



PRIX
FRANÇOIS GUIZOT
INSTITUT DE FRANCE



François Guizot-Institut de France 2020 prize

Award ceremony

Monday 5 October 2020, 6:30 PM, Grande Salle des Séances

Speech of Jean-Claude Casanova

President of the jury

Mr. Chancellor of the Institute,

Mr. Honorary Chancellor

Mr. Perpetual secretary of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres,

Mr. President of the Association François Guizot,

My dear colleagues,

My dear colleagues on the jury,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Madame Catherine Maire

In these times of uncertainty, we must rejoice in the permanence of our traditions, and deplore the difficulties of the moment that have reduced the number of participants in this ceremony of the “François Guizot-Institut de France Prize”, awarded for the fourth time under this name and for the fourteenth time if we go back to its origin in 1993.

The last recipient was Olivier Grenouilleau for his book, *The Abolitionist Revolution*. Today we are celebrating Catherine Maire’s book, *L’Église dans l’État: Politique et religion dans la France des Lumières*, published in 2019 by Gallimard and, like that of Grenouilleau, in the same collection:

the *Bibliothèque des Histories*.

Dare I say, without naming them because we all know them, that this demonstrates the excellence of the choices made by the directors of this collection whose books are being nominated for the Prix Guizot for the third time.

Before I try to explain why we have chosen to honour the work I have just cited, let me say a word about our jury.

Since we last met in this meeting room of the Institute, the jury has changed. Mr. Kleber Rossillon has agreed to join us. He succeeds H el ene Huby who, too far from France, had to leave us in 2019.

And this jury will continue to change next year, as I thought it wise to end my chairmanship. It is not without emotion that one leaves an office that one has striven to fulfil for so many years, and when one addresses a quality audience one last time. But one is delighted when one knows that the person who succeeds you will exercise this role even better, our colleague Michel Zinc, who will be assisted, because he has many more responsibilities than I did, by a vice-president, our eminent colleague Patrice Gu eniffey.

We are familiar with Bossuet’s formula: “*religion and civil government are the two points on which human affairs advance*”. Madam, your subject is about the relationship between the church and the State in France in the 18th century. The Church “in the State”, as you say, taking up Bossuet’s formula. The French specificity of this relationship, of this overly tight knot, will be unraveled not without troubles and difficulties.

But before coming to this point, I would like to mention two contingent reasons that supported the choice of our Jury. One is the support of Fran ois Furet who was one of the founders of this prize alongside Catherine Coste. The other is related to Fran ois Guizot, whose name this prize carries and whose work and actions this prize commemorates.

You had wanted to tell me that Fran ois Furet was in a way at the origin of your research and that it was he who suggested that you study the political effects of Jansenism starting with the drama of Port Royal and through to the Revolution. It is thus for us a great satisfaction in crowning your work to validate this discernment of he who was our friend and the mentor of this jury as to the subject and as to your person.

And Guizot, of course. For we can say he lived through this moment that you are treating. He is the grandson of Jean Guizot (1729-1766), whom he did not know, but who in the first half of the 18th century was pastor during the *d esert*, exercising his ministry in clandestinity after the 1685 Edict of Fontainebleau that had destroyed the peacemaking work of the Edict of Nantes and that forced dedicated Protestants into exile or clandestinity, and therefore to persecution. In his *History of France told to His Grandchildren*, Fran ois Guizot wrote soberly: “I was born in N imes, on 4 October 1787, before the Protestants had a civil status in France”.

Louis XIV, or the State itself, at the same time as it renounced tolerance, made the State even more Catholic and only Catholic, and installed the Church in the State. But Guizot wrote that the King ran up against three pitfalls in religion, the fruit of three “noble” passions. First, the passion of the Protestants for freedom, these defenders of the native freedom of the soul and of personal responsibility. Calvinism, Guizot emphasizes, is a French invention. Second, the passion of faith, with the Jansenists, leading to the surrender to the sovereign will of God; and third, the pure love of the mystics, with the Quietists and F nelon.

Let’s leave F nelon aside, we always forget in France that he recommended escaping absolutism through representation, which gave this neo-liberal bad press in history textbooks compared to the striking Bossuet.

On what historical foundations is this conception of the Church in the State built? As well as the ensuing latent crisis of the 18th century leading to the Revolution and then to separation of church and state?

1. One can go back to the conflict between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII. For Péguy, moreover, all the misfortunes of the modern world begin with Philip the Fair. We are at the very beginning of the 14th century: the bellows of Anagni, the role of Nogaret, an unforgivable crime for Dante who will place the Capetian, the “fleurdelisé” he says, in hell. From this confrontation it results that the Church of France and the King are not subject to the Pope, that the Church is subject to the King, but without separation from Rome.

2. After the Council of Trent, in 1561, Catherine de Medici, at Poissy, brought together and institutionalized an assembly of the clergy: like a national council, with which the State concluded a fiscal contract, but always without breaking with Rome.

3. Third step, ahead of the curve, Louis XIV. The Wars of Religion and Henry IV with the Edict of Nantes had led to a France with two official religions recognized by the State. Absolutism had also appeared. We know which event would put an end to religious duality. In 1652, the King and thus the State, confirmed the Edict of Nantes. They cancelled it in 1656.

The last Protestant synod was held in 1660. The next one, it should be noted, would meet 212 years later, in 1872, and would be presided over by Guizot who had spared no effort under the Empire and with the Third Republic to hold it.

Religious unity, the end of variety, as Bossuet would say, was restored with the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by the Edict of Fontainebleau, on 15 October 1685.

4. Fourth foundation, in 1682, Bossuet wrote the solemn declaration of the Gallican church: the clergy accepts royal absolutism. It is unity in submission and vis-à-vis Rome: firmness without rupture. The religious unity of the country is institutionalised: one King, one faith, one Church.

Michel Le Tellier had been the chancellor of “one religion” and Bossuet would pronounce his funeral oration: “hasten to put Louis with the Constantines and Theodosius” he exclaimed. The comparison with Constantine will prove to be fragile; the continuity of Constantine’s religious work lasted much longer than that of Louis XIV, which endured less than a century. With Theodosius, the parallel would hold but not in the direction wished by Bossuet, because Theodosius precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire as Louis XIV through absolutism and the refusal of representation, precipitated the fall of the monarchy and the brutal separation of church and state, which Bossuet neither wished nor foresaw.

And your book, Madame, recounts this crisis of a union too perfect to be true, of a union that lasted less than a century and which unfolds, you write, like “a common thread running from the Unigenitus Bull of 1713 to the civil constitution of the clergy of 1790”.

Turmoil, controversies, criticisms, polemics, unrest, agitation, discord and divisions, these are the fruits of the unity that we want to impose when we do not accept the benefits of diversity. A historical question and certainly a French question, but also an eternal question at the very heart of political philosophy.

I won’t reveal your entire book: everything in it is narrated with erudition, clarity, and lucidity.

Let me take two examples. The Unigenitus Bull of 1713 aims to finish off the Jansenists. They persist and persevere nevertheless. In 1730, the bull was made a “law of the Church and the State” and these poor Jansenists were persecuted, certainly less violently than the Protestants, but with as much perseverance—especially by being refused the sacraments. This is going to outrage them, thus hardening them and leading the world of parliamentarians towards Jansenism and towards opposition

to an absolute king. Montesquieu and Voltaire will not stop mocking this. The poor State, naively and foolishly, sought unity but obtained division.

The reasonable one was Montesquieu, of course. He saved French honor, but the Sorbonne condemned his *Spirit of the Laws* and the Jansenists hated him. The State seized upon a theological quarrel, for no other serious reason than unity, and in trying to settle the quarrel, poisoned it.

Voltaire also gives an example of moderation. From these quarrels with the Jansenists and over church property (incidentally, the French state does not like Mortmain prohibitions preventing taxation of real estate as it is always looking for taxpayers). Voltaire concludes that the state-church link must be strengthened, but since he distrusts the absolutist-Gallic couple, he praises a kind of Anglicanism: less absolutism of the state and more submission of the church.

Let me take a second example. The lamentable affair of Protestant marriage. Marriage for Catholics is a sacrament. Only the Church, therefore, can marry. The Church holds civil status under its thumb. Either there are no more Protestants in France, or there are many Protestants. In this case, they will marry, give birth, make contracts. Common sense, reason or natural law should agree that for them it is necessary to build a civil state separate from the Church. Why repeat that common sense is the most shared thing in the world and wait a century to show any? My irritation, my indignation are those of the reader. Madam, you remain calm, you describe the long journey of controversies, proposals, advances, setbacks. Silently, the French are groping about and hesitating. At the coronation of Louis XVI, the coadjutor Bishop of Reims harangued the King against the liberties silently granted to Protestants. "Complete," he exclaimed, "the work that Louis the Great had undertaken and Louis the beloved continued." Did he mean persevere towards unity through persecution? Fortunately Louis XVI, Turgot and Maesherbes, the ancestor of Tocqueville, will return civil status to the reformed.

As I read you, this obstinacy in the face of error made me think of the quarrel over criminal procedure, because it is not over. With Louis XIV's criminal ordinance of 1670, reinforced by the Criminal Investigation Code of 1808, France broke with the adversarial system (which came from Roman law and feudalism) to adopt the inquisitorial system. To simplify, let us say that the former equates the prosecution and the defense and that the latter privileges the mission of the prosecution, haloed by the public interest. The First President of the Parliament of Paris, Lamoignon (an ancestor of Maesherbes) opposed the King's Council, which, because of insecurity on the roads, had given birth to the Ordonnance and reduced the ministry of the lawyer. Lamoignon had declared that this limitation of the right to defense, was contrary to natural law, which in this case is as much a matter of common sense as of reason. Indeed, if the judge hears only the accuser or favours the accuser, he will be less enlightened than if he is willing to hear both the accuser and the defendant and if he holds them in equal stead. You can see from the arrogance of prosecutors, who esteem themselves to be equals of judges, that common sense, reason and natural law have not yet made their way to France.

We must conclude. Your book, Madam, makes one think of the statement that is credited to Lavisse. Called upon by the Empress to sum up the history of France in one sentence, he replied, "Well, let's just say that it didn't go very well." The story of errors is as instructive as the story of successes. History, as we know, is the questions that the present, worried or concerned about the future, asks of the past. In this sense your book is a great history book.

Ironically, I am afraid that by making light of Bossuet's wish, I have raised myself above my condition. To repent, I will quote him, with the most complete admiration for his grandiose eloquence and for the beauty of his prose, alas, put at the service of an inaccessible unity. Let us give him the last word, which he expresses about England and which also applies to this French history of the Church in the State in the 18th century, which you have analyzed so well:

"We must not flatter ourselves – the most experienced in affairs make capital faults. But how

easily we forgive ourselves our faults when fortune pardons them! And how we believe ourselves to be the most enlightened and the most skilful when we are the most successful and the most happy! Failure is the only master that can successfully call us back and wrench from us the avowal that we have sinned, which costs so much to our pride. So, when misery opens our eyes, we reconsider with bitterness all our false steps; we find ourselves equally guilty for what we have done and for what we have failed to do, and we no longer know how to excuse the presumptuous judgment that believes itself infallible. We see that God alone is wise; and in vainly deploring the faults that have ruined our affairs, a better rejection teaches us to deplore those that would cause us to lose our eternity, with this singular consolation, that we repair them when we deplore them.” [Translation by Christopher Olaf Blum, Christendom Media]

-- From the Funeral Oration of Henriette-Marie of France, Queen of Great Britain, pronounced on 16 November 1669, in the Church of the Visitation of Sainte-Marie de Chaillot.

Thank you.