

*François Guizot and Protestantism under the Second Empire*

*Conference delivered at the Society for the History of French Protestantism (SHPF),  
54 rue des Saints Pères, Paris 7th, on September 14, 2024.*

*By André ENCREVÉ*

*Emeritus Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Paris-Est Créteil.*

In the intellectual world, François Guizot quickly gained a reputation as a stubborn Protestant. In 1812, he was invited to the table of Fontanes, the Grand Master of the university, who had just appointed him professor at the Sorbonne. The conversation centered on German commentators of Latin poets, whom Fontanes criticized sharply, but Guizot defended vigorously, despite their differences in age and social status. Fontanes then turned to his table neighbor and, smiling, said, “These Protestants never give in.”

However, throughout his career, some—both Protestants and Catholics—refused to see him as a convinced Protestant. For instance, in 1864, the conservative Catholic newspaper *Le Monde* addressed him directly: “Only a small partition separates you from this Church [Catholic]. [...] Break it down with a courageous hand and fall to your knees before your mother. The Church awaits you [...]” The editors of this newspaper were disappointed, but to be certain, it's best to listen to what Guizot wrote about himself, for example, in his testament, written a year before his death: “I die in the bosom of the Reformed Christian Church of France, where I was born and where I am pleased to have been born.”

It is clear that he is Protestant. However, his phrasing is interesting, as it partially explains the perplexity of some of his contemporaries. Indeed, his term “Reformed Christian Church of France” is not commonly used (it is usually just referred to as the Reformed Church) and shows that Guizot wants to emphasize that the Reformed Church is part of a larger whole, the Christian Church, which obviously includes the Catholic Church. Certainly, as we will see, Guizot is an apologist for Protestantism. But the way he expresses himself reveals that he does not share what I would gladly call, by metaphor, the “Huguenot accent” of most of his co-religionists, which then included a significant distrust—indeed, outright hostility—towards the Catholic Church.

His commitment to defending Protestantism manifests itself in at least two areas, which I will present successively. First, he defends Protestantism on the intellectual stage. Additionally, he is very active within the Reformed Church, which will be the subject of my second part.

+  
+ +

Let's start with Guizot's defense of Protestantism on the intellectual stage. In this domain, he employs his own weapons, particularly his passion for general ideas. Indeed, especially when he is bored, Guizot seeks out general ideas. For example, in his *Memoirs*, he recounts his first evening, on March 5, 1840, at a dinner with Queen Victoria during his ambassadorial stay in London. To escape the boredom that begins to envelop him after dinner, he looks for a general idea:

“Neither during dinner nor in the drawing room afterward was the conversation animated or interesting [...] we were seated around a round table, in front of the queen who was settled on a sofa [...] Lady Palmerston and I were barely managing a languid conversation. I noticed above the three doors of the drawing room three portraits: Fénelon, Peter the Great, and [...] Anne Hyde, the first wife of James II. I was surprised by the proximity of these three perfectly incongruous figures. No one had paid attention to it, and no one could explain the reason. I found one: these portraits had been chosen by size; they fit well in the three places.”

In fact, to present Protestantism favorably, Guizot employs this weapon, which he wields so well. I will take three examples: his study on Calvin in 1822, his *Discourse on the History of the English Revolution*, published in 1850, and the attitude that Protestants should adopt, according to him, toward the Catholic Church.

Let's begin with his brief work on *Calvin* (77 pages), published in 1822 in the *Museum of Famous Protestants*. In this text, he defends this great Reformer. He has a significant challenge ahead, as anti-Calvinist prejudices were widespread at the time, even among Protestants. As O. Millet has shown, Guizot constructs his text around a general idea: Calvin is a “religious genius.” Initially, Guizot outlines the main points of Calvin's reformist project in the doctrinal realm, which brings him up to 1541. He then moves on to what he calls Calvin's “second great thought”: to reshape Genevan society through *ecclesiastical ordinances*. For, he says, Calvin's thought and action aim to establish a new society. Calvin is thus a “genius” because he combines theory with practice:

“[...] thus proceeds genius; it sees what must be; it says that it is, and soon it indeed is, because it states what corresponds to the thought of all, because it has raised the flag that everyone sought.”

As a result, after the violent upheavals of the Lutheran revolution, Calvin succeeds in triumphing the idea of religious freedom, which is certainly an integral part of the program of the great Reformers of the 16th century, but can only emerge through a reform of society, beyond the strictly dogmatic aspects of Calvin's thought, which Guizot does not focus on much. Clearly, by framing his reflection at this level, Guizot proves to be a very skillful defender of Calvin and Protestantism, as his demonstration is immune to vulgar polemics, particularly regarding the burning of Michael Servetus.

The second example of Guizot's apologetics is his *Discourse on the History of the English Revolution*, published in 1850, which Laurent Theis describes as “undoubtedly the most solid, well-thought-out, and polished text by François Guizot.” Guizot explains that he seeks to answer a general question:

“[What are the] causes of the firm establishment of political freedom while maintaining the essential elements of the old society” in England and the “poor success of attempts at political freedom with the almost complete destruction of the old society” in France.

To find the answer, he also looks to the United States because, he says, the English revolution “succeeded twice,” since it was “its descendants [who] founded the republic of the United States in America.” Guizot begins by stating his general idea about the origins of revolutions in Europe since the 17th century: the quest for freedom, inaugurated in the 16th century by the Protestant Reformation. You can see that he values this idea, already developed in 1822 in his study on Calvin. He then asserts that if the revolution did not succeed in France in the 18th century, it is because it was merely political, whereas “the fortune of England was that the spirit of religious faith and the spirit of political freedom reigned together and it undertook both revolutions simultaneously.” Therefore, it is because they are Protestants that the English are free, since Protestantism, which advocates for freedom in the religious sphere, is perfectly compatible with a political system based on liberty.

Regarding the United States, for Guizot, their success following the Declaration of Independence in 1776 is due, of course, to the triumph of Enlightenment philosophy but also, and especially, to the fact that, unlike in France, the Enlightenment that triumphed in the United States was neither anticlerical nor anti-religious because it is, fundamentally, a Protestant Enlightenment. And it is in the name of their Protestantism that Americans demanded respect for their freedom. Thus, the alliance of Protestantism and free institutions explains the success

of the Republic in America. Indeed, American republicans did not become worshippers of their own reason—as the French revolutionaries did, which explains their excesses—for a simple reason: they are Protestants, and for a Protestant, no man can be infallible. Consequently, he writes: “the American population remained profoundly Christian, as attached to its dogmas as to its freedom, submitted to God and the Gospel” (not to the Church!). This, in his view, is the fundamental reason for the establishment of a Republic in the United States where freedom reigns.

You see, in one of his most thoughtful texts, Guizot powerfully expresses his attachment to Protestantism. Such apologetics obviously gain the support of most of his co-religionists. However, Guizot does not achieve such support with the third example I will now present: the attitude that Protestants should adopt, according to him, towards the Catholic Church.

In this domain, his general idea raises, at best, misunderstanding and, more often, intense hostility from the nearly unanimous Huguenots, as it contradicts what I propose to call, by metaphor, their “Huguenot accent.” And, as a simple hypothesis, I wonder if we should also see in Guizot a desire to resolve a political problem: since, in his view, Protestantism and political freedom are closely linked—as demonstrated by England and the United States—how can political freedom triumph in a Catholic country like France? A simple solution is to convince the Catholic Church to imitate the Protestant Churches and accept the principle of religious freedom.

Obviously, this will not be easy, and, if I may say so, one must be Guizot to formulate and then attempt to implement such a solution when one knows, for example, that in 1832, in the Encyclical *Mirari vos*, Pope Gregory XVI declares that mere freedom of conscience is “madness” (sic). But, as everyone knows, difficulty has never deterred Guizot.

In any case, in July 1838, Guizot commits a crime of “lese Huguenotism”: in an article in the *Revue française*, he writes, “France will not become Protestant,” and he calls on the Protestant Churches to ally with the Catholic Church instead of fighting against it. Certainly, for him, it is still a matter of securing the future of Protestantism in France. But at that time, most French Protestants are convinced that if France has not yet become Protestant, it is solely due to the persecutions their ancestors suffered. They believe that as soon as true religious freedom is established, the light of the Gospel will quickly dispel the darkness that the Roman Church tries to impose on the world. Since this freedom seems assured with the advent of the July Monarchy, many believe that this day is near.

What has gotten into Guizot, then, the Huguenots wonder? In fact, as usual, Guizot starts from a general idea: currently, in the religious sphere, there are three actors: Catholicism, Protestantism, and what he calls “philosophy,” which we call agnosticism. This agnosticism seems so formidable to him that, to be able to oppose it effectively, Christians must cease to fight one another and, instead, unite beyond their differences. Indeed, his initial remark is not a wish; it is an argument, as it has a corollary addressed to Catholics. He writes exactly:

“The France will not become Protestant. Protestantism will not perish in France. Among many reasons, this one is decisive. The struggle today is not between Catholicism and Protestantism, but rather between impiety and immorality; that is the enemy they both must combat.”

Moreover, he asserts, this struggle is vital for society. He argues that in order to achieve victory, the Churches must fully embrace freedom, and therefore religious freedom. This is natural for Protestant Churches and much more difficult for the Catholic Church, he acknowledges, but it is necessary if victory is to be achieved; and he adds:

"Whether Catholic or Protestant, priest or lay believer, whoever you are, if you are faithful, do not worry about one another; worry about those who do not believe. There is the field, there is the harvest." And he offers this beautiful expression: "Harmony in freedom is the Christian spirit; it is charity united with fervor."

As one might expect, this article was poorly received by most Huguenots, even though — as we know — Guizot also aimed to secure the future of Protestantism in France. Thus, only a month after the publication of this article — and this is just one example — one of the most well-known Parisian pastors, Athanase Coquerel, published a *Letter to Mr. Guizot* in which he categorically refused to follow him down this path. Furthermore, most Catholics also refused to heed Guizot's advice.

However, this reception did not lead him to change his mind. He demonstrated this, particularly, in his speech welcoming Montalembert to the French Academy in 1852. Additionally, a few years later, he committed a new offense of 'lèse-Huguenotisme': he defended the temporal power of the Pope, even though for most Huguenots, while the Pope may no longer be seen as the Antichrist, he is still not far from it. Indeed, on April 20, 1861, Guizot presided over the general assembly of the \*Society for the Encouragement of Primary Education among Protestants in France\* at the Oratory Church. In his speech, he notably declared:

'A deplorable disturbance affects and afflicts a considerable portion of the great and general Christian Church [...]. Whatever our dissensions or even separations may be, we are all Christians and brothers to all Christians. [...] It is the whole of Christianity that

suffers when great Christian Churches suffer [...]. In such trials, we owe our sympathy to the entire great Christian Church.'

Certainly, he did not explicitly mention the temporal power of the Pope, but no one was mistaken, especially since on February 24, 1861, he had already made a similar declaration in his speech welcoming Lacordaire to the French Academy. Naturally, such a statement, in a church no less, provoked very strong reactions in the small Protestant world. Among the more moderate responses, we can cite the personal letter sent to him by Pastor Louis Rognon, who was one of his closest associates. In this letter, he notably asserted...:

"If the temporal power is destroyed by the Revolution, I do not see what humanity will lose, except perhaps during the temporary storms of this destruction, commanded by the justice of God. I am convinced that all of Catholicism is at stake in this very serious matter, but I accept it wholeheartedly, because I do not believe that Catholicism is necessary for Christianity."

Furthermore, all Protestant periodicals, regardless of their doctrinal tendencies, either expressed astonishment or were scandalized, even *L'Espérance*, whose leaders were otherwise very close to Guizot. Pastor Jean-Henri Grandpierre, for example, stated in it that he viewed the fall of the Pope's temporal power as 'the signal of an immense deliverance for the universal Church and a blessing for the advancement of the kingdom of God.'

Once again, this reception did not lead Guizot to change his mind: a few months later, he published a book (272 pages) entitled *The Church and Christian Society in 1861*. In it, he again developed his general idea of the shared destiny between all Christian churches and the benefits the Catholic Church would gain from accepting religious freedom. Moreover, he explained, since Catholics consider the Pope's independence to be an essential element of their freedom, and since this can only be guaranteed by his status as a head of state, all friends of freedom — and therefore in his eyes all Protestants — should defend his temporal power. These clarifications were no better received by Protestants.

Guizot was not discouraged, and in 1864, he published a book titled *Meditations on the Essence of the Christian Religion*, which he presented as the first in a series of four volumes of *Meditations on the Christian Religion*. However, only two more volumes were published, one in 1866 and the other in 1868. Why did he undertake such a project when he lacked a broad theological education, had little interest in dogmatic speculation, and did not seem familiar with the significant output of contemporary German theologians, who were the most innovative and renowned at the time? The occasion was likely the publication of *The Life of Jesus* by Ernest Renan in 1863, to which he seemed to want to respond. But the fundamental reason was the

continuation of his effort, inaugurated by his 1838 article: to defend Christianity — and therefore Protestantism — against all its attackers. His goal was thus apologetic, not scientific. No doubt he had some scientific ambition initially, at least partially, since he announced that his second volume would focus on the history of the Christian religion, including its doctrinal evolution and issues of biblical exegesis. But this volume was never written. Guizot likely did not have the necessary knowledge to write it, and this shortcoming is felt in his three volumes of *Meditations*.

The first volume seems to me the most interesting, but it also shows that Guizot's apologetics are dated. Even though he was familiar with Kant's philosophy, he mostly retained the primacy of morality, and in his *Meditations*, he does not seem much influenced by Kantian epistemology. Indeed, Guizot, whose religious education took place in Geneva at the beginning of the 19th century, was still marked by what is commonly called natural theology. In brief, this theology asserts that every person, by nature, has a certain idea of God. However, since humans are not perfect, this idea of God is imperfect and must be clarified by the Bible, which provides the necessary knowledge that only a supernatural revelation can offer, as nature is incapable of doing so.

Thus, at the beginning of his first volume of *Meditations*, Guizot proposes a sort of syllogism: by nature, all humans ask religious questions; however, the Christian religion offers the most satisfying answers, and therefore, it is the best and the only one of divine origin. The problem is that in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant affirms that matters of faith belong to 'pure reason' and that in this realm, humans can attain no certainty. This puts the proponents of natural theology in an awkward position. The most successful solution at the time was offered by Schleiermacher — the leading Protestant theologian of the 19th century — in his famous *Speeches on Religion*, published in 1799, where he suggested replacing the idea of God, dear to natural theology, with the consciousness of God within us, which is an intuition and not an idea — thus unaffected by Kantian epistemology — and comparable to the 'inner testimony of the Holy Spirit' cherished by the Reformers of the 16th century, making it easier to adopt. But since most 19th-century Protestant theologians were influenced by Schleiermacher, it was difficult to be taken seriously in this field if one did not at least engage with Schleiermacher's epistemology. However, Guizot, who does not cite him in his *Meditations on the Christian Religion*, does not seem to be familiar with his work. His apologetics are therefore somewhat outdated.

Moreover, in his *Meditations*, Guizot does not appear 'orthodox' in the sense of adhering faithfully to the dogmatic teachings of the 16th-century Reformers. What he writes again brings

to mind the 18th century: without openly challenging the major traditional dogmatic assertions, which he intends to uphold, he presents them in a softened and vague manner, much like in the Age of Enlightenment, when morality was of greater interest than dogma.

Furthermore, the general idea underlying his reasoning—the existence of a 'great Christian Church' that all its followers must defend—runs into a fundamental problem: a 'Christian' is an abstract concept. In the street, you don't meet Christians, you meet Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, etc. Trying to define an 'essence of the Christian religion' is therefore a very difficult task because, like all averages, the 'average' he attempts to present in his *Meditations* ultimately corresponds to no one.

That said, on a practical level, it is entirely possible to imagine a 'peaceful coexistence' between Protestants and Catholics in many areas in France, which is what Guizot desires and what we see today. And it is undoubtedly this broader ambition that motivates him when he writes his *Meditations*. But, as in 1838, very few Protestants in the 1860s were willing to follow him down this path. It is true that, at that time, the Catholic Church remained hostile to religious freedom.

Nevertheless, as you can see—and I have only taken a few examples—throughout his life, Guizot was an apologist for Protestantism, but his apologetics were highly personal. However, despite his isolation on the issue of the relationship between Protestant and Catholic churches, Guizot was a very important figure in the life of the Reformed Church, which will be the focus of my second part.

+

+ +

His involvement in the Reformed Church took place, for the most part, between 1850 and 1872, which was a period of crisis for this Church. A crisis so severe that it led to a de facto schism in 1879, only resolved in 1938.

Guizot did not wait until he retired from political life to have an institutional role in the Church. As early as December 18, 1815, he was elected a lay member of the consistory of the Reformed Church of Paris, a position he held until his death on September 12, 1874—59 years, likely a record. In 1825, he was one of the founders of the Protestant Society for Provident and Mutual Assistance. From 1829 to 1855, he was vice-president of the Protestant Bible Society of Paris, and from 1855 to 1868, its president. From 1831 to 1852, he served as vice-president of the Society for the Encouragement of Primary Education among Protestants in France, and as president from 1852 to 1872. In 1852, when the Society for the History of French



Protestantism was founded, he accepted the position of honorary president and held it until his death.

However, to understand his role within a Reformed Church in crisis, it is necessary to "set the scene" by briefly presenting the reasons for the dispute between the Liberals and the Evangelicals.

The Liberals saw themselves as the heirs of the theological evolution of the 18th century, which placed relative importance on abstract dogma (Trinity, redemption, etc.) and focused mainly on morality. Generally, the Liberals did not openly challenge the main doctrinal assertions of the Reformers. When these assertions displeased them, they simply toned them down or avoided discussing them while finding God in nature. For instance, the graduation thesis of Pastor Athanase Coquerel was titled *On the Existence of God Proven by the Contemplation of the Universe*. The Liberals aimed to be rational, as they sought to present a form of Christianity to the modern world that did not demand unreasonable sacrifices of reason. From the 1850s onward, their main stance was their refusal to admit that adherence to a Confession of Faith should be mandatory for becoming a pastor. They emphasized morality, but risked being accused by their opponents of offering only a mundane morality that a humanistic agnostic could just as well espouse.

The Evangelicals emerged from the Revival movement. They believed that French Protestantism, celebrated for its victorious resistance to more than a century of persecution, had "rested on its laurels" since 1802, when the Church was officially recognized by the state. They therefore sought to "awaken" the Church. Noticing that its spiritual slumber corresponded with a partial neglect of dogma, they believed that the simplest way to revitalize the Church was to return to the assertive dogma of the Reformers, which had provided the Huguenots with the spiritual armor to resist the assaults of the Roman Church. They therefore demanded that pastors be required to adhere to a Confession of Faith, which they saw as a safeguard against drifting towards humanistic agnosticism. Since the old Confession of Faith of La Rochelle, dating from 1571, seemed outdated to them, they called for the drafting of a new Confession of Faith adapted to the 19th century.

Furthermore, both camps had their extremists and their moderates. However, by 1850, the two camps were not at the same stage in their development. In 1849, when moderate Evangelicals did not side with their extremist counterparts, the latter left the official Church to form the Union of Free Evangelical Churches, which had its own Confession of Faith. Thus, only moderate Evangelicals remained within the official Church. These Evangelicals accepted the theological evolution of the 19th century, and when old formulas seemed incompatible with

modern thought, they retained these formulas but interpreted them symbolically. As for the Liberals, before 1850, there were very few extremists among them; most were moderate Liberals, perfectly capable of working with the moderate Evangelicals.

But then, what is the origin of the crisis? It stems from the emergence, starting in 1850, of a new generation of young extremists within the liberal camp. These individuals no longer simply soften the traditional dogmatic formulations that they find troubling; instead, they begin to challenge them head-on. Certainly, this evolution was gradual, and it wasn't until the early 1860s that extremist liberals, such as Pastor Campredon in Sète in 1861, started choosing occasions like Christmas to deny the Trinity and even the basic sanctity of Christ from the pulpit. Naturally, even the most moderate evangelicals were scandalized. The reason for the crisis, however, lies in the fact that moderate liberals sided with these extremist liberals, affirming that they too had a rightful place in the Church's pulpits.

This is the general framework in which Guizot's efforts to defend the Reformed Church must be understood. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between two periods: the 1850s and the 1860s.

In the 1850s, Guizot acted in two arenas: the public sphere and the more discreet sphere of ministerial offices. In the public sphere, it is worth noting that, during the 1850s, Guizot was a staunch defender of the Huguenots' religious freedom on at least three occasions. Only the high-ranking positions he held prior to 1848 spared him from facing the wrath of the Bonapartist regime, especially during this period of authoritarian Empire.

In April 1856, during the general assembly of the *Société pour l'encouragement de l'instruction primaire parmi les protestants de France* (Society for the Encouragement of Primary Education among Protestants of France), of which he was president, Guizot publicly denounced the obstacles imposed by some local administrators on the opening of Protestant schools. He repeated his strong stance in 1858 with great vigor:

"Under the pretext of public morals and peace, Protestant schools have been banned or even closed, simply because they were Protestant. [...] Such an abuse is clearly contrary to the freedom of worship, the freedom of primary education, to justice, and to common sense [...]. This is unacceptable."

However, in these two cases, it is only the actions of local administrators that he denounces.

But on May 4, 1859, during the general assembly of the Bible Society, he directly targets the Minister of Worship himself. Indeed, in the 'report to the Emperor' preceding the decree of

March 19, 1859, concerning the opening of new Protestant places of worship, the Minister of Worship, Gustave Rouland, explicitly refuses to recognize freedom of religion. He writes:

'We can summarize our legislation by saying that it creates absolute freedom of conscience, but it has not allowed unlimited freedom of public worship.'

Guizot responded vigorously:

'[...] we cannot let such ideas and words pass without protest, as they would undermine the very essence of our liberties [...] today, we are entitled to something more than merely not being subjected to the Inquisition.'

You can see that in these public protests, Guizot doesn't mince his words!

Regarding Guizot's actions within the more discreet environment of ministerial offices, we can note that, starting from the early 1850s, he intervenes with certain ministers to obtain decisions concerning the internal functioning of the Reformed Church. And, quite quickly, he shows a preference for moderate evangelicals. Without listing all his efforts, it's worth noting, for instance, that in 1854, he successfully intervenes twice with the Minister of Worship, Hippolyte Fortoul, to secure the appointment of two evangelicals to the Central Council of Reformed Churches. It's true that Fortoul owes him his Legion of Honor! In 1856, he again successfully intervenes with Fortoul to secure the appointment of a professor with evangelical leanings to the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Montauban. Additionally, in 1856 and 1857, after Fortoul's death, Guizot makes several appeals to his successor, G. Rouland, to ensure that Protestant evangelists could more easily hold religious meetings in communes without a long-standing Protestant community, though he is much less successful in this case.

As we can see, his efforts reflect a preference for the evangelical movement, though they are discreet enough that liberals may not have been aware of them. At the very least, they did not criticize him for it.

Starting in 1860, the life of the Reformed Church became increasingly troubled by the statements of extremist liberals, and especially by the support they received from moderate liberals. At this point, Guizot began to intervene publicly and with strong determination in favor of the evangelicals.

Why did Guizot choose to publicly support the evangelicals? From a doctrinal standpoint, as evidenced by his *Méditations*, he is not at all 'orthodox' in the sense of being faithful to 16th-century dogma. Moreover, as we know, he is not far removed from moderate liberals. As for his spirituality, it is hardly influenced by the romantic sentimentality that so

deeply marked the 19th-century religious Awakening from which the evangelical movement emerged. Should we interpret this as a sign of his political conservatism? Certainly, Guizot displays conservatism in some areas, but he cannot be seen as hostile to change. For example, his strong commitment to expanding public education shows that he fully understands the emancipatory power of education. Another example is his acceptance of universal suffrage as early as 1849 in his book *De la démocratie en France*, despite having strongly opposed it when he was in power.

In my view, his choice to align with the evangelical camp reflects his ecclesiology, which is itself shaped by his experience as a historian and statesman. He believes that civil society cannot function without the majority accepting a few fundamental rules. Otherwise, it results in arbitrary rule, or anarchy, and the collapse of society. To him, the same applies to a church, which is a religious society. He sides with the evangelicals because he believes that the ecclesiology of the liberals of the 1860s does not respect the 'constitution' of the Reformed Church as it has existed since the 16th century. In particular, he feels that their refusal to require pastors to adhere to any Confession of Faith threatens to lead the Church to its ruin, as this principle has been present from the beginning in the Reformed Churches.

However, contrary to what some liberals believe or pretend to believe, he is by no means the leader of the evangelicals. He likely does not wish to be, but even if he did, the originality of some of his choices would prevent him from fulfilling such a role. He is the most illustrious of the evangelicals, who are pleased that his connections in the highest echelons of the state facilitate some of their initiatives; but they do not always follow his advice and are not afraid to criticize him when they see fit. For example, in 1861, as we know, they did not hesitate to publicly express their disagreement with his views on the Pope's temporal power.

Nevertheless, throughout the 1860s, he was very active within the Church. For the most part, his efforts were concentrated in three areas, which I will present in turn: the appointment of theology professors, the Reformed Church of Paris, and the convening of a national synod.

Regarding the appointment of theology professors, in 1860, Guizot successfully intervened with the Minister of Public Instruction on behalf of Charles Bois, the evangelical candidate for the Faculty of Montauban. The same happened in 1864, when he lobbied for Jean Monod, although he struggled to get him accepted by some evangelicals who found Monod too

open to new ideas. Also in 1864, he attempted, without success, to persuade the Minister of Public Instruction (V. Duruy) not to appoint Timothée Colani, an extremist liberal, to the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Strasbourg. In 1866, he played a decisive role in persuading his friends to support François Bonifas as the evangelical candidate, and Bonifas secured the position. Finally, in 1868, he also helped in getting Auguste Sabatier accepted as the evangelical candidate for the Faculty of Strasbourg. He again had to press his evangelical friends to support Sabatier, who was unquestionably the most brilliant candidate, though some were wary of him due to doubts about his "orthodoxy."

More generally, it's worth noting that V. Duruy—who held office from 1863 to 1869—frequently consulted Guizot when making decisions regarding the Faculty of Theology in Montauban.

Regarding the Reformed Church of Paris, to understand Guizot's actions, we must first remember that the Church's life was very turbulent in the 1860s. In 1860, Parisian liberals were deeply dissatisfied with the consistory's refusal to appoint Pastor Athanase Coquerel Jr. as a permanent pastor; he was only serving as an assistant pastor under Martin-Paschoud for a renewable two-year term. They decided to place all their hopes in the 1862 presbyterial elections, and to prepare for this, they founded an association called the *Union protestante libérale* (Liberal Protestant Union). The election campaign was lively, but the liberals were defeated. They then decided to make the UPL permanent, engaging in systematic criticism of all the consistory's actions. This displeased the evangelicals, who were willing to accept debate during election periods but felt that constant polemics had no place in a Church.

In this tense atmosphere, Guizot played a moderating role. For example, in 1862, the question arose about renewing Athanase Coquerel Jr.'s assistant pastor role. A large part of the evangelicals wanted to refuse the renewal, but Guizot convinced his friends to keep Coquerel in the position, for which Coquerel Jr. thanked him in a letter that is displayed in one of the exhibits in this room. Similarly, in 1863, some evangelicals wanted to establish an *Union évangélique* (Evangelical Union) that would respond point by point to the UPL's polemics. But Guizot dissuaded them, using ecclesiastical reasoning that he would frequently revisit later. He explained:

"Through our faith, we represent the established Church, and our sole aim is to continue defending its doctrine and institutions [...] it would be degrading and weakening for us to reduce ourselves to the status of a faction."

And the Evangelical Union would only be founded a few years later, during the major confrontations between evangelicals and liberals.

Moreover, in October 1863, Guizot—aware that the Coquerel fils case is a *casus belli* for the liberals—once again asked his friends not to refuse the renewal of his suffraganship. With his usual insight, he understood that the extremist liberals were, in fact, agnostics who would eventually leave the Church of their own accord; and this did indeed happen during the course of the 1870s. Guizot thus wrote to Pastor Rognon:

"[...] it is not appropriate for us to take the initiative in a dislocation of the Protestant Church, which will probably happen one day, but we should not appear to provoke it. The rationalists are well on their way to losing their cause themselves [...]. The tide is flowing in our favor; we must let it continue and not interrupt its natural course with a harsh and unnecessary act."

However, at the beginning of 1864, Guizot eventually allowed himself to be convinced, though he was the last to decide. And on February 26, 1864, the consistory did not renew the suffraganship of A. Coquerel fils, which 'lit the fuse.' The liberals, extremely displeased, launched a fierce press campaign, and the controversy intensified. Guizot then decided to participate. He did so first in April 1864, during the annual Pastoral Conferences of Paris, where evangelicals traditionally held a majority. When the evangelicals decided to propose the adoption of a declaration of principles implicitly supporting the Paris consistory, Guizot agreed to draft it. As usual, it was very clear, stating that the assertions of extremist liberals were 'entirely destructive to the Christian faith and the Reformed Church,' and it was adopted by the majority of the members of the Conferences.

The Parisian liberals then decided to seek revenge in the 1865 presbyteral elections. To do so, they focused their attacks on Guizot, the most illustrious of the evangelicals. The electoral campaign was epic. The liberals centered many of their criticisms on his political actions, even accusing him of being a de facto accomplice to the murders of Protestants during the White Terror of 1815. They harshly criticized his political decisions during the July Monarchy, particularly his refusal to support Protestant missions in Tahiti or his backing of the Catholic Swiss cantons during the 'Sonderbund War.' They also condemned what they perceived as his pro-Catholicism and questioned the sincerity of his Protestantism. The Protestant journalist Taxile Delord published a pamphlet titled *The Papacy of Mr. Guizot*, in which he wrote: 'Mr. Guizot wants to reign and lead Protestantism into the abyss, just as he did with the monarchy.'

Liberal newspapers published scathing articles, especially in *Le Lien (the Link)*, where it was written: '[Voters] prevent an official pope from being imposed on Protestantism'; or 'Mr. Guizot is not Protestant enough'; or even, 'In reality, throughout his long career, Mr. Guizot has consistently shown a spirit that was not that of our Church.' As for *Le Protestant libéral*, it wrote, 'Mr. Guizot's religion is nothing but politics.'

Guizot commented on the matter in letters to his daughter Henriette. He wrote to her, for example:

"M. Clamageran holds meetings in the taverns of Puteaux. A song against me has been circulated, and continues to be shared." "M. Grandpierre came yesterday [on February 20] to tell me about the visits he made and the anonymous insults written to him: 'Old fool Grandpierre, down with your Guizot; tyranny will fall under the blows of democracy.'"

Remaining fairly calm and always seeking broader ideas, he explained to his daughter:

"I willingly accept the situation that has been created for me by fighting me fiercely as the representative of the same cause in the church and in the state—the cause of order and liberty, both founded on serious and sincere faith."

"M. Clamageran holds meetings in the taverns of Puteaux. A song against me has been circulated, and continues to be shared." "M. Grandpierre came yesterday [on February 20] to tell me about the visits he made and the anonymous insults written to him: 'Old fool Grandpierre, down with your Guizot; tyranny will fall under the blows of democracy.'"

Remaining fairly calm and always seeking broader ideas, he explained to his daughter:

"I willingly accept the situation that has been created for me by fighting me fiercely as the representative of the same cause in the church and in the state—the cause of order and liberty, both founded on serious and sincere faith."

Obviously, the evangelicals responded, but Guizot was only re-elected in the second round and by the slimmest of margins, with a mere 10-vote lead over his liberal opponent (1,298 votes to 1,288). Until 1870, the life of the Reformed Church of Paris remained particularly troubled.

In this brief talk, I obviously cannot delve into all the details. However, it is important to note that during the years 1865-1870, Guizot tirelessly supported the initiatives of the

Parisian evangelicals. His participation in the struggle was all the more significant because the Minister of Worship, Jules Baroche, was very hostile to the evangelicals and highly favorable to the liberals. As a result, the liberals used their Bonapartist political connections to attempt to obtain changes to the law, hoping these would help them win the presbyteral elections. Guizot was thus very useful, as he could act within the administration, write to high-ranking officials, and secure ministerial meetings, among other things. For example, in 1868, when Prince Napoléon, a friend of the liberal pastor Martin-Paschoud, secured an audience with Napoléon III for the latter, Guizot also requested and obtained an audience with the Emperor. Nevertheless, while Guizot supported his friends' initiatives as best he could, he did not play a leading role in these matters.

The crisis shaking the Reformed Church of Paris was merely an amplified reflection of the broader crisis affecting the entire Reformed Church, due to the decision of moderate liberals to align themselves with the extremist liberals. The moderate liberals continued to argue that the extremists had every right to exercise their ministry within the Reformed Church and to preach their doctrines. This led the evangelicals to seek the adoption of a Declaration of Faith by a national synod, one broad enough for all moderate liberals to accept, but precise enough that the extremist liberals could not. This was difficult, however, because in 1802, when Bonaparte officially recognized the Reformed Churches, he had, in effect, abolished the national synod. For a synod to be convened, a positive decision from the head of state was essential. As the liberals knew they were in the minority, they opposed the idea of convening a national synod. This left room for conflicting interventions directed at ministers and, ultimately, at the Emperor.

In this situation, Guizot once again proved very useful to the evangelical camp. As early as 1863, he raised the issue with the Minister of Worship, G. Rouland. However, no decision was made, and the major confrontations of 1864 and 1865 delayed the matter. Thus, at the beginning of 1866, Guizot, an opponent of the Empire who had not crossed the threshold of the Tuileries since 1848—except during protocol ceremonies for the presentation of new members to the Académie Française—decided to request an audience with Napoléon III. It took place on March 29, 1866, in the presence of the Empress, which was somewhat unusual and indicated that Eugénie, known for her deep piety, likely distrusted what her agnostic husband might concede to the Protestants. The audience lasted more than three-quarters of an hour, which was long for such a meeting. Guizot asked Napoléon III to grant several of the evangelicals' requests, particularly the convening of a national synod. At this point, the Empress reportedly remarked to her imperial spouse: "You cannot be the pope of a religion to which you do not



belong." Napoléon III did not oppose Guizot's requests and encouraged him to negotiate with Baroche, the Minister of Worship. "I left satisfied," Guizot wrote to his daughter. But his satisfaction was short-lived: while Guizot was received without difficulty by Baroche, he obtained nothing, as Baroche was completely devoted to the liberals.

Again, I cannot go into detail about Guizot's numerous interventions—his letters, his visits to high-ranking officials, his meetings with friends, etc. But it is clear that he closely followed this matter, which dragged on for quite some time. It took the departure of Baroche in 1869 and the rise to power of Émile Ollivier on January 2, 1870, for things to finally move forward. On January 19, 1870, Guizot met with E. Ollivier at the home of Count Daru. Then, on January 26, E. Ollivier visited him and conversed with him "from 9 o'clock to half past 10 in the evening." "I found him sensible and full of good will regarding our Church matters," Guizot wrote to his daughter.

E. Ollivier quickly made several decisions, including, in March 1870, the convocation of a national (then referred to as "general") synod of the Reformed Church. The war obviously delayed this meeting. But as soon as the Paris Commune was crushed, Guizot resumed his efforts. At his request, the Minister of Worship—Jules Simon—visited him on November 12, 1871, and they discussed Protestant matters for two hours. Guizot then dined with Thiers, the President of the Republic, on November 17, 1871. And on November 29, 1871, Thiers signed the decree convening a "general synod of the Reformed Church," for which Guizot had worked so tirelessly.

The synod met from June 6 to July 10, 1872. Naturally, Guizot played a very important role. Drawing on his parliamentary experience, he methodically prepared the evangelicals' strategy, organizing several meetings for this purpose. As Laurent Theis wrote:

"Indeed, Guizot has happily rediscovered the atmosphere of preparing for parliamentary battles. At eighty-four years old, he rejuvenates for the last time."

On June 6, drawing from a document prepared by Charles Bois, the evangelicals finalize the text of the Declaration of Faith that they will propose for adoption at the synod. During the debates, Guizot, the leader of his group, skillfully directs the proceedings. On June 18, standing for an hour at the age of 84, he delivers his last great speech. It is a beautiful text, where he reiterates the ideas he has defended for years. This speech reminds me of what Victor Hugo wrote about Guizot in *Choses vues*: "As soon as his foot touched the tribune, his head touched the sky."

With an emotional tone at times, he explains, in particular, why the adoption of a Declaration of Faith seems indispensable to him: "We are obliged to fight [...] when we see the foundations of Christianity being attacked or destroyed. This is the cause of our struggles; our attacks have never been directed against freedom. [...] All who recognize themselves as Christians must also acknowledge the weakness of their knowledge, their insufficiency; but they must unite against this disease of their age, skepticism, unbelief, human pride. The divine power, manifested by Christ, is above the power of [humans]; but to rely solely on this [divine] power to dispel or correct error is a regrettable and guilty illusion."

The majority supports him, and the Declaration of Faith is adopted by the Synod on June 21. Tired and feeling that the essentials have been secured, Guizot submits his letter of resignation to the moderator of the Synod on June 26. This was his last action in the Church.

It is time to conclude.

In general, it seems to me that what emerges from my presentation is, quite evidently, Guizot's profound attachment to Protestantism, as well as his originality, particularly shown by his refusal to adopt the "Huguenot tone" of most of his co-religionists.

But it is also his insight, of which I will give three examples. One of the first is that he understood that the doctrinal presuppositions of the extremist liberals would lead them to leave the Reformed Church of their own accord, which they did starting in the 1870s. One of the first to recognize that the Catholic Church could not accept that its supreme pontiff was not a head of state, a situation that remains true today, even if this state is much smaller than it was in 1861. Finally, one of the first to understand that without renouncing itself, the Catholic Church could accept religious freedom, which it did in the early 1960s at the Second Vatican Council—a century later, it is true.

And, to close this conference, I would like to give the floor to Guizot by quoting what he wrote about himself in 1868 in the third volume of his *Religious Meditations*:

“For 20 years, I have been trying out my tomb. I descended into it alive and have not attempted to leave it [...]. If I were granted the chance to be of any service again for the two great causes which, in my eyes, are one and the same—the cause of Christian faith in souls and that of political freedom in my country—I would await with gratitude, in the midst of my rest, this dawn of eternal day that 'the foolish call death,' as Petrarch said [...].”

*Note: A slightly longer version of this conference, along with notes and bibliographical references, will be published soon in the Revue d'Histoire du Protestantisme.*