PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES AS IDEAL CATHOLICS

Within my PhD research, as part of a project examining the feminization of religion in Belgium, I spent considerable time seeking a suitable angle to tackle questions about the difficult relation between masculinity and religion in the nineteenth century. As it turned out, I settled on Catholic secondary schooling. While I was doing what historians do, mostly reading and looking for primary sources concerning one’s topic, an interesting subject for looking into Catholic manliness suggested itself: the papal Zouaves. I understand that the link between Catholic secondary education and the soldiers of the Pope does not seem clear-cut. Working from the historical context, I will make the association explicit.

The papal or pontifical Zouaves were members of a corps of volunteers, originally Frenchmen and Belgians and later supplemented with other nationalities, formed in Rome for the defence of the pope between 1860 and 1871. They were especially identifiable by their Arabian-cut crimson trousers. Their name and uniform were

1 One extensive historical published study exists about the French Zouaves: Guenel, La dernière guerre, 196. In a study on the French devotion for Pius IX the Zouaves are discussed as a self-sacrificing movement in Horaist, La Dévotion, 54-59. Recently an extensive and wide article, which will be discussed in this contribution, has been published on a certain aspect of the French Zouave mobilization: Harrison, “Zouave Stories”. For Belgium a thorough but of less scientific value local history is available: Goddeeris, De Pauselijke Zouaven, 429. In the literature on the Risorgimento the Zouaves are discussed obliquely and in religious history they are almost completely lacking. For example Coppa, “Italy”, does not mention them. Brief reference can be found in Clark, “The New Catholicism”, 22. The Zouaves received more attention in Viaene, “The Roman Question”, 144-146; Viaene called the mobilization “The most spectacular aspect of Catholic mobilization on behalf of the pope [...]”.
adopted from a French light-infantry corps created by Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in 1852. During the wars of the Second Empire, the Zouaves earned themselves a name as an elite corps. Their bravery together with the easily recognizable uniform made them universally known and examples for soldiers and common people alike. The origin of this French corps and their exotic uniform lies in 1830 during the French Regency, when mercenaries from a Kabyle war tribe were organized into three French regiments and were given a uniform based on their local dress.²

After the Italian seizure of two thirds of the papal territory in 1859, it became clear that the papal army was not up to its tasks.³ The Belgian prelate Xavier de Mérode was selected from the pope’s entourage to reorganize the army. Together with the French veteran general Louis de La Moricière, appointed commander-in-chief, de Mérode decided to start building up an international corps of volunteers. Besides Austrian, Swiss and Irish divisions, French and Belgian volunteers were grouped together into what was called the Tirailleurs Franco-Belges. This pack of infantrymen consisted of 450 men, of which at least 183 were Belgians.⁴ They took part in the battle at Castelfidardo where the papal army was defeated by the Piedmontese. Sixty of them met their death, plenty were wounded and the majority were imprisoned. The survivors were supposed to be repatriated when released from the enemy’s prisons, but most of them returned to Rome.⁵ These men were the basis on which on the first of January 1861 the battalion of pontifical Zouaves was formed.⁶

Between 1861 and 1870 these papal soldiers mostly undertook police actions consisting of border patrols in the reduced Papal States and operations that helped prevent the outbreak of revolutions.⁷ The Zouaves’ finest hour was when they fought Garibaldi and his volunteers on 3 November 1867 at Mentana and won. However, as with most of the events during the Risorgimento, the role of France was pivotal at Mentana. It was the French expeditionary force’s reinforcement of the withdrawing Zouave army that landed the victory. In this case the new chassepot rifle used by the French made the difference and forced Garibaldi to retreat.⁸ The importance or even indispensableness of the French troops becomes clear when the army of pontifical Zouaves came to its end in 1870. The Franco-Prussian war forced Napoléon III to recall his troops to France. The absence of these armed forces brought about Italy’s annexation of Rome. After what has appropriately been labelled a simulacra resistance,⁹ the Zouaves, on direct order of Pius IX, surrendered at the Porta Pia, one of the gates of Rome, and the Eternal City was taken.

The misfortune suffered by the States of the Church activated the religious zeal of Catholics. According to Bruno Horaist in his study on French devotion to Pius IX the defeat at Castelfidardo was apropos the enlisting essential:

² Petit, “Zouaves”.
³ For the ideological, political and religious aspects of the clash between the Catholic Church and Italian nationalism, see Coppa, “Italy”, 233-249.
⁴ Guenel, La dernière guerre, 29; Leconte, “Les Belges”.
⁶ Jarry, “Zouaves”.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ganiage, “Mentana”.
⁹ Id., “Rome”.
The crush of Lamoricière’s small army at Castelfidardo wounded the sense of chivalry and national pride of the ultramontains. This defeat aroused the desire for battle, the hope of being heroes, in the young.\(^{10}\)

Similar in-depth research into different aspects of the Belgian worship to Pius IX has not been done yet. Nevertheless it is clear that the events in the Papal States aroused numerous addresses, petitions and newspaper articles in Belgium devoted to the Pope and the fund-raising system of the Peter’s Pence.\(^{11}\) A recruitment campaign directed at young male Catholics involving books, plays, allocutions and published personal testimonies was set up. This recruitment discourse, which lasted for the whole period, had the desired effect: between 1860 and 1870 nearly 2000 Belgian men went to Rome to serve the Pope.\(^{12}\)

The discourse was also introduced in schools and resulted in pupils entering the papal army. Exact numbers on the commitment of secondary schoolboys cannot be provided yet. It probably was not the prevailing standard as it is certain that the local ecclesiastic hierarchies did not advocate the recruitment of minors; the bishop of Bruges, for instance, expressed concerns about a possible exodus from preparatory seminaries and about making the cause of the pope into a \textit{bambineria}, a case for children.\(^{13}\) A recent study on Belgian Jesuit colleges assesses that the Jesuits in Belgium (as in the rest of Europe) devoted themselves greatly to finding new people to join the pontifical army. The small number of conscripts connected to the Jesuit colleges, 12 enlistments for 5 institutions, however suggests that the Jesuit recruitment efforts were not directed towards their own pupils. Probably parental objections to possible enlistments were decisive in reducing the propaganda for actual service whereas zeal for the pope’s cause was titillated in different ways.\(^{14}\)

On the other hand, therefore, it is interesting to note that the recruitment discourse prompted an image of the papal Zouave as an ideal Catholic male. The creation of Zouave companies for boys in schools appeals the most to the imagination. Zouave corps were established in several high schools during the nineteenth

\(^{10}\) “Chez les ultramontains, l’écrasement de la petite armée de Lamoricière par les troupes piémontaises à Castelfidardo, blessa le sentiment chevalresque et l’orgueil national. Cette défaite aviva, chez les jeunes, le désir de se battre, l’espero d’être un héros”. Horaist, \textit{La Dévotion}, 54. In an accompanying essay in the catalogue of the 2007-2008 exhibition \textit{Héros d’Achille à Zidane} in the Bibliothèque nationale de France on French heroes through the ages the Zouaves are not included in the \textit{Galerie confessionelle de héros zélés ad majorem Dei gloriam} but a short reference is made to the importance of hero worship of Christian knights for the determination of French Catholics to defend the interests of the Pope. Amalvi, \textit{“La construction”}.

\(^{11}\) Viaene, “The Roman Question”, 143-146.

\(^{12}\) The first Belgian Zouave joined in Brussels on 17 April 1860 and the last one enrolled on 1 September 1870. Between these two dates 1963 Belgian men joined the pontifical Zouaves. See Stevens, “Een goudmijn”.

\(^{13}\) Bruges, Episcopal Archives Bruges: File minor seminary 1859-1869. On a controversy surrounding a possible conscription of minors for the papal forces in the city of Bruges see: De Smet, \textit{“Ronse-ling”}.

The best example is the minor seminary of Roeselare where the Zouave corps existed from 1869 to 1960. Students who had been real Zouaves carried the corps during its first few years, leaving a body of descriptive literature for the following members to use in organizing their school society. The members of these corps received a military rank, dressed up in the fancy uniform and walked around with wooden weapons. On festivals they re-enacted battles. The members saw a school year as a military campaign. The importance of this Zouave tradition and the lasting devotion to Pope Pius IX in the minor seminar of Roeselare can be seen in the festivities in 1929, organized to celebrate the Lateran Treaty and in honour of the real Zouaves and Pius IX. Besides Zouave squads, the staging of Zouave plays in different colleges, the composing of passionate speeches about Pius IX and his soldiers for literary societies and the sending to Rome of expressions of support all prove the carry-over of the Zouaves to secondary school boys. It is of course not surprising that these men served as an example. It so happens that they were men who were dedicated to their religion in anything but a noncommittal way. Besides, they belonged to an army, generally accepted as a feature of modern masculinity.

The following quotation from Wiseman’s *Fabiola*, cited in the Zouave novel *For Two Fathers*, which was part of the recruitment discourse, points to the sacrifice of life and thereby to the Zouave as a role model with a status of or even higher than a priest:

Many a pious parent has devoted her infant son from the cradle to the holiest and noblest state that earth possesses; has prayed and longed to see him grow up to be, first a spotless Lévite, and then a holy priest at the altar; and has watched eagerly each growing inclination, and tried gently to bend the tender thought towards the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts. And if this was an only child, as Samuel was to Anna, that dedication of all that is dear to her keenest affection, may justly be considered as an act of maternal heroism. What then must be said of ancient matrons, - Felicitas, Symphorosa, or the unnamed

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15 Known to me are corps in the minor seminary of Roeselare; Colleges of Sint-Josephs, Torhout; Sint-Amands, Kortrijk; Sint-Aloysius, Menen; Tielt and Moeskroen and the Jesuit college in Mons. For France Ruth Harris has noted that Père Emmanuel d’Alzon clothed his pupils at his Assumption College in Nîmes in the colours of the Zouaves. See Harris, *Lourdes*, 215-216.

16 Roeselare, Archives of Roeselare minor seminary: Fund Zouave corps and Library of the Zouave students.


18 In the different Jesuit colleges several plays about the Zouaves were staged, for instance *Pour le drapeau, épisode de la guerre pontificale* (1860); *Le départ du zouave pontifical; La caverne d’Osinio*, *le zouave pontifical*, all three by Paul Lefevre, SJ, see Dusausoit, *Les collèges jésuites*, 660-683. *Pour le drapeau* was also performed in the minor seminary of Roeselare. Roeselare, Archives of Roeselare minor seminary: Library of the Zouave students.


20 Ghent, Episcopal Archives Ghent, Fund minor seminary Sint-Niklaas: Letter of Pius IX sent as an answer to the letter sent to him by the pupils of the minor seminary of Sint-Niklaas out of piety, 6 October 1860.

21 Nye, “Western Masculinities”.

ZOUAVE STORIES PRESENTING RELIGIOUS MASCULINITY

The recruitment discourse will be analysed predominantly through *For Two Fathers* by Canon Servaas Daems. The book can be seen as important for several reasons. First, because it is a work of fiction. Fiction leaves more space for the author to present the narrative. In this respect one could define *For Two Fathers* as a tendentious novel, which implies that the message is presented explicitly. It does not mean, however, that the other works are more accurate. Second, the book has known several editions, three in Dutch (1868, 1898 and 1902), two in English (1869 and 1877), one in French (1870), one in Czech (1876) and one in German (1903). Third, the importance of the author - who became a member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Language and Liter-

22 Wiseman, *Fabiola*, 11. Cited in Daems, *Voor twee vaders*, 57. Referring to the Maccabees was common in the recruitment discourse. It can also be found in Cautereels, *De pauselijke zouaven*, 59 and De Corte, *Lijkrede*, 1.


24 The analysed works are: De Séguar, *Les Martyrs*; Terwecoren, *Ludovic de Taillart*; Van Hulsem, *Het pauselijk zoevenleven*; Cautereels, *De pauselijke zouaven*; Daems, *Voor twee vaders*; De Becdelièvre, *Souvenirs*; De Corte, *Lijkrede*; Pruvost, *Notice*; Terwecoren, *Auguste Misson*. Numerous references to Belgian Zouave stories can be found among others in Gola, *Un demi-siècle* and Lorette, “Historiographie”. For this article only Zouave stories have been selected which were published between 1860 and 1871. The works also had to be in a school library like that of the minor seminaries of Roeselare or Sint-Niklaas or at least had to have been reviewed in a Belgian Catholic pedagogical journal of the nineteenth century. Without claiming full proof these criteria contain the possibility of having been read.

25 The book has been translated in English as *The Double Sacrifice*. I prefer to use the literal translation “For Two Fathers” of the original Dutch title *Voor twee vaders* as I have only read the Flemish version and as different fathers play an important role in the narrative.

ature and was a much sought-after preacher to adorn retreats, especially in Catholic boarding schools and colleges - suggests that his work was known and possibly read in the Catholic milieus I am interested in. 27 I will discuss the Zouave image observed in the book and compare it with the other works in the recruitment discourse.

Daems formulates several motives for writing his book. First, he hopes to deliver writings that are not dangerous. This indicates once again the preoccupation of the church with the reading habits of her followers. But most of all the commitment of the Zouaves inspired him to act. According to himself, he does this best by writing a book. With this, Daems suggests something that is present in all Zouave discourse, namely that everybody should participate in Pius’ battle. People should do everything in their power. Besides fighting, Daems sees praying as most essential. Third, the author wants to fill a gap in the Zouave literature. He refers to the Italian Zouave novel *Olderico, o lo zuavo pontifico* by Antonia Bresciani, in which according to Daems no mention is made of the Belgian contribution to the Pope’s struggle. 28 Finally, he concludes with an appeal to the “brave children of Belgium” to “gather around the rock of Peter” (7). By doing this he links himself to the recruitment efforts. It is notable that he explicitly calls on children and not adults. Throughout his book Daems idealizes the youth as the real defenders of the Catholic Church. Strikingly, his introduction makes no gender difference. Only after introducing two of his main characters, a brother and a sister with the most appropriate names Joseph and Maria, does he make the gender difference clear. At a chapel praying for the recovery of their terminally ill mother, the girl urges the boy to pray more and harder. Joseph suggests that he has better means at his disposal, namely sacrificing himself for the pope: prayer is not the only weapon. 29 As the mother is miraculously cured, the author clearly suggests that Joseph’s promise to join the Zouaves was most efficient. Joseph will band together with two other adolescents, his cousin Victor and friend Marten. Although Victor will not survive the endeavour, before he dies he gets enough opportunities to prove he is a good Christian and a good soldier. And when he finally passes away, he goes down in a blaze of glory.

This idealization of children and their sacrifices are themes that recur in other works by this author and are general features of Catholic youth literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. 30 The other texts in my selection equally emphasize youth although more exclusively boys. For example in a funeral oration in 1860, the priest Joannes-Baptista De Corte speaks of Belgian sons having children’s hearts but manly courage. 31 Eleven years later a sermon delivered at the funeral of August De Rijnck, a Zouave who died from injuries sustained at the battle of Porta Pia, emphasized De Rijnck’s chastity and virtue and his extreme youth when called to become a

27 Weyns, “Daems, Servaas”.
28 This novel is discussed profoundly by Harrison, “Zouave Stories”. The failure to appreciate the contributions of Belgians is a topos in all Belgian Zouave literature, from fiction to historiography, from nineteenth-century to contemporary local studies on individual Zouaves.
29 Daems, *Voor twee vaders*, 16.
30 Van Coillie and Ghesquière, *Uit de schaduw*, 92-97. In particular the story “Of Janneken and Mieken who went to Our Lady for food” in Daems’s *Descriptions and Tales* [my translations], 1897, bears great resemblance to *For Two Fathers*.
Zouave. The priest Petrus Cautereels, who presents what he considers a pantheon of Zouaves in the third part of his book on the Zouaves, does the same. It seems that Cautereels’ selection criteria were being young and having died on the battlefield or because of sustained injuries. For example, Cautereels quotes the newspaper *Le Bien public* which stated that in the Zouave Carlos d’Alcantara, killed at the age of twenty in the battle of Mentana, one could see “[...] the vigour and resoluteness of a man coupled with the sweetness and open-heartedness of a child [...]”.

In biographical works about certain Zouaves the authors also stress the youth of their subjects. In Ludovic de Taillart’s biography written in 1862 by the Jesuit Éduard Terwecoren, his brother gave evidence that Ludovic was “a good child [...] of a rare tranquillity; and although he had an almost-feminine natural sensitivity, his resolute spirit never failed him for a moment: he shed not a single tear in front of his mother”. In their life story Alfred de Limminghe and Auguste Misson are presented as young pious boys, who lived an exemplary life but died too young. De Limminghe’s biographer adds that Alfred’s devotion was still lively and true.

Being youngsters, the Zouaves were somewhat logically presented as unmarried. But strikingly, there was never mention of a fiancée, or even a girlfriend at home or a possible love interest in Italy. The Zouaves were innocent virgins. Their virginal state was embroidered with the support the papal soldiers received from their mothers. The above quotation from Wiseman’s *Fabiola* is one of many references to mothers who have to be prepared to sacrifice their sons for the cause of the pope. Because of this, Anatole de Ségur dedicates his book to the mothers of the Zouaves who “[...] participated in the sacrifice by their abnegation, devotion and the heroic courage with which they accepted it”. Mothers clearly outshined a possible wife or marriage itself. The Zouaves are sons, not husbands. A contrast to this maternal bond was a non-believing father who tried to forbid his son’s commitment. For the sake of completeness, since the whole family was discussed, girls stayed at home but contributed to the wellbeing of their brothers and that of the pope by praying a lot and with such dedication that it often had an immediate effect on the course of battle. The home is presented as a home front, which is only of smaller importance.

The use of children, in this case a boy, as ideals was common practice in all arts and ideologies. Hence one should see the representation of the Zouaves as young and dying heroes in the context of, for example, the creation of Joseph Bara and Agricole Viala as young champions of the French Revolution and in the traditions of child saints. As Cautereels explicitly refers to it, the beatification of the young Johannes Berchmans in 1865 is the best example. These persons, or even better, personages not only increase the dramatic tension but also bring about cultural influence. According to Karen Sánchez-Eppler in a study on children’s participation in the making of social

32 Bloemen, 6.
33 Cautereels, *De pauselijke zouaven*, III, 45.
34 “[...] un enfant sage, [...] d’un calme rare; et, quoiqu’il fût naturellement d’une sensibilité presque féminine, sa fermeté ne se démentit pas un seul instant: il ne versa pas une larme en présence de sa mere” Terwecoren, *Ludovic de Taillart*, 7-8.
meaning in the nineteenth century, “The death of a child stands as the quintessential example of how the helplessness of any actual individual child can be converted into cultural influence. The power that adheres in the figure of the dying child may be used to enforce a wide array of social issues, and any reader of the nineteenth-century fiction can easily produce a list of the lessons - temperance, abolition, charity, chastity, and most of all piety - underscored by the death of a child.”

The latter remark concerning de Limminghe is one of many indications in the texts that illustrate that the dying Zouaves not only stand for piety, but above all portray a pure piety in contrast to corrupted adults. Therefore one could say that the Zouaves are personages that symbolize an ‘infantilization’ of Roman Catholicism. I would in this particular case and for different reasons add the adjective ‘male’ to this expression. Firstly, the Zouaves are men, secondly women have limited roles in the Zouave stories and thirdly, women's functions are consistent with what has already been determined within the feminization of religion theory. Women are presented as profoundly pious and are seen as passing religion down from generation to generation. But fourthly and most importantly, no real difference is made between younger girls and their adult counterparts. They are two of a kind. There is just one exception. Only in Cautereels’ work one can find an unreligious woman. When discussing Garibaldi, the author presents Garibaldi’s wife Anitta as as non-believing as her husband. But Cautereels suggests that her mixed race could be an explanation and surely presents her as an ‘unwomanly’ woman.

I would also claim that this male infantilization is part of the larger feminization thesis as the antipode is the same, namely the unreligious adult man.

Daems elaborates on manly irreligiousness by introducing anticlerical men at several points in the story. This is worked out explicitly in a chapter titled “How a freethinker ends”. In it Victor’s father Mr. Morren witnesses the last moments of a Freemason’s life. The dying man, flanked by his brother and sister, his doctor and a friend, cries out that he wants to see a priest. As all three men are members of the Solidaires they refuse to comply with the last wish of their friend and brother. The man turns to Mr. Morren: “Ah, Morren! cried he; a priest, a priest!... They want me to pass away without a priest!... [...] No, no! moaned the sick person. It is the death! I feel it burning deep down. A priest, quick! They don't want to call one, I can't die like a dog.” Only the sister, indeed clearly ashamed because she thinks a priest

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39 Infantilization of religion has not yet received much scholarly attention. It has been argued that it is part of an exceeding religious specialization, next to, among others feminization, in which children are seen as a separate target audience. It consists of e.g. the practice of children making their First Communion at the earlier age of seven years, the adoration of child saints and youth literature. See De Maeyer, “The Concept”.
40 This expression is taken from Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 13.
41 Cautereels, *De pauselijke zouaven*, I, 79.
42 According to Daems the Solidaires is a grouping that is allied to the Carabona, secretly helps the Italian republican cause and is antagonistic towards priests.
43 Daems, *Voor twee vaders*, 243.
will not follow her into a notorious house of Freemasons, can be persuaded to find a priest. When the clergyman arrives, Mr. Morren and he are kicked around and out after witnessing the terrible death agony of the dying man who neither confessed nor received the last rites. Mr. Morren reflects:

So it is then, how a Freemason ends!... Such is the fate that awaits you if you do not return to religion, to the faith of your younger years. [...] the desperate death-struggle and the horrible rage of the wretched deceased deterred him and clot his blood in his veins, and the hideous face, immediately disfigured and turned black after death, stayed before his eyes and made his limbs shudder.”

With this description Daems lets Belgian current events slip inside his narrative, as starting in the late 1850s civil burials were becoming recurring manifestations of anticlericalism that were at the heart of the culture wars in Belgium. Daems’ disturbing take on a Freemason’s last breath was probably a reaction against the most illustrative example of a Belgian civil burial. In December 1862 Freemason Pierre-Théodore Verhaegen, founder of the liberal Université Libre de Bruxelles, died and under the terms of his will did not have a priest at his deathbed, did not receive extreme unction and was carried to his grave with a big politically charged funeral procession. His devout Catholic family was consternated and the ultramontane journal Le Bien Public called the manifestation “une orgie maçonnique.”

Daems’ rendition of the dying freethinker distinctly contrasts with his account of the departed Victor, who had a soft radiance of blissfulness and a joyful smile on his face. And in his chapter “How a Zouave dies”, a title that in a way mirrors Daems’ section under discussion, Cautereels chronicles that Zouaves lose their lives with patience in suffering and resignation and with endurance and submission to God’s will. Similar accounts are given in the studied eulogia. De Corte tells about a child who is mortally wounded by a bullet, makes the sign of the cross and departs to heaven with a sweet and laughing face. De Rijnck’s published tribute includes a description of his funeral service in which the observer notices that the open casket made it possible to see that De Rijnck’s face remained expressive and full of power. In contrast to Daems’ anticlerical personage, death did not leave marks on August De Rijnck.

Almost identical utterances are made by the Zouave Théodore de

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44 Ibid., 250-251.
45 Witte, “The battle”.
46 Ibid.
47 Daems, Voor twee vaders, 274.
48 Cautereels, De pauselijke zouaven, 83-94.
49 De Corte, Lijkrede, 20.
50 Bloemen, 4.
51 “Veldslag van Mentana”.

Turck de Kersbeek whose letters are reproduced in Terwecoren’s work on Auguste Misson: “Auguste died gently and happily. A smile of faith, piety, love and happiness seemed to animate his still, pallid lips, which had kissed the cross of salvation so effusively.”

According to Pruvost, de Liminghe died with the same quiet forbearance. The Jesuit adds that this is characteristic of the chosen few. This establishes that the acceptance of death has everything to do with the fact that the Zouaves are prepared to sacrifice themselves. Perpetual evidence can be found in the texts. As just one example, Auguste Misson stated “What better thing could have happened? I will never die in better circumstances. To die defending the faith is the best thing in the world.” Sacrifice is the ultimate motivation in the Zouave stories. Clearly the reason behind it will have been the possibility to imitate Christ. That this sacrifice not only consisted of fighting becomes clear when one sees the description of Misson’s life, and certainly in Cautereels. It is mainly the resignation with which the Zouave dies that proves his martyrdom. Again, this is elaborated most explicitly in Daems’ novel.

Daems does this by focusing on the male generational rift between Victor and his father. Victor, inspired by his nephew Joseph and their mutual friend Marten, wants to join the Zouaves. As a minor he has to receive permission from his parents. Victor’s mother is pleased by his intentions, but as a freethinker, Mr. Morren refuses to let his son endeavour in what he calls “foolishness, preposterous foolishness! [...] zealotry, [...] fanciful.” This row is central to the book. Joseph and Marten receive their parental permission without any problem. As their fathers are deceased, Joseph and Marten only need the consent of their mothers, who are to say the least fairly enthusiastic. It is striking that in For Two Fathers and in other stories by Daems, the fathers of Catholic families have passed away. If patriarchs are still alive, they are unreligious. Daems does not provide a single religious male adult protagonist. Personal motives may have lain at the basis of this narrative or it could well be that Daems uses a strong symbol for the feminization thesis, the religious man is death.

But once again it turns out that the male infantilization is merely a part of the feminization. Mr. Morren attacks his wife more than his son: “But, he continued; my wrath is unreasonable: myself - I have myself to blame! I who gave full rein to your mother, to bring you up within her superstition! Yes, I can guess it! It shall be she, who, once again, has put this foolishness in your head.” Letting one of his characters speak this way, Daems shows that he is familiar with the anticlerical reproaches or fears that sons are more influenced by their mothers than their fathers. Morren’s accusations tie in with certain nineteenth-century French family conflicts that Paul Seeley has described and elucidated. Seeley found that a boy with the consent of his father was educated in the domestic sphere by his mother and thereby internalized religiosity. However it became crucial for the boy to renounce the values of his initial maternal socialization later in life. Whenever this rupture did not occur, the

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52 de Turck de Kersbeek, Letter to his father.
53 Pruvost, Notice, 77.
54 Terwecoren, Auguste Misson, 27.
55 Daems, Voor twee vaders, 42.
56 Ibid., 43.
57 Art and Buerman, “Is de katholieke man wel een echte vent?”, 28.
boy received scorn from society and came into conflict with his father because of an ideological commitment identified as unmasculine. However, in the rest of Daems’ narrative one finds the Catholic author’s solution to this division between male adolescents and adults.

Victor’s father can only be persuaded to grant his permission when he witnesses the physical state into which his son enters because of his refusal. And when Victor finally leaves for Rome, like Joseph he makes a deal with God. Like Joseph, who will fight to give thanks for the physical recovery of his mother, Victor will fight for the mental state of his father in the future. Victor has to pay a higher price for his reward than Joseph as he dies. Daems might be suggesting that a physical recovery is more easily attained than a mental one. In this struggle the women in the story help Victor. As Mr. Morren’s secularist friends are no longer willing to talk to him because of the engagement of his son, Morren is condemned to talk more than usual to the womenfolk in his house, namely his wife, his sister-in-law and her daughter, being the mother and sister of Joseph, who all try to persuade him to join them in their prayers in particular and their religion in general. They can only bring Mr. Morren into doubt. It is Victor’s commitment, fighting spirit and sacrifice that changes his mind. When Mr. Morren and the rest of the family are reunited around Victor’s deathbed, Morren reveals that he has become a believer. The father cries out that his son has sacrificed himself for the well-being of his father. “Victor, sweet Victor! He cried between sobbing; it’s over: you have conquered!... I believe, my Lord, I believe just as my Victor!” At this moment we also see that the name Victor was not randomly chosen. The name comes from the Latin vincere, which means conquering. He is not only victorious on the battlefield; he also wins the mind of his father. Victor is fighting for two fathers: for the rights of his religious father, the pope, but also for the mental state of his natural father. To the well-informed reader, Daems suggests the end of the book by using this name from the beginning, a rhetorical device that underlines Daems’ message of an inescapable fate for religious and irreligious people alike.

The sacrifice for the pope in general and in particular for one’s own family shows that the Zouave is presented as the synthesis of the unreligious man and the religious mother. This dichotomy between man and woman is particularly present in the fictional work. A similar narrative is discussed in Hugh McLeod’s Secularization in Western Europe, 1848-1914, and a recent and similar convert was Tony Blair (following the faith of his wife and children). The Zouave as saviour is present in all works. Thanks to the Zouave, religion passes not only through the mother from generation to generation but also via the young Zouave from one sex to another. Women lack something crucial to defend the pope, in Rome as well as at home, namely being a man. Zouaves can infuse manliness into religion. Therefore a male infantilization of religion is necessary to bring the men back to religion. For Two Fathers can be seen as a coming-of-age novel but backwards. As Daems is from the educational sector this could show that there was some awareness that men probably left church after their education. But the belief also existed that the present younger generation could

59 Daems, Voor twee vaders, 267.
60 McLeod, Secularization, 124-125.
be guided differently and their example could bring men back to religion. These
youngsters possessed a quality essential to manliness, specifically the will to defend
a greater cause. Most importantly for religion they could do more than just praying,
namely they could fight. They had “the heart of a lamb in the body of a lion”.

ZOUAVE STORIES AND THE FEMINIZATION OF RELIGION

Recently two other authors have written about Zouave stories, although French ones.
The first author, Sophie Heywood, studied the oeuvre of the Comtesse de Ségur, a
French Catholic author of children’s literature who in some of her books presents
pontifical Zouaves as models for Catholic men. Heywood finds these ideal pious
men to be combinations of a virile religion based on militancy and combativeness
and a sensitive, romantic piety. According to her this combination was not perceived
as problematic and was even in conformance with social norms. Any conclusion that
would suggest otherwise is for Heywood based more on “a modern vision of masculi-

inity than any wish on the part of the Comtesse or the ultramontanes to feminize
men”. In this article I have however tried to establish that there is not as much
incongruence between the Belgian Zouave titles studied and the feminization thesis.
For the most part male unreligious adults are antagonized against believing wives
and children. The conversion of the father to Catholicism is more or less the major
theme in the Belgian works. In the texts the young men get opportunities to prove
they are good Christians as well as good soldiers and in doing so receive the means
they need to do their conversional duty. Hence the Zouave is presented as the synthe-
sis of the unreligious man and the religious mother.

In the sources of the second author, Carol E. Harrison, no mention is made of
fathers. Harrison wrote an extensive article based on a large and varied sample of
French Zouave stories, a term she introduced. These French texts focus exclusively
on the mother-son relationships. As the French and Belgian texts show many simi-
larities this difference is important. Since irreligiousness is the core issue here, this
dissimilarity might be explained by a disparity in French and Belgian anti-clericalism.
During the 1860s the secular-clerical conflict was already at its height in Belgium.
In France, by contrast, the maturation of republican anti-clericalism only began in
the 1870s with the end of the Second Empire and the onset of the French Kulturkampf
in 1877. Therefore French Zouave stories produced after 1870 should be studied to
see if the Catholic father also becomes a literary trope in French stories. If so, this
would make it possible to deduce even more that the Zouave narratives should be
seen as confirming the feminization thesis. Some studies particularly emphasize the
gendered nature of anti-clerical attacks on worshippers and see this as a result of

61 Daems, Voor twee vaders, 40.
62 Heywood, “Les ‘petits garçons modèles’”.
63 Ibid., 216.
64 Harisson, “Zouave Stories”, passim.
65 Witte, “The battle”.
66 McMillan, “‘Priest hits girl’”.
the feminization. The recurring conclusion in these studies is that Catholics were scorned as being effeminate. Therefore the Zouave narratives in Belgium are (and in France might be) Catholic reactions against these accusations. For now, Harrison agrees that these narratives present a Catholic paragon consisting of supposedly incompatible characteristics such as a childlike purity or an emotional spirituality and soldierly virtue. According to Harrison, however, men and women who followed this model intentionally broke societal norms, although with a reason. “Repetition of the Zouave story, with the ritual evocation of physical and spiritual suffering that ran through all of its variations, generated a powerful vocabulary for Catholic men and women who hoped to produce militancy out of self-denial, individual suffering, and private anguish.” For Harrison the Zouave movement gave men and women alike a certain agency.

The antagonism touched upon by myself and Harrison suggests that the Zouave stories were formulated in a society that linked women with religion and identified religiosity with womanliness. This article, Heywood and Harrison nevertheless agree that the Zouave movement as a devotion gave Catholics the opportunity to combine manly and womanly features which could explain its popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Therefore one could conclude that with regard to gender, nineteenth-century religiosity was not as one-dimensional as it has sometimes been evaluated.

67 Healy, “Anti-Jesuitism in Imperial Germany”; Verhoeven, “Neither Male or Female”; Gross, The War against Catholicism, 186; O’Malley, Catholicism, 117; Wheeler, The old enemies, 106; Hastings, “Fears of a Feminized Church”; Art and Buerman, “Anticléricalisme et genre”.
68 Harrison, “Zouave Stories”.
69 Ibid., 305.
The Sacred Heart devotion strongly appealed to men. Hundreds join a manifestation of devotion in the village of Lauwe (Belgium), 1927.

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