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Missionary Schools and the Enlightenment of the Alaskan Natives: A Theological and Sociological Survey of Russian Orthodox and Protestant Missionary Efforts Among the Nations of the Aleutian Islands and Southeastern Alaska

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MISSIONARY SCHOOLS AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE
ALASKAN NATIVES:
A THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX
AND PROTESTANT MISSIONARY EFFORTS AMONG THE NATIVES OF THE
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)

BY
ERIK C. YOUNG

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ISLANDS AND SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

Presented by: ERIK C. YOUNG

Date: APRIL 16, 2007

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

(Daniel L. Brunner)

(George A. Gray)

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For Heather

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PAX

GLOSSARY

Aleuts: Indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands who are comprised of multiple tribal groups. Self-denomination: Unangax, Unangan, or Unanga.

Archbishop: Title granted to a senior bishop, usually one who is in charge of a large ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Archimandrite: A high-ranking celibate priest who is one rank lower than a bishop.

Creole: A person of mixed Native Alaskan and Russian ancestry.

Hierodeacon: A deacon who is also a monk.

Hieromonk: is a monk who has been ordained into the priesthood. Often known as “Father,” these monks are clergy who are able to administer the sacraments.

Igumen: The title for the head of a monastery similar to an Abbot.

Shaman: A broad title for Native Alaskan spiritual leaders. Actual roles vary from witch doctor to wise tribal elder.

Toion: A Native Alaskan tribal leader.

ABSTRACT

The goal of this research thesis is to explore the activities of the Protestant and Russian Orthodox missions to Alaska and the ways in which they engaged the Native American peoples. It examines the geographic, religious, social, and economic distinctives of the respective missionary ideologies. Although the Orthodox and Protestant missions labored at different time periods and under different conditions, their work overlapped and their efforts were informed by the anthropological and theological traditions from which they derived. As a vehicle for equitable comparison, this thesis briefly unpacks the lives of the Presbyterian minister Edward Marsden, a Tsimshian Indian educated in American Universities, and Father Iakov Netsvetov, a Russian/Aleut Creole sent to study at a Russian Orthodox Seminary. These exemplars of Christian ministry represent the best that could be accomplished by both the Protestants and the Orthodox. Protestant successes in native education notwithstanding, their success in affirming the native cultures left much to be desired. This thesis concludes that the Russian Orthodox missionaries operated out of a more affirming anthropology than that of the Protestant missionaries. Eastern Orthodoxy affirms the Image of God in all peoples.

INTRODUCTION

If experience is the best teacher, then history is its classroom. The experience of the Orthodox and Protestant missionaries in Alaska is recorded, albeit sterilized of the physical and emotional experience of those involved, for the enlightenment of missionaries, historians, and sociologists who seek to better understand the Native American experience and the effectiveness of missionary ideology. The point at which the religious, economic, and cultural streams of missionary work intersect is in the educational milieu. In the stories of missionary endeavor in Russian America and Early Alaskan Statehood one may find the Eastern and Western worldviews in direct contact without the complicating factors of armed conflict. The trajectory of missionary activity in Alaska is significant in understanding the Native American experience and, with particular interest in the educational climate, its successes and failures and the net result of the respective Orthodox and Protestant efforts to contextualize their messages.

The research of this topic presented some attendant shortcomings. The first problem is one of diachronicity. The events of both missions occurred in the same milieu but at different periods of time. The work of the Protestant missionaries builds on the work of the Orthodox missionaries. Thus, they are not operating under equivalent conditions. Secondly, there is not as much primary source material available regarding the Orthodox schools as there is for their Protestant counterparts. This lack of information is due in part to the fact that since the Protestant schools were an extension of the U.S.

Ministry of Education, there was much more information recorded regarding the activities of the native schools. Finally, my own unfamiliarity with the Russian language and, by extension, the Aleutian language and its dialects, limits some access to materials regarding the Orthodox mission schools. These limitations notwithstanding, there is still much insight to glean from examining the premises, methods and attitudes underlying the perceived needs for native education.

Research of this issue of missionary activity among indigenous people lends itself easily to the study of missiology and rightly so. Missionaries are wise to consider the assets and liabilities of their efforts to serve people in other cultures. The issues raised by the Orthodox and Protestant missionaries in Alaska are a rich source of fodder for discussions of missionary praxis. However, there are matters of broader sociological importance that may get overlooked by considering these events simply in a religious missionary context. What is at stake in the efforts to convert the Alaskan natives to Christianity is the perpetuation of the rich native cultural heritage developed over thousands of years. The Christian message is ostensibly a universal message of hope for humankind. Thus, Christian missionaries are perpetually challenged to hold their philosophies loosely and humbly before a culture that is unaware of the theological development of the Christian Church throughout its relatively brief history.

This research will shed light on the trajectory of missionary activity in Alaska from the Russian settlement in the mid-eighteenth century through the American purchase and re-settlement in the mid-nineteenth century with particular interest in the educational climate, its successes and failures, and the net result of the respective Orthodox and Protestant efforts.

THE SEEDS OF MISSION TO ALASKA

The Valaam Monastery and Orthodox Mission Ideology

In the ninth century C.E. two monks were sent from Constantinople to Moravia in what is now the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Western Hungary. Moravia was part of the Western, Latin Church and as such its liturgies reflected the linguistic standards of the ecclesiastic jurisdiction of Rome. The only acceptable liturgical languages were Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.¹ Cyril and Methodius, Eastern missionaries and brothers, set out to Moravia to give the Slavs a new liturgical language for use in their churches. They created what came to be known as the Cyrillic alphabet – Named for St. Cyril. Dimitri Oblensky writes, “By receiving the Scriptures and the liturgy in their own vernacular language, the Slavs knew that they had obtained access to a new spiritual world. Their language had now acquired a sacramental character; and the nations who spoke it were, in their turn, held to be raised to the status of a ‘peculiar’, consecrated people.”² Sts. Cyril and Methodius initiated a paradigmatic shift in Christian missions that sought to give every people-group access to the Scriptures and liturgy in their own language so that they may become part of “a privileged and chosen society within which every nation has its own peculiar gifts and every people its legitimate calling.”³ This pioneer spirit informed the missionary praxis of all of Orthodox Christianity and was the inheritance of the

¹ Dimitri Oblensky, “*The Cyrillo-Methodian Mission: The Scriptural Foundations*,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 30:2 (1986), 102.

² Ibid, 103.

³ Ibid, 110.

monks from the Valaam Monastery who were sent to the Aleutian Islands of Alaska to evangelize the native Alaskans. The spirit of the Cyrillo-Methodian missionary ideology informed the efforts of the Alaskan missionaries' creation of an alphabet and written text for the Aleutian tongue and the use of the various dialects in the liturgical exercises.

In examining the missionary exercises (particularly the educational activities) of the Orthodox in Alaska, it is important to understand the context from which the work derives. The Orthodox missionaries to Alaska were monks whose monastic life was formed in the crucible of ascetic practice within the walls of the Valaam Monastery. The monastery at Valaam is situated on an island in Lake Ladoga on the Finnish border with Russia and became a "great monastic citadel" under the leadership of Abbot Nazarius.⁴ In 1782, Fr. Nazarius was confirmed as Abbot of Valaam⁵ and ushered in a new life for the centuries-old monastery. Church services under Nazarius were strictly ordered and he re-established the monastic life that had identified Valaam centuries earlier.⁶ Igumen Nazarius was renowned for his wisdom, humility, and peaceful demeanor as evidenced by his words from a letter to a Russian nun: "As for myself, I feel that I am at fault before everyone and am indebted to all; and how can one become angry at anyone after that?"⁷

Father Nazarius' instruction to his monks conveys the priorities of the life of the Valaam monk. He writes, "Arise quickly, serve with love, labor without murmuring, wearing out your flesh." When not involved in a church service, a monk is expected to "preserve [himself] from harmful idle talk and laughter." They are to enter their cell and make offerings of prayer to God praying "a little for yourself, your parents, benefactors,

⁴ Nazarius of Valaam, *Little Russian Philokalia*, Fr. Seraphim Rose, Trans., [Platina, CA, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1983], 13.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 14.

⁷ Ibid, 22.

and for the whole world; make several prostrations or bows with prayer.”⁸ Only after their devotional prayer are they to spend time reading. Nazarius said, “Pay special heed to this: that you be never idle in your cell. For idleness is the first teacher of every evil...”⁹ For Abbot Nazarius, value is placed on work but not merely as a matter of good ethics but as a matter of holiness itself. If they were to be successful in their missionary endeavors, the monks selected for the mission to Alaska needed to be exemplars of this type of vigorous and disciplined life.

The Primary Members of the Mission

The original mission was borne on the shoulders of eight monks, both clergy and laity. Six were sent from Valaam and the other two were sent from the Konev Monastery. The mission was led by Archimandrite Ioasaf (Bolotov), an educated man and austere monk, who was the first to make any serious study of the Kadiak (Kodiak) Americans.¹⁰ The other missionaries were:

- Hieromonk Iuvenalii (Juvenal), a former artillery officer in the Russian military and the first American martyr of the Russian Orthodox Church.
- Hieromonk Afanasii, priest of the church on Kadiak, who returned to Russia in 1825.
- Hieromonk Nektarii left the mission for Irkutsk in 1806 to join the Kirensk Monastery.
- The monk Ioasaf of whom little is known other than that he died on Kadiak in 1823.
- The monk Herman who was the last remaining missionary of the original mission and the first American saint to be canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

⁸ Ibid, 39.

⁹ Ibid, 40.

¹⁰ Richard A. Pierce, ed. and Colin Bearne, trans., *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America 1794-1837; with materials concerning the life and works of the Monk German and ethnographic notes by Hieromonk Gedeon*, (Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1978), 26.

- Hieromonk Makarii, a monk from the Konev Monastery who became known as the baptizer and enlightener of the Aleuts.
- Hierodeacon Stefan, another monk from Konev.¹¹

The strict ascetic life of Valaam was apt preparation for the severe conditions the monks would experience in Alaska. The monk Herman, the most austere of the original missionaries, reported to Abbot Jonathan of Valaam¹² in December 1819 regarding the conditions on the Island of Kodiak:

The country is cold, though the winters are not so cold but they are changeable with rain and snow mixed. Amongst the garden vegetables there are only turnips, radishes, and potatoes and nothing else will ripen. Grain will not germinate...¹³

The ability of the monks to persist in the face of this adversarial environment is a testament to the devoted life they learned to live under the instruction of Igumen Nazarius of Valaam. Further, their adaptational acumen earned them the respect of the natives who, too, had learned to scratch out a life in this unforgiving environment.

Encountering the Natives

The Russian Orthodox depiction of the native Aleutians reveals their desire to see beyond the Aleutian religious proclivities in search of the divine imprint within all humankind. In his letter to Shelikhov, Archimandrite Ioasaf, the leader of the original mission, writes:

My only pleasure is that Americans are coming from everywhere to be baptized, but the Russians not only make no effort to encourage them in it, but use every

¹¹ *Russian Orthodox Religious Mission...*, 27.

¹² Igumen Jonathan took the place of Igumen Nazarius after his departure from Valaam to return to the Sarov Monastery where he lived out the remainder of his life.

¹³ Monk Herman to Igumen Jonathan of Valaam, 13 December 1819, In *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, Michael Oleksa ed., (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 42.

means to discourage them. The reason for this is that their depraved life becomes evident if compared to the good behavior of the Americans.¹⁴

In his report on the Aleutian Islands, Father Gedeon notes:

The Kadiak people live in peace and friendship with their neighbors and they help each other in times of need... In their dealings with other people they are courteous and are equally censorious of people who do not meet and accompany others.¹⁵

The Orthodox missionaries began their work with the premise that the Native Americans, in their created humanity, were essentially good, bearing in their respective societies the potentialities for Christian holiness. This opinion was rarely supported by the Russian hunters and traders and it was for this reason that the missionaries often felt themselves at odds with their own countrymen. It was in the light of Russian abuses that the Orthodox clergy and monks became advocates for the Native parishioners. Upon arriving to their appointments, the missionaries found the conditions in the various settlements far worse than Shelikov promised to the point that there were no chapels or supplies for celebrating the Holy Liturgy.¹⁶ But what was more disturbing to the monks was the brutal and exploitative manner in which the employees of the Company treated the natives. In Eastern Christianity the prevailing view of the human person is found upon the idea of “participating” in God.¹⁷ John Meyendorff, an Orthodox historian and theologian, points out, “Man has been created not as an autonomous, or self-sufficient,

¹⁴ Archimandrite Ioasaf to Shelikhov, Kadiak Island, 18 May 1795, In *A History of the Russian – American Company*, Vol.2, Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly, eds., Dimitri Krenov, trans. (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1979), 77.

¹⁵ Father Gedeon, “Manuscript of the Cathedral Hieromonk from the Aleksandr Nevskii Monastery, 1804,” in *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America, 1794-1837*, Richard A. Pierce ed.; trans. by Colin Bearne, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1978), 131.

¹⁶ *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, 6.

¹⁷ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1979), 138.

being; his very nature is truly itself only inasmuch as it exists 'in God' or 'in grace.'¹⁸ Meyendorff continues, "True humanity is realized only when [the person] lives 'in God' and possesses divine qualities."¹⁹ The Aleutian natives who were being exploited by the Company agents were not being allowed to be "in God" and therefore continued as unrealized humanity. At stake for the monks of Valaam were not just the souls of thousands of native Aleutians but their opportunity to encounter a completely realized humanity. Reaching the natives of Alaska with the message of Christianity did not simply save souls but brought the potentiality of humanity to completion. The strength of Orthodox Christianity as a vehicle for missionary work is that, anthropologically, any man or woman can be complete "in God" but this completeness is not necessarily bound to a cultural or sociological predilection. One does not necessarily need to become Russian to become a Christian.

Fr. Veniaminov provides a poignant example of the manner in which the Orthodox engaged the natives and their particular experience of the Christian faith. In a letter from Fr. Ioann Veniaminov, then a priest, to Archbishop Michael of Irkutsk he reports meeting a shaman on the island of Akun who began experiencing visions and divine direction after his conversion to Christianity. Veniaminov begins his letter by pointing out that he is "very far from believing various superstitions and still less inclined to invent false miracles."²⁰ He goes on to report his encounter in April of 1828: "Ivan Smirennikov, an old man about sixty years of age, is regarded by the local inhabitants

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 139.

²⁰ Rev. Priest John Veniaminov, "Letter from Rev. Priest John Veniaminov to Archbishop Michael of Irkutsk, 5 November 1829," collected in *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, ed. by Michael Oleksa, (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), 132.

and by many others as well, as a shaman, not an ordinary person, at least.”²¹ He then describes an incident when, in 1825, the wife of the local Toion had her leg caught in a fox trap and was badly injured. There were no means to help her and she was expected to die quickly from her injury. He writes:

Her kinsmen secretly asked [Smirennikov] to cure her. After thinking the matter over, he said that the patient will be well by morning. And indeed, the woman rose in the morning from her deathbed, and is even now entirely well, not suffering any pain.²²

Veniaminov relates another account:

In the winter of [1825], the inhabitants of Akun suffered a great lack of food, and some of them asked Smirennikov to pray for a whale to be washed ashore. After a short time the old man instructed the people to go to a certain place, where they indeed found a fresh whale carcass – Precisely in the spot designated.²³

A final account, which directly involved Veniaminov, was related:

Last fall I planned a visit to Akun, but because of the arrival of state ships from Russia, I had to postpone the trip. Yet, the Akun people sent an escort and all expected my arrival. Only Smirennikov boldly asserted that I would not come that fall, but should be expected next spring. And so it happened, contrary winds did not permit my departure, then the cold weather set in, and I was forced to delay my visit until spring.

Upon meeting Smirennikov, Veniaminov learned that soon after Smirennikov was baptized by Fr. Makarii, two spirits appeared to him that nobody else had seen. They told him they were sent by God “to instruct, teach, and preserve him.”²⁴ They continued to appear to him for thirty years almost daily and they instructed him in Christian teaching. They also granted his requests and informed him of Veniaminov’s arrival. Instead of discounting this phenomenon as necromancy or witchcraft, Veniaminov asked Smirennikov how he felt when the spirits appeared to him. He said that he never felt fear

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 133.

²⁴ Ibid.

in their presence and that when he asked the spirits to leave him, they refused and told him that they cannot leave him. This shaman knew details about the biblical stories of creation, the fall of humanity, Noah, the patriarchs, and the birth of Christ but had never received this teaching from anyone. After his encounter with Smirennikov, Veniaminov issued this decision to the shaman:

I see that the spirits which appear to thee are not demons and therefore instruct thee to listen to their teachings and instructions, as long as these do not contradict the teachings I deliver in the assembly; just tell those who ask your advice about the future and request your help to address themselves directly to God, as he is common Father to all. I do not forbid thee to cure the sick, but ask thee to tell those thou curest that thou doest so not by thy own powers, but by the power of God and to instruct them to pray diligently and thank the Sole God. I do not forbid thee to teach either, but only instruct thee to confine this teaching to the minors.²⁵

The Orthodox are keenly aware of the Image of God in all of creation and are willing to accept that God can reveal Himself when and where He desires. This sets Eastern Christianity apart from its Protestant counterpart who emphasizes God's revelation through the written word (scripture). As the Orthodox encountered the Native Americans, they were willing to accommodate the cultural peculiarities of the various native people and sanctify those trappings that did not reject the primacy and character of God.

Russian Colonialism and the Role of Orthodoxy

Russian Colonialism brought with it the Russian Orthodox Faith. The civil and religious institutions of Imperial Russia were no more harmonious in Alaska than they were in Russia. Mutual distrust persisted between the civil and religious authorities yet the tension held the two institutions accountable to one another. While civil and commercial interests were the primary reason for the Russian occupation of Alaska and

²⁵ Ibid, 134-135.

the exploitation of its resources, the religious mission ensured that the natives would have a role to play in this New World. The Orthodox missionaries risked much to advocate for the fair treatment of Alaska's Native American inhabitants.

The Russian-America Company

In 1733, on the charge of Empress Anna, Captain Bering made an exploratory expedition that, while plagued by misfortune, discovered a purportedly inexhaustible source of valuable furs.²⁶ In his expedition, Bering discovered the North American coast near the western terminus of the Aleutian Islands and opened Russian access to the riches of North America. The years 1743 through 1781 saw considerable inroads of the fur trade to the Aleutian Islands. Much information was collected regarding the geography and natural resources of the islands as well as census information regarding the native inhabitants of the islands.²⁷ Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov, a merchant who made a name for himself in the North American fur trade, began to notice a decline in the profitability of this business. He identified several factors "including the visible decrease of furs, the hostility of the natives toward the uninvited newcomers, and the violent conduct of the traders themselves."²⁸ Shelikhov addressed these issues in a letter of instruction to the chief manager Samoilov dated May 4, 1786:

When the [Kodiak, Aliaksa, Kenai, and Chugach] people are subjugated, every one of them must be told that people who are loyal and reliable will prosper under the rule of our Empress, but that all rebels will be totally exterminated by Her strong hand. ... They must be told to stop wars and robbery among themselves, murderous plotting against the Russians, and all their inconstancy and disobedience.²⁹

²⁶ P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, translated by Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 9.

²⁷ Ibid, 9-11.

²⁸ Ibid, 12.

²⁹ Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov, "Instructions to the chief manager Konstantin Alekseevich Samoilov, to be in full charge of the three company ships and all the Russians during my journey to Okhotsk on company business. May 4, 1786, Kodiak Island, Harbor of the Three Saints, St. Simeon the

In regard to the poor behavior of the Russians, Shelikhov prescribes the following:

In cases of lechery with the native women and dissolute behavior of any kind, the guilty should be punished according to the gravity of the offense... Native hostages and workers, men and women, should be well cared for and should have good food. The women must be clothed and shod. They should not be insulted by our people by actions or words... If you find somebody incorrigible, amputate him as you would an infected part of the body.³⁰

Shelikhov noted the need to reform the Russian conduct of affairs and propose a systematic program for developing the industry. What he proposed is the establishment of a special company for a ten-year period that would “make explorations and arrange voluntary trade with the natives.”³¹

In a report sent in late 1787 to Catherine II, Shelikhov requested special privileges for his company in North America.³² His requests were for an assurance of limited interference from local authorities, civil and military personnel to establish and maintain discipline and create infrastructure, the authority to make Russian citizens of any natives who so desired, and for “two priests and a deacon to educate people who have come into the Greek-Catholic faith, or who may desire to embrace it in the future.”³³

Native Advocacy

Empress Catherine II was a progressive thinker who inherited an affinity for things European from her predecessor, Peter I (“The Great”). Despite her well-

God-Receiver, and the Prophetess Anna.”, in P.A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian American Company*, Vol. 2, (Kingston, Ontario; The Limestone Press, 1979), 7.

³⁰ Ibid, 9.

³¹ *A History of the Russian-American Company*, 12.

³² Grigorii I. Shelikhov, “A Report from Grigorii I. Shelikhov, Requesting Special Privileges for His Company in North America,” *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean: A Documentary Record 1700-1797*, Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownheart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, eds., (The Oregon Historical Society Press, 1988), 344.

³³ Ibid, 345.

documented affinity for German Pietism,³⁴ Catherine was ever faithful to the Russian Orthodox Church. Shelikhov's request for Orthodox missionaries was, therefore, well received and she responded by providing him with the original eight monks from the Valaam and Konev monasteries. Shelikhov's reason for requesting the monks was ostensibly to convert the natives of Alaska to Orthodoxy. It may be argued, however, that Shelikhov was not entirely forthcoming with his motives for establishing an Orthodox mission to Alaska. As noted above, there was unrest between the Alaskan natives and the Russian traders and Shelikhov anticipated that through their good will and kindness, the monks would function as a bridge between the Aleuts and the Russians, making conditions amenable to improved trade. Their role as advocates was legitimized by the fact that "the clergy had been charged by the Imperial Government to keep watch on the Russian America Company."³⁵ The life of Father Herman is an example of how this charge to advocate for the natives was realized.

Although Father Herman was generally revered, his advocacy for the civil treatment of the natives made him unpopular with various Company managers. In a letter from Aleksandr Baranov, a Company manager, to Emel'ian Grigor'evich Larionov, another manager, he writes:

We have a hermit here now by the name of German [Herman], who is worse than Makarii... Even though he keeps himself in his cell most of the time, not even going to church for fear of worldly temptations, he knows nevertheless everything that we think and do. By means of pious cajoling, he extracts all the information

³⁴ Catherine II issued a manifesto on July 22, 1763 inviting Germans to come settle the Volga area of southern Russia. The Moravians and Lutheran Pietists responded by the thousands and brought with them their Protestant zeal for evangelism and work ethic, both of which impressed Catherine greatly. A fascinating study of the topic of the influence of Pietism can be found in George J. Eisenach, *Pietism and the Russian Germans in the United States*, (Berne, Indiana: The Berne Publishers, 1948); J. Eugene Clay, "Apocalypticism in the Russian Borderlands: Inochentie Levizor and his Moldovan Followers," *Religion, State, and Society*, 26:3/4 (1998), 251-263; John Chrysavgis, "Piety – Pietism: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 32:2 (1987), 143-151.

³⁵ *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska...*, 12.

that he wants from pupils among the servants here, and sometimes from our own men.³⁶

In the years following, despite the early tensions, Baranov grew to be a benefactor of the Mission and its churches. On April 23, 1807, he made a donation in the amount of seven hundred rubles and gave Father Gedeon access to the vast Company supply stores for use in carrying out the mission and educating the natives.³⁷

An Uneasy Peace – The Company and Missions

In 1805, Nikolai Rezanov composed a lengthy report to the Directors of the Russian-American Company conveying the conditions of the Russian colonies in America. Regarding the status of the Orthodox mission he wrote,

[The monks] have baptized several thousands here, but only nominally... They have just been 'bathing' the Americans and when, due to their ability to copy, the latter learn in a half an hour how to make the sign of the cross, our missionaries return, proud of their success, thinking that their job is done.³⁸

The Orthodox missionaries often found themselves caught between the whims of the managers and officers of the Company and their holy orders to bring the Christian faith to the natives of Alaska. Regrettably, they occasionally ventured beyond the parameters of Christian mission into the functions of the state with little success. Rezanov cites an example:

At the time of the coronation of the Emperor [Alexander I], the monks without a word to the manager sent out orders calling all the natives to Kadiak to take the oath of allegiance. There were no provisions at Kadiak and if the manager had not stopped the people from gathering by sending his men to their villages, several

³⁶ Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov, "Letter, Baranov to Larionov, July 24, 1800," collected in *A History of the Russian American Company, Vol. 2*, Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly, eds., trans. by Dimitri Krenov, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1979), 121.

³⁷ Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov, "A. A. Baranov to Father Gedeon, 23 April 1807," collected in *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America. 1794-1837*, Richard A. Pierce, ed., trans. Colin Bearne, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1978), 163.

³⁸ Nikolai Rezanov, "Letter, Rezanov to the Directors of the Russian – American Company, from New Archangel, November 6, 1805," in P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company; Vol 2*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1979), 167.

thousand of them gathering at Kadiak would have killed everybody from starvation alone.³⁹

While Rezanov's letter is not an objective report and is replete with imperious self-aggrandizement, he correctly observes the unorganized efforts of the missionaries in the early years of the mission. The remoteness of the villages and great distances between them presented the missionaries with some seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Add to the logistical challenges the additional cultural and linguistic adjustment necessary to be effective teachers and ministers; it is simple to understand Rezanov's perspective. It took the missionaries some time to find their role in the social, economic, and spiritual life of the colonies. When at all possible, the monks who comprised the mission to Alaska made a point of separating themselves from the business of the Company and the functions of the Imperial Russian government. However, trying to keep the holy work of the mission separated from the secular functions of colonialism was an ongoing struggle. They were, at once, both a function of and liberator from colonialism. Even in the later years of Russian America, the Company officers remained lukewarm to the activities of the Orthodox Mission. In his last report on Russian America, Captain Pavel Golovin had this to say regarding the religious activities of the missionaries:

If missionaries are only appointed in order to somehow christen a certain number of natives per year, and to show in their reports that the number of converts has increased... then the colonial missionaries more or less fulfill their obligations faithfully. But if the appointment of missionaries is meant to spread Christian teachings among the savages, and to set a fine example – by word and deed to modify their customs, and to help them in need... and finally to bring about a condition wherein the savages themselves will desire to be converted – then in that case, not one of our past or present missionaries has fulfilled his task.⁴⁰

³⁹ Nikolai Rezanov, "Letter, Rezanov to the Directors of the Russian – American Company, from New Archangel, November 6, 1805," in P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company; Vol 2*, (Kingston, Ontario; The Limestone Press, 1979), 167.

⁴⁰ Pavel N. Golovin, *A Review of the Russian Colonies in North America, 1862*, translated by Basil Dmytryshyn, (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1979), 54.

These reports tended toward hyperbole, as can be seen in Rezanov's report mentioned above. To illustrate the uninformed opinions of these Company officers one should note Golovin's comment later in the report:

I therefore believe that it would be quite useful to recruit likely [Creole] youngsters from the more distinguished clans of the Kolosh; after their elementary education they would be sent to Russia to be prepared for a priestly vocation.⁴¹

The merit of Golovin's idea to send Creoles to Russia to prepare for the priesthood is supported by the success of Father Iakov Netsvetov who was ordained 34 years prior. The government and Company managers were not always the best-informed or most qualified individuals to offer a comprehensive analysis of the particular machinations of such an immense organization.

Although the missionaries were in the employ of the Company and received remuneration from the same, the missionaries understood their role in the colonies as both overseers of the morality of the Russian Company employees and the enlighteners of the heathen natives.⁴² The success of the missionaries in mitigating the escalating conflict between the natives and the Company was abrupt and widespread. As Shelikhov anticipated, the monks helped to placate the angry natives through their kindness, service, and generosity and they held the Russians accountable to morality befitting an Orthodox Christian. Being the keeper of peace and enforcer of morality on the frontier is rarely an easy job and never a safe one. The monks often found themselves enforcing the civil treatment of the natives by Russian Company employees. Barbara Sweetland Smith comments, "The missionaries strongly objected to the attitudes, style of life, and methods

⁴¹ Ibid, 56.

⁴² Barbara Sweetland Smith, *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska*, (The Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 4.

employed by the Company officials.”⁴³ In fact, several of the monks participated in mutinies against the Company administration in protest of the manager’s (Baranov) tacit participation in the ruinous slaughter of sea animals that was almost matched by the cost of human lives.

In 1796, Makarii, a monk with the original mission, took his complaints about the treatment of the natives directly to the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg. He was censured for leaving his post and for ignoring the proper channels and was sent back to Alaska forthwith. Although he was rebuked, his complaint was noted and in 1804 the Church dispatched Fr. Gideon to observe the mission and the conditions at Kodiak and the Aleutians. After two years of observation in the region his report confirmed Makarii’s indictment of inhuman brutality in the administration of Company policy.⁴⁴

Makarii may have been the first to lodge an official complaint but he was impetuous and his complaints often fell on deaf ears. The Imperial Government instituted inspections of the operations from the early days of the Company and Father Herman’s views were sought and highly respected by the inspectors.⁴⁵ Herman became the primary advocate for the humane treatment of the natives. Numerous mutinies against Baranov were carried out by a few of the monks and the tensions escalated to the point that Baranov threatened to imprison them all. Fr. Herman alone garnered the respect of Baranov, Rezanov, and Fr. Gideon. Upon his departure from Alaska, Fr. Gideon informed Baranov that he appointed Fr. Herman head of the mission and wrote, “I have often had the pleasure of hearing you praise this peace-loving Elder highly as a man

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

worthy of great honors, spending his life in working continually for the welfare of the nation.”⁴⁶

The tensions between the Company officers and the missionaries never completely abated, they were lessened, however, by the passage of time and the civilizing influence of the priests and monks who educated the Russians, Creoles, and natives alike.

Evangelization

Christianity had been perpetuated among the natives of the Atkha District⁴⁷ by laymen, employees of the company, as noted by Fr. Iakov Netsvetov:

It must be noted that the Andreanov Aleuts received their faith through the Russian [laymen] as no one of priestly status... ever visited the Andreanov Islands. Thus, all the local Aleuts, without exception, were baptized by laymen... Consequently, I found here upon my arrival the entire aboriginal population baptized... My duty was, thus, to confirm them in their faith by celebrating the Mystery of Anointing with the Holy Myrrh, and thus complete the sacrament of baptism.⁴⁸

The presence of Orthodox Christianity in the Aleutian Islands is attested further back than 1762 as noted in this correspondence by a merchant named Cherepanov:

[The natives of Ottaku] are quite familiar with the Orthodox Christian faith and they do not think that we are wrong, because on one special occasion God's blessing was clearly demonstrated. In 1761 a native named Leontii was confined to his dwelling with a severe injury to his arm. The wound was so terrible you could see the bone. Everyone thought he would never recover... he received the sacrament of Holy Baptism... and as soon as he had been baptized, he immediately improved and later made a complete recovery. Leontii's father, Makuzhan, rejoiced and said to us, "Your God is very good; indeed, He is great."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Father Gideon, *A Sketch of the Orthodox Mission in America, 1794-1837*, (Valaamo Monastery, St. Petersburg: 1894), 274-275.

⁴⁷ Atkha District was comprised of the islands of Atkha, Amlia, Amchitka, Attu, Mednoi, and Bering. This was a Company designated subdivision and not a purely political jurisdiction.

⁴⁸ Iakov Netsvetov, "June 15, 1829: Remarks Relative to the Atkha District," *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years 1828-1844*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 13.

⁴⁹ Stepan Cherepanov, "The Account of the Totma Merchant, Stepan Cherepanov, Concerning His Stay in the Aleutian Islands, 1759-1762," dated August 3, 1762, collected in *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean, 1700-1797*, ed. and trans. by Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1988), 211.

Nearly 20 years later than the above account and almost a decade before the official Orthodox mission was sent to Russian America, Grigorii Shelikhov reports evangelizing and converting about 40 Aleutian natives in 1786.⁵⁰ Although Christianity had not been mediated by the Orthodox Church, the work of evangelism, in its rudiments, was still considered effective even if incomplete. A vehicle for confirming the new believer in his or her faith was necessary. The mission school, with its prominent situation within the community, offered the best possibility to this end. Throughout the history of Christianity, the missionary school has been an effective tool for religious conversion as well as advancing literacy, the arts, and sciences.

Education

The Imperial Government of Russia also charged the missionaries to Alaska with the responsibility of education in the colonies. Bishop Innocent (Fr. Ioann Veniaminov), leader of the diocese of Unalaska and Sitka, established schools and an Orthodox seminary and Father Herman founded a school and orphanage near Kodiak on Spruce Island.⁵¹ Bishop Innocent Veniaminov and his protégé Iakov Netsvetov, a Russian/Aleut Creole educated in an Orthodox school on the island of Atkha and the seminary at St. Petersburg, “devised an alphabet and translated a number of religious works into various dialects of Aleut, providing these people for the first time with access to writing and

⁵⁰ Grigorii, I. Shelikhov, “The Account of the Voyage of Grigorii, I. Shelikhov and His Wife, Natalia Shelikhova, from Okhotsk to the Coast of Northwest America and Return, Including a Description of Islands and Native Peoples Encountered,” dated after November 18, 1786, collected in *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean, 1700-1797*, ed. and trans. by Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1988), 305.

⁵¹ Barbara S. Smith, *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska: A history, inventory, and analysis of the church archives in Alaska with an annotated bibliography*, (Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 11.

reading in their own language.”⁵² The Holy Synod in Russia ordered Innocent to instruct his priests “that they could not be considered to have done their duty until they had translated at least one of the Gospels into a Native dialect and taught at least fifty people to read it.”⁵³ How closely this instruction was followed is difficult to determine but it establishes a high priority for education on the work of the missionaries. Thus, the legacy of Cyril and Methodius begun in the ninth century has been well established in the nineteenth century. It has been accepted that the original Valaam mission came to an end 1837 with the death of St. Herman.⁵⁴ Yet, arguably, the spirit of the mission lived on long after the death of its most tenured missionary.

Aleutian Missionary Schools

The early period of the Alaskan missionary schools lacked the polish of the same schools in the mid to late-19th century. Baranov surveyed the state of the Russian colonies in Alaska and he considered the condition of the native and Creole schools to be unsatisfactory. His survey concluded that there were less than thirty pupils. The main problem was the lack of qualified teachers. From 1804, the students of the [Kodiak] school taught each other reading and writing.⁵⁵ In 1805, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov replaced Shelikhov as the director of the Company and upon seeing the poor condition of the schools went about reforming and expanding the education system. He made provision for some of the students to travel to Moscow and St. Petersburg to be educated in science, engineering, and trades and then to return to America to teach in the school at

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Ukaz of the Emperor from the Holy Ruling Synod to Innokentii, Bishop of Kamchatka, the Kuriles, and Aleutians*, No 42 (Jan. 10, 1841), “Documents Relative to History of Alaska,” I, pp. 134-135.

⁵⁴ *The Russian Orthodox Mission...*, xii.

⁵⁵ Petr Aleksandrovich Tikhmenev, *The Historical Review of Formation of the Russian American Company and its Activity up to the Present Time*, (St. Petersburg, Russia; Printing Establishment of Edward Veimar, 1861), 148.

Kodiak.⁵⁶ Rezanov placed Father Nektarii in charge of the school and entrusted 20 boys to Father Herman to be taught practical agriculture.⁵⁷ These reforms greatly improved the educational climate but also expanded the involvement of the Orthodox missionaries in the educational institutions of Russian America.

Improvements notwithstanding, operating schools among the native Alaskans presented unique challenges for the Orthodox missionaries. Aleuts lived a semi-nomadic, seasonal lifestyle that conflicted with the educational structure of the traditional Orthodox schools.⁵⁸ Therefore, school terms were typically held from November through April or May to accommodate the hunting and fishing seasons that were critical to the native lifestyle.⁵⁹ Further complicating the education process was the entire lack of written native languages especially in their peculiar dialects. Fr. Veniaminov worked diligently to develop an Aleutian alphabet and grammar. Fr. Iakov (Netsvetov) used Fr. Ioann's (Veniaminov) alphabet and created a specific grammar for the Fox-Aleuts. After completing an alphabet they proceeded to translate liturgical texts and then educational texts into the new written language.⁶⁰ In order to properly educate the natives, the Orthodox missionaries exhibited malleability in the ways they conceived of their native schools. From developing a written language and producing libraries of study materials to the establishment of their school year, the Orthodox missionaries adapted themselves to the needs of natives as well as the Company. In order to grasp the education practices of

⁵⁶ Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, 92.

⁵⁷ Nikolai Rezanov, "Letter, Rezanov to the Directors of the Russian – American Company, from New Archangel, November 6, 1805," in P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company; Vol 2*, (Kingston, Ontario; The Limestone Press, 1979), 168.

⁵⁸ Smith, 11

⁵⁹ Smith, 40.

⁶⁰ See copy of Aleutian Primer in Appendix.

the missionaries, it is important to understand the educational system of Imperial Russia and the educational climate from which the missionaries derived.

Nineteenth century Imperial Russia was an Orthodox Christian society infused by a heavy dose of secular European Enlightenment. The influence of the church on Russian thought began a sharp decline under Peter the Great (1672-1725) who, enamored of all things European, structured social and religious institutions according to the example of the European cultural centers.⁶¹ One of the Petrine reforms of 1721 that most seriously impacted the Orthodox Church was the abolition of the patriarchate and the subsequent shift of ecclesiastical power from the patriarch to a Holy Synod. Understandably, the monks of Valaam and Konev, who were keenly aware of the power and motive of the autocrats of Russia, had to learn how to navigate the fickle waters of Russian society and perpetuate their spiritual work. “Nowhere were this secularization and Europeanization of life and culture more noticeable and keenly felt than in education.”⁶² In 1700, Peter founded the first of forty mathematical schools that ultimately became the Naval Academy in 1715.⁶³ In his efforts to integrate European culture into Russian society Peter the Great took great pains to establish education centers and develop a public education system that advocated the arts and sciences and served the needs of the Russian Empire.

Despite the value placed on education by the aristocracy, the overall population of Russia remained largely illiterate until the revolution of 1917.⁶⁴ “Only the nobility and

⁶¹ Mehdi Nakosteen, *The History and Philosophy of Education*, (New York; The Ronald Press Company, 1965), 408.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. Interestingly, the Europeanization of Russia is further exemplified by the appointment of Henry Fargwarson, a Scot, as director of this School of Mathematics. See George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1969), 182.

⁶⁴ Boris Mironov, *A Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, (Boulder, Colorado; Westview Press, 2000), 176. For males older than 9 years, the literacy rate in the late 1700's was 6%; by 1850 it had

the clergy (together a mere 2% of Russia's total population) could demonstrate near-total literacy by the turn of the twentieth century.⁶⁵ It follows, then, that one of the two best-educated segments of society (nobility) would employ the other best-educated segment (clergy) to oversee education in Russia and abroad.⁶⁶ Catherine the Great tapped into the monasteries as a source of human and material resources for the education of society and utilized this resource when Shelikhov requested some monks and clergy to administer a spiritual mission to the natives of Alaska.

Iakov Netsvetov and the Atkha School

In a letter to the chief manager dated May 4, 1786, Shelikhov writes, "The school founded by me must be enlarged. For this purpose I will send required books from Okhotsk on the ship 'Tri Sviatitelia' (Three Saints). Education is useful and necessary. Only literate people can be good and accurate interpreters, so needed in this country."⁶⁷ As to the exact books that were sent to the school, he does not elaborate. However, it appears that literacy was the ultimate goal of education in order to provide interpreters to the Company employees. In 1789, he instructs a company officer, "Do your best to teach more boys reading, writing, singing, and arithmetic. Train them to be good navigators and seamen; and teach them crafts, especially carpentry... We are going to send a fine band to America to you. Just now I am planning the missionary work."⁶⁸ Here the goals

increased to 19%; and by 1913, to 54%. For females, the corresponding rates were 4, 10, and 26%, respectively.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ "In terms of literacy, the clergy conceded nothing to the nobility. In 1857, the average level of literacy of nobles over nine years of age was 77 percent, and among the clergy, 72 percent. The corresponding figures for 1897 were 86 percent and 89 percent. In terms of education, the clergy even surpassed the nobility." Mironov, 227.

⁶⁷ Grigorii Alekseevich Shelikhov, "Instructions to the chief manager Konstantin Alekseevich Samoilov...", in P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian American Company, Vol. 2*, (Kingston, Ontario; Limestone Press, 1979), 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 21.

of education are expanded to include not only literacy but singing, arithmetic, and vocational training to meet the needs of the Company. These educational goals aim to acculturate the Native Americans to the Russian life and are consistent with colonization. The missionaries will, at various times and places, become less interested in the resource needs of the Company than in religious training and preparing students for service to the church. Few priests were able to accomplish the goals of the Company and the Orthodox Church as well as Fr. Iakov Netsvetov.

Iakov Netsvetov (1804-1864) was a Creole whose father was a Russian fur trader and whose mother was a native Aleutian. Regarding the status of Creoles in the Russian colonies, Golovin noted in his 1862 report of the colonies:

The Russians who live in the colonies have not lost sight of the illegitimate origin of the creoles. They look at the reprehensible conduct of the Creole women and the careless attitude of the men, most of whom are willing to hand over their wives to anyone in exchange for a few bottles of rum. Consequently not only [do the Russians] look on them with great contempt, but the word "Creole" is used as a pejorative. Even the Aleuts have no respect for the creoles, and say that they are lower than Aleuts because their mothers were immoral women.⁶⁹

Iakov was born in 1804 most likely on the Island of St. George in the Pribilof Islands.

Vocationally, he was an accomplished ship builder, a trade he was taught by the Russians. In 1821, he received a written commendation and a raise for his shipbuilding acumen, recognizing his "diligence, knowledge of the business, sobriety and honesty."⁷⁰

He received another commendation in 1824 from the Chief Manager, Murav'ev stating

⁶⁹ Pavel N. Golovin, "The Population of the Colonies," from *A Review of the Russian Colonies in North America*, collected in *The End of Russian America: Captain P. N. Golovin's Last Report, 1862*, trans. by Basil Dmytryshyn and E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1979), 17-18.

⁷⁰ Venedict Kramer, Andrei Severin, and Office Manager Zelenin, "No. 13, 6 December 1821. Main Office, St. Petersburg, to Manager Murav'ev," collected in *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 263.

that he “carried out the tasks entrusted to him without laziness, behaved at all times decently and modestly, and [his good behavior] is hereby attested.”⁷¹

He was chosen to study at the Orthodox diocesan seminary at Irkutsk, Siberia. The practice of sending natives back to Russia for education became widely employed as a way to fully appreciate the skills of the natives who showed promise. In opposition to this practice, Kiril Timofeevich Khlebnikov, director of the Novo Archangelsk office, stated that experience has shown that they can acquire the necessary skills in the colonies without the great expenditures of sending them to the capital to be educated. Many Creoles returned from the capital after having studied shipbuilding but lacked the theory or practice to actually build ships. Another problem with sending them away was that the pupils would grow to appreciate the luxuries of Imperial Russia and would acquire bad habits while away.⁷² Similar objections were voiced on the basis of the economic impact of transporting and boarding these students while in Russia as well as the social impact of exposing these natives to the European ethos. Iakov Netsvetov did benefit greatly from his education in the Russian seminary at Irkutsk. It was likely that the remoteness of Irkutsk insulated him from the potentially negative influences of St. Petersburg society.

Upon graduation in October 1826, Fr. Netsvetov was ordained Deacon and transferred to serve at the St. Peter Church of Irkutsk. In 1828, he was ordained into the priesthood and was sent to Atkha to pastor. As regards his reputation throughout the Russian colonies, Governor Adolf Karlovich Etholin requests that Bishop Innocent award Fr. Iakov the Pectoral Cross and Skull Cap in recognition

⁷¹ Chief Manager Murav'ev, “No. 186, 13 May 1824: Certificate,” collected in *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 264.

⁷² Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America, Part I: Novo-Archangel'sk*, 83.

of his “personal qualities, piety and exemplary diligence.”⁷³ In another letter to Bishop Innocent, Etholin refers to Fr. Iakov as “the most splendid missionary.”⁷⁴ Once again, in correspondence from Governor Etholin it is revealed that Fr. Iakov had already received the Pectoral Cross from the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg and thus was awarded the Pectoral Cross twice.⁷⁵

The extreme western location of the Aleutian Island of Atkha had given its people favorable trade and exposure to the Russian economy and institutions. It was a stopping point on the journey east toward the mainland of Alaska. These Aleuts had been exposed to Russians and Europeans from the earliest days of the Russian exploration of America. As the Company operations continued to move east to the mainland, Atkha became less well endowed by its benefactors. When he arrived on Atkha, Fr. Netsvetov found no church building so he began to hold services and meetings in a tent while overseeing the construction of a permanent church building. The young priest was dissatisfied with the conditions of life on Atkha. According to Fr. Iakov, the Atkha District Manager for the Company

...had issued a very clear mandate that the first priority was to insure substantial profits for the Company. As is clear from the available records of the Russian-American Company, Christiakov [Governor of Alaska] felt that the construction and maintenance of churches, and financial support of the clergy, mandated by the Charter, placed an undue burden on the Company.⁷⁶

⁷³ Adolf Etholin, “No. 504, 7 September 1843, Governor Etholin to Innokentii (Veniaminov), Bishop of Kamchatka, the Aleutians and the Kuriles,” collected in *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 267.

⁷⁴ Adolf Etholin, “No. 21, 3 February 1844, Governor Etholin to Bishop Innokentii (Veniaminov),” collected in *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 268.

⁷⁵ Adolf Etholin, “No 331, 8 May 1844, Governor Etholin to the Main Office, St. Petersburg,” collected in “The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), 269.

⁷⁶ Iakov Netsvetov, *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, translated by Lydia Black, (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980), xix-xx.

The Governor and the District Manager curtailed Netsvetov's activities and restricted his access to resources of the Company to such a degree that his mission efforts were virtually stopped altogether. In 1831, Christiakov was replaced by Vrangell [Wrangell] as Governor. Vrangell replaced the Atkha District Manager and this new congenial climate proved amenable to the development of the Atkha School which, up to this time "was maintained by the District Office more on paper than in reality."⁷⁷

Until 1831, there was no separate school building for classroom instruction and neither was there a dormitory facility for housing the students. Father Iakov's journal entry dated July 25, 1831 reads:

To-day the Atkha Office, by an official memorandum No. 134, transferred to me the authority over the local school, in accordance with the order of the Chief Manager: 16 students, their clothing, all inventory and appurtenances, and, in general, all matters pertaining to the school were placed under my complete authority and care.⁷⁸

Under the direction of Fr. Iakov, buildings were constructed, curriculum developed, and subsistence assured for the students both through Company subsidy and through the efforts of the students themselves in growing some of their own food during the summer months. On July 25, 1831, Netsvetov remarks in his journal:

The Atkha School, founded yet in 1827 and hitherto under the authority of the local Atkha Office, was administered by the office clerk. The latter lacked proper physical plant, such as, for example, a house for the students, as he lacked the [knowledge] to properly organize the curriculum in the school. For these reasons, all aspects of the school administration were entrusted to me. The functions of the school, as outlined by the Chief Manager of the colonies, Mr. Vrangell' were: (1) to provide shelter and clothing to the children of poor parents, mostly of creoles; (2) to accustom them from childhood to learning and dilligence (sic), and at the same time introduce them to the concepts of religion and Christian morality; and (3) to prepare them, in accordance with their abilities, dilligence (sic) and good

⁷⁷ Ibid, xx.

⁷⁸ Iakov Netsvetov, *The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years, 1828-1844*, translated by Lydia Black, (Kingston, Ontario; The Limestone Press, 1980), 64.

conduct, to become clerks, supercargos, navigators and sub-deacons. In these matters I am to report [directly] to the colonial Chief Manager.⁷⁹

Netsvetov eagerly received his orders from Chief Manager Vrangell and began to fulfill these responsibilities without delay. A journal entry dated October 25, 1831, a scant three months after the Atkha School came under his responsibility, Father Netsvetov saw the completion of the construction of the schoolhouse. Not only was the schoolhouse erected but it had been furnished with all accoutrements necessary for the boarding and instruction of students. The following day, October 26, classes commenced with 20 students of Creole and Aleut status. Fr. Iakov remarks: "I began the instruction with basics, elementary reading... I, myself, undertook instruction in the Law of God, Catechism, and Holy History. These classes are held Mondays and Fridays (sic) mornings."⁸⁰

The Orthodox priest was deeply invested in the overall welfare of the community. In his journal dated January 7, 1832, Fr. Iakov reports singing the funeral service for a student of the school, a Creole named Aleksei Korenev, who died just a few days prior of an "internal malady."⁸¹ At the same time, however, the Company had the final say in matters pertaining to the operation of the school such as when students were to be dismissed or matriculated.⁸² Company managers retained the right and privilege to assign students to service in various capacities within the company. The Company, while retaining the right to place students in or remove them from the Atkha School, made few dictatorial mandates regarding the administration of the school. In July of 1841, the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 68.

⁸¹ Ibid, 71.

⁸² Ibid, 77.

Company liquidated its support of students at the Atkha School.⁸³ In his July 18, 1841

journal entry, Fr. Iakov writes:

Thus, the Atkha School has been abolished as an institution for the formerly state supported students who were my wards; the instruction of students who voluntarily attend school continues as before and will continue in the future. The Chief Manager asked me to continue such instruction.”⁸⁴

Fr. Iakov continued to run the school until he was reassigned as a missionary to the Yukon in 1845.

Fr. Iakov served as a missionary to the Yukon carrying on the work begun by the original Valaam mission some 40 years before. In fact, he is unofficially revered as the Aleut Apostle to the Eskimos. His success as a missionary is due in no small part to the training he received from the Orthodox school in Atkha, the seminary in Irkutsk, and the example of character lived out in the life of Bishop Innocent. Certainly the hardships he endured as a parish priest in Atkha played a large part in preparing him for the Yukon. Fr. Iakov was an example of the intellectual and moral potential of the Native Aleut when provided the opportunity to learn.

⁸³ Ibid, 226.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

PROTESTANT MISSIONARY IDEOLOGY

Princeton Seminary and the Roots of American Missionary Zeal

In his survey *The Age of Reform*, Steven Ozment writes, “Calvinists distinguished themselves, above all, by their fervent belief that religion not only changed inward self-perception, but also transformed public life and manners; beliefs could not sit idly in the mind, but must renew individuals and societies.”⁸⁵ Social transformation through the religious life was hardly a Calvinist nuance. The Orthodox Christians who arrived in Alaska in the closing years of the 18th century have a long-standing tradition of social reform through religious instruction. What does set Calvinism apart from the rest of the Christian world is the “enforcement of a high standard of individual and social sanctification.”⁸⁶ Yet, Calvin himself did not see moral enforcement as something to be dreaded but as a positive movement toward greater faith in God. “The placement of faith before the law reflected the Calvinist belief that the commandments were not intended primarily to drive one to self-despair and subsequent faith . . . but were to be embraced in a positive way, as a guide to daily living, by all confessed Christians.”⁸⁷

The seeds of the United States’ mission to Alaska can be found in the core values of Princeton Theological Seminary. This bastion of Presbyterian Reformed theology is the milieu within which Sheldon Jackson, the preeminent protestant Alaskan missionary,

⁸⁵ Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 1980), 356.

⁸⁶ *The Age of Reform*, 356.

⁸⁷ *The Age of Reform*, 367.

germinated these seeds of mission. Sheldon Jackson graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1858 having received instruction from Charles Hodge in the tradition of Archibald Alexander.⁸⁸ Alexander “constructed the framework which shaped the theology at the seminary for over a century.”⁸⁹ The overarching themes of the Princeton Theology, as constructed by Alexander, were “devotion to the bible, concern for religious experience, sensitivity to the American experience, and full employment of Presbyterian confessions, seventeenth-century Reformed systematicians, and the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense.”⁹⁰ Alexander was thorough regarding his intentions for establishing the seminary. In May of 1811, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. adopted Alexander’s proposal for the institution of Princeton Theological Seminary.⁹¹ In his proposal his purposes for the Seminary were made explicit. He wrote, “It is to form men for the Gospel ministry, who shall truly believe, and cordially love, and therefore endeavor to propagate and defend, on its genuineness, simplicity, and fulness [sic], that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Plan of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church; and thus to perpetuate and extend the influence of true evangelical piety, and Gospel order.”⁹² He continues, “It is to unite, in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning: believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the Gospel, must

⁸⁸ Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Book House, 1983), 19-20.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Rev. Archibald Alexander, *The Plan of a Theological Seminary adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, in their session of May last, A.D. 1811*, (Philadelphia, PA: Aitken, 1811), 4-6; 12-13

⁹² *The Plan of a Theological Seminary*, 4-6.

ultimately prove injurious to the Church.”⁹³ Further, “It is to found a nursery for missionaries to the heathen, and to such are destitute of the stated preaching of the gospel; in which youth may receive that appropriate training which may lay a foundation for their ultimately becoming eminently qualified for missionary work.”⁹⁴

For the Princeton Presbyterians, the received written Word of God is the final and inerrant authority in all matters of faith and practice and it is, as received from antiquity, inerrant and above reproach. Charles Hodge affirms:

In those instance in which the revelations to be recorded were objectively made, as in the discourses of our Lord, the only office of inspiration, the only thing which could distinguish the record of those discourses made by an apostle from a report made by any other auditor would be the infallible correctness of the report, and this, of course, involves the propriety and fitness of the language used to convey the thoughts to be communicated.⁹⁵

For Hodge, it is not merely the content of scripture but the language in which the message is conveyed that is inspired. This will become important in subsequent discussions. Archibald Alexander stressed a “concern for religious experience” in his seminary proposal. This religious experience is best understood in the words of the Westminster Confession, “our full persuasion and assurance if the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”⁹⁶ The Reformed, and therefore Presbyterian, understanding of religious experience differs from the more ecstatic and mystical experience that may be found in the Orthodox Christian tradition. Alexander, Hodge, and

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Charles Hodge, “Inspiration,” *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 29 (October 1857).

⁹⁶ “Westminster Confession of Faith,” I.v.

<www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/index.html>, accessed November 7, 2006.

their Presbyterian brethren treated this religious experience as a cognitive, rational experience in the tradition of Scottish Common Sense philosophy.

All this should not be taken as evidence of a detached, uninterested faculty concerned only with turning out astute ministers. Charles Beatty Alexander stated, "The early professors always kept their hands on their former students, wherever they might be, the hands of sympathy, of imagination, of Christian love."⁹⁷ In his personal bible, Archibald Alexander wrote several verses on the inside cover that provide clues to his character: "To love Him with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the strength is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And, "I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit."⁹⁸ This spirit of humility was found in every aspect of life at Princeton Seminary. Although, as will be discovered later, the humility that characterized life at Princeton did not always extend to the mission field.

Dr. Alexander searched for a more moderate way of Calvinism as reflected in a letter to a friend: "We go on here upon our old moderate plan, teaching the doctrines of Calvinism, but not disposed to consider every man a heretic who differs in some few points from us."⁹⁹ Alexander was not content to teach simply a system of doctrine. He aimed to send out warriors of the Cross. To this end, he studied the religions of heathenism, and the erroneous faiths of every age, and he knew what should be said to refute their doctrines.¹⁰⁰ Alexander was fundamentally an apologist and not a missionary. Christian apology and mission are not always compatible functions of the Church but

⁹⁷ Charles Beatty Alexander, *Address Delivered, by Invitation of the Directors, on the Occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Seminary in Alexander Hall, Princeton, New Jersey*, (New York: The Trow Press, 1912), 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 5-6.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 14.

they are not opposite functions either. Alexander's efforts at understanding other religions and refutations of their heathen theologies were important to Sheldon Jackson as they helped him to put the religious practices of indigenous people in a context. Apology, however, seldom prescribes alternative action. It reveals what is contrary to one's faith but does little to direct activity to correct perceived aberrations. Conversely, mission ideologies are directed toward action and are not always theologically reflective. For the Princeton professors, correct doctrine was considered sufficient for transforming heathens into orthodox Christians.

It was in 1885 that Jackson was appointed U.S. General Agent for Education by John Eaton, Commissioner for Education in Washington. In his appointment, Jackson was handed the responsibility for establishment of educational institutions in Alaska. This created a potential for a conflict of interest which will be discussed later. Suffice it to say here that his charge as an agent for the U.S. government and his responsibility to the Presbyterian mission to Alaska came into conflict on some occasions. Governor John H. Kinkead, Alaska's first governor as a U.S. territory, recognized the potential for trouble in the commingling of missionary efforts with public education. He wrote to Mr. Eaton shortly before Jackson's appointment as General Agent saying: "I think it would be unwise, certainly unpopular, to place the [school work] in the hands of the missionaries. These things should be in charge of the state or territorial authorities rather than in the charge of one particular sect."¹⁰¹ Criticism notwithstanding, from 1877, the year Jackson commenced missions work in Alaska, to 1885 he managed, with the help of some Presbyterian friends, to establish successful schools at Fort Wrangell and Sitka without

¹⁰¹ J. Arthur Lazell, *Alaskan Apostle: The Life Story of Sheldon Jackson*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 71.

the benefit of official government authority. This is a testament to the determination of the Presbyterians and their commitment to education and Christian missions.

American Occupation and the Advent of the Protestant Mission to Alaska

American Acquisition of Alaska

As the first half of the nineteenth century came to an end the Russian-America Company began to see its virtual monopoly on the Pacific fur trade slip into the hands of the British as a result of their centuries of foreign trade and naval superiority. To make matters worse for the Russians, the Crimean War of 1854 pitted an allied force consisting of Britain, France, and Turkey against the Russian Empire over a small piece of land bordering the Black Sea. The Turks were exasperated by the incremental invasions of Russia into Turkey. The British were leery of Czar Nicholas' move through Turkey because it put them closer to India and the possibility of Britain having to fight Russia for it. The French entered the war, ostensibly to protect their claim on Christian holy sites in or near Jerusalem but it was more a distraction by Napoleon III from internal political turmoil.¹⁰²

The presence of the British navy in the North Pacific and its vast naval superiority put the Russians ill-at-ease. To wit, according to Dmytryshyn and Crownhart-Vaughan,

...a significant Anglo-French squadron, staging out of the Hawaiian Islands in two successive years, maneuvered in the Sea of Okhotsk off the east coast of Siberia and the elusive Amur River mouth. The squadron eventually bombarded and invested the supposedly impregnable harbor of Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka where a small Russian squadron was based, captured a vital Russian – American Company supply ship, *Sitka*, and briefly occupied the harbor of Aian in Siberia, as well as the Kuril Island group.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Sir Charles Petrie, "Crimean War," *The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition*, (Danbury, CT; Grolier Incorporated, 1998), 8:204-205.

¹⁰³ Basil Dmytryshyn and E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, "Introduction," *The End of Russian America: Captain P. N. Golovin's Last Report, 1862*, (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1979), xi-xii.

An allied Anglo-French invasion was enough to get the attention of the Russian colonists and in an attempt to hold on to Alaska against the superior British Navy the Russians actively pursued a foreign policy of good will by allowing the establishment of British trading posts along the river routes in the interior of Alaska. Peace was secured through land-use deals propagated in agreements between the Russian-America Company and the British Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁰⁴ The long reach of international trade and business acumen of the British began to edge the Russians out of the fur and supply trade in their own Alaskan colonies. Adding the tensions of the Crimean War to the struggle of remaining economically viable became too much for many of the investors back in Russia to abide and there began to be calls to revoke the Company charter and to liquidate Russia's American holdings. Naske and Slotnick state, "Nicholas Muraviev, the governor general of eastern Siberia, believed that Russia's future lay in Asia, where it should concentrate its efforts. In an 1853 memorandum he predicted that the Americans, who already possessed California, would inevitably make themselves masters of the entire North American continent."¹⁰⁵ These sentiments were echoed from other parts of Imperial Russia and the possibility of selling Alaska became a reality. The economic conditions of the Russian Empire caused many to seriously consider liquidating the Russian colonies in Alaska. "With Russia already burdened with debts incurred by the Crimean War and about to undertake a costly program of modernization emphasizing railroad building, neither the emperor nor his advisors wanted to spend money on the

¹⁰⁴ Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick, *Alaska: A History of the 49th State*, (Norman, OK; University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 49-50.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 58-59.

colony.”¹⁰⁶ In December, 1866 a meeting was held in St. Petersburg. In attendance was Emperor Alexander II; his brother, Grand Duke Constantine; Prince Aleksandr M. Gorchakov, the foreign minister; Michael Reutern, the finance minister; and the Russian ambassador to the U.S., Baron Eduard de Stoeckel, who was on a brief visit to Russia from the U.S. It was at this meeting that decision was made to sell the Russian Colony of Alaska and instructions given to de Stoeckel to begin negotiations with the U.S.¹⁰⁷ On March 11, 1867, de Stoeckel and U.S. Secretary of State, William H. Seward, began negotiations.¹⁰⁸ The price finally agreed upon for the colony and the property of the Russian-American Company was \$7.2 million. On October 18, 1867, the United States took possession of Alaska.¹⁰⁹

When, in 1867, the United States took possession of Alaska the Civil War had just ended and the efforts to heal the land and society occupied the attention of the U.S. Government. “Although most Americans knew little about Alaska, it would be a mistake to infer that the area had been foisted on an unsuspecting public by a cabal led by Secretary of State Seward.”¹¹⁰ The fur and supply trade in Alaska drew Americans to the territory for nearly a century prior to its acquisition as an American territory. Nonetheless, the purchase of Alaska was not viewed by all as a success. Sheldon Jackson wrote about the acquisition, “The American people almost lost sight of their new possession, or only occasionally recalled it as Secretary Seward’s folly.”¹¹¹ Seward himself anticipated the popular rejection of the purchase. Upon his retirement to private

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 59.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 59-60.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 60.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 61.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 63.

¹¹¹ Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska and Missions on the North Pacific Coast*, (New York; Dodd, Mead & Company, 1880), 14.

life, he was asked, “Mr. Seward, what do you consider the most important act of your official life?” He replied, “The purchase of Alaska, but it may take two generations before the purchase is appreciated.”¹¹² Soon after his retirement from public service, Seward visited Sitka and told his audience “that civil government must come ‘because our political system rejects alike anarchy and executive absolutism,’ but he cautioned that since fewer than two thousand whites lived among twenty-five thousand Natives, ‘a display of military force was needed.’”¹¹³ Historically, relations between the whites and Natives in Alaska were characterized by personal incidents rather than by unending conflict such as would necessitate a military show of force.¹¹⁴

The assignment of U.S. soldiers to carry out the responsibilities of civil government was a mistake, as evidenced by the poor behavior of the soldiers among the civilians of Alaska. William S. Dodge, the special agent of the Treasury Department and the mayor of Sitka, regretted the lack of discipline among the troops and reported being called out many a night by men and women, Russians and Natives alike, asking for protection from drunken soldiers. Misunderstandings were frequent. Americans had no appreciation of the Native culture, while the Natives found it difficult to comprehend the rules and regulations of the new masters of Alaska.¹¹⁵ The army’s enlisted men and officers alike despised their Alaskan tour of duty, suffering more from boredom than from attacks by the aborigines.¹¹⁶ The army remained in Alaska as the civil government until 1879 when the American warship, the USS Jamestown, set anchor in the Sitka

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Naske and Slotnick, 67.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ernest Gruening, *The State of Alaska*, 2nd ed., (New York; Random House, 1968), 555-56.

¹¹⁶ Naske and Slotnick, 67.

harbor ushering in the rule of the navy.¹¹⁷ Apart from the military presence, no formal government structure was in existence. With the increase in mine claims came an increase of miners seeking to make a new, comfortable life in the Alaskan frontier. Like their counterparts in western America, the miners drafted their own form of frontier democracy known as the miner's code. In their initial meetings they decided upon regulatory codes covering the administration of mining claims and prescribed rules of conduct for the community in which a court composed of miners would sit in judgment and mete out penalties for transgressions.¹¹⁸ There was an increasing need for some semblance of a civil government. The U.S. Congress responded to the need for civil government with the Organic Act of 1884, the details of which are of little consequence to this thesis. Suffice it to say that this act established a judicial government based on the laws of the State of Oregon, the nearest geographical state to Alaska. Most important to the establishment of missionary education in Alaska is the involvement of Sheldon Jackson in the establishment of the Organic Act. The author of the Organic Act was Benjamin Harrison, the future President of the United States, who was a fellow Presbyterian and close friend of Sheldon Jackson. The Act made provision of twenty-five thousand dollars for the establishment of schools and the education of all children, native and white, but this was not enough to erect school buildings or to pay needed instructors.¹¹⁹ The Russian Government continued to provide for and operate seventeen schools through the Orthodox Church even after the sale of Alaska to the United States.¹²⁰ Governor Alfred P. Swineford felt that it was

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 68.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 71.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 73.

¹²⁰ Gruening, 58.

...not altogether credible to us, that the despotic government of Russia expends annually more money for the education and Christianization of the native people of Alaska than does the professedly more free, liberal and enlightened one to whose care and protection they were transferred twenty years ago.¹²¹

It is apparent that the U.S. was not prepared to manage the vast resources and responsibilities attendant to the governance of Alaska. The penetration of American education into the Alaskan frontier was slow to start and required an administrator up to the task of establishing and maintaining native and white schools in Alaska.

Sheldon Jackson and the US Bureau of Education

It was finally acknowledged by the U.S. government that a general agent for education was necessary to oversee the establishment and administration of schools in Alaska. U.S. Commissioner of Education, John Eaton, suggested that there was none more qualified as Sheldon Jackson, who had invested time in, written a book about, and already established Presbyterian missionary schools in Alaska. Jackson was recommended by all of the private organizations with an interest in education in Alaska. His salary was fixed at one-thousand two-hundred dollars a year.¹²²

Sheldon Jackson was a sincere Christian and was politically savvy. Through his education and service within the Presbyterianism he had come to be allied with some of the most powerful and influential people in the federal government. Between William Cleveland, a Presbyterian minister and President Grover Cleveland's brother, and John Eaton, Commissioner of Education and faithful Presbyterian, Jackson wielded enough influence to withstand even a well-coordinated smear campaign by John H. Kinkead, Alaska's first governor. Considering the rough-and-tumble frontier politics of these early

¹²¹ Alfred P. Swineford, *Governor's (Annual) Third Report, 1887*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887)

¹²² Gruening, 59.

years of the U.S. occupation of Alaska, it was to the benefit of the religious and educational ambitions of Sheldon Jackson to have friends in high places. Thus, Jackson's devotion to his Christian missionary efforts should not be perceived as being subjugated to his charge as a government agent. In fact, they were considered, by himself, the Presbyterian Church and the U. S. Government, to be in accordance with one another.

Missionary and Government Agent: A Delicate Balance

In Jackson's report on Alaska published in 1880, he opines: "When in 1867 this vast territory, with a population of from 30,000 to 50,000 souls, was turned over to the United States, the call of God's providence came to the American church to enter in and possess the land for Christ."¹²³ This presumes that what the Russian Orthodox missionaries perpetuated among the Native Alaskans was not true Christianity. Jackson's Christian faith was inextricably bound to the English speaking, western philosophical context. Because the natives, even those converted to Christianity by the Orthodox missionaries, did not speak English and had not received the "purer religion and greater consecration"¹²⁴ of the United States, they could be considered no more than nominal Christians. Not only did he want to possess the land for Christ but also desired to reconceive of any extant Alaskan Christianity in a purely Western context. This marriage of Christianity to the English language and Western philosophical ideologies comes to inform the way that education was carried out among the natives. Jackson's education at Princeton Seminary solidified his familiarity with Charles Hodge's opinion that some

¹²³ Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska, and Missions on the North Pacific Coast*, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1880), 129. Jackson's reference to possessing the land *for Christ* is pure Manifest Destiny language and is indicative of the enmeshment of civil and religious action. While the Russians were imperialist in their claims on the Alaskan territory, their claims were in the name of Imperial Russia and not in the name of Christ. This thinking is significant to the manner in which missionary activities were performed.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

languages are more fit for conveying the truths of Christianity than others.¹²⁵ Where Sts. Cyril and Methodius had labored in the ninth century to rid the gospel of linguistic prejudice, Scottish Common Sense philosophy and the Princeton Theology returned the gospel message to the limitations of the fitness of language.

In the same way that the Orthodox missionaries were moved to advocate for the natives being oppressed by the Russians, Sheldon Jackson and his corps of missionary teachers endeavored to protect the natives from the evils being perpetrated upon them by settlers. The problem of alcoholism among the natives was brought to Alaska on the shoulders of the Russian traders and was being perpetuated by the American settlers.

It became clear that the leading voices of the American mission to Alaska believed conversion to Christianity to be the answer to native problems. Where the American missionaries wrestled with the practicalities of establishing schools, William Duncan, a British missionary to the Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia, sought to lead the way by creating a model community.¹²⁶

Native Advocacy

In much the same way that the Orthodox missionaries were placed at odds with their own countrymen, the Protestant missionaries found themselves caught between the needs of the natives and the needs of the government. This was a more difficult balance to strike due to Sheldon Jackson's role as representative of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions and the Education General for the U.S. As clergy and monks, the

¹²⁵ "In those instance in which the revelations to be recorded were objectively made, as in the discourses of our Lord, the only office of inspiration, the only thing which could distinguish the record of those discourses made by an apostle from a report made by any other auditor would be the infallible correctness of the report, and this, of course, involves the propriety and fitness of the language used to convey the thoughts to be communicated." Charles Hodge, "Inspiration," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 29 (October 1857).

¹²⁶ Naske and Slotnick, 75.

Orthodox missionaries were able to separate themselves from the functions of state if those functions were perceived as oppressive toward the natives. The occasional conflicts of interest notwithstanding, Protestant missionaries were staunch advocates of literacy among the natives. At Fort Simpson, in far northwest British Columbia, William Duncan became a notable proponent of native literacy. In October of 1857, Duncan held his first school session for eight half-breed (Tsimshian-British) children from inside the fort ranging in age from two to nine.¹²⁷ The lessons were given in English and consisted of instruction in the basics of the English language. Duncan approached a Tsimshian man named Clah and asked him if he would help him learn the Tsimshian language. Duncan came to be proficient in speaking Tsimshian and used the native language to help the children to better understand the English language.

On August 10, 1877, Sheldon Jackson and Mrs. Anna R. McFarland arrived at Fort Wrangell and this marked the commencement of Presbyterian missions in Alaska.¹²⁸ Anna McFarland became the first Protestant resident missionary in Alaska and began teaching the Tongas natives in a makeshift school situated in the fort. The curriculum consisted of singing hymns in English and saying prayers in both English and Chinook¹²⁹ which accompanied lessons in reading and speaking English.¹³⁰ Jackson's and McFarland's advocacy for literacy was concerted with social and judicial advocacy. Jackson reports:

Mrs. McFarland entered upon her work with great earnestness and wisdom. Her matured Christian experience and her eventful life on the frontier had eminently

¹²⁷ Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985), 38.

¹²⁸ Sheldon Jackson, *Alaska and Missions on the North Pacific Coast*, (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1880), 140.

¹²⁹ Chinook was a jargon comprised of French, Canadian, English and Indian words and was used by Hudson Bay Fur Company in their trade with the various Indian tribes.

¹³⁰ Jackson, *Alaska and Missions...*, 143.

prepared her for the responsible and wonderful work she was now entering upon... It will also be noticed that all the perplexities, political, religious, physical, and moral, of the native population were brought to her for solution, and that her arbitration was universally accepted.¹³¹

As to the extent of her involvement, Jackson further explains:

If any were sick, they came to her as a physician; if any were dead, she was called upon to take charge of the funeral. If husbands and wives became separated, she was the peacemaker to settle their difficulties. If difficulties arose as to property, she was judge, lawyer, and jury. If feuds arose among the small tribes or families, she was arbiter... She was called upon to interfere in cases of witchcraft; and when the Vigilance Committee would hang a white man for murder, she was sent for to act as his spiritual advisor.¹³²

It is worth noting that this illustrates the strength of the Protestant mission activities over those of the Orthodox. In the context of the Orthodox mission, many of these advocacy responsibilities could only be performed by clergy. The institution of Protestantism allowed for laity to perform what were traditionally tasks of the clergy. The primacy of the ordained clergy was recognized in the Presbyterian Church but where the clergy were absent, laity could perform pastoral duties.

The native advocacy of the American missionaries often put them at odds with their own government. The frontier administration of Alaska, comprised largely of disgruntled military officers, worked against Sheldon Jackson and his missionaries and at every opportunity attempted to discredit them. An example of this conflict can be seen in the occasion of the government officials in Sitka spreading rumors among the natives that their children were being mistreated and beaten by the white teachers at the Sitka school. There was no corroborating evidence to support that the children were being mistreated and when they were allowed to leave, they chose to stay. The natives, nonetheless, restricted their children from being involved with the missionaries and began to harbor

¹³¹ Ibid, 147.

¹³² Ibid, 147-148.

severe ill will toward the Americans. Reverend Eugene S. Willard, a missionary in Haines situated approximately two hundred miles north of Sitka, gave a sworn statement to the effect that, "So hindered was our work by this attitude of the people, directly traceable to the influence of Government misrule at Sitka, that it became necessary to suspend the mission work at Haines."¹³³

The missionaries seldom faced peril at the hands of their own government but the tentative peace maintained between the natives and the missionaries was often interrupted by the interference of the governmental agents. As mentioned above, the blurring of the line between government agent and missionary was perpetuated by Jackson's entrenched involvement in both spheres of activity.

Sheldon Jackson and William Duncan

Protestantism is not a monolithic faith tradition. Protestants have developed many theologies and their individual energies reflect the same kind of diversity. There is no doubt that Sheldon Jackson perpetuated education and religious mission according to the Presbyterian traditions. However, he was vigilant in keeping up with what other missionaries were doing in the Alaskan territories. Jackson was particularly intrigued and greatly impressed by William Duncan and his Metlakatla experiment. Duncan and Jackson forged a tenuous and, at times, volatile relationship in their efforts to civilize the natives. Their individual efforts became most profoundly enmeshed around the life of Edward Marsden, a Tsimshian Indian who grew up in Duncan's Metlakatla and befriended Jackson. Marsden was being pulled between the disparate, but equally strong,

¹³³ Reverend Eugene S. Willard, "Sworn Statement of Rev. Eugene S. Willard, of Haines, Alaska. The effect of the misrule of the Government Officials upon a Tribe 200 miles distant. Threatened Massacre of the Mission Family (12 March 1886)," Collected in Sheldon Jackson; *A Statement of Facts Concerning the Difficulties at Sitka, Alaska, in 1885*, (Washington, D.C.: Thomas McGill & Co., 1886), 18.

wills of two Protestant missionaries. Marsden, like Fr. Iakov, was a native who represented the best of what Alaskan Natives were capable of attaining.

The Metlakatla experiment began at Fort Simpson in British Columbia under the leadership of William Duncan, a lay missionary with the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church. Duncan was headstrong and, at times, obstinate but was nonetheless a devout and wholly committed missionary.¹³⁴ When he arrived at Fort Simpson in October 1857 he was startled by the half-naked and painted Tsimshian natives huddled around fires but noted that he was encouraged by their reception.¹³⁵

Henry S. Wellcome, a Duncan confidant and biographer, noted:

Fort Simpson was the center of an Indian settlement, consisting of nine Tsimshian tribes, notorious on the whole coast for their bloodthirsty savagery... constantly waging merciless war upon the neighboring tribes... Despite their atrocious barbarity, these people showed evidence of superior intellectual capacity. Their language, abounding in metaphors, is copious and expressive, and with few exceptions the sounds are soft, sweet, and flowing.¹³⁶

As noted above, Duncan wasted no time in holding classes to teach the natives the English language. About Duncan's engagement with the natives, Wellcome writes:

He had already conveyed to the Indians, the information that a white man had come, not, to barter, or to get gain, but to bring them a message from the white man's God, and to teach them the knowledge of those things in which the white man, was superior to the red man.¹³⁷

The natives were understandably curious at his claims and when he went out of the fort to their villages, Duncan was warmly received as some kind of supernatural being. After gaining their trust, Duncan opened a school at the home of a chief which was eagerly attended by children and adults alike. In September 1858, Duncan saw his first dedicated

¹³⁴ Peter Murray offers the most even-handed treatment of this polarizing figure in Alaskan history in his book, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985.

¹³⁵ Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985), 36.

¹³⁶ Henry S. Wellcome, *The Story of Metlakatla*, (London: Saxon & Co., 1887), 2-3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 9.

school building constructed at Fort Simpson with much enthusiasm by the Tsimshians.

John Arctander writes:

Within a few days the framework was in position, and the work of finishing the school building and providing the schoolroom with the necessary desks and benches, now proceeded as fast as could be expected. Mr. Duncan had intended to buy bark for the roof, but the Indians, saying that the white chief's teaching house ought to have a roof of boards, both for the floor and the roofing. Many, who could not otherwise have contributed, brought boards from their own houses, and even planks, which were part of their beds. On November 17th [1858], when the school was first opened the attendance proved to be one hundred and forty children and fifty adults.¹³⁸

As to the curriculum of Duncan's school:

Every session of the school was opened with prayer and a short address on a passage or narrative from the Bible. Then he would make the whole school learn a text in English, which he explained and paraphrased, and which they repeated again and again until it was firmly affixed in their minds.¹³⁹

The sociological impact of Duncan's school and work among the Tsimshians was indubitable. Every week there were fewer students who would arrive with their faces painted "in the heathen way"¹⁴⁰ or with the native adornments in their noses and lips. It became clear that the drunken brawls in the camp were on the decrease and some of the chiefs had already let it be known that they would abandon their medicine work.¹⁴¹ This abandonment of tribal custom and culture became a hallmark of all Christian missionary work, both Orthodox and Protestant, but was markedly more severe in the Protestant communities. Duncan's rejection of native custom, however, was not entire. In mid-March many families would leave for the fish runs on the Nass River. These fishing trips lasted for about two months and during this period he suspended classes. He urged the

¹³⁸ John W. Arctander, *The Apostle of Alaska: The Story of William Duncan of Metlakatla*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909), 129.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

parents to take their children with them. He commented, “I want to prove no hindrance to their procuring food as has been their custom.”¹⁴² Duncan was fiercely practical and his accommodation of the native fishing trips derived from the practicality of the seasonal gathering of food.

Most of Duncan’s school texts were written in English. However, books of religious instruction were privately printed in Victoria and were written in Tsimshian. He had a complete church service prepared in Tsimshian with three hymns, a prayer, a brief catechism, and fifty five short, carefully selected scripture texts.¹⁴³

There came a time in Duncan’s work with the natives when he arrived at the conclusion that in order for the natives to continue growing in their Christian faith they would need to relocate someplace removed from the “evil influences of the heathen homes and surroundings.”¹⁴⁴ More to the point, Duncan found it important to remove the natives from the evil influences of the white people at Fort Simpson. In June of 1859, at the urging of an old chief, Duncan began to look for a new site to where the village could relocate. Metlakatla,¹⁴⁵ situated approximately 20 miles south of Fort Simpson, was the former winter home of the tribes before they moved to the fort in 1834.¹⁴⁶ This was suggested as the new location of the Tsimshian village. In May of 1862, the natives dismantled the school house, loaded its pieces onto rafts, and headed toward the new settlement at Metlakatla.

¹⁴² Murray, 49.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 49-50.

¹⁴⁴ Arctander, 151.

¹⁴⁵ Metlakatla is a combination of two Tsimshian words; “metla” meaning between and “kah-thla” meaning salt. It indicated a passage between two bodies of salt water. Duncan translated it as “an inlet with an outlet.”

¹⁴⁶ Murray, 50.

Duncan began to experience resistance to his Metlakatla experiment by the political and religious leaders back in his native Britain, the details of which are of little consequence here. After much haranguing with politicians and ministers in Britain and British Columbia, Duncan began to formulate a plan to move the settlement across the water to Alaska where he was certain he could operate unfettered from the bonds of the Church Missionary Society and the provincial government. Duncan set out for Washington, D.C. bearing a letter signed by some prominent supporters in Victoria. This letter¹⁴⁷ dated November 16, 1886, was a letter of reference briefly describing the circumstances precipitating Duncan's desire to relocate to Alaska. He so impressed the politicians in the U.S. that they agreed to allow him to resettle his village in Alaska. The presence of New Metlakatla in Alaska gave Sheldon Jackson greater cause to cultivate his relationship with Duncan and his increasingly high-profile experiment in native acculturation.

The Metlakatla Experiment: Native Liberation or Assimilation?

Upon arriving at the first Metlakatla settlement, Duncan required that every adult pledge themselves to follow a charter of fifteen rules as follows:

- To give up their "Hallied," or Indian deviltry;
- To cease calling in conjurers when sick;
- To cease gambling;
- To cease giving away their property for display;
- To cease painting their faces;
- To cease drinking intoxicating drinks;
- To rest on the Sabbath;
- To attend religious instruction;
- To send their children to school;
- To be clean;
- To be industrious;
- To be peaceful;
- To be liberal and honest in trade;

¹⁴⁷ Full text of letter can be found in Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, page 188.

- To build neat houses;
- To pay the village tax.¹⁴⁸

The first five rules require the natives to abandon traditions that were actually key to preserving their culture. The next three rules are matters of Christian holiness. The final seven rules are intended to create a community built on principles of European propriety. For many historians, it is at this point that Duncan's success at improving the social situation of the Tsimshian tribes becomes obscured by his enlightenment philosophy and his colonial European ethic. In contrast, the Orthodox Christians did not order the lives of the natives so strictly. Rather, they worked to find ways to redeem the cultural traditions that gave the natives their identity.

In his "Plan for Conducting Christianizing and Civilizing Missions on the North Pacific Coast" Duncan proposed that, among other things, he would aim at breaking up the tribal system, commence a Christian settlement, and introduce and foster industries within the settlement.¹⁴⁹ The presumption in these particular goals is that the native way of life (semi-nomadic, seasonal, and communal) is inherently inferior to the European social model (industrialized, constant, and corporate).

Some of the more positive goals in Duncan's plan were his endeavor to preach the Gospel in the Native tongue, itinerate among all the tribes of the same tongue, encourage handcraft trades in the settlement, and allow all the settlers allotments of land.¹⁵⁰ These goals engender a level of independence within the new economies being established by the British and American colonies.

Duncan and Jackson: Education of the Tsimshians.

¹⁴⁸ Arctander, 154-155.

¹⁴⁹ Entire text of proposal can be found in Wellcome, 379-383.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

In the summer of 1879, prior to his appointment as Education General, Sheldon Jackson visited Duncan's first Metlakatla settlement in British Columbia. Jackson found Metlakatla to be a happy and serene environment and was so intrigued by Duncan's methods that he vowed to introduce some of these methods in the new Presbyterian missions to Alaska.¹⁵¹ Jackson recognized the potential of New Metlakatla as an educational and economic model for establishing native settlements. He recognized the potential of Duncan's settlement as a showcase for native education.¹⁵² Jackson tried in vain to entice Duncan to join the Presbyterian mission by offering financial backing.¹⁵³ Duncan rejected the prospect of denominational affiliation. His fierce independence is both the reason for the success of Metlakatla and the cause of much criticism of and opposition to his efforts.

Duncan planned to begin school classes at New Metlakatla in the fall of 1887, but it was mid-January, 1888 before they began meeting in an unheated building. Duncan insisted that students in heated classrooms caught more colds.¹⁵⁴ At this time, there were one hundred forty students under the age of twelve. Duncan made a plan to build a combination day and boarding school for another thirty-five boys and girls between twelve and fourteen. Eventually he hoped to have an industrial training school, but in the meantime did not know what to do with thirty other teenage boys. Jackson urged that they be sent to his residential Sitka Industrial School.¹⁵⁵ Duncan rejected that prospect because, according to Duncan:

¹⁵¹ Murray, 136.

¹⁵² Murray, 203.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Murray, 206.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

By leaving us there is a fear they might be so much puffed up by their superior advantages as to prove worse than useless to their people and home.¹⁵⁶

Duncan's control of the Tsimshians at New Metlakatla was entire and while he sought to improve the conditions and opportunities of the natives, he never expected them to improve to the level of the white colonists. Jackson persisted and persuaded Duncan to release twenty four boys to attend the school at Sitka.¹⁵⁷ When the boys arrived at Sitka and began their studies they were disappointed that Jackson's sixth grade was not up to the level of Duncan's fourth grade.¹⁵⁸

Much has been made of Jackson's and Duncan's relationship as being one of enmity and jealousy. But despite their differences, they maintained an active working relationship throughout their lives in Alaska. Fundamentally, their differences lay in their respective ideas of education. Historian William Gilbert Beattie writes:

Jackson was in full sympathy with freedom of the individual and believed that Indians with evident ability should receive as broad and thorough training as possible in order that they might have...an intelligent background for occupational training... and that they might raise up capable leaders among their own people. Duncan opposed this view and held that Indians should have only occupational training to make a living, a minimum of general knowledge, and but a modicum of English.¹⁵⁹

This ideological difference did not always interfere with their cooperation. However, it became particularly polarizing when a young Tsimshian resident of New Metlakatla named Edward Marsden sent a letter to Jackson on April 12, 1888. The letter read:

Mr. Sheldon Jackson:

My dear Sir. I have heard the nature of your occupation as the Commissioner of Education of Alaska. When we were on British soil in B. Columbia we were anxious to be treated as English people and that our right to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Murray, 207.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ William Gilbert Beattie, *Marsden of Alaska: A Modern Indian*, (New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1955), 50.

the land of our ancestors be acknowledged by the Gov. The English Gov. refused to grant our most earnest request on this matter and therefore we were compelled to leave our village for the sake of freedom and civilization and have come under the flag of the United States. The only thing why we have left our homes in B.C. was to be treated as men *not as Indians* and also to be educated as white people.

I am about eighteen years of age and have been educated in our village in B.C. I am very anxious to receive further education.

Dear Sir, when you come here you will find me in W. Duncan's store as I am working there. That's all I write you the only thing I wish very much is to be educated in an American School. We praise and thank God who has preserved and guided us to this place.

I am Dear Sir your obedient and faithful servant,
Edward Marsden¹⁶⁰

This letter initiated a series of events in the lives of Jackson, Duncan, and Marsden that would change the fortunes of Native Americans in the United States.

Edward Marsden: A Protestant Success Story

Edward Marsden was born in Old Metlakatla on May 19, 1869 to a full-blooded Tsimshian mother and father. Edward's parents, Samuel and Catherine, were close to Duncan. They took turns preparing his meals and while his parents served William Duncan, Edward spent many hours at Duncan's knee learning to read and play music. Samuel had hopes that, through the influence of Duncan, his son would enter the ministry.¹⁶¹ Duncan employed Edward as a clerk in his office and store so that he could learn about business. Edward so impressed a visitor from Victoria in 1883 that he was offered a chance to attend school there. Even though he was guaranteed a job to pay for his room and board, Duncan was opposed and he and Catherine refused to let Edward go to Victoria.¹⁶²

Edward's letter to Jackson prompted a visit from Jackson to New Metlakatla, now situated approximately 200 miles from Sitka, to meet with Marsden and Duncan. After

¹⁶⁰ Beattie, 20.

¹⁶¹ Murray, 222.

¹⁶² Ibid.

some persistent haranguing by Jackson, Duncan reluctantly agreed to permit Edward to attend Jackson's school in Sitka. Edward was joined by twenty five other boys and young men from Metlakatla who wished to attend Jackson's school.¹⁶³ William Beattie writes:

From the first, he showed unusual eagerness to learn, and applied himself diligently, both in and out of the classroom. He soon became the school's outstanding pupil. His understanding of English and use of it, both oral and written, improved rapidly... Diligence and a cooperative spirit in his studies and work, combined with his willing acceptance of responsibility, made Edward a general favorite... Within two years after entry in the Sitka Mission School, this energetic young Indian was learning algebra and other high school subjects.¹⁶⁴

Marsden became proof that the Native Americans in Alaska had the capacity to learn and participate in an Anglo-European society.

After nearly three years in Sitka, Jackson opened the door to Marsden's dream of being educated in an American school. Jackson proposed that he enter Marietta College in Ohio. Marsden jumped at the chance and when he returned to Metlakatla to discuss the possibility with his family and friends, he received much support. But those who were closest to Edward, his mother and Duncan, discouraged him from leaving. His mother did not want to see her only son relocate so far away. Duncan told Edward that, as Beattie relates, "it was not desirable for an Indian to seek higher education."¹⁶⁵

William Duncan acted according to his devotion to God and his role as a missionary. More than anything he wished to protect the Metlakatlans, for whom he had sacrificed much, from exploitation. Jackson was an ambitious missionary who thought well enough of the natives that he wanted to improve their lot. He was also a politician who had staked his reputation on the value of acquiring Alaska for the United States. He had much to lose in failing to show the value of Alaska's human and natural resources.

¹⁶³ Beattie, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 22-23.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 25.

Jackson's interest in Marsden, therefore, was not mere optimistic altruism. Duncan was aware the potential of Edward's exploitation by Jackson and tried to protect him from it. Duncan had much to lose in Edward's departure from Metlakatla. Edward worked tirelessly for Duncan and was a pillar of Metlakatlan society. Edward's value to Duncan and Jackson was not his identity as a Tsimshian Indian of the Northwest Pacific Coast. He was valued by Duncan and Jackson for the boost he could bring to their respective reputations. The exploitation of Edward Marsden by his two greatest benefactors, Duncan and Jackson, is illustrative of the difference between the earlier mission work of the Orthodox who recognized and affirmed the Native identity and the Protestant missionaries who simultaneously rejected and exploited the Native identity.

After Marsden completed his studies at Marietta and continued his studies at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati where he continued a speaking career he began at Marietta. He was invited to speak at religious associations and universities and was a curiosity for many white people who had never heard a Native American speak so eloquently. He was an oddity and his academic accomplishments contributed to the curiosity of Edward Marsden. He completed his course of studies at Lane and was licensed to preach in the Presbyterian Church on April 14th 1897.¹⁶⁶ On April 14th 1898, the Presbytery of Athens, Ohio formally ordained Marsden as a minister in the Presbyterian Church.¹⁶⁷ Beattie writes:

At twenty-nine years of age, Rev. Edward Marsden remembered how, when a youth in the Sitka Mission School, the conviction had come to him that someone must rouse the Indians to a realization of their own possibilities; how he was once convinced one must have thorough training for such a purpose; and he recalled the ten toilsome years of his own preparation. Then turning his face toward his

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 80.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 93.

beloved Alaska and his fellow Indians, he dedicated the remainder of his life to service among them.¹⁶⁸

Thus, Marsden came full-circle to serve his own people with the education and influence he acquired in American schools. Much like Fr. Netsvetov returned to the Aleutian island of Atkha, his home, Edward Marsden attempted to return to Metlakatla only to receive a lukewarm welcome from his mentor, William Duncan.¹⁶⁹ The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions assigned Marsden to serve the community of Saxman, Alaska just across the bay from New Metlakatla. Marsden became an advocate for education reform in the settlement of Metlakatla. Attached to a petition to the Commissioner of Education for a government school at Metlakatla, Marsden sent a letter with very strong indictments against Duncan. He wrote:

We attribute the very high and unnecessary death rate, the intoxicating propensities, the ignorance and the very shameful prevalence of immorality even among boys and girls... to the stubborn efforts of Mr. Duncan at keeping them from going to school after the age of 14 years.¹⁷⁰

Edward Marsden became an advocate for the same opportunities of which he availed himself. He accomplished very little reform in New Metlakatla due to William Duncan's stubbornness and political savvy. Nonetheless, Edward Marsden serves as an example of all that was good about the Protestant missionary endeavor in Alaska.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 93-94

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 96.

¹⁷⁰ Collected in Murray, 266.

CONCLUSION

There is little question as to the role education played in the Orthodox and Protestant missions to Alaska. Education is what prepared the missionaries for their work and, therefore, became the language of transformation in the Alaskan territory. Yet, even in their unified vision for educating the Native Americans, they operated under differing motives.

The liturgical forms of Orthodoxy lend themselves to cultural adaptation. This can be done in large part due to the fact that the tenets of the Orthodox faith are situated neither linguistically nor philosophically. Orthodoxy is established in the outcomes of the first seven ecumenical councils and is therefore concerned largely with Christology and the nature of the Trinity. The prayers and liturgies employed in all segments of the Eastern Church deal almost entirely with these theological doctrines. To say that the language has never been a problem for the Orthodox Church is an overstatement. The split of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Christians is arguably rooted entirely in the Greek terms used to describe the interrelationship of the human and divine natures of Christ. However, because there is little philosophical or ideological development in Orthodox Christianity beyond the ninth century there is less at stake in translating the liturgies into new languages. For the Russian Orthodox Church, then, the veracity of the Christian faith and its attendant liturgical elements was not thought to be rooted in any particular language. The Russians had translated much of the liturgical

material from Greek to the Russian language, neither of which derived from a common alphabet. This was never problematic for the Russians and therefore the translation of the liturgy could be done without compromising the simple truths of Christianity. It is important to recognize that change does not happen abruptly in the Russian Orthodox Church. For example, the Nikonian Reforms of 1653,¹⁷¹ instituted by Patriarch Nikon who was installed by the Tsar, against tradition, sparked a backlash of a group of Orthodox Christians who came to be known as the "Old Believers". The reforms proposed by Nikon were changes in how many fingers would be used to make the sign of the cross, the spelling of Jesus' name, whether "Alleluia" should be sung two or three times, the retention of certain words and phrases in the Creed, the number of hosts to be used in the liturgy, and whether the priests should walk around the altar with or against the passage of the sun. All of this may appear to be hair-splitting, but it illustrates that Russians did not play fast-and-loose with the details of their faith. Thus, language translation occurred thoughtfully and carefully, always with an eye toward protecting the faith from apostasy.

Another characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy was its ability to accommodate cultural proclivities. While Protestants are recognized for their adaptability to disparate cultural ideals, the Orthodox were practicing this adaptability for centuries before the Reformation. The Russians encountered nomads and barbarians in the native peoples of the eastern regions of the empire. They had success in converting the nomadic Siberians and even the warring Mongols. The ability of the missionaries to Alaska to accommodate

¹⁷¹ Among the reforms were changes in how many fingers would be used to make the sign of the cross, the spelling of Jesus' name, whether "Alleluia" should be sung two or three times, the retention of certain words and phrases in the Creed, the number of hosts to be used in the liturgy, and whether the priests should walk around the altar with or against the passage of the sun.

certain cultural practices of the natives had been time-tested in the missionary activities in mainland Russia and Asia. For example, the semi-nomadic life of the natives made it difficult to strictly adhere to the liturgical calendar. There were times of the year when the natives simply were not around and feasts and fasts could not be observed. The natives also had centuries of mythology and folk-religion that rooted their identity in the land and the seas around them. The families were typically identified by an attendant spirit (Fox, Bear, Raven, etc.) and emblems representing this spirit were used in totems and other folk art. When the American missionaries arrived on the islands after the 1867 purchase they found the family tribal emblems still present among the villages. The Orthodox missionaries did not force the natives to utterly abandon their folk traditions.

The Orthodox and Protestant missions had their share of successes and failures both morally and politically. Yet they both were able to present some fine examples of what their particular educational systems were capable of attaining. The Orthodox schools produced some fine clergy that perpetuated the Orthodox Christian faith among the natives of Alaska. Foremost among them was Iakov Netsvetov, a Creole who was educated in a missionary school and sent to Russia for seminary training. Likewise, the Protestants produced Edward Marsden, a full-blooded Tsimshian Indian who was educated in William Duncan's New Metlakatla community and, with the help of Sheldon Jackson, received a liberal arts and seminary education in American Universities. By way of comparing the exemplars of the respective mission schools, one may deduce the religious, economic and sociological impact of each ideology.

Iakov Netsvetov was educated by Orthodox missionaries and trained to be a priest in service to his own people. While he received vocational training as a ship builder and

was taught how to participate in a Russian economic and social environment, the ability of the Orthodox missionaries to maintain separateness from the institutional machinations of the Company allowed them to affirm the natives in their indigenous customs. Under the service of the Orthodox missionaries, the natives, therefore, were allowed to retain their millennia old identity as Aleutian Islanders. In the same way that Edward Marsden was trained in an American university and seminary, Iakov Netsvetov went away to Russia to attend seminary and receive his training as a priest. He was not exploited as an example of the capacity of natives to learn. Their capacity to learn was utilized to instruct them in literacy, science, agriculture, language, and faith. Richard, L. Dauenhauer, in his paper “Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education,” writes:

There is no attack in Orthodoxy on the basic worth of the individual. There is no attack on a person’s language. Rather, the Church sought to instill a sense of pride in the Native language and foster popular literacy in it.¹⁷²

This sense of identity is reinforced by the value placed on the missionaries becoming increasingly literate in the indigenous languages. The efforts of Ioann Veniaminov and Iakov Netsvetov to develop written language materials for the Aleuts ensured that Russian, while the *lingua franca*, would not extinguish the particular native languages.

Through their lives lived among the Native Aleuts in native villages, the Orthodox endeavored to improve the lives of natives by affirming their identity as natives. The Protestant missionaries, by situating the natives in boarding schools and military forts, strived to improve the native’s lives by making them more European. In his book, *The Americanization of Alaska*, Ted C. Hinckley writes:

¹⁷² Richard L. Dauenhauer, *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education*, Occasional Paper No. 3, (Fairbanks, Alaska: Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, 1980), 9.

In company with thousands of other nineteenth century Christian field workers, Jackson had come to realize that unless native peoples could acquire a rudimentary grasp of the white man's civilization, Christianization must fail.¹⁷³

Historians recognize the goal of the protestant missionary ideology as not simply

Christianization but Westernization. Dauenhauer offers:

Conceptually, I believe this to be the most important single part of Sheldon Jackson's philosophy: only through massive acculturation could the natives be Christianized and therefore spared the military havoc of Native Americans in the lower 48 states.¹⁷⁴

Jackson may very well have been protecting the natives from the havoc of Department of Indian Affairs involvement. This begs the question: Why not use his influence to advocate for the natives against inhuman government activity? The Orthodox missionaries put themselves at great risk in their advocacy of the natives against the government officials.

The explicit effort of the U.S. Government and its agents to eradicate the indigenous languages can be seen documented in publications such as the February 1888 issue of *The North Star*, a newspaper published in Sitka and edited by Jackson and Professor William A. Kelly. This periodical included the following regarding the primacy of the English language:

The Board of Home Missions has informed us that government contracts for educating Indian pupils provide for the ordinary branches of an English education to be taught, and that no books in any Indian language shall be used, or instruction given in that language to Indian pupils. The letter states that this rule will be strictly enforced in all government Indian schools. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs urges, and very forcibly too, that instruction in their vernacular is not only of no use to them but is detrimental to their speedy education and civilization. It is now two years and more since the use of the Indian dialects were first prohibited in the training school here. All instruction is given in English. Pupils are required

¹⁷³ Hinckley, 115.

¹⁷⁴ Dauenhauer, 13.

to speak and write English exclusively; and the results are tenfold more satisfactory than when they were permitted to converse in unknown tongues.¹⁷⁵

There are extant more examples of this kind of rhetoric from the pens of other missionaries and scholars of the time.¹⁷⁶

In the context of the Alaskan mission school, Orthodox Christian theology and praxis is better equipped to preserve the identity of the individual and affirm the cultural identity of a people group than the Protestant theology and praxis. There is much to be admired in the work of Sheldon Jackson and his missionary teachers. They sacrificed and suffered much in their service to the Native peoples. But one must consider whether all of that effort and sacrifice was necessary in light of the considerable work that had been accomplished by the Russian Orthodox missionaries who had already made converts of and paved the way for the successful education of the Natives.

¹⁷⁵ Sheldon Jackson and William A. Kelly, eds, *The North Star*, (Sitka, Alaska, 1888), February 1888.

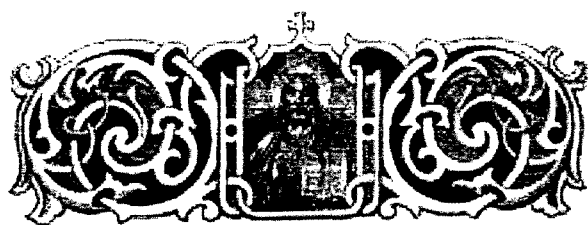
¹⁷⁶ See Livingston F. Jones, *A Study of the Tlingits of Alaska*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 41-42. See also Hall Young, *Hall Young of Alaska: The Mushing Parson*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1927).

Appendix



Aleutskiy Bukvar'
[Aleut Primer]

Sanktpeterburg'
[Saint Petersburg]



УНАНГАЛІА АСАУКА.

А Г Ё Д И К К А М Н П С Т
а г ё д и к к а м н п с т

Х Х Ъ Ч Х Ъ Ю А
х х ъ ч х ъ ю а

А Г Ё Д И К К А М Н П С Т
а г ё д и к к а м н п с т

Aleut Alphabet

(3)

КАЛЕНДЕРНИХ

МОЛИТВЫ

АЛГАЛАНХ ТАЛАДДАГА.

ПОВОСЖДЕННЫМ.

АЛААХ КАНУХ АЛАА
 САНХ КАНУХ АНГАНХ
 АНГАЛГАДНГАСАДАГАНХ
 А) АСАГАНХ АДАНХ, АМИНЬ.

Во имя Отца и Сына
 и Святого Духа, аминь

ГҮНӨДӨНХ НҮӨНХ ХРИ-
 СТҮСАНХ, АНГҮГҮСАНХ АЛАА,
 ТҮНХ ТҮННҮТҮГҮСАНХ -
 КӨӨГӨ НҮӨНХ Б) ТҮННХ
 НТҮГҮННІСАДА.

Господи Иисусе Хри-
 сте, Сыне Божий, помилуй
 меня грешного.

АЛАЧҮГАХ А) АДАМННХ
 [НҮГҮННХ] ТҮМАНННХ Г)
 АНГҮГҮСАНХ! АЛАЧҮГАХ Б)
 АДАМННХ [НҮГҮННХ].

Слава Тебѣ, Боже нашъ,
 слава Тебѣ!

Царю Небесный:

НННМАГҮГҮ! КАГАТАМХ НННМАГҮГҮ
 ТАМХ, АНГҮГҮСАНХ АНГҮГҮСАНННХ, АЛАМХ АЛАМХ
 АНГҮГҮСАНХ АНХ, АНННХ АНГҮГҮСАНХ, АЛАМАНХ.

А) АСАДАДАГАНХ. Б) НҮӨНХ. В) АНГҮГҮСАНХ.
 Г) ТҮМАНННХ.

(Top of Page)

“Daily Prayers” with Aleut on left and Russian on right.

“In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Forgive me.”

(Bottom of Page)

Prayer: “Ruler of Heaven” in Aleut.

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