

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
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**WHERE EAST MEETS WEST: A LANDSCAPE OF FAMILIAR STRANGERS –
MISSIONARY ALASKA, 1794 – 1898**

A Dissertation in
History
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2008

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Alaskan religious and cultural landscape. The history of Alaskan Christian missions is unique: Alaska developed as an arbitrary cultural/geographical construct and also one of the few regions where representatives of all three main historical branches of Christianity – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – proselytized simultaneously. Alaska is viewed as a special landscape where dynamic cross-cultural interactions and multi-denominational – in the case of Protestant – missionary ventures took place. Fierce competition characterized the regional cultural exchange at some times, reciprocity and friendly contacts at others. Those involved were the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, Jesuit missionaries, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Moravian preachers – men and women – as well as representatives of the Russian American Company, the Hudson's Bay Company's entrepreneurs and American fur traders.

In this geographically remote and environmentally severe region, the Native populations – the Aleuts and Athapaskans, Tlingits and Haidas, Tsimshians and Inuits – played an independent and crucial role in cross-cultural conversation. They were active participants in a complex process in which different sides had to alter their cultural attitudes, religious traditions, and ideological values in continuous interaction with each other. Thus, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Alaska was a place where the existing religious and cultural identities of Natives and colonists dynamically interacted in a process of mutual transformation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research for this dissertation was made possible through support from the Department of History and Religious Studies (Hill Dissertation Fellowship) and the School of Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office Dissertation Support and Interdisciplinary Dissertation Research and Creative Projects Awards, Pennsylvania State University; the Huntington Library Andrew W. Mellon Short-Term Fellowship; the Newberry Library Short-Term ASECS Fellowship; the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; the Kennan Institute Grant and the American Philosophical Society, Phillips Fund Award in Native American Studies.

My special acknowledgements are to the dissertation committee members: professors Linda Ivanits, Matthew Restall, and Anthony G. Roeber, and especially to my dissertation advisor, William Pencak, for their help, patience, understanding, and advice. I also want to express my gratitude to Drs. Anne Rose, Joan Landes, Catherine Wanner, and George Enteen, as well as the History Department of the Pennsylvania State University.

This work would not be possible without assistance from Rose Speranza, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Arlene Schmuland and Jeffrey A. Sinott of the Consortium Library, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Susi Krasnoo and Mona Noureldin of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Sara Austin of the Newberry Library, Chicago, Tatyana Stepanova of the Alaska State Archives, Gladi Kulp of the Alaska State Library, David Nordlander of the Library of Congress, June Lacke of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Margery N. Sly and Beth Bensman of the Presbyterian Archives, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their support.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Alaskan region received constant attention from the major European powers beginning in the late eighteenth century. Russian-Danish Vitus Bering and Russian-German Georg Wilhelm Steller visited Alaska in 1741 and 1742. By 1770 several Russian merchant groups, primarily G. I. Schelikhov, P. S. Lebedev-Lastochkin, and G. Panov dominated the scene. Spanish expeditions to Alaska took place in 1774, 1777, 1778, and 1790. In 1776 Alaska was visited by James Cook (one of his co-travelers, Joseph Billing, was later employed by Russia's Catherine II). In 1779, two Spanish Franciscans, Father Riobó and Father Noriega, became the first Christian missionaries to travel to Alaska. France organized an expedition led by the Comte de la Pérouse in 1785. Starting in 1799 Alaska was exploited by the Russian American Company (Second Charter – 1821, Third Charter – 1841). In 1812 a first attempt to divide Alaska into spheres of economic influence was undertaken by the Russian American Company and the American Fur Company, based in Astoria, Oregon. By 1833 the British Hudson's Bay Company was also active in Alaska.

In this geographically remote and environmentally severe region, the Native populations – the Aleuts and Athapaskans, Tlingits and Haidas, Tsimshians and Yupik Eskimo – played independent and crucial roles in cross-cultural conversation. They were active participants in a complex process in which both Natives and missionaries had to alter their cultural attitudes, religious traditions, and ideological values in continuous interaction with European and American colonizers and missionaries.

The history of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Alaskan Christian missions and the cultural and social landscape in which they were set is unique: Alaska developed as an arbitrary cultural/geographical construct and also one of the few regions where representatives of all three main historical branches of Christianity – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – proselytized simultaneously. On the Alaskan landscape, dynamic cross-cultural interactions and multi-denominational missionary ventures took place. Fierce competition characterized the regional cultural exchange at some times, reciprocity and friendly contacts at others. Those involved were the priests and monks of the Russian Orthodox Church, Jesuit missionaries, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Moravian preachers – men and women – as well as representatives of the Russian American Company, the Hudson Bay Company's entrepreneurs, and American fur traders. Catholics, including Jesuits, were also present, but their role will only be discussed incidentally, since the primary task of this dissertation is to examine the encounter between the state religion of the Russian Empire and the unofficial Protestant establishment of the United States. Whereas the Catholic-Orthodox or Catholic-Protestant competition has centuries of history, the Orthodox-Protestant, for example Presbyterian, dialogue which took place in Alaska was something entirely new for both sides.



Map of Alaska, 1899.¹

¹ <http://explorethenorth.com/library/maps/maps-alaska.html>. Accessed on November 14, 2007.

The nineteenth-century Alaskan spiritual landscape was one of a kind: this was where two frontiers – the Russian and the American – met. This was the first and the only place where the Orthodox Christianity, supported by the Russian Imperial State encountered Protestants, most notably the Presbyterians. The idea of ecclesiastical rivalry was new to the nineteenth-century Orthodoxy, which was the official religion of the Russian state when the Orthodox Church was, essentially, part of the Russian government, administered by the Holy Synod. At the same time, the Presbyterians, despite the official separation between church and state in the United States, were openly favored and privately supported by the unofficial Protestant establishment that worked closely with and was closely identified with the United States government – for instance, Presbyterian missionaries were appointed governors and Indian agents for Alaska. Furthermore, the story was complicated by the fact that neither side, Orthodox or Presbyterian, recognized the legitimacy of each other as fully Christian, though each group avoided declaring so in public lest the statement jeopardize Russian-American diplomatic relations.

The major difference between the two churches is that, historically, the Orthodox Church was taking a slower and subtler approach to conversion, not expecting any sudden results and allowing for a certain co-existence with the Native culture and tradition. But most of the mainstream of the American Protestants, at least since Jeffersonian times, believed conversion should be quick and swift, the Natives should be “civilized” and, during the nineteenth-century, also “Americanized”. Native identity, culture, and tradition should be erased completely, as late nineteenth century

Americans were attempting to do on the reservations and at institutions such as the Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Indian school.

In this situation of the major – Orthodox-Presbyterian – ecclesiastical rivalry, smaller Christian denominations also took an active part. Notable is the Moravian Church – a tiny, almost marginal Christian denomination. The Moravians, without any state support, relying almost entirely on small private donations, suddenly became a surprisingly strong religious force on the Alaskan frontier.

In sum, Alaska was the first place where the Russian and American clerics met. The first decades of the Alaskan missionary encounter defined the future of the spiritual dialogue between the Russian East and the American West. This nineteenth-century religious competition produced a lasting impact on both churches and, most importantly, on the Alaskan Native people, whose own spiritual and cultural traditions were heavily affected and almost destroyed by the two waves of colonization.

Finally, Alaskan history in the nineteenth century, after the acquisition of Alaska by the United States in 1867, can be compared in many ways to the colonial period of American history. Until 1958, when Alaska acquired its statehood, it was treated and exploited essentially as a colony: it was the source of fur, fish, game, gold, and other minerals – similar to the way Canadian economic historian Harold Innis² has described as the successive conduit for sending many of the same items overseas – but not of new citizens. Thus, the First Organic Act of 1884 did not provide for a representative assembly. The Second Organic Act of 1912, while allowing for a territorial assembly

² W. A. Mackintosh, “Innis on Canadian Economic Development,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 61 (1953), pp. 185-194.

provided – much like the Irish Parliament under British rule – that its every legislative act should be approved by the United States Congress. The territorial governor, too, was appointed by the President, much like the King of England had chosen the colonial executives.

My dissertation concentrates on early attempts to Christianize the Native population of Alaska. It looks at different approaches to Christianization employed by Orthodox and Protestant – Presbyterian, Moravian, and Episcopalian – missions; attitudes towards the native peoples carried into practice by representatives of the Russian American company; the initial response of the Native population to cultural change; and the final outcomes both for those who were converting and those who were converted. Alaska was a place where old religious and cultural identities – native and colonist – dynamically interacted. For example, in the light of British and American competition Russian priests and settlers had to modify some of their approaches to the native peoples which they brought to the new land.

Furthermore, the situation was even more complex as none of the peoples involved in the shaping of Alaskan destiny was homogeneous. Thus, while it is still legitimate to use the general term "Russians" for the people who came to settle Alaska under the aegis of the Russian Empire, it should not be forgotten that they came for different reasons (commercial exploration vs. religious mission) and from different ethnocultural and even religious backgrounds (some were, for example, German Lutherans). Both factors shaped their visions of the native populations as well as their approaches to colonization. Also, there was no single "Native People" in Alaska, but a number of different ethnic groups, such as Aleuts, Yupik Eskimo, Tlingits (Kalosh), each

with its own understanding and a unique pattern of cooperation or resistance to the influences of the European newcomers. Needless to say, the established patterns of mutual cultural conceptualization did not remain static but changed over time.

The dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction. Chapter Two examines the Alaskan missionary approaches of the Russian Orthodox Church, roughly from 1794 to 1867, led by figures such as the monk Herman and the priest Ioann Venniaminov (canonized as St. Innocent of Alaska). Chapter Three explores the religious Americanization of Alaska between the 1870s and the 1890s as exemplified by another “Alaskan Apostle”, Presbyterian minister and the United States government’s General Agent for Education in Alaska, the Reverend Sheldon Jackson, as well as other Presbyterians.

Further examination of Americanization involves two case studies. The fourth chapter analyzes the work of John and Edith Kilbuck, William Henry and Caroline Weinland, and the Moravian mission on the Kuskokwim River in Bethel, Alaska, begun in 1885. Chapter Five looks at the utopian experiment of New Metlakatla and the Reverend William Duncan on Annette Island. In sum, I hope to offer a comparative portrait of the cross-denominational and multiethnic religious and cultural exchange which took place in Alaska between 1794, the year the first Orthodox Mission launched into Alaska, and 1898, with special emphasis on mid-1880s as a critical period in the Alaskan missionary transition. I stop in 1898 because that is the year the famous Edward H. Harriman expedition was prepared to explore coastal Alaska. By 1899 Alaska was not a spiritual frontier any longer: it was rather a Polar “Babylon” built by the Gold Rush, a strange mix of peoples united by the desire for profit, the last frozen frontier – an object

of Gilded Age consumer-tourist curiosity where Christian natives and missionaries were, at least in the eyes of the wider world, lost in the shuffle.

The fact that this dissertation discusses only four churches does not mean that the efforts of other denominations were not important. I have chosen not to discuss the Catholic missions in Alaska, and the story of another “Alaskan Apostle”, Bishop Charles Seghers of Vancouver. But both will be given full treatment in the longer, book version of this dissertation.

The four missions were each chosen for a particular reason. The first, the Russian Orthodox, set up the initial missionary landscape. It dealt mostly with island (Aleutian Island) and coastal native nations, as well as peoples living along rivers, such as the Kuskokwim and Yukon. Several patterns of interaction occurred: Russians interacting with the Aleut people mainly on smaller Aleutian Islands; Russians and Tlingit people meeting in Southwest Alaska, Novo-Archangelsk or Sitka; and Russians and, most remotely, Yupik Eskimo encountering each other in the Kuskokwim region.

As for the Presbyterians and Sheldon Jackson, in Chapter Two, we will look at interaction between the Presbyterian missionaries and mainly Tlingit people in Southeast Alaska, including Sitka where the Russian Orthodox presence was earlier established. The same is true for the Chapter Three, which looks into interaction between the Moravian missionaries and the Yupik Eskimo in the Kuskokwim Delta, where they also met Russian clerics. Connections between the Presbyterian and other Protestant missions should be noted as well: the Moravians were just one part of a large multi-denominational missionary enterprise beginning 1885 when Sheldon Jackson enlisted help from other denominations. As a result, Baptists began work at the Cook Inlet area and in Kodiak,

Episcopalians along the Yukon River (where Canadian Anglicans were already present since 1862) and along the Arctic Coast, Methodists in the Aleutian Islands, and Congregationalists in the Cape Prince of Wales area. Finally, in Chapter Four, with William Duncan, we will see that the very concept of “Alaskan” mission is something flexibly constructed: formerly Anglican, William Duncan transferred the old Tsimshian settlement of Metlakatla from British Columbia to Annette Island, Alaska, and invented his own Alaskan story by creating his own church [for church statistics in all four cases see Appendix A].

Historiography: Approaches to the Problem

Alaskan historiography is rich. Starting from Hubert Bancroft and his seminal *Alaska*, published in 1886, the culture of this region has drawn growing attention from scholars.³ A number of notable academic studies have been done on the Native population of the region, on its economy, and on the economic, political, and cultural interaction between different groups of colonizers and explorers (Russians, Spanish, British, and Americans). In most of these, due attention is paid to the analysis of the Natives’ religious beliefs and cultural practices, as well as to the investigation of the methods of conversion utilized by the Europeans. The nature, extent, patterns, and limits of cultural assimilation of the indigenous population are also well examined.

³ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Alaska, 1730-1885* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft, 1886). Subsequent works discussed below.

Turning from work on Alaska to studies of Native American interaction in general, several major themes are present. The first can be defined as the "moral argument." Scholars associated with this rather straightforward interpretation view the Native Americans as "heroes", who lost their noble cause in a struggle with an alien and, as a rule, hostile and destructive civilization. The counter-argument may be termed "the clash of civilizations", where mutually interacting groups are treated as roughly equivalent. Colonists are not necessarily villains but are sometimes benevolent influences. This line of scholarship argues against the use of moral philosophy and moral judgment in history: "the winners" won and "the losers" lost for various reasons – demography, technology, disease, leadership, etc. – unrelated to moral worth. Yet a third argument emphasizes the independence and creativity of the Native Americans' agency: they did not passively participate in cultural exchange but interacted with whites to create it. Finally, a fourth argument emphasizes the impersonal socio-economic, cultural, and ecological processes in which both Natives and colonists participated.⁴

⁴ Among the general works of theoretical importance that deal with encounters but not Alaska are James Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: the Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: the North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); William John Eccles, *The Canadian frontier, 1534-1760* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969); Robert H. Jackson, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: the Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: Norton, 1984); Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America: How Indians Discovered the Land, Pioneered in it, and Created Great Classical Civilizations, How They were Plunged into a Dark Age by Invasion and Conquest, and How They are Reviving* (New York: Norton, 1993); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: Norton, 1988); James

As a rule, the earliest scholarly works in English underestimated the impact of the Russian Orthodox Church, depicted Russian colonial administration in mainly negative terms, or simply dismissed this period of Alaskan history as insignificant. For example, Ernest Greuning in his history of Alaska spent just a few pages on its Russian period (he was a governor of Alaska from 1935-1953 and one of its first two United States senators). The standard *History of Alaska* by Henry W. Clark, published in 1930, devoted to the same topic only ten pages out of two hundred. Their analysis usually stressed the malevolent treatment of the Natives by hard-drinking employees of the Russian American Company. Consequently, the Russian period of colonization was called the

Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania frontier* (New York: Norton, 1999); Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, 2nd Ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: Change and Persistence on the Iroquois Frontier, 1609-1720* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Dean R. Snow, *The Iroquois* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, 3rd Ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Knopf, 1970); Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The American Indian and the United States: a Documentary History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979); Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Red Man's Land/White Man's Law: A Study of the Past and Present Status of the American Indian* (New York: Scribner, 1971); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

For historiographical perspectives see William N. Fenton, *American Indian and White Relations to 1830: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957); Stanley Pargellis, "The Problem of American Indian History," *Ethnohistory* 4 (1957-58), pp. 113-124; Wilcomb E. Washburn, "A Moral History of Indian-White Relations: Needs and Opportunities for Study," *Ethnohistory* 4 (1957-58), pp. 47-61; Bernard W. Sheehan, "Indian-White Relations in Early America: A Review Essay," *William and Mary Quarterly* 26 (1969), pp. 267-286; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "The Political Context of a New Indian History," *Pacific Historical Review* 40 (1971), pp. 375-382; Robert M. Carmack, "Ethnohistory: A Review of Its Development, Definition, Methods, and Aims," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 1 (1972), pp. 227-246; James Axtell, "The Ethnohistory of Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978), pp. 110-144; Daniel K. Richter, "Whose Indian History?" *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (1993), pp. 379-393; James H. Merrell, "Some Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (1989), pp. 94-119; Neal Salisbury, "The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming Europeans," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 53 (1996), pp. 435-458.

“Russian occupation,” whereas the period starting from 1867 was generally regarded as that of benevolent acculturation.⁵

This approach is hopelessly outdated, as is a Soviet school of Alaskan history which emphasized the negative role of the religious mission as tools of Russian tsarism and nationalism. This view was shared by the majority of Soviet historians in 1940s and 1950s.⁶ Nevertheless, later Russian works by S. G. Fedorova, Viacheslav V. Ivanov, R. G. Liapunova, R. Y. Makarova, and Semen B. Okun offered a more balanced approach to the Russian American adventures, while still maintaining the old Soviet style of historical writing, which emphasized political and economic history at the expense of cultural, religious, and intellectual. However, a number of works paying due attention to the spiritual and cultural realms of Russian efforts in Alaska have been published lately, authored by A. V. Grinev, A. A. Istomin, A. Y. Petrov, and the recent three volume *History of Russian America*, edited by N. N. Bolkhovitinov.⁷

Recent decades have seen a radical reversal of the negative treatment in Alaskan scholarship given to Russian Orthodoxy. A number of American historians (many of them are Orthodox believers) emphasized the success of the Orthodox missionaries to

⁵ Ernest Gruening, *The State of Alaska* (New York: Random House, 1954); Henry W. Clark, *History of Alaska* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930).

⁶ See, for example, I. Orgizko, *Khristianizatsiia Narodov Tobol'skogo Severa v XVIII V.* (Leningrad: Uchpedgiz, 1940) or Vladimir Bogora, *The Chukchee* (New York: AMS Press, 1975).

⁷ S. G. Fedorova, *Russian Population in Alaska and California, late 18th century - 1867* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1973); Viacheslav V. Ivanov, *The Russian Orthodox Church of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and Its Relation to Native American Traditions: An Attempt at a Multicultural Society 1794-1912* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997); R. Y. Makarova, *Russians on the Pacific, 1743-1799* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1975); Semen B. Okun, *Ocherki Po Istorii Kolonialnoi Politiki Tsarizma v Kamchatskom Krae* (Leningrad: Sotsekgiz, 1935); Semen B. Okun, *The Russian-American Company* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979); Bolkhovitinov, N. N., *Istorija Russkoi Ameriki: 1732-1867* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1997).

Alaska, praised them for their patience, tolerance, and understanding of the native cultures, as well as for their successful educational efforts, portraying them as cultural heroes. Consequently, the U.S. acquisition of Alaska became a story of the suppression of the Native cultures, which had flourished under Russian rule. Among historians of this camp are Michael Oleksa,⁸ Bishop Grigorii Afonsky,⁹ and S. A. Mousalimas.¹⁰ The works by Oleksa and Mousalimas present a theological rather than historical approach to Alaska history.

Yet another group of American scholars, including Arthur J. Lazell, emphasize the importance of the nineteenth century Alaskan Protestant heritage and stress the success of various Protestant missions. If, for Paul D. Garret, Orthodox Father Veniaminov was the Apostle to Alaska, then for J. Arthur Lazell the role was fulfilled by the Presbyterian Dr. Sheldon Jackson.¹¹

Secular historians, including Lydia Black,¹² Sergei Kan,¹³ and Andrei Znamenski¹⁴ (who addressed the natives' response from a comparative viewpoint,

⁸ Major works by Michael Oleksa are: *Orthodox Alaska: a Theology of Mission* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993) and *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

⁹ Gregory Afonsky, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917* (Kodiak, AK: St. Herman's Theological Seminary, 1977).

¹⁰ S.A. Mousalimas, *The Transition from Shamanism to Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska* (Providence, RI: Bergahn Books, 1995).

¹¹ Ted Hinckley, "The Early Ministry of St. Hall Young, 1878-1888," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, v. 46 (September 1968), pp. 175-196; Arthur J. Lazell, *Alaskan Apostle: The Life Story of Sheldon Jackson* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960); Morgan B. Scherwood, *Exploration of Alaska, 1865-1900* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1965).

¹² Lydia Black, besides writing numerous volumes on Alaskan history also edited Journals of Ioann Veniaminov and Jacov Netsvetov, whose lives and works will be discussed in the following chapter. Her most recent volume is *Russians in Alaska: 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004).

¹³ Major books by Sergey Kan on this subject are *Symbolic Immortality* (Washington, D.C. Smithsonian, 1993) and *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity Through Two Centuries*

comparing Orthodox missions in Alaska and Siberia), the voluminous and encyclopedic writings by Richard Pierce,¹⁵ Barbara Smith,¹⁶ Mark Stokoe,¹⁷ and others, present a more balanced and neutral, not apologetic approach to Alaska's story. Nevertheless, many of the monographs written by the historians belong to a fact-finding, sometimes antiquarian approach and often are not analytical or theoretical. Despite this shortcoming, the current historical understanding of early Alaskan history would be impossible without the decades of painstaking research and publishing efforts undertaken by scholars such as Lydia Black and Richard Pierce.

Finally, various aspects of the religious life of Native Aleut and Eskimo people have been analyzed by N. M. Dauenhauer and R. Dauenhauer, A. Fienup-Riordan, W. W. Fitzhugh and M. Crowell, W. S. Laughlin, W. Oswalt, A. L. Siikala, and others from

(Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). For articles by Sergei Kan see: "Recording Native Cultures and Christianizing the Natives Russian Orthodox Missionaries in Southeastern Alaska, Russia in North America," *The Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian-America* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1990), pp. 298-313; "Words that Heal the Soul: Analysis of the Tlingit Potlatch Oratory," *Arctic Anthropology* 20, no.2 (1983); "Memory Eternal: Orthodox Christianity and the Tlingit Mortuary Complex," *Arctic Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (1987), pp. 32-55; "Recording Native Cultures and Christianizing the Natives: Russian Orthodox Missionaries in South-Eastern Alaska," in *Russia in North America*, ed. Richard P. Pierce (Kingston, Ont.: The Limestone Press, 1990), pp. 298-313; "Russian Orthodox Missionaries and the Tlingit Indians of Alaska, 1880-1900," in *New Dimensions in Ethnohistory*, ed. Barry Gough and Laird Christie (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), pp. 129-160; "Shamanism and Christianity: Modern-Day Tlingit Elders Look at the Past," *Ethnohistory* 38, no. 4 (1991), pp. 363-387; "Clan Mothers and Godmothers: Tlingit Women and Russian Orthodox Christianity, 1840-1940," *Ethnohistory* 43, no. 4 (1996), pp. 613-641.

¹⁴ Andrei Znamenski, *Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siberia and Alaska, 1820-1917* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Some of the major books by Richard A. Pierce are *Russian-America: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1990); *Builders of Alaska: The Russian Governors, 1818-1867* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1986) as well as numerous translations of Russian Alaskan.

¹⁶ Barbara S. Smith, *Orthodoxy and Native Americans: The Alaskan Mission*. (Syosset, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989); *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska: a History, Inventory, and Analysis of the Church Archives in Alaska with an Annotated Bibliography* (Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1980).

¹⁷ Mark Stokoe, *Orthodox Christians in North America, 1794-1994* (Syosset, NY: Orthodox Christian Publications Center, 1995).

ethnographic and anthropological perspectives.¹⁸ Crucially, unlike most of the scholarship mentioned above, the ethnographic and anthropological approach presents mostly the native view of cultural exchange, providing material and cultural evidence necessary for balanced Alaskan colonial portrait.

In general, whereas the earlier methodologies emphasized native heroism and resistance and portrayed the natives as victims, the modern culturally and socially oriented approaches stress independent and active native and colonist identities. They note the importance of dialogue and call attention to cultural interaction, pluralism, and change, while utilizing ethnohistorical and anthropological methods as well as archaeological findings. They argue against both white and native hero-worshipping history, thus endeavoring to create a history from below, where everyone is a valid actor.

Nevertheless, at least one crucial question has remained unasked in this voluminous literature: the nature and the character of religious and cultural interaction among different Christian missions to Alaska (Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic), the

¹⁸ Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Tuvunáagu yís, for Healing Our Spirit: Tlingit Oratory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Shuká, our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Central Yup'ik Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Eskimo Essays: Yup'ik Lives and How We See Them* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Nelson Island Eskimo: Social Structure and Ritual Distribution* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Pacific University Press, 1983); William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell, *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures Of Alaska and Siberia* (Washington, DC.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988); William W. Fitzhugh, Susan A. Kaplan, and Henry B. Collins, *Inua: Spirit World of the Bering Sea Eskimo* (Washington, D.C.: Published for the National Museum of Natural History by the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982); William S. Laughlin, *Aleuts: Survivors of the Bering Land Bridge* (New York : Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Mission of Change in Alaska: Eskimos and Moravians on the Kushokwim* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1963); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Eskimos and Explorers* (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp, 1979); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Alaskan Eskimos* (San Francisco: Chandler Pub. Co., 1967); Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál, *Studies on Shamanism* (Helsinki: Finish Anthropological Society, 1992).

sources of their success, and the reasons for their failure. I compare these Christian missions to Alaska in close conjunction with the variety of responses to the missionary activities by different groups of the Alaskan native population. I investigate the varying degrees of flexibility with which the missions of different denominations were able to adapt to the natives' cultural heritage. I also explore the interactively evolving multiple native and colonist cultural and religious identities, attitudes, and loyalties, resulting from their mutual participation in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural exchange.

My approach stresses the interactive aspect of contacts between different ethnic, cultural, and religious forces on the Alaskan daily spiritual scene and as well as change over time. While during the "Russian" period of missionary Alaska (1794-1867), the majority of missions of course came from the Orthodox Church, the patterns of their responses to the Native population were influenced by the minor presence of Catholic and Protestant preachers, even if it was occasional and sporadic. Similarly, the Protestant and Catholic missions in the 1870s and 1880s had to modify their own missionary practices considering the earlier and continuing Orthodox presence. Such a variety of human encounters in small, face-to-face spaces were the "middle grounds" of the colonial Alaskan landscape, to borrow a phrase from Richard White's study of Native-Euro-American interaction east of the Mississippi.¹⁹

After discussing the Orthodox presence, I move on to the religious and cultural Americanization of Alaska starting from 1867 and extending well into the twentieth century, and look at the gradual establishment of the Protestant influence in Alaska. In 1877 a Presbyterian mission was established at Sitka and in 1879 a Catholic mission at

¹⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Fort Wrangell. The Anglican Church Missionary Society of London, the Methodist Church of Canada, the Quakers and the Moravians, and other Catholic missions followed soon. The Presbyterian ministry of S. Hall Young and Reverend Dr. Sheldon Jackson emphasized Native assimilation through educational and humanitarian enterprises.

While the Russian American Company abandoned its Alaskan endeavors with the secession of Alaska, Orthodoxy did not disappear. After the 1867 transfer of Alaska to the United States, the Russian Orthodox Holy Synod created a separate Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. In 1869 the Russian Imperial Missionary Society was formed by Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow to promote Orthodoxy in foreign lands. Moreover, by the beginning of the twentieth century a new Alaskan Orthodoxy emerged, internalized and reinterpreted by part of the Native population as a response to the new, mainly Protestant, realities. They sought to preserve their tradition and culture, legitimizing them through the easily recognizable and officially acceptable Eastern Christian tradition.

To sum up, my major questions are: what was the scope and extent of the influence of Orthodox and Protestant and missionary activities in Alaska; what was their aftermath and mutual influence, and in what way did the early colonial religious and cultural developments influence further religious and cultural development of the region: I hope to offer a comparative portrait of the cross-denominational and multiethnic religious and cultural exchange which took place in Alaska between 1794 and 1897.

Archival Material

The most serious problem one encounters when studying nineteenth century Alaskan history is the shortage of the Native sources. Several things should be mentioned here. First, the Native heritage suffered greatly from both waves of colonization. For example, when one studies Native Alaskan myths it is very difficult to separate the voice of the person recording from the narrator: is the narrator saying things or it is the one who is recording them hearing what he or she wants to hear? Two waves of religious syncretism with Orthodoxy and Protestantism pose another challenge. Finally, most of the Native informers, who left records, were also Christian converts, whether ordained priests and ministers or Native helpers which obviously affected their narratives as well.

In the United States, the major depositories of Alaskan documents are as follows (in alphabetical order).

The Alaska Regional Office, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Alaska Region, Anchorage, contains archeological objects, natural history records, ethnological and historical objects, records of regional offices of federal agencies in the state of Alaska, 1775-1995, and materials reflecting the involvement of federal agencies in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, has a splendid collection of documents related to the history of and wide range of activities by the Alaskan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian American Company. The archives of the Diocese of Alaska (Library of Congress) contain 150,000 items for the period of 1772-1936 relating to the Russian Orthodox Church of America. They include

ecclesiastical records relating to the administration of the 17 parishes and 36 chapels of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, and also in Canada and the U.S., comprising correspondence, registers of births, marriages, and deaths, confession and communion records, clergy dossiers, orders and edicts (ukases) from imperial and ecclesiastical authorities, financial records, diaries and travel journals, photos, printed matter, and other material. It includes material relating to missionary work among the Tlingit Indians; Russian administration of Alaska through the bureaucracy of the church; schools and education; the Russian American Company; and papers of various church officials; and the Russian Orthodox Church of America.

The Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, also has a collection of microfilm made from originals at St. Herman's Pastoral School, Kodiak, Alaska, generated between 1844-1974. These records contain correspondence, priests' journals, journals of worship services, school journals, church registers, metrical records, marriage inquests, confessional records, receipts and other financial records, chronicles, miscellaneous papers, and other records, primarily in Russian, relating mainly to the Kvikhpak Mission. Also at the Library of Congress is a compiled 15-volume collection of Documents Related to Russian America, and the monumental Yudin collection. Gennadii V. Yudin (1840-1912) was a Siberian distiller/merchant and bibliophile. He assembled a great collection of materials relevant to Russian history in general and history of Siberia in particular. This collection was purchased by the Library of Congress in 1906 and became the Library's foundation for its Russian-language resources.

Finally, the Library of Congress holds duplications of the materials otherwise located in various Russian archives. Moreover, whereas most of the original documents

related to early Alaskan history remained in the United States (as stipulated in the Alaskan Purchase Treaty of 1867) some of the original documents previously located in principal Russian archives were lost.

The National Archives, Washington, D.C. has the records of the Department of the Interior as well as materials from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Board of Education (Record Group 75). It also has a number of the Russian American Company files.

University collections are another source of the materials. Among them are the University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Archives and Manuscripts Department, and the University of Alaska Anchorage Collection with their rich papers related to the political, social, cultural, and economic development of Alaska, and especially south central Alaska and Anchorage, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, contains a collection of documents on Alaskan Native languages, including vocabularies, dictionaries, and grammars, as well as historical, sociolinguistic, and educational materials. This is also true of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, E. E. Rasmuson Library, Alaska and Polar Regions Department collections.

The Alaska State Library, Juneau, holds a collection of manuscripts and archival records relating to Alaska and the Yukon Territory, also including some Russian Orthodox Church records. The Anchorage Museum of History and Art materials include documents and artifacts of the native cultures of Alaska, from late 18th century to the 1980's.

In Russia, there are holdings of the Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, as well as the State Historical Public Library, St. Petersburg, National Public Library, St. Petersburg, and Russian State Library, Moscow. These locations contain mostly secondary resources, but house rare Russian-language nineteenth century publications unavailable elsewhere.

Major Presbyterian archival sources used in this dissertation came from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It houses the magnificent collection of Sheldon Jackson Papers, dated 1855-1909 (Record Group 239). The collection itself is extremely rich. Its archival material varies from Jackson's letters and diaries to newspaper scrapbooks. One can get an impression that Rev. Jackson, "The Collector", had never thrown any print or autograph away, thus creating a dense digging ground for lucky archival archeologists.

A second set of sources, crucial for the Presbyterian chapter, is also in the possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society. These are the Records of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Alaska Mission, 1882-1992, Record Group 301.3; the U.S.A. Woman's Board of Home Missions Records, 1866-1958, Record Group 305, especially Series 4 – missionary correspondence and missionaries and the Series 5 – missionary publications); the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. College Board Records, 1883-1948, Record Group 32; and some of the material from Record Group 301.8 – the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of National Missions, Department of Health, Education and Welfare Records, 1867-1972.

Finally, newspapers, such as *The North Star*, *The Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, and *The Presbyterian Home Missionary* provide valuable glimpses into the history of the early Presbyterian endeavors in Alaska.

Another major set of the Sheldon Jackson papers is located at the Princeton University Theological Seminary. These are mostly letters, made available in microfilm courtesy of the University of Alaska. Additionally, the Newberry Library, Chicago, is the location of several pieces of the correspondence which took place between Rev. Jackson and William Duncan.

Major archival sources used in Chapter Three come from several locations. The Moravian Church Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, contain, among other material, the mission journals and diaries of Ernst & Caroline Weber and John and Edith Kilbuck. Other materials, such as rare Moravian publications, periodical, missionary manuals are located at the Reeves Library of the Moravian College and Theological Seminary. In William Henry Weinland's collection, at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, are his and his wife Caroline Weinland's correspondence, letterbooks, travel journals, private diaries and journals (he kept them since turning fifteen), drawings, newspaper clippings, business papers, account books, various church records, records of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, annual reports of Alaska mission, daily texts, school records, as well as meteorological journals. For this chapter, double sets of diaries, journals, and letters dealing with the same events exist, one set written by William H. Weinland and the other by his wife, Caroline Weinland materials and the other written by John and Edith Kilbuck. The Moravian Church, for the most part, chose missionaries as married couples.

In Chapter Four, William Duncan's adventures in Metlakatla (or Metlakahtla), can be traced in the following sources: the William Duncan papers collection, located in Duncan's Museum in Metlakatla, Alaska, also available on microfilm, and the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs papers related to New Metlakatla (Record Group 65 at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.).

Chapter 2

Saints in the Wilderness: Orthodox Visions

Vision # 1:

Russian wit plunged in adventure,
Has scattered free men across the seas
To seek new lands, for trade and profits,
For the food of the fatherland, for the honor of the Tsar. (repeat)

God the Almighty is helping us here,
Supporting Russian courage everywhere,
As soon as we discovered the land, we quickly settled it,
A very important strip of the mainland.

Forming society and companies,
We don't need the muse of the Greeks
We need but to learn the simple rules of nature
And to follow its laws.

To erect buildings in parts of the New World;
The Russian is moving, Nootka is his goal,
Savage peoples, of barbarous natures,
Have now become our friends.

...
Honor and glory brought us here,
Brotherly friendship unites us,
Let us build and expand,
This very useful Russian American Land.

*The Song Composed by Baranov on the Northwest Coast of America [1799].*²⁰

²⁰ K. T. Fedorova, S. G. Khlebnikov, R. G. Liapunova, and Richard A. Pierce, *Notes on Russian America* (Kingston, Ontario: Fairbanks Alaska, 1994), v. 1, p. 226.

Vision # 2:

As for their knowledge of future, old Aleuts assert that some of their famous shamans predicted, long before the coming of the Russians, that white men with different customs would come to them from beyond the sea and that subsequently all Aleuts would become just like the newcomers and live according to their manners.²¹

Vision # 3:

O Holy Father Innocent! Your glory has shone from the Far Eastern lands to the Western World. From humble origins in a Siberian village you rose to world renown as a modern Apostle. The Lord chose you to bring the Orthodox faith to the ancient Peoples of Alaska and Asia, who together with us honor you with these songs of praise:

Rejoice! Imitator of the Apostles and their Successor!

Rejoice! Evangelizer of the Arctic Peoples!

Rejoice! Scholar and Teacher of the Aleuts!

Rejoice! Illuminator of the Eskimos and Indians!

Rejoice! Humble genius whose footsteps were guided by the Lord!

Rejoice! Visionary Architect of the Orthodox Church in America!

Rejoice! O Holy Father Innocent! Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of Alaska!

From the Akathist Hymn to St. Innocent, Apostle to America.²²

To the Russian Orthodox Church Alaska was not a separate “American” entity, but rather a continuation of missionary Siberia. Unlike Britain or Spain, Russia was never an overseas but a continental empire. Only with the missionary activities of Ioann Veniaminov, later St. Innocent (Innokentii), and the transfer of the Alaskan land mass to the United States in 1867, was Alaska viewed as a separate spiritual landscape by the

²¹ Ivan Veniaminov (St. Innokentii), *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District* (Kingston, Ont.: The Limestone Press, 1984), p.219. Note on spelling: in dealing with original documents I kept original and not modern standard spellings of the geographic locations and tribal names, the way they were used then. As a matter of fact, a great variety of transcriptions and spellings of the same names and locations in the same language – whether Russian or English – reflected the transitory state of Alaska itself.

²² Michael Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 363.

Orthodox Church.²³ Thus, a profound change which took place within sixty years or so of the Russian Orthodox missionary exploration of Alaska is reflected in clerical-administrative reforms over the decades: if Alaskan parishes of the Orthodox Church belonged to the Siberian dioceses initially, with time, as the importance of the Alaskan mission was growing, some of the remote Siberian parishes became parts of the “Alaskan” spiritual enterprise. In other words, in the beginning, Siberia was baptizing Alaska. But by the 1850s and 1860s Alaska was in charge of some of eastern Siberia’s spiritual maintenance.

Evangelizing the Arctic Peoples

Russian Orthodox history in Alaska is characterized by several defining moments. The early Orthodox missions can be viewed as dualistic in nature. Just like later Protestants, especially the Presbyterian mission, they carried a “civilizing” purpose. However, whereas Sheldon Jackson and like-minded Protestant missionaries insisted on complete *Americanization* of the Native nations, the same is hardly applicable to the

²³ Three years later, the Russian Orthodox Church created the diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska and transferred the bishop’s headquarters from Novo-Arkhangelsk, Alaska to San Francisco, California, the better to supervise further missionary activities in the United States and Canada. In 1903, the American bishop’s headquarters moved again, to New York, in order to deal with the increasing numbers of eastern European immigrants. On Ioann Veniaminov’s life and works see: Lydia Black, *Orthodoxy in Alaska: Christianization of Alaska, Veniaminov’s Stewardship Orthodoxy in Alaska after 1867* (Berkeley: Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the Graduate Theological Union, 1996); Lydia Black, *A Good and Faithful Servant: The Year of Saint Innocent – An Exhibit Commemorating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Ioann Veniaminov 1797-1997* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Fairbanks Alaska State Veniaminov Bicentennial Committee, 1997); E. P. Shishigina, A. A. Fedorova, et. al., *Mitropolit Moskovskii I Kolomenskii Innokentii (Veniaminov), Prosветitel’ Narodov Aliaski I Severo-Vostoka Azii: Biobibliograficheskii Ukazatel’* (Jakutsk: Natsional’naia Biblioteka, 1995); Saint Innokentii, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, *Journals of the Priest Ioann Veniaminov in Alaska, 1823 to 1836* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1993); Saint Innokentii, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District* (Fairbanks: Elmer E. Rasmuson Library Translation Program, University of Alaska, 1984); Ivan Evseevic Popov-Veniaminov, *Tvorenija Innokentija, Mitropolita Moskovskago: Sobrany Ivanom Barsukovym* (Moskva: Synod Tipografia 1887).

Orthodox visions of Alaska. The Orthodox Church in Russia was not only an ecclesiastical institution but also part of the state machinery (The Holy Synod).

Therefore, one of its purposes was to turn the Natives (Aleuts, Tlingits, and later Yupik Eskimos) into imperial subjects. In fulfilling this assignment the Church drew on more than two hundred years experience of converting the Native populations of Siberia.²⁴

Thus, Sheldon Jackson criticized the Russian Orthodox Church for mass, wholesale conversions, thereby misunderstanding the Russian missionary purpose. He was trying to turn the Natives into *Americans*, but the priests of the Orthodox Church by no means tried to made Aleuts or Tlingit into *Russians*. This difference, to a large extent, can be explained by earlier experiences of encounters between the colonized and the colonizer in both countries. The *Americanization* of Native Americans can be traced in the United States to the first years of the young republic, if not to the Puritanizing impulse of colonial Massachusetts manifested by John Elliott and his praying towns. The Russian imperial experience was different. It is possible to argue that the first really *systematic* measures to *Russify* various imperial ethnic elements took place in the second half of the nineteenth century and were directed primarily at the Slavic peoples of the Russian empire, mostly Poles and Ukrainians, and not at the “aboriginal” nations of Siberia or the Muslim populations of the Asian and southern parts of the country.

At the same time, it would be a great mistake to view the Orthodox mission simply as a tool of the Russian imperial enterprise. The Russian Church, once again

²⁴ On this subject see Andrei A. Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity: Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siberia and Alaska, 1820-1917* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999). One of the examples which come to mind is the Bishop Innokentii of Irkutsk in the early nineteenth century. A graduate of the Kiev Theological seminary he was consecrated as a Bishop of Pereyslav in 1721, sent to the province of Irkutsk at the border with China, where he established the first Russian-Mongolian missionary school in 1733.

learning from its Siberian experiences, knew how to be patient and somewhat tolerant in dealing with the Natives. It did not systematically try to eradicate Native cultural traditions from everyday life. The Orthodox Church was often the only defender of the Natives against the *promyshlenniki*, or commercial entrepreneurs, starting with Gregory Shelikhov,²⁵ Shelikhov's son-in-law and a director of the Justice Department of the Imperial Senate, Nicolai Rezanov,²⁶ and the Russian American Company, especially the first Russian Governor of Alaska Alexandr Andreyevich Baranov.²⁷ Ironically, it was Shelikhov himself started teaching Christianity to the natives of Kodiak Island around 1784, and it was his idea to bring the first official Orthodox missionaries from one of the cradles of Russian Orthodoxy – the Valaam Monastery on Lake Ladoga in 1794, promising to cover the expenses of the mission. The Russian American Company, which replaced Shelikhov's and Golikov's private trading companies, first as a private (1799)

²⁵ Grigory Ivanovitch Shelikhov (1747-1795) was one of the founders of the Russian American company (1799), organized commercial exploration of the Aleutian Islands beginning 1775, and started the first Russian settlement in North America. See: A. G. Bondarskii, M. S. Adamov, *G.I. Shelikhov* (Moskva: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Geographicheskoi Literatury, 1952); Yrii Ivanovich Fedorov, *Russkaia Amerika* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Russkoe slovo", 1995); Boris Petrovich Polevoi, *Grigorii Shelikhov: "Kolumb Rosskii", Biograficheskii Ocherk* (Magadansk: Magadanskoe Knizhnoe Izd-vo, 1960); Richard A. Pierce, Ed., G. A. Shelikhov, *A Voyage to America, 1783-1786* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1981); L. A. Sitnikov, *Grigorii Shelikhov* (Irkutsk: Vostochno-Sibirskoe Knizhnoe Izd-vo, 1990).

²⁶ Nikolay Petrovich Rezanov (1764-1807), a Russian aristocrat, statesman and explorer was an enthusiast for the colonization of Alaska and California and one of the founders of the Russian American Company (1799). See: Hector Chevigny, *Lost Empire: The Life and Adventures of Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov* (Portland, Ore.: Binfords & Mort, 1965); Richard A. Pierce, E. H. Iversen., and Maurice M. O'Moore, *The Romance of Nikolai Rezanov and Concepción Argüello: A Literary Legend and Its Effect on California History* (Kingston, Ont.: Fairbanks Alaska, 1998); Thomas C. Russell., *The Rezanov Voyage to Nueva California in 1806, the Report of Count Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov of His Voyage to That Provincia of Nueva España from New Archangel; an English Translation Revised and Corrected* (San Francisco: Calif. Private Press of T.C. Russell, 1926); Albert Shumate, *Nikolai Rezanov & Concepción Argüello* (San Francisco, Calif.: Gleeson Library Associates University of San Francisco, 1993).

²⁷ Alexandr Andreyevich Baranov – governor of Alaska from 1799-1818 – was often blamed for being excessively cruel to the Native Alaskans and clashed with the Orthodox missionaries on many occasions. See: Hector Chevigny, *Lord of Alaska; Baranov and the Russian Adventure* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1951); K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America* (Kingston Ont.: Limestone Press, 1973).

and then as a state-run trading monopoly (1818), was obliged to support the Orthodox Church, which was reflected in its Charters (1799, 1821, 1844).²⁸ As the 1821 renewed charted stated explicitly:

The Company must see that there are always enough priests, church readers and choir directors in the colonies so that churches of God and other proper places of Divine services be founded wherever a sufficient number of inhabitants reside; and they should be supported so that clergy may receive their necessities for their proper domestic life. They should always be given necessary support by the local government in performing their duties so that all the employers of the company can accomplish everything demanded by the love of God, and receive for their need such help and protection as they may expect from the servants of the Church.²⁹

The Natives, especially Aleuts, needed the Church's help: ruthless exploitation, fur-traders' violence, enslavement, and disease decreased their population dramatically. It is commonly believed that from the initial contacts in the 1760s to 1799 Aleut numbers decreased sixfold, bringing that nation to the verge of extinction. Most researches agree that the pre-contact Aleut population can be estimated at between 15,000 and 25,000.

²⁸ The Russian American Company started as a private twenty-year trading monopoly in the Kuril and Aleutian Island as well as Alaska during the rule of the Tsar Paul I of Russia (1799) with a provision that one-third of its profits went to the emperor. However, in 1818 the Company was reorganized as a state-run enterprise with its area of control extended to the 55°N latitude from the original 51°N latitude. The main base of the company in Alaska was Novo-Arkhangelsk (1804, now Sitka), with a supply base in Fort Ross, California. After 1867 the Russian American Company became known as the Alaska Commercial Company, administrated by Hutchinson, Kohl, and Company of San Francisco. On this subject see: *Otchet Glavnago Pravleniia Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii* (St. Peterburg: Tip. Senata, 1843); Richard A. Pierce, *Documents on the History of the Russian-American Company* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1976); Richard A. Pierce, *The Russian American Company: Correspondence of the Governors, Communications Sent, 1818* (Kingston, Ont., Canada: Limestone Press, 1984); P. A. Tikhmenev, *Istoricheskoe Obozrenie Obrazovaniia Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii I Dieistvii Eia Do Nastoiashchago Vremeni* (St. Peterburg: V Tip. E. Veimara, 1861); P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian American Company: Vol. 2, Documents* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1979); P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978).

²⁹ Gregory Afonsky, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917* (Kodiak, Alaska: St. Herman's Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 41.

Violence by colonizers even led to a rebellion against Russian *promyshlenniki*, or fur traders, in Amchatka in 1784.³⁰

Unlike the Protestant missionaries, for whom financing and personnel limitations required restricting their enterprises to particular areas, the Orthodox experience extended to interaction with most of the Alaskan Native groups: Aleuts in the Aleutian Islands, Tlingits in the town of Novo-Arkhangelsk, and the Yupik Eskimo in the wilderness along the Kuskokwim River.

The first Native group to encounter the Orthodox was the Aleut,³¹ with the Tlingit and Yupik following later. The Eskimo-Aleut people, related to the Native nations of Northeastern Siberia, were initially encountered by Russians on the Northwest Alaskan coast and the Aleutian Islands. The second group was the Pacific Eskimo, Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq (as they called themselves) nations of Prince William Sound and Kodiak Island. The Sugpiaq are subdivided into Koniags – inhabitants of Kodiak, the eastern parts of the

³⁰ The 1910 US Census estimated total number of Aleuts at 1,491.

³¹ The term “Aleut” was introduced by the Russians and comes from the Chukchi or Koryak languages of Siberia. For secondary literature on Aleuts see Lydia Black, Richard A. Pierce, et al., *The History and Ethnohistory of the Aleutians East Borough* (Kingston, Ont.: Fairbanks Alaska, 1999); Valérie Chaussonnet, *Crossroads Alaska: Native Cultures of Alaska and Siberia* (Washington, D.C.: Arctic Studies Center National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution, 1995); William W. Fitzhugh and Valérie Chaussonnet, *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Waldemar Jochelson, *History, Ethnology, and Anthropology of the Aleut* (Oosterhout: N.B. Netherlands Anthropological Publications, 1966); *Handbook of North American Indians. Volume 5: Arctic* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1984). Also see Robert E. Ackerman, *Ethnohistory in Southwestern Alaska and the Southern Yukon; Method and Content* (Lexington University Press of Kentucky: 1970); Lydia Black and Richard A. Pierce, *Atka, an Ethnohistory of the Western Aleutians* (Kingston, Ont., Canada: Limestone Press, 1984); Henry Bascom Clark, Austin Hobart Collins, et al., *The Aleutian Islands: Their People and Natural History with Keys for the Identification of the Birds and Plants* (City of Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1945); S. G. Fedorova, *Ethnic Processes in Russian America* (Anchorage: Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, 1975); William S. Laughlin, *Aleuts, Survivors of the Bering Land Bridge* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1980); R. G. Liapunova, *Essays on the Ethnography of the Aleuts: At the End of the Eighteenth and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1996); Lael Morgan, *Alaska's Native People* (Anchorage: Alaska Geographic Society, 1979).

Alaska Peninsula and southeastern Kenai Peninsula – and Chugach of Prince William Sound.

The Aleuts, or Unangan, or Unanga people (translated as “the original people”) of the Eskimo-Aleut language family are indigenous not only to Alaska (the western part of the Alaska Peninsula, the Aleutian Islands, the Pribylof Islands, the Shumagin Islands) but to Siberia as well (Kamchatka). Hunter-gatherers, they were noticed by early explorers for their “Barabaras” or underground semi-subterranean winter houses, fishing and traveling kayak boats (“baidarkas” or “bidarkas”), their art of weaving and creating ornamented baskets, and weapons like harpoons used to hunt sea animals like seals for subsistence.

The Orthodox missionary Ioann Veniaminov observed that the Aleuts acknowledged the existence of a Creator of visible and invisible worlds, named *Agugux*. While the Aleut’s Creator was a powerful force, it was not interventionist but rather distant and removed, recognized but not worshiped. Instead, Aleuts worshiped a multitude of powerful and invisible spirits.

There are several Aleut versions of the story of creation of man. According to one, in the beginning the earth was vacant, but two human-like being fell onto it from the sky and started the human life. Others claim the existence of a lonely solemn islander-man sailing from his island to the mainland – ashore he found a human footpath which led to a woman: thus started the human race, forbears of all the Alaskans.

Aleut religious beliefs stressed that this world exists in a precarious balance, which had to be carefully maintained: between life and death, good and evil, this life and the afterlife, along with a balance in existing with the Nature, based on living in

symbiotic relation with the hunted animals, which were not mere beasts of prey but a respected and, indeed, the only source of livelihood. Destruction of this balance often meant death. Such beliefs were quite common for other Native American groups, for instance, the woodland Indians of Eastern North America.³²

There were two kinds of spirits in the Aleut universe. In Western tradition they would be probably labeled as good and evil, although according to the Native tradition the terms *useful* or *detrimental* are probably more appropriate. Aleuts called them, respectively, *Qugax* and *Agiliqayax*. Celestial objects were also revered; light and darkness and the forces of nature were all respected and feared.

Ioann Veniaminov retells the story of an old Aleut expressing this balanced natural world, maintained on pain of retribution:

An old men taught that those who speak ill about the sun, [saying] for instance, that it is too hot, or hides itself, etc., were blinded by it, and permitted to see its light. The moon killed its detractor with a stone. The one who chatted about the stars was compelled by them to count them, otherwise he would become insane. If in summer, on a clear and calm day, one should remark while outside, what is this calm? When will it become cool? Or say to a comrade that in winter we did not suffer, but now in summer we have to bear the heat, then an unusual punishment will follow such calumny.³³

The Aleut world had a three-layer structure. *Hakadan Kyuudax* was on top, with neither day or night and a multitude of people inhabiting it. The human world was in the middle. The subterranean underworld – *Sitxugix Kuyudax* – was the third one, settled by a large number of people unknown to the Aleuts.

There was also a vague belief in immortality of the soul. Killing and burial of slaves upon prominent people's deaths attest to that: they were taking servants to the

³² See, for example, Dane Morrison, *Massachusetts Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600-1690* (New York: P.Lang, 1995).

³³ Innokentii, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*, pp. 217-239.

other world. But, as Veniaminov discovered, in general “all thought and believed that the souls of the dead, or, as they call them, shadows, dwelled invisible among the kinsmen, accompanying them on land and sea, especially those whom they had loved, and that they were capable of performing any kind of good and evil.” So, when an Aleut was in danger, the spirits of ancestors were called upon.³⁴

When Veniaminov encountered them in the early nineteenth century, the Aleuts had no idols or temples, but carried offerings to invisible spirits and certain sacred localities, places (*audagdax*), in villages or on cliffs. The sacred was not to be disturbed: taking anything, any object from there, living or not, was a taboo. Aleuts brought their offerings –*axsxiliq*, such as animal skins and bird feathers – to the sacred spots, thus petitioning for assistance.

The world of the Aleut was animistic: land and sea creatures all possessed souls though they inhabited separate worlds. For the Aleut, everyday life as well as hunting was regulated by a set of taboos. The Aleut world abounded in spirits and deities, good and evil. As in other indigenous traditions, the shaman communicated between this and the other world. Life was a cycle of the rites of passages (like the first kill of a seal by a boy, marriage festivals, and systems of gift-giving). The human soul was captured in this cycle: the dead do not really die but continue to live on in newborn Aleut children – hence the tradition of renaming the children after those who just recently died (comparable to the Yupik tradition of renaming adults after the recently deceased which

³⁴ Innokentii, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*, p. 221.

often confused traders and missionaries). There is also an afterworld – in the sea or the sky – a new home for an eternal but disembodied soul.³⁵

Shamans were the intermediaries between the human and other world. Ioann Veniaminov provides the following description of Aleut shamans, based on the words of some old Aleuts:

The old time Aleuts also had shamans and shamanistic séances. But in what precisely their shamanistic séances consisted or how they were conducted I could not ascertain, except that, as it is common to all shamans, during a shamanistic séance, they leaped, grimaced, beat the drum and [entered the state characterized by loss of conscious control]. The shamans here, as everywhere, were, or were considered to be, the intermediaries between the visible and invisible worlds, between men and spirits, and the common folk believed that, as the saying goes, being associated with deviltry they could forfeit the future and aid suffers. Therefore, they [the shamans] were appealed to for help in good luck in hunting, longevity, miraculous rescue from dangers at sea, the calming of storms and winds, etc., and healers ... [as] recourse for help in difficult childbirth.³⁶

Important for Orthodox conversion of the Aleuts was the fact that, while the Aleuts used the shamans' services, this was neither a highly respected nor inheritable position, as it was among the Tlingit. Thus, the priests could supplant them without causing a total decentering of the Native world. Veniaminov wrote that:

Aleut shamans said that it was not they who summoned spirits (as is done among the Koloshi – or Tlingit) but that the spirits themselves enlisted their own servants, they related that when they were about fifteen years of age the devil began to try them with fantasies and apparitions. ... Then the devil began to hold conversations with them to make a deal, to exact the oath and [assign] terms, but in just what that solemn compact consisted all, except the shamans themselves, did not know and feared to learn. If one

³⁵ On Aleut religious beliefs see, for example, Norman Bancroft-Hunt, *Shamanism in North America* (Buffalo, N.Y., USA: Firefly Books, 2003); Gordon H. Marsh, *A Comparative Survey of Eskimo-Aleut Religion* (College: University of Alaska, 1954). An interesting broader book on the related subject is by Antonia Curtze and Slobodin Richard Mills, *Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit* (Toronto: Buffalo, 1994).

³⁶ Innokentii, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*, p. 219.

does not endure all the trials of the devil and commences to seek aid elsewhere, then he [the devil] will strangle [the person] in a most unhappy [accidental] manner.³⁷

For some Europeans, this world was simply irrational and savage. Peter Tikhmenev, an employee of the Russian American Company and its later historian, writes, for example:

All savages are lazy by nature and although their principal subsistence depends on the preservation of fish, they never exert themselves to do so. Should necessity force them, to obtain food they will catch enough for a day and then retire again with their wives. They prepare no more than 300 fish iukola³⁸ for the winter, but at the onset of autumn they begin games, inviting as many of their neighbors as they can feed from their stock. During the entire holiday they eat to excess, dance and shamanize. At the end of the games the host brings out all his belongings and, depending on his condition, presents his guests with deer hides, chamois or bird parkas. If he is not rich he cuts them in four parts and gives equal shares to everyone. Even the poorest of them is obliged to cut the skin into small pieces and give each person a present.³⁹

The second important group of the Natives encountered by the Russians was the Tlingits, or as they were called by the Russians – Kalosh. Tlingit religion will be discussed in detail in the second part of this manuscript, just as that of the Yupik Eskimo will be in the third and Tsimshian the in the fourth. In brief, though belonging to what anthropologists call a different “culture area”, Tlingit beliefs were in many ways similar to the rest of the Native Alaskans: the universe was animistic and filled with good and evil spirits, the Shaman was the mediator between the visible and invisible worlds, and a

³⁷ Ibid, p. 220.

³⁸ Iukola is the Siberian term for dried fish.

³⁹ K.T. Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America*, v. 2, p. 44.

clan-based native social texture was cemented by a complex system of rituals, such as *potlatch* (studied in great detail by Sergei Kan) and gift exchange.⁴⁰

At Kodiak, the first Aleut native group to encounter Russians were the Eskimo-speaking Sugpiaks, or Koniag. The early years of colonization (1780s – 1820s), where there was ruthless exploitation due to the labor shortage, had a devastating effect on this group, originally numbering around 6,500.⁴¹ As the missionary enterprise was a continuation of the Siberian experience, so was the way Russian American Company treated the conquered people – as serfs. Lydia Black, one of the best known scholars of Russian America, describes the early labor situation:

This was the labor-shortage situation the new company manager found in Alaska. Thus, soon after his arrival Baranov instituted large-scale recruitment of Native laborers. Each Native settlement under his control had to provide “several persons of both genders” as laborers. This class of laborers was designated *kaiury* (a term used in Kamchatka to designate hired dog-team drivers). Their numbers were augmented by former slaves of the Aleuts, war captives, and their descendants, who were thus technically liberated. These practices, which violated the order issued by the government especially in regard to fair payment for labor, were stopped immediately upon Baranov’s removal in 1818 and from then on Aleuts, who had, in Russian terms, the status of free peasant were hired for wages, the terms of their employment strictly regulated.⁴²

Interestingly enough, while Russian *promyshlenniki* were the Aleut nemesis, there were, as Lydia Black stated, striking similarities between the two groups’ religions:

Their concept of the function of religion was not far from that of the Aleut. They, like the Aleuts, looked to their faith to avert misfortune and help one over the rough spots in life, principally in the hour of death. Like the Aleuts, they believed in the power of symbols and in the power of ritual action. They were not bookish people. Like the Aleuts, they carried their own talismans and had their own personal protectors, the saints whose aid they invoked. They believed in a special link to their name saint and to the

⁴⁰ Kan, Sergei, *Symbolic Immortality; Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989).

⁴¹ Sugpiaks, or Koniags are one of the four major groups in Eskimo-Aleut family.

⁴² Lydia Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2004). p.127.

saint of their locality – that is, the saints to whom they dedicated the chapels they built. Specifically, they believed in the power to cure. As late as the 1820s, Aleut shamans were active as curers throughout the [Aleutian Island] chain, and the “Old Voyagers” used the shamans’ services in much the same way as Aleuts, since the 1750s, had used baptism to cure those who were pronounced incurable by their own. ... Many, like the Aleuts, believed that the future could be known and that men with ritual power could change things. Members of both groups engaged in ritual preparation for the hunt.⁴³

In remote Siberian and later Alaskan areas, lay baptism was widely practiced and accepted as necessary. Hence another irony – it was probably *promyshlenniki*, not monks and priests, who baptized Alaskans first, trying to establish commercial connections or baptizing their Native wives. The first recorded Church baptism of an Aleut–Temnak, an Attu islander, took place in 1747 at Okhotsk, Siberia.⁴⁴ Most of the earlier baptisms were conducted by laymen. Thus, paradoxically, these abusive *promyshlenniki* prepared the ground for the Orthodox mission both by effecting some conversions and, later on, contributing financially to the Orthodox mission.

Michael Oleksa, one of the most authoritative writers on Alaskan missions, points to a different source of Native preparedness for the Orthodox message – “the pre-contact

⁴³ Lydia Black, *Orthodoxy in Alaska: Christianizations of Alaska Veniaminov's Stewardship Orthodoxy in Alaska after 1867*, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁴ According to Lydia Black, the laymen prepared the ground for the Orthodox Church in the following ways:
 “1. Examples of popular Russian religious practices observed by natives, along with everyday association with popular religion as lived by ordinary Russians;
 2. Godparenting, taken very seriously by the godfathers;
 3. Name exchange, associated with lay baptisms and godparenting, a very important feature in an Alaskan Native context;
 4. Education of young Aleuts by literate *promyshlenniki*, whether in Alaska or in homes and schools in metropolitan Russia;
 5. Spread of accounts of observed Russian religious practices by Alaskans who acted as messengers or harbingers of the new ideology and symbols associated with it to areas not directly in contact with the Russians (a rather common phenomenon);
 6. Baptism as a curing rite, means of achieving healing, hunting success, escape from hardship and frustration, and so forth;
 7. Marriage and cohabitation and participation in childrearing by Russian fathers.”
 See *Ibid*, pp. 16-17.

intellectual and spiritual life of Alaskan Native people . . . dominated by myths and legends which contained archetypes for correct, and, more importantly, meaningful human behavior.”⁴⁵ Native creation myths and legends provided foundations enabling understanding in future contact. Oleksa illustrated his point with one of the Yupik Eskimo creation myths, which included the concept of “omnipotent and omnipresent Creator” myths as an example, considering the fact that after the Aleuts Yupiks were the second group to become the focus of the Orthodox mission effort:

It was the time when there were no people on earth. For four days the first man lay coiled up in the pod of beach pea. On the fifth, he burst fourth, falling on the ground, and stood up, a full grown man. Feeling unpleasant, he stood and drank from a pool of water, then felt better. Looking up, he saw a dark object approaching with a waving motion until it stopped just in front of him. It was a raven. Raven stared intently at the man, raised one wing and pushed up its beak, like a mask, to the top of its head and changed immediately into a man. Still staring and cocking its head from side to side for a better view, Raven said at last, “What are you? Whence did you come? I have never seen the likes of you.” And Raven looked at Man, surprised to see that this stranger looked so much like himself in shape.”⁴⁶

Creator – Raven, the Black Bird – common for many Eskimo traditions, though not worshiped and not in control of reality was nonetheless a spiritual guide, a guardian of the proper natural balance.

Oleksa points out another similarity in the creation myths as well as the Yupik vision of paradise:

At that time there was neither day or night. The Creator, Kashshakhiliuk, began to blow on a straw, and this is how the land gradually rose out of the water and grew . . . The place where the first people came from was warm, there were no winters nor storms, but always gentle, healthy breezes.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 14.

Thus, indigenous creation myths defined the course of missionary dialogue to a great extent. Pre-existing spiritual archetypes, seemingly irreconcilable with Christianity, contributed to such dialogue as well: a priest replaced the shaman; the immortal soul replaced the Eskimo “life force”, or “*Inua*”; animals had place and purpose in the balance of life predetermined by Creator; the “cosmos” was orderly and organized, regulated through ceremony and ritual. At the same time, while accepting Oleksa’s general approach, we should be quite careful in our reliance on the oral tradition which preserved such myths, since by the time they were recorded the extent of outside influence is not easy to determine. Nonetheless, some structural similarity between the Native Aleut and Yupik peoples’ beliefs and tenets of Christianity eased the transition from Shamanism to Orthodox Christianity in Alaska.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Oleksa provides a following comparison between the Aleut pre-contact Shamanism and Orthodox Christianity:

Pre-Contact Shamanism	Orthodox Christianity
1. Mythology/Sacred Stories	1. Bible
2. Imitation of ancestral or cosmic (eternally significant) acts	2. Imitation of Jesus Christ
3. “Taboos”: System of regulations for proper human behavior	3. Moral/ethical laws and standards; the Ten Commandments
4. Initiation by ritual death and rebirth	4. Baptism and Chrismation as ritual burial and sanctification
5. <i>Yua/Inua</i> : the life force that animates	5. <i>Logoi</i> , the life-giving and god-oriented power which directs and motivates everything toward the Logos, who recapitulates them all in Himself
6. Annual festivals to appease spirits and celebrate/represent the sacred stories	6. Annual cycles of feasts, celebrating and commemorating crucial events of the life Christ: “salvation history”
7. Ceremonies: music, dance and art as symbolic representations of primordial characters and events	7. Worship cycle; vespers, liturgy, icons, singing, architecture and vestments symbolize the reality and presence of the Kingdom which is to come
8. Kassaqa (master of ceremonies)	8. Clergy, choir director
9. Shaman: one who experiences the reality to which the myths refer and can deal with that reality in order to heal and prophesy	9. Saint: one who lives the Christian life fully, becoming God-like through <i>theosis</i> , restored to full humanity
See Ibid., pp.125-126.	

The first Native/Orthodox missionary encounter occurred at Kodiak in 1794.⁴⁹ Seven monks from the Valaam monastery arrived on September 24th, 1794, after traveling 7,327 miles in 293 days: they were Archimandrite Joasaph; monks Herman (he later became the first Orthodox non-native Saint of Alaska, where he stayed until his death in 1837)⁵⁰ and Joasaph (Kosma Evseyev); Hieromonks Makary, Yuvenaly (Juvenal), and Afanasy; and Hierodeacon Nectary. Their average age was forty. According to Basil Bensin, a historian of Orthodox Church in America, this was the longest journey ever made by any Orthodox missionaries.⁵¹ On November 21, 1794, the first Orthodox Church in Alaska – the Church of the Holy Resurrection – was founded, with a permanent building erected in 1796.

The task of the mission was to baptize the Natives and instruct them in Orthodox Christianity, make sure that the Russian settlers' religious needs were accommodated, and also to assist the settlement with the task of everyday survival – Valaam monks were not only proficient in Orthodox teaching, but were also quite skillful in agriculture and some crafts. The mission's task was to ensure the colony's survival – both temporal and spiritual. Initially, only about thirty Russian families settled at Kodiak permanently – most of them not by their own choice: they were Siberian exiles. The founder and first

⁴⁹ The word “Kodiak” comes from the InnuIt word “Kikhtak” or the island.

⁵⁰ See Frank Albert Golder, *Saint Herman of Alaska* (San Francisco: Orthodox Church in America, 1970).

⁵¹ Basil M. Bensin, *Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1967: Special Publication for the Centennial Celebration of the Purchase of Alaska by the United States from the Russian Empire in 1867* (Sitka: Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America, Diocese of Alaska, 1967). Archmandrit Joasaph and Hieromonks Stephan and Makary died in a shipwreck in 1799, Hieromonk Yuvenaly was killed in 1796 by the Natives, Archdeacon Nektary died in 1808 in Russia, Hieromonk Afanasy served as a priest in Kodiak until 1824, when he returned to Russia, and monk Joasaph served there as well until his death in 1823.

chief manager of the Russian American Company, Alexandr Baranov, fur traders and merchants, the translator and interpreter Priianishnikov, *promyshlenniki* and mariners, all came of their own will.

The first attempt to baptize the Natives took place in Unalaska, in the Aleutian Islands, before the mission was established at at Novo-Arkhangelsk. The crucial importance of previous missionary encounters in Siberia should be stressed here: Russian Orthodox missionary goals and practices in Alaska were tested there first. Once again, they faced competition with Shamanism.⁵² Second, as in Siberia, Orthodox priests, unlike preachers of many Protestant denominations, de-emphasized purely instructional, theological, and assimilationist aspects of conversion, putting the stress instead on a beautifully sung liturgy and elaborate rites and vestments, impressing the Aleuts. There were also practical reasons Aleuts converted, such as access to trade, goods, and, later, medicine. What was condemned as “wholesale” baptisms by the Protestants were viewed as an offer of “all-inclusive” salvation by the Orthodox.⁵³

The Orthodox priests put themselves in direct competition with the shaman. The Orthodox rite of conversion includes open renouncing of the devil and his helpers – for the Alaskans, that meant the shamans. The centuries-old shamanistic tradition was firmly rooted in Native culture. To an outsider, the Native world was dark: the Tlingit, Alexander Baranov remarked, “the Kolosh believe in evil spirits. They think that these inflict sickness upon people. They [the spirits] inhabit the waters, and therefore sickness

⁵² This subject is analyzed in great details in previously mentioned books authored by Znamenski and Mousalimas, see the footnotes 10 and 14.

⁵³ One also needs to consider the Orthodox liturgy and its impact on native imagination: it is always based on singing, quite elaborate, as are the Orthodox priests’ robes and church ornamentation.

is transferred through eating fish and shellfish which are possessed by evil spirits.”⁵⁴

These observations on the people of Unalaska, although unsympathetic, explain why they would be receptive to a religion that promised redemption and deliverance from the shamans: “they observe no religious laws and have no understanding of a Supreme being. However, they do have a name, Aguga, for the creator of heaven, and Kuga, for the ruler of the earth. The latter the shamans invoke and question about the future and curing the sick. They also recognize an evil spirit who in their tongue they call Aggallikiiahk.”⁵⁵

Shamans were the source of power mediating between heaven and earth. According to the frustrated Khlebnikov “only the shamans have the people’s trust, and everything told by them serves as religion.”⁵⁶ He considered their universe repulsive: “in the mythology of the Sitkha Kolosh, animals are considered active participants in life: man is perceived as a demigod and ravens as life givers.”⁵⁷

By converting the Natives, Orthodox missionaries, monks, and priests were inevitably putting themselves into direct conflict with powerful traditional spiritual forces. Why did they win? To begin with, the shamans were feared and often not liked by the natives, which helped the priests in the competition. Secondly, it should not be discounted that the Orthodox missionary, spiritual effort was backed up by the material and administrative resources of the Russian American Company.

⁵⁴ Cited in K. T. Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America*, v. 1, p. 50.

⁵⁵ Ibid, v.2, p. 122.

⁵⁶ Ibid, v.1, p. 47.

⁵⁷ Ibid, v.1, p. 48. See the Kolosh (Tlingit) creation myth, same volume, pp. 48-50.

On the other hand, there were occasions when shamans willingly converted to Orthodoxy, and, rarely, Orthodox believers reverted to Shamanism. One example was Feodor Bashmakof, a priest tried for sorcery at Sitka in 1829, an episode historian Hubert Howe Bancroft unfortunately used to characterize the entire Alaskan mission:

As an illustration of the condition of the Colonial clergy a may be mentioned the trial for sorcery of Feodor Bashmakof, a servitor at Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1829. The charge by Terenty Lestnikof to the effect that Bashakof, a native Kolosh, baptized at Novo-Arkhangelsk in November 1805, educated at the parish school, and admitted to the subordinate priesthood in January 1827, had been observed by competent witnesses in the act of assisting at certain pagan rites intended to effect the cure of a sick native, and had been seen 'to go through the motions and steps of shamans and sorcerers in the service of Satan', and also of having at various times desecrated an orthodox shrine by taking pagan charms into the holy water blessed by the benediction of the priest, and of receiving payments in furs for such sacrilegious actions. In the opinion of Veniaminov, which was afterward approved by the holy synod [sic], Bashmakov sinned more from ignorance than malice, and he was discharged with a severe reprimand. Though informed that he was free to return to Novo Arkhangelsk, Bashmakov voluntarily entered the convent of the Ascension at Nerchnisk.⁵⁸

To Bancroft's surprise, the proceedings in this case displayed a remarkable degree of leniency on the part of the higher Russian clergy, in contrast with the tribunals of the Roman Catholic Church in similar cases. However, as Bancroft admits, it is doubtful that Bashmakof's retirement to one of the most desolate convents in Siberia was a voluntary act.

Despite such backsliding, the mission proved successful, first in the short run and then, after a hiatus, in the long. The monk Herman wrote in 1794 that

The Americans accept baptism readily. Almost 7,000 people have been baptized. And also on Unalaska during our travels through the Aleutians, the Aleuts showed a desire to be baptized, surprising us immensely. Now father Makarii is going there to preach and baptize. He is going to the Aleutian, Fox and Adrianov Islands. Also father Juvenaly is

⁵⁸ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Alaska, 1730-1885* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1886), pp. 709-710. Also see Bancroft Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Reel# RK 8-14.

planning to travel to the mainland soon, beginning with Kenai, Chugach Bay and Alegmute.⁵⁹

It is possible to suggest that such readiness to be baptized, real or alleged, on the side of Aleuts can be attributed to the previous fifty years of abuse by *promyshlenniki*. The behavior of the monks stood in sharp contrast. On the other side, the Orthodox missionaries' readiness to accept Aleuts into the Church can be explained by general Orthodox emphasis on baptism, with catechetical instruction only following, rather than preceding, as with the Protestants.

Hieromonk Makary⁶⁰ converted many of the Natives of the Aleutian Islands and baptized most of the Aleuts of Unalaska and Umnak. Hieromonk Yuvenaly did the same in Kenai and Chugach, where he baptized as many as 700 Natives, while Archimandrite Joasaph stayed in Kodiak. But not all the Natives were receptive to their message: Yuvenaly was killed in 1796 near Lake Illama. It was probably his demand for boys as pupils – viewed by the natives as a demand for as hostages – in the school he was going to build that led to his death.

However, most of the hostility toward the priests came from their fellow Russians – brutal fur traders and trappers, especially directed against Hieromonk Makary who was preaching in the Aleutians.⁶¹ One may contrast two visions of Alaska (see the poems at

⁵⁹ Anonymous, *History of Kodiak Mission, 1794-1837*, pp. 61-71, cited in Afonsky, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917*, p. 70.

⁶⁰ In Orthodox Christianity, hieromonk is a monk who is also a priest.

⁶¹ See, for example, Bensin, Basil M., *History of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America* (New York: Printed by Colonial Printing & Publ. Co., 1941), p. 20.

the start of this chapter): the religious one, expressed by an Akathist⁶² – praising St. Innocent of Alaska as an Apostolic imitator, educator, and defender of the natives, and a secular one, Baranov's song, which offers a utilitarian and imperial destiny for Alaska. These two radically different viewpoints on Alaska determined the way the two groups treated the natives and each other. If for the Valaam monks Natives were future brothers and sisters in Christ, for fur traders they were nothing but human – or not very human – instruments for extraction of personal profit and attaining imperial glory.

To be sure, it would be an oversimplification to say there were no misunderstandings between the Natives and the missionaries. But there was almost no sympathy for the Natives at all in the early decades of interaction between the Russian American Company and the native Alaskans. The only voices in defense of the Aleut against the abuse by *promyshlenniki* were those of the Valaam monks. See, for example, the Report from Heiromonk Makarii to the Holy Synod, dated December 20, 1797:

The Shelikov-Golikov Company men act like barbarians toward the people. They exhibit no humanity whatsoever. They forcibly take women and children as concubines. They beat people to death. Beginning in early spring they send both the healthy and sick to hunt sea otters against their will. The sickly often die on the way. They force them to continue hunting until autumn so that they have no time to attend to their own subsistence activities, to store food for themselves, or to take animals to make winter parkas. The same company does not provide them with bird skins for parkas or any other clothing. They suffer greatly from cold. Because of the humiliation of being beaten, they commit suicide. Many die of starvation. If someone fails to make his quota of foxes, that Aleut is thrown to the ground, stripped of clothing and mercilessly flogged with thick leather cords and they say, "You are too lazy to hunt sea otters and foxes Yasak!" and they take everything for the company. They even force those whose bodies are infected, or whose legs are rotting. Those who walk with crutches and cannot walk are forced to fish for the company, to tow in driftwood or make baidarkas. Also people are deported to the uninhabited northern island [Pribylofs - sic] against their will to harvest seals for the company. Even those who walk on two crutches are deprived of their children, so there is no one to feed them. Sometimes they bring a baidarka to the seashore and such

⁶² The Akathist is a hymn dedicated to a specific saint or feast, around which a special intercessory service is built.

disabled persons are forced to fish for their own subsistence and household. If they catch nothing, they go hungry.⁶³

Not only physical, but sexual abuse was common:

The manager Maxim Kribdin kept a minor girl who had been baptized as his concubine. At one time he committed a licentious act and that same day called her to his bed. When she refused, he beat her on the back with a stick until she bled. There is no one to offer protection for anyone.⁶⁴

Even more, members of the Russian Company were sometimes blatantly scornful of religion:

One of the members of the Shelikov-Golikov Company called himself a Kodiak priest and administered “blessings” to the Russians, thus telling the Aleuts that anyone who does not allow them to keep girls is sinning. Another told the Aleuts that I am Tatar! Another ridiculed me, asking the Aleuts, ‘Did the Pope baptize you? What did he give you?’ They are leading the newly baptized people into temptation and confusion with blasphemy.⁶⁵

“The newly-enlightened people cry not tears but blood. They hope to have relief,” wrote Makarii. Short of God, only the Tsar himself could defend the Aleut:

The Russians do whatever they want. The Aleuts are in despair of the monarch’s mercy, and they say that there is no one to whom they can go for help. I was barely able to persuade them that the Sovereign’s mercy is great and they should count on it.⁶⁶

There were other reports of abuse as well. Thus, Heiromon Gideon reported:

In 1801 the company drove out Aleuts in the Sitkhin otter hunting party in the following manner: They prepared beforehand leg irons and neck yokes, and made ready birches for the young ones, ropes’ ends for the thirty-year-olds and canes for the old men. A baidara was sent off armed with a cannon and rifles. On the western cape of Kadiak, on coming

⁶³ Report from Heiromonk Makarii to the Holy Synod, December 20, 1797. Oleksa, Michael, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 288.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 288-289.

to the shore, the Russian hunters stood on guard with loaded rifles, shouting: “If you don’t want to go on the expedition just say so now [cocking their guns], as we’ll shoot.” Under such pressure who could show displeasure? When they arrived off the island of Sitkhinak, they fired the cannon and, standing with rifles ready, spread out the iron shackles on the ground near the dwellings, together with the birch rods, canes, manacles and yokes, saying, “Anyone who doesn’t want to go with us should choose one of these.” At this one man began to protest. They seized him, put him in irons, and flogged him until he was hoarse from screaming and could hardly say, “I’ll go!”⁶⁷

Heiromonk Gideon provides a long list of abuses inflicted on the Aleuts, who, as a result of mistreatment “look more like corpses than living people”:

In 1798 some twenty men in the Sitkhan party were drowned and about the same number died in the course of the journey.

In 1799, 140 men in the same party died as a result of eating shellfish when they were starving. Some 40 more died on the journey.

In 1800 the Tugidok party was sent to sea in bad weather by the hunter Lopatin, in spite of their protests, and 32 baidarkas were lost as a result – some 64 men.

... In 1805 ... in the last days of October as the party was back from Sitkha, some 300 men were drowned...⁶⁸

Needless to say, the Russian American Company counterattacked. Nikolai Rezanov, second in rank official of the company, wrote to his superiors, blaming the monks’ incompetency and insubordination for the Company’s difficulties:

As for the ecclesiastical mission, they have baptized several thousand here, but only nominally. Seeing that the ways of Kodiak natives become milder I find less explanation for that in the work of the missionaries than to time and to their own aptitude. Our monks have never followed the path of the Jesuits in Paraguay to develop the mentality of the savages, and have never known how to enter into the extensive plans of the government or company. They have just been “bathing” [baptizing] the Americans and when, due to their ability to copy they learn how to make the sign of the cross, our missionaries think that the job is done. Having little to do they try to take part in the civil

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 289.

⁶⁸ Report from Cathedral Hieromonk Gideon to the Holy Synod, June 1-2, 1805, Ibid. pp. 291-292.

government of the country, calling themselves government representatives. ... The result is grief and there is a danger of our losing the whole country.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the first Valaam martyr, Yuvenaly, killed by the natives, according to Resanov, was not a martyr at all and should have blamed his own arrogance for his misfortune:

Sometimes, unknown to the manager, they would set off uselessly to make new converts. On the Alaska peninsula, trade, which promised big profits, was opened with the hill natives, on Lake Iliamna, sometimes called lake Shelikhov. The monk Juvenal [sic] went there immediately to propagate the faith. He baptized them forcibly, married them, took girls away from some and gave them to others. The Americans endured his rough ways and even beating for a long time, but finally held council, decided to get rid of the Reverend and kill him. He does not deserve pity, but the Iliamna natives in their exasperation killed the whole crew of Russians and Kodiak people. Since then this people think of revenge and fearing that the Russians will settle there again, showing no mercy at the slightest misstep. Last year they killed Russians again. I told the holy fathers that if any of them took another step without first getting the Manager's approval, or if they meddled in civil affairs, I would order such criminals deported to Russia, where for disrupting the peace of the community such people would be defrocked and severely punished to make an example of them. They cried, rolled at my feet and told me that it was the government employees who had told them what to do. They promised me to behave, so that the Manager would have nothing but praise for them in the future.⁷⁰

Later writers interpreted Yuvenaly's story differently. Here is, for example, Tikhmenev: "Soon after their arrival at Kadiak, the priest Iuvenalii of the spiritual mission went there to preach the word of the Lord. He taught, endured insults, suffered hunger and cold and converted many to the faith. However, restraining them from the prevailing passion of voluptuousness he forbade polygamy. Native people require gradual softening up and are unable to adjust immediately to the verities of the holy faith.

⁶⁹ Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, Letter from Nikolai Rezanov to the Board of Directors of the Russian American Company, November 6, 1805, p. 306.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 306-307.

Abstention from whims – the first of Christian virtues – in the opinion of heathens is inexplicable, especially without the knowledge of their language. The holy father was unable to overcome their stubbornness and suffered martyrdom.”⁷¹

It is possible to conclude that initially the Orthodox mission enjoyed limited but real success. Nevertheless, in 1802 Tlingit rebelled in Novo-Arkhangelsk,⁷² and slaughtered the Russian settlers. The Russians settled once more in 1804, when Baranov returned on the warship *Neva*. He bombarded Tlingit villages and re-established a Russian presence, but for over a decade, the Orthodox missionary effort was nominal. Until 1816 there was only one Orthodox priest on Kodiak, Hieromonk Afanasy, who spend most of his time in that town. The capital of the colony, Novo-Arkhangelsk on Baranov’s Island, had no priests or monks at all between 1808 and 1816. Church services such as the sacrament of baptism or funerals were administered by an employee of the Russian American Company.⁷³

Peter the Aleut, the first Alaskan Native Orthodox saint and martyr deserves mentioning here. According to the Orthodox tradition, Cungagnaq, an Aleut native of Kodiak Island, was baptized under the name Peter by Valaam monks. He was captured in 1815 along with a group of other Aleut seal hunters by Spanish sailors, taken to Los Angeles, and apparently tortured and executed for a refusal to abandon Orthodoxy and convert to Roman Catholicism (execution and torture were supposedly conducted by some California Indians, whereas the interrogator were Catholic priests). This story,

⁷¹ Tikhmenev, v. 2, p. 43.

⁷² Official capital of Russian America starting 1808.

⁷³ See *Istorija Russkoi Ameriki*, v. 3, p. 119.

based on a single eyewitness account, that of a Russian Creole named Ivan, is hard to confirm, but it can serve as a testimony and an example to the competition between Russians and the Spanish in that region.⁷⁴

St. Herman, Ioann Veniaminov, and Ioakov Netsvetov

One monk who continued his mission during these times was the original Valaam missionary Herman, later St. Herman of Alaska. He came to Alaska with the first mission of seven monks in 1794 and stayed there until his death in 1837. He settled on Pine Island – “New Valaam” as Herman called it – located close to Kodiak. A humble man, he declined ecclesiastical promotions, refusing to accept the higher titles of Hieromonk and Archimandrite. On New Valaam Herman founded a school for Aleutian orphans, teaching them the scriptures and how to sing the liturgy. He was known for his compassion and help to the natives in times of epidemics and natural disasters, defending the Natives against abuse by *promyshlenniki*. He died at the age of 81 and was canonized by the Orthodox Church as St. Herman of Alaska, becoming the first American saint in the Orthodox Church.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See, for example See Raymon A. Bucko, SJ, “Peter the Aleut: Sacred Icon and the Iconography of Violence”, *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association*, vol. 23, no.1 (2006), pp. 22-45.

⁷⁵ Frank Alfred Golder, *Father Herman, Alaska's Saint: A Preliminary Account of the Life and Miracles of Blessed Father Herman* (San Francisco: Orthodox Christian Books & Icons, 1968); *Ocherk Iz Istorii Amerikanskoi Pravoslavnoi Dukhovnoi Missii (Kad'Iakskoi Missii, 1794-1837)* (St.Peterburg: Tip. M. Merkusheva, 1894); Dorrie Papademetriou, *North Star: St. Herman of Alaska* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

The first regular priest – not a monk – to arrive in Novo-Arkhangelsk was Alexey Sokolov, in 1816. It was Kyrill Khlebnikov,⁷⁶ the new Director of the Novo-Arkhangelsk division of the Russian American Company (1818), under whose rule the situation of the Orthodox Church gradually improved.⁷⁷ By 1825 a new church was built on Kodiak, and missionary activities continued on Unalaska as well. By 1816 all of the Unalaskan Aleuts were baptized into Orthodoxy. In 1823 the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church established a special mission for Unalaska and the Aleutian Islands, and in 1824 a 25-year-old priest from Irkutsk, Ioann Evseevich Popov Veniaminov, came. His arrival signified not only a change in his personal life but opened a whole new chapter in history of the Russian Orthodox mission.

Born into the poor family of a church *psalomschik* (cantor) in 1797, Father Ioann graduated from the Irkutsk seminary, served as a priest for several years in Siberia, and left for Alaska in 1823, accompanied by his mother, his wife, his infant son Innocent, and his brother Stefan.⁷⁸ Upon his arrival in Unalaska in 1824 he found a parish of

⁷⁶ K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, (St-Peterburg: Morskaiia tipografiia, 1835); K. T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America: Kyrill T. Khlebnikov's Reports, 1817-1832* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1976); K. T. Khlebnikov, R. G. Liapunova and S. G. Fedorova, *Russkaia Amerika V Neopublikovannykh Zapiskakh K.T. Khlebnikova* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979); K. T. Khlebnikov and L. A. Shur, *The Khlebnikov Archive: Unpublished Journal (1800-1837) and Travel Notes (in 1820, 1822, and 1824)* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1990).

⁷⁷ K.T. Khlebnikov (1784-1838) is known, among other things, for his efforts to build better relations with the United States. He helped to organize a diplomatic conference between the United States and Russia in 1824 in St. Petersburg, resulting in a treaty delineating each country's spheres of influence.

⁷⁸ On Veniaminov's life see Ivan Platonovich Barsukov, *O Zhizni i Podvigakh Innokentii* (St. Peterburg: V Sinodalnoi Tipografii, 1893), A. V. Dulov et al., *Apostol Aliaski: Materialy Nauchnoi Konferentsii, Posviashchennoi 200-Letiiu Innokentii Veniaminova I 270-Letiiu Irkutskoi Eparkhii: 1-2 Oktiabria 1997 G* (Irkutsk: Nauch. Biblioteka Irkutskogo Gos. Universiteta, 1998); Paul D. Garrett, *St. Innocent, Apostle to America* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979); Charles R. Hale, *Innocent of Moscow, the Apostle of Kamchatka and Alaska* (Davenport: Ia. Borchardt, 1888); Dan Pakulak, *Zhizn' i Deiatel'nost' Innokentii, Mitropolita Moskovskogo* (Tiumen': Rutra, 1994); Helen A. Shenitz, *Alaska's "Good Father", the Story of an Alaskan Priest Who Became the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church* (Wilkes Barre, PA: Federated Russian Orthodox Clubs, 1962); *Sviatitel' Innokentii, Mitropolit Moskovskii I*

approximately fifteen hundred Aleut believers, previously baptized by Yuvenaly and Makary, with almost a thousand Native Orthodox believers living on various islands of the Aleutian chain. From the very beginning Veniaminov displayed an interest in Native languages, traditions, and culture.⁷⁹ He became one of the first ethnographers of the region. An amateur linguist, Veniaminov was the first to translate parts of the Bible into the Aleutian language and composed several instructional works as well.⁸⁰

It is impossible to overestimate Veniaminov's significance, not only for the Orthodox Mission in Alaska, but for the Russian Orthodox Church itself upon his return to Russia. Before 1829, when Veniaminov translated the catechism into Aleut, no Russian in Alaska had any formal understanding of that language. He also wrote the first grammar of the Aleutian language and its first vocabulary. Veniaminov's achievement is connected closely to his self-education in native traditions: he started a school for boys in

Kolomenskii, Apostol Ameriki i Sibiri i Ego Nasledie: Materialy Nauchnoi Konferentsii (Moskva: Gosudarstvennaia Publichnaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka Rossii, 2000).

⁷⁹ Veniaminov's published works appear under his subsequent title, Saint Innokentii, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, and are edited by Ivan Barsukov: *Sostoianie Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi V Rossiiskoi Amerike* Uniform Title: *Sostoianie Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi V Rossiiskoi Amerike* (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Imperskoi Akademii Nauk, 1840); *Tvoreniia Innokentii, Mitropolita Moskovskago* (Moskva: Synodal'naia Tipografia, 1886); *Pis'ma Innokentii, Mitropolita Moskovskago i Kolomenskago 1828-1878* (St. Petersburg: Synodal'naia Tipografiia, 1897); *Izbrannye Trudy Sviatitelia Innokentii, Mitropolita Moskovskago, Apostola Sibiri i Ameriki* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1997).

⁸⁰ See, Saint Innokentii, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, edited by Ivan Barsukov: *Gospoda Nashego Iisusa Khrista Evangelie, Napisannoe Apostolom Matfiiem* (Moskva: V Sinodal'noi Tipografii, 1840); *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven* (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1952); *Nachatki Khristianskago Ucheniia, Ili Kratkaia Sviashchennaia Istoriia i Kratkii Katikhizis. Razsmatrivano i Odobreno Sviatieishim Pravitel'svuiushchim Synodom, i Izdano Po Vysochaishemu Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Povelieniiu, Dlia Prepodavaniia V Uchilishchakh* (Moskva: V Synodal'noi Tipografii, 1861); *Opyt Grammatiki Aleutsko-Lis'Evskago Iazyka: Sviashchennika I. Ven'iaminova, V Unalashkie* (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1846); *Ukazanie Puti V Tsarstvie Nebesnoe. Besieda, Iz Pouchenii K Novoprosveshennym Khristianam* (St. Petersburg: V Synodalnoi Tipografii, 1841); *Zamiechaniia O Koloshenskom i Kad'Iakskom Iazykakh i Otchasti O Prochikh Rossiisko-Amerikanskikh, S Prisovokupleniem Rossiisko-Koloshenskago Slovaria, Soderzhashchago Boliee 1000 Slova, Iz Koikh Na Niekotoryia Sdielany Poiasneniia* (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Imperskoi Akademii Nauk, 1846).

Unalaska, initially numbering about twenty pupils. By 1830 Veniaminov could teach without a translator. Beginning with Veniaminov, the Orthodox mission was no longer merely part of an imperial enterprise aimed at extending Siberia into Alaska, designed to smooth the transition from pagan to an imperial subject. It became a mission based on a dialogue between Orthodoxy and the Native traditions and culture.

By 1834 all the inhabitants of the geographically enormous Unalaska parish were at least nominally Orthodox. Veniaminov believed that the Aleuts were truly exemplary Christians. He wrote “just as they adopted Christianity, they immediately abandoned shamanism, and not only shamanism itself but the very signs of it such as false faces and masks which they used in dances and shamanistic séances, and even the very songs, which remind one slightly of their previous faith and rites – all have been abandoned without any coercion.”⁸¹

In 1834 Veniaminov moved to Sitka or Baranov Island in southwestern Alaska, at the request of the Russian Governor of Alaska Ferdinand Petrovich Wrangell. Kyrill Khlebnikov, in the *Notes on Russian America*, described Sitka Island: “All the hills are covered with coniferous forests, but only the upper rocky elevations are covered permanently with snow. Sitka is an island separated from the mainland by Khutsnovskii Strait (Chatham Street) and separated by shallow straits to the north. The entire island is almost two degrees, stretching from Cape Ommaney to Ledianoi Strait. There is probably not even a square mile of level space.”⁸² The capital, “the fort of Novo-Archangel’sk is located within the bay 14 miles from Cape Edgecumbe, which can be

⁸¹ Innokentii, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*, p. 230.

⁸² K. T. Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America*, v.1, pp. 39-40.

seen west of here. A chain of snowy ridges stretches from north to east from Mt. Edgecumbe.”⁸³

Veniaminov spent the next five years in Novo-Arkhangelsk, the colonial capital, preaching at St. Michael’s Cathedral. According to the historian of the Russian American Company, Peter Tikhmenev, there were only 80 native converts and 1,200 Russian and Creole Christians living in Novo-Arkhangelsk by the time of Veniaminov’s arrival. By 1837 there were 11, 503 Russians, Aleuts, Creoles and Eskimo Christians, out of about 50,000 Natives living in Russian America.⁸⁴ By 1840 there were 1,230 Orthodox believers in Sitka itself, mostly Russians and Creoles, but also 78 Aleuts and 20 Tlingits.

It was also Ioann Veniaminov who started – very carefully – to convert the neighboring Tlingits (Kalosh), the nemesis of the Russian American Company from its very early days when they had massacred the inhabitants of its settlement. Once again, he started with language and culture, resulting in the publication of a Tlingit grammar and a comparative linguistic treatise on Native Alaskan languages in 1846. As Georgy Afonsky noticed, “the Thlingits [sic] became especially attentive to the sermons of Father John after the smallpox epidemic of 1838 which practically destroyed the native population. Father John was the first person to convince the Thlingits to accept the vaccinations which halted the epidemic and saved this brave and independent nation.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid, v. 1, p. 46.

⁸⁴ Richard A. Pierce, Dimitri Krenov et al., *A History of the Russian American Company, Volume 2: Documents* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1979); P. A. Tikhmenev, *Istoricheskoe Obozrenie Obrazovaniia Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii I Dieistvii Eia Do Nastoiashchago Vremeni* (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii E. Veimara, 1861).

⁸⁵ Afonsky, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917*, p. 55.

In April 1838, after fifteen years in Alaska, Veniaminov was ready to leave Sitka to travel home. His final destination was Russia's capital, St. Petersburg, where he planned to present a report on the successes and problems of the mission to the Holy Synod – *A Review of the Orthodox Church in the Russian Settlements in America, Together with My Opinion as to How Their Condition Might Be Improved* – and to request assistance for the Orthodox Church's activities in Alaska.⁸⁶ He was accompanied by his wife Catherine and their five children – Ioann and Catherine were married in 1817, when Veniaminov was still a seminary student in Irkutsk. Upon their arrival, Catherine and four of the children were going to stay in Irkutsk, while Veniaminov and his youngest daughter were to continue to St. Petersburg.⁸⁷

On June 25, 1838, Ioann Veniaminov saw the capital of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg, for the first time. He soon received an appointment to see the most powerful figure in the Orthodox Church, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod Nicholas Protasov. The Ober-Procurator founded Veniaminov's proposals worthy of notice: namely, to increase the numbers of churches, priests, and missionaries in Alaska, as well as give missions a more formal and accountable structure.⁸⁸

After his initial success in St. Petersburg, Veniaminov traveled to Moscow, where he stayed for several months. There, he gained support from another influential church figure – Metropolitan Philaret, and also captured the attention of the general public.

⁸⁶ See Innokentii, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, *Sostoianie Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Rossiiskoi Amerike* (St. Peterburg: V Tip. Akademii Nauk, 1840).

⁸⁷ See Paul D. Garrett, *St. Innocent: Apostle to America* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1979), p. 125.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 128-129.

Veniaminov's personality and energy as well as his message of the exotic lands and peoples captivated the minds of prominent Muscovites, who donated money as well as various church items for the benefit of the Alaskan mission.⁸⁹

In November of 1839, Veniaminov was invited to appear before the regular session of the Holy Synod, where he finally presented his formal report, describing the current state and the prospects of the mission, and also offered ethnographical observations on Aleuts. Several days after the presentation, Veniaminov was given the rank of archpriest, or supervisor over a number of parishes, by the Holy Synod. He was also granted permission to publish his theological works. In January 1840, the Synod formally approved Venianinov's suggestions, which thus acquired canonical force for all the Russian Orthodox missions⁹⁰

It was also in January, filled with new hope to continue his work in Alaska, that Veniaminov received devastating news – his wife Catherine had died in Irkutsk on November 25, 1839. This proved a decisive moment for the Orthodox mission in Alaska. Up to that point, its driving force had been Ioann Veniaminov himself, the man with the experience, plan, and a vision. It was Veniaminov who understood the Aleuts as no one else in Russian America. Now, with six children to take care of, he had to choose between Alaska and his family. He initially preferred the latter.

However, the Metropolitan Philaret suggested to him instead the path of a monk, a typical choice for a widower-priest. Only after several months of spiritual self-examination and prayers, after visiting the ancient shrines of the Russian Church in Kiev,

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 130.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 132.

did Venianinov agree. He also received personal assurances from Tsar Nicholas I, whom Philaret had informed of Veniaminov's tragedy, that the monarchy would take care of his children's education and other needs. As a result, with Veniaminov's approval, his three sons, Innocent, Gabriel, and Alexander, were granted permission to transfer from the Irkutsk Seminary to St. Petersburg. His daughters, Olga, Paraskeva, and Thekla joined the National Institute for Girls (*Institut Blagorodnyh Devits*) under imperial patronage. Veniaminov took his monastic vows on November 29, 1840, choosing the name Innocent to honor Bishop Innocent of Irkutsk. His renewed mission was important to the Russian church and government: he was promoted to the rank of Archimandrite the very next day, and received an audience with Tsar Nicholas I the day after.⁹¹

Meanwhile, the Holy Synod planned to make crucial changes in Russian America. A new episcopal district, the Diocese of North America and Kamchatka, with its bishop to reside in Sitka was created. Previously, Alaskan Orthodox parishes belonged to the Diocese of Irkutsk. Even more important, the bishop and the clergy of the new diocese were granted permission to modify the liturgy and administrative procedures in accordance with local conditions and needs. A mere two weeks after taking his monastic vows, on December 14, 1840, Veniaminov was chosen by the Tsar from among three available candidates to head the new diocese.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 135-144.

⁹² Ibid, pp. 137-138.

In this position, Veniaminov extended the reach of the Orthodox mission to the rest of Alaska. In the 1840s he initiated parishes at Kenai (next to Cook Inlet)⁹³ and Nushagak (present-day Dillingham). The mission there was led by Ilya Petelin.⁹⁴ In Kvikhpah, the head of the mission was a young Orthodox priest named Iakov Netsvetov, who became the next leading figure in the history of Orthodox Christianity in Alaska.

By the end of the 1840s there were four active Orthodox churches in Alaska: in Novo-Arkhangelsk (1751 parishioners), Kodiak (6338 parishioners), Unalaska (1751 parishioners) and Atka (994 parishioners), and eight island chapels, where the service was conducted periodically. There were also the four priests, already mentioned.⁹⁵

Considering the size of the missionary territory, the most serious problem the Orthodox Church encountered was a lack of priests. The only solution was to find volunteers among the native people. In 1843 Ioann Veniaminov organized a missionary school in Novo-Arkhangelsk, and in 1845 a Theological Seminary was transferred there from Kamchatka.⁹⁶ The results were heartening. According to Veniaminov's report to

⁹³ Before 1845 all church services in Kenai were conducted by a layman A. Komkov, an employee of the Russian American Company, in a small chapel located in Nikolaevky Redut settlement. In 1845 a new missionary, Hieromonk Nikolai, arrived from the Novo-Arkhangelsk, who baptized about 400 people within the next two years and served there until his death in 1867 – see N. N. Bolkhovitinov et al., *Istorii Russkoi Ameeriki*, v.3, p. 135.

⁹⁴ P. A. Tikhmenev, *History of the Russian-American Company*, vol. 2, p. 255.

⁹⁵ See N. N. Bolkhovitinov, et al., *Istorii Russkoi Ameriki*, v. 3, p. 136. More detailed statistical data on this subject can be found in the Appendix A.

⁹⁶ The Orthodox Missionary Oath by Ioann Veniamonov:

“I, the undersigned, in front of this Holy Bible, promise and swear by Almighty God that I am obligated by my position and am earnestly willing, in the work of Christianization assigned to me, to think, to teach and to act as is maintained and taught by our Orthodox Church and as is prescribed and ordered by the instructions of my Archpastor, The Right Reverend Innocent, Bishop of Kamchatka, in accordance with the decrees of His Imperial Majesty.

“I swear by the Living God that, ever keeping in my mind His awful words, ‘damned is he who preaches God’s word carelessly,’ I will earnestly perform the work of God which has been assigned to me to my utmost mental and physical strength, without hypocrisy and avarice, avoiding all threats, deceit, extortion

the Holy Synod in 1850 – he was promoted to the rank of the Archbishop the same year – the Diocese of Kamchatka and the Aleutian and Kuril Islands had 23,130 parishioners, with almost 15,000 of them living in Alaska. There were already 9 churches in the whole of Alaska, and 3 in Novo-Arkhangelsk, including a separate one for Tlingits. Three new churches had recently been built in Kenai, Nushagak, and Kvikhpak, along with 37 chapels, and these were serviced by 9 priests and 2 deacons.⁹⁷

One indicator of the depth of the interaction between Native and foreign elements in Alaskan Orthodox spirituality is the number of the Native-born or “Creole” priests. The best example is Iakov Georgeevich Netsvetov, the first Aleut-Russian priest and missionary, who preached to the Native peoples of the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions. Netsvetov is closely linked with the history of the Kvikhpah Mission. Sometimes called the Enlightener of Alaska, he was the third important Orthodox missionary figure in Alaska, following S. Herman and Ioann Veniaminov. As the first Native Alaskan-born priest, he is an essential figure for understanding Native Alaskan Orthodox Christianity.

and other unlawful acts, and without any force or violence; but sincerely, disinterestedly, kindly, consistently with true meekness and Christian love, keeping in mind the glory of God and the salvation of people’s souls as the final aim of all my thoughts, words and acts, seeking not my own, but that which is of Our Lord Jesus.

“I furthermore swear by Almighty God that I am obligated and am willing at all times to be the loyal, good, and obedient subject of His Imperial Majesty, the All-Merciful Emperor, and of the lawful heir of the Russian Throne in carrying out work entrusted to me; and I will preserve and defend the interests of His Imperial Majesty to the utmost of my understanding and ability, being ready to sacrifice my life, if necessary.

“I furthermore swear by Almighty God that I do not entertain any mental reservation, equivocation or misinterpretation of the promises pronounced by my tongue: Should it be otherwise, God, He to whom all hearts are open, be my Righteous Avenger.

“I seal my oath by kissing the words and the cross of my Savior. Amen.”

Quoted in Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, p. 139. It was used when Bishop Innocent Veniaminov was the Bishop of Kamchatka, Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 137.

Born in 1802 on Atka (Aleutian Islands) in a Creole family (his father, Yegor Netsvetov was a Russian from Siberia, his mother, Maria Alekseevna, was an Aleut), Iakov studied in the Irkutsk Theological Seminary and was tonsured as a sub-deacon in 1825. That year he married a Russian-Creole woman Anna, and, upon graduation in 1826, served the Holy Trinity-St. Peter Church of Irkutsk. As a deacon he was elevated to the priesthood by Archbishop Michael of Irkutsk in 1828. The next year Netsvetov returned to his native Atka, Alaska. The Atka parish included the islands and the land of Amchatka, Attu, and Bering as well as part of Kuril Islands. Like Veniaminov, Netsvetov was not simply a priest: he was an educator (teaching in the parish school), scholar (collecting species of Native fauna for museums in Russia as well as working on Native translations), and writer.⁹⁸

On December 30, 1844, Ioann Veniaminov appointed Netsvetov to lead the Kvikhpak Mission, to convert people along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. Netsvetov established a mission in the Ikogmiute village (now known simply as Russian Mission), a Yupik Eskimo settlement, baptizing Yupiks and Athabaskans.⁹⁹ Beginning in 1884, the Moravian missionaries encountered Orthodoxy planted by Netsvetov in this region. Netsvetov served there until 1863 and spent the last year of his life in Novo-Arkhangelsk, preaching at the Tlingit chapel.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Iakov Netsvetov, *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Yukon Years, 1845-1863* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1984); Iakov Netsvetov, *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atka Years, 1828-1844* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1980).

⁹⁹ Netsvetov's assistants were two Creole Natives, Innokentii Shayashnikov and Konstantin Lukin, as well as his own nephew, Vasilii Netsvetov.

¹⁰⁰ Netsvetov died on July 26, 1864 at the age of 60. He was actually called to Novo-Arkhangelsk by Bishop Peter to clear his name against certain slanderous accusations.

Netsvetov is the most important example of the early Native, indigenous leaders of Orthodox Christianity. But he is just one of many. Just like the “creolized” Russian American colony itself, the Orthodox Church in Alaska was remarkable for the extent of integration of the indigenous element.¹⁰¹

The success of the Alaskan mission under Veniaminov’s leadership led to an increase in the size of his spiritual domain. *Alaska was now baptizing Siberia*: in 1852 the Yakutsk region became part of Veniaminov’s diocese. As a result, in 1858 Veniaminov transferred his cathedra to Yakutsk, and later moved it to Blagoveshchensk (1860) after the Russian acquisition of the Amur region from China in 1858, with two vicars in Yakutsk and Novo-Arkhangelsk (1858), and Peter, former rector of the Novo-Arkhangelsk Theological Seminary, installed as Bishop in Novo-Arkhangelsk.¹⁰² By 1860, in Alaska there were 11 Orthodox priests, 16 parish servers and administrators of other ranks (*diakon*, *psalomschiki*, *prichetniki*)¹⁰³, 12,007 believers (of them 784 Russians -576 men and 208 women, and 1676 creoles – 853 men and 823 women, the rest were Natives). Orthodox Churches were financed by the Russian American Company (25,000 rubles a year), Holy Synod (3,000 rubles), and private donations.¹⁰⁴

In 1867 Russian Alaska became a United States possession and a separate Orthodox diocese of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska was established in 1870. Article II of the cessation treaty stated the following:

¹⁰¹ Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*, pp. 143-168.

¹⁰² Peter served in that capacity in 1858-1866.

¹⁰³ English equivalents for these Orthodox Church terms: *diakon* is a deacon; *psalomschik* is a reader, psalmist, sexton; *prichetnik* is a psalm reader.

¹⁰⁴ N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki*, v.3., p. 142.

In the cession of territory and dominion made by the preceding article are included the right of property in all public lots and squares, vacant lands, and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks, and other edifices which are not private individual property. It is, however, understood and agreed, that the churches which have been built in the ceded territory by the Russian government, shall remain the property of such members of the Greek Oriental Church resident in the territory, as may choose to worship therein.¹⁰⁵

The churches indeed remained Orthodox property. But in time, Protestant missionaries were determined that they should be emptied of the Alaskan souls which gave them spiritual life. Their predominantly hostile encounter with the Russian Church, and overall failure, is the subject of the next three chapters.

Conclusions

Whether the success of Orthodox Christianity in Alaska was a logical outcome of the internal development of the Russian Orthodox Church is open to debate. The Russian Orthodox Church was an integral part of the Russian imperial structure. Therefore, state involvement with and state assistance to the Church should not be overlooked. It is possible to argue that without state financial and administrative aid, the story of the Orthodox Alaskan mission would have been quite different, if possible at all. What is undeniable is the role of some extraordinary individuals, such as Ioann Venaiminov (St. Innocent or St. Innokentii), who as a reward for his services Tsar Alexander II appointed Metropolitan of Moscow, the highest position in the Russian Orthodox Church, in 1867, and Iakov Netsvetov or St. Herman of Alaska.

Russian Alaska began as a private company enterprise. General treatment of the Native people by the Russian American Company was abusive, especially during the first

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Alaska.html>. Accessed on November 14, 2007. In accordance with the decision of the Holy Synod, the Orthodox Church in Alaska received 72,000 dollars a year as a budget, or 1% sum of the 1867 Alaskan purchase.

period of its existence. But, arguably, with the introduction of the missionaries, relations softened. Ironically, as Gregory Afonsky maintains, Orthodox missionary success can be attributed in large part to the support from the Russian American Company, which itself was also an arm of the Russian Imperial Government: it provided initial financial support, and the permanent settlements established by the Company provided places for interacting with the Native populations. The company's cruelty then led the Natives to embrace the missionaries.

By the time of the Alaskan cession to the United States, the Russian American Company had more than 30 settlements, forts, and trading outposts. Starting in the 1820s the company began expansion into the Alaskan interior, which, in turn, enabled Orthodox missionaries to access previously unattainable places and unreachable peoples, for example along the Yukon, Nushagak, and Kuskokwim Rivers.¹⁰⁶

Lack of forceful conversion, inclusiveness, and wide acceptance of a Native clergy should be mentioned as well – that was part of a broader phenomenon, the creolization of Alaska, including wide-spread intermarriages between the Russian settlers and natives. But the missionary progress of the Orthodox Church in Alaska was by no means easy: difficulties of travel, the irregular schedule of services, and the lack of trained priests remained serious obstacles, as did doubts about the sincerity of Native conversion and the superficiality of religious conviction, not to mention harshness of the physical environment and frequent epidemics. Within twenty years of the American take-over, new challenges emerged: first Protestant (Presbyterian, Moravian, Quaker, Baptist, Methodist and Episcopalian) and later Roman Catholic (regular priests, Jesuits and other

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 14.

orders) missionaries arrived to win souls they believed the Orthodox had imperfectly converted.

Chapter 3

Presbyterian Alternative: Sheldon Jackson, Gilded Age Missionary

A Plea for Alaska

An ice bound land!
 The crystal walls of the icebergs grand,
 Guard the Way to that desolate land.
 Vainly would foam of the dashing waves
 Tarnish the sheen of those emerald caves.
 The ice bound land!
 A silent land;
 Sends sweet speech of the Word of God,
 Through snowy silence, o'er bloomless sod!
 The Gospel story rings through our lands,
 Send its music to those still strands:
 That silent land.
 A dark, dark land;
 The Alaskans pray for the world's glad Light;
 Hold it forth for the heathens' night!
 Heralds of light and gladness plead,
 Send us forth for the heathens' need
 To that dark land!
 A lone, lone land!
 Circle the icy zone with prayer,
 Pour out your gold for the heralds there!
 Care for them, plead for them!
 Harvest yield,
 Send more laborers into the field,
 To that lone land!
 A lone, lone land!
 They heed not peril, nor toll, nor shame;
 They count not life to be dear to them!
 Shall we out worldly goods withhold?
 Shall we keep back our silver and gold
 From that lone land?

Clara Twaits¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Sheldon Kelly, W. A. Docking, Alfred Austin, and A. E. Jackson, *The North Star: A Monthly Publication in the Interests of Schools and Missions in Alaska. The Complete Issues from December, 1887 - December, 1892* (Seattle, WA: Shorey Book Store, 1973), p. 7.

The nineteenth century Alaskan cultural landscape was not a “typical” meeting place of “western civilization” with an indigenous, Native culture. Alaska and Alaskans lived through a much more complex process: first, “the discovery” of Alaska by the Russian explorers and profiteers, then the “rediscovery” and dramatic remapping of “Seward Icebox’s” cultural terrain by the United States Army geographical surveyors, military and civilian administrators, as well as gold-hungry adventurers. Alaska also experienced two different waves of Christianization, of baptism and re-baptism, in which representatives of all of the three major historical branches of Christianity participated zealously. The Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholics were joined by a wide array of Protestants, including but not limited to the Presbyterians, Moravians, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, and Episcopalians were among the spiritual conquerors of the frigid darkness.

No one is more associated with the Americanization of Alaska than the Rev. Sheldon Jackson. Since at least George Washington’s times and even during the colonial period with the Puritans’ “praying villages”, the American approach to incorporating the Native element into the Republic was rather simple. It sought to erase completely the Native past and replace it with a standardized American identity. As a rule, such erasure usually started with language and education, concentrating on a younger generation who were frequently placed in boarding schools, for example, Sheldon Jackson’s Institute in Sitka, Alaska.¹⁰⁸ It continued with modification of Natives into sedentary and industrious

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Sheldon Jackson, *Education in Alaska* (Washington: G.P.O., 1890); William Hamilton, *The Work of the Bureau of Education for the Natives of Alaska* (Washington: G.P.O., 1886).

folk, usually agriculturalists, although Jackson sought to replace the traditional hunting-gathering mode of subsistence with the introduction of reindeer.¹⁰⁹

Finally, and most importantly, conversion and Americanization meant the replacement of the whole system of Native religious beliefs and social customs, leading to the reinvention of Native identity. In the Alaskan case, champions of the white Protestant Anglo-Saxon way such as Sheldon Jackson, Samuel Hall Young,¹¹⁰ or John G. Brady¹¹¹ faced an unusual task: they had to eliminate the cultural and religious layers built up through more than a century of Russian rule and Native interaction with seventy-four years of the Orthodox missionary endeavors. While the whole idea of replacing Native identity is unacceptable today, and is sometimes referred to as “cultural genocide,” Sheldon Jackson’s endeavors in Alaska should be viewed in the context of the contemporary history and his personal experiences. He came to Alaska from the American West and the Indian Wars – the Sioux uprisings in the Plains, the Navajo and Apache wars in the Southwest. He was simply doing to Alaska what his compatriots to the south were doing to the Native Americans there.

For the first ten years of its existence as part of the United States, Alaska was neglected as a missionary field by Protestants. Not even the alleged two hundred

¹⁰⁹See Sheldon Jackson et al. *Annual Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1891); Sheldon Jackson et al., *Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska* (Washington: G.P.O., 1893); Sheldon Jackson et al., *Annual Report on Introduction of Domestic Reindeer into Alaska* (Washington: G.P.O., 1899).

¹¹⁰ Samuel Hall Young, *Alaska Days with John Muir* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915); Samuel Hall Young, *Hall Young of Alaska, "the Mushing Parson"; the Autobiography of S. Hall Young* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1927). Also *Centennial of Home Missions : In Connection with the One Hundred and Fourteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, New York City, May 16-20, 1902* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1902).

¹¹¹ Ted C. Hinckley, *Alaskan John G. Brady, Missionary, Businessman, Judge, and Governor, 1878-1918* (Columbus, Ohio: Published for Miami University by the Ohio State University Press, 1982); *Inventory of the John Green Brady Papers* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Historical Library, 1985).

thousand dollars in bribes distributed by the Russian government made “Seward’s folly” or “Seward’s icebox” warmer to the American public. President Andrew Johnson appointed the infamous “Jefferson Davis in Blue” the first military governor of the Alaskan Territory, probably to get him as far away as possible. Jefferson C. Davis (1828-1879), a Union general, is mostly known for murdering his unarmed former commanding officer, Maj. Gen. William “Bull” Nelson in 1861, after Nelson had slapped him in the face when he called him “pappy,” and abandoning his African-American auxiliary troops at the Battle of Stone River. As the post-war military commander of Alaska (March 18, 1868 - June 1, 1870), he is primarily remembered for executing a native chieftain by hanging after a quarrel which followed a night of drinking.¹¹²

Jefferson C. Davis set an unfortunate precedent in relations between the Natives and the military authorities. Take the bombardment of the Tlingit village at Angoon in 1882 – it was shelled by the Navy Cutter *USS Corwin* at request of the Northwest Trading Company. A whaling vessel's harpoon charge misfired and killing a crewmember, who was, unfortunately, a Tlingit shaman. The village was shelled after the Tlingits demanded restitution to the medicine man’s family in the form of two hundred blankets, but the Northwest Trading Company found an alternative form of payment.¹¹³

¹¹² Nathaniel Cheairs, Jr. Hughes and Gordon D. Whitney, *Jefferson Davis in Blue: The Life of Sherman's Relentless Warrior* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), chapter 4. Jefferson C. Davis's Alaskan papers are located at the Newberry Library, Chicago.

¹¹³ *Alleged Shelling of Alaskan Villages: Letter of the Secretary of the Treasury in Response to a Resolution of the House of Representatives Relative to the Alleged Shelling of Two Villages in Alaska by the Revenue Cutter Corwin* (Washington: G.P.O., 1882); *The 100th Anniversary Commemoration October 24, 25, 26, 1982 of the Bombardment and Burning of Angoon October 26, 1882* (Angoon, Alaska: Kootznoowoo Heritage Foundation, 1982).

The debates on the impact of Sheldon Jackson and his followers on the Alaskan Natives is still highly charged. For example, Michael Oleksa stresses that Jackson used his family and political connections – such as President Benjamin Harrison, William Cleveland, brother of President Grover Cleveland, and the Federal Commissioner of Education John Eaton – to be appointed the first Territorial Commissioner of Education. Jackson remained in Alaska for just over ten years, from 1877 to 1888, and was also a traveling companion of the famous naturalist John Muir. Oleska writes:

The twin goals of his term in this office were the Christianization and assimilation of the native population. Jackson felt that the only way to avoid the catastrophic experience of Indian wars, which continued in the “Lower 48” from the time of the Pilgrim Fathers until the age of the Henry Ford, was to bring Native Americans into the public mainstream much the same way as public schools were doing with the millions of Southern and Eastern European immigrants flooding Ellis Island about this time. S. Hall Young wrote that an immediate first step had to be the eradication of the old Indian Languages – the sooner the better. The Carlyle Indian School, a boarding program in Pennsylvania, provided Jackson with a ready-made model. Children would be removed from their homes and villages, sent to distant boarding homes where English and only English would be permitted. The cheapest and most suitable teaching staff for these institutions would be missionaries from various American Protestant denominations. Instead of a military confrontation on the battlefield, the war in Alaska would be fought in the classroom, with the full authority of the federal government backing the monolingual, English-speaking, Protestant missionary-teacher.¹¹⁴

This is exactly what the Dawes Act of 1887, which set up the general Indian policy of the United States, called for.

For others, including Ted Hinckley, J. Arthur Lazell, or Robert Liard Stewart, Sheldon Jackson is an exemplary model of a true American spiritual pioneer and frontier hero.¹¹⁵ Hinckley argues:

¹¹⁴ Michael Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁵ See Ted C. Hinckley, *The Americanization of Alaska, 1867-1897* (Palo Alto: Calif. Pacific Books, 1972); Ted C. Hinckley, *The Canoe Rocks: Alaska's Tlingit and the Euramerican Frontier, 1800-1912* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996); Arthur Lazell, *Alaskan Apostle: The Life Story of Sheldon*

During the late nineteenth century, at a time when American Protestantism was slipping back into what church historians view as its nadir, a slender but muscular arm had reached out for Alaska. The Presbyterian leadership there reflected such contemporary currents as the social gospel movement, the quest for civil service, temperance reform, women's rights, improved public education, and compassion for the "vanishing American." In a vague way the Board of Home Missions came to appreciate that due to its location, Alaska could not be treated as just another evolving western state. In spite of all the heroic talk about standing on its own feet, Alaska was and is wedded to Washington, D. C. In their unblushing mixture of church-state purses, Presbyterians most certainly rattled the First Amendment. Their insistence upon territory-wide ecumenical planning, racial equality, and the use of public money to reinforce private investment clearly adumbrated some of the paramount forces in twentieth-century American society.¹¹⁶

The Native Alaskan nations to which Dr. Sheldon Jackson directed the Presbyterian effort were the Tlingits and the Haida,¹¹⁷ in Southeast Alaska, at Sitka and Fort Wrangell. "Tlingit", or "Kolosh" (Kolush), as the Russians called them, means "people". They spoke various dialects of the Tlingit language, part of the Na-Dene language family, related to that of Haida. Their ancestral territory was along the Pacific Coast and coastal islands, what is now British Columbia and Southern Alaska. The Tlingit people consisted of several independent clans: Auk, Chilkat, Gohalo, Hehl,

Jackson (New York: Harper, 1960); and Robert Laird Stewart, *Sheldon Jackson, Pathfinder and Prospector of the Missionary Vanguard in the Rocky Mountains and Alaska* (New York: F.H. Revell Co., 1908).

¹¹⁶ Ted Hinckley, "The Presbyterian Leadership in Pioneer Alaska", *Journal of American History*, Vol. 52, No. 4. (Mar., 1966), p.756.

¹¹⁷ On the Haida see: Dana Augaitis, *Raven Travelling: Two Centuries of Haida Art* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery Douglas & McIntyre Seattle University of Washington Press, 2006); Marianne Boelscher, *The Curtain Within: Haida Social and Mythical Discourse* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989); Robert Bringhurst, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999); Sharon Busby, *Spruce Root Basketry of the Haida and Tlingit* (Seattle: Marquand Books Distributed by University of Washington Press, 2003); Carol M. Edwards, Elizabeth A. Eastman, and Lillian Pasco, *Gyaehlingaa: Traditions, Tales, and Images of the Kaigani Haida* (Seattle: Burke Museum Publications Distributed by University of Washington Press, 1991); George F. MacDonald, *Haida Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996); George Peter Murdock, *Rank and Potlatch among the Haida* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936); Ulli Steltzer, *A Haida Potlatch* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984); Robin Kathleen Wright, *Northern Haida Master Carvers* (Seattle University of Washington Press: Vancouver, 2001).

Henya, Huna, Hutsnuwn (Kilisnoo), Kake, Kuiu, Sanya, Sitka, Stikine, Sumdum, Taku, Tongass, and Yakutat. Tlingit territory was divided into clan territories, or *kwans*.¹¹⁸

Known to the traders from the outside for their Chilkat blankets and elaborate wooden body armor, the Tlingit formed a society stratified by wealth and rank. Slavery was practiced, with powerful shamans and secret societies. Fierce warriors, they were remembered for the famous 1802 attack and destruction of the Russian Novo-Arkhangelsk settlement on Baranov Island, the 1805 raid on the trading post at Yakutat, and smaller raids on the outposts of the Russian American Company. However, by 1867 Russian-Tlingit co-existence was mostly peaceful, with many converted to Orthodoxy, while retaining many indigenous practices.¹¹⁹

Anthropologists classify Tlingits as part of the Northwest Coast culture area, characteristic features of which are salmon fishing; hunting land and sea mammals; building houses of wood planks and beams; use of dugout canoes, totem poles, wooden ceremonial masks, cedar chests, and boxes; and the ceremony of potlatch or gift giving, so often misunderstood by the Westerners. For example, the social theorist Thorstein

¹¹⁸ Among major works on the Tlingit are: George Thornton De Laguna and Frederica Emmons, *The Tlingit Indians* (Seattle University of Washington Press: New York, 1991); Andrew Thornton, Thomas F. Emmons, and George Thornton Hope, *Will the Time Ever Come?: A Tlingit Source Book* (Fairbanks, Alaska: Alaska Native Knowledge Network Center for Cross-Cultural Studies University of Alaska, 2000); Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); Aurel Krause, *The Tlingit Indians; Results of a Trip to the Northwest Coast of America and the Bering Straits* (Seattle: Published for the American Ethnological Society by the University of Washington Press, 1956); Kalervo Oberg, *The Social Economy of the Tlingit Indians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973); Oliver Maxson Salisbury, *The Customs and Legends of the Thlinget Indians of Alaska* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1900); John Reed Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs, and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970).

¹¹⁹ On the subject of Tlingit culture and Orthodox Christianity see Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

Veblen presented it as an example of “conspicuous consumption” in his famous work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. However, the potlatch, a system more accurately described by scholar Sergei Kan “symbolic immortality”, can be defined as a set of practices regulating relations between ancestors and the living generation through a life-long cycle of rituals devoted to the celebration of birth, rites of passages, puberty, weddings, funerals, and rites honoring the dead.

Ceremonies of potlatch defined the Tlingit social, economic, and political fabric through gift-giving feasts, which involved music and dance, spiritual ceremonies, and performances of a theatrical nature, all of which reflected and reinforced complex hierarchical relations between the Tlingit families, clans, and villages. Those who distributed the most, not those who possessed the most as in capitalist societies, were the most powerful and respected, though their gifts were to some extent reciprocated. Upon missionary protests, potlatch was outlawed first in Canada (1884) and then in the United States through an amendment to the Indian Act of 1885.¹²⁰

Despite the seeming differences, structural parallels in Tlingit and Christian tradition in this case made a dialogue between Christianity and native spirituality possible. Ioann Veniaminov explained the nature of the Tlingit belief in a Supreme Being and his son:

¹²⁰ On potlatch see Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), and also Mary Giraudo Beck, *Potlatch: Native Ceremony and Myth on the Northwest Coast* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Books, 1993); Douglas Chaikin and Ira Cole, *An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990); Abraham Rubel and Paula G. Rosman, *Feasting with Mine Enemy: Rank and Exchange among Northwest Coast Societies* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1986); Abraham Rubel and Paula G. Rosman *Feasting with Mine Enemy: Rank and Exchange among Northwest Coast Societies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). Also see Ronald Burgess, Kim Niezen, *Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

The Koloshi, like all other North Americans, have a Shamanistic faith. The supreme being acknowledged by the majority of the Koloshi is a personage named Yeil.

...

According to the Koloshi belief, Yeil can do anything and created everything in the world; the earth and human beings, and the plants; he obtained the sun, the moon, and the stars. He loves human beings but often, in anger, he sends them epidemics and [other] misfortunes. Yeil pre-existed before his birth. He does not age and shall never die. The Koloshi every year receive news of his existence with the east wind. His permanent abode is whence the east wind originates. ...

Yeil's residence, which the Koloshi call Nasshakiyel', lies deep within the interior of the American continent. Yeil has with him a son, but it is not known from whom and when he was born. Yeil's son loves human beings even more than his father and often he intercedes before his father for them and saves them from the father's wrath. He provides food and fish for people.

Yeil's life history, his sayings and deeds, constitute for the Koloshi the sole dogmas of their faith and the rules for their life's conduct: whatever and however Yeil did and lives, exactly the same we live also, say Kaloshi.¹²¹

In short, it was possible for the Tlingits to equate Yeil with God the Father and his son with Jesus Christ, leading to a creative syncretism that permitted the easier acceptance of Christianity.

Presbyterians at Sitka

"... Let me introduce you to *your* very *own* hospital. Imagine yourself waking up on Sitka's main street around the Greek Church, then looking to the right, through a gap between a curio store and the old saw-mill over the bay, a mile away on the crescent-shaped shore you see the long line of mission buildings..." – so begins a circular letter sent out by the Presbyterian Home Missions Women's Executive Committee in 1895. Written by Dr. B. K. Wilbur, Physician and Surgeon of the Sitka Missionary Hospital, it was part of a fund-raising effort for the hospital, addressed to the "Young Societies of

¹²¹ Ivan Veniaminov, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*, pp. 382-433.

Christian Endeavor” in California.¹²² But the hospital was more than a regular wood-frame architectural structure where the sick were healed. It was a glimpse of the ideals and methods of the whole Presbyterian missionary endeavor in Alaska.

What was the Sitka Presbyterian mission? The letter answers: “First is the Boys’ Home, then the Girls’ Home, Industrial Homes, Museum, Manse, and the Hospital, the last in the line near the model cottages; not a building remarkable for beauty, but plain and simple in outline, compact and well arranged.”¹²³ Each missionary building on the Sitka street map was also part of a grand design: winning the souls of the young natives first, by shaping them through education, culture (Museum), industrial training (Industrial Homes), and care physical (Hospital) and spiritual (Manse).

Just like the Church, the Hospital was open to everybody: “*Your* hospital is not only for the school children, but for everybody”, Wilbur told the young Californians, and it was there to provide relief, not just physical, but also spiritual. It offered the *right* kind of healing in the proper setting. As “the Story of Billy” noted:

That misfortunes rarely come singly, was never more truly illustrated than in the case of a Klinget [sic] man; shot in the thigh some years ago, he was rendered a cripple, but able to support himself by making carvings and selling them to the summer tourists. He fell through a rotten floor and rebroke his injured leg. As the Greeko-Russian Church [sic] has not better help for this than holy water and burning incense, which are not recognized modern methods of surgical treatment, the man called for me, although previously rather unfriendly. The hurt was the ugly one, and I scarcely hoped for a favorable result but feared the amputation. Hospital was not open so it was necessary to treat him in his native home in the Ranch (native village). While still on the floor, unable to help

¹²² Presbyterian Historical Society, Record Group (hereafter cited as PHS, RG), 301.3–8–73. Women’s Executive Committee: Circular Letter regarding Sitka Mission Hospital 1895. From Dr. B. K. Wilbur, Physician and Surgeon to the Sitka Mission Hospital. Sent by request to the Young Societies of Christian Endeavor in California.

¹²³ Ibid.

himself, his wife went off to a feast at Chilcat; his step-daughter gave but poor attendance; his younger brother died, and was buried without Billy's being able to see him, and his older brother unkind and neglected him. When his wife returned she ran away and married another man, while his step-daughter stole everything he possessed, except the clothes he had on and his few tools. The hospital having being open I moved the patient to it, operated on the hip and secured a good result, but before he could return to his home, his sister died. Surely his cup was full, but he found a new and abiding joy, for he saw the hollowness of the Russian faith, and renouncing the old he accepted the true faith and found peace through Christ Jesus, our Savior. He has since joined our church and resumed his carving; is living a consistent life, saved by the power of God though the instrumentality of hospital.¹²⁴

On the surface, this sad story seems to belong to the huge epistolary missionary genre of the Victorian era: a dirty, wretched, poor, abandoned, and suffering, but still noble savage, mistreated by fate and others; the pious white hand of a gentle and caring doctor offering not just relief from temporal pains but also pointing to the path of eternal salvation. It is a combination of traditional piety with faith in the divine instrumentality of Progress, where powers of physical healing dispensed by a modern professional – medical doctor – is yet another manifestation of the coincidence of spiritual and secular improvement. Thus, the Presbyterian Mission in Alaska can be viewed as a healing Christian enterprise, based on both faith and reason, offering the *right* religion to those in need by those who were merely “instrument[s] in the hands of the great Physician, in whose hands alone are the issues of life.”¹²⁵ But there is also something else. The source of Billy's suffering lies not in a physical wound, but his previous wrong choice of spiritual treatment: namely, the Orthodox branch of Christianity. Orthodox iconography was idolatry pure and simple for the Presbyterians.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Wilbur's letter to the Californian Christian youth (note the audience) reflected the Presbyterian-Orthodox conflict over spiritual influence, a competition for Native souls between the newcomers – modern, competitive and actively proselytizing Presbyterians, whose aim was not only to convert but also to Americanize the Natives – and the more established and traditional Greek Orthodox/Russian Church, attempting to preserve and save the Native flock. This competition shaped in many ways the early Presbyterian mission in Alaska, especially its southeastern part.

Sheldon Jackson, “The Apostle of Alaska”, a man of unimposing physique but impressive energy, was born in 1834 in Mineville, New York.¹²⁶ His education included studies at the Union College (completed in 1855) and training at the Presbyterian Church's Princeton Theological Seminary (he graduated in 1858). He married Mary Vorhees in 1858, the same year he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister, and the year he started his missionary career, destined to last for fifty years (he died in 1909).

Jackson started his ministerial path in the west and the north-central parts of the United States, first at the Choctaw mission in Iowa in 1858, then spending ten years in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and later extending his missionary field to Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Utah, as well as visiting Arizona, Mexico, Texas, and Nevada

¹²⁶ On Sheldon Jackson see Norman J. Bender, *Sheldon Jackson's Crusade to Win the West for Christ, 1869-1880* (Wayne, NE: Wayne State College, 1982); Rosemary Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson, the Collector* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska State Museums, 1999); Floyd L. Faris and John Thomson Carr, *Sheldon Jackson: Builder of the New Alaska* (New York City: Baptist Board of Education Dept. of Missionary Education, 1929); John Eaton, *Sheldon Jackson; a Pioneer in the New West* (New York: Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 1905); Winifred Hulbert, *The Bishop of All Beyond, Sheldon Jackson* (New York: Friendship Press, 1948); Peter M. Rinaldo, *The Great Reindeer Caper: The Missionary and the Miners* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: DorPete Press, 1997); Robert Laird Stewart, *The Mission of Sheldon Jackson in the Winning of the West* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1911); Elizabeth A. Tower, *Reading, Religion, Reindeer: Sheldon Jackson's Legacy to Alaska* (Anchorage, Alaska: E.A. Tower, 1988).

thanks to the transcontinental railroads. From the early days, Jackson's trademark missionary characteristic was his superb organizational ability. He devoted a lot of energy to setting up churches and schools, recruiting potential ministers, personally establishing more than one hundred different missions and churches. Jackson had impressive fundraising talents: he was using money not only received from the Presbyterian Home Mission Board, but successfully managed to raise funds from the general public as well as the federal government. He possessed the true gifts of a Christian propagandist – he delivered innumerable public speeches, lectures, and addresses, and wrote numerous books, pamphlets, and articles.¹²⁷

Jackson was one of the first mainstream missionaries to realize the importance of women's missionary work on the frontier – he helped to establish the Women's Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Church in 1878, and closely cooperated and coordinated his efforts with the Women's Board of the Home Missionary Society. Here were the roots of the great role that the women-run Presbyterian Home Mission Society played later in Alaskan missions, including contributions by its exceptional members, such as Amanda R. McFarland, Sarah Austin, and others.¹²⁸ Middle-class, well-educated,

¹²⁷See, for example, Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska* (Meadville, PA: The Chautauquan, 1880); Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska, and Mission of the North Pacific Coast* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1884); Sheldon Jackson, *The Native Tribes of Alaska* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883); Sheldon Jackson, *Report of the Rev. Sheldon Jackson, D.D. Upon the Condition of Education in Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1881); Sheldon Jackson, *A Plea for Alaska: Female Infanticide – Immorality – Polygamy – Slavery – Widow-Burning – Murder– Suicide* (New York: Board of Home Missions, 1880); Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska: Fort Wrangell* (New York: Ladies' Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 1880); Sheldon Jackson, *Historical Statement: An Official Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Alaska from 1877 to 1884* (Sitka: Presbytery of Alaska, 1884); Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska a Sketch of the Country and Its People* (New York: Domestic Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 1883).

¹²⁸ For Eugene Willard see: Eugene S. Willard, *Children of the Far North* (New York: Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 1890); Eugene S. Willard, *In the Chilcat Country* (New York: Century Co., 1885); Eugene S. Willard, *Kin-Da-Shon's Wife: An Alaskan Story*, 4th Ed. (Chicago: Student

Presbyterian women accompanied their husbands and fathers on their missionary assignments, and single women, both young and middle-aged, came too – usually as teachers or doctors. The first Presbyterian mission in Alaska, founded in 1877 at Fort Wrangell, while prominently promoted by Sheldon Jackson, was equally the work of Amanda R. McFarland.

From 1877 on Jackson focused most of his attention on Alaska. While he never stayed in Alaska permanently, he made a total of twenty-seven trips over the next decade and became one of the primary champions of the Alaskan cause in the United States over the next thirty years. Jackson's friendship with Benjamin Harrison, a devout Presbyterian and the President of the United States, helped as well.

There were three key elements in Jackson's missionary approach to Alaska.¹²⁹ First and foremost, he wished to Americanize as well as Christianize Native peoples, and whether they lived in Alaska or Iowa did not matter. In fact, he saw the two missions as identical. That meant complete erasure and replacement of local Native identity with the greater American one. Native languages were not to be used: Native culture was looked upon with a great suspicion. A wide network of schools for children, occupational training for adults, and even introduction of reindeer from Norway in 1891 to replace

Missionary Campaign Library, 1892); Eugene S. Willard, *Missionary Life in Alaska* (New York: Women's Executive Committee of Home Missions, 1882); Fannie Willard, *The Message of an Alaskan Life*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1909).

¹²⁹ On Presbyterian missionary approaches in America see Belle Marvel Brain, *The Redemption of the Red Man: An Account of Presbyterian Missions to the North American Indians of the Present Day* (New York: Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1904); Michael C. Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes toward American Indians, 1837-1893* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985); W. Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America: With Sketches of All Her Ministry, Congregations, Missions, Institutions, Publications, Etc* (Baltimore: Hill & Harvey, 1888); William Edward McCulloch, *The United Presbyterian Church and Its Work in America* (Pittsburgh: Board of Home Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1925).

quickly diminishing supplies of seals and whales – the traditional sources of the Native diet – all served one purpose: a newly reformed industrious, pious, disciplined, and sober American Christian subject had to replace the “barbaric” Native.

Jackson’s “Rules and Regulations for the Model Cottage Settlement, Sitka, Alaska” as reflected in the “Declaration of its Residents” shows what he wanted, and sometimes succeeded, in accomplishing. In words modeled on the United States Constitution, it said: “We, the people of the Westminster Addition to the village of Sitka, in order to secure ourselves and posterity of a Christian home, do severally subscribe to the following rules for the regulation of our conduct and town affairs” signed in the presence of witnesses:

1. To reverence the Sabbath and refrain from all unnecessary secular work on that day; to attend divine worship; to take the Bible for our rule of faith; to regard all true Christians as our brethren; and to be truthful, honest and industrious.
2. To attend to the education of our children and keep them at school as regularly as possible.
3. To totally abstain from all intoxicants and gambling, and never attend festivities or countenance heathen customs in surrounding villages.
4. To strictly carry out all sanitary regulations necessary for the health of the place.
5. Never to alienate, give away, or sell our land, or building lots, or any portion thereof, to any person or persons who have not subscribed to these rules.¹³⁰

Ironically, Jackson was also one of the most active and enthusiastic collectors of the material artifacts and oral traditions of the Native American past. Like many contemporaries, he believed in the inevitability of progress along current lines, culminating in world-wide peace and prosperity, the merger of Christian idealism with Positivist philosophy and Social Darwinism. Yet the past – he faced the dying Native

¹³⁰ PHS, RG 301.3 8-67, *The North Star*, Sitka, Alaska, 1892-1898, August 1898, Rules and regulations of the Model Cottage Settlement, Sitka, Alaska.

present and contributed greatly to its passing – had to be “mummified” and preserved as a curious artifact for the future generations.¹³¹

The second characteristic of Jackson’s missionary approach was to insist on a joint effort of the government and churches. His official position as the United States General Agent of Education in Alaska reflected this. Americanization and Christianization had been federally funded aspects of the Indian policy since the days of George Washington, and continued to be so into the twentieth century.¹³²

Thirdly, a broad and united ecumenical front of allied Protestant Churches had to be formed to achieve the desired objectives. Jackson brought not just Presbyterians, both male and female, but Moravians, Methodists, Baptists, and Episcopalians to Alaska, each assigned their own missionary geographic area, with the most easily accessible region, Southeast Alaska, reserved for the Presbyterians. This policy’s goal was to counteract to and minimize the influence of the Orthodox Church as well as to prevent the spread of newly-emergent Roman Catholic missionary elements.

While Alaska was acquired by the United States as early as 1867, there was no official Presbyterian presence in this remote military district until nine years later – in fact, there were no Protestant missionaries in Alaska at all. Sitkan officials, army

¹³¹ See Rosemary Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson, the Collector* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska State Museums, 1999) as well as Steven C. Brown and Paz C. Carro, *Spirits of the Water: Native Art Collected on Expeditions to Alaska and British Columbia, 1774-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

¹³² See, for example, Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian policy in the formative years: the Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1780-1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Anthony Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: the Tragic Fate of First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973); or Robert Vincent Remini, *Andrew Jackson & his Indian Wars* (New York: Viking Press, 2001).

families, sailors, and traders were also without any clergy except the Russian Orthodox. Until 1875, when Sheldon Jackson called for a missionary involvement in letters to the Board of Home Missions, and the Rev. Dr. Aaron L. Lindsley, backed him up with letters to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, the Church did not pay any attention to this remote corner of the American empire.¹³³

But by 1890 there were five centers of Presbyterian life in the Southeast Alaska. According to the census data of the same year, the oldest Presbyterian Church, at Wrangell, established in 1876, reported 46 Native and 7 white communicants. The Thlingit [sic] Presbyterian Mission of Juneau had a membership of 39 Natives and 5 whites, with the church building valued at \$1,350. There were two Presbyterian churches in Sitka, the First Presbyterian with the membership of 12 white communicants, and the Second Presbyterian Thlingit, with 14 white and 240 native communicants, most of them affiliated with the Indian Industrial Training School. A smaller Presbyterian Church was located at Juneau, overseeing the Presbyterian Mission Home for the Native children, and another one at the village of Huna, on Chichagof Island. Besides that, the Presbyterians administered the government's school at Point Barrow.¹³⁴

Yet not just the Presbyterian, but the Protestant missionary effort, paled besides the persistence of Russian Orthodoxy. Despite the well-established Presbyterian missions at Sitka, Wrangell, Howkan, and Juneau, a small Protestant Episcopal mission at Anvik, Lutheran Swedish Free Missions at Yakutat and Unalaklik, Moravian missions at

¹³³ A. L. Lindsley, *Sketches of an Excursion to Southern Alaska* (Portland, Or.: s.n., 1881); J. Thorburn Ross, *Aaron Ladner Lindsley: Founder of Alaska Missions and Leader of Other Great Enterprises in the Northwest* (Seattle: Shorey Book Store, 1964).

¹³⁴ *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census, 1890* (Washington: G.P.O., 1893), p. 183.

Bethel and Carmel, Father William Duncan's non-denominational mission at Metlakatla, and rapidly developing Roman Catholic missions at Nulato, Kozerevsky, Tununuk, and Juneau, there were 12,167 Russian Orthodox, but only 1,334 Protestants and 498 Roman Catholics in Alaska by 1890.¹³⁵

The Alaskan Presbyterian Mission possessed significant tracts of land as well, at Point Barrow, St. Lawrence Island, Haines, Hoonah, Juneau, Sitka, Fort Wrangell, Saxman, and Jackson.¹³⁶ These were seen as essential to the civilizing effort:

Presbyterian owned more property than is now actually being cultivated or used by the missionaries at the points indicated, but we feel that for the furtherance of our work, and to provide for any possible increase, there should be set apart at these points, land not only upon which the buildings stand, together with yards and gardens, but additional lands for pasturing, for the procuring fuel where it is timber, and for farming work, all these uses of the land being in the line of helping the natives in their efforts to learn the ways of civilization and to become self-respecting and self-supporting people. At several of the points it will be seen that provision has been made that the Board shall see lands to the native members of our churches, upon which to build civilized homes in live in a civilized way, all this being in the line of the uplift and civilization of these people.¹³⁷

Presbyterian-Orthodox Competition

To the Presbyterians, "civilization" was incompatible with Russian Orthodoxy. As an article in the *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* complained, appealing to traditions of American religious toleration and article 3 of the treaty by which the Russian government ceded Alaska:

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ See PHS, RG 301.3-8-19, Sitka, Property Correspondence, 1899-1913. Letter of Sheldon Jackson to Mr. H.G. Olin of the Board of Home Missions, March 23, 1901.

¹³⁷ PHS, RG 301.3-8-19, Sitka, Property Correspondence, 1899-1913. Letter of June 11th, 1901 from the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to W. D. Dustin, Surveyor General, Sitka, Alaska. Land claims were based on June 1890 statute providing for civil government in Alaska, which provided for the survey and patenting of mission lands among the Indian societies in Alaska.

Everybody knows how proudly Americans boast of their religious toleration and their liberties. Why is it that this toleration does not extend to the followers of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska? ... The Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist missions are not behind the Jesuits in vexing the Orthodox population – with the difference that the latter act, so to speak in a perfunctory way, as from habit, while the former do all they can, with thorough deliberation to oust the Orthodox Church from the former Russian dominion.¹³⁸

At times, Orthodox and Protestant Christians seemed to relate to each other only through conflict. In Alaska, the Orthodox Church did not know any ecclesiastical competition for more than eighty years (1794-1876). The only non-Orthodox congregation in Alaska before 1867 was the Lutheran one in Sitka, which served the needs of the Protestant, mainly Lutheran sailors, explorers, and traders who were either employed by or were the subjects of the Russian Empire. Finns, for example, who lived on the Baltic Sea and were responsible for a good deal of Russian trade were Lutherans. (Lutherans also had protected status in imperial Russia since the eighteenth century.) The only previous but formidable competitor to Orthodoxy was the pagan shaman. Furthermore, even after annexation, the Orthodox Church was fully supported politically as well as financed by the Russian government.

Yet that Orthodox majority was shrinking. Besides the obvious and disturbing presence of newly emerged ecclesiastical competition, whether Protestant or Catholic, the Gold Rush of the 1890s brought in considerable numbers of outsiders. The Russian priests, whether white or Creole, were quickly swamped by an influx of adventurers, miners, traders, sailors, soldiers, and other clergy. In such a situation, the Orthodox Church positioned itself – as indeed, for the most part it had earlier against Russian settlers and traders – as the only defender of the Natives against the greed of commercial

¹³⁸ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1 (1896-1897), n.10, p. 111.

companies and the personal mistreatment of individuals. The names had changed, but the ruthless practices had not. Like the Russian American Company of the old days, the Alaskan commercial companies of the late nineteenth-century claimed that whole territories such as Kenay, Nushagak, Kvikpakh, and Kuskokwim were without any order or governmental control: “They have not become wealthier under American rule – that is a fact. Quite the contrary: the population is frightfully impoverished ... now living poor destitute wretches, hopelessly in debt to those commercial Companies to whose tender money-making mercies the American Government has delivered up Alaska.”¹³⁹

Second, from the Orthodox perspective, the predominantly Protestant American Alaskan administration was clearly not on the side of a people loyal to what they perceived as a foreign church. “Administrative resources” clearly favored the Protestants, especially when John Brady, a Presbyterian missionary, was appointed the Governor of Alaska in 1897. Orthodox priests complained of persecution, as, for instance, in the Pribylof Islands, where Orthodox presence was strong:

... These men come with a rooted prejudice against the Orthodox Church and her administration, with absolutely no knowledge of Orthodox religious institutions; at the same time, oblivious of the principles by [sic] their own constitution, they assume towards the Orthodox Church an attitude which can be in no wise be termed tolerant, from the point of view of that same constitution. Thus, for instance, a certain Brown, being agent here, used to compel the Aleuts to marry as he, not they, saw fit, and forced the priests to perform the ceremonies; in addition to which these marriages were ordered between persons standing to each other within the degrees of relationship forbidden by our church. He further required the services to be performed in English instead of Russian; he gave strict orders that no Orthodox priest should dispose of the church money collected from the sale of wax candles, from donations, from the church box, etc. The same agent, consistently carrying out his principles, and with the assistance of the agent of the Northern Commercial Co., Ting, [sic] seized a sum of \$3.325 which the priest and parishioners were sending for safe-keeping to the office of the Alaskan Diocese, taking it on his responsibility to credit this sum to the parishioners on account of a debt they

¹³⁹ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1 (1896-1897), n.11, pp. 196-197.

owned the Northern Commercial Co. ... moreover, threatened that he would not allow the Bishop to land of the island.¹⁴⁰

Only after a long correspondence (1892-1895) between the Russian and American governments did the Treasury Department returned to the Alaskan Diocese the sum illegally appropriated.

One story illuminates the extent of tensions between the Orthodox and Presbyterian churches in the 1890s. “*New instances of most revolting act of violence perpetrated by the Presbyterian missionaries and officials*” – was the title of the editorial article appeared in the *Orthodox Messenger*¹⁴¹ a month after this bizarre but also symbolic incident took place at Sitka in January 1896. There are at least three sides in the story: that of the Orthodox Church itself and its Sitkan representatives, especially Father Anatolii Kamenskii;¹⁴² that of the American pro-Presbyterian administration including Sheldon Jackson, and Alaska’s outgoing (James Sheakley¹⁴³) and incoming (John Brady) governors, the latter of whom also happened to be an active member and past missionary of the Presbyterian church;¹⁴⁴ and, finally, that of the Tlingits, their loyalties split between the two conflicting sides, with members of the same families belonging to either of the two churches.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 200.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 224-226.

¹⁴² On Father Anatolii Kamenskii see Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, pp.283-366.

¹⁴³ James Sheakley of Sheakleyville, Pennsylvania, a gold-hunter in California and petroleum producer in his home state, member of the Forty-fourth Congress and the United State Commissioner of Schools of Alaska in 1887-1892, served as a Governor of Alaska from 1893 to 1897, before John Brady.

¹⁴⁴ On John Brady see Hinckley, *Alaskan John G. Brady, Missionary, Businessman, Judge, and Governor, 1878-1918*.

The quarrel began with the death of a wife of an Orthodox Native. She was attended by an Orthodox priest at her deathbed, and, according to the *Orthodox Messenger*, wished to be buried according to the rites of the Orthodox Church. This last wish was supported by the widower and her children. However, as the author writes, “in the name of civilization and enlightenment”:

with no provocation, for some unknown objects of their own, the authorities seize on the body of this peacefully deceased Christian woman, and handle it as they would a beast’s carcass, – take it out of the coffin supplied by the Orthodox relatives, haul it along the streets, paying no heed to the cries and lamentations of the relatives, to whom those poor remains are dear and sacred. Not content with this, they insult the priest, when, indignant at such coarse acts of violence, he protests in name of law and humanity, against the arrogant desecration of the regalia of the Orthodox Church and the articles used for divine worship, throwing in his face epithets of a most offensive personal character and hinting anything but gently that he had better remove himself from the country.¹⁴⁵

The language of the article, emotional and accusatory, suggests the extent of the inter-confessional divide. The article wraps up: “this is not a barbarian’s stubborn rejection of civilization, no! – it is a loud cry to Heaven against the barbarism of civilizers.”¹⁴⁶

The second, more detailed and revealing article, with more information on the same story, was published by Father Anatolii Kamenskii in the *Orthodox Messenger* on January, 21 1896. Now the main actors of the drama have names: it was Catherine Kakhtutyn, the wife of Stepan Katlan, who had been ill all winter and died of what was termed gangrene of the lungs. Her body was taken to the house of Ivan Klantitch and Agatha,¹⁴⁷ her brother and sister, since Stepan’s house was too small and, more

¹⁴⁵ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1 (1896-1897), n.10, pp. 224-226.

¹⁴⁶ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1 (1896-1897), n.10, pp. 224-226.

¹⁴⁷ Note the Russian names of the Natives – Ivan, Agatha, and Stepan.

importantly one of the deceased's children, Alexander, was also lying sick (he died three days later). When Hieromonk Anatolii Kamenskii and Reader A. Archangelsky, came to the house to perform the service for the dead, they found something they did not expect: "I found the body already in the coffin; the lid was being furnished in the same room. ... In spite of a coffin having being made and the body having been laid in it, the two oldest sons of Katlan, (by another wife) who resided in the Presbyterian Mission, had ordered there another coffin. Her husband and her own four children all were Orthodox."¹⁴⁸

Kamenskii continues:

The next day, Friday, January the 22nd, I returned, to perform the customary service: the body was lying *in two coffins*! The one in which she laid yesterday now was inside another, the lid of which stood their too, with the words "*In her name*" inscribed on it. "What is the meaning of this?" I asked. They replied that the two Presbyterian sons had come and made the arrangement, saying that such were the orders of the Government officials. – "And what does Katlan, the husband, thinks of it?" I again inquired. They said that he had resisted, but at last decided to let things go until the funeral. I performed the service, and after listening to some more explanations, left the house, indignant at heart at the Presbyterians' tricks, but not suspecting that they would proceed to an even greater length.¹⁴⁹

The conflict escalated. An hour later the body of the deceased was carried away by Native policemen under the direction of the Presbyterian minister A. E. Austin and the assistant teacher of the Indian public school, Mrs. Campbell, accompanied by the governor, James Sheakley, court marshall W. L. Williams, government interpreter Kostomitinof, and well as some members of the Presbyterian mission, all followed by "a

¹⁴⁸ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1(1896-1897), n.10, pp. 224-226.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 225.

vast crowd of Indians, stretching along the whole village and filling the air with loud cried and lamentations.”¹⁵⁰

Observing the procession, Kamenskii asked the governor for permission to take the body back:

If it had been improper for me to perform in a house belonging to the Mission, it would be far more so now, with a coffin made at the Mission and decorated with the emblems of a heretical denomination; – that it was all the same as though I was required to officiate in the vestments of a Buddhist bonze. I represented that Orthodox Christians have funeral observances of their own; that the coffins in which they lay their dead bear certain emblems and inscriptions. Lastly I proposed that, if the Governor and the Marshall absolutely objected to the woman being buried in the coffin provided by her husband and other Orthodox relations, they should allow me to have a third one made, at the expense of the Church of Sitka, which was well able to afford the outlay. But this proposition was equally rejected. Once the Governor said right out that it seemed I, a foreigner and a newcomer, would instruct them, instead of receiving instructions from them, and that, if American laws were not to my taste, I was free to leave Sitka.¹⁵¹

Thus the body was to be buried on the Presbyterian mission cemetery grounds, despite the fact that the woman was Orthodox.

When matter was taken to the court – on the same day – of all parties involved, it was the Sitkan Judge Rogers who seemed to be most reasonable, though not too sensitive. He ordered the body to be taken to the house of the deceased’s husband Katlan who could bury it in any coffin he chose – “a cracker box, if he liked.” ¹⁵²

But it was Katlan, the husband of the deceased, who proved to be the wisest person of all involved. He had only one wish – that all this squabbling be stopped. Katlan proposed a solution: the remains of his wife should be placed in the coffin he and

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 225.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 226

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 226.

his Orthodox relatives had made, the rites of the Russian Orthodox Church should be administered, and, not wishing to hurt anybody's feelings, the other – Presbyterian – coffin should also be used, so his wife “should rest under the earth in two coffins”.

So the story ends – in its Orthodox interpretation:

At 10 o'clock the next morning an extraordinary procession moved along the streets of Sitka. The body was carried by woman in its double coffin, into the Russian Church, preceded by the two coffin lids and followed by a large crowd. On all faces could be read, if not exactly joy, still a feeling of satisfaction that the remains of the unhappy woman were to find rest at all, after all the indignities heaped upon them by the heretics.¹⁵³

What conclusion can be drawn from the incident? For Father Anatolii Kamenskii, overly suspicious of the Presbyterian Church, this funeral was nothing but an example of true “methods of the Presbyterian propaganda”, directed at humiliating the followers of the other creeds. The earlier use of the term “Jesuit” by Father Kamenskii describing Presbyterian methods is a good example of these Orthodox suspicions.¹⁵⁴

Despite Katlan's wishes, the story did not end with the funerals.¹⁵⁵ In 1897, this episode was brought to the attention of the Russian Ambassador Kotzebue in Washington, D.C. by a delegation of the Orthodox Aleuts and Tlingits, who also petitioned to the President of the United States.¹⁵⁶ By that time, there were 482 Native

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁵⁴ This is just one example of competition between the Presbyterian and Orthodox Churches in Alaska. A similar situation occurred in 1897 in Unalaska and involved the death of a student at the Methodist Jesse Lee Home. See Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, pp. 173-174.

¹⁵⁵ Also see Anatolii Kamenskii and Sergei Kan, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska. Vol. 1* (Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1985); Anatolii Kamenskii and Sergei Kan, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska. Vol. 2* (Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1985).

¹⁵⁶ See Anatolii Kamenskii and Sergei Kan, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska. Vol. 2*, pp. 132-136.

Orthodox believers in Sitka alone, but only 425 Native Presbyterians, mostly Tlingit and Haida, in all of Alaska: 240 in the First Presbyterian Thlingit [sic] Church in Sitka (with 14 white communicants); 46 at the Presbyterian Church in Wrangell (with 7 whites); 110 at the Haida Presbyterian mission at Howkan (with 8 whites); 39 at Juneau's Thlingit [sic] Presbyterian mission (along with 5 whites), and none at the First Presbyterian, white congregation of 12 communicants in Sitka.¹⁵⁷

The second point of conflict between the Presbyterians and Orthodox involved education. Given the method and purpose of the Sheldon Jackson's missionary enterprise, this tool in the identity-replacement process led to a competition for Native students, including attempts to lure or "steal" pupils from competitors. Furthermore, non-denominational, public schools were in fact sites of Protestant indoctrination, to the great dissatisfaction of the Orthodox clerics, who had no role in the public domain.

At Kodiak, this conflict involved the Baptist Mission. At Nushagak, there was confrontation between the Moravians and the Orthodox priest over access to the Orthodox children schooling at the Moravian boarding house. The *Russian Orthodox Messenger* claimed that the routine administration of whole territories, such as Kenai, Nushagak, Kvikpakh, and Kuskokwim, was left to the Protestant missionaries without any governmental control, much to the detriment of the Natives: "They have not become wealthier under American rule – that is a fact. Quite the contrary: the population is frightfully impoverished ... now living poor destitute wretches, hopelessly in debt to

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix A.

those commercial Companies to whose tender money-making mercies the American Government has delivered up Alaska.”¹⁵⁸

In 1894 the Orthodox priest V. Modestov filed a complaint in the Sitka Court against the actions of the Moravian missionaries Shoechert and Wolfe, who placed the children of the Orthodox population into their missionary boarding school and refused to return them to the parents or guardians. Sitka’s authorities refused to consider the complaint. Similar grievances were brought in 1896 against the Moravian brethren in Nushagak, at the Carmel mission. Complaints were submitted by Vladimir Donskoy, the Orthodox priest who was Superintendent of the Sitka district, to District Attorney Taylor and Justice of the Peace Rogers, but “they returned the papers with an apology, stating that they could do nothing in the case, in the first case, because there is no direct communication with Nushagak and ...because both the sending of an investigator and summoning of witnesses would cost the Government considerable sums.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, the official view was that these were religious quarrels, and not transgressions of the law, legitimate elements of missionary competition, and nothing else.

The Russian Orthodox Church did not agree, because it was unfamiliar with missionary competition. While the Russian imperial government recognized the right of Muslims, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics within the empire to adhere to their faiths and practice them publicly, they were not allowed to proselytize. The Russian Orthodox Church, being part of the Imperial State (through the Holy Synod), enjoyed a privileged situation in which missionary competition was viewed as unimaginable. Hence the anger

¹⁵⁸ See Anatolii Kamenskii and Sergei Kan, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska*, Vol. 2, pp. 132-136.

¹⁵⁹ *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* 1 (1896-1897), n.11, pp. 196-197.

and confusion of the Orthodox clergy in Alaska: they believed in a sacred tradition where the faith or denomination in which one is baptized should be respected by other churches and retained for life. Scholar Sergei Kan writes:

While anti-Orthodox sentiments were fairly strong among Presbyterian missionaries and teachers as well as some of Sitka's more nationalist Anglo-Americans, the Orthodox clergy, in turn, was not immune from strong anti-Protestant prejudice. While the Presbyterians accused the "Greek Church" (as they liked to call it) of empty ritual, Orthodox clergy did not even consider Protestantism to be a legitimate form of Christianity, referring to Presbyterianism and other Protestant denominations as "sects." Coming from a country where Orthodoxy was the state religion and religious pluralism was not a popular idea, priests from Russia were troubled and confused by the variety of Christian denominations operating in Alaska. What made Presbyterianism and other Protestant denominations particularly suspect in the eyes of the Russian clergy was its de-emphasis on sacraments. Mutual suspicions and accusations on both sides further aggravated by a lack of knowledge about the rival denomination's dogma and ritual practice as well as poor communication between the competing churches. Thus, the Presbyterians falsely accused the Orthodox Church of requiring its members to pledge allegiance to the emperor of Russia, while the Russian clergy relied on rumors to form its opinion of the way Presbyterian ministers performed baptisms.¹⁶⁰

Sheldon Jackson also had a great deal of private aid as well as state support – from the Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, from other Protestant denominations, and from government officials, including Presidents of the United States and Alaskan governors, to support his official administrative position as Federal Commissioner/Agent for Education in Alaska. However, despite all this heavy artillery, his approach backfired. It was precisely his attempt to erase Native language and identity and remake Tlingits and other Native Alaskans into the image of white American settlers that led to a backlash. For example, in 1867 there was only a handful, not more than thirty, Orthodox Tlingit believers in Alaska. During the period of the Presbyterian missionary endeavors, Tlingits began finding Orthodoxy an attractive

¹⁶⁰ Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), pp. 272-273.

alternative. Thus, at Sitka, there were eighty Orthodox baptisms in 1881 and fifty from 1882 to 1885, with Native Sitkans becoming predominantly Orthodox by 1892.

According to historian Michael Oleksa, the personal approach of Vladimir Donskoi, the cathedral parish priest, had a great deal to do with the Orthodox success. He learned the Tlingit language, arranged regular weekly meetings with the Natives, participated in their feasts, recruited Tlingits as the Church readers and choir directors, and, even more importantly, conducted services in not just in Russian, but also in Tlingit and English. Furthermore, the Orthodox priests were more tolerant of Native traditions, using “persuasion rather than excommunication or suspension when new converts “lapsed” into pre-Christian behavior.” According to Oleksa:

Both Russian/Creole and Tlingit cultures provided ample opportunity for socializing, especially feasting. Tlingits were invited into homes of “respectable” Aleuts. Many of whom had maintained prestigious social positions after the 1867 sale. The traditional Tlingit emphasis on social rank and protocol could be satisfied with such inter-ethnic intercourse. ... In most of Alaska, winter was a traditional season for holiday feasting and visiting, and the Orthodox clergy were sensitive to the cultural parallels. They were also aware of the importance of the protocol and social status in traditional Tlingit life, and baptized leading chiefs, such as Qatlän, with great pomp and public ceremony, no doubt much to the dismay of the Presbyterians. In turn, the American missionaries turned increasingly to the civil authorities to enforce assimilationist policies. When potlatching was officially outlawed, the Orthodox bishop was given a ceremonial paddle as a token of unity and solidarity. In Orthodox communities, memorial feasts continued to be held at the burial and on the fortieth day following the death, despite the legal ban on such “pagan festivities.”¹⁶¹

As there were structural parallels between the Tlingit funeral potlatch and Russian *pominki*, or a feast in memory of the deceased, Tlingits also embraced the practice of prayers for the dead as used by Orthodoxy, incorporating a special memorial book, or

¹⁶¹ Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, pp. 181-182. Also see Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, pp. 245-277.

pomiannik, listing the baptismal names of deceased relatives. Orthodox Christmas and Easter were much more festive than the sober Protestant counterparts. But, as Sergei Kan insists, the Tlingit acceptance of the Orthodox mortuary or memorial practices did not mean they were giving up their pre-Christian past. For the most part, Russian priests knew about these practices and did not object them.

Interestingly enough, as Sergei Kan argues, the story of the funeral in two coffins can be reinterpreted. As with adoption of Christianity, the continuation of the old Tlingit funeral tradition – cremation of the dead – was no longer possible, Tlingits buried their dead in two coffins for a different reason – to keep the body warm, with gifts, in its travel to the “village of the dead”.¹⁶² Thus the coffin incident shows how neither group of “official” Christians may have understood what the Tlingits were really doing.

Why the Presbyterians were so unsuccessful and uncomprehending appears in the poem that opened this chapter by a Presbyterian woman describing Alaska as “dark, alone, and silent.” Like their Protestant ancestors in the colonial period, in the 1880s, the Presbyterians came to a land they believed was vacant and uncivilized; the cultural and religious landscape of the Russian Orthodox Church merged with Native American practices as part of the spiritual darkness. But far from being silent and passive recipients of an assimilationist process, Alaskans embraced Orthodoxy ever more fervently to the Protestants’ grief, perceiving, and not without reason, Protestantism, the American government, and commercial enterprises as interlocking forces that sought to overthrow what had become a satisfactory way of life.

¹⁶² Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries*, pp. 253-254.

Chapter 4

Moravian Wounds: A Party of Five.

The Storm-king's banners were proudly spread,
 As his legions pressed forth in their might,
 They fettered Alaska with barriers of ice,
 And gloomed her in Artic night.
 The Prince of Darkness marshaled his clans,
 And bound her in triple chains;
 No light, no hope, for these dreary lands,
 These desolate, snow-covered plains.

The auroral dawn of a better day
 Flashed athwart the polar night;
 The white bear, the walrus, the seal's soft eyes.
 All turned to the growing light.
 The imbruted Eskimo slowly caught
 The beam in his dull, hopeless eye;
 But brighter, yet brighter the day star arose,
 Till it flooded the earth and the sky.

The cross grew luminous as it stood,
 The Eskimo bowed at its side; -
 "O! tell me the story once more," he said,
 "I, too, need the cleansing tide."
 Now, washed in the blood, made "Whiter than snow,"
 He rises to newness of life,
 And, under the power of Sharon's sweet rose,
 He awakes to a nobler strife.

E. A. Lehman.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ *The Moravian*, May 30, 1935, p. 1.

“My dear Valentine: this time 11 years ago...” – this very unusual valentine letter left Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on February 14, 1884. The sender was a young, bright, and ambitious Moravian seminary student, William Henry Weinland. The addressee was Caroline Yost, Weinland’s sweetheart of eleven years. The letter carried confessions of a special kind – not just a confession of love and devotion to Caroline, but of Weinland’s new passion that took him to the frigid Alaskan frontier, which Caroline would soon share with him.

The previous evening Dr. Sheldon Jackson had delivered an address on missionary work in Alaska to the audience of eager Moravian students in Bethlehem, presenting a spectacular view of the Alaskan missionary field as cold, desolate, and empty, and calling for help. While Protestant missionary stations had been already established among the Indians in the southern part of Alaska, the northern and central regions were still unattended. Sheldon Jackson’s intent was simple: to bring the Moravians from Pennsylvania to begin mission work among the Eskimo people there. Dr. Jackson, who traveled through part of Alaska before his Bethlehem visit, found the Natives, “terribly degraded in barbarism and superstition” – i.e Native custom and Orthodoxy – but nonetheless anxious to hear and to “receive the Gospel”. He called upon the Moravians to fulfill this mission. In the 1880s and 1890s, the Yu’pik Eskimo (Inuit)¹⁶⁴ people of Alaska became one of three major focus groups for the Moravian

¹⁶⁴ On Yupik see James H. Barker and Robin Barker, *Always Getting Ready: Upterrlainarluta: Yup’ik Eskimo Subsistence in Southwest Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993); Richard Adams Carey, *Raven’s Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992); Alexander B. Dolitsky, *Tales and Legends of the Yupik Eskimos of Siberia*, 1st ed. (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska-Siberia Research Center, 2000); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Yup’ik Eskimo Oral Tradition* (Norman: University

Church in the United States, along with the recently freed slaves and the Mormons, and the principal focus for the church's Northern Province.

The nature of the Moravian Church's doctrine and history poised it to take an especially energetic and, for a Protestant denomination, unusually successful role in the Christianization of Native Alaskans. The church's motto is "In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In all Things Charity-Love." Founded in 1457 in Moravia and Bohemia as the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Unity of the Brethren, established by the followers of John Hus, the Moravians were in reality a pre-Reformation Protestant church. The most important Moravian leader of the seventeenth century was Bishop John Amos Comenius, who is known for his works on education, an important focus considering the attention Moravians paid to schooling later. In 1722, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf provided refuge for Moravians at Grosshennersdorf, Saxony. As part of the eighteenth's century wave of German immigration to North America, Zinzendorf led the Moravians to establish themselves in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (1741); others went to Salem, North Carolina (1751), which became centers of the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in North America.

of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Eskimo Essays: Yupik Lives and How We See Them* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Nelson Island Eskimo: Social Structure and Ritual Distribution* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Pacific University Press, 1983); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Wise Words of the Yup'ik People: We Talk to You Because We Love You* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks: Agayuliyararput -- Our Way of Making Prayer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996); Chase Hensel, *Telling Our Selves: Ethnicity and Discourse in Southwestern Alaska* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Alaska Geographic Society, *Inupiaq and Yupik People of Alaska* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Geographic Society, 2001); Anna M. Kerttula, *Antler on the Sea: The Yup'ik and Chukchi of the Russian Far East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Bashful No Longer: An Alaskan Eskimo Ethnohistory, 1778-1988* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Edward A. Bitar and Joseph N. Tennant, *Yupik Lore: Oral Traditions of an Eskimo People* (Bethel, Alaska: Lower Kuskokwim School District, 1981); James W. Van Stone, *Eskimos of the Nushagak River; an Ethnographic History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967); James W. Van Stone, *Historic Settlement Patterns in the Nushagak River Region, Alaska* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1971); James W. Van Stone, *Nushagak, an Historic Trading Center in Southwestern Alaska* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1972).

Amazingly for the small size of the church, the Moravians were truly global. They specialized in preaching to people other denominations disdained or failed to convert. Starting with missions among the slaves of West Indies (1732), they quickly spread their reach to Greenland and Lapland, preached among African slaves and Indians in North America, extended their message to South and West Africa, Egypt and Algiers, India, Jamaica and Barbados, among other places. To be sure, the success of the Moravian missions varied by region. While some were extremely successful, others, for various reasons, failed – for example, those in Lapland, Algeria, Ceylon, and the Guinea Coast in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁶⁵

By 1892, the Moravian Church had 120 permanent missionary stations and 20 exploratory stations around the world, with 203 missionaries,¹⁶⁶ 241 Missionary Schools, and a great number of Native workers, 22 of whom became ordained Moravian

¹⁶⁵ Among the general works on the subject are Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nippanee, Indiana: Evangel Publishing House, 1996); Edmund A. De Schweinitz, *The History of the Church Known as the Unitas Fratrum* (Bethlehem: Moravian Publication Concern, 1901); Arthur J. Freeman, *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf* (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: The Moravian Church in America, 1998); J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967); Gary Steven Kinkel, *Our Dear Mother the Spirit: An Investigation of Count Zinzendorf's Theology and Praxis* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1990); A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf: The Ecumenical Pioneer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); Louthan Howard and Andrea Sterk, *John Comenius: The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998); Harry E. Stocker, *A Home Mission History of the Moravian Church in the United States and Canada*, (New York: The Special Publications Committee of the Moravian Church, 1924); Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf: The Story of His Life and Leadership in the Renewed Moravian Church* (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: Moravian Church in America, 1984); John R. Weinlick and Albert H. Frank, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages*. (Bethlehem and Winston-Salem: The Moravian Church in America, 1989).

¹⁶⁶ Of this number 139 were married brethren, 131 married sisters, 21 single brethren, and 12 single sisters. See *The Missionary Manual and Directory of the Unitas Fratrum of the Moravian Church*. (Bethlehem: Moravian Publication Office, 1892), pp.27-43.

ministers.¹⁶⁷ Church attendance world-wide numbered 90,030,¹⁶⁸ with total expenditures of \$359,651,¹⁶⁹ all of these centralized with a membership base of 33,000 people at the Church's headquarters in Germany.

The Alaskan missions were among the Moravian successes. The first converts were received into church fellowship on September 10, 1888. By 1892, after eight years of missionary endeavors, there were two Moravian missionary stations in Alaska, ten missionaries, or "Foreign Agents", two Native Workers, or assistant missionaries, 58 communicants, 24 baptized adults, and 86 baptized children. Of 168 Natives attending Moravian services, children constituted more than half.¹⁷⁰ Within a decade, by the early 1890s, the Moravian missionaries, initially only five in 1885, had, for the most part, managed to win the Kuskokwim district from their mighty rival, the Russian Orthodox. The Moravian missionary field in Alaska was located in the lower Kuskokwim basin,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Total numbers were: 22 ordained brethren, 20 wives of ordained brethren, 15 assistant missionaries, 835 male and 681 female native helpers.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. The breakdown for this number was as follows: 31,490 communicants, 17,429 baptized adults, 35,176 baptized children, 1,274 candidates for baptism, 2,197 new people, and 2,464 under discipline.

¹⁶⁹ Moravian missions were financed through annual contributions made by the church members, contributions from the friends of the church, interest from funded legacies, money raised by the missions themselves, and annual grants of Missionary Associations established in the Provinces, such as "The Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, London; "The Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; "The Mission Society of Zeist" in Holland; "The London Association in Aid of the Mission of the United Brethren", London; "The Wachovia Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen", Salem, North Carolina; and "The Missionary Union of North Schleswig". These funds went to support the Missions, including salaries paid to the missionaries (it should be noted here that not all missionaries were salaried, traveling expenses, building and school expenses, education, pensions for both foreign and native born missionaries and their wives, as well as expenses of the Mission Board. On top of the Moravian institutional structure was the General Synod, which met every ten or twelve years, with delegates from America, Germany, Great Britain, as well as the Foreign Missions. The General Synod elected an Executive Board of Bishops, which maintained the routine supervision and control of the foreign missions and school, and managed finances.

¹⁷⁰ *The Missionary Manual and Directory of the Unitas Fratrum of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Publication Office, 1892), p. 43.

which begins on the Togiak River and runs northward along the coast of the Bering Sea to Nelson Island, as well as along the Nushagak River.¹⁷¹

According to Rev. S. H. Gapp, by the mid-1920s this region was almost completely under Moravian spiritual supervision. The Russian Orthodox Church, which initially claimed the district, maintained only a few small congregations in the area, ministered to by Native helpers, who, according to Moravian sources, attended Moravian services on occasion and even allowed Moravian services to be held in their churches, although they refused to unite with the Moravians. According to statistics dated January 1, 1927, besides three major missionary stations – Bethel, Quinhagak, and Quigillingok, as well as the School for Orphans, located at Nunapitsingshak – there were also 28 Moravian regular preaching places, assisted by 13 Native helpers. The total communicant membership was 1254, with a total membership of 2342 and 262 children attending Sunday Schools.¹⁷²

Does the reason for the Moravians' success lie in their determination and willingness to accept the Arctic challenge, traveling hundreds of miles by dog teams in winter or by boat in summer?¹⁷³ Missionaries from other denominations did exactly the same. Or, maybe, the Kuskokwims were not important enough for the Moravians' rivals? But competition in proselytizing was taken seriously by all sides, and elsewhere Protestant missionary efforts tended to backfire and lead to Orthodox converts. Rather,

¹⁷¹ S. H. Gapp, *Where Polar Ice Begins or The Moravian Mission in Alaska* (Bethlehem: The Comenius Press, 1928), p. 16.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁷³ Even in the 1920s, some Kuskokwim areas were served twice, or even once a year, in case of the converts living on the Togiak River. In such situations, the Native helpers and elders carried on most of regular religious duties. The role of the Native helpers and elders will be explained later in this chapter.

there was something in the Moravian approach that made their message more appealing. And they were the only ones, and not any of ten other Protestant missionary societies, who answered the missionary call of Rev. Sheldon Jackson by founding missionary stations in central Alaska.

The Moravians set up first at Bethel on the Kuskokwim River, then Carmel on the Nushagak, Quinhagak on the Kanektok, and Quigillingok on the West Coast of the Kuskokwim Bay. They also organized their mission fields into semi-autonomous, self-governing, and self-supporting provinces, which gave the Alaskan mission the flexibility it needed in the dark and frozen land, so far away from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Six major themes are critical for understanding the Moravian mission in Alaska. First is the unique character of the Moravian missionaries' means of communicating with the Natives of Alaska. Second is the Moravian approach to the conversion of Natives and later their acceptance into the church congregation. Third is the importance of Native education, both secular and spiritual, in the Moravian mission. Fourth is the role of the Moravian missionary as a doctor or healer of the Natives in competition with the shaman. Fifth is the Moravian contest with the Orthodox priests over potential and existing converts. Sixth, certain aspects of the Moravian worship (for example – singing) were particularly helpful in approaching the Natives.

The Moravians accepted two sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, administered by ordained clergy. Moravians democratically elected boards of elders and trustees, both male and female, as well as legislative synods and executives, also comprised of lay people and clergy. Moravian clergy served in three ministerial orders: deacons (pastors), presbyters (senior pastors), and bishops who led the church. Thus, by

the time they reached Alaska, the Moravians, from a small group of religious dissenters in central Europe, had grown into a world-wide evangelical and ecumenical church, which in turn consisted of independent bodies.

Moravians viewed the missionary act as a *living mission*, a living sacrifice, rather than spreading the right doctrine or bringing proper civilization, as did other churches. Furthermore, and also critically important, Moravians positioned themselves as an inclusive *Native Church*, because converted Native people were trained to be pastors, administrators, and helpers in their own churches. Undoubtedly, such an approach contributed to establishing trust between the Moravian newcomers and Natives.

The average Moravian mission was established in the following manner. First, stations for missionaries consisted of complete missionary posts, with a church or chapel, living headquarters for missionaries, and school houses. Moravian missionaries came from the three nineteenth-century Provinces of the *Unitas Fratrum*, the German, the British, and the American, headed by Missionary Superintendents. Field missionaries had to be appointed by the Mission Board. The Alaskan Mission was an exception to the rule, since missionaries there were appointed by the Provincial Board, either at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, or Salem, North Carolina. Wives of the Moravian missionaries were assigned important roles. They served very successfully as liaisons between the mission and Native families, through visits and conversations. Missionary sisters were officially recognized as religious laborers and received official appointments from the Moravian Missionary Board.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ On Moravian missions see Hermann Wellenreuther and Carola Wessel, eds. *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772–1781* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park:

Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); F. R. Baudert and Timothy J. Keegan, *Moravians in the Eastern Cape, 1828-1928: Four Accounts of Moravian Mission Work on the Eastern Cape Frontier* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of South African Historical Documents, 2004); J. H. Buchner, *The Moravians in Jamaica* (Freeport: N.Y. Books for Libraries Press, 1971); Colin G. Calloway, Gemünden Gerd, and Susanne Zantop, *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Edmund De Schweinitz, *The Moravian Manual : Containing an Account of the Protestant Church of the Moravian United Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1859); Richard S. Dunn, *Moravian Missionaries at Work in a Jamaican Slave Community, 1754-1835* (Minneapolis: The Associates of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, 1994); Donald F. Schultz Lawrence W. Durnbaugh, *A Brethren Bibliography, 1713-1963: Two Hundred Fifty Years of Brethren Literature* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1964); Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Adelaide L. Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1740* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1967); Adelaide L. Fries, *The Road to Salem* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); Anna Rosina Gambold, John Gambold, and Rowena McClinton, *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Lawrence Henry, ed., *The Moravian Indian Mission on White River; Diaries and Letters, May 5, 1799, to November 12, 1806* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1938); Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: Study of Changing Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Gerald Lee Gutek and Patricia Gutek, *Visiting Utopian Communities: A Guide to the Shakers, Moravians, and Others* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998); John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians, from Its Commencement, in the Year 1740, to the Close of the Year 1808* (New York: Arno Press, 1971); Samuel P. Hildreth, *Contributions to the Early History of the North-West: Including the Moravian Missions in Ohio* (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864); James Hunter, *The Quiet People of the Land: A Story of the North Carolina Moravians in Revolutionary Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976); Simon Somerville Laurie, *John Amos Comenius, Bishop of the Moravians: His Life and Educational Works* (Boston: Willard Small, 1885); Georg Neisser, *A History of the Beginnings of Moravian Work in America, Being a Translation of Georg Neisser's Manuscripts: Kurzgefasster Aufsatz Von Der Mährischen U. Böhmischen Brüder Anfänglicher Ausbreitung in Den Nord-Americanischen Colonien U. Missionen Vom Jahr 1732 Bis 1741; Angemerkte Vorkommenheiten Bey Den Brüdern in Den Forks of Delaware Um Die Zeit Des Anbaues Von Bethlehem, in Dem Jahr 1741; Kurzgefasste Berichte Von Den Vorgängen Der Ersten Hälfte Des Jahres 1742* (Bethlehem: Archives of the Moravian Church, 1955); Levin Theodore Reichel, *The Early History of the Church of the United Brethren (Unitas Fratrum) Commonly Called Moravians, in North America, A.D. 1734-1748* (Nazareth: Moravian Historical Society, 1888); Edmund Schwarze, *History of the Moravian Missions among Southern Indian Tribes of the United States* (Bethlehem: Times Pub. Co., 1923); Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan : The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture Williamsburg Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism among Early American Moravians* (New York: AMS Press, 1971); George M. Shultz, Ettinger Amos Aschbach Historic Nazareth, and Pennsylvania Bi-Centennial Inc Corp Author: Nazareth, *Two Centuries of Nazareth, 1740-1940* (Nazareth: Published by Nazareth Pennsylvania Bi-Centennial Inc. Nazareth Item Pub. Co. 1940); Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Elisabeth W. Sommer, *Serving Two Masters: Moravian Brethren in Germany and North America, 1727-1801* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Walter H. Wagner, *The Zinzendorf-Muhlenberg Encounter: A Controversy in Search of Understanding* (Nazareth: Moravian Historical Society, 2002); Marcia Wright, *German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891-1941: Lutherans and Moravians in the Southern Highlands* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Muriel H. Ward Clara Alice Wright, *Springplace; Moravian Mission and the Ward Family of the Cherokee Nation* (Guthrie, OK: Co-operative Pub. Co., 1940).

It is impossible to underestimate the attention Moravians paid to Native agency. Native “Missionaries” and “Assistant Missionaries” were appointed by the Mission Board in Bethlehem under the same conditions as regular Moravians and carried the same missionary responsibilities. “Lay Readers” were Native assistants licensed as Bible readers and leaders of regular village religious meetings, once or twice a week, which consisted of praying, singing, and reading the Bible. “Helpers”, just like “Readers”, were appointed by the Missionary Conference,¹⁷⁵ but received no compensation, and were assigned to the districts where they lived. They carried an everyday workload, visiting converts in their homes, checking on their Christian progress, and laboring among those who were still not converted, trying to bring them the Moravian message as well. “Helpers”, both male and female, were also responsible for the maintenance of good mores among the Natives. They negotiated the resolution of petty conflicts, made sure that children did not neglect the school, called upon the sick, and reported their activities to the Missionaries.¹⁷⁶

The extensive use of Native peoples facilitated the major Moravian missionary principle: existing missions had to be organized as self-supporting churches, letting the Moravian church go on to organize new missions elsewhere. The primary object of the

¹⁷⁵ The Missionary Conference was made up of all Missionaries in the Missionary Province, who regularly met to oversee and discuss missionary needs and progress. Sometimes Missionary Helpers’ Conferences were also held. Some Missionary Provinces also had Congregation Committees, which gave them more autonomy in matters of self-management, both spiritual and temporal, and self-financing, i.e in the West Indian Provinces.

¹⁷⁶ For more information on this subject see *The Missionary Manual and Directory of the Unitas Fratrum of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Publication Office, 1892); *Handbook of the General Regulations with regard to the outfit, salary, traveling expenses, and pensions of Moravian Missionaries and also concerned the education of their children and other items of their personal interest* (London: Norman and Son, 1897); *Rules and Regulations of the Moravian Mission in Alaska* (Bethlehem: Bethlehem Printing Company, 1927).

Moravian mission was not to *spread civilization*, but to preach the word of God. Of course, the Moravians were not completely oblivious to the civilizing impulse. Ideally, a converted people's mental life would be elevated through education, and their physical existence bettered through hygiene and medicine as they acquired the Gospel. *The Missionary Manual and Directory of the Unitas Fratrum of the Moravian Church* stated:

In our efforts for the conversion of the heathen, we will not chiefly aim at a large number of persons nominally brought to profession of Christianity, but strive that by means of the Gospel, preached with the demonstration of the Spirit and of the power, those, committed to our charge may be really turned from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.¹⁷⁷

Moravians approached the Natives through several steps. First came the regular, ordinary pastoral work of preaching and conversion. Second, Moravians developed a system of *religious conversations*, or “speaking” with the converts.¹⁷⁸ Such mandatory conversations were carried on in the Mission Houses, six times a year, with each class of converts. Male converts had to face male missionaries whereas female members had to converse with the missionary's wife. Prior to each celebration of Lord's Supper, that had to take place at least twice a year, each communicant met for a close personal conversation to promote grace.

Church discipline was the Moravians' third tool. Those found guilty of civic wrongdoing or religious offenses were, depending on the severity of the case, either reprimanded, that is given “brotherly advice”; suspended from the Lord's Supper in case

¹⁷⁷ *The Missionary Manual and Directory of the Unitas Fratrum of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem: Moravian Publication Office, 1892), p. 27.

¹⁷⁸ Moravians divided converts into six classes: *Baptized children* of members under five years of age; *Members under discipline*; *new people* – new applicants, people who just recently became interested in the Moravian message and required special instruction in the basics of the Moravian creed; *Candidates for Baptism* – those who received proper instruction already and were ready for baptism; *Baptized Adults*; and *Communicants* – members who were baptized, confirmed, and admitted to the Lord's Supper.

their transgressions were more serious; or, if the offense was severe enough, excluded from church membership. However, even those deprived of membership were not excluded from the Mission, but fell under close missionary supervision, and were readmitted to the church in case they showed repentance. Only habitual drunkards and gamblers, criminals or fornicators were permanently expelled. Another example of Moravian discipline occurred at funerals – all heathen superstitious customs and practices connected with death and burial had to be discountenanced. Pagan burials were prohibited on the missionary property, and persons, who died under care of shamans or as willful opponents were not allowed to receive Christian burial at all.

After discipline, education of the young was the fourth important tool Moravians used to reach out to objects of conversion. As Bishop Wullschaegele maintained:

Touching Christian knowledge, experience shows that those members of our Mission Churches who have been baptized in their youth and instructed in our schools are far in advance of such as have joined the Mission from the heathen and been baptized as adults. Hence, in all our Missions where it is in any way possible, we forthwith establish schools, in which not only the children of our baptized converts, but also any other children that may be entrusted to us by their parents, are educated and, especially, especially, made acquainted with their God and Savior.¹⁷⁹

Each mission station established a school, with missionary and native instruction in basic scholarly subjects, practical skills, singing, and religion. Instruction was given in grammar reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and Biblical history. Schools were divided by grades, starting with the infant department for children between three and six. Some schools received funding from the government and were supervised by the United States government's Superintendent for Education, District of Alaska, who at first was

¹⁷⁹ Bishop Wullschaegele, *Missionwerk der Evangelischen Brüdergemeine*, from *The Missionary Manual and Directory*, p. 28.

Sheldon Jackson. There were also Sunday Schools established for adults and, in some cases, Native theological seminaries. On most occasions, however, Native ministers were educated in the regular Moravian Seminaries – in the case of Alaska, the first two Native boys were sent to Bethlehem in 1890.¹⁸⁰

The Moravians applied their missionary principles to the Kuskokwim under the general supervision of Rev. Robert de Schweinitz, the agent of Missions for America. While most rules were the same for all Moravian missions, there were also some specific instructions given to the Moravians in Alaska, which took into consideration local specifics. For example, the huge size of the missionary field inevitably altered the frequency of church services, which depended on pastors' visits. The institution of the Native helpers became especially important here.

As elsewhere, the Moravian mission in Alaska was a “mission from within” – instead of rushing in to baptize people as soon as possible, Moravians tried to learn Native cultures and especially languages, living among the Natives, and only later proceeding with conversion efforts. This aspect of the Moravian missionary approach made them similar to the Roman Catholic Jesuits. Also, as with the Jesuits, the Moravians sought to understand Native cultural traditions, language, and religious beliefs. Before being converted, Natives also had to be educated in the Moravian Christian tradition as well. Quality, not quantity of conversions was emphasized, hence the stress on learning, religious and secular.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ In the West Indian Provinces such a seminary was established on the Island of St. Thomas, in 1886.

¹⁸¹ It is interesting to compare the Moravians to the Jesuits in their missionary approaches. See, for example, Ross Alexander Enochs, *The Jesuit mission to the Lakota Sioux: Pastoral Theology and Ministry, 1886-1945* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1996); Harry Crosby, *Antigua California: Mission and Colony on*

Moravians concentrated on winning souls, young souls in particular. The method was quite simple – schooling. Eskimo boys and girls attended Moravian day schools at both missionary stations (Bethel and Carmel), as well as Sunday schools, being educated in Moravian worldly and ecclesiastical principles. In 1890 Moravian Alaskan day schools were attended by 48 children, who were taught by two male and two female teachers. This represented an expensive enterprise per capita: by 1890, total Alaskan spending reached \$8,400 a year. In 1892, at Bethel, religious and educational services were provided by Rev. John H. Kilbuck and his wife, Edith, Rev. Ernst L. Weber and his wife, as well as a teacher, Miss Lydia Lebus. At the Carmel station, founded in 1887, these tasks were performed by Rev. Frank W. Wolff and wife, Rev. John Hermann Schoehert, and two teachers – Miss Mary Huber and Miss Emma Huber.¹⁸²

Moravians realized that preaching to Native peoples had to be conducted in the simplest manner possible. Moravian missionaries were encouraged to acquire Native language skills as expediently as possible. As for services, while in theory the ministers had to conduct these twice every Sunday at the missionary stations as anywhere else, some exemptions were made: since the Alaskan population was so scattered, it was physically impossible to serve the spiritual needs of all of the flock regularly. Hence evangelical missionary tours were offered. Remote locations had to be visited at least twice a year, and then the building of permanent chapels for preaching and lodging was

the Peninsular Frontier, 1697-1768 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); or Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: the Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁸² See the *Proceedings of the General Meeting of the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (Bethlehem: H. Ruede, 1892).

encouraged. Also, those sending out the missions were recommended to have services as often as possible during the winter time, since the number of Natives present at the stations during the summer, with long hunting and fishing trips, inevitably declined.

As elsewhere, an Alaskan candidate for baptism had to be familiar with the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. Protracted instruction was recommended, considering its oral nature as the Natives had no written language. Baptism had to be administered in a public service. Interestingly enough, polygamists were allowed to be baptized, with the sanction of the Provincial Elders' Conference. However, polyandrists – women with two or more husbands – were excluded. Additional instruction was required before admittance to the Holy Communion. Children under five were baptized as children, children between five and twelve were baptized only in case of sickness, children after twelve were baptized as adults.

Moravians recognized baptism administered by other churches as valid, but exercised “great care in reference of claims that baptism had been received – especially in the Greek [Orthodox] Church”. Doubtful cases had to be decided by the Station Conference.¹⁸³ In cases when members of other churches were applying for Moravian status, a careful examination of their motives had to be conducted and the rules of the Moravian Church had to be carefully explained. The convert then had to pledge publicly obedience to these rules.

¹⁸³ See *Missionary Results of 1899*, section 106.

The people Moravians came to convert were Yupik Eskimo (Inuit is the term preferred now).¹⁸⁴ They called themselves “Yut”, which means “people”, and spoke Central Alaskan Yupik (also known as Central Yupik, Yup’ik, or West Alaska Eskimo). Nomadic people, they lived by fishing and hunting. Alaska was not the first place where Moravians encountered Eskimos before – they had met them in Greenland and Labrador first. These previous encounters with the Yupiks’ close relatives aided Moravian participation in Alaska mission, since they were experienced in dealing with powerful obstacles to conversion of a similar nature.

How did the Moravians describe the Yupik they encountered?¹⁸⁵ Like all peoples, the Yupik have the idea of God – Agaiyaun is the creator of the world and of the Eskimos. There is also Father Raven, who came from the sky, and Takanaluk Arnuluk – “the Mistress of the Sea” who rules over the creatures of the ocean, and Nuliajak, “the Mother of Beasts”. Yupik native religion is expressed in taboos, festivals, games, plays, and feasts.

The animistic world of the Eskimo is full of eternal spirits – ancestors, animals, and natural forces. In death, the soul, or shade, *tarnera*, abides by the corpse for four days for men and five for women. These are the days of mourning. The dead body is put

¹⁸⁴ Note: Yupik live both in Alaska and Siberia.

¹⁸⁵ General works on Yupik culture include Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Nelson Island Eskimo: Social Structure and Ritual Distribution* (Anchorage: Alaska Pacific University Press, 1983); Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Yup’ik Eskimos: As Described in the Travel Journals and Ethnographic Accounts of John and Edith Kilbuck* (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1988); William W. Fitzhugh, *Inua: Spirit World of the Bering Sea Eskimo*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982); Edward W. Nelson, *The Eskimo About Bering Strait* (Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1899); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Mission of Change in Alaska* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1963); Wendell H. Oswalt, *Alaskan Eskimos* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967).

in the elevated funeral box, with the person's belongings. The journey for which these remains were intended was not to a prehistoric paradise. The spirits remained close to the living. Eskimo society was filled with fear: the fear of disembodied spirits, fear of parting the body at death (ghosts), fear of the Land of Dead and of Evil Spirits.¹⁸⁶

Certain powerful humans served as shields against those fears among the Yupik: *Anagkut*, *A-nghatl-kok*, or *An-etl-kok* – the shamans. They were human allies, mediators between the realm of people and spirits, protectors against hostile spirits and evil, men who controlled the powers providing fish and game, cured body and soul, and preserved tradition.¹⁸⁷ The shaman, the Yupic ally, became one of the most formidable human obstacles to the Moravian spiritual quest.

Moravians William H. and Caroline Weinland

At Nazareth, at last! ... I have begun a race for good, on the path on which I feel my utter helplessness without the Divine aid, which I am always sure to receive if I ask it in a believing spirit. Trials and hardships are begetting me on every land. Cursing and swearing are showered in my ears almost momentarily, at a rate which should be heard sooner at a gambling saloon than at a Christian Institution like this, but really should be heard nowhere. I, however, have prepared of being removed from this disgusting company; but I must not say plans for one future, for I have seen that always God does not look on them, induce the course of events as he thinks best!"¹⁸⁸ –

So wrote William Weinland, age 15, on the first page of his private journal upon arriving at the Moravian Theological Seminary.

¹⁸⁶ S. H. Gapp, *Where Polar Ice Begins or The Moravian Mission in Alaska* (Bethlehem: The Comenius Press, 1928), Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁷ Several Kuskokwim shamans became Native Helpers, see S. H. Gapp, *Where Polar Ice Begins or The Moravian Mission in Alaska*. (Bethlehem: The Comenius Press, 1928), p. 83.

¹⁸⁸ William H. Weinland Diary, vol. 1, September 9 – March 29, 1876 – 1877. William Henry Weinland Collection [from now on – WHWC], Box 14. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Weinland's shock at the behavior of his fellow students would prepare him for a similar shock when, eight years later, he heeded Sheldon Jackson's and the Moravians' Board of Directors call to Christianize Alaskan Indians. "It has always been the characteristic of our church that we have gone into the mission field where no one else would venture to go", Weinland wrote on February 14, 1884, shortly after graduating from the seminary.¹⁸⁹

"I am now convinced that the Lord will have us go into the missionary field" – William Henry Weinland, now a member of the graduating class of the Moravian Theological Seminary, added three days later, on February 17.¹⁹⁰ That field was Alaska. On March 1 Weinland, equipped with a map of Alaska and Eskimo New Testament, discussed his choice with Professor Augustus Schultze.¹⁹¹ On April 21, he formally accepted the call and was appointed by the Northern Provincial Board to undertake this exploratory missionary tour along with the Rev. A. Hartmann of the Moravians' Canada Indian Mission, located at New Fairfield.¹⁹²

The missionary party traveled in the U. S. revenue cutter *Corwin*, with Lieutenant Michel A. Healy, and was promised assistance from the Alaska Commercial Company. On May 3 *Corwin* steamed out of San Francisco, and reached Unalaska on May 15.

To Weinland's surprise, the Alaskan missionary field was far from unattended. In Unalaska he observed the Aleuts, members of the Russian Orthodox Church, "with black

¹⁸⁹ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, February 14, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹⁰ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, February 17, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹¹ William Henry Weinland's diary, March 2, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹² *The Moravian*, April 9, 1884.

hair, large heads, high cheek bones, not much of a chin, and dark complexion” There he paid visits to the Orthodox church and seminary, as well as the Deacon Inokentii Trishkin – ”the object of our visit was mainly to pay him a friendly call.”¹⁹³

The company continued their trip on board the *Dora*, a steamer belonging to the Alaska Commercial Company, across the Bering Sea to the Nushagak River, where Weinland and Hartmann met their future rivals from the Russian Church in the Nushagak and Togiak Rivers parish. Then they sailed on to the Kuskokwim River, traveled for another 150 miles in two bidarkas through the tundra accompanied by an interpreter, Mr. Lind, a Norwegian in service of the Alaska Commercial Company. Finally, on June 8, the party of two arrived at Nushagak, Kuskokwim, where they were met by a Russian Finn named Sipavy, an agent of the Alaska Commercial Co., ¹⁹⁴ and an American, Mr. Clark, the Alaska Commercial Company’s agent in the region for the last six years.¹⁹⁵

On June 11 they arrived at Todiag where they met the storekeeper – a Russian, unable to speak any English, who did “a very good business in furs.”¹⁹⁶ These were the non-Native people the Moravians had to interact with in the years to follow. As for the Natives, Weinland found them “approachable, very superstitious, very filthy, very loose in their estimate of the marriage relation, but kindly disposed, and on the whole honest, having very few possessions to tempt cupidity or prompt to theft, and living in utter

¹⁹³ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, May 3, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹⁴ William Henry Weinland notes, WHWC, Box 19.

¹⁹⁵ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, June 8, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

disregard of the most ordinary laws of health, so that lung disease and scrofulous afflictions appeared to be very common.”¹⁹⁷

He continued:

The natives here are very ready to assist in their power. Their appearance is very startling. Some wear nothing whatsoever on their heads, but have long black hair, as black as coal. They wear their hair hanging down their necks and over their foreheads to their very eyes. The face looks flat, that is the eyes are not at all deep, cheek-bones very high, some almost on a level with the joint of the nose, many with noses pierced but small round chin. Their clothing consists almost entirely of furs, some looking well, others worn very hard until nothing but the hide remain. Men and women dress so nearly alike, that is difficult to distinguish between them. The skin boots is worn almost universally by them. They seem to be contented and happy, and are great people to grin and laugh. Coming on shore the other day I came upon a party of native men sitting in a circle. They at once called out “shaman, shaman:” and several took off their hats, one man coming to shake his hands with me... They live exclusively in barabarahs, or earth houses and these must be seen to be comprehended... attended service at the Greek Church... . Some looked and acted very deviously, and I could not help pity them and pray for them that the light and blessing of true Christianity [sic!] may reach them. There were more women than man, and a large number of children, in all about sixty persons. Imagine these standing for two hours, the women are with colored handkerchiefs and usual garments for men, women and children, the fur coats and skin boots... one of them looks much like a Negro – has a high forehead, a sprinkling of grey hair, and... another of the company is young and strong, looking like a real warrior.¹⁹⁸

After the exploratory trip, Brothers Weinland and Hartmann arrived back in Bethlehem on September 25, 1884 after an absence of five months. During this time they had traveled more than 13,000 miles, about 2,000 miles of which constituted their exploration of Alaska. It was their recommendation to establish a Moravian missionary station on the Kuskokwim River, 75 miles from its mouth, at Nushagak in Bristol Bay – the future Bethel.

¹⁹⁷ John Taylor Hamilton, *The Beginnings of the Moravian Mission in Alaska* (Bethlehem, PA: The Comenius Press, 1890), p. 6. Also see William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, June 8, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

¹⁹⁸ William Henry Weinland to Caroline Weinland, June 8, 1884, WHWC, Box 23.

Upon his return from the first Alaskan trip William H. Weinland was ordained as a Moravian pastor and married his long time sweetheart, Caroline Yost of New York City on March 10, 1885.¹⁹⁹ In the spring of 1885 five Moravian missionaries left Pennsylvania for Bethel: Rev. William H. and Caroline Weinland, his classmate Rev. John Kilbuck and his wife Edith, and Brother Hans Torgensen, a carpenter, as a lay missionary.²⁰⁰ They chartered a schooner, the *Lizzie Merrill*, purchased building materials, supplies, and a small sailboat, *Bethel Star*, and seemed to be ready for the mission.²⁰¹

Who were they? William Henry Weinland (1861-1930) was born on January 23, 1861 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to Henry E. Weinland and Sarah A. Jones Weinland. He graduated from the Moravian College and Theological Seminary in 1884 having previously attending Moravian Secondary School in the same town.²⁰² Considering that Bethlehem was the principal center of Moravian life in North America, his choice of a

¹⁹⁹ He became a Deacon of the Moravian Church of the United Brethren at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on March 22, 1885, ordained a Presbyterian of the United Brethren of Moravian Church on September 23, 1888.

²⁰¹ It seems that this little party of five was well equipped for almost any occasion. We read in Weinland's account books: on March 19th, 1885, he started buying provisions for the Alaska Mission: Revolver (first on the list) for \$3.50, box of cartridges for \$ 0.75, a shotgun for \$17.00, a rifle (\$16), 50 brass shells (\$3), reloading fixtures (\$1.75), and umbrella (\$2.75), On April 7th added a medicine chest for \$39.30, a new home sewing machine for \$45 on May 2nd, not forgetting about spoons, butter knife, buttons, nail brushes, knitting needs, mending cotton, blankets, sheerings, drillings, hair brushes and hair pines, two corsets and corset laces, gum boots and mosquito nettings, rubber blankets, market baskets and hand dusters, paper rails and salmon nets, 50 lbs of tapestry and 2 17x24 inch walnut frames, walnut bed stands and 4 sq. yards of linoleum, note pads and copying books, music paper and exercise books, stove pipes and milk boilers, tea strainer and biscuit cutter, H. Dull's book on Alaska and Loomis's Meteorology, Kushner's Greek and 8,000lbs of red wood blocks, 10 gallons of sunseed oil and 1 can of green paint, carbolic acid, insect powder, peppermint and anis oil, toilet paper, beef lard, 1 sack of Java coffee for \$4 and 6 cases of Eagle Milk for \$51, 4 sacks pack salt and 50 lbs of oatmeal, a cask of canvassed hams and 133 pounds of bacon, 15 gallons of canned honey, 1 box of Barbers Eagle Chocolate, a crystal bowl and 2 chamber sets, 250 postage stamps and sails for Bethel Star, 3 gallons of Pure Whiskey (\$1.25 each) and one gallon of alcohol for \$0.75, ten barrels of flour and 250 Lbs of rice, barley, beans, dried apples, pickles and raisings. By May 16th total spending for the future mission were \$5,612.93, with the boat as a major expense. See W. H. Weinland's Account Book, page 24, WHWC, Box 14.

missionary career was quite natural. On April 9, 1885, William Weinland was appointed Superintendent and Treasurer of the Alaska mission at Bethel. He remained there a little less than two years: on March 4th, 1887 he had to resign on account of his sickness and that of his daughter, Bessie, and left Alaska on June 7. He later assumed the pastorate of the Moravian Church at Gracehill, Iowa, from August 1887 to May 1889, and was subsequently appointed to work with the Natives of Southern California, establishing the Potrero mission on the Morongo Reservation. William and Caroline Weinland raised seven children, of whom two were born at Bethel, Alaska, Elizabeth Louisa, in 1886, and Caroline Sarah, in 1887. William Weinland spent his final years in Banning, California, retiring in 1929.²⁰³

John Henry Kilbuck and his wife, Edith (Romig) Kilbuck, were the second Moravian couple who went to the first Moravian Alaska mission in Southwest Alaska.²⁰⁴ John Kilbuck was the great-grandson of Delaware (Lenape) chief Gelelemend, a signer in 1778 of the first American Indian treaty with the new United States government. He was born in Franklin County, Kansas on May 15, 1861, into a family of the Christian Munsee band of the Delaware. A classmate of William Weinland, he was educated first at the Nazareth Boys' School and later at the Moravian College and Seminary. He was the first Delaware to be ordained a Moravian minister in 1884. His wife Edith Romig was born on April 16, 1865 in Franklin County, Kansas, the daughter of Moravian minister Joseph

²⁰³ William H. Weinland died in 1930. His wife outlived him for two years.

²⁰⁴ Sometimes spelled *Killbuck*.

Romig, who preached among the Munsee in Ottawa, Kansas. She married John Kilbuck in 1885.²⁰⁵

Hans Torgersen was born in the small Norwegian town of Larvik on March 18, 1850, the fourth in a family of six children. His parents immigrated to America in 1854, settling in Door County, Wisconsin, together with several other Norwegian families, at a Norwegian Moravian colony, Ephraim.²⁰⁶ Not a public speaker but a diligent worker, he set aside the timberland he acquired over years of hard work as a missionary property and eventually decided to dedicate himself to missionary service. A call followed soon – in January 1878, Hans Torgersen and his wife, Christine, started their work as lay missionaries on the Indian Mission at New Fairfield or Moraviantown, near Bothwell, Ontario, Canada. In the spring of 1885, after the Moravian Church accepted Sheldon Jackson's call to launch a new missionary enterprise in Alaska, Torgersen left his home to join the Weinlands and the Kilbucks. An experienced carpenter and farmer, Torgersen was appointed to accompany them as a practical assistant. He wrote his family from San Francisco on May 18, 1885: "Today, Monday, at 2 o'clock, we expect, God willing, to

²⁰⁵ John Henry Kilbuck died in 1922 in Akiak, Alaska. Edith died in 1933.

²⁰⁶ The Norwegian Moravian colony, Ephraim, was founded just a year prior to their arrival, by the Rev. A. M. Iverson at Eagle Harbor (the original Moravian congregation was founded several years earlier, in 1849, in the city of Milwaukee). Raised in poverty by a not very religious family, Hans Torgersen attended Ephraim Sunday School, where he became acquainted with the basic dogmas of the Moravian Church. As the Civil War broke out, his brother Torger Torgersen enlisted in the Norwegian regiment of the 15th Wisconsin Infantry, was wounded during an engagement at the Stone River in Tennessee, in early January 1863 and died. This event, according to people who knew Hans Torgersen, led him to religion. On October 22, 1865 he became a full communicant member of the Moravian Congregation at Ephraim. See Clement Hoyer, *A Brief Account of the Life of Hans Torgersen, One of the Pioneers of Moravian Missions in Alaska* (Green Bay, WI.: West Side Moravain Church, 1935).

sail for Alaska. I came on board Saturday evening. We leave at 3:30. Must close.

Farewell, farewell. Rest safely in Jesus's wounds."²⁰⁷

The five missionaries sailed from San Francisco on May 18 1885. Caroline Weinland and Edith Kilbuck were sick most of the time and Brother Torgensen "very sick." The Weinlands and Kilbucks spent their rainy foggy days reading, holding services, enjoying oyster soup and sago puddings for dinners, and popping corn in the evenings. On the morning of the June 12 they finally saw the Natives in a bidarka ahead of the schooner.²⁰⁸

By June 17 they reached the Kuskokwim Bay, landing on June 19, and holding there first service on Sunday, June 21, on land, in a tent. The missionary party reached their final destination, the Bethel settlement, several weeks later, on July 14. With great difficulties they erected a tent and a small frame building, 12 by 14 feet. Caroline Weinland described their new place in a letter to her parents:

The spot we have selected for our station is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the trading post and perhaps a little over 200 feet from the river bank, on a high point, the view from here is quite pretty, to the north and west a wide undulating prairie with low brush here and there, to the east the view up the river and the trading post directly south, the river and a pretty island in the river, that is all covered with low trees. Bro. Torgersen thinks we can raise quite some greens and vegetables, besides potatoes, but is doubtful, the soil is nearly clear sand with but very little loam.²⁰⁹

It seems that great difficulties and grave misfortunes were following their party. Imagine two young inexperienced men just out of school, educated in classics and theology but not carpentry, with their young wives, (pregnant Caroline) in middle of

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 20.

²⁰⁸ William Henry Weinland's notes, May 31, 1885, WHWC, Box 14.

²⁰⁹ Letter, Caroline Weinland to her family, August, 1885, WHWC, Box 23.

nowhere, facing the winter with no roof over their heads, unable to communicate with the Natives but by the sign language. Weinland was sick most of the autumn and Kilbuck almost lost his sight.²¹⁰

The estimated Native population in the area of a two days' journey with a dog team as its radius was around twelve hundred. However, the first six months of the Moravian Alaska mission were mostly about plain survival and not converting the Natives. On August 10 a tragedy happened: Hans Torgersen drowned during a storm. His body was not recovered until five weeks later, and laid to rest on September 16. One day before he died, he told Brother Kilbuck that it was his wish to be buried where he died. Later, Kilbuck movingly recalled: "I was at his grave, on Easter Morning of 1888, several natives professed conversion and declared their wish to become members of the Moravian church."²¹¹

The first Moravian encounter with the Russian Orthodox Church had occurred on the first Weinland trip: they had stopped at Nushagak where they were introduced to the local priest. He informed them that he claimed the Nushagak and Kodiak districts as his parish and suggested that they explore the Kuskokwim district – that being unoccupied. This was a rather neutral encounter. Initially, the idea was simple – there is enough space for *any* Christian mission here. The situation changed soon and the Russian Church claimed Kuskokwim district as its exclusive proselytizing field.

Weinland's initial impressions of Unalaska and the Orthodoxy he encountered there are quite interesting. First, he wrote in his report to the fellow Brethren in

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Bethlehem about Veniaminov's work quite favorably: "Ounalaska formed one of the chief fields of the missionary labors of the noble Russian priest, Veniaminov, who, until the United States purchased Alaska, worked so earnestly to convert the Aleuts from heathendom to the faith of the Greek Catholic Church. Here he established a school, and endeavored to bring to the people also mental enlightenment. Veniaminov has gone to his rest; but of this man it may be said, as alas! it can be said of but too few Greek priests in Alaska, that the people are better for his having labored amongst them, and a few of his former scholars are still met with, who bless his memory."²¹²

But, for Weinland, Veniaminov was rather an exception than a rule for the Orthodox priest:

Judged by our standard of enlightenment, the Aleuts are still sadly degraded; but, compared with their neighbors, the Esquimaux of the main-land, even the few acquirements of the Aleuts give them great advantages. Not a few can read and write, and several of their young men have spent more or less time at San Francisco in the pursuit of knowledge. But the statement which I read recently that the accountants of the Alaska Commercial Company are native Aleuts, is erroneous, since no Aleuts hold a position in their counting-house. They are, however, employed by the Company in various other positions of trust, and as far as we could learn, give good satisfaction. The Aleuts are well acquainted with the Russian language, which language is the go-between in Alaska. A few can speak English, but only a few.²¹³

He further observed that the Orthodox churches of Alaska were divided into two classes – self-sustaining and mission churches: "those on the Aleutian Islands are of the self-sustaining class, the natives paying the salaries of their priests from their own earnings. The employees of the Company report that, usually when a party of Aleuts

²¹² William H. Weinland, "Report of the Missionary Exploratory Expedition to Alaska," *Moravian*, October 29, 1884.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

return from a hunting expedition, each man will select some of his best furs and sell them to the credit of the church.”²¹⁴

At the same time, Weinland had to admit that:

Among the Aleuts the Greek religion is implanted deeper than in any other part of Alaska, priests being supplied from Russia through the San Francisco Synod and the natives almost without exception being members of this Church. And, in fact, the religious tendency of the Aleut is in itself highly commendable. All church festivals are kept strictly, all religious ceremonies fastidiously observed. The great difficulty, however, is that in the Greek Church, where there is practically no preaching, but little catechetical instruction, and in which services are exclusively of a liturgical character, conducted in Slavonic language, which the natives do not understand, ceremony becomes the *sic qua non sic*, [the necessity] and real spiritual life with the fruits of the Spirit, are the exception. The white men living amongst them as employees of the Company are there from a desire for worldly gain, and, being representatives of as many different creeds as of nationalities, they care not for the Sabbath, nor do they seek to improve their opportunities of testifying to the truth as it is in Christ by setting worthy examples of Christian living.²¹⁵

On January 4, 1886, the Weinlands had twelve visitors: ten Native Eskimos and two white men. Their neighbor, Mr. Lind, who had been away on a trip, returned accompanied by a deacon of the Orthodox Church from Nushegak. He came to see how many members of the Orthodox Church were living on the river. He also looked for a place to erect a church and a house at Kolmakovsky. Weinland complained: “if the idea of the authorities of the Greek church [sic] is carried out, we will have a Greek priest on this river, although at a distance of three hundred miles from here. They are ... bound to keep a distance from us, for we have not interfered with their work in any way, and they have not right to interfere with us in any way whatsoever.”²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Weinland soon, however, had at least two problems with Orthodox neighbors. The first was trivial and personal, and indicated his misunderstanding of the offices in Orthodoxy: “The deacon who makes this trip is the priest in charge – but he is a bad bad man. He brought me several letters from gentlemen living in Nushagak, whom I met last summer a year ago. They warned me to beware of him. Besides being a drunkard, he is branded as the champion liar of Alaska. What such a man can do in the work of truly leading souls to Christ can well be imagined.” The second problem was fundamental – the Orthodox way of practicing Christianity: “No, the Greek church can do us no harm, nor hinder us to any extent in our work! They may baptize at wholesales, but a man of such character can have but very little benefit from his religion himself, and his superficial work cannot stand the test when we are once able to teach them and obtain peace for their weary souls.”²¹⁷

Still, survival required cooperation between different churches, and here the Moravians’ traditional willingness to cooperate with other denominations stood them in good stead: “The deacon will continue his journey to Kolmakovsky day after tomorrow, and in about who weeks he will return, when we will send out mail down to Nushagak with him, expecting a vessel will come up to Nushagak in May.”²¹⁸

Time in Alaska moved glacially. Weinland wrote about his encounter with the Russian priest in January and sent letters with him to Nushagak that month, letters he expected to be picked up by a postal carrier *four or five months later*. Weinland concluded that day’s letter: “You will be interested to learn that the inside fixtures of the

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

Greek Church which once stood in New York, ... are to be sent and used in the new church in Kolmakovsky. ... I can never forget one sentence which Bjerring expressed to me, ‘if you could only convert all the Greek priests in Alaska.’²¹⁹ Orthodox Christianity, both its content and the behavior, the Moravians observed, seemed as far remote from their own practice as the rites of the Yupiks.

Not all descriptions of the Orthodox were so negative. On the same visit, Caroline Weinland wrote on February 1, 1886, without any trace of her husband’s emotions: “today the deacon of the Greek Church at Nushagak arrived at the trading post here and brought letters.”²²⁰ In a letter to his parents, William Weinland was not negative at all, when describing his later Orthodox encounters during his March, 1886, travel to the village of Nagomute: “There is the mission of the Russian church. We were welcomed by the trader...After the service we were invited to the house of the Priest, but as he can speak no more English than I can Russian, which is none at all, I smoked his cigars instead of trying to talk to him. However, he was very friendly, and as Mr. Lind acted as interpreter, we spent the time quite pleasantly.”²²¹

It is possible to distinguish several crucial themes in the Moravian missionary discourse on Alaska. First, Alaska was the realm of darkness, spiritual and otherwise, where Moravians ought to bring the light of Gospel. Second, Alaska was a wound, which requires spiritual healing. The Moravian brethren became medicine men, healing the Native’s soul and many times, also body. The minister as a doctor, the minister as a

²¹⁹ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Ms. Yost, January 4 – February 2, 1886, WHWC, Box 10.

²²⁰ Letter, Caroline Weinland to Yost family, December 18 – February 3, 1885-1886. WHWC, Box 9.

²²¹ Letter, William Henry Weinland to his parents, May 6, 1886, WHWC, Box 23.

medicine man took the traditional and familiar role of a shaman. Third, the wounded land of Alaska had to be converted not by the word of the Gospel only, but by the dramatic, visual and musical aspects of the Moravian worship. Despite their rivalry, there were similarities between the Moravian and Orthodox missions – both stressed ritual and emotional commitment.

In the beginning, Alaska was viewed by Moravians as a place in the Devil's possession. Not just the lack of light and long frigid winter nights, but also Native conduct seemed to prove that. John Kilbuck wrote, for example: "at the mouth of the river, an old woman was cut up into small peaces by a man, who supposed he had lost his children through her witchery. Some time ago quite a prominent native came down here. She was insane, and he was her only living relative. This man wished to leave her among strangers and tried to bribe them to kill her. He was finally compelled to take her back to his home. We heard the other day that he deliberately froze her to death.'²²²

The Moravian task was to bring the light into the darkness: "Shed daily light into those dark places."²²³ There is obviously a difference between physical darkness – polar nights – and metaphysical darkness, but the missionaries regarded the former as symbolic of the latter. They were not able to remove the first but quite equipped to deal with the latter. As Weinland wrote in December 1885:

True, it is there are many dark features about life here, in Alaska, and if one wished to keep on the dark side of the cloud all the time it would be a very easy matter to do it. But – bright spots – birds singing I have watched them from out window, I have listened to

²²² John Taylor Hamilton, *The Beginnings of the Moravian Mission in Alaska* (Bethlehem: The Comenius Press, 1890), p. 13.

²²³ Letter, Laura Albrecht to Rev. William Henry Weinland, July 23, 1888, WHWC, Box 1.

their singing, and I have felt oh, so at peace, for if the birds can sing, in the country, surely a child of God can sing and rejoice here likewise.²²⁴

Alaska was a wound to heal for the Moravians. It seems that the initial successes of the mission – if not in converting the Natives but at least in establishing cordial and cooperative relations with them from the very start – can be attributed to the fact that the missionaries were looked at as medicine men by the Natives. Furthermore, they actually acted in that capacity which served as an additional source of their missionary/shaman/medicine man power.

Weinland was unintentionally doing the right thing when in preparing for this missionary endeavor, he brought along a good supply of medicine. To his own surprise, he became the doctor of Kuskokwim: “We have homeopathic medicine with us” – wrote Weinland – “and try to cure or relieve the ailments of the natives, and with the blessings of the Lord on our efforts, we have succeeded beyond our expectations.”²²⁵ The Natives knew that Moravians had medicine, and for some reason or other, came to him for relief: “Homeopathic medicines do the natives much good, which a great surprise to me, seeing the little care they take of themselves and considering how strong their diet is.”²²⁶

Weinland wrote to Caroline’s family in February 1886, describing the medical cases he had to deal with. The previous November, a young native woman froze her foot badly, and “when we first saw the foot, five days after, mortification had already set in,

²²⁴ Letter, William Henry Weinland to M. E. Yost, May 30, 1886, WHWC, Box 10.

²²⁵ Letter, William Henry Weinland to Yost family, April 6, 1886, WHWC, Box 9.

²²⁶ Letter, William Henry Weinland to M. E. Yost, Febraury 2, 1886, WHWC, Box 10.

and the entire foot was badly swelled.”²²⁷ Weinland had to improvise: “I began to bathe the foot daily in a lotion of chamomile and to apply a poultice of flaxseed meal and cereal. This reduced the swelling, and by Christmas the toes had dropped one by one. Since then I have applied warm lard to the open sore or have seen that it was done every day, and the result is the foot is healing nicely. Mortification did not extent beyond the joints, and in a week or two I expect the skin will have closed entirely over the sore.”²²⁸

Caroline Weinland confirmed the presence of disease and the usefulness of medical knowledge in conversion as well as cures:

The natives seem to have great faith in our medicines and come from a good distance up and down the river, and bring all kinds of sick people to us or want medicine to take with them.... All the natives that have been here seem to take a very kindly interest in us, and help us all they can, but it is impossible to get anyone to stay and work steadily. I am very glad we brought a medicine chest with us besides herbs and other remedies.... On the 29th of August a little boy was brought to us by his parents to have his arm cured. The poor child must have suffered a great deal. He had a large festered sore on his arm. It was near the elbow and his arm was swollen to nearly three times its natural size. We based the arm in warm Calomel and ... I made a sort of house flannel sleeve to keep his arm warm. His parents brought him twice a day for a week to have his arm dressed, and by that time it was on fair way to recover.²²⁹

Frostbites (cured with flaxseed and charcoal), physical traumas, chronic disease – these seemed to be prevalent problems William Weinland dealt with, serving his patients as an Alaskan doctor ordained by frontier. Thus, healing the physical wound first, he would win the soul later. But he did not always experience success – just a day before this letter was written, he had to watch in despair as a patient suffered whom he could

²²⁷ Letter, W.H.Weinland to M. E. Yost, Febraury 2, 1886, WHWC, Box 10.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Letter, Caroline Weinland to her family, December 15, 1885, WHWC, Box 23.

not help much: “little girl, probably eighteen month old, is troubled with an affection of the spine... she is restless, screaming or whining constantly.”²³⁰ Experiences like this affected the missionaries themselves in the most profound manner, and intensified their own spiritual devotion.

Medicine alone was not enough to cure disease and to heal the Natives’ wounds. A whole way of life – physical and spiritual had to be changed: “One complaint is very prevalent. The severe climate and the wretched manner of living of these natives, causes various kinds of lung complaints. Many natives spit blood, and this continues until the man or woman is completely prostrated by weakness. I have but little hopes of curing such cases permanently, but we have treated quite a number, and have relieved them all. I am afraid they cannot be cured until they can be induced to live differently.” ²³¹

Weinland concluded:

This is a picture of wretchedness and misery which we see wherever we go quite enough to make one sick at heart. And yet, these natives call themselves “The People”, while the white man is a strange order animal, something like a dog. Oh, that we could only speak to these people and tell them the Truth. But wait, I have hopes. Our daily prayer is, that while we are unable to speak freely with the people, our example and our daily walk and conversation may have a good influence on their minds, and I believe our prayers is being answered.²³²

²³⁰ Letter, William Henry Weinland to M. E. Yost, Febraury 2, 1886, WHWC, Box 10.

²³¹ Weinland mentioned another case: “Another case of long standing came to my notice today. It is a man who is partly (1/4) of Russian descent, who murdered one wife several years ago, and who had two wives left last summer a year ago. His disease seems to be acute inflammation of the lungs. Although his case is almost hopeless, yet I sent him medicine and trust it may relieve him. In many cases I have been almost helpless, unable to learn what the symptoms are. A native will come and tell me so and so is sick and asks me for medicine, to my question, where is he sick, he will tell me “in his head” or “in his stomach.” Letter, William Henry Weinland to M. E. Yost, Febraury 2, 1886. WHWC, Box 10.

²³² Letter, William Henry Weinland to M. E. Yost, Febraury 2, 1886, WHWC, Box 10. And more: “The blood of these natives is so impure every sore festers and they are constantly bothered with boils and large open sores, especially the children. It is no wonder much is so, they eat dried salmon damp, and grease without mold, and sour fish, fish that had been buried in a hole in the ground and probably during a warm spell thawed out and soured, the odor from these fish is terrible, and yet the natives eat it with ... relish.

It took years before the Moravian Church authorities realized that it was essential to send a doctor with any missionary party. William Weinland, long after his own experiences in Alaska, bitterly complained: “In sending us to Alaska without even one in the party knowing anything about the medicine the Moravian Church has committed a great wrong. Thank God that at last this subject is receiving the attention it deserves.”²³³

Concluding Note

Drawing on their vast missionary activities throughout the globe over the preceding centuries, the Moravians were often able to convert the Alaskan Yupik more quickly and effectively than their longer-entrenched Russian Orthodox competitors. They came as healers of the physical as well as the spiritual, taught women and children, and respected Native culture. By involving the Yupik in their own conversion and governance, they overcame the barriers other denominations found almost insurmountable. It is also possible to argue that by the time of their arrival Orthodox Church in Alaska had been weakened: its leaders had died or returned to Russia, and support did not reach the levels it had under Russian rule.

While there are relatively few Moravian Native Alaskans in all of Alaska, the Moravian Church retains a strong presence in the areas of the initial encounter, in the Kuskokwim region in genera. The Moravian Seminary in Bethel attests to that. The

The dogs do not like it and will eat it only when almost starved.” -- Letter to “Dear Friend”, April 6, 1886, WHWC, Box 9.

²³³ Letter, William Henry Weinland to *The Moravian*, July 28, 1892.

intense nature of the Moravian encounter with the Natives, along with their small numbers and limited funds compared with the more mainstream denominations, only enabled them to cultivate a small area.

Chapter 5

Apostle or Devil?: William Duncan of Metlakatla [Or**“How an Alaskan Tribe Rose from Cannibalism to Christianity”].²³⁴**

Chicago. That peacefully disposed young bear which Thomas Strong presented to the city is kept chained in the deer padlock in the city part. The other day it broke its chain and started in to have a venison dinner. It ran after the deer till the young buck turned on it and combed its fur with his horns, and kicked it on the snout and made the blood run and finally the bear imitated Zaccheus and climbed a tree, while a buck stood guard at the bottom with fire in his eyes and frothing at the mouth with rage. The brief association of that bear with the pious colony at Metlakahtla it seems did not eradicate all the savage nature of the brute. But it will probably wait till it is bigger before it tries to eat that buck again.

“The Tables Turned”, *Portland Oregonian*, October 26, 1887.

The Orthodox Church tried to extend the Russian imperial realm into Alaska through state-supported spirituality. The Presbyterians and Dr. Sheldon Jackson attempted to Americanize Alaska though indirect help from the U.S. government. The Moravian Brethren, a small but remarkably active group, endeavored to “heal” the Alaskan “spiritual and physical” wounds. Rev. William Duncan of Metlkatla tried to do something entirely different. The New Metlakatla [or Metlakahtla, in its old spelling]

²³⁴ “How an Alaskan Tribe Rose from Cannibalism, to Christianity” is a title of an article published in the *Union*, Springfield, Massachusetts on December 27, 1887.

story shows that, historically, the very term *Alaska* is not just liminal in its essence, but also politically constructed.²³⁵

Earlier chapters have shown that the missionary concept of *Alaska* had different and, at times, mutually exclusive meanings for different missionaries. For example, Ioann Veniaminov perceived Alaska mainly as an extension of the Siberian ecclesiastical and ethnic landscape: thus “Russian America” was not treated much differently from the rest of Siberia. The Presbyterian “Apostle” Sheldon Jackson viewed Alaska from the perspective of an ecclesiastical manager. Alaska had to be Americanized, both re-civilized and re-baptized in the ways of the true and only civilization – white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. That is why Jackson seemed to have no serious doubts when molding any given Protestant denomination into one anti-Orthodox and anti-Catholic proselytizing front. Among those who joined him were the Moravian brethren, but they seemed to look upon Alaska as a “wounded” land in urgent need of spiritual healing.

Finally, Sheldon Jackson was willing to accept missionary assistance from some rather bizarre and, to an extent, scandalous characters such as William Duncan, as long as they were Protestants and seemed suitable for his civilizing mission. On the American side there was arguably a general acceptance and enthusiastic endorsement of William Duncan’s missionary and social experiment at New Metlakatla, on Annette Island. It seems that Duncan had managed to strike some deeply religious and cultural chords in his contemporaries. Suddenly, as William Duncan and his spiritual flock moved from British Columbia to Annette Island, they, the newcomers, technically strangers to the “Alaskan”

²³⁵ Main archival microfilmed material is available as William Duncan Papers at the Public Archives of Canada and Records of the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Concerning Metlakatla, 1887-1933, at the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

land proper, became some of the most recognized, celebrated, and welcomed Alaskans by the American media. Alaska, just like America, can be found outside its formal borders. It is not a matter of geography but rather adherence to a fairly rigid – real or imagined – set of ideas about a wild land and people in need of taming.²³⁶

Beginnings

In 1857 the Anglican layman William Duncan established a mission at the Tsimshian village of Metlakahtla [sic], 15 miles south of Port Simpson, British Columbia. The Native North Americans lived in the vicinity of the Skeena and Nass rivers, south along the coast of British Columbia, and north into Alaska. Tsimshian culture was similar to the Haida and the Tlingit, and was typical of the Northwest Coast area. Subsistence hunter-gatherers, they depended largely on the codfish and halibut of

²³⁶ Among apologetic accounts the 483-page volume by Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome, *The Story of Metlakahtla* (London: Saxon, 1887, 2nd Ed.). There is also John William Arctander's *The Apostle of Alaska: The Story of William Duncan of Metlakahtla* (New York: Fleming H. Revell. Co., 1909). A moderate and academic account, mostly on this British Columbia mission's period, is Jean Usher's *William Duncan of Metlakahtla, A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974). Finally, Peter Murray's title *The Devil and Mr. Duncan: A History of the Two Metlakahtlas* (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985) does not leave too many doubts about author's negative take on Duncan's saga. There are two recent books on the subject worth mentioning. One is by Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002). Another is by Brian C. Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Matlakatlans, 1870-1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999). Also see Phylis Bowman, *Metlakahtla – the Holy City!* (Prince Rupert, B.C.: P. Bowman, 1983) and *The Church and the Indians: The Trouble at Metlakahtla*, (Victoria, B.C.: n.p., 1882); George T. B. Davis, *Metlakahtla: A True Narrative of the Red Man* (Chicago: Ram's Horn Co. House, 1871); William Duncan, *Ten Years Work among the Tsimshian Indians* (London: Church Missionary House, 1869); Edward Delor Kohlstedt, *William Duncan, Founder and Developer of Alaska's Metlakatla Christian Mission* (Palo Alto, CA: National Press, 1957); *Metlakatlah Inquiry, 1884. Report of the Commissioners, Together with the Evidence* (Victoria: Govt. Printer, 1885); Jeanette C. Vincent, Ruth Warren, and Patricia Mills, *Report on a Preliminary Survey of the Archival Materials Held at the William Duncan Memorial Church, Metlakatla, Alaska* (Seattle, WA: J.C. Mills, 1989); *Rules and Regulations for Annette Island's Reserve, Alaska, for Metlakahtla Indians and Other Alaskan Natives* (Washington: G.P.O., 1915); and *A Short Story of the Metlakatla Christian Mission, William Duncan Memorial Church*, (Palo Alto, CA: National Press, 1954).

the deep sea as well as the salmon and candlefish that came upstream in spring. They also hunted seals and sea lions and, in the interior, bears, mountain goats, and deer.²³⁷ After a conflict with the British Columbian government and the Anglican Church, Duncan moved to Port Chester, or New Metlakatla, on Annette Island, Alaska in 1887. Most of the Tsimshian followed him. There he established a semi-authoritarian utopian for-profit community based on the principles of independent non-denominational Evangelical Christianity and Victorian morality, religious pragmatism, and rational industrial production. It continued to exist long after his death in 1918. William Duncan left probably the most controversial legacy of any missionary in Alaska. Today the Tsimshian live in both British Columbia and Alaska, mainly by fishing and forestry. In 1990 there were close to 10,000 Tsimshian in Canada and more than 2,000 in the United States.

The controversy surrounding the mission and William Duncan's actual objectives

Was Metlakatla a product of Evangelical Christian perfectionism or an ugly child of Duncan's own greed? His personal annual profits from the settlement's business exceeded \$30, 000 a year, and he received wide coverage in the contemporary press. This publicity occurred, to a large extent, due to the efforts of Duncan's unexpected ally, Henry S. Wellcome, a pharmacist and a future knight of the British Empire who published his best-selling account of Duncan's career in 1886. *The Story of Metlakahtla*

²³⁷ In order to avoid confusion over the spelling of the word Tsimshian, found in the material cited, I adopted the modern variant of the spelling throughout this text. Alternatively, in the earlier, mostly nineteenth-century texts "Tsimshian" can be found spelled as *Tshimsian*, *Tsimshian*, *Tshimsean*, *Tsimsian* or *Tsimsean*. The same problem exists with the term Metlakahtla. Some earlier references spell the name as *Metlakatla*, *Metlakahta*, *Metlahatla* and even *Metlekahtla*. The term *Metlakatla* will be used in this text, unless an alternative spelling is used in the title of a book or an article.

appealed to a wide range of emotions: to the sentiments rooted deeply in the American Utopian tradition, to Evangelical humanitarianism, to American nationalism and its republican heritage, but also to the fresh anxieties coming from Victorian sentimentalism, the emerging industrial order, and the perception of Alaska as one of the last American frontiers. Duncan's experiment, which straddled the Alaska/British Columbia border, demonstrated the arbitrariness of cultural definitions of the Alaskan borders and the concept of Alaska itself. What is Alaska? What are the Alaskan border and Alaskan frontier? Culturally and religiously, did Alaska differ from Canada? Finally, the story of Metlakatla is the tale of negotiated, erased, and replaced identity, of the way different authors manipulated and presented the "nature" and image of the Tsimshian for particular purposes to the United States public.

William Duncan was a man of many faces, a Scottish entrepreneur and Canadian missionary, an American patriot and the Tsimshian Indians' Brass Band Organizer. Due to his efforts, the Tsimshian tribe – the nation of raven, whale, and bear – was forced to abandon its past.²³⁸ Theirs is a story of cultural identity forcefully negotiated and superimposed, erased and replaced, of external boundaries internalized. It was not the static ethnic or geographic concept of the Tsimshian, but rather their frontier identity's multiple and manipulable nature—cultural, political, religious, and behavioral—that made

²³⁸ On Tsimshian religion see Marius Barbeau, *Tsimshian Myths* (Ottawa: Dept. of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1961); Franz Tate and Henry W. Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970); John J. Cove, *Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1986); Frederick Webb Hodge *Thirty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1916).

their odyssey so appealing to the American public in Henry Solomon Wellcome's best-selling pulp fiction epic *The Story of Metlakahtla*.²³⁹

Wellcome's story of Duncan's utopia juxtaposes the metaphoric dichotomies of freedom versus oppression, civilization versus barbarity, industriousness versus idleness, and Christianity versus paganism and "devilry". These dichotomies were more than ideas familiar to the American reading public; they were essential and integral components of the contemporary American mentality. By settling the Tsimshian tribe within the limits of well-known cultural and linguistic borders, Wellcome made Americans accept the Tsimshian "Other".²⁴⁰ Wellcome's work often compares the Tsimshian's misfortunes to those of the peaceful Acadians, expelled by Britain during the French and Indian War, who fell the victim to tyranny and oppression and suffered on their exodus from Nova Scotia. Wellcome used Longfellow's *Evangeline's* Acadian trope deliberately – it created a commonly accepted, recognizable, and decipherable medium of cultural identification for the Tsimshian "Other", one which could evoke

²³⁹ On the Tsimshian people see Margaret Anderson, *Interpretive Contexts for Traditional and Current Coast Tsimshian Feasts* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1985); Marius Barbeau, William Beynon, John J. MacDonald, and George F. Cove, *Tsimshian Narratives* (Ottawa: Directorate Canadian Museum of Civilization Education and Cultural Affairs Division Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1987); Theresa Durlach, *The Relationship Systems of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian* (New York: American Ethnological Society G.E. Stechert and Co. Agents, 1928); Viola Edmundson Garfield, *Tsimshian Clan and Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1939); Viola Edmundson Garfield, Jay Miller, and Carol M. Eastman, *The Tsimshian and Their Neighbors of the North Pacific Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984); Viola Edmundson and Paul S. Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians and Their Arts* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979); Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture: A Light through the Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

²⁴⁰ Henry Solomon Wellcome was a very interesting person himself. He was born in Wisconsin into a deeply religious family. His uncle, a surgeon, owned a drug store there, hence Henry's early exposure to a career in the pharmacological business. A graduate of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, he established successful export/import operation selling drugs in England. A visit in 1901 to the Sudan led to the founding of the Wellcome's tropical research laboratories. He also founded the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and was knighted. Sir Henry Wellcome died in London on July 26, 1936, at 82. His legacy was the Wellcome Trust, a registered charity for medical research. After a chain of business takeovers Wellcome became Glaxo-Wellcome, merged later with SmithKline Beecham, thus becoming one of the world's biggest drug companies.

readers' reactions as intended by the author, as this poem was one of the must-read items in the 1880s United States.

According to Wellcome, Duncan was nothing less than a nineteenth-century Moses, who led the Tsimshian into the promised land – away from “Orgies and Heathenish Rites”, “Devil Dancing”, and “Dog Eating Religious Orgies”,²⁴¹ from “the dark mantle of degrading superstition”, from pride, jealousy and revenge, from “cannibalism, violence, betrayal, and ferocity”, from the “deeds of blood” and a history which was little else than “a chapter of crime and misery”, just to select a few phrases.²⁴² Most of these claims, especially those of dog-eating and, even worse, cannibalism, had nothing to do with Tsimshian reality. But they tell us much about the 1880s American reading public, and how that public wanted to perceive the “Indian”. Wellcome, among other things, was a successful drug salesman and knew well how to sell a cure, real or not, to a disease, be it moral or physical, whether or not it was real or just the product of somebody's imagination.

The cure for the Tsimshian's barbarity was simple and William Duncan developed it to perfection: while the Tsimshian were allowed to retain their tribal name, they had to erase completely their past identity and traditions. The new Tsimshian was going to be a sober, industrious worker, disciplined and pious, and, just maybe, a member of a brass band for recreational purposes.

²⁴¹ In his book, Wellcome stressed repeatedly *alleged* and rather peculiar Tsimshian past dietary preferences: cannibalism and dog-eating: if the Tsimshian were not accepted, the reversal of fortunes can prove to be disastrous.

²⁴² Quoted in the *Louisville Christian Observe and Free Christian Commonwealth*, September 28, 1887.

William Duncan was born in Bishops' Burton, Yorkshire on April 3, 1832.

Duncan was raised by his grandparents and educated in the market town of Beverley in Yorkshire until age 14 when he went to work in the local tannery. At age 21 he became a traveling salesman. Active as a Sunday-school teacher, he gained his schoolmaster training with the Anglican Church Missionary Society in London from 1854 to 1856, which, in 1856, chose Duncan to bring the light of the Gospel to the Tsimshian Indians on the northern shores of British Columbia.

But let us allow Wellcome's *Memorandum*²⁴³ to tell us about his friend. We learn that Duncan was a "young Yorkshire boy of humble parentage", who "made a remarkable record at school, became a choir boy at Beverly Cathedral in his early youth", and later "entered employment of a great leather firm and rapidly rose to an important position receiving an extremely high salary for one of his age and was offered a prospect of partnership". Young Duncan was also "very devout and religious minded, and when an urgent call was made by the church missionary society for missionaries for the foreign field, he resigned his position and volunteered". He then passed through the Highbury Training College "standing at the head of all other students in his class".²⁴⁴

In June of 1857, William Duncan arrived in Fort Simpson, British Columbia. He was then 23 years of age and "started his Mission single handed amongst the most savage, degraded and ferocious tribes of Indians on this continent". Five years later, in 1862, he led a small group of followers to the site of the Tsimshians's former village of

²⁴³ William Duncan Papers, Metlakahtla [henceforth WDP], reel 14, frames 12387-12389, Henry S. Wellcome's Memorandum.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Metlakatla. He “learned their language rapidly and from the first he began his work on practical lines: taught the Indians to make soup and be clean, etc.”, remaining there for thirty years; his “novel methods” were copied by others.²⁴⁵ Aiming at freedom from the Hudson Bay Company’s control, Duncan established a prosperous and self-governing utopian Christian community.

Under Duncan’s regime, there was a uniformed Tsimshian police force, a brass band and a cornet band, one school for children and another for adults, and a church choir. Duncan had the Tsimshian build a saw mill, start a newspaper, found a salmon cannery, and establish workshops to make rope and nets. He also bought a schooner, the *Carolina*, to conduct trade. Metlakatla was a commercial success and Metlakatlan traders were soon challenging Hudson’s Bay Company merchants. It should be noted that from the very early days of the colony, William Duncan did his best to publicize his missionary experiment both through the press and his personal travels in Canada and England.

William Duncan’s *Code of Conduct* for Metlakatla was a mixture of a non-negotiable social compact, imposed cultural agreement, code of commercial conduct, and covenant. Tsimshians, who submitted to harsh, simple, and Victorian rules, were

1. To give up their “hallied” Indian devilry.
2. To cease calling in conjurers, when sick.
3. To cease gambling.
4. To cease giving away their property for display.
5. To cease painting their faces.
6. To cease drinking intoxicating liquors.
7. To rest on the Sabbath, the Lord’s Day.
8. To attend religious instruction.
9. To send their children to school.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

10. To be clean, industrious and peaceful.
11. To be liberal and honest in trade.
12. To build neat houses, and pay the village tax.

Executive/legislative authority belonged to a council, elected by adult males of eligible age. Constables were elected to keep law and order. Administratively, the settlement was divided into companies identified by color: Pink, Crimson, Yellow, Orange, Green, Lilac, Purple, Blue, Scarlet (the chief of whom was “Abraham Lincoln”), and White; each consisted of 28 to 30 members, including 1 chief, 2 elders of the church, 3 councilors, 2 constables, 1 captain of the fire brigade, 2 bandsmen, and 10 firemen.²⁴⁶ In short, nearly everyone, as in a New England town, had some essential civic duty to perform. The tribal administration was generally based on the 1884 Canadian Indian Advancement Act and the Indian Act of 1880.

Soon the community grew to almost one thousand members. The British Columbia civil authorities appointed William Duncan to serve as magistrate, to ensure that he could have power over not only his Tsimshian charges, but also any intruders, especially numerous bootleggers. Strict discipline, based on Victorian values, was enforced, drinking was prohibited, and those who violated the rules were expelled. The Indians lived literally by the bell.

However, according to Wellcome, after many years of successful work, the head of the Church Missionary Society, who favored Duncan’s methods, died. His replacement, a high churchman, held different views and interfered by insisting on the institution of Anglican rites and ceremonies which Duncan regarded as unwise. Serious

²⁴⁶ WDP, reel 16, frames 14651-14720.

troubles arose in consequence: as Duncan put it, “a pompous bishop was set out who by his indiscretions caused a division and confusion which threatened serious disorder.” For the sake of peace, Duncan and his followers petitioned for homesteads in the United States Territory of Alaska, supported by prominent Canadians and Americans alike,²⁴⁷ such as the prominent social reformer, the Episcopal Bishop Edward Cridge of Victoria, and the controversial Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts.²⁴⁸

Duncan’s conflicts were not limited to the newly instated High Church bishop. Numerous documented protests from United States revenue officers reveal what a successful Indian trader he had become and how widely he operated. His operations extended into Alaska, turning Metlakatla into an extensive trading point for himself, instead of a missionary post for a society devoted to civilizing and religious pursuits.²⁴⁹

Tensions between the Church Missionary Society, the Church of England, and the British Columbian government, on the one hand, and William Duncan on the other, escalated in the late 1870s. A visit to Metlakatla by Bishop William Carpenter Bompas of Athabasca in 1877 and 1878 confirmed the growing suspicions held by officials that Duncan was becoming far too dictatorial and too independent of the Church of England. Church rules were not for him: Duncan refused to be ordained. Moreover, Duncan refused to allow his Tsimshian converts to participate in the Eucharist; he argued that Holy Communion too closely resembled ritual cannibalism. Eventually, the Church of

²⁴⁷ WDP, reel 14, frames, 12387-12389, Henry S. Wellcome’s *Memorandum*.

²⁴⁸ Congressman Henry Dawes of Massachusetts sponsored a milestone piece of legislation, the General Allotment Act (The Dawes Severalty Act) in 1887. It was intended to persuade Indians to break up their tribes and encourage assimilation, by turning them into independent citizen-farmers.

²⁴⁹ See the accusations made in the *The Public Ledger* of Philadelphia on December 2, 1887.

England established a new diocese called Caledonia in Metlakatla headed by Bishop William Ridley, whom one of Duncan's supporters called "the most sublime religious snob . . . a poor imitation, or sham bishop, a creature of mere uniform," the sole cause of the trouble, an Anglican bishop "full of Ritualistic doctrine."²⁵⁰

The chain of scandals, threats of murder, official complaints, and investigations that closely followed the new bishop's appointment led to the fragmentation of the community. Most of the Metlakatla residents remained loyal to Duncan. However, when the community's property was seized by British Columbia authorities under the Indian Act of 1880, Duncan maintained that his Metlakatlans ought to be able to live outside the Indian Act and own their own land – a view disputed by the government. At that moment, immigration to neighboring Alaska began to look like a viable and very attractive, if not the only, option.

Here is how Duncan himself described his Canadian secular and religious adversaries:

I must not omit to mention briefly what our enemies are doing. The Government of British Columbia and Canada and the Ecclesiastical party from the English Church are greatly incensed at our action. Everything is being done that malice can invent to annoy and impoverish us. Our church, village hall, cannery, sawmill, store, and workshops, are all seized. More than that, they have taken 80,000 feet of limber which was in stock at the saw mill. The poor people are subject to such annoyance that they almost fear to go for their property, for white men have been sent to the old village and ordered to take arms against our people if we attempt to bring away the buildings I have named.²⁵¹

The worth of the Metlakatla property seized by the Canadian Government is a good illustration of the dynamics of the community's economic life. Total personal

²⁵⁰ *Gazette*, Montreal, November 11, 1877.

²⁵¹ *New York Morning News*, November 29, 1887, Duncan's letter to his supporters in Boston, November 28, reprinted as an article "Under the American Flag".

assets included lots that came to \$42,620, an average of between \$300 and \$400 per capita, the lowest being around \$200, the absolute lowest \$ 50, the highest \$1,100.

Estimates of the communal assets were: buildings \$27,550, plus the church \$12,700, store \$1,200, guest house \$500, office \$500, mission house \$1,200, cannery \$6,000, saw mill \$2,000, brick \$500, school house \$250, village hall \$2,600, hay \$550, and ladders \$50.

The overall total was \$70,170.²⁵²

Duncan always maintained that the ultimate justice came from God: “In this world we may see fiction in the place of truth, and tyranny under the guise of law, pass unchallenged, but before God’s tribunal will go hard with the liar and the tyrant.”²⁵³

However, he also tried to find at least some approximation thereof on the shores of the Potomac River. In 1886, Duncan traveled to Washington, D.C. to enquire about transferring his settlement to Alaska. While in the U.S. he met for the first time the pharmaceutical mogul Henry Solomon Wellcome, who decided to write a book about Metlakatla and organized an aggressive public relations campaign in favor of Duncan’s cause.

It was actually Wellcome who applied to Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard to purchase a freehold on Annette Island for the sole occupancy of Duncan’s mission.

Annette Island was chosen because of its isolation from white settlements and whiskey. Despite his initial dismissal of the petition – no land laws had yet been enacted in Alaska and there was thus no mechanism for the U.S. government to sell land – U.S. Attorney

²⁵² WDP, reel 14, frames 12291 – 12294.

²⁵³ Ibid.

General Augustus Hill Garland promised Duncan protection against squatters. In the autumn of 1887, the canoe exodus was launched.²⁵⁴

Here is the Tsinshan petition:

Whereas, the people of M. upon Port Chester, Annette Island, in the District of Alaska, United States of America, formerly subjects of M, BC, in number from six hundred to one thousand men, women, and children, native North Americans, have long since abandoned their tribal relations and have become civilized, law-abiding and Christian people, and are desirous of obtaining homes and lands in severalty and the other rights and privileges of civilized and Christian nations. Which rights and privileges have been, from no fault of their own, denied to them in their old home in British Columbia.

And whereas, in protest of such treatment and in the hope and expectation of acquiring title in the United States to their future homes, churches and public buildings, they have abjured and forever renounce all allegiance to all foreign princes, potentates and powers, and especially to the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, to whom they were formerly subjects, and have abandoned their homes and possessions and have emigrated in a body into the District of Alaska, in the United States of America.²⁵⁵

Wellcome's public campaign on Duncan's behalf stimulated interest in the American press, and resulted in Duncan's meeting with American President Grover Cleveland. Prominent politicians, Canadian and American alike, were responsible for that meeting. As the *New York Age* wrote:

Like the Pilgrim Fathers of old this afflicted but prospering and thrifty flock seek a refuge from grievous wrongs, and hope to find it under the American flag. They prefer abandoning the home of their fathers and the precious fruits of their land and the intolerable stings of religious greed and intolerance. We therefore most respectfully commend Mr. Duncan and his mission to such brothers and sisters in our sister country, the land of the free, as may be disposed to use their influence in aid of the oppressed.²⁵⁶

Alaskan Governor A. P. Swineford eagerly approved the Metlakatlan exodus as well: "The removal of these civilized and largely educated Indians into Alaska will not

²⁵⁴ WDP, reel 14, frames 12387-12389, Henry S. Wellcome's Memorandum.

²⁵⁵ *Citizen*, Ottawa, Canada, November 26, 1887, reprinted from the *Alaskan*.

²⁵⁶ *The New York Age*, 2nd edition, October 22, 1887.

only add a number of Industrial enterprises, but have a beneficial effect upon the natives of that Territory.”²⁵⁷ In 1887, Duncan and 823 members of his congregation, a steamer, and more than 70 canoes, sailed northward to establish New Metlakatla on Annette Island in Alaska. The old Metlakatla community was recreated on the new spot.

For Duncan, his journey was the *exodus*:

I landed here on August 7, and found about forty of our people awaiting my arrival. The Hon. Mr. Dawson, Commissioner of Education at Washington, and the Rev Dr. Fraser of California addressed the people. . . [On August 16 a fleet of fist 50 canoes arrived] . . . As soon as their canoes were hauled up and they had taken some refreshments we met together for worship on the beach. The concluding prayer by a native showed by its fervency how intensely they realized the importance of the hour and the magnitude of the work they had undertaken. Their long-looked-for exodus had begun. Next day our little steamer arrived with 28 canoes and boats in tow.²⁵⁸

William Duncan “who was not an ordained clergyman, with a title, any more than the Apostles had titles, but a simple man even as they were simple men, largely endowed with the Master’s spirit,” appeared before the world as the man who “cast the drink-devil out of these Indians” and “tamed wild beast into men and did many wonders. . . ”²⁵⁹

Canadian authorities made some effort to offer another version of the story and refute the United States’ pro-Duncan anti-Canadian media orgy. Thus, the *Citizen*, published in Ottawa, contradicted the claims made in the *Alaskan*:

... it is without a particle of truth. All the privileges the Indians ask for in Alaska they could have obtained under the provincial laws in British Columbia any time they had chosen to do so. All Indians on abandoning their tribal relations have the right in that province of obtaining land by applying to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. No such application was made by Metlakatlans, or by any one on their behalf. No man among

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *New York Morning News*, November 29, 1887.

²⁵⁹ *The New York Age*, 2nd edition, October 22, 1887.

them ever was deprived of the land to which he had a claim. Indeed the first serious outbreak arose from their refusal to permit the surveyors to lay out the reserves which Mr. Duncan had previously asked might be laid out for them; it is pitiable to think that so much falsehood has been indulged in connection with this matter, and that it has been done under the guise of religion, it, to say the least of it, most deplorable.²⁶⁰

One attempt to offer an official Canadian version of the Metlakatlan controversy was made by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, J. W. Powell, of Ottawa, in a letter dated November 14, 1887 and published in *The Public Ledger* of Philadelphia on December 2 as a response to pro-Duncan's statements. Powell maintained that the core of the dispute was land and property, not religion, and stated that the charges of ill treatment and injustices to the Tsimshian tribe done by the Canadian government were but a sham. They "do not have the least foundation, and are nothing but instruments of the false pretense for raising money." Old Metlakatla Tsimshians were educated not by Duncan but by the Canada Missionary Society, with the financial assistance of the Canadian government. It was British Columbia's government, at Duncan's request, that had set aside two acres of land, which he "covered with buildings at the expense of the Society and which is now held in trust by the Government for that society."²⁶¹

Powell continued: "All the surrounding ground, however, was reserved for the Indians, and on this have been built the church, school house, individual habitations, etc. The government contributed time to time the land reserves for Indians – favorite fishing and hunting – 70,000 acres held in trust for them by the Government and could not be alienated without their prior and free consent."²⁶² Powell next went on to hail the

²⁶⁰ *The Citizen*, Ottawa, Canada, November 26, 1887, reprinted from the *Alaskan*.

²⁶¹ *The Public Ledger* of Philadelphia, December 2, 1887.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

benevolence of the British rule: “No subjects of her Majesty in any part of the world enjoy greater liberty and protection than do the Indians of British Columbia ... where they are not interfered with, more consent and happy equal laws for Indians and whites.”²⁶³

Thus, according to the official Canadian version of the controversy, Duncan was at first nothing more than one of the many regular agents of the Church Missionary Society which paid his salary for a long time. He principally distinguished himself by gaining personal control of large sums of money for mission maintenance and abusing his financial powers.

Furthermore, according to Powell, Duncan, a lay missionary who had never taken holy orders, abused not only temporal authority but also spiritual. When the new diocese was created and the bishop in charge of the area was appointed, other missionary settlements were established. Then serious troubles began, and “upon Mr. Duncan’s dismissal for disobedience and contumacy, mission property was destroyed, buildings torn down, while riotous assemblages, originated and prompted by Duncan, so far away from central authority, made lives and property of those opposed to him at Metlakatla no longer secure.”²⁶⁴ That was why Duncan’s appointment as magistrate was revoked and a commission of inquiry sent to the settlement, to pacify the deluded Indians he had raised against the government.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ In the process of investigation, William Duncan refused to give required evidence on the ground “*that he might criminate himself*”.

Public Response

United States public reaction to “The Story of Metlakatla” and the surrounding controversy was overwhelming, given the general hostility to Britain at the time culminating in the Venezuelan boundary controversy in 1893.²⁶⁶ There were literally hundreds of reviews prasing Duncan in newspapers and magazines, regional and national, secular and religious, popular and professional. Here is a typical report on Metlakatla favorable to Duncan:

The desolation of a community which had been compelled to leave the homes and graves of their ancestors, their houses and their farms, simply because they would not accept the ritual of the church of England and obey the teachings of a clergyman who they had not invited to instruct them. They were not able to move their houses, for they were built of adobe, but were taking out the windows and doors, tearing up the floors to use the planks in their new homes, and in some cases removing the bones of their dead.²⁶⁷

Metlkahtla’s story resonated with various people in the United States, even with those who opposed Duncan. The reports simply could not leave their readers indifferent. A “very curious volume”,²⁶⁸ or a “pretty story”,²⁶⁹ Wellcome’s book was a story of oppression sure to win the sympathy of American readers.²⁷⁰ According to some, the Metlakatla story was after all “not a novel, not a sensational advertising of some business, not an exaggerated, gossipy, scandalous recital of imaginary prosperity and adversity: but

²⁶⁶ See, for example, Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

²⁶⁷ *Commercial Advertiser*, Baltimore, November 30, 1887.

²⁶⁸ *New York Herald*, New York, June 19, 1887.

²⁶⁹ *The Gazette*, St. Joseph, June 14, 1887.

²⁷⁰ *Philadelphia Press*, June 18, 1887.

is a concise statement of facts, the condensation of thirty years' history of the most remarkable kind."²⁷¹ Thus, "The Story of Metlakahtla" ought to be read by "everyone who has an interest in seeing a governmental church brought low by the practice of Christ's teachings and plenteous supply of the common sense."²⁷²

For the "educated" public, Metlakatla appeared as a story of "a band of remarkably intelligent Indians", ²⁷³ the tale of people who did not ask for money – "one of the leading features of the civilization they have learned from Mr. Duncan was self reliance" ²⁷⁴ – curiously, on whom did they rely before? And, just like the Civil War veterans, the only thing they were craving were homesteads. Yet it was still a good deed to send monetary donations to the mission, and one of the publications' many purposes was fundraising. For example, the *Republican* of St. Louis Missouri raised \$326 by October 27, 1887, and fundraising efforts were also made by private individuals, such as Richard D. Young, who suggested a relief fund for "poor Metlakatlans".²⁷⁵

For the American patriot/nationalists, this was a tale of "wonderful change and oppression", ²⁷⁶ of prosecution and tyranny, and yet of hope: the British government and church began a persecution of the settlement, and became so tyrannical that "the oppressed people resolved to remove from such domination and seek safety under the

²⁷¹ *The Christian Woman*, Philadelphia, July 9, 1887.

²⁷² *Kansas City New Times*, June 20, 1887.

²⁷³ *Republican*, St Louis, Oct 27, 1887.

²⁷⁴ *Kansas City New Times*, June 20, 1887.

²⁷⁵ *The World*, New York, June 29, 1887.

²⁷⁶ *The National Republican*, Washington D.C., June 29, 1887.

flag of the United States.”²⁷⁷ It was a story of a freedom-loving people who “unanimously decided rather than submit to this churchly oppression, to expatriate themselves”,²⁷⁸ that is, from British Columbia to the protection of the Stars and Stripes: “they want to be where religion is free, where speech is free, where they can be secure in the ownership of the product of their hands and brains.”²⁷⁹

At the same time, Metlakatla was a story of loneliness and courage, when, in the course of his labors Duncan faced “all those hideous risks and dangers, all those trials and exposures, all that loneliness of endeavor and sense of being self-expatriated which a man must feel who gives the best portion of his life to turning savages into Christians, hearts of stone into hearts of flesh . . . rewarded by fruits of conversion.”²⁸⁰ Thus “hardly in all the long and glorious record of Christian missions can be found a chapter of more wonderful and thrilling interest.”²⁸¹

However, despite the overwhelming number and variety of published responses to Metlakatla, it is possible to trace several lines of argument defending Duncan’s experiment, as well as justifying and welcoming the Tsimshian Indians’ resettlement to Alaska.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Chicago Times*, June 18, 1887.

²⁷⁹ *Express*, Rochester, New York, June 20, 1887.

²⁸⁰ *The Evening Telegram*, June 18, 1887.

²⁸¹ *The Observer*, New York, June 23, 1887.

First and foremost are the themes of republican justice, democracy, and American progressivism – the omnipresent rhetoric of freedom versus oppression.²⁸² Thus it is a tale of a New and American Metlakatla, an Exodus of Tsimshian Pilgrims seeking protection under the American flag and freedom from the British Victorian Nabobs. It is a saga of the “people, who unanimously decided rather than submit to this churchly oppression, to expatriate themselves”,²⁸³ when “the British government and church began a persecution of the settlement, and became so tyrannical that the oppressed people resolved to remove from such domination and seek safety under the flag of the United States.”²⁸⁴

Read, for example, “The Story of Metlakahtla” in the *New York World* on June 12, 1887:

A Persecuted Community Seeks refuge Under Uncle Sam’s Flag. Remarkable Missionary Work of William Duncan of the British Columbia Coast – Cannibal Indians Converted and Civilized. The Metlakahtlans [sic] groping their way under a noble and self-sacrificed leader from the stage of barbarism and savagery to an industrious and orderly community, find their path blocked by a clique of professed Christians, the tranquility of their settlement disturbed, their lands invaded, their property practically confiscated and their natural rights disregarded.... This Indian Community is now seeking refuge under the American flag from the gross and seemingly malicious persecution to which they have been subjected by the Canadian authorities and a Bishop of the Church of England.²⁸⁵

Another article stated: “in this particularly atrocious assault upon the Indian settlement so long established by Mr. Duncan ... there is something peculiarly British and Canadian in all this. The English profession of spreading civilization and carrying

²⁸² *Philadelphia Press*, June 18, 1887.

²⁸³ *Chicago Times*, June 18, 1887.

²⁸⁴ *The National Republican*, June 29, Washington, D.C.

²⁸⁵ *The World*, New York, June 12, 1887.

enlightenment to the dark corners of the earth has never overstepped the line of commercial aggrandizement.”²⁸⁶ Taking into consideration the uneasy nature of relations between the U.S. and Great Britain and its imperial possession Canada in the 1880s, the anti-British diatribes in the U.S. media’s treatment of the Metlakatlan case are quite understandable:

. . . He [Duncan] asks the United State to give this colony a home in their free world, where the English bishops can not claim the church property not the *English nabobs* [a word invoking the despotism of East Indian maharajahs] claim the land. It would be a piece of poetic justice if the throne on the Potomac should celebrate the Queen’s coming birthday by taking Duncan and his converts away from the call of that white mother who looks upon eviction with such barbaric complacency. Thus the fifty-year-reign would be celebrated in the wilds of Alaska.²⁸⁷

A second element of the newspaper coverage also attacked England by juxtaposing the Anglican Church against Duncan’s religious pragmatism, his system of applied Christianity versus the soulless formalism of the English Church. As the *New York World* stated: “In spite of Mr. Duncan’s protests, the Church of England Missionary Society, through its bigoted Bishop, had attempted to force these simple-minded Christians to adopt its elaborate rites and ceremonies.”²⁸⁸ And *The New York Age* praised Duncan’s republican simplicity: “Duncan, who was not an ordained clergyman, with a title, any more than the Apostles had titles, but a simple man even as they were simple men, largely endowed with the Master’s spirit.”²⁸⁹ Bishop William Ridley, Duncan’s most effective adversary, was in turn accused of formalism and ritualism and, to be sure, of bigotry. Democratic United States Senator George G. Vest of Missouri wrote:

²⁸⁶ *Rochester Morning Herald*, New York, Monday, June 1887.

²⁸⁷ WDP, reel 14, frame 12850.

²⁸⁸ *The World*, New York, June 12, 1887.

²⁸⁹ *The New York Age*, 2nd edition, October 22, 1887.

'Did you see the church of England priest?' I asked: 'Did you hear the other side of the story?' 'Yes,' replied the senator, 'I saw him and I questioned him. He is a tall fellow, with a bullet-shaped head, and did not look to me as if he was of much account. His chief complaint was that Mr. Duncan did not administer the sacraments to the Indians; that he was not an ordained person and could not do so. Mr. Duncan said that the reason he did not approve of administering the sacrament to the Indians was that they had recently been cannibals, and had been taught by him that eating human bodies and drinking human blood was wrong, and he did not think it was good policy until that doctrine was firmly impressed upon their minds, to offer them the body and blood of Christ as a holy sacrament.

The English priest was also a liar:

'The priest told me,' continued the senator, 'that Mr. Duncan had debauched the women. I made some inquiries about that, and found that it was a vile slander. Not only the Indians themselves but neighbors said it was false, and in that tribe adultery is punishable by death. The priest told me too, that Mr. Duncan had robbed the Indians, and I discovered, on the contrary, that he had not only given his services for twenty years to them without compensation, but that the specific charges were untrue.'²⁹⁰

Another observer commented:

The American public must have asked itself how could one trust the bullet-shaped headed English priest, who carefully avoided eye-contact? Was he afraid to reveal his bigoted nature? There was something peculiarly British and Canadian in all this. The English profession of spreading civilization and bringing enlightenment to the dark corners of the earth has never overstepped the line of commercial aggrandizement (the seizure of Metlakahtla's [sic] land). Otherwise Britain has tried to reap the fruits which others have sown, and it is not to be wondered that her national church should closely follow the example as in this particularly atrocious assault upon the Indian settlement so long established by Mr. Duncan.²⁹¹

Finally, there were two paradoxical reactions to Wellcome's account. Some almost routinely incorporated the American obsession with industry, industriousness, productivity, and efficiency. Most of the reviewers stressed "skillfulness" of the Tsimshian in various trades. On the other hand, there was also a somewhat sickly post-

²⁹⁰ WDP, reel 14, frame 12932. Citation is from the article in *The Morning News*, New York, November 21, 1887, a reprint from the *Chicago Daily News*.

²⁹¹ *Rochester Morning Herald*, New York, June 1887.

Victorian and post-Romantic fascination with the alleged “darker” side of the Tsimshian savage’s identity in the past, which was supposedly erased and eliminated by Duncan.

Previously, “the very name of Metlakahtlans [sic] was a terror to peaceful men, and a synonym of savage cruelty”, wrote one amazingly inconsistent account, given that almost no one had ever heard of the Tsimshian until Duncan became famous and they only became Metlakatlans once he had civilized them! ²⁹²

Just as freedom was always threatened by tyranny, in Meklakahtla civilization was always endangered by savagery, Sunday schools by dog-eating orgies, and five o’clock teas by cannibalism. Below are a few of the many examples of the dichotomy of righteous industry versus savagery and cannibalism found in the U.S. media coverage of the Metlakatlan odyssey:

Notorious on the whole coast for their cruel, blood-thirsty savagery. They were constantly fighting, and in taking captives, they enslaved the women and beheaded the men. They were cannibals and given to atrocious and barbarous ceremonies. Yet they were intelligent and were skilful carvers. ²⁹³

Or:

This was the center of the country of the Tsimshian tribes, notorious for their cannibalism, cruelty and treachery, . . . extensive slavery, extremely superstitious and under influence of medicine men at some of their orgies they were in the habit of condemning a slave to death and rending the body limb from limb devouring the raw flesh while still warm. . . But, despite their barbarity, these people showed evidence of superior intellectual capacity. . .” and are “. . . skilful in engraving silver, gold and copper. ²⁹⁴

Another author states:

²⁹² *The Observer*, New York, June 23, 1887.

²⁹³ *Gazette*, Worchester, Massachusetts, June 15, 1887.

²⁹⁴ *The World*, New York, June 12, 1887.

In the districts around this new village flourished horrible rites such as eating a live dog at times; selling girls for bad purposes; terrible slavery where the whip sounded all day and night. No South Sea islander ever possessed customs more revolting or more infernal, and yet Mr., Duncan built up a village having a population of a thousand, in which the civilization was as high as that of the whites New England or Illinois.²⁹⁵

But, thanks to Duncan,

They promised to give up “ahlied”, or Indian devilry, medicine men, gambling, painting their faces and drinking liquor, and agreed to be cleanly, industrious, liberal and honest in trade, to build neat houses, to send their children to school, to pay the village tax, to rest on the Sabbath and attend religious instruction... [they] became a veritable Acadian village.²⁹⁶

Defending Duncan – Linking Economics and Christianity

Thomas N. Strong, one of William Duncan’s strongest supporters and, not coincidentally, one of his business partners, offered a Christian defense of New Metlakatla. He rejected the allegations that Metlakatla’s corporate council was nothing but a secret organization, and stressed the fact that it was an openly and fairly elected body, with one man casting one vote. He refused to believe that William Duncan had been indicted for smuggling. But, most importantly, he concentrated his defense on Duncan’s Christian practices. Yes, he admitted, Duncan refused to give communion, but why? Strong held that the sacrament had to be thoroughly understood and appreciated, certainly impossibility for an Indian who in religious matters had “the mind of a child” and could mistake the sacraments for witchcraft or sorcery. If such people were allowed

²⁹⁵ *Chicago Journal*, June 18, 1887.

²⁹⁶ *The World New York*, June 12, 1887.

to take communion, how would the Episcopalian Church be any different than from the Catholic?²⁹⁷

Moreover, Strong wrote, “the tendency to attribute potency to forms and ceremonies made nearly all our early Indians here [British Columbia] converts to the Roman Catholic Church”²⁹⁸ – which was not completely true. The Catholic Church supposedly failed to *prepare* the Native to the true essence of Christianity: “The Indians, attracted by its forms, joined it, and became at once and in all sincerely devoted converts, and thereafter attended church, played poker, stole, and scalped unwary travelers with equal and impartial zeal.”²⁹⁹ At the time, Catholicism was not primarily a religion to most American Protestants – it was an international political conspiracy (somewhat as Communism was regarded a century later) to overthrow republican government and the Protestant religion throughout the world. To counter these vices, “Indians need to have full appreciation and understanding of it before administering it. A man who was training a wolf for a domestic animal would hesitate a long time before he gave fresh blood to the originally wild creature, however tame it might appear to be, and, however harmless and beneficial the blood would be if properly received and assimilated.”³⁰⁰

From here came Duncan’s emphasis on the danger of teaching the forgiveness of sins: sin not at all. And what was the preparation? First, according to Strong, Duncan had to “break down the old superstitious practices without allowing the Indians simply to

²⁹⁷ See his October 22, 1887 letter from Portland, Oregon, to Mr. A. G. Agnew of 23 West 39 Street, New York City, published under the title “Slander Refuted” on January 4, 1888 in *The Boston Transcript*.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

change their names,” since “to an uneducated, in fact to any but very intelligent and educated Indian, the ceremony of administration of the Lord’s Supper would be looked upon very much in the light of medicine men’s witchcraft.”³⁰¹

How to reach the Indian soul? Duncan’s answer was simple: break it and replace it with something else. Duncan believed in the complete rejection of the past, of the old Native individual personality, tribal identity, traditional practices, cultural heritage, traditional economy, and then replacement with a new everyday routine: educational, religious, industrial. The Native’s time was divided among multiple tasks, prescribed by Duncan, and synchronized by the clock. For Duncan, the Metlakatla’s salmon cannery was not just a business enterprise but a continuing corporate, civilizing missionary exercise based upon complete intolerance of the tribal past and absolute rejection of the old Native identity.

Another author described and argued in favor of New Metlakatla’s civilizing enterprise.³⁰² First, a measure of official authority had been given to Duncan through his appointment as a justice of the peace by the territorial Alaskan authorities, and some of his Indians had been appointed constables. Second, “these Indians, having abandoned their tribal organization and taken lands for themselves, now only lacked naturalization to become citizens of the United States, and they are quite as likely to be good citizens, industrious, law-abiding, moral and thrifty as an equal number of immigrants from any country of Europe.”³⁰³ They had a steamer which carried their product, canned salmon,³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *The Daily Spy*, Worcester, Massachusetts, December 3, 1886.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

to market; they had a church, mills and workshops. They were workmen remarkably ingenious and expert in the mechanical arts. Liquor was prohibited, bottles smashed if founded, cooperative stores established (both caused conflicts with the local Indian traders), and a savings bank set up.³⁰⁵ Duncan introduced his Indians to town meetings, taxes, councils, and public works (drains, roads, landing places, wells, a house for strangers, a public play ground). He abolished slavery and harbored fugitives “often at great risk, from the man-stealers.”³⁰⁶

These Tsimshian Indians were not only sure to become citizens, but their colony, the New Metlakatla, would be invaluable as a center of civilization, an example and incentive for all the Indians in that part of Alaska:

They make their own cans for salmon packing from tin plates. They make furniture for their houses and make it well; they govern themselves on a thoroughly democratic system; they are more scrupulous in their dealings than the members of most Christian communities, and, as the final proof and crowning glory of their enlightened state, they have a brass band which can and does, on suitable occasions, play “Yankee Doodle,” “Hail, Columbia,” and other patriotic American airs.³⁰⁷

Thus, the “brave missionary” Duncan³⁰⁸ civilized a body of Indians “inordinately fond of spirituous liquors”,³⁰⁹ degraded by cannibalism,³¹⁰ and mired in dog-eating

³⁰⁴ The salmon cannery was built 100 feet long 34 feet wide.

³⁰⁵ *New York Evening Post*, July 2, 1887.

³⁰⁶ *Times*, Albany, December 5, 1887.

³⁰⁷ See *The Daily Spy*, Worcester, Massachusetts, December 3, 1886. Twenty one brass musical instruments and an organ were brought to Metlakatla from England.

³⁰⁸ *The American*, Baltimore, June 13, 1887.

³⁰⁹ *The Inter Ocean*, Chicago, June 15, 1887.

³¹⁰ *Journal*, Columbus, Ohio, June 12, 1887.

religious orgies. Duncan, a “chivalric Christian,” succeeded in civilizing “a thousand or more of degraded savages”³¹¹ who “20 years ago . . . were cannibals”,³¹² showing “what success may be attained by missionary work among the lowest types of humanity.”³¹³

What happened after the Tsimshian exodus? It became the Alaskan colony, now called New Metlakatla, and was once again a commercial success – it produced Mission Brand Canned Salmon. But soon Duncan ran into the same problems with the American authorities as he had with the Canadians, together with similar allegations of financial mismanagement and sexual misconduct. New Metlakatla was torn apart by divisions, and, ironically, Duncan's new adversary was Edward Marsden. The son of one of Duncan's first converts at Fort Simpson, Marsden started a Presbyterian church on Annette Island as a spiritual alternative to Duncan's by now non-sectarian evangelical one. Duncan's supporters claimed that the new conflict was the work of a conspiracy on the part of the Bureau of Education and representatives of “sectarian interests,” who attempted to defame Duncan and capture or destroy his Metlakatlan Christian Church and Mission by “false and unwarranted” charges of “dishonesty,” exploitation, misuse of funds, immorality, insanity, and disloyalty.³¹⁴ In 1915, the United States government seized Duncan's New Metlakatlan properties, as the Canadians had done some thirty

³¹¹ *Express*, Rochester, New York, June 20, 1887.

³¹² *The Morning News*, New York, November 21, 1887.

³¹³ *The Post*, June 20, 1887, Hartford, Connecticut, article “A New Indian Problem”.

³¹⁴ WDP, reel 14, frame 12306.

years before. William Duncan, isolated and almost without allies, remained at New Metlakatla until his death, on August 30, 1918.³¹⁵

Duncan's Alaskan frontier was not a spot on a map, nor was it based on geographic location or ethnic origins. It was rather a *tabula rasa* of frontier identity. It was created through the process of social construction, arbitrary in its essence, a mechanical assembly of desired cultural and social qualities. It was a frontier engineered

³¹⁵ William Duncan's Will gives a good reflection of his vision for Metlakatla's future [WDP, , reel 14, frames 12325-6]:

In the name of God, Amen. I, William Duncan, of M, Alaska, of the age of eighty four (84) years, being of sound mind and body, but remembering the uncertain nature of this transitory life, do make this my Last Will and Testament in manner and form as follows; to wit:

Second: Where as it has always been my intention and desire to, so far as practicable, penetrate the missionary work which our most gracious Lord has permitted me as his humble instrument to conduct for the betterment and uplifting of the people of certain native tribes of the North Pacific Coast, and in particular the Tshimshians, whom upon my arrival in 1867 I found in a degraded state of heathenism; and

Whereas our Heavenly Father has with tender mercy blessed our efforts and may have been rescued from their dark and evil ways to the light of the simple Gospel of our redeemer, Jesus Christ, and

Whereas a large number of these people have attained to a credible degree of Christian civilization and their material condition has been considerably improved; and

Whereas my experience and observation have convinced me that it is necessary in the case of our native races them to have very careful guidance for some generations at least to secure the necessary self-restraint, self-respect and self-reliance and to create in them a spirit of manliness and pride so that they may make their own way and become entirely self-supporting and worthy of the rights of full citizenship; and

Whereas for I have certain just claims against the Government of the United States on the account of destruction of industries and business and the seizure of buildings and other property and

Whereas in the course of my said missionary work I have by my own labor and efforts acquired a certain amount of money and property which is my own property, but which I propose and intend shall be expanded for the maintenance and support of said mission or similar work along the lines upon which I have so long conducted it:

Now, therefore, to carry such intent and purpose into execution, I hereby give and bequeath unto Thos. N. Strong of the City of Portland, Oregon, and Dr. Benjamin L. Myers, and H. C. Strong of Ketchikan, Alaska, all of my property, real, personal and mixed, and wherever situated;

IN TRUST, HOWEVER, for the carrying on and support of the religious, medical, and educational work in behalf of and for the use and benefit of the Mission of the Christian Church of Metlakahtla, Alaska, now being conducted at said M, and such other institutions or for such other native people as they may hereafter deem wise and proper; under condition, however, that said medical, religious, and educational work shall always be carried on in the same spirit and as free from all sectarian influence as it has been my aim and endeavor during the past years to carry on it.

In the maintenance of such work I urge upon my trustees that they shall encourage domestic virtues and habits of forbearance and obedience to, and respect of, parents, that they shall encourage healthy sports and amusements, and the spirit of helpfulness to others who may be in distress or who may meet with misfortune. No alcoholic drinks shall be allowed in dance halls or similar places of bad character, and the living of any of the people in adultery shall be sternly discouraged.

socially and negotiated culturally, based on pragmatism, nationalism, industrialism, religion, politics, ethics, and manners.

William Duncan's initial success on American land can be attributed to several reasons. Unlike his time in British Columbia, he was skillful in cultivating good working relations with influential political and religious figures, such as Congressman Henry Dawes and Rev. Sheldon Jackson. For instance, he wrote to Jackson: "I cherish a hope that you would come back by way of Alaska and thus we might see you on your way to Washington."³¹⁶ This time, he knew exactly how to play the American media, making sure that his enterprise would receive favorable newspaper coverage.

Thus, Duncan explained the placement of his colony under American protection in terms of the acquisition of freedom from oppression, no matter what source it came from – freedom from temporal or spiritual authorities, as well as a defense of the sanctity of private property. Duncan skillfully used political and religious rhetoric that was both historically and culturally familiar to the Americans. Thus, in his published letter to one C. Todd of California, he complained that the Canadian authorities seized Old Metlakatlan property as if it was their "lawful spoils." He claimed that his Tsimshian flock only tried to "assert" their *personal freedom* by moving to Alaska, refusing to "to come under the galling yoke" of the Canadian Indian Act, claiming that the presence of an Indian Agent in the community had a profound demoralizing effect on them. Duncan denounced the "assumption of a proud unscrupulous priest," or the official religious authority whose powers were to be in conflict with his own, while denouncing the authority of the Queen of England over the Old Metlkahtlan land:

³¹⁶ Letter to Rev. Sheldon Jackson, December 25, 1891; WDP, reel 6, frame C 2150.

. . . For six years we have, I am thankful to say, survived the wrongs inflicted upon us, but during these six years six of the principal authors of these wrongs have been called to render up their accounts before God, they are now where lies are unmasked, actions are weighted, and where official audacity and expediency, along with priestly accomplishments avail nothing. In this world we may see fiction in the [sic] instead of truth, and tyranny under the guise of law, pass unchallenged, but before God's tribunal at will go hard with the liar and the tyrant. One fiction upon which our oppressors based their untoward acts was that Metlakahtla [sic] was on an Indian reserve and therefore subject to the law under the Indian Act which assumes the right to control the personal property of the Indians and under this Act an Indian may build himself a house but he may not, it seems, pull it down or remove it. Once he has created his home, the building and improvements became the property of the Queen. Surely, this is fiction and tyranny pure and simple. The fact is that M was not built on any Reserve. The settlement was founded by myself in 1862 for all Indians who would abandon their savage customs and live as civilized people. At that time the "Indian Act" was not in force nor were any Indian Reserves on the Coast of British Columbia. The site of the settlement was chosen by the Indians themselves.³¹⁷

From the beginning, Duncan maintained that the new settlers would be loyal to the American government, and not just loyal subjects, but loyal citizens.³¹⁸ He started to request American citizenship for his most advanced pupils.³¹⁹ He stressed that as soon as they established themselves at the new settlement, they became loyal to the United States.

³¹⁷ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 4, September 1893.

³¹⁸ The old oath of Loyalty to the Metlakahtlan Community was slightly adjusted. Declaration of Purpose, January 20, 1891:

We, the people of Metlakahtla, Alaska, in order to secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of a Christian Home do severally subscribe to the following "Rules and Regulations of Our Conduct and Our Town Affairs":

1. To reverence the Sabbath, and to refrain from all unnecessary secular work on that day; to attend Divine Worship; to take the Bible for our rule of faith; to regard all true Christians as our brethren; to be truthful, honest and industrious.
2. To be faithful and loyal to the Government and the Laws of the United State of America.
3. To render our votes when called upon for the election of the Town Council, and promptly to obey the Bylaws and orders imposed by the said Council.
4. To attend to the education of our children and to keep them in school as regularly as possible.
5. To totally abstain from all intoxicants and gambling, and never attend heathen festivities or countenance heathen customs in surrounding villages.
6. To strictly carry out all sanitary regulations, necessary for the health of the Town.
7. To identify ourselves with the progress of the settlement, and to utilize the land we hold.
8. Never to alienate, give away or sell our land or building lots, or any portion thereof, to any person who have not subscribed to these Rules.

³¹⁹ WDP, Letterbook 5, reel 6, April 1, 1895, to Capt. W. J. Bryant, U. S. Inspector of Health, Seattle.

Duncan held public ceremonies for such occasions. For example, on January 1, 1888 such a ceremony took place for a Tsimshian called Frederic Mason.³²⁰ A document issued to him reads:

this certifies that on the 1st day of January 1888 Frederic Mason being then a man of full age and married was in an assemblage of the people of Merlakhtla in said District publicly held on said date, duly sworn by me to support and upheld the Constitution and Laws of the United States and to bear true allegiance thereto and then and there said Frederic Mason with said other people publicly expressed his intentions of becoming of a Citizen of the United States as soon as the Laws thereof might permit. . . That said Frederic Mason is of pure Native blood and before his abandonment of tribal relations for American Citizenship was a member of the Tsimshian tribe of Indian living in the Northern portion of British Columbia William Duncan–Missionary Metlakahtla [sic] Alaska.³²¹

A similar document was issued for David Leask, a Tsimshian school teacher, stating, among other things, that the U.S. authorities were obtaining not only a future good citizen but also a good Christian, since Leask from “his childhood and youth regularly attended School and for many years has been a consistent Christian and the School teacher at Metlakahtla [sic].”³²²

Duncan’s Alaskan community was built on religion, education, industry, law and order, and the values of community, pragmatism, individualism, loyalty, and self-sufficiency. As Duncan argued, his community provided an example of order and prosperity to Alaska – he was critical of the current state of affairs in Alaska. This would be order and prosperity based not just upon the prompt administration of justice, but on

³²⁰ WDP, Letterbooks 5, reel 6, 1894-1895, p. 339.

³²¹ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 5, 1894-1895, p. 340. Indians only became United States citizens in 1924.

³²² WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 5, 1894-1895, p. 341.

proper spiritual instruction. He argued that in secular growth there was only “stagnation and decay and in spiritual matter division and confusion.”³²³

What became of Duncan’s community? For people like Henry Dawes and Sheldon Jackson, Metlakatla presented an example of remarkable success in the advancement of civilization. When the Tsimshian moved to the island it was nothing more than another piece of wilderness, “settled” by a dense forest of spruce and hemlock timber. Tsimshian newcomers settled on the west side of Annette Island, on a gradually sloping tract of ground, built their 150 houses on a mile or so stretch of the beach – the 11th 1890 Census gives us the number of 823 Metlakatlan inhabitants, 177 families, and 142 houses.³²⁴ Most of the houses constructed initially were built of solid log; painted two-story frame houses were added later.

According to Duncan’s system, the town territory was divided into square lots. Each was assigned a pre-determined number of Natives, with one household for each corner of the square, who elected their representatives – the selectmen. Each settler had to make a contribution to a common fund, which was spent on clearing the timber and the construction and maintenance of the sidewalks, streets, and alleys. Considering Duncan’s intent to build a uniform and exemplary Christian community, it is not surprising that individual holdings had to meet a rigid set of rules and expectations.

Since one of Duncan’s professed major goals was total autonomy and the self-sufficiency of the community, artisanal and industrial skills of the settlers were essential.

³²³ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 4, 1891-1894, p. 495, June 20, 1894.

³²⁴ *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1893), p. 163.

By 1890, a large and well-equipped store and cannery were built, both under metal roofs, which were quite luxurious feature in comparison with the nearby settlements (the store measured about 60 by 120 feet, and was 30 feet high). It maintained a selection of goods, most of which could be found in any mainland store, and was run by the Natives who nonetheless had to make daily business reports to Duncan.³²⁵

The major businesses concern of New Metlakatla was the cannery where Missionary Brand salmon was produced. At the approximate construction cost of \$10,000, the cannery went into operation in 1890 with an initial capacity of producing 8,000 cases of salmon per season. Once again, Duncan made sure that all the cannery operations, from fishing to the mechanical work, were performed by the Natives. Duncan's supporters and admirers would see this, once again, as an example of the benevolent civilizing force of practical Christianity.

Another major enterprise was a steam sawmill. It produced not only the lumber for Tsimshian carpenters and joiners, but also sold shipping boxes to other canneries. One more principal building was the so-called Industrial Home, a large, one-storied structure which housed living space, a dining hall, a kitchen and a storeroom, as well as Duncan's own private office and bedroom. Native boys, who were to be trained in the mechanical and industrial arts, were boarded and lodged in the Industrial Home under strict discipline; this was an arrangement similar to any industrial or mechanical school of the time. There were 5 teachers, 3 men and 2 women, 178 pupils enrolled, 97 boys and 81 girls, with an average daily attendance of 67 and the average number of school days of

³²⁵ Ibid.

168 in 1890.³²⁶ The literacy rate of the population between 10 and 23 years of age was an average of 81% (83% for males and 77% for females).³²⁷ There were 6 additional pupils and 1 teacher in the Industrial Home, subsidized, just as the general school, by both the U.S. government and private sponsors.

Finally, there was an octagonal school building, with high ceilings and many windows, which also served as the place of worship before a permanent church was constructed. This building's seating capacity was approximately 400 persons. In the evenings, weather permitting, islanders as well as visitors were entertained by a brass band of 15 members or so, performing both sacred and popular music.

In the center of the village was a bell tower and the bell was sounded on public occasions and as a signal for Sunday worship attendance, the worship led by William Duncan. Only the opening hymn was sung in English, while the rest of the service was usually conducted in the native Tsimshian language. As Duncan claimed, church services were well attended on Sundays and weekdays by the natives who, among themselves, held two weekly prayer meetings.³²⁸

Education

In the field of education, Duncan advocated several major principles. Self-reliance was at its head: "I am doing my best to make them self-reliant. . . My experience has taught me – it is a mistake to render pecuniary aid to individual Indian in health . . . to

³²⁶ *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1893), p. 188.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 193.

³²⁸ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 5, 1894-1895, p. 296, February 1895.

help the Indians only as a community.”³²⁹ Yet, we may asked, were they not self-reliant before?

While soliciting and accepting public funding, Duncan nonetheless rejected the very concept of public schooling. The major principle to which education had to conform was quite simple: it had to be in harmony with the principles of the Metlakatlan community. Tsimshians on Annette Island, according to Duncan, had to be a united body when it came to religion. He was afraid of secularizing education in the territory.³³⁰

Nevertheless, “secular” funding was welcomed. For example, when Duncan thanked the Acting United States Commissioner of Education [William Torrey Harris] for a voucher worth \$2,500 which provided for the construction of the boarding school, he asked for more funds to complete the building of the training school.³³¹ But he also complained: “Boarding schools are however expensive institutions and the government grant in aid of \$10 per quarter for each pupil does not cover one-fourth of the outlay. The maintenance of our Boys House alone last year cost \$1330.32 . . . [with an] increase in number [the] coming year.”³³²

By 1891 Duncan’s school consisted of a large “Day School” – a Boys Home with 16 pupils and a Girls Home with 20 girls.³³³ Since those buildings had been erected with

³²⁹ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 5, 1894-1895, p.285, February 14, 1895.

³³⁰ WDP, reel 7, April 29, 1891.

³³¹ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 632, July 8, 1892.

³³² See WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 368, Letter to Rev. Sheldon Jackson, D.D., U.S. Gov. Agent of Education for Alaska, Washington, D.C., and WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 437, letter to J. W. Holcombe, Acting Commissioner of Education.

³³³ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 388.

the funds from the voluntary subscriptions of Duncan's supporters who donated their money for this specific purpose, not just federal funds, Duncan argued that it should be he, not the local School Committee, who ought to select the teachers. The true issue was who would control not just the education, but the minds of future adult Metlakatlans.

School attendance was not quite regular, and Duncan had to explain this to the United States Commissioner of Education. In August 1891, he wrote:

Unfortunately, however, the conditions of life to which the natives here at present are indissolubly bound render it impossible for the children to remain regularly at school. Now when they have the means of subsistence in their villages or in its immediate vicinity the Indians are compelled to move hither and thither to obtain a livelihood by hunting-fishing-gathering of various kinds and by picking up jobs of work in surrounding settlements of the whites.³³⁴

Thus, it was impossible for Duncan to run his community as a completely self-sufficient utopia.

Business

Duncan also advocated self-reliance for the economic organization of the settlement. As with most conservative thinkers of the age, he argued that the really poor among the Tsimshian were "the aged, the sick and the indolent", to whom loans were inappropriate. His plan was to encourage work and see that "the strong take care of the feeble." Loans were small and had to be repaid on time. Thus, loans for personal use were viewed as harmful; however, money loaned to the community as a whole was considered beneficial.³³⁵ Skills, necessary for the communal well-being, were acquired in

³³⁴ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 328, August 1891.

³³⁵ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, pp. 408-409, letter to Mrs. Doubleday, one of the sponsors of the colony, dated July 31, 1891.

training schools, to which Tsimshian boys were sent;³³⁶ a day school teaching industrial arts for boys and domestic arts for girls in the settlement was also established.³³⁷

The salmon canning business, however, was the main showcase for Duncan's ideas. It initially employed 120 people.³³⁸ In 1890, for example, the total cost of imports to New Metlakatla was \$24,355.68 while exports totaled about \$9,065.66. When Duncan's people were unable to find ample employment in Alaska, many of them still went to work every summer in British Columbia.³³⁹

Duncan had extensive business contacts in Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco. The canned salmon and lumber produced by the colony were not the only commodities traded. For example, one fur shipment included 18 black bear, 21 beaver, 20 land otter, 2 wolf, 95 mink, 1 wolverine, 40 summer and 34 winter deer skins.³⁴⁰ In exchange for the settlement's exports, Duncan imported items such as cane sugar, coffee, milk, corned beef, oats, corn meal, tobacco, canned apricots, tea, sunflower oil, flour, rice, potatoes, boxed apples, oranges, grapes, plums, onions, and peaches.³⁴¹

At times, Duncan sounds like a typical ruthless Gilded Age entrepreneur with some Christian overtones (as did Rockefeller and Carnegie). Often he was not all that eager to repay his debts. He wrote to one of his British Columbian creditors, who tried to

³³⁶ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 410, August 1, 1891.

³³⁷ WDP, reel 6, Correspondence, Letterbook 4, 1891-1894, p. 183, letter to M. Wessner, dated April 28, 1893.

³³⁸ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 517.

³³⁹ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 413, August 4, 1891, letter to Chas H. Isham, Special Agent Washington D.C.

³⁴⁰ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 393.

³⁴¹ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 426.

collect old debts from him: “To collect the Christian principle that commands us to owe no man anything but to love one another.”³⁴² In another instance, he referred to *Romans 13*: “Owe no money? Anything but to love one another.”³⁴³

By 1900, according to the official United States Report on Alaskan fisheries, the “Industrial Company” of Metlakatla at the cannery of Annette Island employed 3 whites and 234 natives, paid a total of \$24,500 in wages, used \$11,046 worth of tinplate, produced 10,542 cases of tinned salmon valued at \$36,000 in 1899 and 18,000 cases valued at \$54,000 – while 92,276 red salmon, 4,452 silver salmon, and 201,423 pink or humpback salmon were salted and packed. The Industrial Company paid \$720 in government taxes, and owned 2 steamers with a total tonnage of 62 tons, valued at \$8,000.³⁴⁴

Concluding Note

Thus, Duncan’s Metlakatla incorporated various features that Gilded Age Americans admire. Order, hygiene, education, temperance, capitalism, and religiosity flourished under his rule. His patriotic stance enabled Uncle Sam to challenge John Bull once again. But like the America he represented, Duncan incorporated more than a touch of buncombe and bombast in his project. For better or for worse, Meklakahtla forged for Americans an Alaska in which they could see many of their virtues and not a few of their vices.

³⁴² WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 3, p. 451.

³⁴³ WDP, reel 6, Letterbook 4, 1891-1894, letter to Alfred Dudowed, Fort Simpson, B. C., dated February 4, 1893. Duncan refers to the *Romans 13:8*: “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

³⁴⁴ Jefferson F. Moser, *The Salmon and Salmon Fisheries of Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1902), p. 32.

Conclusions

A painting by Rie Munoz, “Cry in the Wilderness”, on the wall in the lobby of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, greets visitors as they enter. It is also the last object they see leaving the library. It places missionary endeavors at the center of its visual representation of Alaskan history. Perhaps unintentionally, the manner in which the major missionaries are presented in the painting symbolize their different enterprises.

Right in the center of the canvas is Ioann Veniaminov, or St. Innocent of Alaska. That is as it should be, for Orthodoxy was not only the first, but has proven the most successful of all the missions undertaken. He sails the seas under the Russian imperial eagle, indicating the union of church and state, while his vessel pillar is in the form of a large cross; Aleutians nearby are kneeling. A totem pole and an Orthodox Church are behind him, a dog-sled running by his side. The Russian priest is adored by the people, and their pre-contact religious totem is preserved in syncretistic union with Christianity.

Next to the Orthodox Church is the industrial school house in Sitka, the Sheldon Jackson Academy, with Jackson himself in front, resting his hands on the shoulders of the Native, possibly Tlingit students. Jackson dominates the students, he stands above them, and his academy, the agent of Americanization, rather than a church, is shown to represent his enterprise.

In the upper left corner visitors see the Moravians: John and Edith Kilbuck surrounded by Yupik children. Unlike Jackson, they are in the midst of their converts as their strategy of conversion required them to learn and become part of the Natives’ culture as part of their proselytization. Next to Amanda McFarland, Jackson’s co-

founder of the Fort Wrangell Mission, down below and dressed austere, is Rev. William Duncan – in the lower left corner – preaching to Tsimshians. His idiosyncratic, charismatic personality dominates his community.

This canvas serves not merely as a symbolic representation of the different forms of Christianity that came to nineteenth century Alaska, but it calls attention to Christianity's crucial importance in the formation of the Alaskan identity, the forging of Alaska's past, and the understanding presenting Alaska's present. Just as the Alamo and the oil and cattle industry are the foundations of Texas state identity, revolutionary patriotism to a large extent defines Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and commercial success and a "wise-guy" attitude are associated with New York, to Alaskans, their identity is largely the product of a succession of religious encounters.

As of 2005, Alaska is home to more than a hundred thousand Athabaskans, Aleuts, Innuits, Yupiks, Tlingits, Haida, Tsimshians and other native people out of a total population of about 650,000. Alaska has a greater (15.7) percentage of Native Americans than any other state.



Rie Munoz, "Cry in the Wilderness", Elmer E. Rasmuson Library,
University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Alaska is unique in other ways. It is not a continent. It is not an island. But, nonetheless, when we say the “word” Alaska, the image of a *separate* geographic, political, ethnic, and, finally, spiritual and religious entity comes to mind. The enigmatic essence of Alaska lies in the fact that this remote and seemingly unfriendly land offers a vast space to be filled and defined by the human imagination. Alaska is what we want it to be. It is impossible to reinvent Savannah or Boston: they have a fixed place in the American historical landscape. Alaska, however, allows for such flexibility. One illustration of this phenomenon is the geographic boundaries of the region itself. If you ask the first stranger passing by what is Alaska, you will probably hear a standard response: “wild, dark and cold place,” much like Presbyterian poet Clara Twaits imagined over a hundred years ago.

Yet, the Tongass National Park is home to the biggest rainforest in North America. Alaska is perceived as an exciting frontier, but the excitement ends with the straight line at the Canadian border, cutting the Yukon in two halves – one of which is a Canadian frontier that is also a part of that nation’s identity. Some Alaskan ethnic groups are also found in Siberia, others in the Yukon. What do arctic Nome and the foggy, rainy southeast region of Ketchikan have in common besides an imagined and arbitrarily constructed political identity?

Alaska’s religious, spiritual, and missionary history shows that Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1890 lament that the American frontier was closed only applied to the forty-eight contiguous states. Missionaries in search of a frontier requiring truly apostolic efforts flocked to the Orient, Africa, and the South Pacific in the nineteenth century: others went to Alaska – along with Hawaii, where their role is far more famous.

And each of the missionary denominations invented and reinvented the place called Alaska in this process. For the Russians, Alaska, in the beginning, was an extension of a seemingly endless imperial enterprise, not differing greatly from Siberian snow but adding to the crown's glory by turning part of America into Russian land. But in time Alaska played an ironic trick: instead of Alaska becoming an extension of Russian Siberia, mainland Russia learned lessons in Christianization from Ioann Veniaminov, who rose to head the entire Russian church. The Russian Church, the heart of Russian tradition and identity, conservative by its nature, part of the state machinery, devoted to preserving the status quo, introverted and not extroverted, turned into a *missionary* church, thanks to the Alaskan experience.

For missionary activists such as Sheldon Jackson, Alaska was a place where American Manifest Destiny found its final frontier. They thought all of North America should eventually become one, homogenous Americanized realm, and the Alaskan Natives, originally presenting the spiritual and cultural opposite of their civilizers, should be melted in Jackson's pot. Thus, for Sheldon Jackson and his fellow Presbyterians, the Alaskan endeavor was a quintessential reaffirmation of Americanism: one language, one culture, one economy, and one way of believing. Not only was the Native element their target, but also foreign and alien Russian cultural and religious influence.

For the Moravians, a denomination persecuted in the past, Alaska was a spiritual wound, an open mystical sore in need of divine healing, a frozen land calling for a warm and sacred embrace. Thus, in the 1880s, the Alaskan Mission became one of the most important North American Moravian missions, if not the most important, along with the efforts to convert Mormons or bring in the African-American freedmen whose spiritual

and physical wounds were also visible. That was why John and Edith Kilbuck, and Henry and Caroline Weinland, among others, hurried to the banks of the Kuskokwim River from Pennsylvania. And, in time, Moravians took their healing mission more literally – sending not just preachers, but also doctors to the remote parts of Alaska.

One thing should be noted here: while the Moravians obviously competed with the Orthodox counterpart for converts and communicants, there were certain similarities between the two churches. The missionary gains of both were based on the wide use of Native clergy and emphasized ritual, beautiful spiritual singing in the particular, which created meaningful parallels bridging Christian and Native worlds lacking in the Presbyterian approach.

William Duncan's New Metlakatla Tsimshian experiment was another and more radical invention of Alaska. Through a massive propaganda campaign, with the help of Sheldon Jackson as well as powerful supporters in the U.S. Government, Duncan managed successfully to convince the American public that Annette Island, only a few miles from the British Columbia, was the most important part of the Alaskan frontier. Duncan's Alaska, New Metlakatla, was a perfect example of Alaska as an image of an absolutely separate and autonomous geographic and spiritual realm: it was an island, indeed. It was also an example of the boundless imagination involved in the invention of Alaska. Duncan literally *invented* his community, a spiritual and Christian yet industrial and rational, utopian yet American, a frontier-like yet rigidly regimented Victorian and Gilded Age frontier community. Yet like America itself, his land was corrupt, and his own sexual indiscretions and pecuniary corruption were at least as conspicuous as his idealism.

Finally, in this world of shifting spiritual meanings, not only did missionaries invent their own Alaska. Alaska and its people made them reinvent themselves and their churches, especially the Moravians and Russian Orthodox. For the story of the Alaskan missions did not end in the early twentieth century. Orthodox, Presbyterian, Moravian, and other churches are still in Alaska, as is the Metlakatlan community on Annette Island. But only the Greek Orthodox Church, with 8 percent of the population or about 70,000 believers, is among the top five ranked religions – Baptists comprise 11 percent, Buddhists, 10 percent, Lutherans 8 percent, and Roman Catholics 7 percent. Presbyterians and Moravians today number about 5,000 each (under one percent) with about 37 and 22 churches respectively, while there are 86 Orthodox parishes. There are about 1500 people in New Metlakatla (less than a third of one percent).³⁴⁵ Of the varieties of Christianity discussed in this dissertation, only the Orthodox have retained their following, as Alaskans are now turning to Fundamentalist Christian religions and Buddhism. The Lutheran total makes sense as Germans (at 16.6%) are the only ethnic group in the state outranking Native Alaskans, and just barely, as of 2000.

Once again, Alaska today is a welter of religious diversity.³⁴⁶ The Rasmusen Library painting thus continues to symbolize the fact that the complex interaction of religions is the gateway to the understanding of Alaska.

³⁴⁵ U.S. Census, 2000; denominational figures from about 1990 are the most recent I could find: see http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_7.html. Accessed on November 14, 2007.

³⁴⁶ See Kurt Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

Appendix A

Statistical Data and Documents on Russian America.

Instructions to Archimandrite Joasaph:³⁴⁷

You are entrusted with apostolic service, to safeguard it and those entrusted to you. You will receive your reward in heaven, that same reward by which the Holy Apostles were glorified. This heavenly reward will be yours for converting those who do not know the Law of God and for bringing them to the truth of the Gospel. In all your missionary efforts, therefore, look forward to this reward and continue to establish Christian lives in righteousness.

To your care are entrusted those whom we send with you. When resting from travel, try to bring them to more perfect knowledge of the Gospel and to prepare them for the task of converting the unenlightened to true Evangelical knowledge. When you are in America, be ready to instill in these people the true faith.

If someone in your company wants for some reason during his travels to leave you in order to remain in Russia, you must allow him to do so only if he is in a state of grave illness.

If a hierodeacon or hieromonk dies during the journey, or for some other reason leaves your company, then in his place choose from among your novices one who is worthy. You may then tonsure him and ask the bishop of Tobolsk or of Irkutsk for permission to profess him.

When you are in America, if someone of your number shows by his deeds that he is unworthy of his calling because he tempts others, first of all accuse him face to face. Then, if need be, assemble the brothers and confront him with the whole unpleasant matter. As punishment, all his previous labors must remain without reward. If by this means he does not correct himself, then punish him with *poklons*³⁴⁸ and strict fasting. If he proves to be utterly incorrigible, then forbid him to serve.

When Jesus Christ leads you to meet those who do not know the Law of God, your first concern will be to serve as an example of good works to them, so as to convert them by your personal life into obedient servants of the Lord.

To convert them into the Christian faith, begin speaking in the following manner. When one sows various seeds, one notices how small the seeds are, yet what different kinds of trees come forth from them and what kind of fruit they bear. And this happens whether the sower is asleep or awake; and he adds nothing to promote their growth. Ask them, to what power they can attribute this miraculous action. Then have them notice the movement of the sun, how it rises, goes down and sets. Who moves this greatest of all sources of light? Have them note, too, how the rain comes from the clouds to bring moisture, irrigating the plants so as to give them food. Ask them who creates all this. When we go to our beds, sleep overtakes us and refreshes us. Rising up, we feel in ourselves new strength for the coming day. Who protects us in our helpless state of sleep, and who regenerates us when we awaken?

³⁴⁷ Gregory Afonski, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917* (Kodiak, Alaska: St. Herman Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 22-23.

³⁴⁸ *Poklon* ("bow") – a bow used in the Orthodox Church service.

Finally, care for all the sons of the Church who are pure in heart. Be concerned also for new converts. You should have a special office where you can be reached and where you can work to solve problems arising from various offenses. File all problem cases in a book with the help of your secretary, and close it with a special seal. Then at your first opportunity, send us a complete report, taking care to omit nothing.

Ioann Veniaminov's Instructions to the Missionaries, 1840:³⁴⁹

Thou shalt not proceed to administer holy baptism to natives before they have been thoroughly instructed.

On arriving in some settlement of the savages, thou shalt on no account say that thou art sent by any government, or give thyself out for some kind of official functionary, but appear in the guise of a poor wanderer, a sincere well-wisher to his fellow men, who has come for the single purpose of showing them the means to attain prosperity and, as far as possible, guiding them in their quest.

From the moment when thou first interest on thy duties, do thou strive, by conduct and by virtues becoming thy dignity, to win the good opinion and respect not alone of the natives, but of the civilized residents as well. Good opinion breeds respect, and one who is not respected will not be listened to.

On no account show open contempt for their manner of living, customs, etc., however these may appear deserving of it, for nothing insults and irritates these natives so much as showing them open contempt and making fun of them and anything belonging to them.

From thy first interview with natives, do thy best to win their confidence and friendly regard, not by gifts or flattery, but by wise kindness, by constant readiness to help in every way, by good and sensible advice and sincerity. For who will didactic manner, for by so doing thou canst seriously jeopardize the success of thy labors.

When a native speaks to thee, hear him out attentively, courteously, and patiently, and answer questions convincingly, carefully, and kindly....

Those who show no wish to receive holy baptism, even after repeated persuasion, should not in any way be vexed, nor, especially, coerced....

Among some savage tribes in those parts, polygamy is to be met with, but only among the rich and powerful. Therefore, while striving to incline them to monogamy, do thou proceed with caution and tact, never in a masterful spirit, but so as not to anger and embitter them. ...

The nature of those countries makes it almost impossible for the inhabitants to observe the fasts after the usual manner, i.e., by changing animal flesh diet to a wholly vegetable diet, and *their fasting can more conveniently modify not so much the quality as the quantity of the food and the time of taking it*. Therefore, they should not be compelled to observe the fasts by change of diet; but they should, according to circumstances, diminish the quantity of the food they take, and not take that in the early hours of the day.

Attendance at ordinary services, with the exception of the Liturgy, should not be made an absolute duty... because none of them will, for a very long time yet, understand what is read and recited in church.

No matrimonial unions or contracts entered into before baptism must be considered as hindrances to the administration of the Sacrament; and no marriage contracted before baptism (with the exception of such incestuous ones as can scarcely occur at all) must be annulled, nor must such marriages be inquired into.

³⁴⁹ Gregory Afonski, *A History of the Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1794-1917* (Kodiak, Alaska: St. Herman Theological Seminary, 1977), pp. 45-46.

Statistics of Population of Alaska, 1890.³⁵⁰

Districts	The territory	Southeastern	Kadiak	Unalaska	Nushagak	Kuskokwim	Yukon	Arctic
Number Of Settlements	309	43	40	22	41	80	58	25
Total	32,053	8,038	6,112	2,361	2,726	5,681	3,912	3,222
Male	19, 428	4,842	4,398	1,434	1,712	2,854	2,099	1,909
Female	12,804	3, 196	1,714	927	1,014	2,827	1,813	1,313
Native	15,381	3,645	2,294	1,154	1,205	3,341	2,082	1,600
Foreign	16,671	4,393	3,818	1,207	1,521	2,340	1,830	1,562
Race and Color								
White Total	4,208	1,738	1,105	520	318	24	202	391
Male	3,863	1,380	1,056	495	310	19	193	391
Female	445	349	40	25	8	5		
Mixed Total	1,823	133	783	734	28	17	127	
Male	801	67	407	343	10	5	59	
Female	932	66	377	391	18	12	68	
Indian Total	23,531	5,834	2,782	967	1,996	5,640	3,583	2,729
Male	12,105	3,054	1,494	456	1,008	2,830	1,817	1,416
Female	11,426	2,780	1,288	511	988	2,810	1,736	1,313
Mongolian Total	2,288	329	1,433	137	384			
Male	2,288	329	1,433	137	384			
Female								
All others Total	112	4	8	3				7
Male	111	3	8	3				97
Female	1	1						

³⁵⁰ *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1893), p. 3.

Christian Denominations in Alaska, Summary, 1890.³⁵¹

Denomination	Communicants				Value of Church Property
	Total	White	Creole	Native	
Total	12,167	438	1,924	9,805	\$328,219
Russian Orthodox	10,325	20	1,891	8,414	\$203,644
Protestant	1,334	71	3	1,260	\$16,150
Roman Catholic	498	337	30	131	\$8,425

Roman Catholic Church, Alaska, 1890.³⁵²

Names of churches	Location	Communicants				Value of Property	By whom funded
		Total	White	Creole	Native		
Total		498	337	30	131	\$8,425	
I. St Peter Claver mission	Nulato	80		20	60	1,200	Church funds and subscr.
II. Holy Cross mission	Kozerevsky	59	9	10	40	3,000	Do
III. Immaculate Conception	Tununuk	34	3		31	1,000	Do
IV. Nativity of Blessed Virgin	Juneau	325	325			3,225	Do

³⁵¹ Ibid, p. 184.

³⁵² Ibid, p. 180.

Protestant Churches in Alaska, 1890.³⁵³

Names of Churches	Location	Communicants				Values of Church Property	By whom supported
		Total	White	Creole	Native		
Total		1,334	71	3	1,260	\$16,150	
Presbyterian		481	46		435	8,350	
I. First Presbyterian	Sitka	12	12			1,000	Presbyterian Board, home missions
II. First Presbyterian Thlingit	Sitka	254	14		240	4,000	Do
III. Presbyterian church	Wrangell	53	7		46	2,000	Do
IV. Haida Presbyterian	Howkan	118	8		110		Do
V. Thlingit Presbyterian Mission	Juneau	44			39	1,359	Do
Protestant Episcopal I. Christ church	Anvik					1,200	Board of missions of Protestant Episcopal church in United States of America
II.	Nuklukayet						No report
Swedish Free Mission		35			29	2,600	Swedish Free Mission society, American Branch
I. Mission church	Yakutat	20			17	1,200	
II. Mission Church	Unalaklik	14			12	1,400	
Moravian		47	15		29	4,000	Moravian Society for Propagating the Gospel among the heathen
I. Moravian mission	Carmel	18				2,500	
II. Moravian mission	Bethel	29			21	1,500	
Undenominational I. Christian church	Metlakahtla	766			763		By members

³⁵³ Ibid, p. 186.

Russian Population Changes, Russian America, 1799-1867.³⁵⁴

Period	Average number of people	Maximum during this period	
		Date	Number of people
1799	–	1799	225
1805-1820	400	November 1818	400
1821-1827	549	1827	734
1830-1846	669	1839	823
1846-1851	517	1846	560
1852-1863	618	1858	754
1867	–	1867	812
1799-1867	500		

³⁵⁴ S. G. Fedorova, *Russkoe Naselenie Aliaski I Kalifornii. Konets XVII v.-1867 g.* (Moskva: Nauka, 1971), p. 140.

Population in Russian American Colonies by 1830.³⁵⁵

	Russians		Creoles		Aleuts		Total		Both Sexes
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
At Novoarhangel'sk	271	18	128	106	52	47	451	171	622
At Ka'diak Proper	104	8	177	187	37	17	3,520	3,506	7,026
On Ka'diak Island in settlements					1,230	1,271			
On mainland					1,972	2,023			
In Unalashka district	23	7	51	52	569	701	643	760	1,403
In Pribylov Islands District	8		17	23	98	92	123	116	239
Fort Ross	35	2	21	32	61	51	117	85	202
In Atkha district	43	1	55	65	298	332	396	398	794
In Kuril district			1		59	9	71	9	80
Total	495	36	450	466	4,376	4,543	5,321	5,045	10,366

³⁵⁵ K. T. Khlebnikov, *Notes On Russian America*, vol. 1. (Kingston, Ont.: Limestone Press, 1994), p. 71.

Russian Census of 1860 (Civilized People of Russian Colonies).

[Taken from Report of Committee on Organization of Russian American Colonies, volume 2).³⁵⁶

DISTRICTS						
	Sitka	Kadiak	Unalaska	Atka	St. Michael	Aggr. Total 9845 Male 5127 Female 4718
Russians						
Total	452	67	4	4	30	557
Male	389	66	4	4	30	493
Female	63	1				64
Creoles						
Total	505	872	255	197	58	1886
Male	249	431	125	87	29	921
Female	256	440	130	110	29	965
Aleuts						
Total	64	2148	511	763		4486
Male	31	1081	752	404		2268
Female	33	1067	759	359		2218
Kenaitz						
Total		931				931
Male		440				440
Female		491				491
Kuskokwim and Aglemuit						
Total		1340			58	1398
Male		670			29	699
Female		670			29	699
Chugatz and Copper River						
Total		587				587
Male		306				306
Female		281				281

³⁵⁶ *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1893), p. x.

Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, 1890 Census.³⁵⁷

Names of Churches	Location	Communicants				Value of church property	By whom supported
		total	white	Creole	native		
Total		10335	30	1891	8414	\$284444	
Est. value of 27 chapels						19200	
Est. value of church property						303644	
I. St. Michael's Cathedral parish	Sitka	1226	10	213	1003	200000	Russian government
Subordinates: Chapel	Kilisnoo					2000	Partly by Russian government
II. St. Nicholas mission (parish)	Kenai	1115		147	968	5000	Russian government
Subordinates: Alexandrovsky Chapel	English Bay Seldovia						Members Do
III. Church of Resurrection (parish)	Kadiak	2390	9	637	1744	12000	Russian government
Subordinates: Chapel							Members
Do	Aforgnak						Do
Do	Akhiok						Do
Do	Ayaktalik						Do
Do	Cape Douglas						Do
Do	Kaguyak						Do
Do	Killuda						Do
Do	Katmai						Do
Do	Old harbor						Do
Do	Orlova						Do
Do	Uzinkee						Do
Do	Karluk						Do
Do	Lesnoi						Do
Do	Nuchek						Do
Konstantinovsky							Do
IV. Church of the Ascension (parish)	Unalaska	1419		608	811	10000	Russian government
Subordinates: Resurrection	Belkovsky					14325	Members
Bosbematic	Unga					2500	Do
Ascension	Voznesensky					1500	Do
Kazansky	Korovinky					700	Do
Protassof	Morzhovoi					800	Do
Chapel	Atka						Do
Do	Attu						Do
Do	Borka						Do

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 185.

Do Do Do Do	Chernovsky Makushin Sannak Umnak						Do Do Do Do
V. St Peter and St Paul (parish)	St. Paul Island	219		111	108	2000	Do
VI. St. George (parish)	St. George Island	85		36	49	5000	Do
VII. Nushagak mission (parish) Subordinates: Chapel Do Do Do	Nushagak Yekuk Pakwik Ighiak Ugashik	708		28	680	5000	Russian government Members Do Do Do
VIII. Pokrovskaiia mission (parish) Subordinates: Chapel Do	Ikogomut Kolmakovsky St. Michael	173	11	111	3051	1619 1500 2500	Russian government Private subscript.

Appendix B

Presbyterian Missions in Alaska. ³⁵⁸

YEARS	Missionaries or Ministers	Teachers	Doctors and Nurses	Total
1877-1878	1			1
1878-1879	2			2
1879-1880	2			2
1880-1881	2			2
1881-1882	3			3
1882-1883	3			3
1883-1884	3			3
1884-1885	4			4
1885-1886	2			2
1886-1887	4			4
1887-1888	4			4
1888-1889	7			7
1889-1890	6	25	2	33
1890-1891	8	29	2	39
1891-1892	9	32	2	43
1892-1893	8	37	2	47
1893-1894	8	32	2	42
1894-1895	8	37	2	47
1895-1896	7	32	2	41
1896-1897	9	25	2	36
1897-1898	9	32	2	43
1898-1899	12	28	2	42
1899-1900	15	34	2	51
1900-1901	12	28	2	43
1901-1902	16	40	2	58
1902-1903	20	39	2	61
1903-1904	19	40	2	61
1904-1905	16	39	2	57
1905-1906	19	36	2	57
1906-1907	16	32	2	50
1907-1908	18	30	2	50
1908-1909	20	35	2	57
1909-1910	18	35	2	55
1910-1911	20	28	2	50
1911-1912	20	37	2	59
1912-1913	28	17	2	47
1913-1914	26	19	2	47
1914-1915	24	18	2	44
1915-1916	24	18	3	45

³⁵⁸ Presbyterian Archives, Philadelphia, RG 301.3 – 7 – 4, List of Missionaries (by Mission and Date), Mission Statistics (by year).

List of Presbyterian Missionaries in Alaska, by Location.

Sitka, 1st (native)

1885 – Sheldon Jackson
 1886-1898 – Alonzo E. Austin
 1899-1900 – Melzar D. McClelland
 1901 – no name listed in G.A. Minutes
 1902-1907 – Wm.S. Bannerman
 1909-1913– Eugene E. Bromley
 1914-1915– Robert J. Diven
 1916-1923 – Robert A. Buchanan
 1925-1927 – Wallace S. Marple

Sitka (white)

1891 – Alonzo E. Austin
 1892 – John G. Brady
 1893-1898 – Alonzo E. Austin
 1899-1900 – Melzar D. McClelland
 1901 – no listing
 1902-1907 – Wm.S. Bannerman
 1909-1913 – Eugene E. Bromley
 1914-1915 – Robert J. Diven
 1916-1923 – Robert A. Buchanan
 1925-1927 – Wallace S. Marple
 1929-1930 – J.L. Webster
 1933 – Dissolved

Haines (Formerly Chilcat)

1883-1884 – Eugene S. Willard
 1885-1893 – no name in G.A. Minutes
 1894-1900 – Wm. W. Warne
 1901 – Wm.S. Bannerman
 1903-1904 – Norman B. Harrison
 1906-1904 – Allen F. McLean
 1915 -1918 – Emil Winterberger
 1920-1923 – Claude G. Denton
 1924-1933 – E.E. Bromley

Juneau, Native (now called Juneau Memorial, since 1939)

1888-1893 – Eugene S. Willard
 1894-1913 – Livingston F. Jones
 1914 – no name
 1915-1924 – David Wagonner

Juneau, Northern Light

1891 – Samuel H. King
 1892 – no name
 1893 – Samuel H. King
 1897-1899 – James H. Condit
 1900 – Wm. S. Bannerman
 1901-1904 – James H. Condit
 1907 – Alexander Pringle
 1908-1909 – David Holford
 1911-1916 – John B. Stevens
 1917-1925 – George G. Bruce
 1926-1928 – O.A. Stillman

Hoonah, Thlinget

1890-1893 – John McFarland
 1894-1896 – no name
 1897-1898 – Alvin C. Austin
 1899-1904 – Wm M. Carle
 1907-1908 – W. J. Caldwell
 1909 – Andrew J. Whipkey
 1911-1916 – George E. Good
 1917-1918 – George J. Beck
 1919 – Carl S. Gladfelter
 1920-1930 – George J. Beck

Wrangell, 1st

1879-1888 – S. Hall Young
 1899-1891 – Allan MacKay
 1892 – no name
 1893 – Livingstone F. Jones
 1894-1899 – Clarendon Thwing
 1900-1903 – Harry P. Corser
 1908-1919 – James S. Clark
 1922 -1930 – Robert J. Diven

Jackson (Howkan) (Hydah)

1887-1897 – J. Loomis Gould
 1898 – Melzar D. McClelland
 1899-1900 – no name
 1901 – David S. Montgomery
 1902-1903 – Donnell R. Montgomery

Killismoo

1894-1896 – Wm. W. Warne

Metlakahtla

1921-1932 – Edward Marsden
1933-1948 – Alfred D. Swogger
1949 – no name
1950-1951 – James H. Mulholland
1952 – H.A. Iverson

Barrow

1890-1896 – Stevenson, M. Leandor
1893-1895 – Beaupre, T.E.
1897-1904, 1909-1913 – Marsh, Dr. H. R.
1899-1909 – Spriggs, Rev. Samuel R.
1899-1909 – Spriggs, Mrs. Samuel A
1902-1905 – Koonooya, Peter (native)
1913-1915 – Cram, Delbert W.
1915-1920 – Spence, Dr. Frank H.

St. Lawrence Island

1894-1898 – Gambell, V.C.
1894-1898 – Gambell, Mrs. V.C.
1898-1901 – Doty, Rev. W.T.
1899-1901 – Lerrigo, Dr. P.H.
1901-1911 – Campbell, Dr. Edgar O.
1901-1911 – Campbell, Mrs. Edgar O.
1911– Miss Anderson
1911 – Miss Ingwaldson
1912-1913 – Dr. J.W. Reed
1912-1913 – Mrs Reed, J.W.

Appendix C

Moravians in Alaska

Statistics of the Alaska Moravian Mission.³⁵⁹

Year	Station	Communicants		Total
		Total	Number Served	
1892	Bethel	26	52	
	Carmel	17	32	
1896	Akiak	47	85	614
	Akiachak	38	93	
	Ogavik	33	72	
	Bethel	113	25	
	Carmel	60	210	
1900	Bethel	97	262	
	Ogavik	32	79	
	Carmel	100	459	
1905	Bethel District	136	497	771
	Ogavik District	63	110	
	Quinhanak District	56	164	

³⁵⁹ James W. Henkelman, Kurt H. Vitt, *The History of the Alaska Moravian Church 1885-1985 Harmonius to Dwell* (Bethel, Alaska: The Moravian Seminary and Archives, 1985), p. 409.

Moravian Missionaries in Alaska.³⁶⁰

Years	Missionaries
1886-1898	Kilbuck, Mrs. J.H. (Edith Romig)
1885-1898	Kilbuck, The Rev. John
1885	Torgesen, Hans
1885-1887	Wienland, Mrs. W. H. (Caroline Yost)
1885-1887	Weinland, The Rev. William
1887-1904	Huber, Mary
1887-1894	Wolff, Mrs. F. E. (Mary Schrader)
1887-1894	Wolff, The Rev. Frank
1888-1898	Weber, Mrs. E. L. (Caroline Detterer)
1888-1898	Weber, the Rev. Ernest
1889-1911	Schoechert, The Rev. John
1891-1898	Mack, Mary
1893-1908	Helmich, Mrs B. K. (Anna Lichty)
1893-1908	Helmich, The Rev. Benjamin
1893-1904	King, R.N. Philippine
1893-1911	Schoechert, Mrs. J.H. (Lidia Lebus)
1896-1904	Rock, The Rev. Samuel
1896-1905	Romig, Mrs. J.H. (Ella Mae Ervin)
1896-1905	Romig, M.D., The Rev. Joseph
1898-1904	Rock, Mrs. S. H. (Emma Huber)
1898-1906	Weinlick, The Rev. Joseph
1898-1906	Weinlick, Mrs J. (Rosa Stolz)
1901-1910	Stecker, the Rev. G. Adolph
1901-1910	Stecker, Mrs. G.A (Franziska Pitschmann)
1901-1908	Zucher, Mrs. E. P. (Elizabeth Arnstadt)
1901-1908	Zucker, The Rev. Ernst
1902-1914	Hinz, Mrs. J.L. (Maria J. W. Henzel)
1902-1914	Hinz D.D., The Rev. John
1906-1916	Rock, Mrs. S. H. (Emma Huber)
1906-1916	Rock, The Rev. Samuel

³⁶⁰ James W. Henkelman, Kurt H. Vitt, *The History of the Alaska Moravian Church 1885-1985 Harmonius to Dwell* (Bethel, Alaska: The Moravian Seminary and Archives, 1985), pp. 412-413.

Orthodox and Moravian Clergy Serving in Southwestern Alaska.³⁶¹

Orthodox Clergy in the Kuskokwim Parish 1892-1926.

John Orlov (Native/Creole) 1892-1896
 Iakov Korchinsky 1896-1897
 Nikifor Amkan (Native/Creole) 1897-1901 reader
 Hieromonk Amphilokhy 1901-1909
 Mathew Bereskin (Native/Creole) 1908-1926

Orthodox Clergy in the Kvikhpak Parish 1845-1966.

Yakov Netsvetov (Native/Creole) 1845-1862
 Hieromonk Illarion 1862-1868
 Zachary Bel'kov (Native/Creole) 1876-1896
 Iakov Kochinsky 1897-1901
 Konstantin Pavlov 1901-1906
 Ikifor Amkan (Native/Creole) 1906-1917
 Vasily Changsak 1923-1966

Orthodox Clergy at the Nushagak Parish 1841-1916.

Illia Petelin (Native/Creole) 1841-1845
 Heiromonk Feophil 1853-1868
 Vasily Shishkin 1868-1892
 V. Modestov 1893-1897
 Vasily Kashevarov (Native/Creole) 1896-1900
 Nicholas Kashevarov (Native/Creole) 1900-1906
 Vasily Kashevarov (Native/Creole) 1906-1916

³⁶¹ Compilation from Barbara Smith, *Russian Orthodoxy In Alaska*, p. 13, and Michael Oleksa, *Alaska Missionary Spirituality*, pp. 377-386. Compiled by McCollough, Martha L.

Moravian Missionaries Serving in Alaska between 1885 and 1920.³⁶²

John and Edith Kilbuck 1885-1898, 1916-1922 – Bethel, Akiak
 William and Caroline Weinland 1885-1887 – Bethel, Carmel
 Mary Huber 1887-1904 – Bethel, Carmel
 Ernest Carolina Weber 1888-1898 – Ogavik
 John/Lydia Schoechert 1888-1898 – Carmel, Quinhagak
 Mark Mack 1891-1898 – Bethel
 Benjamin/Anna Helmich 1893-1908 – Ogavik
 Samuel/Emma Rock 1896-1916 – Bethel, Karmel, Ogavik
 Joseph/Ella Romig 1896-1905 – Carmel, Bethel, Quinhagak
 Joseph/Rosa Weinlick 1898-1906 – Bethel, Quinhagak
 Adolph/F. Stecker 1901-1927 – Bethel, Quinhagak
 Ernest/Elizabeth Zucker 1901-1908 – Bethel, Quinhagak
 John/Marie Hinz 1894-1924 – Bethel, Kwigillingok
 Herman/E. Holmeier 1907-1917 – Bethel
 Frederic/ Anna Schwalbe 1907-1948 – Bethel, Quinhagak
 Arthur/Elsie Butzin 1910-1931 – Bethel
 Ferdinand/Marie Drebert 1912-1954 – Kwigillingok, Bethel
 Arthur/Esther Scheel 1917-1920 – Bethel, Quinhagak

³⁶² James W. Henkelman, Kurt H. Vitt, *The History of the Alaska Moravian Church 1885-1985 Harmonius to Dwell* (Bethel, Alaska: The Moravian Seminary and Archives, 1985), p. 412.

**For *The Moravian*. Report of the Missionary Exploratory Expedition to Alaska.
by William H. Weinland. Religious Beliefs of the Esquimaux.³⁶³**

In ascertaining information on this point we labored under manifold disadvantages. Not being acquainted with the Esquimaux language, we were unable to converse with the natives and thus find out directly for ourselves what their religious beliefs are. All the information which we could receive came through – Mr. Lind, who in turn questioned Fetka, his blind Russian interpreter, and he again questioned other natives. Besides this, Mr. Lind has learned what little Russian he knows merely in the trading business, and we frequently asked questions which he found great difficulty in translating into Russian, because of his very limited vocabulary of Russian words. Hence, the result of our investigations was very unsatisfactory; but I will give it for what it is worth, hoping at some time or other to be able to communicate more satisfactory facts from personal investigation and study.

It is said that there exists no race or people upon the face of the earth so degraded as to have no idea of some Supreme Being. This holds good of the Esquimaux of Alaska also. But at the same time, they have no comprehension of a Supreme Being who is good or kindly disposed towards mankind. According to their ideas, the devil is the all-powerful agency in the world, and he rules for evil. But the devil is not the creator of the world, nor is he its governor. The world and all things came into existence by themselves without outward agency, and thus they continue because nature ordains that they should. The devil merely rules the affairs of men. If sickness overtook a man and he dies in consequence, that is the course of nature and can not be attributed to any other agency. But if a man dies suddenly, that is the work of the devil. Sickness itself is often a visitation from the devil, who delegates his power to a man possessed of supernatural power, called a Shaman. These Shamans often play into each other's hands, the one causing the sickness, and another demanding a large number of valuable goods to enchant the evil spirit and cure the sick.

But, while they have no idea of future reward or punishment, yet they do not believe in total annihilation after death. They believe that death consists in the separation of the spirit from the body, and that the spirit thereafter lives in nearly the same manner as the person did during lifetime. They recognize the voice of conscience, and in a measure they are guided by its dictates; for now that the consequences of stealing or committing murder are a feeling of unrest, of conscious guilt.

As an illustration of this last point, I call to an incident which happened on our home-journey. One of our guides, Nicholion, borrowed my knife, and used it in whittling. I was engaged in the tent writing my notes, when he came, held up the knife, and showed me how he had broken the blade. I endeavored to tell him that it made no difference, since I had another, but he could not understand my English, and the Esquimaux words at my command were not yet to convey the ideas which I wished to. He handed me the knife, refusing to have more to do with it, and added, "ingaashitook," I am bad. Some time later he came out from the tent, and found the poor man against the bank, his face wearing a

³⁶³ *Moravian*, October 24, 1884.

most gone expression, and he went one step up, "Chwinga ashiba," I am very bad. Does this little incident show clearly that, as come speaks so forcibly to their hearts, they are tale of repentance?

It would seem, however, that this system of our beliefs of which we learned from theirs, and by them ascribed to the Esquimaux, it is an admixture of truth and mistakes, is for the present cannot be corrected. Taking thing into consideration, it seems probable before the Russians came into this part of Alaska, Shamanism, of which a few traces are blind, ruled the minds of the Esquimaux in its vigor, but that the Russians taught them norms and ceremonies of a better faith, but and ceremonies merely. They neglected to let into their hearts the Divine truths, and now, since the Russians have withdrawn from this section of the country and these conies are no longer observed, their minds are in with regard to religious beliefs. So much however, be asserted with all positiveness does not exist amongst them in any form ever. They seem to be groping for the light comprehend not, and we believe that they welcome the glad tidings of life and salvation of Christ Jesus.

The trader at Kolmakovsky is Mr. Lind, a Finlander, and as he was the only person able to speak the English language, we had the most dealings with him and consequently learned much of his character and disposition. Sitting in the ware-house on Sunday evening, June 10, a number of natives assembled at the door and sent a spokesman to request Bro. Hartmann to keep a religious service. Having an Esquimaux New Testament used in Labrador, Bro. Hartmann tried to read to them, but found that they could not understand it, and fearing lest, since they could not understand English, he would appear to them as the performer of mere ceremonies, he refused their request, telling then through Mr. Lind and Fetka, that they must wait until the Missionaries would come. This led the conversation to the subject of our proposed Mission, and Mr. Lind begged us to establish our Mission at Kolmakovsky, claiming that it was centrally located, and that we could work both up and down the river. He also said that he had two unbaptised children, whom he requested Br. Hartmann to baptize.

The third request which he made was rather peculiar. A friend of his, having spent some time at Kolmakovsky, took sick and died there. With tears streaming down his cheeks and husky voice, he related, "There was no one there but me, so I buried him, and read some sort of a burial service over his grave. But what will it help if such a sinner as I read a burial service! Won't you please be kind enough to come to Kolmakovsky and read your Moravian burial service over his grave." He was in solemn earnest, although his friend had been dead and buried for several years already. Promising him to come to Kolmakovsky if time and circumstances would permit, and make an examination of the situation, we closed the day as usual, with reading of the Scriptures and prayer, to which Mr. Lind remained and knelt with us.

Be it what it may, there was something on that man's mind of which he never spoke, but it could be plainly seen that there was a heavy burden resting upon his conscience, which gave him no rest by day, and at night he moaned piteously. A possible explanation is found in the fact that he, like most of the traders, is living with an Esquimaux woman to whom he is not married. We expected several times that he would request Bro. Hartmann to marry them. But these traders say that they cannot regard Alaska as their permanent place of residence, and they hesitate to bind them-selves for

life to these women, for they would be ashamed to take them to the States and recognize them as their wives. When Bro. Hartmann offered to baptize the children, Mr. Lind hesitated, saying that he preferred to wait until Missionaries would arrive, who would likewise educate the children in the Christian faith.

Appendix D

Documents Relevant to the Mission of William Duncan, New Metlakatla.

Chronology of daily life/time management gives us a good understanding of the society itself.

A sample Routine for Adult Evening School, Metlakatla, Alaska, 1916.³⁶⁴

From 6:30 pm to 7:15 pm

1st class: Reading Monday 3rd Irish Book, T, Th, FR – Bible

2nd class: Writing, Copy on slates from blackboard words from vocabulary to be committed to memory

3rd class: Reading Alphabet and sheet series

From 7:15pm to 8:00 pm

1st class: Writing – words and sentences dictated from vocabulary for home lesson or arithmetic on slates

2nd class: Reading – First book of Lessons or Sheet Series

3rd class: Writing – Alphabet from blackboard

From 8:00 to 8:30 pm

Mondays: secular Singing

Tuesdays: Geography, Astronomy, Health, or Morals

Thursdays: Bible and Gospel, History

Fridays: Sacred Singing, Bible & Prayer

From 7:00 to 8:15 pm

Wednesdays: Lecture on Pilgrim's Progress, illustrated

Saturday: Lecture on the Creed & Commandments & catechism

³⁶⁴ William Duncan Papers, document 14938, reel 16, copied September 17, 1916, Metlakatla.

Compare this to the adult school routine from 1865. Few changes took place in almost 50 years.³⁶⁵

School Routine for Adults, 1865.

7:00 to 7:30 pm

1st class: reading Sheet Series and a Text from Scripture or a Tsimshean from the Blackboard

2nd class: writing words from Blackboard, Sheet series

3rd class: writing Letters and Syllable from Black board

7:30 to 8:00 pm

1st class: composition

2nd class: reading

3rd class: reading Tsimshean from Blackboard

NB Write a short lesson in Tsimshean on Black Board

Let 2 & 3 Classes read it together for a short time when the 2nd writing

8:00 to 8-30pm

Monday: march lesson

Tuesday: singing

Wednesday: arithmetics

Thursday: singing

Friday: Geography, Physical Science and Astronomy

8:30 to 9:00pm Religious lesson – Singing and Prayer

M-T-W: Bible and Gospel

Th.: Pilgrims Progress

Fr.: Catechesis Creed Commandments and Lords Prayer

³⁶⁵ William Duncan Papers, Document 18647, reel 15.

School Routine for Children, 1916.³⁶⁶

9:00-9:30 am: All School Singing Prayer & Scripture Lessons

9:30-10:00 am

1st class: reading 3rd book or Colbourn's Arithmetics

2nd class: reading prints 2nd book or Colbourn's Arithmetics

3rd class: writing from blackboard

4th class: reading chart – class room

10:00-10:30 am

1st class: Composition and Readings

2nd class: hearing reading – individually

3rd class: reading first book

4th class: writing letters & words

10:30-11:00 am

1st & 2nd classes: language lessons from blackboard

3rd and 4th classes: spelling words from reading lesson

11-11:30 am

1st class: private arithmetic

2nd class: blackboards arithmetic

3rd class: Colbourn's Arithmetic

4th class: writing figures from blackboard

11:30am –noon

1st class: blackboard arithmetic

2nd class: private arithmetic

3rd class: sums from blackboard

4th class: ball frame

Afternoon from 1:00 to 2:30 pm: Reading as in Morning

2:30 to 4: pm: All School

History – M, W

Geography – T, Th

Morality, Fables, Health, Singing – Friday

³⁶⁶ William Duncan Papers, Document 14941-6, reel 15, Copied September 17, 1916.

William Duncan's daily time table.³⁶⁷

AM

6:00 to 8:00: general work, building, trade, cash accounts

8:00 to 10:00: household work, general news

10:00 to 12:00: children's school

PM

12:00 to 2:00: law officers, writing letters, registers

2:00 to 4:00: children's school;

4:00 to 6:00: seeking sick, to speak to any par... persons

6:00 to 9:00: adult evening school family prayer

9:00 to 11:00: translation and writing, Register, study subject for lecture

Schedule for the next day:

AM

6:00 to 8:00: outdoor work, trade and cash accounts

8:00 to 8:30: family prayer

8:30 to 9:00: breakfast and reading

9:00 to 10:00: household duties and general work

PM

12:00 to 1:00: translating and language

1:00 to 2:00: private

2:00 to 4:00: school for children

4:00 to 6:00: seeing: sick, mourners, offenders, debtors, backsliders, doubters, those in domestic quarrel and dispute, those who do not attend church, those who have not paid tax

6:00 to 7:00: dinner and reading

7:00 to 9:00: adult school and evening prayer

9:00 to 10:00: study and letter writing

10:00 to – journal and register

³⁶⁷ William Duncan Papers, Document 14648-9, reel 15.

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