

1640. sedentary, that their admirable disposition for Christianity was understood and turned to account, as we shall see in the sequel. But I do not think myself bound to include in these favorable dispositions the worship of the cross, said to have obtained, from time out of mind, in all this eastern part of Canada.

The worship of the Cross among the Gaspesians. Mr. de St. Vallier, bishop of Quebec, in a letter which he published on his return from his first visitation of his diocese, speaks of this worship as an attested and indubitable fact.¹ He had it from the Recollect Father Christian le Clercq, who has taken great pains to give it currency,² but who has had as many gainsayers as he has well-informed readers. Moreover, this religious was the only one who had advanced this paradox, none of those who lived among those Indians before him—many of whom knew their language and studied their traditions better than he was able to do—having discovered any thing of the kind. What misled the historian was apparently this :

A letter of Father Julian Perrault, written in 1635, informs us that these Indians took pleasure in imitating all that they see Europeans do : that having especially remarked that they often made the sign of the cross on themselves, they did the same. When they met a European they made the cross on different parts of their body, but without the least idea of its being a mark of religion.³ This custom, already of long date when Father Christian le Clercq resided among the Gaspesians, and perhaps become a superstitious practice, induced that missionary to believe it so originally. It may also be, that on question-

¹ *Estat Present de l'Eglise, etc.*, p. 14 (ed. Quebec). Mgr. de St. Valier does not quote le Clercq, but gives as authority Mr. de Fronsac, son of Mr. Denys, who had it from an Indian who died a few years before, aged one hundred or one hundred and twenty : *Estat Present*, p. 14.

² Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspesie*, p. 172, etc. He admits that in his time they had lost their respect for the cross (*ib.*, p. 187).

³ *Relation de la Nouvelle France*, 1635 (ed. Quebec), p. 43. Perrault says they painted the cross on their persons.