

***Champlain or Brûlé, which one sold out
and***

why does it matter?

This talk was inspired by one I gave in French last November to a Franco-Ontario audience in Toronto.

There, I learned of their high regard for Étienne Brûlé, who they consider the first European to settle in Ontario. They had also discovered that he did not, in fact, settle there, but kept a dual existence with a home in Champigny-sur-Marne, near Paris.

I have respect for both Samuel de Champlain and Étienne Brûlé whatever their decisions. I believe that they established two paths, two threads, that we can follow right up to the present day.

That said, they were at loggerheads, or at least Champlain dismissed Brûlé because he had chosen to live among the people of Huronia following their cultural norms.

One of those threads, Champlain's, led to the very Catholic Quebecois who have adopted secularism today, and the other, Brûlé's, was not tied as tightly to the Catholic Church, but led to the Canadiens.

Given that these two men came to a colony that was conceived as a safe port for the Protestant, or Huguenot minority parishes to coexist with Catholic parishes, I think it a safe conclusion that Brûlé was Protestant.

They were both in New France thanks to Pierre Dugua de Mons, the founder of both the Acadian colony and the Quebec colony. He was one of the military companions to Good King Henri. Both he and the king were Huguenots, Protestants, followers of Jean Calvin.

We don't learn about Dugua de Mons in our history classes, I believe, because the Catholic Church, which controlled education, wrote him out of our history. He was not Catholic.

Let's start, though, with a quick review of the early Catholic Church.

The Roman Empire did not have a religious plan. It saw the people it conquered as lacking relevance, as lesser people.

The early Christians helped the disenfranchisement that resulted from this negligence and gave them a purpose, a sense of belonging. Many felt their gods had failed them. The idea of this new god who sent his son to suffer for them gave them the strength to stand up to the Roman overlords, believing in this

new god who did not care about temporal power, who's power was the Kingdom of Heaven.

This Christian movement had some similarities to a labour movement today, but it could not be defeated, because it grew through suffering.

300 years in, Constantine saw the power in it and promised that theirs would be the religion of the empire if he became emperor, which he did in the early 300's.

For the next 1200 years, the church held a social monopoly that they used to homogenize the people into one. In the process they took responsibility for hospitals, education, registration of births, deaths and marriages, acted as consultants to their people and worked to homogenize society - to get rid of troublesome tribal differences, encourage the concept of a nuclear family - father, mother and children, sharing the sacraments, including communion, prayer, confession...

And introduced the concept of an eternal soul, an afterlife, a place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

With the growing influence of the Catholic Church came presumptions of power. There was a monopoly that owned the souls of the people. There were always rebellions, put down by the Church through its nobles, princes and kings, which was effective as long as the Church could weed them out early enough. With the coming of the printing press, though, this became more difficult - even impossible - and some sects grew too strong to stop, notably the followers of Jean Calvin, who had to leave France and find refuge in Geneva, and of Martin Luther, who had princedoms join his movement in the German states.

Twelve hundred years after Constantine's adoption of Christianity, the Reformation and the Wars of Religion began. At that time, with the arrival of the printing press, the bible could become a personal possession, something that the Church had forbidden. The Catholic Church began to be held to account for its accumulation of great wealth. Science began explaining things differently. People felt that they could take over some aspects of the Church's responsibility, dropping parts that they felt were wrong - like confession. It is important to remember, though, that they still believed in God and Jesus Christ and virtually all of the church mythology that had been drummed into them for 1200 years.

King Henri's mentor, head of the Huguenots until 1572, was this man, **Gaspard de Coligny**, also generally unheard of and forgotten. He tried three times to create New France, a safe port where Catholics and Protestants could practice separately, in peace. This was France's part of the Wars of Religion,

and if you think it had to do with God, then it sounds crazy – like the world gone mad – but it had nothing to do with God, really. They both believed in most of the same religious traditions, but the Protestants felt that the Catholic Church was abusing its obligations and privileges.

Obligations of the churches were education, hospitals, registry of births, marriages, and deaths and of course the Sacraments. The Church had become very wealthy through schemes like selling Indulgences. These Indulgences were a lot like modern carbon credits. Someone could give, or even leave, a major part of their estate to the Catholic Church so it could prepare their place in heaven.

In 1562 Jean Ribault, following instructions from Admiral de Coligny, tried to set up a New France in present-day Florida. Pédro Menéndez d'Avilés, a Catholic, and a Spanish admiral, discovered the settlement and murdered the occupants in gruesome ways. The Pope created medals to celebrate the murder of heretics.

It was the fourth attempt to create an escape route for French Protestants, who were not tolerated in France.

In 1541 the Huguenots, French Protestants, had organised companies that could finance the colonisation of this New France in exchange for exclusive trading rights.

The various attempted colonies included St. Kitts or St. Christof, created in the Caribbean in 1538 by people leaving Dieppe; Québec, where Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval was guided by Jacques Cartier in 1542; and a third on an island near Rio de Janeiro. All failed.

The Huguenot cemetery depicted in the painting above, done in 1550, was the site of the Catholic massacre of Protestants in 1560, during a funeral. Roberval was among the Protestants killed.

To the Catholic League of Nobles, de Coligny was a brave and terrifying man. He declared that it was **better to die trying for peace than live a hundred years in fear**. He tried another tactic, encouraging the marriage of his royal protégé, Henri, king of Navarre, to the sister of the French king. This event led to one of the worst massacres in French history.

Inspired by the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, and led by the Catholic Duc de Lorraine, the massacre, remembered as **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre**, spread across France. Peaceful Protestants were locked into their neighbourhood and killed. A civil war began.

Led by de Coligny's protégé Henri II of Navarre, the war lasted 22 years and ended when Henri of Navarre, capturing Paris, accepted to convert to Catholicism in order to become King Henri IV of France, the first of the line of Bourbon kings of France, and the only good one.

Among his first acts was to negotiate the Edict of Nantes, guaranteeing the co-existence of Protestant and Catholic parishes.

His next undertaking was to empower his military companion Pierre Dugua de Mons to create American colonies where the Catholics and Protestants could co-exist. De Mons first attempt was on an island in the Bay of Fundy, and his second is known today as Annapolis Royal.

De Mons learned he had to return to Paris to protect their income from the Catholics, so he sent his cartographer, Samuel de Champlain, to the region where Roberval's colony had failed, and Champlain built the habitation of Quebec there in 1608. Jean Duval, one of Champlain's men, tried to assassinate the Protestant leadership, including Champlain, in the hope of selling the colony to the Spanish Catholics. He was caught and hung.

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Champlain and Brûlé were both fascinated by the Indigenous world. Brûlé was with Champlain after Champlain's sole victory against the Mohawk in the spring of 1610, and Brûlé asked Champlain to allow him to stay for a year with their new Algonquin and Huron-Wendat allies. A Huron-Wendat chief accepted to take responsibility for Brûlé, and according to their tradition offered his son Savignon to stay with Champlain. At the end of the year, Savignon returned from France, and while he said he had been treated acceptably, he was relieved to get back from such a violent and uncivilized place.

By contrast, Brûlé opted to stay with the Huron-Wendat.

This map shows the names of some of the larger communities. Where you see Huron in the middle of the map was a huge grouping of four Wendat nations.

The four Huron-Wendat nations mentioned were located between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. Their population was as great as that of the Five Nations at the time, and their agricultural society was the hub of this cosmopolitan world comprising many nations and different languages.

In 1610, when Champlain returned from the spring battle against the Mohawk, he learned of the assassination of Good King Henri. This was a major historical incident that changed the direction of French culture. Its significance compares with the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The Regent of the Kingdom of France, Marie de Médici, and her son, the future King Louis XIII are pictured above. Although the queen and her son fought

continuously, they both agreed to name and retain the same first minister, Cardinal Richelieu. King Louis XIII even named another cardinal, Cardinal Jules Mazarin as Cardinal Richelieu's successor.

Champlain had been hired to map out and settle a safe port where the Huguenot and Catholic parishes could co-exist. The death of the king changed everything. Pierre Dugua de Mons was forced to stay in France to raise money for the colony and he appointed Champlain to take over the running of it. As Pierre Dugua de Mons' influence waned, Champlain had to choose between the survival of the colony and its founding principles. He chose the colony's survival. Champlain could rationalize that the Edict of Nantes guaranteed the safety of the Huguenots in France and therefore he did not really have to worry about that. By contrast, the Catholic Church would – could.....allow and help him convert the local people to Catholicism and thereby increase the colony's numbers without the need for more than the few Catholic Frenchmen who were willing to come.

Once the Church arrived to administer the colony, Champlain's role would be to help them. The church wanted to bring young Huron-Wendat boys into a school removed from their own culture in order to turn them into good Frenchmen. Champlain was forced to tell the Huron-Wendat that the French administration would trade only with Huron-Wendat who accepted conversion to Catholicism. This way, the French began to divide and destroy Huronia.

At the same time, Cardinal Richelieu created the Company of One Hundred Associates, all Catholic traders, and passed a law stating that the Edict of Nantes did not apply in New France, undermining the founding principles of the colony yet again.

Cardinal Richelieu, shown above, was the creator of the Académie Française, a tool for the harmonization of French culture. He also worked carefully to undermine the power and influence of the Nobles, and to place all of the power in the hands of the king. Since the king gave him carte blanche, he therefore created a dictatorship overseen by the Catholic Church. He had to proceed carefully to not start another civil war with the Huguenots. His suspension of the Edict of Nantes in New France was just a test and was not generally announced in France. Huguenots would continue to emigrate over the decades of the 1600s. Richelieu mobilized a military attack against La Rochelle, the stronghold port of the Huguenots, hoping to weaken it, and when the Wars of Religion spread across the German states, Holland and Scandinavia, he carefully supported the Protestants while he continued to weaken the Protestant-Huguenot hold at home.

He could be compared to Machiavelli.

While the English Navy tried to protect the Protestants in La Rochelle, the Huguenots elsewhere worked with the English to weaken Richelieu's position.

The Kirke brothers, who captured Quebec in 1629, were Huguenots from Dieppe. Seeing what was happening in La Rochelle, they had accepted to sail under the British flag. They were burned in effigy by Catholics in France. Unfortunately for them, Richelieu had withdrawn from La Rochelle and made peace with England, signing a promise to return to each king any property captured after their peace treaty. Quebec would have to be returned to Champlain.

The Kirkes and the de Caens, a French Huguenot trading family, opened trade to all Indigenous people, whether they were Catholic or not. They held Quebec for three years, restoring Quebec to its founding principles, and Étienne Brûlé can be seen at this time to have **not lost** those original principles. Although he lived in Huronia, he explored broadly and returned several times to his home in Champigny-sur-Marne, near Paris with furs. He married there and his communications show that he knew Huguenot families in France. When he returned to Huronia, the chiefs, knowing how he and Champlain had fallen out, withdrew their protection of him. This meant that anyone who decided to kill him would not be stopped. It was likely Catholic Huron-Wendat killed him in revenge for their losses during the Huguenot occupation of Quebec.

Decades later, in 1665, King Louis XIV rescinded the Edict of Nantes in all of France. That triggered a huge exodus of Huguenots, resulting in economic weakness for France. The Huguenots were businesspeople, entrepreneurs and risk takers. They were educated in many different fields and trades, and they were welcomed all across Europe. Jean-Louis Ligonier, who left Castres in the south of France at 15 years of age, gradually found his way into the British military. He later learned the fate of those who had remained. Among a sea of rules they suddenly had to respect, they were ordered to support agents of the government in their own homes, there to monitor them against practicing their religion.

Ligonier worked his way up the military ranks in Great Britain, and it was to him that War Minister William Pitt turned for guidance in the Seven Years' War. Ligonier chose the generals who captured New France. He was in his seventies, and this was a sweet victory for him, to be able to turn the colony back to its founding principles.

Henri-Marie de Pontbriand, Bishop of Quebec, instructed the Catholic Church to accept the new sovereign that they found themselves under. They were Gallican (French) Catholics, as distinct from Roman Catholics, and they were obliged to recognize the veto power of the king and the need to get the approval of the civil authority for major parish changes. Pontbriand died in 1760, three years before the Treaty of Paris. His vicar and successor, Jean-Olivier Briand, maintained Pontbriand's instructions. The colonial civil society had mostly returned to France, and the Church, well-suited to the task, had to fill that vacuum. Briand went to England and did everything correctly to pledge the Church to its new king. He realized that the only impossible **task for this**

Anglican administration was to endorse him as a Catholic bishop. He told the British authorities that, being so close to France, he wished to take leave and return to briefly visit his family there, who he had not seen in years. There was a lot unsaid between the parties, but there was the appropriate amount of wink-wink nudge-nudge for them to realize that Briand would return to England, endorsed as Catholic Bishop of Quebec – by the French king. In that way, the Gallican Catholic Church survived transfer to an Anglican kingdom.

Over the following decades, and especially after the French Revolution, the Gallican Catholic Church remained dependent upon the British Colonial Office to endorse changes in the administration of the colony. Sometimes the Colonial Office simply refused, and this meant that the Gallican Catholic Church needed to find other solutions. It was through this kind of back door that Jean-Jacques Lartigue was named a bishop in spite of the Colonial Office's refusal to set up a diocese in Montreal. Lartigue was named Bishop of Telmessus in Lycia, appointed auxiliary to the Quebec diocese, serving in Montreal, in 1821. In that way, Montreal gained a bishop from a lost diocese in the Ottoman Empire, and he was administering the non-diocese of Montreal. The Colonial Office did not, or could not, object. No diocese had been created. This naming of someone to the status of bishop of a long-lost diocese was not uncommon. During the 1820s, Lartigue kept in close contact with what was happening in France. Gallican Catholicism no longer had a king with special status in Rome. Among the clergy there, a movement began to accept their status as Roman Catholics, serving the Pope directly. The movement, called Ultramontanism, had a hero: Hugues-Félicité-Robert de **La Mennais**. He went way too far, however, because he saw a democratic future for the Church, in which the clergy would have a say.

Lartigue and his secretary Ignace Bourget supported Ultramontanism, at least in as much as they needed to for their administrative decisions to be made by the Vatican instead of by the Colonial Office.

Even as La Mennais was repudiated by Pope Gregory XVI, Lartigue and Bourget were endorsing most of his concepts. Lartigue's cousin, Louis-Joseph Papineau, head of the Parti des Patriotes, was jeopardizing the whole structure of Catholic life in Lower Canada by insisting upon republican principles with both the Colonial Office and the Church. He wanted civil control of the institutions that were being run by the Church and he wanted the Colonial Office to give the Assembly the power to govern those institutions. He also felt that all religions, including non-Christian ones, should be considered as having the same status.

What he wanted does not seem extraordinary now, but he was rapidly making powerful enemies in both the Catholic Church and the British Colonial Office. Lartigue asked a colleague, who was going to Rome, to deliver a letter to the pope asking that Lartigue be named Bishop of Montreal and that his diocese be recognized. It included an area that ran from James Bay to the US border and from halfway between Montreal and Quebec City to the western border of Lower

Canada. He reassured the pope that the British would have no problem with the action he was asking the pope to take.

The pope obliged, and a major new diocese came into existence without the approval of the Colonial Office. The whole clergy of Lower Canada **cringed**, waiting for reprisals from the Colonial Office, but Lartigue bet that they would respond favourably to a fait accompli.

Two weeks after the pope's announcement, Lartigue received a letter of congratulations from the Colonial Office.

Quebec – Lower Canada – became Roman Catholic and no-one noticed – except the clergy, who celebrated a successful revolution in September 1836.

Lartigue took immediate action to undermine his cousin Papineau in every parish in his jurisdiction.

After the unsuccessful rebellion of the Patriotes, the civil authority in Lower Canada had to be rebuilt and at the same time, the Colonial Office joined Lower and Upper Canada into the single Province of Canada.

When Bourget became bishop in 1840, he supported Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine in his mission, together with Robert Baldwin of the old Upper Canada portion, to work towards responsible government by electing one political party that would achieve majority in both the east and west parts of the new province. Lafontaine's liaison with the Church was a devout Catholic, Augustin-Norbert Morin, who promised to maintain all of the Church's powers, meaning the creation of almost no civil society, but leaving all of the historic responsibilities of health, education, registry of births, marriages and deaths with the churches.

As a result, Canada achieved responsible government, but with the caveat that the Church still controlled the people, at least in Lower Canada - Quebec.

From Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine to George-Étienne Cartier, the political leaders were dependent upon the Church, and Bishop Ignace Bourget did not stop there. He was among the strongest supporters of Papal Infallibility and raised the first Canadian overseas military expedition, the Zouaves, to defend the position of Pope Pius IX in his battle against Italian nationalism, while the Canadian government was in the process of creating the Canadian federation. No-one challenged Bourget. He was too powerful.

He also undertook to excommunicate any members of the Institut Canadien, a non-religious French civil society think tank, who refused to accept the Catholic Church and recant to their beliefs on their deathbeds.

A new leader and member of the Institut, Wilfrid Laurier, stood up to the bishop and was continuously threatened with excommunication.

By 1885, the year Bourget died, he had turned his congregation into a deeply religious one, where the Church was all. So much so that, when a new smallpox epidemic began in 1885, the Church took the position of anti-vaxxers and Montreal had to be quarantined from the rest of North America while the plague spread and 5000 Montrealers died.

This is in contrast to a smallpox outbreak that hit Montreal in the 1830s, fifty years earlier, and was controlled through a vaccination campaign.

Bourget and Lartigue's legacy was La Grande Noirceur that lasted until 1960.

When Jean Lesage won the election in 1960, he ran on a platform of Quebec promoting and encouraging its own. This development was successful because the Church influence was waning in the face of the new media, radio and television, but also because of World War Two. During the war, the tax rate had climbed so much that after the peace began, our politicians ran on platforms that offered social support – not from the churches, but from the civil authorities. We became a welfare society where there was enough money to improve all those old Church-supported institutions, rebuilt and financed by the government, not by the Church. North America was in its golden age, with a tax rate so high that the Americans could quite literally fly to the moon – on public funds. This wore away people's dependence on the Church, and as a result, also hurt the Church's credibility. In Quebec, our Catholic Church supported Maurice Duplessis, who favoured the large business hierarchies from elsewhere, but Lesage's message was strong: To become masters in our own house.

That was followed by René Lévesque's and Robert Bourassa's nationalization and development of our electricity supply, consolidated into Hydro Quebec and driven to dam waterways in the north. The institution bulldozed through Indigenous territories with classic capitalist blindness to the people who lived in those territories. When René Lévesque finally took power through the Parti Québécois, he nationalized the language the Québécois spoke, too. It filled the identity vacuum left behind by the Catholic Church's new, limited role at the same time as the papacy in Rome, in order to save its diminishing influence in the face of growing secularism, decided to change the language of their weekly Mass to the colloquial languages.

Slowly, as secularism began to replace religious practice, language replaced religious identity.

Do not expect to become an accepted member of the Québécois de souche culture if your family was not Québécois Roman Catholic. Between television, radio and the welfare society, the language has been homogenized across the province. To put it generously, the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec has morphed into a singular ethnicity.

But François Legault's Bills 96 and 21 are just the modern expression of the Roman Catholic tendency to homogenize, to make all people the same, a practice that can be seen in the time of Cardinal Richelieu, and that goes all the way back to the time of Constantine, a practice that led to the Reformation and to the Wars of Religion.

Closed Sundays was inherited from the Jewish Sabbath, that gave us the concept of having a day a week for ourselves, an ancient religious obligation, universalized through Christianity. Our world is built upon our religious past, and we must remain aware of how that effects secularism's priorities.

Now, four hundred years after the Huguenots founded Quebec, people feel that God is a quaint idea that we don't need.

But we still need a day off. In fact, the whole social structure we live in was built on top of religions over the past few millennia. The modern European

philosopher Marcel Gauchet expresses it this way, “I maintain that this “secular” understanding of reality and of the social bond is essentially constituted from within the religious field. The secular mind used religious truth to form itself.”

Each religion is a social construct that was built with god, or gods, as the keystone. You might not believe in God, but removing the keystone causes some unanticipated problems. It is these problems that will continue to distinguish types of secularism. Without God, praise has no target and gratitude has no recipient. Adoration redirects to celebrity culture, destroying people who cannot possibly fulfill the expectations, and creating popular monsters, but each secular community reflects its particular religious foundations and priorities in different ways and each risks carrying the baggage of its religion into secularism.

There are as many different secular understandings and interpretations as there are religions.

You can have Catholic secularism, Jewish secularism, Anglican secularism, etc. --- even Quebecois Catholic secularism.

You need freedom of religion just as much in a secular society as in any other. If you hold that secularism is inevitable, then acknowledging the need for freedom of worship allows each form of religious expression to find its own understanding of secularism... in its own time and in its own way – it is your religious conviction that leads to secularism and the French Catholic secularism that we are experiencing today carries all the baggage of the Catholic Church, including its monopolistic, homogenizing obsessions that led to the Wars of Religion.

Today, Quebecois Catholic secularism forces us, the minorities, to challenge some of its religious baggage just like our ancestors had to challenge the Catholic Church, just like Étienne Brûlé had to stand up to Samuel de Champlain. The most distressing baggage of Catholicism is its homogenizing tendency. As my Catholic mother explained to my Jewish wife, “All religions are the same, so why don’t you become Catholic?”

The difference today in our battle against that homogenization is that no-one cares – there is neither an English Protestant Navy at the harbour of La Rochelle, nor the Huguenot brothers sailing up the river, nor Jean-Louis Ligonier fighting to bring Quebec back to freedom of religious expression, nor Louis-Joseph Papineau observing that non-Christian religions also have a place as important to their practitioners as any other.

We are simply faced with an old religious monopoly that was never really understood on a political level by other than those who had suffered its abuses and those who benefited from its powers.

What Can we Do about it?

Heritage Canada does a lot for minorities, but its existence is dependent upon our elected politicians. The good will of our politicians is dependent upon the

number of voters and the members they elect to Parliament. We are no longer a strong enough force to supply those members. Nor are other minorities. The large minority communities in Quebec have balanced Canadian respect for all minorities, and if our presence loses its influence, the other ones in the other provinces are at risk. Our absence in Parliament will have a catastrophic effect on the French and other minorities across Canada, because they are in the same position as we are here. Our minority status, a large minority in a French-majority province, was their guarantee of fair treatment. Now, we must depend upon our own actions in maintaining solidarity with other minority groups across Canada, especially French minorities in the different provinces. Therefore, we are faced with two concerns: Catholic secularism's overwhelming tendency to homogenize society, and the threat *that* presents to minorities across Canada.

It is up to us. Together, our Canadian minorities are the heirs to the Huguenot legacy.

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