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Samuel de Champlain and the French Wars of Religion

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SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN AND THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION

A Thesis

Submitted to the McAnulty College & Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

By

Benjamin Goff

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Benjamin Goff

2014

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ABSTRACT

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Thesis supervised by Dr. Jotham Parsons

Nearly all studies of Samuel de Champlain focus on his trials in New France due to the substantial numbers of available sources. His early life remains understudied because there are no such sources regarding these years. This essay attempts to alleviate that disparity by utilizing primary materials not typically associated with Champlain. Using late sixteenth-century France to contextualize Champlain's youth, this essay surveys three critical areas of his early life: military experiences, ties of patronage, and religious convictions. Military experience, gained during the Wars of Religion, prepared Champlain for violent encounters with Native Americans. Ties of patronage, which he began building during the wars, secured future support for his North American endeavor. Finally, his religious convictions elucidate the social atmosphere in France during the Wars of Religion. Placing Champlain within this atmosphere further defines his early life. When combined, these three areas present a reasonable picture of the young Champlain.

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Introductory Historiography

Born into a tumultuous era, Samuel de Champlain, despite his famous exploits, lived a life much obscured to us by the passage of time. While Champlain's explorations of the North American continent greatly overshadow his earlier ventures, the fact remains that we know virtually nothing of this man's childhood, adolescence, and young manhood. His home town is known. He was verifiably a soldier. His father was a sailor. Apart from these and a few other sparse clues, nothing is certain regarding Champlain's youth. His date of birth is not known. The date of his baptism may be known, his baptized religion likewise. The environment he grew up in, on the other hand, is well documented and studied. By looking at the social, political, and cultural context of Champlain's youth, we can infer much about the man. Champlain grew up in a time of tremendous religious unrest, political chaos, and endemic warfare, due to the civil wars which raged throughout the kingdom of France at the time of his birth. The culture which he presumably partook in is well documented by historians, as is the political climate. Additionally, we know a great deal about the men who influenced young Champlain. Men like King Henri IV, Jean Hardy, and Marshal D'Aumont. Based on the milieu in which Champlain grew up and matured, we can make assumptions about his early life. By doing this, a gap in the historiography of Champlain may be addressed.

Extensive work has been done over the last four hundred years concerning Champlain; this scholarship tends to focus almost exclusively on Champlain's later life, and for good reason. Champlain, in his own hand, left behind an extensive survey of his journeys in the New World.¹ This vast primary source, coupled with the works of the Jesuit missionaries and Marc Lescarbot,

¹ Samuel de Champlain. *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. H.P. Biggar, 6 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922).

provide historians with an embarrassment of riches,² at least when compared to the dearth of information we have concerning his early days. Armed with these sources, historians have been telling the story of Champlain with little variation for years. Even before his death in 1635, writers were putting pen to paper and recording the history of Champlain. The aforementioned Marc Lescarbot was perhaps the first, with his *Histoire de Nouvelle-France*. Today, this serves as a wonderful primary source, often corroborating seamlessly with Champlain's own accounts. Unfortunately, it provides little information relevant to this essay. This, also, is much the case with the works of the Jesuit missionaries, otherwise known as *The Jesuit Relations*, and the works of the Recollect Order.³

Relying principally on these sources, secondary scholarship became common in the mid-to-late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and continues up to today. Famous figures in the field of history, like Francis Parkman and the formidable Canadian historian Francois-Xavier Garneau,⁴ became interested in Champlain, and subsequently wrote multiple volumes. Others followed, such as Benjamin Sulte and Narcisse-Eutrope Dionne, two more Canadian historians.⁵

² Marc Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, eds. W.L. Grant, H.P. Biggar. 3 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1907); *The Jesuit relations and allied documents; travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, 73 vols. (New York: Pagent Book Company, 1959).

³ Gabriel Sagard, *Le grands voyage du pays des Hurons* (Paris: Denys Moreau, 1632); Gabriel Sagard *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les frères mineurs recollects y ont faicts pour la conversion des infideles : depuis l'an 1615* (Paris: Denys Moreau, 1636). Sagard was a member of the Recollect order and an expert on the Huron. These are two of his works, and are representative of the type of material produced by this order.

⁴ Francis Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1907); Francois Xavier Garneau, *Histoire du Canada, Depuis sa decouverte jusqu'a nos jours*, 3 vols. (Charleston: Bibliolife, 2009).

⁵ Benjamin Sulte, *Histoire de Canadiens-Français, 1608-1880*, 8 vol. (Montreal: Wilson, 1882); N.E. Dionne, *Champlain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963). This is a later reprint of Dionne; the original was published in 1891.

A common theme for these early works was the unquestioning support of Champlain's moral fiber; most historians were extremely favorable when describing Champlain, often finding little to no fault with his actions and decisions. At times, they portrayed him not as a man, but as a saint. For example, Morris Bishop in his *Champlain: The Life of Fortitude*, published 1948, wrote, "The reader of Champlain's works, the student of his life, must feel himself constantly in touch with a man to whom good was a reality; one who believed in the goodness of God's purpose, and who sought to realize it in the welfare of his fellow men."⁶

Samuel Eliot Morrison, Harvard's own maritime historian, wrote a biography in 1972, extolling Champlain's leadership abilities. Conrad Hiedenreich doted over Champlain's skill as a cartographer. Marcel Trudel, a prominent Canadian social historian, produced a work regarding the entire history of New France in the mid-twentieth century which gave ample credit to Champlain for the colony's early successes.⁷ Most had nothing but praises for the great explorer. However, a small number of older historians, such as Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix who wrote in the mid-eighteenth century, questioned Champlain's decision to ally with various native tribes, mainly the Algonquin. Charlevoix thought the more powerful Iroquois were the better choice of ally.⁸ Since then, many of the previously mentioned scholars have noted that the geopolitical situation in New France dictated an Algonquin alliance, therefore rebuking

⁶ Morris Bishop, *Champlain: Life of Fortitude*, (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc. 1948) 341.

⁷ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France* (Toronto, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972); Conrad Heidenreich, *Explorations and Mapping of Samuel de Champlain 1603-1632* (Toronto: B.V. Gutsell, 1976); Marcel Trudel, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France: le comptoir, 1604-1627*, vol. 2 (Montréal: Fides, 1966).

⁸ Pierre-Francois-Xavier Charlevoix, *Histoire et description général de la Nouvelle France* (Paris: Pierre-François Giffart, 1744).

Charlevoix's earlier hypothesis.⁹ Minor though it was, this was the only point of criticism up to the mid-twentieth century. This hagiographic trend was not without merit, but it would come to an end eventually as scholarship progressed.

The first major critic, and one of the only authors to treat Champlain harshly, was Bruce Trigger. His work attacked Champlain based on Champlain's relationship with the native peoples of New France. His principal work, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*, argued that the relationship between the early Canadians and the Native Americans had been misunderstood in previous historical works.¹⁰ Indigenous Americans, he surmised, were not understood on their own terms, leading to a Eurocentric view of New France. He was right to argue this point; scholarship up to that time did not sufficiently factor in the Native American influence. He criticized the works of previous historians heavily and for the first time portrayed Champlain in an extremely negative light. In his article entitled "Champlain Judged by His Indian Policy: A Different View of Early Canadian History" Trigger stated "Important as Champlain's contributions to the early development of Canada have been, his dealings with the Indians were far from heroic. At all times Champlain appears to have viewed the native peoples as a means to an end and in later years his treatment of them became increasingly callous."¹¹

⁹ Trudel, 190.

¹⁰ Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994).

¹¹ Bruce Trigger, "Champlain Judged by His Indian Policy: A Different View of Early Canadian History" *Anthropologica* 13, No.1/2 (1971): 110.

Today, historians like David Fischer, Raymonde Litalien, Denis Vaugeois, Janet Ritch and Conrad Heidenreich take a more even approach. They mark the four hundredth anniversary of Champlain by giving credit to both the man and his flaws. Fischer's *Champlain's Dream* coupled with Litalien and Vaugeois' *Champlain: la naissance de l'amérique française*, and Ritch and Heidenreich's *Samuel de Champlain Before 1604: Des Sauvages and Other Documents Related to the Period* have provided this work with a starting point, as well as inspiration.¹²

So stands the historiography of Champlain, lacking many substantial discussions of his youth. Some historians devote only a couple paragraphs to Champlain's early days, citing the obvious lack of sources for the brevity of the section; although, the average length is slightly less than a chapter. Such a prominent figure in Canadian and U.S. history deserves more attention; this paucity of scholarship regarding his youth is not acceptable.

Most publications contain a basic introduction, presenting more or less the following information. Champlain's date of birth is unknown, although he is thought to have been born before, or during, the year 1574. Recently uncovered records suggest August 13, 1574 as the exact date for baptism, but this is still under debate.¹³ Born in the province of Saintonge to a

¹² David H. Fischer, *Champlain's Dream* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2008); *Champlain and the Birth of French America*, eds. Raymonde Litalien and Denis Vaugeois (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004); *Samuel de Champlain before 1604: Des Sauvages and Other Documents Related*, eds. Janet Ritch and Conrad Heidenreich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2010). All Three works have helped with this project tremendously. *Champlain's Dream* and *Champlain and the Birth of French America* have excellent historiographies which contributed to the introduction of this thesis. Additionally, *Samuel de Champlain Before 1604*, is the most complete history of Champlain prior to his travels in North America, and includes numerous primary sources which have been invaluable.

¹³ Baptismal Record, 1574, AD-17, Archives départementales de la Charente-Maritime, La Rochelle, France. It is unclear if this document is actually Champlain's baptismal record. The period is correct, as well as the first names of Samuel and both his parents. The area of birth is plausible, if not probable. However, the last name on the record is Chapeleau, not Champlain, which causes many

presumably non-noble family, Champlain was acquainted with the sea from an early age. Brouage, the town where he grew up, was a prosperous community due to its proximity to the sea and its trademark salt production, an essential industry of the time which helped to preserve foods. Fishermen leaving for the productive waters off North America would regularly stop in Brouage to fill their ships with salt in order to preserve their catch. Many historians have speculated that Champlain was relatively familiar with North America as a result of growing up in this region. Surely the sailors passing by relayed tales of the New World to those who would listen.¹⁴

Champlain's early religious affiliations have also been a topic of interest for scholars. Extremely devout in his later years as a Catholic, the role religion played on the youthful Champlain is not known. In light of recent scholarship, it is increasingly likely that Champlain was born a Protestant. The name Samuel seems to be of Protestant origin; additionally, he grew up amongst a large Protestant population in Saintonge.¹⁵ Not coincidentally, the infamous Protestant fortress of La Rochelle was located very close to Brouage. These factors are not enough to prove his religion at birth, but when coupled with a new found baptismal record, it is more likely that he was at first Protestant. Regardless of his religious beginnings, it is well known that he served under King Henri IV during the Wars of Religion. Henri himself switched back and forth between Catholicism and Protestantism, sometimes under threat of violence, other

historians to second guess the document. An image of the baptismal record can be found here (<http://www.fichierorigine.com/dossiers/Champlain.JPG>). This is taken from a Canadian genealogical website.

¹⁴ Bishop, 3-5; Morison, 16-22; Fischer, 15-29. All three works say approximately the same things regarding Champlain, especially in their opening chapters.

¹⁵ Bishop, 5; Morison, 17; Fischer, 24. Both Bishop and Fischer propose that Champlain was brought up Protestant. Morison on the other hand states that Champlain was "certainly" brought up Catholic, but he gives no evidence to back up his claim.

times of his own free will. By the time Champlain reached his thirties, evidence suggests that he was Catholic. The probability of shifting religious sensibilities is significant because it speaks to a crisis of identity that the French, as a nation, were undergoing during the Wars of Religion. An examination of these shifts may provide insight into Champlain's religious and political mentality. Also, perhaps his experiences as both Protestant and Catholic allowed him to maintain the loyalty of men with differing religious views throughout his time in command of New France.

A prototypical and highly condensed version of Champlain's youth can be found in a biography written by the previously mentioned scholar, Narcisse-Eutrope Dionne. This work, *Champlain: Fondateur de Québec et père de la Nouvelle-France*, published in 1891, is considered a classic on the subject of Champlain and Dionne's command of the sources is superb. Chapter one, "Champlain's First Voyage to America" unfortunately commits only a single page to Champlain's life prior to his first transatlantic voyage in 1599. Dionne mentions Champlain's time in the army of Henri IV, but does no more. This is perhaps the single greatest flaw of an otherwise brilliant study. The following excerpt from that first chapter is almost everything Dionne has to say concerning Champlain's youth:

We know practically nothing of Champlain's years in one of the most troublous periods in the history of France, that of the wars of religion. His youth appears to have glided quietly away, spent for the most part with his family, and in assisting his father who was a mariner, in his wanderings upon the sea. The knowledge thus obtained was of great service to him, for after awhile he became not only conversant in the life of a mariner, but also with the science of geography and astronomy. When Samuel Champlain was about

twenty years of age, he tendered his services to Marshal D'Aumont, one of the chief commanders of the Catholic army in its expedition against the Huguenots.¹⁶

With the coming of the twentieth century, new biographies tried to parse more of Champlain's personality and character. One of the most prominent was Morris Bishop's 1948 work entitled *Champlain: Life of Fortitude*. Bishop takes the reader on a chronological ride through Champlain's life, highlighting the major events. Besides pointing out Champlain's merits and pioneering qualities, the work adds little in terms of analysis. At times, whole sections of Champlain's own writing are pasted onto the page and cited. The first chapter includes the expected bits of information regarding Champlain's youth, yet reveals nothing new of value.

The second half of the twentieth century brought more works. Samuel Eliot Morison's *Champlain: Father of New France* published in 1972 was a biography very much in the mold of Bishop. A standard introduction followed by a timeline of events produces a remarkable similarity between the two works. One major difference occurs towards the end of the monograph where Morison goes into more detail about the lasting impact of Champlain upon Canada and the United States. The persistence of the French language in Quebec and implication of Champlain's geographical discoveries are the highlights of the concluding chapters. This final section of Bishop's is somewhat refreshing but does not represent new findings or a divergence of opinion from previous research. More recently, David Hackett Fischer produced a large volume entitled *Champlain's Dream*, published in 2008. This work has a few chapters covering Champlain's formative years and is one of the most extensive overviews of the subject written to

¹⁶ Dionne, 1. This is one of several paragraphs devoted to Champlain's time before his voyage to New Spain. The citation gives the reader a good sense of the brevity of the section as well as the normal amount of effort put into researching Champlain's youth.

date. It is second only to *Samuel de Champlain Before 1604: Des Sauvages and Other Documents Related to the Period*, which was published later in 2010. *Champlain's Dream* for the first time goes beyond and adds to the standard introduction. Fischer attempts to provide the reader with a more comprehensive view of our subject's youth. He talks about King Henri and his relationship to Champlain, as well as the period of the Wars of Religion in which Champlain was involved. Fischer must be given credit for this, but he tends to wax poetically about the beautiful French countryside, and he does not take the research as far as it could have gone. There are avenues yet unexplored.

Ritch and Heidenreich's *Champlain before 1604*, is currently the most detailed discussion of the topic. It is primarily a collection of sources relating to Champlain's early years. The editors of the work provide some analysis of the sources in their introductory chapters, yet they leave the debate unfinished. Even though they present new insights, they do not speculate enough on the greater implications that these sources present.¹⁷ They are unwilling to make the leap into the realm of plausibility by going beyond these sources. In truth they stop short of utilizing the material to its fullest potential. To do this, one must look at historical evidence not directly related to Champlain in order to understand the general atmosphere of the times in which he lived, and thereby create a probable narrative for his youth.

In an attempt to fill the historiographic gap created by a lack of attention given to Champlain's early years, this essay will argue that the experiences gained and connections formed in his youth put Champlain in a position to succeed later in life. In fact, Champlain

¹⁷ Hienrich and Ritch, 3-40. Pages three through forty in Hiednrich and Ritch include an introductory essay. Using sources such as the recently discovered birth record, they argue that Champlain was probably Protestant. They also discuss his military appointments to an extent and present their new findings. These findings focus on the type of work Champlain did while in the army.

would have likely failed in his endeavor to colonize the New World if not for these experiences, connections, and worldviews.

While in the army of King Henri IV, Champlain acquired the necessary skills to fight and administer in the New World. Champlain was a quartermaster during his time in the army. He displayed administrative skill and probably an ability to lead and fight, therefore quickly rising through the ranks. Quartermasters were in charge of making sure soldiers were housed or quartered during campaigns. This position, usually referred to as a *fourier*, included other functions such as creating maps for the king and his army. Champlain's capability to produce maps would be essential for his career in New France. Without this skill, he would not have been able to secure himself (via patronage) the position of royal geographer. Also, as a result of this administrative function, Champlain had the knowledge and experience needed to run a colony effectively, helping to ensure its success. Furthermore, the position of quartermaster was not merely an administrative position: every man had to fight, not just frontline troops. Champlain probably engaged in a number of sieges and battles in the Old World. This gave him practical knowledge of warfare which translated well in the New World. The French Wars of Religion were not conflicts decided solely by pitched combat: there was much siege warfare, which surprisingly enough was applicable in the New World, where Champlain indeed conducted several sieges. Chapter one will cover these subjects.

Connections in early modern French society were every bit as important as experience. The patronage system was highly developed, immensely complex and allowed for some measure of upward mobility. While gaining noble status was not the end result, the system worked reasonably well for Champlain. He forged connections in his youth which helped sustain his colony for many years. In Champlain's case, his practical knowledge of map production

probably helped him to work the patronage system. Often times, low-level subjects with specific skills received the graces of their higher-ups.¹⁸ These skills could be anything from writing prowess, oration, or as is obvious in this work, map-making. This work argues that Champlain used his map-making abilities to secure himself, not only promotions, but also connections in the military that stretched all the way to the top with Henri IV. These connections, which incorporated Champlain into the affinities of Henri IV and d'Aumont, were made in during the Wars of Religion. The second chapter will deal with issues such as how Champlain might have navigated the political landscape, as well as what role his technical abilities and education played when seeking a patron. A single act of patronage likely occurred, in the form of a promotion, which secured him the good will of his superiors. This act precipitated the events that would follow in his life.

Chapter three shifts away from the military and political issues of Champlain's early life and focuses on religion, primarily, the probable causes and time frame for his conversion. There were many pressures in play in sixteenth-century France influencing Catholics and Protestants alike. Chapter three argues that Champlain yielded to these pressures by converting to the Roman faith sometime during or immediately after the French Wars of Religion. At that point in his life, Champlain would have been separated from his Protestant family and community, while at the same time eyeing a future in a largely Catholic world. The community played a large part in the continuation of the Huguenot faith. Their collective strength helped to cement the individuals to the larger community. In general, the more contact a Protestant had with his or her extended community, the less likely they were to convert. Once Champlain left this sheltered

¹⁸ Credit must be given to Dr. Jotham Parsons for assisting in the conception of the idea that patronage in early modern France could often be based on one's technical abilities and skills. These ideas will be explored in more depth in chapter two.

environment, he was more susceptible to external pressures to convert. The chapter will also look at numerous issues related to abjuration and polemical dialogues that were taking place. Catholic authors and their views on Catholic doctrine will be examined, as well as the nature of the confessional debate taking place at the time. The chapter will conclude with a comparison of conversion narratives between Champlain and a man of similar social and political position, Marc-Antoine Marreau de Boisguérin. This comparison will illustrate that abjuration and conversion were highly individual affairs, for, despite similar upbringings, the two men experienced radically different paths to conversion.

The overall objective of this study is to provide a satisfactory beginning to the story of Samuel de Champlain. The missing chapter in his life is without question the first and perhaps the most important, for it is vital to our understanding of his later actions. Without knowing his youth, how can we fully appreciate his adulthood? These formative years, which took place in such difficult times, and under difficult circumstances, were the crucible which hardened Champlain and prepared him for a life in the New World. By understanding his military trials, political connections, and religious convictions, we can further enhance our knowledge of Champlain.

The Early Martial Experiences of Samuel de Champlain

Samuel de Champlain was never destined to live a peaceful existence; his place and time of birth predetermined that he was to be a man of war. Armed conflict never manifested as a distant threat, but instead, a near and ever-present menace in his life. Brouage, the town where Champlain was born, lay close to the epicenter of Huguenot resistance in France: the fortified coastal city of La Rochelle, fifty kilometers to the north. Fighting over La Rochelle and its surroundings ensured that the entire region tasted the bitterness of civil war. There were very few regions which escaped the ill effects of the Wars of Religion, but the strategic importance of La Rochelle engulfed the surrounding regions in some of the most ruinous actions of the war. Like many men of his day, Champlain partook in these conflicts. By the time he appeared in the muster rolls of King Henri IV, the conflict had become as much struggle against Spain as against the remaining forces of the Catholic League. Fighting for Henri IV would do much in the way of forming the young Champlain. Unfortunately, these events have not much been accounted for in previous studies of the great explorer.

It is well known that Champlain spent time in the army, but little research has been done on the effects this experience might have had upon him. Morris Bishop and Samuel Morison both cover Champlain's time in the Wars of Religion, but quickly continue on to other matters. David Fischer provides a full chapter on the subject, but does not discuss in detail what Champlain may have experienced in that army, nor does he go to great lengths to explain how this prepared him for his North American exploits. A lack of sources plagues the research; therefore, other materials must be used to make inferences so as to learn more of Champlain's first tastes of martial life. What can contemporary accounts of battles and sieges tell us? How reasonable is it to assume that Champlain had experiences similar to those found in these

accounts? Just because Champlain was not inclined to pen his own Old World military memoirs, does not mean that we do not know what it was like to be a soldier in the latter half of the French Wars of Religion. One can assume that his skill in combat and administration, as well as his leadership qualities came from his years in the army. Accounts of contemporary *fouriers*, sieges and battles can illuminate how exactly these experiences gave him the three crucial skills of fighting, administering and leading. What follows is the French Wars of Religion as Champlain probably saw them.

When and at what age did Champlain first witness the civil wars of France? This question is difficult to answer due to the mystery of Champlain's date of birth. Historians have spent much time and energy trying to determine it, never coming to much of an agreement.¹ Recently, however, new evidence has arisen that suggests his date of birth might have been shortly before August 13, 1574, being the date on a baptismal record in the register of La Rochelle that may have been his.² The authenticity of this document has not been totally verified, yet it remains a very promising piece of evidence. The period is correct, and the location of La Rochelle would not have been out of the ordinary. Additionally, the recorded first names of Samuel and both his parents corroborate preexisting documentation. However, the last name on the record is Chapeleau, not Champlain, which causes some to doubt the document. A simple change in spelling does not automatically invalidate the record, however; Champlain was often spelled in various ways. For example, in a later document, dated June 26, 1601, Champlain is spelled

¹ Bishop, 3-5; Morison, 3-8; Fischer, 8-10. As late as 2008, there was little consensus as to Champlain's date of birth, any year from 1565-1580 was considered possible. Afterward, the newly discovered baptismal record suggests his birth was sometime during 1574 or in one of the preceding years.

² Baptismal Record, 1574, AD-17, Archives départementales de la Charente-Maritime, La Rochelle, France.

Zamplen.³ Orthographic consistency was obviously hard to come by in the sixteenth century. Regardless, any date from 1570 to 1574 is reasonable. Most importantly, if correct, this document verifies what historians have long guessed at: Champlain was born a Protestant.⁴

Assuming that Champlain was born not long before August 13, 1574, his first memories of war may have come as early as 1577, when he would have been between three to seven years old. During the Sixth War of Religion, a Catholic army led by the Duc de Montpensier besieged Brouage on June 22, 1577.⁵ This relatively insignificant action involved perhaps only several thousand men besieging and around one thousand defending. The opening moves of the siege consisted of several skirmishes fought over control of surrounding villages followed by the laying of trenches by the besiegers. The siege would last two months and have some of the classic traits of contemporary siege warfare. Sorties and relief supplies sent by sea factored heavily into the outcome; there were also significant naval actions that helped to shape the course of events during the short campaign. Brouage was overtaken by the royalists on August 21, 1577, which may have contributed to the peace that followed in September.⁶

³ Cádiz: Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz, no. 1512, ff246^v-249^v ; f 248, Notario Marcos de Rivera, 1601. This is a Spanish source which details the transfer of property to Champlain. Even though Champlain is spelled in a Spanish manner (Zamplen), the main point to consider is that consistency of spelling was not an issue in early modern Europe.

⁴ Janet Ritch, "Discovery of the Baptismal Certificate of Samuel de Champlain," *Les amitiés généalogiques canadiennes-françaises: Bulletin de l'amicale des familles d'alliance canadienne-française* 36, (2013), 20-3. Available from <http://www.champlainsociety.ca/discovery-of-the-baptismal-certificate-of-samuel-de-champlain/>. Accessed on November 30, 2013.

⁵ Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle: 1553-1602*, ed. Alphonse de Ruble, vol. 5 (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1891), 268-85.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 360. The treaty of Bergerac ended the Sixth War of Religion on September 17, 1577.

An account of the siege has been preserved by Agrippa D'Aubigné, a prominent military memoirist of the sixteenth century. He described a sortie in which a leading Protestant captain defending Brouage was killed. While not significant with respect to the larger picture of the Wars of Religion, this sortie reflects a typical occurrence in siege warfare, the kind of story that must have been well-known to Champlain as he entered adulthood:

The prayer was said in the ravelin,⁷ Seré knocked down several *gabions* which enclosed the ravelin, with thirty cuirassiers and one hundred and twenty chosen harquebusiers. The guards companies at first put all into duty and defense, but facing resolute men that pierced their defenses now put all the trench to route; more than a thousand men fled the village of Yers. Seré did not wish to linger until he had taken the trenches, for many of the fleeing, who had been thrown into the beaches on the right, were regrouping. Next, several gentlemen, including Pui-Gaillard jumped on a stump and rallied four to five hundred of the Swiss who took the path to the trench, going straight toward Seré. They were followed by a very small group, who had only barely survived the assault and was retreating to Brouage, but too late, having disregarded the advice of those crying “look out behind you.” Moreover, he had just recovered from a serious illness which enfeebled him. Seeing himself pressed by the Swiss and having lost breath, he gave them about ten cuts of the halberd; thus enveloped by those who had jumped the trench between themselves and the gate. In this way Seré was killed surrounded by about ten valorous men.⁸

⁷ Ibid., 305-6. Ravelin: Usually triangular breastwork situated outside of the main defenses of a fortification. The objective of such a structure was to prevent the besiegers from placing their artillery within range of the main fortifications. An attacking force would have to deal with the ravelin before it could handle the fort itself. Taking the ravelin was often risky because any attacking force would be under fire from the main walls as well as the ravelin itself. Gabion: A defensive cage-like device filled with earth or stone and used in siege warfare to build protective barriers. Yers: A small village just to the south of Brouage. Seré: The Protestant captain who organized the sortie. Pui Gaillard: A Catholic capitan.

⁸ Ibid., 305-6. This translation is my own. Here is the original text: “La prière estant faicte dans la ravelin, Seré faict abatre quelques gabions qui le fermoyent, donne premièrement avec trente cuirasses et six vingts arquebuziers choisis. Les compagnies des gardes se mirent au commencement en tout devoir et defense, mais, ayans à faire à des résolus qui les percèrent, toute la tranchée s’esbranla en fuite, si bien que plus de mil hommes gagnèrent le bourg d’Yers. Seré ne voulant point prendre haleine qu’il ne fust au bout des tranchées, la pluspart des fuyards qui s’estoyent jettez dans les sables de main droite se recognurent. Quelques gentilshommes après, et puis Pui-Gaillard, sauté sur un courtaud, en rallièrent quatre ou cinq cents auprès, des Suisses, et cela prit le chemin de la tranchée, allant droit là où Seré, qui n’estoit suivi que de fort pue, se retiroit, mais trop tard, ayant mesprisé l’advis de cuex qui lui crièrent plusieurs fois “Regardex qui vous suite.” D’ailleurs il sortiot d’une grand maladie qui l’avoit affoibli. Se

This attack, or any sortie for that matter, was designed to disrupt enemy progress on the construction of trenches and platforms for cannons. It was a common strategy employed by defending garrisons. If such tactics were employed prudently, the besieged could greatly improve their chances for success. For example, during the siege at La Rochelle in 1573, the defending Protestants sortied about sixty times in a six month period, prolonging the siege and keeping the at times hapless Catholics at bay.⁹ In the excerpt, it is clear that the defenders of Brouage succeeded in temporarily disrupting Catholic progress on the trench, but tragically suffered the loss of one of their captains in the process. Champlain during his time in the army probably saw a fair number of sorties and presumably was on the receiving end of such actions. He probably fought in melees similar to the one described above. At any rate, this was the narrative of military valor he would have encountered as he became a soldier.

Perhaps Champlain was not present in 1577 to witness these traumatic events taking place in his hometown. Most sensible civilians had probably evacuated the area as the Catholics made their entrance into the province. We cannot know what his memory of the siege of Brouage was or if he was even able to recall it, since at the time he was probably only three to seven years old. He and his mother may have headed for safer locales (such as La Rochelle) and his father could have been out at sea or perhaps even participating in the unfolding events. Regardless, the

voyant pressé par les Suisses et n'ayant plus de haleine, il retourna lui dixiesme aux coups d'hallebarde; cela enveloppé par ceux qui sautoyent la tranchée entre le porte et eux. Ansi fut tué Seré, avec dix hommes de valeur autour de lui.”

⁹ James B. Wood, *The King's Army: Warfare, Soldiers, and Society during the Wars of Religion in France, 1562-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 248-9. This book is an excellent resource for any study of the Wars of Religion and has been invaluable for the development of this essay, particularly contributing to knowledge of the manner in which the early parts of the French Wars of Religion were conducted.

war hit home early for young Champlain. If he himself could not remember it, his family and friends in Brouage certainly would have. Undoubtedly, this was a defining experience for not just his family but for the entire area.

The incessant warfare that plagued the region did not ignore Brouage after the siege of 1577.¹⁰ Again in 1585 the town fell under siege. During this second event, the besiegers were successfully repulsed. This combat was little more than one of several actions taking place in Saintonge, the province where Brouage was located, hence Champlain's home province. Champlain would have certainly remembered this second siege, yet he was still unlikely to have participated in it. He was still too young, in all probability being between ten and fifteen years old. If he were around fifteen, however, it would not have been out of the ordinary for him to have participated in some capacity. At the very least, the sieges of Brouage in 1577 and 1585 set an early tone for the warlike nature of his life.

Nine years later, Champlain first appeared in the muster roles of King Henri IV. Champlain's actions in the elapsed time are not known. His family, while not extravagantly wealthy, was certainly comfortable financially; perhaps he even enjoyed a plentiful childhood. The Champlain family was not noble, but they seem to have been a part of a rising class of bourgeois. As is evident through his later writings, Champlain obtained some measure of education, which was not uncommon for boys in his social standing, and although no scholar would confuse his tart style with the prose of a classically educated gentleman-scholar like Michel de Montaigne, he nevertheless had an ability to clearly document his adventures. Some recent studies have also discussed the possibility that Champlain studied the arts of cartography,

¹⁰ Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle: 1553-1602*, ed. Alphonse de Ruble, vol. 7 (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1891) 7-28.

siege warfare, and logistics at a nearby academy, usually reserved for noble children, which may have allowed him to make noble connections early in his life as well develop his propensity for producing high-quality maps.¹¹ Many have made the assumption that he attended school in these years, and many have also proposed that he took to the sea and learned his father's craft.¹² This would explain his uncanny ability to safely traverse the Atlantic, which he did almost yearly from 1604 onwards, by no means an easy task. Assuming that in these formative years Champlain learned to read, write, sail and perhaps dabbled in cartography, it is no wonder that he emerged in the opening moments of the seventeenth century as a capable explorer.

Another trait that served him equally well in the New World was his martial prowess, gained on the soil of Brittany from 1594 to 1598 while in service to the King. The young Champlain was introduced in the official army payrolls as a *fourier*, a type of quartermaster, for time served between March 1 and April 30, 1595.¹³ It is possible that he had been in the army for some time prior to this, for he is briefly mentioned as having fought bravely in an account of the Siege of Crozon, in 1594.¹⁴ Crozon was a Spanish fort situated across the bay from the city of Brest in Brittany, which controlled maritime access to the bay. The Spanish presence in the area was a threat to both English naval supremacy and French interests under Henri IV. A combined

¹¹ Hienrich and Ritch, 4-18. The two authors speculate about the possibility that Champlain attended a noble academy. It is tempting to make such a connection, but Champlain's social standing must not be forgotten. His relatively low rank in society would have been a major hurdle for him to gain entrance to the school. Nevertheless, given his cartographic skill and obvious level of education, it seems probable that he indeed attend the school that Hienrich and Ritch refer to.

¹² Morison, 10-5; Fischer 15-29; Hienrich and Ritch, 13-4.

¹³ Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Archives régionales de Bretagne, Rennes, C2914, ff. 192^v.

¹⁴ Arthur Le Moyne de la Borderie and Barthelemy Pocùet, *Histoire de Bretagne*, vol. 5 (Rennes: Librairie generale J. Plihon et L. Hommay, 1913), 260.

force of English and French soldiers formally laid siege to the fort on October 1, 1594, signaling the start of a terrible campaign. The walls of Fort Crozon were sturdy and reportedly thirty-seven feet thick. Despite near constant bombardment from English guns under the command of Sir John Norris, very little damage was done to the curtain.¹⁵ The small garrison of four hundred Spaniards, led by Don Thomas de Praxides, was not an easily extinguished foe, despite facing a besieging force of five thousand men.¹⁶ In addition to the tenacity of the Spanish defenders, who were reportedly all veteran soldiers, the siege was further complicated by inclement weather. Cold temperatures and rain were constant nuisances to the troops, many of whom fell sick to the unforgiving November climate.¹⁷

The Spanish, like the Protestants of Brouage, sortied several times and inflicted heavy losses on the French in particular who were commanded by Marshall D'Aumont, a latter patron of Champlain, driving them from their trenches on two occasions. The besiegers, plagued by their own slow progress, attempted at one point to take the fort without forcing a breach. This attack was carried out by the English who imprudently charged headlong towards the fort, scaled the walls and struggled with the defenders once inside. They were easily defeated. The siege continued with few developments until November 7, 1594, when news of a Spanish relief force

¹⁵ The curtain was the main wall in a fortification. In the case of Crozon, the curtain was extremely thick and well built in modern style. For more information on how such structures were constructed and defended, see: Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁶ Frank Jones, *The Life of Sir Martin Frobisher* (London: Spottiswood & Company, 1878), 327.

¹⁷ Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les guerres de la ligue et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*, ed. Le Bastard de Mesmeur (Saint-Brieuc: Librairie de l'Prud'homme, 1887) 268-93; Dom Hyacinthe Morice, ed., *Mémoires pour servir de preuves à l'histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Bretagne, tirés des archives de cette province, de celles de France & Angleterre, des Recueils de plusieurs sçavans Antiquaires*, ed. Dom Hyacinthe Morice, vol. 3 (Paris: Charles d'Osmont, 1746), 1611-38.

en-route to Crozon reached the ears of the allied leaders. They decided to force a breach as soon as possible with mines they had been preparing, hoping to avoid a costly open-field battle with the relief force. On November 17, 1594, after ten days of preparation, the mines successfully detonated and created gaps in the curtain large enough that the attackers were able to storm the fort. The English charged on the left side while the French simultaneously assaulted the right. All accounts of battle state that it was a bloody affair in which the Spanish troops fought bravely and until the bitter end. Nearly all the Spaniards were slain in the defense of Fort Crozon.¹⁸

Arthur le Moyne de la Borderie, an early nineteenth century French historian who specialized in the history of Brittany, gives an in-depth account of the siege of Crozon in his *Histoire de Bretagne*. He says only the following about the actions of Champlain at the time of battle.

To these names, one is happy to add Samuel de Champlain, the future explorer of Canada who, then 25 years old, was engaged in the corps of d'Espinay Saint-Luc, governor of Brouage, his native town, and fought bravely at Crozon.¹⁹

This is the entirety of his allusion to Champlain. Due to imprecise citations, it is difficult to find the primary source which verifies La Bourderie's claim that Champlain was present. There is, however, a reference to Sieur de Champfluery in a primary account of the siege written by M. Moreau and entitled *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les guerres de la ligue et particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille*. Even considering the previously mentioned apparent disregard for orthographic consistency, this is unlikely to refer to Champlain.

¹⁸ Moreau, 270.

¹⁹ La Borderie and Pocuet, 260. Here is the original text: "A ces noms on est heureux de joindre celui de Samuel de Champlain, le futur explorateur de Canada qui, alors âgé de 25 ans, s'était engagé dans le corps de d'Espinay Saint-Luc, gouverneur de Brouage, sa ville natale, et se battit bravement à Crozon." What preceded this citation was a list of prominent soldiers who fought at the siege of Crozon.

Describing Champlain as *Sieur* at this early date stretches the limits of his social standing. Later in his life this would not be unusual, but at this point he was a young non-noble soldier who certainly did not merit the title of *Sieur*. This distinction was normally reserved for the noble class.²⁰ However, after the war he seems to have taken a step up the social ladder. He was a pensioner of King Henri IV, implying that he had at least a nominal connection to the king. He also had made acquaintances with many powerful men in the nobility like the marshals de Cossé-Brissac and D'Aumont.²¹ Champlain mentions briefly his connections in the opening pages of his description of the voyage to New Spain and at several other points in his writing.²² He was certainly not born noble, but after 1598, he appears to have obtained quasi nobility.²³ Perhaps five years after the Siege of Crozon, he may have been addressed as *Sieur*, but not in 1594.

Though no primary sources make reference to Champlain's participation at Crozon, it is still fairly probable that Champlain was present. Multiple documents refer to companies of men from Saintonge, of which Champlain might easily have been a member.²⁴ It would not have been out of the ordinary, given the possibility that Champlain attended a noble academy and learned various skills of war, if he joined a regiment from Saintonge and marched north with them to Brittany. The leader of this group of men was Francois d'Espinay de Saint-Luc, a former governor of Brouage, who held the position in 1579. Champlain probably knew, or knew of, this

²⁰ Moreau, 281.

²¹ Samuel Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, Vol. 1*, ed. H.P. Biggar, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922) 3-4.

²² *Ibid.*, see the opening pages of the second chapter.

²³ Fischer, 61-6. Here Fischer does talk about Champlain's experience in the military. While not all encompassing, this represents a good summation of that part of Champlain's life

²⁴ Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire Universelle de Jacques-Auguste De Thou depuis 1543 jusqu'en 1607 Traduite sur l'edition latine de Londres*, Vol. 12 (London: Bibliothèque royale, 1734) 314.

man from his childhood. Brouage was a small town and a relatively wealthy and well-to-do family like Champlain's would have certainly had some relationship with the governor. Saint-Luc was a Catholic supporter and fought against the Protestants in the early Wars of Religion. He was a favorite of Henri III's for many years but after the conversion of Henri IV he quickly aligned himself with the new king. During the Brittany campaign, he was a subordinate of Marshal D'Aumont. According to de Thou, it was these men from Saintonge, under d'Espinay, who were among the assaulting waves of troops to storm Fort Crozon. If Champlain was in their number, he experienced a terrible and truly horrendous fight.

A captain named Romegou, a noble from Saintonge, led d'Espinay's men on the second charge into a breach in the curtain in late November, 1594. He was killed almost immediately after he entered the fort, followed closely by his second in command. The Spanish had easily repulsed an initial attack moments before and were not much weakened when the second wave of troops came.²⁵ If Champlain was a member of this regiment he would have made the assault with the second wave. Accounts of the battle all mention the brutality of the final fight. One source suggests that half of all the French and English soldiers involved became casualties while the Spanish were almost killed to a man.²⁶ Champlain likely participated in these events: suffering from the cold and rain of November, charging into the breach, encountering determined and seasoned defenders, engaging in the melee that surrounded him. What trials could have better prepared him for a lifetime of hardship in the North American wilderness?

²⁵ Ibid., 314.

²⁶ Hienrich and Ritch, 20.

After the siege of Crozon, Marshal D'Aumont and his army retired to the nearby village of Quimper. It is here that the first official mention of Champlain in the records of the army is made.²⁷ He received a reasonable, but not spectacular pay; his administrative position as a *fourier* ensured that his income at least exceeded that of the common foot soldier. Perhaps his introduction as a *fourier* is best explained as a promotion given in recognition for his bravery and good service at Crozon. Alternatively, he may have simply been the best man for the job and was recruited green and straight out of Brouage, never having fought at Crozon. This is possible because Champlain may have had some qualifications for the position, presumably learned while at the academy in Brouage, before he ever set foot in Brittany. Alternatively, he could have impressed his superiors in some other fashion in order to secure this position. The unfortunate fact remains: we may never know.

The campaign in Brittany was not over after 1594, although the Catholic League and its Spanish allies had been dealt a grievous blow. The next three years were spent capturing the remaining towns still held by foreign or hostile troops and rounding up local groups of bandits. There were several sieges and skirmishes that Champlain could have been involved in, but once again there is no definitive proof of his participation.²⁸ After most of the immediate Spanish threats had been removed, King Henri IV began to place garrisons around Brittany in order to maintain the peace. Quimper, where Champlain remained, was one of the largest concentrations of troops in the area.

²⁷ Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Archives régionales de Bretagne, Rennes, C2914, ff. 192^v.

²⁸ Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle: 1553-1602*, ed. Alphonse de Ruble, vol. 9 (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1891) 186-96.

Champlain's position as *fourier* involved planning routes and preparing lodgings for the king and his retinue. Champlain in this role was an aide to Jean Hardy who was a *maréchal des logis du roi*. A *maréchal des logis du roi* was a member of the king's household; therefore, Champlain, as an aide, was also part of this household, albeit far removed from the king. His tasks included the production of maps, the measuring of distances, and recording descriptions of landmarks, towns and geographic features. Maps were considered classified documents in the sixteenth century; Champlain in this sense was deployed in the personal and discreet service of the king.²⁹ For further proof of this connection, we know from pay records that he had personal interactions with Marshal D'Aumont and conceivably even with Henri IV himself.³⁰ Champlain was paid for running personal messages between the king and D'Aumont, revealing a certain level of trust and familiarity between the three men. Perhaps he was transporting newly made maps for the war in Brittany in secret. Just because he was running messages back and forth between the two men does not automatically indicate that Champlain had personal interactions with Henri IV at this time. It does however remain a possibility. This, the relationship between Henri IV and Champlain, will be of more importance in chapter two.

Champlain to all appearances was thriving in this role. He was earning a good salary, assisting kings and marshals, and all the while gaining valuable skills. He seems to have impressed his superiors enough that by April 1597, he was a captain, and possibly even in charge of a unit of men.³¹ As a captain in Brittany he probably developed or refined his leadership skills. Unbeknownst to him, his leadership would prove invaluable in the coming years; one needs only

²⁹ Hienrich and Ritch, 10-32.

³⁰ Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Archives régionales de Bretagne, Rennes, C2914, ff. 523^v

³¹ Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine, Archives régionales de Bretagne, Rennes, C2914, ff. 526^v

to look at his deeds in New France to realize just how invaluable it was. Perhaps he was a natural leader, capable of commanding the respect of men without having any prior experience. Even if this is the case, he surely used this position of leadership to sharpen his skills. By the time Champlain was the governor of New France, he was an exceptional leader of men, able to motivate as well as intimidate.

Champlain's years in Brittany reflect directly upon his later life. For example, map making is an essential skill of an explorer and useful for making ties of patronage. How else, or where else, could Champlain have gained enough experience to draw such detailed maps of the North American coast? Additionally, how could Champlain have been expected to combat Native American warriors so efficiently without having had significant combat experience in France? Finally, if he had never led men before as a captain, how could he have been expected to lead, let alone govern, a colony? Without this training, made possible by the army, Champlain would have been ill-prepared for a life of adventure in New France. The army, in a way, provided the perfect mixture of combat experience and practical knowledge for Champlain to thrive in the New World.

In 1598, after much of the fighting in Brittany had subsided, Champlain left the army and set out on his first transatlantic voyage. He made for New Spain. Regarding his reasons for going, Champlain says the following:

Having been employed in the king's army which was in Brittany, under the marshal d'Aumont, de St. Luc, and marshal Brissac, in the capacity of quartermaster in the said army for some years, and until his majesty, in the year 1598, had reduced the said country of Brittany to obedience, and dismissed his army; and seeing myself thereby without any charge or employment, I resolved, so as not to remain idle, to take a trip to Spain and, being there, to acquire and cultivate acquaintances, in order by their favor and intermediary, to manage to embark in some one of the ships of the fleet which the king of Spain sends every year to the West Indies; so that I might be able there to make inquiries

into particulars of which no Frenchmen have succeeded in obtaining cognizance, because they have no free access there, in order to make true report of them to His Majesty on my return.³²

Champlain here gives one of his only accounts of the wars in France. For all the years spent fighting and working for the king in Brittany, Champlain can only muster a few pitiful lines, stating merely that he was in the army of Marshal d'Aumont and was moving on after the army disbanded. In New Spain, Champlain seemed to be observing Spanish colonies in the service of Henri IV, but it is not clear if this was actually Champlain's objective or simply his premise for going. Was he really spying or did he go for the simple thrill of adventure? He was likely both spying (an archaic way of putting it) and simply catering to his sense of adventure. Either way, Champlain set sail with a small fleet of Spanish ships bound on a yearly voyage to the colonies. Even on this trip, Champlain could not escape the threat of war (which is not to suggest that he was running from it). Champlain recounts seeing the destruction left behind in the wake of an English attack on the Spanish fort of San Juan.³³ After participating in the overwhelming violence of the Wars of Religion, sights of carnage were probably commonplace for Champlain, for he does not seem to be overly disturbed by the sight of the ruined fort.

³² Samuel Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, Vol. 1*, ed. H.P. Biggar, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922), 3-4. The translation is Biggar's. Here is the original text: "Ayant esté employé en l'armée du roi qui estois en Bretagne sous messieurs le maréchal d'Aumont, de St. Luc, et maréchal de Brissac, en qualité de maréchal des logis de ladite armée durant quelques annees et jusques a ce que sa majesté eust en l'année 1598 reduict en son obéissance le dis pais de Bretagne, eus licencier a son armée, me voyant par ce moyen sans aucune charge ni employ, je me résolus pour ne demeurer oisif de trouver moyen de faire une voyage en Espagne, en y estant pratiquer et acquérir des connaissances pour par leur faveur et entremise faire en sorte pouvoir m'embarquer dans quelqu'un des nauires de la flotte que le roi d'Espagne envoyé tous les ans aux indes occidentales, affin d'y pouvoir m'y embarquer des particularités qui n'ons peu estre reconnues par aucuns François, a cause qu'ils n'y ont nul accès libre, pour a mon retour en faire rapport au vraie a sa majesté."

³³ *Ibid.*, 35-40; Fischer, 89.

Perhaps had the fleet left a few weeks earlier, Champlain would have found himself in yet another battle, this time in the heat of the Caribbean instead of the cold of Brittany.

Shortly following his return from New Spain, the next major saga of Champlain's life unfolded: his adventures in Canada. It is clear from his own accounts that Champlain was not shy about using force against the Native Americans. He actively engaged in indigenous warfare and was quick to use the skills provided by his military background if they furthered or benefited his colony. A familiarity with combat, gained while in the army, cannot be overlooked in this equation. Without such skills, presumably honed in Brittany, how could he have been expected to combat Native Americans or garner the respect needed to lead and control the often unsavory men sent to him from France?³⁴ It is likely that, aside from his seemingly innate capability for leadership, his skill in arms aided him greatly in his colonial tasks. His martial prowess secured him native allies, the respect of his subordinates and finally, victory on the battlefield.

The sieges of Brouage and Crozon, along with other engagements in which he may have taken part, provided an exceedingly effective, though horribly dangerous, training ground for Champlain. But how exactly did Champlain use these experiences to his benefit? At first, the differences between European styles of warfare and those practiced by the Native Americans seem too drastically disparate for Champlain's old world military experience to be effective. Contemporary European warfare centered on sieges with intermittent pitched battles, usually between a besieging force and a relief force attempting to break the siege. The primary reason most commanders were afraid to engage in open battle was the risk of losing their entire army. One needs only to look at some of the larger pitched battles during the Wars of Religion, such as

³⁴ With regard to convicts, it was a common practice in the early modern period to send prisoners off to unsettled lands to plant the seed of civilization. This often led to problems for the men in charge.

Dreux, to see the devastating consequences of a pitched engagement. Therefore, warfare was a matter of holding or assaulting fortified positions. In addition, war in Europe was on a different scale when compared to the Native American variation of war. Natives practiced a largely ritualistic style of warfare that focused on small retaliatory raids which produced few casualties. Tiny mobile bands of warriors did most of the fighting and even large battles in native conflicts consisted of only perhaps several hundred individuals.³⁵ When compared to the thousands upon thousands of troop involved in European wars, even the largest engagements in North America were mere skirmishes. Almost every aspect of warfare between the two continents was different. Even the obvious technological gap exposed fundamental disparities. Nevertheless, there were some similarities. Champlain was able to use these similarities to his advantage by applying siege techniques learned in France to warfare in the New World. The best example of this is a siege in miniature conducted by Champlain while in New France.

It is interesting to think that Champlain took part in sieges both in France and in the New World. The styles of combat, while drastically different, still involved fortified positions, speaking perhaps to a universal tendency in human nature towards defense. Native Americans living in the northeast region of North America built large wooden enclosures around strong points to stave off attackers. Therefore, not surprisingly, forts were twice involved in the battles fought between Champlain and his native adversaries. One was located on the banks of Lake Champlain, though Champlain did not get the chance to besiege this fort as the natives inside rushed out to fight a pitched battle. The following quote, taken directly from Champlain's

³⁵ Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604-1618*, ed. W.L. Grant (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1907), 275-90. From Champlain's own writings, we can gather what Native American warfare was like. Generally speaking, this sort of violence included raids and sometime battle of several hundred individuals. For more information on the scale and style of native warfare see: Wayne Lee, *Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800*, *The Journal of Military History* 71 (2007): 701-41

memoirs, concerns a second fort. The natives' weapons and fortresses may have varied from what Champlain was used to in Europe, but the manner in which he attacked was very European.

These (orders) were to make with certain kinds of wood a cavalier which should be higher than the palisades. Upon this were to be placed four or five arquebusiers who should keep up a constant fire over their palisades and galleries, which were well provided with stones and by this means dislodge the enemy who might attack us from their galleries. Meanwhile orders were to be given to produce boards for making a sort of Mantelet to protect our men from the arrows and stones of which the savages generally make use. These instruments namely the cavalier and mantelets were capable of being carried by a large number of men. One mantelet was so constructed that the water could not extinguish the fire which might be set to the fort, under cover of the arquebusiers who were doing their duty on the cavalier, in this manner, I told them, we might be able to defend ourselves so that the enemy could not approach to extinguish the fire which we should set to their ramparts.³⁶

Champlain was using European techniques, technology and terminology to wage war in North America. This example provides direct correlation between sieges in Europe and sieges in New France: the similarities are striking. The use of a cavalier to attack the besieged and the construction of mantelet to provide cover, points to a European method that was brought to the wilds by Champlain.³⁷ Champlain lamented the undisciplined nature of his native allies and blamed them for the failure of the siege. Seemingly, at least to Champlain's eyes, Native Americans had no methodical or commonly used way of attacking such structures, and once the siege lost momentum, the attackers lost cohesion. Champlain was wounded in the action and was forced to retreat. This siege had several obvious differences from a European siege. It had a limited number of black powder weapons, the defensive structure was not very advanced, and the siege was conducted over several hours, not several weeks or months. Even Champlain's basic

³⁶ Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 290.

³⁷ "Cavaliers" were fortified platforms from cannons could pound a defending garrison into submission. This is in effect what Champlain is doing to the Indian defenders. His cavalier is smaller than a European one, and he obviously doesn't have any cannon, but he makes due with what he has by applying European techniques to native warfare.

plan of attack was not well executed. Despite these facts, it was as like to a European-style engagement as could have been conceived, considering the time and place of the event.

It is clear that Champlain was never far from war. He was exposed to it from an early age during the sieges of Brouage in 1577 and again in 1585. Afterward he may have attended a military academy that would have prepared him for combat. The wars in Brittany continued the warlike nature of his existence into the late-sixteenth century and finally, his campaigns in New France capped of the trend. His early life, in a military sense, was the perfect trial run for the hard life he would live, far away from home in wilds of North America. Champlain seemed not to mind the harshness of colonial life and in fact spent several winters in Quebec. He would eventually die there in 1635, when he was between sixty-one and sixty-five years old. He succumbed to complications from a stroke on Christmas day. It is somewhat surprising that a man, whose life was so intertwined and littered with violent encounters, would die in relative peace and at an old age.

Champlain's colony could not have been as successful as it was, if it had not been for the formative experience of fighting for King Henri IV in Brittany. These crucial years provided him with three critical skills. The first was the ability to fight, as speculated by his probable actions at Crozon in 1594. Despite a lack of primary evidence to confirm his participation, it is still likely that he was engaged in the siege due to the presence of regiments of troops from Saintonge, his home province. Second, he learned the technical skills needed to create maps. Champlain's renowned skills as a cartographer were probably perfected during his time spent as a *fourier*. Without this skill, New France might have remained uncharted for many years. Finally, Champlain seemed to have had an innate penchant for leadership. Prior to 1604, we know nothing of his leadership qualities. It is just as likely that Champlain developed these skills as a

captain in 1597, as it is likely that he possessed these skills all his life. Regardless, his leadership was sharpened, if nothing else, in Brittany.

There are still questions left unanswered. One of biggest is: How was Champlain able to make connections with prominent members of the nobility? His connection to Henri IV and other luminaries of France is perplexing. How did a low ranking, middle-class man find his way into the service of the king? A study of the inter-workings of Henri IV's system of patronage could provide answers to such questions. Is it safe to assume that his position as a *fourier* opened doors for the young Champlain, or was it perhaps his supposed time in a military academy? A second question: what role did religion play in the early days of Champlain's life? Since it is now probable that he was baptized a Protestant, when did he convert? Were there political reasons or spiritual reasons at the center of his decision? Questions such as these reveal the uncertainty that still surrounds Champlain's early days. The unfortunate reality is that we will never know what truly happened. Barring the discovery of some long lost cache of primary sources, the young Champlain will forever remain a mystery to scholars. We may be able to piece together the influence of patronage and religion in Champlain's early life by discussing the dynamics of the patronage system and the religious climate at the time. Set against the background of the Wars of Religion, the following two chapters will address these two issues: patronage and religion.

Patronage, Map-Making, and their Role in the Development of Champlain's Career

The sub-field of patronage is a major topic in early modern French history. The number of works on the subject is gigantic and they stand as a testament to the importance of the institution in early modern society.¹ Financial transactions, political decisions, and military appointments were all accomplished through various acts of patronage. Therefore it is vital to consider how Champlain may have fit into this overarching institution of sixteenth and seventeenth-century France and how it may have served his interests. It is likely that a key act of patronage, which may have occurred during Champlain's military career in Brittany, precipitated his success in the New World. Surviving records give clear indications about the patron-client relationship for upper and mid-level nobility; yet for a person of Champlain's stature, records remain scarce. This by no means indicates that Champlain was not involved in some form of patronage during his years in the army of Henri IV. In fact, he, by virtue of his position in that army and by his later appointments, such as royal geographer on the 1603 voyage,² was almost certainly part of a patron-client relationship.

The study of French patronage has largely followed the historiographic trends of political history, falling in and out of popularity with changing schools of thought. Some studies have tried to look at the larger trends within the field of patronage, particularly French *Annaliste* historians like E. Le Roy Ladurie.³ However, the dominant school focuses on event-oriented history, researching the individual magnates who most significantly dictated the structure of

¹ For a good summation of the literature see: Sharon Kettering, "Patronage in Early Modern France" *French Historical Studies* 17 (1992) 839-62.

² Champlain, *Works*, 3-4.

³ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *L'Etat royal: de Louis XI à Henri IV, 1460-1610* (Paris: Haccette, 1987).

patronage. For all this, the positions of low-level men, men like Champlain, have not been extensively researched; not surprisingly, the influence of social history has yet to be significantly felt in the subject's literature.⁴ The primary reason for this dilemma is, as in the previous chapter, a lack of sources. Such studies are difficult to conduct given the pitiful number of surviving records, and the end results are most studies inevitably start at the upper end of society and work down the social ladder if the sources allow them to do so. To combat this, methods similar to those used in the previous chapter will be employed here. By reviewing letters written by Henri IV, it is possible to see how he might have interacted with Champlain in a patron-client type relationship. These letters will be supplemented by accounts of the map-making patronage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the type of patronage in which Champlain was most likely to have been involved.

There were many variations of patronage. To conceive the complexity of the system, it is best to envision a web of reciprocal relationships, reflecting what have come to be called "affinities." An affinity is simply a large interconnected group of patron-client relationships. Not only did these relationships connect up and down depending on social rank, but they also moved laterally. Members of an affinity with similar social standing were likely to be connected through the ties of a common patron. Such ties often led to friendships with economic, political and social benefits, similar to those received from their common patron but on a smaller scale. The perks of these relationships came most often in the form of financial or political support. Patrons

⁴ Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-13. Much of the previous paragraph is based on Carroll's introductory chapter. The politics of this period are difficult to analyze from the perspective of social history. One of the few works addressing this issue is: Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Unfortunately, this work lies outside the scope of this thesis.

would often earn prestige through various literary or artistic commissions, and alternatively, some commissions were awarded for practical items, as was the nature of Champlain's patronage. In other cases, patrons could receive the reciprocated political support of their clients.

Within this sort of structure, it is easy to envision how members of a given affinity came under pressure to maintain their position within it. The practicality of the system made it very stable. Members were under bonds of not only friendship, and loyalty, but kinship as well. Often, whether intentionally or not, heads of affinities would patronize family members or use marital relationships to strengthen bonds that otherwise may have been strictly political or economic in nature. This dynamic, when added to the already self-reinforcing nature of the patronage system made these ties durable and dependable. Thus, affinities were very strong structures, for members were often unwilling to abandon their place within the affinity.

Some of these structures were so large that they became miniature principalities within the kingdom of France. This was especially true during the Wars of Religion. After the loss of power by the French monarchy, local provinces maintained much of their functional capacity thanks to the presence of large affinities headed by magnate families.⁵ They used old government apparatus to ensure sources of revenue would not dry up. Tax systems primarily were maintained when the royal government lost control of an area. The revenue collected would be diverted to pay for the mustering of troops, an essential function in times of war.⁶

⁵ *The French Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, ed. David Potter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 81. The source selected here is entitled the beginnings of autonomy in Languedoc. It gives evidence for the process being described here, that of the decay of royal authority and local magnates gaining control of the region while maintain many governmental apparatuses.

⁶ Carroll, *Noble Power*. Carroll's work is currently the standard text for patronage and affinities during the French Wars of Religion.

When Champlain finally took to the battlefield, local affinities were losing their grasp on regions once devoid of monarchical influence. By the end of the century, King Henri IV had an ever-tightening grasp on local systems of government; one result was that affinities could no longer raise their personal armies without royal assent. This raises the question: was Champlain in an affinity? With only scant sources to rely upon, the answer is presumably yes. It is likely that at some base level Champlain was connected to Henri IV through, probably, an indirect line of patronage. How did this indirect line of patronage work? Upon review of many letters written by Henri IV, and from the general form of patronage taken at the time, it seems that Champlain came into the patronage of Henri IV some time during the Wars of Religion as a result of his ability to produce maps, learned, as we saw in the previous chapter, from his early education.

It would be somewhat misleading to deem Henri IV the head of an affinity, as there would be no difference between saying this and calling him the leader of France. All monarchs undoubtedly had a web of interconnected relationships that eventually stretched down to the lowest levels of society. Most would build off of preexisting affinities or perhaps develop smaller ones of their own, consisting of only elite members of society. In the case of Champlain, this connection, which probably occurred between 1594 and 1595, came through the army. The rough outline for how such a relationship probably worked is as follows: Henri selected his commanders, promoting men who had been proven in the past and men who could help him achieve his goal of the reunification of France. These commanders in turn had smaller circles of their own: miniature affinities. The probable line of patronage stretched from King Henry to Jean Hardy. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Jean Hardy was one of Henri's *maréchaux des logis*. In turn Champlain was promoted as an aid to serve alongside Hardy. One of Champlain's commanders may have given his name to Hardy for selection to the position. This could have

been one of a number of people. Marshal d'Aumont is a possible figure. As Marshal of Henri's forces in Brittany, he would have been in a good position to secure this position for Champlain, although he may not have dealt with such day-to-day matters. A lower level figure like d'Espinay was more likely to have prompted this first commission.⁷ With very little evidence, this theory is impossible to prove definitively, yet such a narrative fits well within the structure of sixteenth-century patronage. This was, potentially, the initial act of patronage that spurred Champlain's career, the crucial point when Champlain's feet were first set upon the path to greatness.

If Champlain's promotion took place in the manner described above, it is unlikely that Henri IV would even have been notified; his duties as king would have left him preoccupied and untroubled by such a low-level promotion. This is in spite of the fact that Henri and his high-level commanders were in fairly consistent contact at the time.⁸ Perhaps d'Aumont was informed of Champlain's promotion, but he would not have thought it significant enough to inform Henri. Rather, it seems more likely that before Champlain left for the New World as a royal geographer he had made personal contact with Henri IV. The first appointment to *fourier*, while technically a promotion to the king's household, was not a significant event outside of Champlain's life. A later date is more probable for the first instance of direct contact between Henri and Champlain. From surviving letters, we can guess at the type of relationship the two men may have had if they

⁷ d'Espinay, as previously mentioned, was a leader of men from the Saintonge region, a possible early commander of Champlain's.

⁸ *Recueil des lettres missives de Henri IV*, ed. M. Berger de Xivrey, Vol. 4 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1848). For Brissac, see pages: 242, 261, 267, 268, 900; For d'Aumont, see pages: 23, 288. In this volume, and in the others in the series, Henri is in constant contact with his commanders. These correspondences deal mainly with the various campaigns and the larger strategies that guided them. Unfortunately, letters concerning the patronage of a low-level soldier like Champlain would not have warranted official communication. The other volumes in this series did not contribute directly to this work; they, instead, served to inform the author of Henri's style of patronage.

did indeed interact personally at a later date. This later date could reasonable be put before Champlain voyages to New Spain and after his promotion to *fourier*.

By looking at letters addressed to men of similar social standing to Champlain, we can surmise what kind of relationship Champlain may have hoped for and even, to some extent, achieved. The following letter is addressed to a Monsieur Serafin. Judging from the letter we cannot be certain of Serafin's rank in society. Taking into account that he was some sort of writer, and the fact that he is not addressed as a high-ranking noble would be, we can assume that he was of low-level nobility or non-noble altogether.

M. Serafin, even though I have written to you through my cousin the duc de Nevers and by the marquis de Pisany, still, the Bishop Du Mans has told me of the friendship he bears you, and of which he gave many assurances on his departure, I very much wanted to send you the present letter by him, you can be assured that I will be well pleased if an occasion presents itself to recognize them by any gratification; towards which I will always be very favorable, as I also am confident in your continued good will and affection that you have testified before to the peace and reestablishment of this kingdom. And on this, I pray to god M. Serafin, that he has you in his sanctity and divine guard.⁸

This letter assures Serafin that he will continue to be in the good graces of the king and receive benefits from those graces, so long as he continues his good work. From this, we can gather that Henri IV would have been courteous to Champlain but would not to stoop to using flattery as he

⁸ Ibid., 46-7. Special thanks must be given to Dr. Jotham Parsons for assisting with this translation. Monsr Serafin, Combien que vous aye escript par mon cousin le duc de Nevers et par le marquis de Pisany, toutesfois le s~ evesque du Mans m'ayant faict récit de l'amitié qu'il vous porte, dont il a mesme rendu beaucoup de tesmoignages à son partement, , je vous ay encore bien voulu faire la présente par luy, que vous pouvés estre asseuré que je seray bien aise qu'il se'presente occasion de les reconnoistre par quelque gratification à quoy je seray tousjours tres disposé, comme je me promets aussy que vous continuerés la bonne volonté et affection que vous avés tesmoigné par cy-devant au repos et restablissement de ce Royaume. Et sur ce, je prie Dieu, Monsr Serafin, qu'il vous ayt en sa sainte et digne garde.

would with people of high status.⁹ Any interactions with Champlain would likely have been brief and to the point, as the following and other letters would indicate.¹⁰ Long letters are generally saved for matters of importance, or for members of magnate families. Take the following letter for example:

M. Bregine, Sending my cousin the duc de Nevers to Our Holy Father the pope to give due honors and praise to him on my part, I have been informed of your sufficiency to do a good job giving the oration that ought to accompany this act, which has moved me to nominate you to my cousin to be employed in this, and to command you to do me service on this occasion, as I am confident you will well know how to do; this will gain you all the more credit on my part for your future advancement. I pray to God M. Bregine, that he has you in his divine sanctity and guard.¹¹

Once again, the nobility of Bregine is not certain; the letter is short and to the point. It informs Bregine that Henri wishes for him to give a speech during an audience with the Pope, which was a high honor. This would be the type or style of letter that Champlain likely would have received. Such letters were not written by Henri himself, but rather by a horde of scribes and minions who facilitated such menial affairs. Interestingly, we can see from the above examples that patronage in early modern France was often predicated on the mastery of a skill of craft, especially when the client in question was not of the nobility, or at least high-nobility.

⁹ Ibid. The entire volume is littered with short letters to people of uncertain nobility. For a specific example: see footnote 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., 329. This letter addressed to M. Beauvoir, displays the characteristics not seen in the two letters presented here. It is long, less formulaic, and somewhat more congenial. This is the manner in which Henri IV have addressed members of the high nobility.

¹¹ Ibid., 47. Special thanks to Dr. Jotham Parsons for assisting with this translation. “Mons~ Bregine, Envoyant mon cousin le duc de Nevers vers Nostre Saint Pere le Pape pour luy rendre l'obéissance qui luy appartient de ma part, le tesmoignage qui m'a esté donné de vostre sumpsance pour bien faire l'oraison dont cet acte doit estre accompagné m'a meu de vous nommer à mon dict cousin pour vous y employer, et mander à me faire service en cette occasion, comme je m'asseure que vous vous en sçaurés bien acquitter, ce qui vous acquerra d'autant plus de recommandation en mon endroict pour vostre advancement priant Dieu, Mons' Bregine, qu'il vous ayt en sa sainte et digne garde.”

Upper-level nobles naturally found themselves entwined in the web of patronage by virtue of their position at birth. Less fortunate souls had to earn their way into these circles. This means that Champlain, assuming in fact that he did come into the patronage of the King, was a master of his craft.

If Champlain were to receive a letter or any sort of contact from the king, it would not have been for his oratory skills, or his ability to write. Champlain's main attribute that fostered his relationship with Henri IV was his capacity for map-making. Map-making had a long history of patronage that developed earliest in Europe in the Italian city-states during the Renaissance. It was here that the first iteration of the so-called 'map-consciousness' came into being.¹² The term 'map consciousness,' reflects the widespread use, understanding and development of maps in Europe starting around the period of the Renaissance. Before that, Europe was not a culture that had made extensive use of maps. The physical representation of space and distances on a two dimensional surface was probably deceptively confusing to early modern Europeans. The earliest European maps were used by the Italian city-states primarily for military purposes and their use slowly spread northward with other aspects of the Renaissance. Common uses included plotting the projected movements of troops, surveying enemy fortifications or territory, as well as the surveying one's own lands. This sort of map production came into common use in northern Europe around 1500 and, cartography became part of the standard curriculum for young

¹² *Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe.* ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). This work informed much of the following discussion. It is a wonderful collection of essays revealing early modern government's consumption of maps, especially military maps. See also: Christine Marie Petto, *When France was King of Cartography: The Patronage and Production of Maps in Early Modern France* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007)

nobles by the middle of the century.¹³ Champlain, as is argued in the first chapter of this work, was introduced to this skill at some point in his education despite his lack of nobility.

The military benefits of maps quickly became apparent to the monarchs of France and England, and they began to directly commission them. The various monarchs were interested in knowing what invasion routes into their lands were the most likely to be used by invading armies and they then began to construct defensive fortifications along these routes. A good example of this was a large number of maps commissioned by Henry VIII of England in the 1530s that detailed the coasts of England.¹⁴ These maps were later the basis for a dubious large-scale defensive construction project. They also served the dual purpose of accurately recording the extent England's physical borders, something that was of little concern prior to the development of 'map-consciousness.'

Maps could help plan offensive operations as well. If an army had a map surveying the layout of a fortress, then it stood a far better chance of taking that fortress; in this manner, mapmakers could also be employed as spies, a potential explanation for Champlain's trip to New Spain.¹⁵ By illustrating the most advantageous lines of attack on paper, a mapmaker could provide tremendous benefit to any commander. A map could be distributed to officers and troops alike, so these forces knew precisely where to attack and with what strength. They would know the surrounding countryside, which provided knowledge of defensible positions should a relief force need to be engaged. An example of a fortress falling, due in part to information provided

¹³ Ibid., chapter two.

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵ Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*. See chapter entitled "A Spy in New Spain." Also see: Buisseret, 37.

by a map was the case of Haddington in Scotland. Edward Seymour, the Duke of Hertford became regent of England after the death of Henry VIII. In an act of incredible misjudgment, Hertford had a map outlining the defenses of the newly constructed fortress of Haddington displayed in a room in one of his estates. An astute French ambassador took notice of this piece and committed it to memory, and within two years, Haddington was in French hands.¹⁶ Incidents such as this, and others like it, demonstrate the importance of maps in early modern Europe. Especially when applied to siege warfare, which was the dominant style of engagement during period, they could turn the tide of a battle or facilitate the capture of key points.

Despite being aware of Champlain's amazing capacity to produce high quality maps, there are few records surviving that give a detailed account of the nature of Champlain's patronage, although, we do know that he had a pension from the king before he left for New France.¹⁷ Evidence for how this pension operated or what it was specifically for is fleeting. We do, however, have surviving evidence of other cartographers working on pension for the kings of France. One such man was Jacques Signot. He was the first known French cartographer commissioned by the king to produce a map. During the Italian Wars, King Charles VIII asked Signot to fabricate a map that revealed the passages over the Alps into Italy along with a written description of each pass. There are no financial details of the transaction remaining, but Signot says he was commissioned to do the work.¹⁸ While this example is definitely more concrete than Champlain's, in that the king personally requested the services of Signot, it nevertheless shows a

¹⁶ Buisseret, 40.

¹⁷ Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 56.

¹⁸ Jacques Signot, *La totale et vraie description de tous les passaiges, lieux et destroictz par lesquelz on peut passer et entrer des Gaules es Ytalies* (Paris: Toussaint Denis, 1515), 1.

precedent for this sort of patronage. Despite the fact that this commission took place well before Champlain's time, it demonstrates the likelihood that Champlain was patronized for his technical skills with maps. This along with the development of map-consciousness paved the way for men like Champlain to receive a royal pension in France.

With the increased use of maps, came an increase in their complexity. Maps were more and more accurate as exacting scientific standards began to be enforced.¹⁹ Once these standards became common, proper training and education became ever more critical and this development is reflected in the primary literature. We can see the shift to 'map-consciousness' in some of the educational manuals of the day, such as Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, which stresses the importance of sketching as a weapon in a courtier's repertoire.²⁰ Another instructional manual, *The Boke Named the Gouvernor* by Thomas Elyot, a famed sixteenth-century English scholar, comments on the importance of any commander to be able to accurately depict terrain, so as to more easily issue orders and conduct campaigns.²¹ Together, these two works, verify the notion that map-making was a pivotal ability for any young noble.²³ With the capacity to sketch and create maps, nobles destined for a military career could, at least theoretically, depict the enemy countryside, enemy positions, attack plans and so on accurately, hence becoming more able commanders.²⁴ Even though Champlain was not a young courtier by any stretch of the imagination, he had at least the education to match that of many noble born children. This

¹⁹ Petto, 1-13

²⁰ Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Leonard E. Opdycke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 188.

²¹ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governor*, (London: Everyman, 1962), 132.

²³ *Ibid.*, 23-4.

²⁴ For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, see: Buisseret, 30-1.

education seemingly gave him the technical abilities needed to rise up the ladder militarily and receive acts of patronage that accelerated his career.

The eventual fruits of this initial act of patronage would be reaped throughout Champlain's career. In the early stages of his explorations of New France, his title as royal geographer was certainly a product of the aforementioned patronage, but later in his career, during his dealings with the French royal court Champlain was really able to receive the most significant benefits. He could be assured that his patrons in court would help him navigate the turbulent waters of French national politics. Additionally, with his education and tremendous natural abilities, Champlain could conduct himself at relative ease when in the presence of the court. Thanks to these skills and connections, despite his lack of nobility, Champlain seems to have carried some social weight. Thanks of these initial acts of patronage, which occurred probably in 1594 or 1595, Champlain's later dealings with the court went relatively well. Champlain continued to maintain his connections after his time in the army and these connections at court helped him to remain politically relevant despite at times being thousands of miles away from Paris. As such, the court of France is the obvious arena of choice to examine the fruits of Champlain's ties of patronage, especially those fruits that were reaped later on in his life. Such an analysis reveals how essential Champlain's initial promotion was in terms of his later success. It was that promotion which set in motion the course of Champlain's life. Champlain still could not have succeeded in New France without continued political and financial support from the court, even if this support was at times limited.

It was at the court that the major politics of the day were played out and Champlain was forced to periodically be present to garner interest and funds for his young colony. Any person wishing to advance an agenda or gain political assistance would head to the Louvre to engage in

its social life to build rapport with powerful nobles and princes. This is exactly what Champlain was obligated to do while in charge of New France.

European courts in the seventeenth century represented not just the seat of government for any given state, but the apex of elite culture: the playgrounds of the rich and powerful. Today, it would be similar to having the White House, Hollywood and Wall Street squeezed into one space. Politics and matters of state were certainly discussed but so too were courtly gossip, recent theatrical performances, the latest fashion trends, and all manner of other subjects that were peripheral to the management of the state.²⁵ If one wanted to thrive in this environment, a mastery of both the practical and frivolous aspects of court life was essential. Failure to obtain this mastery could lead to humiliation or loss of political virility. It was common for high ranking nobles to be at court; often it was even their duty to be present, but for low ranking nobles, going to court was often a once in a lifetime event, a sort of pilgrimage. For some, like Champlain, it was a necessary chore: essential for the continuation of his North American endeavor. Once at court, there were various social functions that were important to the overall structure of aristocratic life. Elegant balls, lavish dinners, games of rhetoric, and all sorts of other activities were typical cultural functions regularly performed by the court. Such spectacles may seem extravagant to the modern reader, but they served important social functions inherent to the court. One of the better sources for understanding courtly life in early modern Europe is

²⁵ For a good depiction of court life, one should view the film *Ridicule*, dir. Patrice Leconte (Miramax, 1996). This film shows the inner workings of the French court in the eighteenth century. It gives the viewer a good sense of the ways in which the court was more than a political arena, but also very much a social one. The social aspect of the court often had political implications, as the film makes clear.

the previously mentioned *Book of the Courtier* by Baldassarre Castiglione.²⁶ Castiglione showed how rhetoric was a much needed skill. He popularized the image of the learned courtier, thereby helping to make courtiers men of knowledge and sophistication. *The Book of the Courtier*, due to its popularity at the time, also reflects the cultural impact that the courts had on the entirety of Europe, not just in Italy and France. Champlain probably did not exude the same level of polish that regular courtiers did. But, this was the environment he had to deal with on his numerous return voyages to France.

The court wielded immense political might. The wealthiest, most prominent members of the nobility, not to mention the king himself, frequented it, making it the ideal place to advance political agendas. Indeed, being a courtier was a full time job for many nobles, and as an extension of the court, they filled various roles such as diplomats, advisors and administrators. If connections could be secured at court, then one had a good chance of receiving the benefits of those connections. This aspect of the patronage system was a primary function of the court, and Champlain was undoubtedly a beneficiary of the system. Courtly patronage was an effective way of conducting business in an elite society where political allies were essential in order to remain relevant. Even the king could not function without the political support that the patronage system provided him.

Champlain's main connections to the court later in life came in the form of three men who supported him in his New World efforts. These three men, termed the 'American Circle' by David Hackett Fischer, were: Pierre Jeannin, the French Intendant of Finances, Nicolas Brulart,

²⁶ Castiglione. While written in Italy in the sixteenth century, this work was read throughout Europe and reflected not only Italian courts but also in European courts in general.

Chancellor of France, and Cossé-Brissac an important general who served under Henri IV.²⁷

These men, all high-ranking members of the court, provided the needed political and financial support that kept Champlain and his young colony afloat. These relationships were all made possible by Champlain's initial promotion, and they show how pivotal that promotion was.

Pierre Jeannin was an advisor to King Henry III as well as King Henri IV, and a principle member of the ruling elite. He shared views of religious moderation with Champlain, giving the two common ground. After the Wars of Religion in France, Jeannin helped to restore order in the country by reconciling King Henri IV with various factions within the kingdom. The strain of many years of civil war had taken its toll on France; Henri IV and his confidants were eager to ease tensions, thereby making men like Jeannin very valuable. In the early sixteen hundreds, he served as a foreign diplomat negotiating the peace of Lyons, as well as an alliance between France and the Netherlands.²⁸ He later became the Superintendent of Finances under the reign of Louis XIII.

Jeannin helped to keep Champlain connected to the court after King Henri IV died and Louis XIII ascended to the throne. Jeannin perhaps saw Champlain as a kindred spirit due to their religious convictions; regardless, he remained one of Champlain's staunchest supporters after Henri IV's death. It was essential for Champlain to have people on his side at that critical juncture. Without continued support from the court, the colony would certainly have failed, and this fate could very well have befallen New France once Henri IV passed. Louis XIII could easily have been inclined to abandon the colony, yet thanks in part to Jeannin, support for the

²⁷ Fischer, 150.

²⁸ Pierre Saumaise, *Eloge sur la vie de Pierre Janin* (Dijon: Claude Guyot, 1623) 1.

colony continued. For example, Champlain writes of a meeting in 1611, after the death of Henri IV, where he wished to regulate the fur trade. Unlicensed traders were causing the young colony troubles by driving up the costs of furs. Jeannin was extremely supportive and sent Champlain away with his approval to the king. The measure was approved.²⁹ This is a fine example to the reciprocal nature of the patronage system.

The next member of the “American Circle,” Nicolas Brulart, the Marquise de Sillery, was also a close friend of Henri IV and Chancellor of France in 1607. He helped to negotiate the proposed marriage of Henri and Marguerite de Valois.³⁰ While ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt to arrange the marriage, the fact that he was in a position to conduct this attempt shows his proximity to Henri. His son continued this tradition of service to the king by working as the foreign minister to Louis XIII. Champlain left evidence that Brulart, along with Jeannin, advised him on the undertaking of explorations that would be most useful to France. A quest to find a fabled North Sea, which the Native Americans had alluded to, is one such example. Champlain and his superiors hoped that this sea would form part of a potential passage to the Pacific Ocean, in other words, the famed Northwest Passage.³¹ Unfortunately, this quest was never undertaken because of complications in Native American relations.

²⁹ Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 229. We see with this example, the fruits of Champlain’s labors. With men like Jeannin in his corner, men who were extremely influential, Champlain was assured of some political weight. He could therefore conduct legislative reforms that benefited his colony. This type of influence demonstrates the power of the ‘American Circle’ as a small political party. It also shows how far up the social ladder Champlain had risen. All this would not have been possible without the initial act of patronage.

³⁰ L.E. Bois, *Le Chevalier Noël Brulart de Sillery* (Quebec: A Coté, 1871), 2.

³¹ Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 235.

Charles de Cossé-Brissac was a marshal of France and close associate of Henri IV. In the later stages of the Wars of Religion, the armies of Henri IV and the Catholic League squared off for supremacy of France. Brissac was, like Champlain, part of the campaigns in Brittany and may have been familiar with Champlain from an early date. It is even possible, however unlikely, that Brissac secured Champlain's first promotion along with or in place of d'Aumont and d'Espinay. Brissac survived the conflict to become an influential leader at court. He continued to support Champlain well into the seventeenth century. He might have been the longest standing member of the so-called 'American Circle' potentially having known Champlain directly since the mid 1590s. If we assume Brissac had a prior relationship with Champlain before the start of the seventeenth century, then this shows another major benefit to the critical first act of patronage. Perhaps it was this promotion that introduced the two men. From that point on, Champlain was able to build his reputation in Brissac's circle, further enhancing his social status.

Cossé-Brissac, Jeannin and Brulart guided and aided Champlain when he was on French soil. These were the men he relied on to keep political and financial support flowing into the colony. The circle could be termed an affinity in miniature, with limited goals and few members. What exactly bound the American Circle and Champlain together? There seems to be one common thread, their close relationship to Henry IV. They all had loved and served the King while he was alive. Perhaps this solidified the group to an even greater extent after his death. If this was indeed the case, then it is a prime example of the enduring nature of affinities, and a good example for how the initial act of patronage supported Champlain later in his life. In other words, advancement in the military led to patronage, followed by a relationship with Henri IV, and eventually a larger network of supporters.

A second group with whom Champlain had close relationships was the viceroys of New France. These men were also of very high standing and many were in fact closely related to the king, making them of princely origin. To Champlain's frustration, they spent most of their time focusing on matters and troubles in France, rather than those in the New World. Each viceroy was different from the preceding viceroy, and they had distinct ways of doing their jobs. Several, such as the great Condé, were hands off and simply held the office of viceroy to add to their political clout. Others, such as Pierre de Mons, promoted New France from afar, trying to get support either financially or by convincing people, often lower class men, to settle in North America.

Champlain needed the viceroys to be the voice of New France in Old France, and de Mons was one of the few upon whom he could rely. While the six men who held this position during Champlain's lifetime all contributed to the story of New France, the only two who factor prominently into this study are Pierre de Mons and Cardinal Richelieu. The others all nominally supported Champlain and made him their lieutenant; he was therefore able to hold his position as head of New France until his death in 1635.³²

The first viceroy, de Mons, had a similar background to Champlain. Both fought in the Wars of Religion, both hailed from the Saintonge region, and both were followers of Henri IV. It was de Mons who first asked Champlain to accompany him to the New World; Champlain thereby obtained a commission as the royal geographer on the mission to New France.³³ The

³² Fischer, 601-4. For a detailed account of each of the six viceroys of New France, see *Champlain's Dream* by Fischer. Appendix G gives a brief overview of the viceroys and talks briefly about their relationships to Champlain. It is interesting to note that many of these men held fur trade monopolies in New France at the same time which they held the office.

³³ Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 230.

exact details of this commission are unclear. It is probable that Champlain had built up enough of a reputation during the Wars of Religion and during his travels in New Spain to merit such a promotion, as was discussed earlier in the chapter. This commission likely had the blessing of Henri IV, but it was nevertheless de Mons who extended the invitation. By all accounts, Champlain and de Mons had an amicable relationship.³⁴ They worked well together while in New France, and continued to do so after de Mons had retired to France. The following citation provides some insight into their relationship.

Now after Sieur de Monts had conferred with me several times in regard to his purposes concerning the exploration, he resolved to continue so noble and meritorious undertaking notwithstanding the hardships and labors of the past. He honored me with the lieutenancy for the voyage.³⁵

De Mons returned to live in France after several years of toil in the New World, but after the death of Henri IV in 1610, he fell out of favor and the young colony increasingly relied on the American Circle to navigate the court. This marks the point at which New France became Champlain's project and not de Mons'. In the early parts of his works, Champlain makes clear that de Mons was in charge, but after 1610, it is Champlain who calls the shots.³⁶ It is, in effect, this relationship that allowed Champlain to become involved and ultimately take charge of the colony of New France. De Mons however still was able to help out behind the scenes, providing

³⁴ Jean-Yves Grenon, *Pierre Dugua de Mons: Fondateur de L'Acadie et cofondateur de Quebec (1608-1613)* (La Rochelle: Archives départementales du Conseil Général de la Charente-Maritime, 1999), 14. This work is extremely useful, being a biography of de Mons. Also see: Guy Binot, *Pierre Dugua de Mons, gentilhomme royannais, premier colonisateur du Canada, lieutenant general de la Nouvelle-France de 1603-1612* (Paris: Royan, 2004).

³⁵ Champlain, *The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 122.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-469. Champlain makes it clear that de Mons is in charge, clearly being subordinate to him and often asking for his permission to do certain duties, like exploring. It seems natural that Champlain would succeed de Mons as the man on the ground in New France given Champlain's long list of abilities.

valuable aid to Quebec in the form of financial contributions.³⁷ If de Mons is taken as representing one end of the spectrum of viceroy relations, then Cardinal Richelieu can be seen as the other. Richelieu was the least supportive of the viceroys to Champlain. He took a much more controlling approach that pushed aside Champlain to a small extent.

Richelieu's management of New France led to greater financial support for the colony but not to greater stability. Richelieu was interested in the fur trade because it took relatively small investment in order to make a profit, as the Indians with which the French traded wanted only trinkets or weapons (knives, pots, guns etc.) in return for their furs.³⁸ As many historians have stated, for Richelieu, the ends nearly always justified the means and he was known to have been ruthless in many of his dealings. Richelieu founded the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* and proceeded to run things from France. This company took away the fur trade monopoly from Champlain's supporters and allies at court and combined their interests with other parties who wanted a piece of the industry. This moved combined all parties into one large company.

Much of this chapter has presented ways in which Champlain established or maintained connections with people in positions of power in the French court, but what were the tangible effects of this in New France? By promoting the new colony in the Old World, Champlain and his patrons were able to have men and supplies sent to New France.¹⁹ All of his supporters used their connections to the crown to convince the king and court of the profitability of the upstart

³⁷ Fischer, 610-11.

³⁸ Victor L. Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu*, trans. D. Lockie (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1975), 256. For more info also see Joseph Bergin, *Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the Pursuit of Wealth*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁹ Champlain, *The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, 107.

colony. They promised trade routes to China, the riches of the fur trade in addition to the already lucrative fishing industry.²⁰ This demonstrates the system of patronage at its best. Champlain, through his former career in the military made connections with high-ranking nobles which he then developed into a miniature political party. This small affinity, built around former military men, high-ranking courtiers, and others loyal to Henri IV, was the fruit of one act of patronage that likely occurred sometime in the mid 1590s. This event involved the promotion Champlain to *fourier*; from there Champlain's social and political exploits were continually on the rise. It should be noted that Champlain was not necessarily the center of this network. He was a very important part within it, but to call him the center would belittle the work of de Mons, Jeannin, and other important figures in this equation. This affinity was slowly constructed from Champlain's youth, starting out with the likes of Brissac, Henri IV, d'Aumont and other leaders in the Wars of Religion. Those vital years truly set the ground-work for France's colony in the New World.

The nobles in Champlain's miniature affinity were hoping to reap benefits from Champlain's expeditions, so they in turn supported him and helped to present his cause to the king and court. The king then supported the high-ranking nobles financially and politically in return for their own political support. In this way power and financial support ran up and down the social ladder. It flowed down from the king all the way to Champlain in New France. This relationship played out most frequently with the American Circle and at times with the various viceroys, usually de Mons. Champlain's patronage network, as described above, would not have been possible without the connections Champlain made during the Wars of Religion.

²⁰ Ibid., 230-1.

Champlain's Changing Religious Affiliations

The final issue this essay will investigate is Champlain's confessional loyalties and his probable abjuration of the Protestant faith sometime before his travels to New France. Any work concerning the French Wars of Religion cannot avoid the issues brought about by the religious divide in France, especially considering the inevitable crisis of identity that came with the internal religious struggles in the purportedly most Christian kingdom in Europe. Champlain was not immune to this dynamic and therefore an understanding of this struggle is paramount to understanding the world in which Champlain grew up and how he interacted with it. Not only was France as a whole struggling through a crisis of self-identity, but Champlain, along with many Frenchmen, probably underwent this debate on an individual level. The dilemma of religious affiliations was connected to questions of loyalty to the French monarchy, devotion to a particular belief system and adherence to community values. Individuals faced with such moral uncertainties had to sift through them on a personal level; for some the choice was simple, while obviously for others it was not. The majority of the population sided with Catholicism, and the number of conversion overwhelmingly favored abjurations of the Protestant faith.¹ In the case of Champlain what can be inferred? His ultimate religious affiliation is well known, but in this time of moral ambiguity how did he arrive at his selection of Catholicism and when did he make the choice? This question marks the last major missing piece in our understanding of Champlain's youth. Once answered, the probable path of his early years will be somewhat more visible; and since, as always, there is a distinct lack sources, we must endeavor to gather what is available from other places.

¹ Raymond Mentzer and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559-1685*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6-7.

Secondary literature on the subject of abjuration and conversion during and just after the French Wars of Religion offers a wide range of opinions as to why various persons switched between belief systems. Many French scholars cite shifting demographics and a decline in Huguenot baptisms, especially towards the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the two principle reasons for the slow decline of Protestantism.² This drop in baptisms slowly sapped the Protestant population, and communities, which were once strong, began to diminish. Without the support brought about by the large personal networks these communities provided, pressure from numerous sources, such as Catholic propaganda, increased presence of Catholic neighbors as well others sources, pushed conversion numbers up.

On a more general-level, confessional literature during the French Wars of Religion has traditionally focused on one debate: whether the wars were political in nature or religious. Older publications, those produced in the early to mid-twentieth century, strongly emphasize the political aspects of the wars. Those authors believed surviving evidence supported the position that Huguenot rebellions were fostered by purely pragmatic motivations. A popular explanation put forth the idea that the religious wars in Europe could be seen as an attempt by the nobility to curb the growth of royal authority.³ France's deeply militaristic noble class made the country a good case study for this theory. Political rationales remained the dominant explanation in the

² For an *Annales*-style overview of Protestant demographics in the late Wars of Religion and after, see: Philip Benedict "La population réformée française de 1600 à 1685," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 42, (1987) 1433-65.

³ See James Thompson, *The Wars of Religion in France, 1559-1576: The Huguenots, Catherine de Medici, Philip II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909); J.E. Neale, *The Age of Catherine de Medici* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1959); and Lucien Romier, *Le royaume de Catherine de Medicis: La France à la veille des Guerres de religion* (Paris: Perren, 1922). This is the classic work that first put forth the idea that the religious wars in Europe were a reaction against the growing absolutism of European monarchs.

field, despite some divergent theories, until the end of the twentieth century.⁴ As scholarship progressed, theological motives for violence became a commonly accepted belief among historians. Newer histories emphasized that faith and politics, as two mutually exclusive catalysts for religious violence, were largely a fabrication of modern times. Such a distinction would not have been apparent to an early modern Frenchman. This, as Mack Holt commented, put religion back into the Wars of Religion.⁵

Modern interpretations would be laughable to both Huguenots and Catholics, as there were deep connections between religion and politics. The separation of church and state was not a concept or practice at the time, and religion played a role in national politics that is difficult for modern observers to understand. Confessional loyalty and national politics so greatly influenced one another that modern distinctions proved to be misleading. Recent scholarship attempts to dispel this false dynamic while focusing on the decisions that led individuals to acceptance or rejection of Protestantism. Personal questions of loyalty to the state were not exclusive to questions of religious devotion. The French state and the Catholic Church had been connected ideologically for hundreds of years. To abandon Catholicism literally meant rejection of one's national identity.²¹⁶ Huguenots were able to rationalize their confessional allegiances by claiming

⁴ Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1956); idem, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564-1572* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); and Nancy Lyman Roelker, *Queen of Navarre: Jeanne d'Albret, 1528-1572* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968). As mentioned in the text, these works diverge from other scholarship at the time, for placing emphasis on religion. This type of scholarship would no longer be in the minority in the coming decades.

⁵ Mack Holt, "Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1993) 524-51. This article is a review of several works concerning confessional issues during the Wars of Religion in France. It was invaluable in producing the short historiography that introduces this chapter.

⁶ Jacques d'Ilhaire, Sieur de Jouyac, *L'Heureuse Conversion des Huguenots à la Foy Catholique* (Rouen: Adrien Morront, 1610). French national identity was not fully developed in the sixteenth and

to oppose the Pope and his corrupt church, not the institution of the French monarchy.⁷

Supporting this view was a long history of tension between Rome and Paris. The monarchs of France and the popes rarely agreed on all matters. French priests were loyal first to the French crown with Rome being a distant second; this, however, does not imply that clerical loyalties to Rome and to the kings of France were mutually exclusive. The two loyalties could coexist. The at times turbulent relationship between Rome and Paris did however make Huguenot aggression toward the Pope a good pretext for claiming to have remained loyal to France and more specifically to the monarchy. The French kings were not satisfied with this explanation and pursued the Huguenots as traitors to France. So, as the war raged on, the protestant population shrunk with each renewed round of violence. Besides the natural attrition of war, one of the primary reasons for the shrinking number of Protestants was conversion.

The overwhelming majority of conversions in the last years of the sixteenth century were abjurations of the Protestant faith. This is the type of conversion that Champlain probably underwent. The question is why? How does the historiographic debate over political and religious motivations play into our understanding of his reasoning? What pressures exerted themselves upon the young Champlain, and when did he convert? Before, during or after his time fighting in Brittany? Perhaps after his trip to New Spain? This mystery can be unraveled by starting with Champlain's birth. By revisiting this topic, a clear picture of the confessional world Champlain was raised in can be understood. Recent research has discovered a baptismal record

seventeenth centuries, as regional identities were still more prevalent; nevertheless, primary sources clearly allude to the beginnings of a sort of proto-French nationalism, to use an archaic term.

⁷ Anon., *Juste Complainte des fideles de France contre leurs adversaries Papistes, &autres. Sur l'affliction &faux crimes, dont on les charge a grand tort. Ensemble les inconveniens, qui en pourroyent finalement avenir a ceux, qui leur font la guerre* (Avignon: Trophime des Rives, 1560). These issues are also well covered in the secondary literature. See: Mentzer, 6-7

that almost certainly reveals Champlain's religious affiliations at birth.⁸ If this record is to be taken as authentic, then we can say that Champlain was brought into the world as a Huguenot and converted sometime afterward to Catholicism. Historians have long guessed Champlain's original faith was Protestantism. The city of Brouage was not far removed from La Rochelle and was in a central area of Protestant activity. Others have also noted that his name denoted Protestantism, as Samuel was a common name among newly born Protestant boys.⁹ When combined, these factors make Champlain's early Protestantism nearly definitive.

To better comprehend the context of Champlain's decision, and to understand the various religious pressures he was under, it is helpful to explore accounts that deal with people who were in a similar situation to Champlain. One of the best sources for such a comparison is the conversion story of Marc-Antoine Marreau de Boisguérin. Boisguérin was a well-to-do, non-noble soldier like Champlain, and the similarities between the two men and their lives are striking. Yet for all the commonalities these men shared, their eventual conversions were very different, demonstrating that conversion was a highly individualistic decision that could not be defined strictly by the circumstances of a person's situation. Each individual had their own time and reason for converting and the comparison of Champlain and Boisguérin helps to illustrate this dynamic.

⁸ Baptismal Certificate. It is very probable that this record is Champlain's baptismal certificate, however there are some uncertainties. Two in particular obstacles stand in the way of this being totally verified: first discrepancy in the spelling, second the location in which the item was found. That being said, this source appears to meet most standards of authenticity and can be used a source with little to no issues.

⁹ See Introductory Historiography for an overview of the debates surrounding Champlain's religion at birth. Before the baptismal record in question was found, the topic was open for debate. Now the case appears to be closed in light of new found and previous evidence.

Champlain and Boisguérin came from surprisingly similar backgrounds. Both were born as non-nobles into relatively well-to-do families. In this regard, Boisguérin was slightly better off. It appears his family was part of the upper middle class, and on the cusp of nobility, whereas Champlain was in the middle-class. Growing up neither of the two experienced the life of a legitimate French noble as one was the son of a ship captain and the other of a merchant. Although Boisguérin was born earlier, sometime in the late 1550s or early 1560s, both were baptized as Protestants. They fought under Henri IV during the later stages of the French Wars of Religion, and by all accounts, both achieved a measure of success during this time. Champlain was able to catapult his career forward, thereby securing for himself the post of royal geographer on the coming expeditions to New France. Boisguérin experienced a similar trajectory in his military career. He, unlike Champlain, served well enough to merit ennoblement by Henri IV after his service had ended, which was a fairly unusual occurrence. This ennoblement could be due to the fact that his family was slightly more respectable (or at least wealthier) than Champlain's; nevertheless, the two shared in successes not commonly felt by the average soldier.¹⁰

If Champlain and Boisguérin's military experiences were similar, were their childhoods comparable as well? What was it like living as a Protestant during the Wars of Religion in France? How did Champlain and Boisguérin experience Protestantism during their youths? Surviving documentation suggests that in areas of Protestant domination, large communities were united spiritually, leading to developments in local customs, particularly local watches.

¹⁰ Edwin Bezzina, "Caught Between King, Religion, and Social Ambition: Marc-Antoine Marreau de Boisguérin and his Family (ca. 1560-1680)," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 39 (2008): 331-6. This excellent article provides evidence for the majority of this section of chapter 3. For references to primary sources, see the article.

There was a close eye kept on the moral behavior of the community. This was led by elders and other spiritual leaders, and was meant to ensure the Huguenot community remained pure, unlike the Catholics who were under the wayward guidance of the sacrilegious Vatican.¹¹ These communities were essential for the maintenance of the Huguenot population. Apart from this, Catholic and Protestant societies operated in a similar fashion. Obviously, religious ceremonies were very different, as well reading practices and to debatable extent their professions, as some studies have postulated that Protestants were more likely to be of the merchant and trading classes than were Catholics.¹² Despite of these differences, the ebb and flow of life did not vary drastically for the average Frenchman, as lifestyle remained similar between the two confessions. By the time Champlain reached maturity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, these elder councils were beginning to lose their grip on the Protestant community at large. Some historians believe that the intrusion on everyday life by these moral police provided incentive for many Protestants to convert.¹³ Just such a community probably was present in Brouage; Champlain must have been aware of how these councils operated and felt their effect upon his life. It is, however, unlikely that he converted prior to his time in the army; he was too young and surrounded by friends and family who would have exerted pressure on him to remain Protestant if he was already entertaining such thoughts. Discontent with the elder councils might, at most, have planted the first seeds of dissent in Champlain's mind: the first impetus for abjuration.

¹¹ Mentzer, 1-9.

¹² See the famous work: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001). This influential work argued that there was a connection between Protestant ideology and capitalism that allowed for the growth of the later. A principal point in Weber's argument was that there were a large number of Protestants working as merchants, showing how Protestants and Catholics differed in their respective occupations.

¹³ Mentzer, 8

The start of Champlain's military career marks the moment when his conversion became probable. There is a small chance that he converted in the decades prior to the 1590s, yet his age and communal pressures probably prevented him from doing so. Most likely however, confessional loyalty was not even on the young man's mind. After he left the Saintonge region, it is more likely that such issues began to weigh on him, including issues of French nationality and loyalty to the newly converted King Henri IV. He would at this point have been far removed from his community and its leaders. This, when coupled with his maturing age, would have allowed him to have more agency in such a decision.

It is at this point that Champlain and Boisguérin diverged. Champlain remained non-noble, but continued with his career in New Spain and later New France. Boisguérin received a *seigneurie* near his ancestral home. Both remained clients of Henri IV, but Boisguérin stayed Protestant for a very long time, almost until his death; whereas it is obvious that Champlain converted well before his death, and there is a distinct possibility that he converted shortly after leaving Saintonge. There is an even greater probability that he converted after the conversion of Henri IV. Why did this happen? Boisguérin, despite being older than Champlain, was still in the prime of his life; therefore, the conversions did not take place at the same time. Presumably the two men were under similar pressure to convert. Why is it that one did so far earlier and the other waited almost until his death? This is unclear, but it is likely that they felt the same social pressures. These pressures included the impetus to follow the example of King Henri, which can be verified via primary source documentation.¹⁴

¹⁴ Jouyac, 38.

Henri IV's abjuration in 1593 certainly could have added to Champlain's decision to convert. Yet it seemed not to affect Boisguérin. Henri's reason for converting appears fairly obvious; if he wanted to maintain his kingship over a distinctly Catholic country, it would not do for him to remain Protestant. Henri slowly went about the process of conversion. By doing this, he was able to ensure that his Protestant allies were not alienated, while the moderate Catholics still saw him as the preferable option to the Catholic League. Catholic propaganda at the time catered to abjuration stories. These conversion sagas were a chance for Catholic propagandists to take a stab at the faltering Huguenot community. Catholic propagandists were hoping to increase conversion rates and they therefore put much time and effort into the production of these sagas. This was carried out to the point that an individual's private reasons for conversion were lost amid the overwhelming bulk of pamphlets and sixteenth-century mudslinging.¹⁵ This is also the case with Henri, as we do not know what his true motivations were for converting. He may have felt some moral obligation to convert for the good of France as a whole, and his newly acquired role as king certainly intensified this potential obligation. This seems probable given his accounts of the conversion. One such account of the event contends that "many persons of outstanding doctrine and piety contradicted the opinions that separated him from the (Catholic) church, and inspired by the spirit of God, he desired in all conscience to be able to content his people."¹⁶ Once again, this is as close as we can come to knowing Henri's religious convictions. He

¹⁵ Michael Wolfe, *The Conversion of Henri IV: Power, Politics and Religious Belief in Modern France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 9. For more information on various types of propaganda used in the French Wars of Religion, see Luc Racaut, *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002).

¹⁶ *The French Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, ed. David Potter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 230-1. The work contains two documents related to the subject of Henri's abjuration: the first written by Henri himself, the other written by an observer who recounts Henri's words on the matter. The first talks about his slow conversion due to his duties in war. The second is discussed above.

undoubtedly had the good of France in mind. Perhaps he thought it was his moral obligation to become Catholic. Such moral obligations present a good example of the blurred lines between politics and faith. His conversion would have had obvious political benefits, but once the morality of such an issue was brought into question, faith certainly played into the decision. Henri could not have been a successful king without converting, but the choice between the two religions probably weighed more heavily upon him than the historical record suggests.¹⁷

If Henri's mental state with regards to his conversion is not clear, then at least we can look at that of his religious instructor: Jacques Davy Du Perron, who oversaw Henri's conversion to the Catholic faith. He was a prolific writer and one of the most eloquent men of the day. After himself abjuring Protestantism, he was a staunch Catholic throughout the Wars of Religion, even supporting the Catholic League. He, however, eventually became a proponent of Henri IV and would help to ease his transition into the Catholicism, ultimately negotiating Henri's reconciliation with the papacy. Henri in return promoted him to the post of bishop of Évreux.¹⁸

From Perron's numerous works, it is possible to see what type of instruction and supervision, Henri might have undergone. He, like many Frenchmen, seemed to justify his adherence to the Catholic Church through his understanding of its long history and storied past. For example in the following work entitled *Lettre pour la conversion de Mademoiselle sa mère*,

¹⁷ Since we do not know the details surrounding Henri's personal beliefs, it is fair to assume that he was torn over whether to remain Protestant or convert to Catholicism. Evidence for this assertion lies in the fact that once elevated to the position of King, he stalled his conversion, remaining Protestant for quite some time afterward. Also, Henri had already been forced to convert once before to Catholicism, though under threat of violence. Once free of this threat, Henri reneged on his conversion and returned to Protestantism. This shows that he had a personal attachment of some kind to his Protestantism.

¹⁸ P. Feret, *Le Cardinal du Perron: Orateur, Controversiste, Ecrivain*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie académique, 1879), 1-12. This is the most recent piece of scholarship on Cardinal Perron. Despite being an extremely influential figure during his time, he is very much underrepresented in the current scholarship.

Perron eludes to the church's long history and suggests the because of this history, it is the one true church. As can be seen, he puts great faith in the continuity of the Catholic doctrine.

For fifteen or sixteen hundred years past, during all that span of time, even if you have been told otherwise, catholic doctrine has truly continued from father to son and with such great continuity, that I can barely restrain myself from being angered and turning red at the ignorance or the malice of those who were the first authors to persuade simple people that the primitive church was otherwise, with regard to doctrine than what it is now.¹⁹

Before and after this citation, Perron asserts that years of study have led him to this belief and because of the continuous nature of the church's teachings, he feels that it is the true religion. This is an assertion many Catholics had put forth over the years and continues to be a selling point of the Catholic religion today. Perron may have appealed to Henri citing this longevity. He could have impressed upon Henri the weight of the monarchy's history with Catholicism, as well as the deeper roots of the true religion.

This sort of reasoning played into the nature of the confessional debate going on at the time. Historians have proposed that the issue was no longer over specifics of doctrine, but rather why a person should choose to believe in the specifics of a given doctrine.²⁰ So, Perron did not

¹⁹ Perron, *Les diverses ouvres de l'illustrissime Cardinal du Perron* (Paris: Antoine Estienne, 1622), 835. This work also includes du Perron's most famous discourse: an account of his debates against Philippe de Mornay, a prominent Protestant, at the council of Fontainbleau. Here is the original text: "Depuis quinze ou seize cent ans en ça, durant tout le quel espace de temps, quoy que l'on vous ayt dit au contraire, la doctrine Catholique a tellement continue de pere en fils, & avec une si grande conformité, que je ne puis quasi m'empescher de rougir, de l'ignorance ou de la malice de cuez qui ont esté les premiers autheurs, de persuader au simple peuple, que l'eglise primitive auoit esté autre, pour le regard de la doctrine, que celle de maintenant."

²⁰ Susan Rosa, 'Il'était possible aussi que cette conversion fût sincère': Turenne's Conversion in Context," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1994): 638.

elaborate on differences between Catholicism and Calvinism, such as the belief or disbelief in transubstantiation, but rather that one should believe in transubstantiation because it is a time-honored tradition that has been observed for hundreds of years. It was not necessarily the teachings of the religion that mattered, but the validation of those teachings. Champlain was almost certainly exposed to this sort of material since conversion narratives and polemic pamphlets were being published at an alarming rate.²¹ Whether or not such arguments were effective or persuasive for Champlain is difficult to say. In Boisguérin's case these arguments were not effect at least until the 1620s. It is probable, however, that such thoughts entered Champlain's mind and played at least a small a role in his decision, if for no other reason than that they were a prominent aspect of conversion discourses.²² Because this logic was widely publicized, it more than likely had an impact on Champlain's decision to convert.

The previously cited but not yet discussed *L'Heureuse conversion des huguenots à la foy catholique* produced by Jacques d'Illaire, sieur de Jouyac, is an excellent source for confessional issues during the period. We can see in this work the old rhetoric extolling the slogan *un roi, un loi, une foi*.²³ This rhetoric demonstrates the French mindset regarding the king's role in religious issues. Champlain and Boisguérin, because they were former adherents of Henri IV, presumably felt pressure to convert due to the writings of people such as Jouyac. Focusing on the role of the king in this dynamic, Jouyac was once again arguing for the continuity of what could

²¹ See Perron; as well as Racaut. Despite being published in 1622, Perron and others like him were producing large amounts of materials meant to sway the balance of power between Protestants and Catholics. If one is interested in discovering more about this literature, see Racaut.

²² The same type of argument is echoed throughout many other primary sources, one such is: Jouyac, 31-8. This work will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. While in a similar vein to Perron, it focuses more on the Catholic continuity of the French monarchy.

²³ Perron, 12.

be seen as a French national identity. To be French is to follow the king and be Catholic. This may have been an ideal that Champlain subscribed to earlier in life than did Boisguérin, yet in the end perhaps they were both drawn to it. It is difficult to say with certainty, but Boisguérin in his old age could have at last succumbed to Jouyac's style of thought.

Jouyac discusses the conversion of Henri IV, suggesting that it was a moral obligation for Henri to abjure the Protestant faith.²⁴ It describes the peace Henri's conversion had helped to bring about and praises him for it, afterward stressing how the conversion helped to re-establish the church and return it to its former glory.

Also, we see God seemingly appeased by the re-establishment of his service, churches, temples, and all the outward order of his Church; which shows us that it is now that he wants it restored and put back in its former splendor.²⁵

Jouyac is arguing here, that God is pleased by the conversion of Henri, and this serves as proof that Catholicism is the one 'true religion.' There was, in fact, a powerful force behind this circular logic. If Henri IV had converted and the League was slowly being quelled, then Catholicism must be the religion of the one true God. God was manifesting his approval through the progress being made by Henri. The primary difference between Champlain and Boisguérin, is that Champlain probably was influenced to a greater extent by these happenings in the late sixteenth century, which was the probable time-frame for his conversion. On the other hand,

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Ibid., 48: "D'ailleurs nous voyons Dieu, comme appaisé par le restablissement de son service, des eglises, des temples, & de tout l'ordre extérieur de son Eglise; qui nous montre que c'est a present, qu'il la veut restaurer, remettre en sa première splendeur."

Boisguérin, was able to live rather comfortably despite these pressures. He would ultimately convert later during a second wave of Protestant abjurations in the 1620s.²⁶

In the years between Henri's conversion and Boisguérin's, Boisguérin helped preside over a local community of Huguenots. This is one possible reason why he was able to resist outside pressure to convert: internal pressure from his community ensured that he was locked into that way of life. His position of leadership made him a pillar of the community further decreasing the likelihood of conversion. Additionally, while Henri lived, Boisguérin remained a favorite of the monarch. His military career and the continued service of his sons in the royal armies, allowed for the maintenance of noble titles and privilege. Spain's continued conflict with France at the time called for large numbers of men to staff the armies. This meant that the war-ravaged French kingdom under Henri was not particular about the religious ideals of its soldiers. Thus, Boisguérin and his sons continued to serve relatively unmolested. This is not to say that it was easy being Protestant in a largely Catholic army, but due to the demographic challenges faced by France due to forty years of near continuous struggle, Protestants were tolerated in the military.

After Henri's death in 1610, this dynamic slowly began to change. Boisguerin, no longer having strong connections in the court came under more and more external pressure. Troubles with Louis XIII's regime came to a head in 1616 when Boisguerin was stripped of his authority in his home province.²⁷ Being Protestant in the royal army became increasingly difficult, and for

²⁶ Bezzina, 346-7. For more information on this trend see: Philip Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots, 1600-1685* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 138.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 342-4. Boisguérin was granted the governorship of Loudon, his home region, by Henri IV. In the mid 1610's during a new bout of civil violence in France, Boisguérin's son fought for the

this reason along with any religious convictions they may have had, many of his sons took up the Protestant cause in a new round of religious violence. After the disgrace of losing authority in his hometown, Boisguérin too fought with the rebellious Protestants and was ultimately defeated. Sometime after these failures, his conversion to Catholicism is probable, although the precise date is not known.²⁸

The primary difference between Champlain's conversion and Boisguérin's was the environment they inhabited and the situations they faced at the time of their conversions. Champlain was away from his family for long periods during the Wars of Religion and afterward he went quickly to New Spain. He was not influenced by a strong circle of friends and family who may have persuaded him to remain loyal to the Protestant faith. Being an ambitious man, while at the same time following the example of Henri IV, Champlain probably saw the benefits of converting at a young age. The rhetoric of writers such as Perron and Jouyac may also have had an impact. After the wars Boisguérin continued to live in the protestant community. With his political and social ambitions largely fulfilled, he had no reason to convert. When his particular socio-political situation deteriorated, he began to feel more strongly the need to abjure. In the final years of his life, he may have come under political and social pressure to convert. Many prominent Protestant nobles converted in the 1620s and Boisguérin can be counted among their number. Some scholars have put forth the idea that this wave of conversions was brought about by military defeats and a generally bleak future for French Protestantism.²⁹

Protestant cause, although Boisguérin did not. After the conflict had been settled, Louis XIII removed the governorship from Boisguérin, though he did retain his nobility.

²⁸ Ibid., 344-7.

²⁹ Benedict, 138-40.

The comparison between Champlain and Boisgu erin show that conversion was a highly individualized decision. Despite their similarities in youth, their divergent paths led them to convert at different times and under different circumstances. The principle difference can be found in the effect the community had upon the two men. Champlain without a strong communal base was influenced by the numerous pressures mentioned earlier. These pressures included Henri IV as a role model, the continuity of the Catholic Church and its role in the development of proto-French nationalism, and the reasoning spread through pamphlets and conversion narratives. Ambitions in the realm of politics cannot be discounted a factor in this dynamic as well. Alternatively, while a member of a strong Protestant population, Boisgu erin was not as affected by these pressures and remained Protestant far longer than did Champlain.

Knowing that Champlain had a high degree of agency in his confessional choice hints at his possible conviction to proto-French nationalism while simultaneously revealing his devotion to Henri IV. This connection helps to explain the relationship between the French monarchy and the Catholic Church. The confessional divide also brings the War of Religion into context, allowing the modern observer to comprehend the conflict in greater detail. Once Champlain had pondered these confessional issues for himself, he arose ready to colonize the New World. This debate was just another formative experience of his youth, further preparing him for his trails in New France. Perhaps it was his new-found Catholic faith that sustained him during the long years that followed.

Conclusion

This study has argued that the historical record, when studied directly, does not sufficiently illuminate Champlain's youth, and has attempted to resolve that deficiency. By using sources that have been picked over many times for other projects and looking at them through the lens of sixteenth-century culture as it relates to Champlain, we can reach general conclusions about the life he lived before his journeys in New France. We can now assume that Champlain was accustomed to the violence of warfare from an early age due to the multiple sieges that occurred at his hometown. He made the most of his situation and joined the army of Henri IV. While in that army, Champlain felt the heat of battle. He probably perfected his skills in map making and refined his leadership qualities. Finally, he learned the art of siege warfare and applied this knowledge during his struggles in the New World. If anything is certain, it is that Champlain was no stranger to armed conflict, violence and death.

Aside from his military pursuits, Champlain was able to make valuable and vital connections in the army. An initial act of patronage, which promoted him to the rank of *fourier* allowed him to get his foot in the door. From there, he maintained and cultivated his connections. By doing so, he could have possibly met King Henri IV, and undoubtedly some of the king's courtiers, through whom he secured the position of royal geographer. From these first connections, Champlain was able to be part of a miniature affinity, which may be called, to borrow from Fischer, the American Circle. This small group of men helped to maintain France's mainland American colony after Henri IV had died and the colony was at its weakest. This group also nominally included the viceroys of New France, the most significant of whom were de Mons and Cardinal Richelieu.

The final section of the work concerned the confessional divide and Champlain's views and mindset regarding this issue. It is probable that Champlain converted sometime during his service in the army or directly afterward. For a young man with ambitions of upward mobility and political savvy, the mid 1590s would have been the opportune moment to embrace Catholicism. Champlain was away from the influence of his family who might have tried to convince him to remain Protestant. He also may have been influenced by some of the prominent Catholic propagandists writing at the time. When combined, these factors point to an abjuration before his departure for New France. This conversion narrative helps to contextualize Champlain's youth. The Wars of Religion and Champlain's connection to Henri IV can be better understood through an analysis of this probable narrative. The internal debate that led him to Catholicism provided Champlain with the faith that would sustain him through the cruel North American winters and during the tiresome journeys across the Atlantic.

This study unfortunately cannot provide definitive proof for any of its assertions due to lack of direct sources. It can only comment on the probability of these occurrences and direct the reader's attentions to the supporting evidence. Nevertheless, this study has been successful in contributing to the story of Champlain. Perhaps the work's greatest merit lies in its ability to stretch existing sources to the limit, a much-needed skill in a field such as early modern Europe where new evidence is rarely found. With luck, a more sound understanding of the life of Samuel de Champlain has been achieved and hopefully the founder of New France can now claim to have had a youth.

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