history of the city of Lyon. So it was there his training began, in the Collège Royal, in his philosophy year and in particular from the Abbé Noiret, who taught him and his classmates to reflect and to develop their own thinking, get some perspective on all ideas...

Jean-Paul Clément: He had a great influence...

Mireille Beaup: He had a very great influence.

Jean-Paul Clément: Perhaps we could say a little bit more about him, since Abbé Noiret is not very well-known.

Mireille Beaup: No. He was really known for being a good teacher. He had worked in a number of colleges and seminaries, and finally, when he was appointed as professor of philosophy at the Collège Royal in Lyon, he stayed there 25 years. He became known from then on as an extremely deep thinker, very skilled, like Socrates, in making young people think for themselves, and

nurturing the ideas they had within themselves but which they didn't dare express. Like many of his friends, Frédéric Ozanam stayed in touch with Noiroton until the end of his life, and often asked his advice. He was an extremely discreet, humble man, but really brilliant. In the end, he was appointed Inspector General. His former pupils gave him official recognition, especially Falloux, when he became a government minister, and appointed Noiroton to the post of Inspector General.

Jean-Paul Clément: And I think he played an important role when Ozanam was hesitating between the priesthood and marriage.

Mireille Beaup: Yes, that's so. Both between priesthood and marriage, and between law, where his father wanted him to go, and literature, which he loved so much.

Jean-Paul Clément: Law, because his father really wished his son to be a lawyer, and he pushed him hard in that direction. He did not give up, like an Alexandre Dumas, for instance.

Mireille Beaup: Not at all. This is also an extraordinary thing. He studied both in parallel. He had his law studies - he went as far as doing a doctorate in law, and then became a company lawyer for a while in Lyon, and pursued his literature studies which led him gradually to a doctorate and Agrégation in literature.

Jean-Paul Clément: A kind of dual career...

Mireille Beaup: It was a dual career. Which shows, which proves how intelligent he was, with that extreme intellectual curiosity which is interested in everything: the problems of his time, the issues of the great social revolutions which were latent at that point, and simultaneously, in the Divine Comedy, and the poetry of the Middle Ages. He was fairly comfortable in all fields, which is what struck his contemporaries most.

Jean-Paul Clément: He was especially interested in Dante.

Mireille Beaup: In Dante in particular. This relates to a discovery he made when he travelled to Rome with his family, after his law degree. He found that Raphael had painted a picture showing the great philosophers, and that he had placed the figure of Dante in the painting, which is now in the Vatican galleries. He wondered how Raphael could have placed Dante among the philosophers. This is where the idea for his thesis on Dante's philosophy and the Catholic philosophy of the 13th century came from.

Jean-Paul Clément: So I think it is very important to recall his Italian origins, which you have emphasised. So with Ungaretti, we move to Ozanam, Italian by birth and Lyonnais through his closest bonds. But as well as Abbé Noiroton, which of the leading figures of the time impressed him most? Lamennais perhaps?

Mireille Beaup: Lamennais and Chateaubriand. He greatly admired Lamennais, until he was condemned, and Lamartine as well, until "Jocelyn" was placed on the Index. But Chateaubriand remained his master until the end, especially for his love of the Middle Ages.

Jean-Paul Clément: Very good. We have come to the end of our first broadcast about Ozanam, with the name of Chateaubriand, very dear to me, as everyone on this station knows. So until next week, my dear Mireille Beaup!