

Making the constitution more Catholic?

Catholic adaptation strategies to the Belgian constitutional liberties of 1831

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«Everything had to proceed from the beginning. There were no “precedents”, since history had none to offer»¹. Trotsky’s depiction of the Russian Revolution of 1917 as a *tabula rasa*, a creation *ex nihilo*, created contemporary hopes for a new beginning for humanity, and revealed a more general point of view certainly shared by most revolutionaries throughout history. In reality, within human history, a total discontinuity with what came before is largely an ideal, or even an illusion. In his study on mass movements, the American philosopher Eric Hoffer stated that new regimes appear, even after radical changes, more than anything as «a patchwork of old and new»². A revolution, in spite of what the word implies, never comes from a vacuum and always contains elements of continuity. Traces of the past keep working, either noticed or unnoticed. 1830 Belgium was no exception.

To see this continuity in action, one can look at the first major result of the Belgian Revolution – the constitution of 1831. At the

time, this text represented an innovative *summum* of contemporary political views, especially regarding individual freedoms. Later historians have stressed its “originality” should in fact be underplayed. No constitution in Europe appeared as progressive as the Belgian, but most of the ideas underlying it had been in circulation for some time. Moreover, continuity and tradition were urgent concerns in Catholic thought as well. In this respect, Catholic support for the Belgian revolution cannot imply a total break either. Rather, the 1831 constitutional framework should be seen as the result of the interaction of the revolutionary rhetoric of change, the search for new principles to be adapted to the Belgian case, and – as addressed in this article – the Catholic aspiration to historical continuity.

Following the formation of an organised Catholic political field later in the nineteenth century, Karel Van Isacker made a distinction between a «legal» and a «real» country³. A similar distinction could be made between a “legal” and a

"real" – or between a "written" and a "living" – constitution. In 1831, not only were political views constitutionalised, many of them also remained vague or general. Still, it is not a stretch to say the constitution as a text worked quite well. It remained in force a century and a half before the first major structural changes were implemented in the 1970s. At the same time, the constitution also became a framework marking the limits within which the defence of social groups' interests had to take place. How this struggle would take shape was, however, still to be determined. After 1831, the "legal" written constitution needed to be translated into the "reality" of Belgian society – a process that sometimes occurred smoothly, but more often through conflict.

1. *Innovation and continuity: the search for a truly Belgian constitution*

Half a century before the Belgian revolt, the American and French revolutions had provoked a paradigmatic shift in the political agenda of many European countries. Times soon appeared ripe for more uprisings. In July 1830, this indeed happened again in Paris, when street riots triggered the establishment of a so-called liberal monarchy. A few weeks later, the southern part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, and especially the cities of Brussels and Liège, somewhat followed the French example. This was not the first time. An uprising, known as the Brabant Revolution, had already taken place there in 1790 against the centralistic policies of the Austrian Emperor Joseph II. To a certain extent, that insurgency was an early instance

of national awareness in the future Belgian provinces and anticipated aspects of the anti-Dutch protest of the 1820s. Significant discrepancies between the two revolts, however, remain. Not only was the Brabant Revolution less successful, its intellectual basis was different as well, as democratic Vonckists fought and lost to reactionary Vandernootists, who were mainly advocates of the ancient regional autonomies and ecclesiastical privileges⁴. It was this same patchwork of reactionary forces that would oppose King William I of Orange's constitutional and religious policies in the first years of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

1830, however, had a different outcome – independence was proclaimed and a liberal constitution was introduced. In the following years, the basic laws of other countries were more or less written in accordance with the Belgian model⁵. The liberal nature of the constitution was visible in the articles concerning a number of extensive freedoms – press, speech, religion, education, and association – which under the Dutch constitution of 1815 had only been enforced with severe restrictions. These liberties, as well as principles of ministerial responsibility and popular sovereignty, although tempered by censitary suffrage, were in any case already a matter of discussion in several countries. The debates in the constitutional committee and, later on, in the National Congress revealed that the Belgian founding fathers' main priority was drafting a constitution that was first and foremost truly Belgian. In other words, combining progressive views on governance and freedoms with a genuine respect for local traditions and customs. In this regard, the young leaders of the new state fol-

lowed the same course of thought as many Enlightenment thinkers. Montesquieu, for instance, had called for an adjustment of political institutions to local circumstances in *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748). And following his theories, the Belgian constitution also remained close to organicist views on intermediate bodies such as provinces, towns, and parishes and on the maintenance of an "aristocratic" Senate, which could be more easily found in the British legal tradition than in French post-revolutionary institutions⁶. This was also a consequence of the socio-political equilibrium that governed Belgium in the years following the revolution, when the winning, progressive, urban middle class, composed of entrepreneurs and liberal professionals, shared power with traditionalist groups like rural landowners, Church hierarchies, and lower clergy⁷.

Hence, the separation of Church and state in the new constitution could be interpreted as a means of recognising the place and autonomy of the majority religion – a measure Catholics eagerly embraced after the cold shower of William I's somewhat too active ecclesiastical policy. However, it is surprising that, in 1790, Catholics had distinguished themselves for their reactionary, particularist positions, whereas they appeared now ready to accept a strong individualistic and centralistic basic law. All the more since the constitution did provide for the establishment of lower levels of government – provinces and towns – but, in fact, attributed to them only a clearly subordinate role, despite intentions – in the end not maintained – to enshrine them as a sort of *quatrième pouvoir*⁸. In this respect, once more the constitution proved to be a com-

promise text trying to combine divergent visions on state and intermediary bodies.

It is, therefore, interesting to reconstruct how Catholics could endorse such a turn of events. This article will address three questions illustrating the positioning of Belgian Catholicism towards a constitution that contained potential elements of conflict with the Church doctrine. How could Catholics reconcile themselves with modern constitutional freedoms in an epoch where these were to be rejected by the Holy See? How did they ensure the Church's dominant position would not be jeopardised by the asserted impartiality of the government? And how did the Church start to reassert its authority after the end of the Unionist consensus of the 1830s? These questions will be considered on the basis of three examples from the period 1831–1847, the year when Unionism officially came to an end and Liberals formed a one-party government. Although these temporal limits are inevitably rather arbitrary, they still represent two unquestionable watershed moments and should suffice to bring to light more general patterns of Catholic adaptation to the reality of the new Belgium.

The ideas of so-called Liberal Catholicism certainly constituted a major source of inspiration for Catholics during the protests against William I and in the years after 1830. However, we will see Liberal Catholicism – not easy to define in itself – and early constitutional enthusiasm were not destined for a long life. Slowly, other strategies were developed in order to bring the traditional Catholic character of Belgium into line with its liberal constitution. The aim here is not to reconstruct the *longue durée* of the participation of the whole spectrum of Catholicism in Belgian socio-political debate or to

explore Belgian Catholicism in all its theological, institutional, and socio-historical facets. This would be impossible within the space of this article. However, I do hope to draw attention to a selection of events and trends that can illustrate both the self-positioning of the Church in the new Belgian state and the strategies developed to defend the Church's interests.

2. Catholic post-revolutionary thought between traditionalism and Ultramontanism

Before introducing my case studies, it seems wise to take a step back and present the general evolution of Catholic post-1789 thought in Europe and its translations within the Southern Netherlands. In fact, traces of French-speaking thought were to be found also in the Catholic mindset, although, quite predictably, it was not the Enlightenment that set the pace. The French Revolution put an end to the peculiar alliance between throne and altar known as Gallicanism, a sort of political theology presupposing not only close ties between Church and state, but also a certain episcopal prevalence in administering the Church, with the pope being regarded as a *primus inter pares*. After 1789, it appeared necessary to abandon any nostalgia for the old relationship and develop new forms of coexistence between Church and state. In an early phase, two thinkers in particular gave shape to this new line of thought: Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald.

Both are deemed the founders of traditionalism. Like Montesquieu, Maistre and Bonald dictated that laws and political systems had to adapt to the "nature"

of every nation. But unlike the thinkers of the Enlightenment, and frightened as they were by the iconoclastic fury of the French Revolution, they did not believe in popular sovereignty and in the Rights of the Man and Citizen. They saw these new ideas as being violently imposed on European society without any historical foundation, and lamented the fact that organically evolving traditional social structures – those developed over time without abrupt revolutions – were thrown in the dustbin. Thus, Maistre and Bonald considered the absolute monarchy the best political system⁹.

Maistre's preference for traditional social structures did not prevent him from seeing that a return to the past was impossible – and even undesirable – since Gallicanism supposed a certain degree of subordination of national Churches to state control. In this respect, the revolution had been a sign of Providence, indicating that the old political structures were outdated. A new *élan* was needed. While revolutionary forces had exiled religion to the private sphere, Maistre and – *mutatis mutandis* – Bonald rediscovered Ultramontanism, a well-known theological current asserting a vertical vision of the Church with the pope above bishops and councils, and developed it into a political philosophy, mainly aiming to counter the revolutionary conviction that religion should be merely a matter of personal, inner belief. By applying his hierarchical social vision to the Catholic Church, Maistre stressed the royal side of the pope's power: «the pope is the king in the Church and the king is the pope in the State»¹⁰. By acknowledging the mutual balancing of the two realms, Maistre intended to delegitimise any Gallican form of alliance between throne and altar as well as the revolutionary

aspirations to a civil religion outside of the Church. At this phase of Catholic thought, traditionalism and Ultramontanism clearly went hand in hand.

The application of French traditionalist concepts in the Southern Netherlands was not self-evident. The appeal to a monarchical tradition was difficult to translate within the turbulent history of the region. However, there existed claims in favour of maintaining or revivifying traditional local political structures, mainly inspired by a religious Romanticism of German origin. Diffused by Baron Ferdinand von Eckstein, a Catholic convert, during his stay in the Southern Netherlands in 1814–1816, Friedrich Schlegel's traditionalism was adapted to the particularist, corporatist inclination of parts of Belgian Catholicism¹¹. Nonetheless, in the years around 1830, it was not traditionalist Ultramontanism that had the strongest influence. It was Robert Félicité De Lamennais – priest and theologian with a traditionalist background – who had the main impact. He is now known as the father of so-called Liberal Catholicism, a phase in his intellectual trajectory that peaked around 1830. Lamennais, who was younger than Maistre and Bonald, came to the conclusion that the rejection of modern freedoms was no longer realistic. To him, it was necessary to embrace modern freedoms and put them at the service of the Church. He formulated a positive interpretation of the concept of liberty while trying not to slip into indifferentism – the idea that all beliefs are eventually equivalent. He argued the only veritable Truth, that of the Catholic Church, could not but triumph in its competition with other, false beliefs. Only the final victory would reveal where the Truth was to be found. To that end, com-

petition had to be total, which subsequently called for a complete separation of Church and state as the most effective protection against state intervention¹².

3. *An overview of Belgian Catholicism in the 1830s*

In his typology of political Catholicism in Belgium after 1830, Viaene identified four strands, each with its own motives to accept the constitution either as a principle or as a tactical solution. The largest group were the «transigent Liberal Catholics». Their moderate attitude was grounded on the distinction between the *longue durée* of the Church's history and the volatility of political regimes. The main criterion of evaluation for political decisions was their compatibility with the Catholic freedoms of education, religion, and association, and the full respect for the position of the Catholic Church as the dominant religion. On these bases, this Liberal-Catholic current adapted Lamennais's *liberté illimitée* and envisaged the desirability of forms of state funding (remuneration of priests, support for Catholicism in education, etc.). Mechelen and Louvain became the two main centres of Liberal Catholicism, in particular thanks to the negotiating attitude of the new archbishop Engelbert Sterckx (as of 1832) and university rector Pierre De Ram¹³.

Smaller, but no less interesting, were «transigent Ultramontanes». While accepting the constitution, their support was less heartfelt than the transigent Liberal Catholics. In line with the conservative re-orientation delivered by Pope



Lambert Mathieu, "Pierre de Ram, rector of the Catholic University of Leuven", painting, 1836;

Gregory XVI, the transigent Ultramontanes were convinced that the constitution was – from a Catholic perspective – more problematic than Liberal Catholics seemed to realise. Nonetheless, they were willing to accept it as a mere political fact, and as such, imperfect and transitory. In addition, they considered it a duty for good Catholics to submit to the power in place as the legitimate God-wanted authority. At the same time, the Church and its believers had to commit to preventing constitutional freedoms from being used against the Church, and in violation of the historical ties between the Belgian nation and Catholicism¹⁴. Two bishops, Boussen in Bruges (as of 1834) and Delebecque in Ghent (as

of 1837), as well as some prominent politicians, emerged as the main exponents of this current – respectful of the letter of the constitution but with a more conservative mind-set¹⁵. The difference between this group and transigent Liberal Catholics might appear wafer-thin. Both currents deemed the Catholic Church a bastion in defence of liberty, and freedom of religion in particular. The main discrepancy derived from divergent conceptions on the extent to which the Church should be granted privileges.

Viaene also identified intransigent wings within Ultramontanism and Liberal Catholicism. These groups were smaller and rather marginalised during the heyday of Unionism. «Intransigent Liberal Catholics» supported a radical Menaissian vision on freedom. Lamennais's excommunication in 1834 would largely discredit them, although some of their views continued, mainly under-the-radar, to produce some effects, particularly on lower (Flemish) priests with emancipatory aspirations¹⁶. «Intransigent Ultramontanes», on the other hand, were reactionary figures who saw the constitution as a provisional solution that, in the long run, had to be followed by a return to medieval local checks and balances and corporatist structures, as defended by the Vandernootists in 1790. This romantic position, embodied by aristocrats like Count Louis de Robiano-Borsbeek, would never completely disappear. From the 1850s onwards, some of their views would feed a more combative phase of Belgian Catholicism¹⁷. The first signs of this evolution already appeared in the 1840s, as we will see further on.

Albeit with varying nuances, to all currents within Belgian Catholicism religious

freedom was tantamount and became the touchstone for the overall acceptability of the political situation in the country. In this respect, the association of Catholicism and freedom should appear less surprising than often assumed. Already by the late Middle Ages, in fact, Catholic thought had developed its own definition of *libertas* by intending it as the state's abstinence from intervention in Church-related matters. This *libertas Ecclesiae* had, therefore, an institutional nature and did not imply a concession to forms of legal equivalence to other confessions¹⁸. This strong, though rather superficial, terminological convergence around "liberty" explains both the attitude of Belgian Catholics and the potential sources of conflicts deriving from the discrepancy between the idea of the Church's freedom and the Liberal framework of individual liberties.

Catholic opposition to an independent Belgium might thus have been reduced to a minimum, but some opposition remained. Contrary to a consolidated notion that only a handful of Liberal entrepreneurs showed nostalgia for William I's trade and industry policy, as Els Witte has pointed out, Orangism could also be found among Catholics. Portions of the lower clergy and of the Catholic urban nobility offered Orangist sympathies, mostly as a result of their political engagement under the United Kingdom of the Netherlands¹⁹. Their position could also be explained as an expression of Catholic legitimism. If transigent Ultramontanes acknowledged the positive consequences for the Church and accepted the historical fact of the revolution, many Orangist Catholics found the rejection of William I's authority to be in opposition to the Catholic doctrine. Theirs was an an-

ti-revolutionary stance that did not find much support amongst the episcopate, but appeared shortly strengthened in the aftermath of the condemnation of Lamennais's doctrine (and potentially of Belgian liberties), which these Orangists liked to interpret as a sign of Roman support for the restoration of the Orange dynasty²⁰. In the first uncertain years after 1830, when the dynastic succession on the Belgian throne was still a matter of discussion, this stance strangely appeared more in harmony with analogously legitimistic position promoted by the Holy See. «[...] certain teachings are being spread among the common people in writings which attack the trust and the submission due to the princes; the torches of treason are being lit everywhere», noted pope Gregory XVI, for instance, in 1831 in his *Catechism on Revolution*²¹.

In summary, Belgian Catholicism was dominated by a globally positive attitude towards the constitution. At the same time, there was a small number of Orangists whose stance was based on legitimistic motives and a sentiment of discomfort towards the 1830 interruption of the dynastic continuity. Moreover, within Belgian Catholicism, varying degrees of constitutional enthusiasm could be observed. Due to the proactive attitude of the Belgian Church hierarchies during the Unionist phase, internal differences were not confined to the political arena, but could be observed within the ranks of the clergy, especially between the dioceses of Ghent and Bruges on one hand and the Menaissist centres of Mechelen and Louvain on the other²². In the 1830s and 1840s, a number of events would slowly produce a shift in this delicate equilibrium.

4. *Making the constitution more Catholic?*

The divergent priorities of Liberals and Catholics – and the different strategies envisaged among Catholics – were destined to provoke tension, precisely due to the gap between the legal and real constitution discussed previously. Unionism managed to stay in place until the adoption of a peace agreement by both The Hague and Brussels in 1839. Still, fissures slowly started to emerge in the patriotic Unionist façade. In fact, it was mainly a question of when those cracks would lead to an open confrontation and whether the constitution would prove resistant. In the period 1831-1847, several incidents came to increase the Catholics' distrust towards the Liberal agenda. Here, only three case studies will be presented, in order to highlight aspects of the consolidation of a Catholic view on the "real constitution" alongside the combination of international and domestic influences on Belgian Catholicism: the Catholic conformity of the constitution; the liberty of education; and the consequences for the Flemish language with the introduction of a complete freedom of language, a struggle that provoked divisions within the Flemish clergy.

4.1. *Lamennais's excommunication: a disavowal of the constitution?*

As stated above, the influence of Lamennais's ideas on Belgian Liberal Catholicism is undeniable. At the same time, internal dynamics proved at least equally strong. After the nostalgic, traditionalist phase of the 1810s, a more innovative *cahier de do-*

léances of Belgian Catholics had started to take shape in the mid-1820s, long before Lamennais's "liberal turn". The interference of William I's government into the education sector and his *de facto* refusal to enforce the concordat signed in 1827 forced even obedient Catholics to open their eyes. The Liberal-Catholic slogan "Free Church in a Free State" did indeed imply a separation, but was also vague enough not to exclude forms of mutual recognition. In this case, separation did not imply complete indifference as was the case in the United States of America, and as would become Lamennais's ideal.

It is interesting that, in 1829, the bishop of Liège, Cornelis van Bommel, prepared a report on educational freedom for the king. He did so in his dual function as high prelate and William I's counsellor on education – a position he would occupy for a few months and without much success. In *Système de liberté illimitée des cultes et des opinions religieuses*, Van Bommel compared the situation of Europe and America in terms of religious freedom. While not insensitive to Lamennais's arguments, he admitted that a complete separation of Church and state was rather unrealistic for a European continent where links between civil and ecclesiastical authorities were still omnipresent. It is probable that Van Bommel was expressing more than personal ideas, and that his view on the matter was shared by the head of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands at the time, Mgr. De Méan, who was archbishop of Mechelen and renowned for being prone to compromise with the government despite previous delusions. While rejecting *Ancien Régime* – like forms of state religion, Van Bommel pleaded for a combination of freedom and protection that would be more

suitable to the European equilibrium. In his eyes, protection could still allow for some form of state financing of the Church's institutions – like parishes and schools. This was a form of “tempered freedom” that would allow the acknowledgement of the social functions of the Church²³.

After August of 1830, Belgian prelates largely operated along Van Bommel's lines, in order to enshrine the ideal of “limited freedom” in the constitution. In the weeks when the draft was written, it was De Méan who intervened directly by sending a letter to the National Congress to reaffirm the Catholic *desiderata*. However, not all wishes were inserted in the constitution. Civil marriage, for instance, stayed in place and any linkage with the canonical dispositions on Church marriage were rejected. Freedom of education, although by only a few votes, passed²⁴. These examples illustrate the tough negotiations, but also the spirit of mutual concessions that infused the writing process. It would be an exaggeration to define the constitution of 1831 a Liberal-Catholic or Mennaissian text, although the influence of Lamennais' *L'Avenir* on Belgian Catholics remains certainly undeniable²⁵. But the final result ought rather to be classified as a compromise where some Liberal as well as some Catholic wants could find fulfilment. Considering it was completed in a few months, the constitution certainly represented a significant accomplishment²⁶. At the same time, its nature of compromise alluded to the fact that its enforcement would demand a prosecution of the same “transigent” attitude. The question is if that would still be possible. The more so since in Rome, the enthusiasm for Menaissian Liberal-Catholicism was starting to evanesce, if it had ever been strong to

begin with. Both Pius VIII and his successor Gregory XVI set a visibly more conservative orientation. Gregory XVI ascended to the pontifical throne in February of 1831, too late to intervene in the Belgian constitutional events. One year later, however, he was ready to reprimand the perilously liberal evolution of Lamennais. The encyclical *Mirari Vos. On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism* (1832) openly condemned *L'Avenir* and its ideas. Despite a journey to Rome to atone for the controversial aspects of his theory, it soon became clear the French priest-theologian would not make any concession. In *Paroles d'un croyant* (1834), Lamennais chose to follow his conscience above his duty of obedience to the Church, a step resulting in his excommunication.

The condemnation of Lamennais unleashed a delicate debate among Belgian Catholics. His influence on the constitutional conception of freedom was undeniable – several members of the clergy had expressed their enthusiasm for his theories. It was, therefore, necessary to determine whether Gregory XVI had condemned the conduct of the Belgian Church altogether. *Mirari Vos* did not explicitly rejected the Belgian “experiment”, but the condemnation of the freedoms of thought and of the press, as well as of a complete separation between state and Church, seemed to point in that direction. It was, eventually, a question as to whether the Belgian freedoms should also be considered in conflict with the doctrine of the Church. If the Belgian freedoms had indeed to be rejected, the position of Catholicism within the Belgian state would subsequently undergo a dramatic change, and would potentially suffer a great deal from this re-orientation imposed from Rome. It was, in effect, difficult

to deny that those very liberties reinforced Church activities in Belgian society – activities that had been simply unimaginable in the times of French and Dutch centralism²⁷.

The risk of an escalation of intra-Belgian tensions was perceivable. At the same time, nobody really wanted to lose the positive effects experienced by the Church under the constitution of 1831. A well-known argument from Catholic theological thought supplied a way out based on a distinction between “Catholic thesis” and “Belgian hypothesis”. At a more theoretical level, the Church did indeed reject Belgian constitutional freedoms. On a more flexible level, however, it appeared advisable to keep those same liberties in place on a temporary basis, *id est* as long as they proved advantageous for the deployment of Catholicism in Belgium. It clearly was a pragmatic solution – the Belgian experiment could continue, but only as an exception that should never become a blueprint for other Catholic countries²⁸. The distinction of thesis vs. hypothesis allowed Belgian bishops to avert a conflict within their hierarchies while saving the constitution, and, in the end, the very existence of the Belgian state.

Yet some resistance remained. A few priests, particularly in the regions of Ghent and Tournai, rejected the opposition between thesis and hypothesis and the definition of the constitution as a temporary lesser evil. They were limited in number, but nevertheless politically very active, mostly as members of parliament. As such, they were able to gain some publicity²⁹. In the intermediate run, they roughly underwent the same democratic shift to the left as Lamennais, and merged with the liberal camp or were marginalised within their

own dioceses³⁰. Mgr. Delebecque in Ghent, in particular, was responsible for isolating and delegitimising the democratic tendencies within his jurisdiction³¹. His conservative course would become the first signal of a more general shift to the right of Belgian Catholicism in the following decades. But for the time being, Delebecque’s intervention mainly had the effect of strengthening the Catholic constitutional front and the position of Belgian prelates in the heyday of Unionism as the protectors of the freedom of religion altogether.

4.2. *Education policy: an inevitable apple of discord*

Once the constitutional compromise was accepted, the debates focussed on the enforcement of specific Catholic constitutional dispositions. Education, in particular, had been for centuries the domain of religious orders and parishes, and had recently become a major point of concern for Catholics under William I. In 1825, the king shut down all lower seminaries and created a state-controlled *Collegium Philosophicum* in Louvain. As a result, Catholic publicists showed themselves very sensitive to this external intervention in what they considered an exclusive domain of the Church. Freedom of education emerged as one of the major Catholic *doléances* on the eve of 1830. That Liberals were disposed to compromise on this matter should not be surprising. At the time, several among them saw religion as a stabilising factor in society, even more so in a country that still had to build its identity. This compromise was enshrined in article 17 of the constitu-

tion, but was formulated in a rather ambiguous way. Whilst freedom of education was guaranteed with no restrictions in the first clause, the second part specified that state education ought to be regulated by law. Private initiative in education was completely free, but – if one reads well – its limits over state education still had to wait for detailed negotiations.

In the first years after the revolution, Catholic primary schools deployed their activities without any restrictions, thus becoming the dominant form of basic education in the country. Not alien to the Enlightenment ideals that education was a powerful instrument in forging good citizens, Liberals quickly became aware of the necessity of guaranteeing a minimum of uniformity. Besides, in a new country still looking for consolidation, it was imperative to ensure that not only moral values but also patriotism were correctly assimilated. For some Liberals, a first answer was a state-organised inspection, which would not conflict with the constitution as it would not imply the organisation of a network of public schools. A bill on the matter, presented by the Liberal Home Secretary Charles Rogier in 1831, alarmed King Leopold I who feared a strong Catholic reaction. He convinced the minister to retire the proposal so as not to jeopardise the stability of the country. Still, a first breach in the Unionist alliance had been opened. A similar destiny awaited a bill regulating secondary education in 1834, which would have allowed the state to open three athenaeums, in addition to the twenty-something public colleges already opened by William I. Under Catholic pressure, the bill was retired. Reform for secondary education, although far from extensive, only reappeared in 1840

when a public final examination for all secondary students was introduced in order to guarantee the uniformity of the pupils' competences. A more comprehensive reform would become possible only in 1850, after the Liberal electoral victory of 1847³².

As far as primary education was concerned, tensions mounted faster after the first failed attempt in 1831. By 1842, the Unionist cabinet led by Nothomb presented a bill regulating primary education as well as training centres for teachers. The Catholic press immediately started a campaign to oppose the law. «The child belongs to the State as a result of his education provided by and for the State [...]. See here, if not literally, at least resumed, what the supporters of this principle have proposed and accepted; read and judge», warned the Flemish monthly *De Middelaer* in 1841³³. However, Catholic fears finally appeared to be largely unfounded. The 1842 law, in fact, provided a blueprint for Catholic educational monopoly. While imposing the opening of at least one primary school in every municipality, it left local administrations free to "adopt" the Catholic institution already in place – a choice embraced by most local councils as the most cost-effective³⁴. Unionist consensus seemed safe in the end, but it was evident the law posed a potential risk as well. It not only provided a justification to Catholic monopoly on primary education, but also equipped public authorities with a form of public – albeit "adopted" – education, which could be modified by future parliamentary majorities.

A more successful intervention on tertiary education in 1835 had already contributed to ignite these fears. The reopening of the Catholic University in Louvain in 1834-1836, almost forty years after its

closing under the French administration in 1797, marked a milestone in reaffirming the Catholic character of the Belgian nation. Two state-controlled universities existed at the time – in Ghent and in Liège, both founded under the Dutch regime. For the most important positions within the re-opened university, Liberal Catholic figures were appointed, like rector Pierre De Ram or literature professor Jan Baptist David³⁵. The president of the university became, as tradition imposed, archbishop Sterckx. Not surprisingly, the University of Louvain appeared in the first years of its new existence as a bastion of Menaissism³⁶. The grandeur of the re-opening of Louvain caused Free Masons in Brussels to fear for an upcoming Catholic quasi-monopoly on higher education. A Free University was therefore founded in Brussels in 1834 by Pierre-Théodore Verhaegen, exponent of an anti-clerical current emerging at the time as one of the motors of the Liberal political machine.

In the mid-1830s, the Belgian university landscape was transforming itself into a veritable patchwork. State intervention was deemed necessary in order to introduce some uniformity, at least in the value of diplomas. In 1835, the government prepared a bill for the creation of a Central Jury charged with certifying the competences of students graduating from all four Belgian universities. Although non-public universities did not receive the status of legal entities, diplomas from Louvain and Brussels obtained full legal value. Thus, the still existing triangulation of Belgian tertiary education – public, free, and Catholic – received its first official recognition³⁷. Some concerns were raised about the rules regulating the appointment of the jury mem-

bers, while some conservative Catholics also expressed doubts about the law. Its text did not attack Louvain's internal autonomy, but it did contain at least one disputable concession to Liberal forces. Catholic religious training was namely limited to Louvain's curricula and was not included in the mandatory programmes of the other universities, even though it had been made compulsory at the primary school level. A highly questionable disposition, obviously, in terms of reaffirming a conservative vision of Belgium as a Catholic country in which the majority's faith should enjoy a privileged protection from public authorities³⁸.

However difficult these settlements had been, they remained in place for several decades. Further reform of primary education was launched only in the 1870s by the anti-clerical Prime Minister Walthère Frère-Orban, who unleashed an unprecedented – and victorious – Catholic reaction. Despite the disappearance of the Central Jury in the meanwhile, tertiary education basically still works to this day according to the "pillarisation" anticipated by the compromise of 1835³⁹. More generally, the different outcomes of negotiations on education in the Unionist period reveal that the translation of the freedom principle in the reality of Belgian society largely depended upon the political context of the moment, as well as on the specific power relations between State, Church, and possible third parties. Whereas the Church, in the 1830s, reached a quasi-monopoly in primary education, this was evidently not the case at university level, with a different negotiation position for the Church as a result. Secondary education, as already mentioned, would be regulated for the first time

only in 1850, under the Liberal cabinet of Charles Rogier. This time, the bishops were not able to block the bill against a favourable parliamentary majority. Interestingly, on the occasion, the prelates put in place actions – such as a boycott of the traditional masses in state *athénées* at the beginning of the school year⁴⁰ – which somehow prefigured the readiness to adopt more assertive, and somewhat unconventional strategies, which would prove useful during the notorious School Struggle of the 1870s and 1880s.

4.3. *Flemish: a Catholic language?*

Freedom of language usage was included in article 23 of the constitution. It was not a request of Catholics or Liberals; it was more than anything a rhetorical choice in line with the general tone of the constitution. In fact, ever since the French Revolution, it had been assumed that ruling a modern state required one common language, for at least two reasons. First, as a principle, law, court rulings, parliamentary debates, and so on represented the tangible expression of the “general interest” and, therefore, needed uniformity and accessibility for everyone. Second, and more pragmatically, monolingualism appeared as the most efficient choice for running a country and for creating a sense of common belonging to the national community. William I’s only partially successful pro-Dutch policy in the Belgian provinces was, to a large extent, inspired by similar preoccupations.

As stated, independent Belgium chose a different path, at least in words. But the practical result was less pluralistic. Since

the eighteenth century, the French language had acquired cultural and social prestige in the Southern Netherlands, which the Dutch language policy had done little to undermine. In her analysis of centralisation factors in Belgian history, Els Witte also included linguistic policy – despite the formal linguistic freedom as stated in the constitution, the “real” situation resulted in a *de facto* monolingualism⁴¹. Absolute freedom from state intervention could have some disadvantages after all, as seen here in terms of consolidating pre-existent dominant positions. The case study under scrutiny here does not concern the birth of a Flemish national movement, which would gain momentum – also among Catholics – only decades later. The focus needs to be directed, instead, to a preliminary clash between two different views on the Flemish language.

It is necessary to point out that the Dutch language in Flanders had remained at a dialect level and lacked one prerequisite of an official language – uniformity. Quite logically, the few (largely French-speaking) intellectuals campaigning for Flemish literary production in the newly-born Belgium soon identified standardisation as their most urgent concern. The government was not insensitive to their requests⁴². Nobody could imagine a bilingual country, but some knowledge of Flemish was inevitable at certain levels. In 1837–1838, for instance, during the discussion over a bill on military training, Flemish language courses were inserted in the curriculum of military academies since knowledge of the language was needed to train Flemish recruits⁴³. Analogously, school masters had to be trained in Dutch, at least partially, as lessons were provided in that language in

several schools, particularly in the countryside⁴⁴. Hence the government's decision to appoint a commission to elaborate a standard spelling. Its members, leaning on the scientific insights of the time, pointed at the common roots of Flemish and Dutch and consequently agreed on a *rapprochement* with the Dutch spelling.

However, an activist minority opposed these plans. What followed between the end of the 1830s and the official publication of the new spelling rules in 1844 became known as the *spellingoorlog* (spelling struggle). Curiously, all spelling protesters ranked among the Flemish clergy, whereas most of their colleagues joined the more Liberal linguists and writers in their support for a slightly Flemishised Dutch spelling. Why did Flemish Catholicism prove so fragile on the issue? What specific Catholic concerns played a role in producing the fracture between pro-Dutch and so-called particularists? And, most of all, what does this episode reveal about the internal power relations within the Belgian Church in the declining phase of Unionism?

The technical discussion focussed on specific spelling changes. But such small details were able to enflame the spirits because they concealed more profound concerns. Particularists feared cultural exchanges with the Netherlands; they saw Holland as a Calvinist country that would try to spread the Protestant word in Flanders and destroy the very soul of Belgium, laced as it was with the Catholic roots of the country. What the Dutch had not been able to do under the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, could happen now in the form of a cultural annexation⁴⁵.

The particularists' arguments were not always coherent or scientifically founded.

Nevertheless, this does not mean they did not have a point. First, they based their struggle on specific pastoral needs. Most of them resided in countryside parishes in Brabant and Flanders and knew their flock was composed of dialect speakers more proficient – at least passively – in French than in standard Dutch. It was a practical concern to which bishops were also sensitive⁴⁶. But there was more. Amongst Catholic thinkers, the traditionalist De Bonald was the one who paid specific attention to language's role in God's plan. In his eyes, thoughts and their linguistic forms were narrowly intertwined and both were an integral part of the divine plans for humanity. To change the spelling would, therefore, mean to intervene in God's creation. Traditionalists rejected the social doctrine of the *contrat social* as well as the idea that society could be manipulated. Following the same logic, they refused the conception of language being merely an instrument or a convention. Languages – pretty much as human societies altogether – differed from one another according to local circumstances, and this implied they should be left free to develop organically in full respect of the traditional evolution of a people's culture along the centuries⁴⁷. «We should believe nothing than men have not always believed», thus has Reardon summed up traditionalist doctrines⁴⁸. It is no wonder then that particularists associated a traditional Flemish spelling with the defence of the Catholic soul of the Belgian nation.

The reference to Belgium's defence reveals particularists were keen to recur to a Belgicistic patriotic rhetoric. In this respect, they underlined the bilingual character of the Belgians as a barrier against both Dutch Protestantism and French immoral-

ity. They were against French ideas and literature as sources of moral corruption, but recognised the presence of French[-speaking] brothers as one of the factors determining the failure of William I's linguistic policy. Their contacts with French-speaking circles were, nevertheless, rather selective. Particularist publications often pointed to the exaggerated attention devoted to French politics by Belgian journals in French, but also at their Liberal *penchant*. The attitude was, therefore, ambivalent. French was not an enemy in itself, but had to be put to the service of the Belgian – and, therefore, Catholic – cause⁴⁹.

The association of Belgium and Catholicism was not unique in the 1830s–1840s, but in the heyday of Unionism, it led to the recognition of a certain autonomy for the state as well. After 1839, things started to change. In 1838, Belgian bishops had already condemned Freemasonry, hence mounting the first attack on one of the pillars of Belgian Liberalism. In 1842, an episcopal letter warned against “immoral and vacuous” publications, thus showing an anti-intellectual stand that tallied with the particularists' fear for a cultural community with Holland⁵⁰. In this respect, it is less surprising that their spelling struggle, even if academically indefensible, received the support of conservative bishops. Mgr. Boussen of Bruges and Mgr. Delebecque of Ghent expressed their sympathies by refusing or retarding the introduction of the new spelling in their seminaries. This was justified by pastoral motives and the fear that the new spelling would impede the lower clergy from connecting with their flocks⁵¹. But a traditionalist *penchant* and the fear of protestant influences was evident, particularly for the Bruges prelate. «Protestantism as

a political instrument is well lively around us. [...] it fraternises [...] with Liberalism to destroy the Catholic faith, corrupt people [...] and overthrow all authority», wrote Boussen to Jan Baptist David, a supporter of the new spelling⁵². Interestingly, the particularists received the appreciation of another ally. The intransigent Ultramontane Count Louis de Robiano was not a fan of Flemish, which he considered inferior to French. However, he preferred an autonomous Flemish language as the only barrier against Dutch publications. In his case, support for French and defence of a traditional Flemish spelling could easily combine with one another thanks to the glue of a reactionary traditionalist mindset cherishing a doctrinarian or even theocratic vision of Belgium⁵³.

To sum up, the split among Catholics over the Flemish spelling was more than a mere academic discussion. Particularists were not just narrow-minded priests eager to bicker over a few letters. The Flemish dispute mirrored the other – Belgian – divide between Unionist Liberal-Catholics on one side and clerical Ultramontanes on the other. Particularists saw their struggle for a traditional spelling in the frame of their engagement for a theocratically coloured Belgium. And they were less isolated than most literature on the subject seems to think. They looked for allies among the reactionary – French-speaking – Catholic aristocracy while awakening also the sympathy of conservative bishops. In this respect, the spelling struggle – maybe precisely because it was marginal and did not question Belgium's very existence – was also one of the first episodes manifesting a growing divide between conservative and moderate Unionist prelates from Mechelen and

Louvain. The transigent Liberal-Catholic view of Belgium was on the verge of shifting towards a more Ultramontane constitutionalism. The divide revealed a potential convergence of conservatives and reactionaries within Belgian Catholicism, a trend reinforced in the decades to come by the *déconfiture* of Unionism and the evolution of Liberalism towards an anti-clerical direction.

5. *Epilogue and conclusion*

The Belgian constitution of 1831 was considered at the time the most modern and liberal constitution in Europe. It was a remarkable performance by the critical mass behind the revolution and an act of creation showing the way to patriots in other countries. But the new constitutional basis did not begin in a vacuum, and was even, in some respects, less progressive than one might expect. As far as Belgian Catholics were concerned, they embraced the concept of "freedom" as the basis of their alliance with the Liberals, but not without charging "liberty" with an interpretation of late-medieval origin, based on the affirmation of the institutional freedom of the Church from state intervention. The Belgian constitution was for them the most recent – and rather advantageous – expression of these traditional principles. In a Catholic vision, continuity prevailed over rupture, making participation in a regime overthrow more comprehensible. This definition of freedom as being profitable to Church activities became more and more prominent after 1839, when Unionism started to decline. If transigent Liberal Catholics had present-

ed the Church as the bastion of religious freedom altogether, a more Ultramontane position began to emerge in the 1840s, according to which a privileged relation between the state and, more specifically, the Catholic Church should be envisaged, albeit always within the framework of the constitution.

In other words, apart from certain nuances, the Catholic concept of freedom applied to the Church itself and its community of believers in their relationship to the political authorities and was, therefore, mainly institutional. As such, it was much older than the liberal freedom, which dated back to the Enlightenment and focussed on individual liberties. After 1847, the increase of Belgian Liberals' *laïcité* ideals would provoke growing tensions, making open conflict inevitable. But in 1831, this was not the case just yet. At the time, Liberals were favourable to a certain influence of the Church on society, seeing in it a means to stabilise the new state. The terminological convergence towards freedom alongside the revolutionary rapprochement of Liberals and Catholics made the compromise of 1831 possible. This does not mean, though, that the Unionist phase was free from frictions, both among Catholics and between Catholics and Liberals. On one hand, the constitution and its positive effects for the Church had to be unlinked from Lamennais's Liberal Catholicism in order to avoid a showdown between the episcopate and the state. On the other, the ambiguity of certain constitutional articles on matters of shared interests between Church and State, especially article 17 on education, reveals that the Belgian patchwork of old and new and the ambiguity about liberty were in themselves sources of possible conflict when-

ever sensitive “legal” articles needed to be translated into the “real” constitution. The outcome of negotiations varied according to the power relations of the moment. It is no surprise, therefore, that the defence of the Church’s interests in the aftermath of Unionism inspired conservative and reactionary clergy to adopt a common strategy towards a greater assertiveness, as illustrated already in the 1840s in the struggle against a new – more Dutch – spelling for the Flemish language.

More in general, the Belgian example appears also illustrative of tensions crossing Europe and European Catholicism in the nineteenth century. The fact the constitution survived Lamennais’s excommunication made it possible for Belgian Catholics to further adapt the *libertas Ecclesiae* to the new institutional framework and towards the separation of Church and state. The traditional ideal of a confessional state, still defended by Maistre, proved to be an unrealistic path for the consolidation of the Church in modern societies. But, then again, Belgium was not supposed to be a model for other Catholic countries. Still, recognising this “Belgian exception” suggested the acceptance of some sort of national specificities and the need for the Church to adapt to them. But who exact-

ly should represent the Church’s interests in the autonomous arena of nation-states’ politics? As far as Belgium is concerned, in the 1830s-1840s, the hierarchies were still eager to intervene directly in the political debate, seeing themselves as the “natural” guide of Belgian Catholicism in all sectors of society. Later on, several factors, including the democratisation of European societies and the Roman centralisation of Church life, would make a direct political engagement of prelates along national lines undesirable, if not impossible. Politics would become the task for the Catholic laity, even though – naturally – under strong episcopal supervision. It would naturally be anachronistic to project this evolution back to 1831 and this is why, within the framework of this article, the formation of a Catholic political party was barely touched upon. Still, the tolerance towards the “Belgian experiment” implied from the beginning the need to find forms of autonomous representation for Catholic interests within Belgian institutions, all the more since their separation from the Church had been brought about with the active contribution of Catholic revolutionary leaders.

¹ L. Trotsky, *My life*, ch. 29, <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/mylife/ch29.htm>> (December 11, 2017).

² E. Hoffer, *The True Believer. Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, ch. 115 (e-book on December 11, 2017).

³ K. Van Isacker, *Werkelijk en wet-*

telijk land, Antwerp, Standaard, 1955.

⁴ A. De Dijn, ‘In overeenstemming met onze zeden en gewoonten’. *De intellectuele context van de eerste Belgische constitutie*, in «BM-CN-Low Countries Historical Review», CXVII, 2001, pp. 25–26.

⁵ J. Gilissen, *Le caractère collégial*

des premières formes de gouvernement et d’administration de l’État belge, in «Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwe Geschiedenis», XII, 1981, p. 609.

⁶ De Dijn, ‘In overeenstemming’ cit., pp. 28–32; H. De Smaele, *Eclectisch en toch nieuw. De uitvinding van het Belgisch parlement in 1830-*

- 1831, in «BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review», CXX, 2005, pp. 408-411.
- ⁷ E. Witte, D. Luyten, A. Meynen, *Politieke geschiedenis van België*, Antwerp Manteau, 2016, pp. 20, 46-47.
- ⁸ E. Witte, *Centrumvorming in België*, in «BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review», CI, 1986, pp. 606-613. Discussions on the potential role of towns and provinces as a *quatrième pouvoir* could be found in the debates of the National Congress, as reported in E. Huytens, *Discussions du Congrès National de Belgique, 1830-1831*, Brussels, Wahlen, 1844, vol. IV, pp. 68, 104.
- ⁹ B. Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 26.
- ¹⁰ Quoted by O. Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, Lincoln/London, University of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 127.
- ¹¹ H. Haag, *Les origines du catholicisme libéral en Belgique*, Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1950, pp. 56-60; R.F. Lissens, *Een leetuur van 'Le Spectateur Belge' (1815-1823) van Leo de Foere*, Ghent, KANTL, 2000, pp. 30-35; V. Viaene, *Belgium and the Holy See from Gregory XVI to Pius IX*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2001, pp. 51-52.
- ¹² Reardon, *Liberalism* cit., pp. 91-92, 105-106.
- ¹³ Viaene, *Belgium* cit., pp. 77-100; for Catholic debates on "limited freedom" around 1830, see also Haag, *Les origines* cit., pp. 255-256 and A.F. Manning, *De betekenis van C.R.A. van Bommel voor de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, Utrecht, Spectrum, 1956, pp. 110-111.
- ¹⁴ Viaene, *Belgium* cit., pp. 100-112.
- ¹⁵ What this conservative mindset implied has been defined as «privileged freedom», see E. Lamberts, *Kerk en liberalisme in het bisdom Gent*, Louvain, University Library, 1972, p. 228.
- ¹⁶ Ivi, pp. 64-77; Catholic Republicanism, the well-known modernisation theory opposing Liberal modernity and religious traditions as well as the influence of Lamennais' ideas on Catholic democratic tendencies have recently been put under critical scrutiny by H. de Smaele, *Catholic Republicanism Revisited*, in J. De Maeyer, V. Viaene (eds.), *World Views and Worldly Wisdom. Religion, Ideology and Politics, 1750-2000*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2015, pp. 57-73.
- ¹⁷ Ivi, pp. 40-64.
- ¹⁸ B. Wauters, *Recht als religie*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2005, pp. 327-328.
- ¹⁹ E. Witte, *Het verloren koninkrijk*, Antwerp, Bezige Bij, 2015, pp. 383-385.
- ²⁰ Ivi, pp. 384-388.
- ²¹ M. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, London, HarperCollins, 2005, p. 116.
- ²² One question, not overtly discussed here, that has piqued the interest of several scholars in the past, is that of the formation of a Catholic party. Modern parties did not exist in the 1830s and in 1846 Liberals were able to form only a proto-party with a decentralised organisation of electoral associations. For Catholics, several factors retarded the process until the final part of the nineteenth century. For an analysis of the question, see (among many others) A. Simon, *Le parti catholique belge*, Brussels, Renaissance du Livre, 1958; E.L. Evans, *The Cross and the Ballot*, Boston, Humanities, 1999; H. De Smaele, *Rechts Vlaanderen*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2009; Van Isacker, *Werkelijk* cit.; Viaene, *Belgium* cit.
- ²³ Manning, *De betekenis* cit., pp. 110-113.
- ²⁴ Viaene, *Belgium* cit., pp. 28-34.
- ²⁵ R. Aubert, J. Beckmann, P.J. Corish, R. Lill (eds.), *The Church between Revolution and Restoration*, London, Burns & Oates, 1981, p. 279; Viaene, *Belgium* cit., p. 66.
- ²⁶ Ivi pp. 34-36; E. Witte, *La construction de la Belgique*, Brussels, LE CRI, 2010, pp. 168-175.
- ²⁷ Haag, *Les origines* cit., pp. 180-196.
- ²⁸ A. Simon, *L'hypothèse libérale en Belgique*, Wetteren, Scaldès, 1956, pp. 18-26; Haag, *Les origines* cit., pp. 189-196. Interestingly, the "Belgian exception" could be maintained as a model for countries where the Church did not have a dominant position and liberty of conscience for Catholics was therefore to be guaranteed, see Wauters, *Recht* cit., pp. 328-329. See also Haag, *Les origines* cit., p. 189.
- ²⁹ Lamberts, *Kerk* cit., pp. 246-250.
- ³⁰ Ivi, pp. 263-266.
- ³¹ Ivi, pp. 227 ff.
- ³² V. Mallinson, *Power and Politics in Belgian Education*, London, Heinemann, 1963, pp. 35-38.
- ³³ De Middelaer, I, 1840-1841, p. 426.
- ³⁴ Mallinson, *Power* cit., pp. 45-50.
- ³⁵ Indoor objections to De Ram's appointment were moved by conservative bishops, like Boussem from Bruges, who nevertheless could not block the decision, see L. Kenis, *De Theologische Faculteit te Leuven*, Brussels, AWLSK, 1992, pp. 87-88.
- ³⁶ Viaene, *Belgium* cit., p. 82.
- ³⁷ Mallinson, *Power* cit., pp. 38-43. See also P. Dhondt, *Un double compromis*, Ghent, Academia, 2011.
- ³⁸ A. Simon, *Le Cardinal Sterckx*, Wetteren, Scaldès, 1950, vol. I, pp. 311-313.
- ³⁹ For an overview of Belgian education laws until the 1960's, see Mallinson, *Power* cit., pp. 237-239.
- ⁴⁰ Ivi, pp. 63-64.
- ⁴¹ Witte, *Centrumvorming* cit., pp. 619-620.
- ⁴² Government's support was nevertheless limited, as proved by the indifference towards the pro-Flemish petitions of 1840. See L. Wils, *Honderd jaar Vlaamse Beweging*, Louvain, Davidsfonds, 1977, vol. I, pp. 20-26; Witte et al., *Politieke geschiedenis* cit., p. 60.
- ⁴³ R. Boijen, *De taalwetgeving in het Belgische leger*, Brussel, Centre d'Histoire Militaire, 1992, pp. 21-22.

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- ⁴⁴ Mallinson, *Power* cit., pp. 153-154; Wils, *Honderd jaar* cit., pp. 39-41.
- ⁴⁵ R. Dagnino, *Twee Leeuwen, Eén Kruis*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2015, pp. 116-121.
- ⁴⁶ Archbishop Sterkcx himself was not completely unaware of the pastoral needs of several particularist priests, as proven by his decision to publish the translation of the *Catéchisme de Malines* in the "traditional" spelling until at least 1843; see *ivi* pp. 101-103, 128-129; see also J. Geldhof, *West-Vlaanderen in de spellingsoorlog van 1841*, in «Biekorf», LX, 1959, pp. 339-345, and LXI, 1960, pp. 79-83, 275-281.
- ⁴⁷ Dagnino, *Twee Leeuwen* cit., pp. 123-124.
- ⁴⁸ Reardon, *Liberalism* cit., p. 48.
- ⁴⁹ Dagnino, *Twee Leeuwen* cit., pp. 129-130.
- ⁵⁰ H. Gaus, *Pers, kerk en geschreven fictie*, Bruges, Tempel, 1975, pp. 99-102; Witte *et al.*, *Politieke geschiedenis* cit., p. 49.
- ⁵¹ Dagnino, *Twee Leeuwen* cit., pp. 128-129.
- ⁵² Geldhof, *West-Vlaanderen* cit., LX, 1959, p. 345.
- ⁵³ Dagnino, *Twee Leeuwen* cit., pp. 130-131.