

LITTLE RUSSIAN
PHILOKALIA



Vol. III: St. Herman

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA
III
St. Herman of Alaska

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

SERIES

Vol. I ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV: Spiritual Instructions

Vol. II ABBOT NAZARIUS OF VALAAM: Counsels

Vol. III ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA: Treasury of Spirituality

Vol. IV ST. PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY: Field Flowers



Үбөрҥүн Тҕерман

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

Valaam engraving of 1894, based on a miniature aquarelle of Nun Elizabeth Yanovsky

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

VOL. III

*A Treasury of
Saint Herman's Spirituality*



NEW VALAAM MONASTERY • ALASKA

St. Herman Press

1989

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St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood

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PREFACE

NOVEMBER 15/28, 1986 marks 150 years since the repose of St. Herman, one of the most vivid representatives of the flowering of sanctity in 19th-century Russia. The scope of the significance of this flowering has not been grasped by 20th-century Christians, and its total impact has remained inaccessible to the God-thirsting neophytes of our days.

We all see clearly the influential phenomenon of Dostoyevsky, St. John of Kronstadt, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, the Optina Elders, and one of the major sources of their spirituality, St. Paisius Velichkovsky. But the field of modern-day sanctity has not been presented in its genuine, Patristic form, so that it can be available as a beneficial and practical tool. A hindrance to this, unfortunately, has been the spirit of rebellious reformers and abstract thinkers who, being contemporaries of these great luminaries, have "missed the boat." By seeking some abstract, academic way of seeing Christian mysticism in action, they have cut themselves off, they have separated modern scholarship from the very source of sanctity, from a brilliant and light-emitting phenomenon, remnants of which are still alive, unsuspected, dying. . . .

St. Herman belonged to the first wave of the outpouring of sanctity initiated by the spiritual genius of St. Paisius Velichkovsky. He was a younger contemporary of St. Paisius and was in contact with his disciples. Moreover, he was so permeated with St. Paisius' spirit that he may rightly be considered one of the most outstanding bearers of the Paisian legacy. This legacy he carried to the American continent. He even brought with him fragments of the Slavonic *Philokalia*, putting these Patristic texts to use while completing his own path to sanctity in this land. Being isolated from the centers of the Paisian flowering

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in Russia and the Balkans, he spent much of his energy surviving and helping impoverished orphans to survive. This, of course, did not hinder his dazzling manifestations of sanctity, but it caused these manifestations to be hidden in the shadows of a primitive, newly-developed country, Alaska. His significance was barely felt in Russia, his native land. Had he remained there, his sanctity could have been placed on a candlestand and shone to thousands, as was the case with his friends and co-strugglers, Abbot Nazarius, St. Seraphim, Theophan of New Lake, Alexis of Konevits, Basiliscus and Zosima of Siberia, and others.

Because of St. Herman's isolation, we have almost no written homilies of spiritual instructions as we have from others. Nevertheless, the meager teachings of his Spiritual Treasury, if coupled with incidents from his holy life, are sufficient to comprise a volume of instructive texts. In presenting these bits and pieces of his own writing and that of his contemporaries who made known his significance, we have attempted to portray the Saint that God gave to America, hoping that the missing gaps will be filled by the Patristic quest of the reader. Thus, our attempt here has not been to produce a complete biography according to chronological order (which, however, *is* being prepared), but rather to present sources from highly reliable authors whose view of sanctity was not modelled after the academic fashions of their times or ours. Further, we have not attempted to conjure up some kind of legendary giant, but rather to confront the reader with the vivid icon of St. Herman's "patristic" humbleness, even his powerlessness before the oppressive spirit of his environment, which tended to overshadow the image of a saint.

St. Herman was in spirit no different from his famous contemporaries — St. Seraphim, St. Tikhon, etc. — nor was he any different from the monastic fathers of the Egyptian desert, Palestine, Mt. Athos, Gaul, Ireland or ancient Holy Russia. His true significance accuses those "weavers" of his legend who merely wish to utilize him for the sake of political gain. Whether he, as a missionary, taught grammar, arithmetic or the Law of God is of secondary importance. First of all, his significance lies in his authentic monastic, hesychast tradition, which he bequeathed to the American soil.

There is no need to apologize for St. Herman and his brother missionaries because they did not build a whole series of ecclesiastical centers. The calibre of their classic monastic inheritance far surpassed any earthly achievements. It is in the eyes of those who have not attuned themselves to ultimate, mystical achievements that St. Herman's mission appears deficient. Alas, the historic conditions which developed in 19th-century Alaska were not conducive to the spiritual development of that land. All the attempts to continue St.

PREFACE

Herman's Valaam traditions on his holy island brought little visual success, but who would dare judge their spiritual fruits? Being in the full Patristic tradition of the universal Orthodox Church, St. Herman's spirituality is not only marvelous in itself, but is able to kindle a spark of inspiration to follow his path on the part of the contemporary young individual. With this in mind, we present the third volume of the Little Russian Philokalia, the teachings of Russian Fathers of the recent past.

The material presented here has never before been published in any language, Russian or English, in its entirety in one volume. Many of the authentic letters of St. Herman have never been translated into English, and among the translations which have been made, not all display a proper understanding of the semi-Slavonic popular language used by St. Herman's contemporaries, and especially of the contrition (*umilenie*) evoking tone used by a true monastic elder, as in the case of monastic writers like Elder Zosima or St. Herman's close friend Elder Theophanes of New Lake, who left a whole volume of endearing Patristic instructions to his spiritual daughters, nuns of his neighboring monasteries.

The present volume contains:

1. The complete existent 11 letters of St. Herman.
2. The *Prima Vita* of 1868, written at the request of Abbot Damascene of Valaam, and based mostly on the account supplied by St. Herman's close disciple, Schema-monk Sergius.
3. "A Treasury of St. Herman's Spirituality," consisting of various memoirs and bits of information related to St. Herman's teaching on Orthodox piety and the apprehension of the atmosphere of Philokalic life, which teaching comes to us across a century and a half and is quite distinctly Patristic.
4. A listing, originally written in St. Herman's own hand, of the books of his personal library.
5. The Bibliography in the back, which is deliberately kept to a minimum since it will be given in its entirety in the forthcoming complete *Life: St. Herman of Alaska and the American Paradise*.

The complete *Life and Miracles* of St. Herman began to be compiled ever since I returned from his grave-site on Spruce Island. I was deeply moved there by the ascetic life of Archimandrite Gerasim, who lived on the site of St. Herman's former dwelling place deep in almost impenetrable marshes, alone in

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an extremely damp climate for so many years, all these years enduring such unjust persecution by church authorities of all three Russian Orthodox jurisdictions, *i.e.*, ecclesiastical church factions. I myself was warned beforehand about his “uncanonicity” and met a very uncomplimentary attitude towards him from the Kodiak clergy at that time. Later, when I learned more about St. Herman, and how he had been regarded in a similar way, this attitude only confirmed for me the very identity of Father Gerasim as the very man about whom 100 years earlier St. Herman had prophesied so clearly. I loved Fr. Gerasim and, just like him, I dedicated my life to St. Herman — as well as to Fr. Gerasim himself, whose life comprises an important part of St. Herman’s life story.

Twenty-five years ago I embarked on writing the life story of St. Herman, only to be constantly inspired by new material on his mission, which prompted me more to action than to writing. After all these years instead of a modest-sized volume on St. Herman’s life I ended up with some of the results of what St. Herman set out to accomplish, not only in Alaska but in the whole of America: a Missionary Brotherhood for all people of this and the English-speaking world; a Printing Press with Patristically-oriented books and magazines; a monastery and a convent; the traditional Valaam typicon put to use by monastics in New Valaam on Spruce Island; theological courses as preliminary requirements for baptizing modern-age natives into the fullness of St. Herman’s *Holy Russia* tradition. With the help of hard-working and *podvig*-loving brothers and sisters, God granted us to finally even come out with this preliminary volume in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of St. Herman’s repose and the forthcoming jubilee of the millenium of Holy Russia’s baptism!

May our Lord be glorified!

Abbot Herman (Podmoshensky)

November 15th (28th), 1986

The night of St. Herman’s repose

INTRODUCTION

St. Herman and the *Philokalia*

THE EARLY MONASTIC LIFE of St. Herman began under the wings of the elders of Sarov. Alongside the harsh strictures issued to confine monasticism in the 18th century, great hope arose among the homeless God-seekers of the age. The entire monastic life at Sarov had been interrupted time and again, and elders had been banished. These fearless confessors of incomparably noble stature numbered among their ranks St. Seraphim* and, as well, several other righteous men who had a formative influence on the life of St. Herman. There he first met his dear benefactor Elder Nazarius,** later Abbot of Valaam; Elder Theodore,*** who soon went to revive the nearby Sanaxar Monastery; and Fr. Theophanes, the close friend of the future Apostle to America. What moved these elders? To a man they were instrumental in the appearance in Russia of the Slavonic *Philokalia* and the revival of Orthodox monasticism organized upon the traditional coenobitic model.

Leaving the spiritual nursery of Sarov, many young ascetics, among whom were Theophanes and his lifelong friend St. Herman, followed Elder Theodore to the cross of a life of the severest poverty and wealthiest devotion. Elder Theodore here in Sanaxar anticipated the labors and achievements which the disciples of St. Paisius were to inspire in Russia. He embodied in himself the last vestiges of the Russian school of sobriety and inner watchfulness which

*See *Little Russian Philokalia*, Vol. I: St. Seraphim of Sarov.

**See *ibid.*, Vol. II: Abbot Nazarius of Valaam.

***See *ibid.*, Vol V: Elder Theodore of Sanaxar.

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had been sown in the Russian land in the 14th century by the disciples of St. Gregory of Sinai. Elder Theodore initiated the reawakening of Russian monasticism and established delicate lines of communication with the great Abba Paisius. When the former was unjustly and ruthlessly banished, Paisius undertook through correspondence the consolation of his spiritual children, and the newly-arrived Paisian monk Cleopas confirmed Elder Theodore's disciples and shared the indescribable riches with which he had returned to his native land. The disciples headed southward living for a time in the Roslavl forests among the hesychasts who reverently copied the Patristic writings on prayer of the heart and treasured the growing Paisian legacy. Having once tasted of the sweet nectar of interior prayer the young St. Herman searched diligently with pain of heart for fruits of the same vine. They headed to Astrakhan to where disciples of Paisius now began to dwell and where Nicephorus (Theotokis), a good friend of Paisius who had sent the latter the first printed text of the Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian, had been Archbishop. St. Herman and Fr. Theophanes parted ways, Fr. Theophanes headed for Paisius and St. Herman sought a desert not subject to the vicissitudes of the Roslavl forests where he could delight in the fruits of interior prayer. After dwelling for a while in the St. Sergius Hermitage near Petersburg, he heard that Abbot Nazarius had brought from Sarov to Valaam, and restored there, that wonderful monastic way of life. Before long he too joined Abbot Nazarius and then lived for a considerable time as a recluse in the inner desert of Valaam.

It is well-known that at this time Metropolitan Gabriel continued his close spiritual communion with both Abbot Nazarius and St. Paisius. When he received the Slavonic *Philokalia* from Paisius, Metropolitan Gabriel asked both Abbot Nazarius and the old companion of St. Herman, Fr. Theophanes, to be among those to review and correct it. Fr. Nazarius had made Valaam at this time into an actual testing-ground for the soundness and accuracy of the Slavonic text of the *Philokalia* and as well a place where its treasures could become manifest.

The year 1794 arrived. By the designs of God's Providence evangelization of the New World was for eternity to be colored with the spiritual hues of the writings on unceasing prayer, which actually came off the press in 1794. St. Herman was among the first to step forward to bear the light of faith to distant lands. Passing through Petersburg, St. Herman obtained a printed copy of this dear treasure with whose contents he had earlier become familiar. With hope he crossed vast Siberia and the stormy Pacific and, most trying of all, endured afflictions from his benighted kinsmen who strove to keep the natives of Alaska

INTRODUCTION

in the darkness of slavery. He alone persevered in his obedience of Apostolic work, since he had indeed beheld *the good things of Jerusalem* (Psalm 127:6), having not simply theoretical knowledge about God and religion but having been trained in the inner workings of the heart.

He most certainly had a model guiding and sustaining him. When the appropriate time arrived, when he had grown so tired of the intrigues of the merchants and traders, he withdrew to Spruce Island and called this same New Valaam, planting in American soil the fruitful shoots of the Russian desert.

Among the disciples of St. Herman, Simeon Yanovsky holds a special place. He, among others, was loaned the Slavonic *Philokalia* by St. Herman. Consequent to their relationship, Yanovsky, upon returning to Russia, settled in Kaluga and became the disciple of Elder Anthony of Optina who had been nurtured in the very same way as St. Herman, living as well for a time in the Roslavl Forests. One does not need to ask why Yanovsky would seek out such a spiritual director. It is a question of fidelity which lies at the very heart of love. Simeon Yanovsky later entered the St. Tikhon of Kaluga Hermitage, which had been revived by the disciples of Elder Leonid of Optina, and died as the Schema-monk Sergius.

The simplicity of the latter part of St. Herman's life is the surest witness to his spirituality. The crudeness of the Russian traders and wild character of the natives required no big words or high-mindedness. In the life of St. Herman we reach a point when words are not needed as they would not be able accurately to describe the content and richness of his life. After manifold apostolic labors St. Herman withdrew again to his beloved desert with his inseparable companion, the *Philokalia*. The biographical sources reflect that no one who knew him had access to his interior life. Just where we wish to know more there is no description. To whom and for whom was he to pour forth the spiritual directions we yearn to hear? We behold no such head-knowledge, no such presumption, no pains to teach others what they could not fathom. We see simply love, the restoration of the image of God to a state of likeness to God, harmony, fatherly protection and prophecy. Likewise in his letters, where one might like to see exalted spiritual discourses, he reports on the state of the mission, the welfare, or more precisely, the oppression of the natives and heart-felt reports to his father and abbot. The eye-witnesses of his life did not share his way of life, but involuntarily they supply hints and bring us to the threshold of his warm, loving heart where we find nothing novel, no topic for idle disquisitions; to the contrary, we find stillness — a reflection of Valaam.

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When he chose to depart, he was escorted forth into the unending age on the anniversary of the repose of St. Paisius Velichkovsky, upon the foundation of whose life rests all his achievements and labors.

The teaching of St. Herman can be grouped into three categories:

1. First and foremost, his monastic teaching drawn from his life and the reminiscences of those who knew him. As a monastic Father, he was equal in stature to the original *Philokalia* authors.
2. His teaching as a missionary, addressed to the pagan that was in need of his catechetical instructions.
3. Most significant for today, his teaching for the conversion of lukewarm Christians into fervent Orthodox heroes of ascetic exploit. In this regard, the legacy that he passed on to his spiritual son, the future Schema-monk Sergius Yanovsky, is especially significant for the modern reader of the *Little Russian Philokalia*.

Monk Gerasim (Eliel)

St. Herman Monastery

Platina, California

November 15th (28th), 1988

The repose of Sts. Paisius and Herman



I
The
PRIMA VITA
(Original Life)
of St. Herman

*Written in 1864 by order of
Abbot Damascene of Valaam*



FIRST ICON OF ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

The Saint is depicted standing on Monk's Rock; behind him is Spruce Island, showing the beach house on Monk's Lagoon.

*Painted with the blessing and approval of Fr. Gerasim in 1962
by Reader Gleb Podmoshensky*

Life of Valaam Monk Herman, American Missionary

Let your light so shine before men . . .

(Matthew 5:16)

*I*N 1793 AN Ecclesiastical Mission was composed in Valaam Monastery and sent to preach the Word of God to the wild natives of Northwestern America, who only ten years prior to that had begun to embrace Russian citizenship. Among the members of this mission was monk Herman.

After their departure from Valaam Monastery the missionaries, from time to time, informed their brethren in Christ concerning their activities.¹ Although these letters of information, most likely, continued for the stay of the Valaam monks in America, they were not all preserved in the monastery archives. Thus Valaam Monastery knew the labors and the fate of the individual brethren from only the writings of Mr. Sturdza² and some others.³ These writings described the general progress of the preaching of the missionaries in the Russian-American territory, especially major events in the lives of these preachers, but lacked information about Monk Herman. The information of the latter was brought to Valaam near the end of 1864 by one pilgrim, who lived approximately ten years in America on his own business and who personally knew the

1. Their letters were published in *Sketches of Russia* by Vadim Passek, Book 5 (Moscow, 1842), pp. 224-236.

2. *Documents on the Labors of Russian Orthodox Missionaries from 1796 to 1853* (Moscow, 1857).

3. Manuscript description of the voyage around the world of Hieromonk Gideon of St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra and others.

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closest disciple of Father Herman. The account of Creole Gerasim Ivanova-Zyrianov was given in a written form to the Abbot of Valaam monastery.

Moved by the desire to receive more detailed information about the Elder, and namely to confirm the existing information, the abbot in the same year, 1864, wrote inquiries to Hierarch Innocent, Archbishop of Kamchatka and the Aleutians, to Bishop Peter, who had previously resided in New Archangelsk and was a vicar of the Kamchatka diocese, and to the disciple of Monk Herman, the aforementioned Creole Gerasim Zyrianov.

While these inquiries were being transferred by sea, the Abbot of Valaam monastery received from Kaluga in 1865 a letter from Simeon Ivanovich Yanovsky. In this letter Mr. Yanovsky explained that he personally knew "the former monk of Valaam monastery, esteemed Holy Man, Great Ascetic." He preserved two of his letters, "as a treasure from the Holy Elder, whose memory is to him holy," and offered to provide these two letters to the Abbot, as well as some other interesting information concerning the life of the Elder. A correspondence began: information concerning the Elder was acquired. They were "written from the heart with an intent of making it better and more truthful." Together with this it became evident that the man who provided this, S. I. Yanovsky, was himself, from 1817 to 1821, the main governor of all Russian-American colonies, and that now, according to his expression, he is "a sick, old man of 77 and is at the side of his grave; who knows, maybe the Lord prolonged his life in order to pass along the information about the life of the Holy Elder."⁴

Further, answers were received in 1867 in reply to the letters of the Abbot of Valaam (Abbot Damascene) which were sent across the ocean. Bishop Innocent had confirmed the reality of his miraculous deliverance from drowning through the prayerful intercession of Father Herman,⁵ which was reported, among other things, by the aforementioned pilgrim. The Right Reverend Bishop Peter submitted information about the Elder which, as he confirms, upon his request was collected and written by a Kodiak citizen Constantine Larionov, who was worthy of credence. "I do not know," wrote the bishop to the abbot concerning this, "whether the Kodiak Creole Gerasim Zyrianov will send you any information about Father Herman, but I have, on my part, commissioned a Kodiak priest and a Kodiak citizen, Constantine Larionov, to write all that they know or have heard from others about Father Herman. I collected what I could and am hereby sending it to you."⁶

4. His original letters are at the Valaam Monastery office in file 15, 1859.

5. This original letter of March, 1867 is in the office of Valaam Monastery.

6. This original letter of September 9, 1865, no. 55, is in the office of Valaam Monastery.

PRIMA VITA

Thus fully reliable data on the life of Father Herman was collected in Valaam. This unexpected collection of information occurred exactly 30 years after the death of the Elder, who had prophesied that in precisely that time people would remember him as if hearing his testament to his beloved spiritual relatives, the inhabitants of his beloved Valaam. We will now attempt, on the basis of the aforementioned sources, to depict the events of his life as a memorial of our blessed Father.

Monk Herman came from the businessmen of the town of Serpukhov in the Moscow diocese. We do not know how he was called before his monastic tonsure, or what his last name was. From his very young years he had a great zeal towards a pious way of life, and became a monk 16 years after his birth. At first he entered the Holy Trinity Sergius Hermitage, located on a Finnish bay on the Peterchhoff road about twelve miles from Petersburg. At that time St. Sergius Hermitage was attached to St. Sergius Lavra (near Moscow) and was governed by superiors sent from the Lavra. It is most likely that Father Herman, a native of the Moscow territory, visited Moscow and made pilgrimages to St. Sergius Moseow Lavra. There he had the occasion to find out about the holy branch of the holy Lavra, Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Petersburg Hermitage. This, most likely, was the cause of his entering the Hermitage.

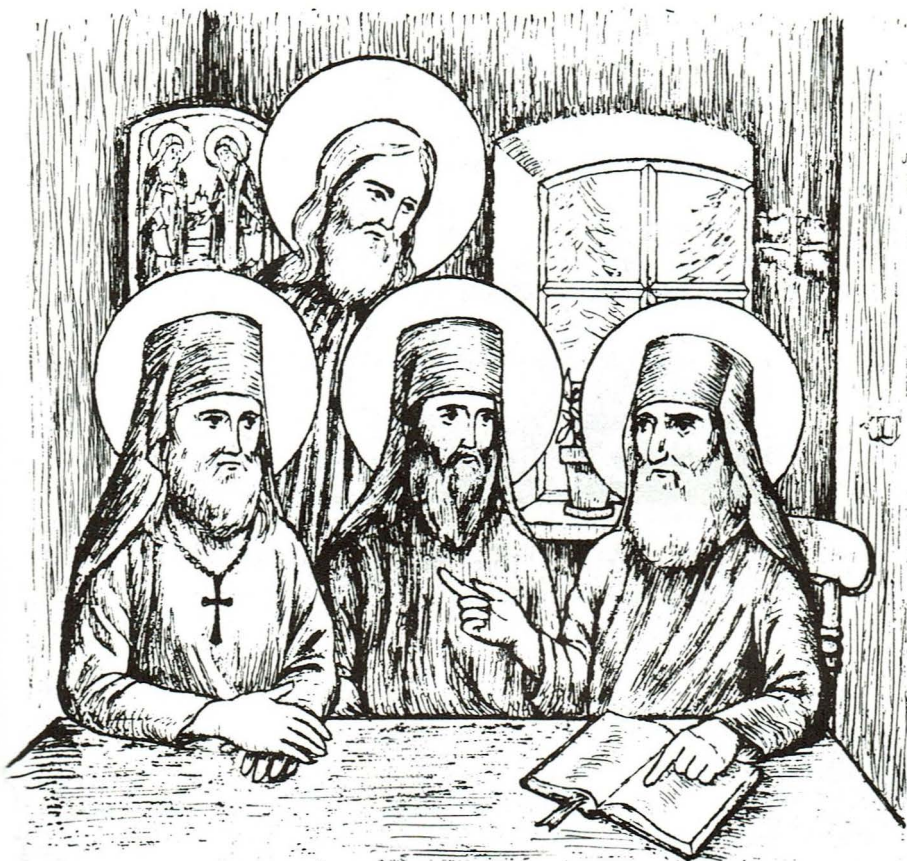
In St. Sergius Hermitage, incidentally, a certain event occurred to Father Herman. On his neck on the right side under his beard there appeared a certain carbuncle. The pain was horrible. The swelling grew rapidly and disfigured his whole face; it was very difficult to swallow and there was an intolerable smell. In such a dangerous condition, expecting to die, Father Herman did not turn to an earthly physician, but, locking himself in his cell, with warm prayer and tears he turned to the icon of the Heavenly Queen, begging from her healing. He prayed the whole night, then with a wet towel he wiped the face of the Most Pure Theotokos, and with this towel he tied his swelling. Continuing to pray with tears he fell with exhaustion into sleep on the floor and saw in a dream that he was healed by the Most Holy Virgin. In the morning he woke up, stood up and, to his great amazement, found himself completely healthy: the swelling dispersed without breaking out, leaving only a small lump as a small reminder of the miracle. The doctors who were told about this healing did not believe, insisting that the carbuncle must have been cut out, or had broken by itself. But the words of the physicians were the words of the weakness and inexperience of man in the face of the grace of God acting, and the order of nature being overcome. Such occurrences humble man's mind under the mighty hand of God's mercy!

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Father Herman lived in the St. Sergius Hermitage for some five or six years and later moved to Valaam monastery, which is situated on the archipelago of the majestic islands amidst the limitless waters of Ladoga Lake. With his whole soul he came to love Valaam monastery, its unforgettable Abbot, the great Elder Nazarius, and all its brethren. "Your paternal kindness to my lowliness," he wrote later to Abbot Nazarius from America, "will not be erased from my heart, neither the terrible impenetrable Siberian wilds, nor its dark forests, nor the great rivers will wash away, neither the stern ocean will extinguish these feelings. For in my mind I imagine my beloved Valaam and look always at it across the great ocean." In his letters he addresses Elder Nazarius as "most holy, my beloved Batiushka," and all of the Valaam brethren he called "beloved and most treasurable." He called his deserted Spruce Island, the place of his dwelling in America, "New Valaam." And, as is apparent, he was always in contact with his spiritual homeland. As late as 1823, thirty years after his stay in the American territory, he wrote letters to Father Nazarius' successor, Abbot Innocent.

Here is what is said concerning the life of Father Herman on Valaam by his contemporary, who was also tonsured by Abbot Nazarius and was the future abbot of Valaam -- Father Barlaam. "Father Herman went through various obediences, and as being ready for any good thing, he was, among other things, sent to the city of Serdobol in order to supervise over the marble quarry there. The brethren loved Father Herman and would impatiently await his return from Serdobol to the monastery. Having tested the zeal of the young ascetic, the wise Elder Father Nazarius blessed him to go and live alone in the desert. This desert was located in a dense forest, about a mile's distance from the monastery, and until now has retained the name: "Hermanova [later known as Herman's field]." On feast days Father Herman would come from his desert to the monastery. It would happen that during small vespers, standing in the cliros, he would sing in a pleasant tenor voice the refrain of the canon: "Sweetest Jesus, save us sinners," "O Most Holy Theotokos, save us," and tears as hail would pour out of his eyes.

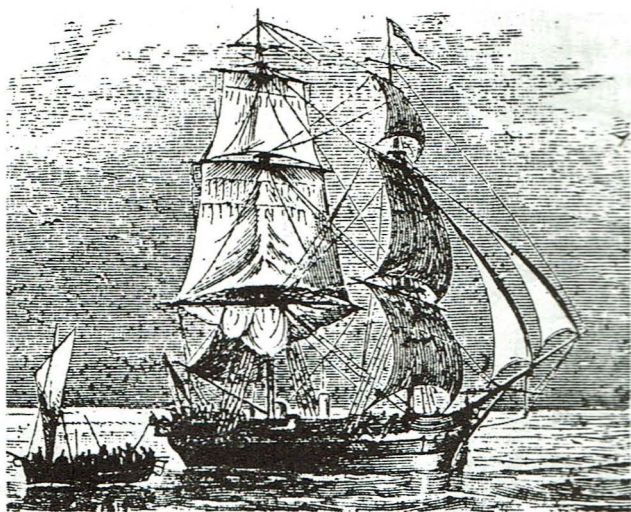
In the second half of the last century the boundaries of Holy Russia on the north were being enlarged with the activity of Russian *promyshlenniki* (scouts and pioneers). The Aleutian islands were discovered. These comprise on the great ocean a chain from the eastern border of Kamchatka to the western shore of Northern America. With the discovery of these islands there was found a holy need of the evangelical light for the wild inhabitants there. For this holy task, with the blessing of the Synod, Metropolitan Gabriel entrusted Elder



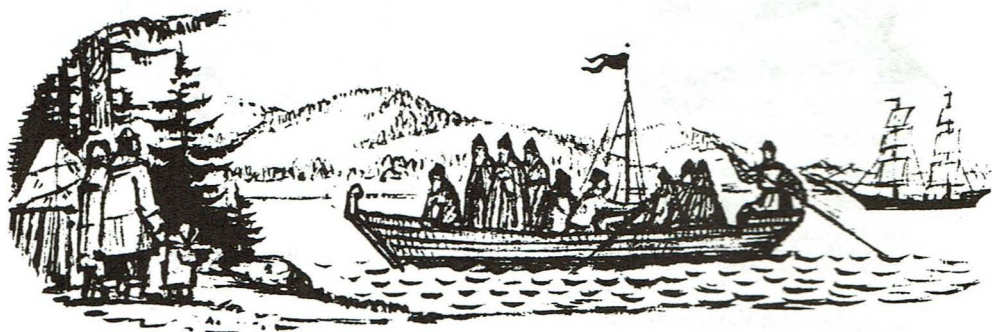
SAINTS IOASAPH, HERMAN, JUVENAL, AND ABBOT NAZARIUS
in order from left to right.

Leaving Valaam Monastery, the future American missionaries are instructed by Blessed Nazarius in spiritual principles by which all Orthodox missionaries are to conduct themselves.

Illustration by Fr. Damascene.



A ship similar to the "Three Hierarchs," upon which St. Herman and his companions arrived in Russian America.



The Valaam missionaries landing on Alaskan soil
while Kodiak Aleuts welcome them.

A drawing by N. Popkov.

PRIMA VITA

Nazarius to select capable men from the Valaam brethren. Ten men were chosen, and one of their number was Father Herman. In 1794 those chosen men left Valaam monastery for their appointed destination. With holy zeal the evangelizers quickly spread the evangelical light amidst the new sons of Russia. Several thousands of people accepted Christianity. A school was founded to educate the newly-baptized children. A church was built where the missionaries lived. But by the unfathomable ways of God the general success of the mission was not long standing. After five years of his greatly profitable activity, the head of the mission and his whole suite drowned. This was Archimandrite Ioasaph, who had been raised to the rank of a bishop. Before him, the zealous Hieromonk Juvenaly was vouchsafed a martyric crown, while others one after another left the mission. Finally there remained only Father Herman, and it was to him that the Lord sent grace to labor longer than all his co-brethren in enlightening the Aleuts.

We mentioned before that the place of residence of Father Herman in America was Spruce Island, called by him "New Valaam." This island is separated by a strait two miles from Kodiak Island. A wooden monastery is located here for the placement of members of the mission and a large wooden church built in the name of Christ's Resurrection. But Spruce Island is not large and is all covered with forest. In the middle of it there runs a small river into the sea. Father Herman chose this picturesque island by himself as a place for his own seclusion, and dug there with his hands a cave in the ground and spent his first whole summer in it. By winter the Russian American Company built a cell for him near his earthen cave. He lived in this cell until his death, turning the cave into a place for his repose as a grave. Not far from the cell there rose a wooden chapel and a little wooden house for his school and for visitors. This was the ground of great ascetic labors by Father Herman in the course of more than forty years of his life. Here in the garden he himself dug the beds, planted potatoes, cabbage, and other vegetables. The basket, in which the Elder carried sea cabbage (kelp) from the shore in order to fertilize the earth, was so big that they say that it was hard for one man to lift by himself. Father Herman, however, to the amazement of all, would carry it with kelp without any outside help for long distances. One winter night his disciple Gerasim accidentally saw him in the woods and walking barefoot with such a huge log that it was hardly possible for four men to carry it. Thus labored the Elder, and all that he acquired was filled with immeasurable toil; all this he did to provide for food, clothing and books for his orphans.

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His clothing was the same winter and summer. He did not wear a shirt. Instead he wore a form of deerskin shirt without sleeves, which, for more than eight years, he would not take off and could not change. Consequently all the fur wore off and it became soiled. In addition he wore his shoes, his cassock, his faded-out and patched mantle, and his klobuk. In this clothing he walked everywhere in all types of weather: in rain, snow, winterstorm and in severe frost.

A medium sized bench, covered with deerskins, whose fur had worn out with time, served as his bed. For his pillow he had two bricks which were hidden under the deerskins and were thus unnoticeable to visitors. He had no blanket. A wooden board replaced it, which lay on his stove. Father Herman called this board his blanket and willed to have his dead body covered with it. It was fully his size. "When I visited the cell of Father Herman," stated Creole Constantine Larionov, "I the sinful one sat on his bed, and I consider it the height of my happiness!"

When it would happen that Father Herman would be a guest amidst the company's personnel he would talk on soul-saving matters and sit there up to, and even past, midnight. He would not stay to spend the night, and no matter what the weather would be, he would always return to his desert hermitage. If for some reason he was compelled to spend the night away from his cell, then they would always find that his bed that had been prepared for him had not been slept in, and that the Elder had not slept at all. Exactly the same would happen in his desert hermitage. Having spent the night in conversation he would not give himself over to rest.

The Elder ate very little. When visiting as a guest, he would barely taste some dish and would remain without dinner. In his cell, a very small portion of fish and vegetables constituted his whole meals.

His body, worn out by labor, fasting and vigils, was weighed down by fifteen-pound chains. These chains at the present time are treasured in the chapel where, it has been said by some, they were found behind an icon of the Mother of God at the Elder's death; or they fell out from behind there at his death, as others explain.

Describing these ascetic labors of Father Herman, his disciple, Aleut Ignatius Aliaga adds: "Yes, Apa conducted a hard life, and no one can imitate it."

The described characteristics of the Elder refer, so to say, to his external activity. "His main activity was, however," as Bishop Peter said, "exercise in seclusion of his cell where no one saw him; and only outside his cell did they

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hear him sing and perform the services in accordance to the monastic rule." Such testimony of the Bishop is confirmed by the following answer of Father Herman himself. The Elder was asked: "How do you, Father Herman, manage to live alone in the forest, don't you get bored?" He answered: "No, I'm not alone there! There is God, and God is everywhere! There are holy angels! How can one be bored with them? With whom is it more pleasant and better to converse, angels or people? Angels, of course!"

How Father Herman regarded the native inhabitants of America, how he understood his relationship to them and how he had compassion for their needs, he expresses himself in one letter addressed to the former governor of the colonies, Yanovsky:

"The Creator has given to our beloved fatherland this region like a newborn babe, still without strength or knowledge of any kind, nor sense, which demands not only protection, but also, because of its weak and tender age, support. But it is still not even possible to ask anyone to do this. The dependence of this people is a blessing of Holy Providence, given as it is into the hands, for an unknown period of time, of the Russian authorities here, and now given into your hands.

"For this reason I, the most humble servant of the local peoples and their nurse, stand before you with bloody tears and write my request: be a father and protector to us! We, of course, know no eloquence, but we say, with the halting tongue of children, wipe away the tears of defenseless orphans, cool the heat of sorrow in melting hearts, give us to know the meaning of consolation."

As the Elder felt, so he also acted. He always interceded before the authority on behalf of the transgressors, defended those who were being hurt, helped the needy ones in any way he could. The Aleuts of both sexes, as well as their children would often visit him. Some would ask for advice, others complained that they were pressured, yet others sought defense, or requested help: and everyone would receive satisfaction as far as it was possible for the Elder to do. He looked into their mutual grievances, he tried to make all at peace, and especially in families he strove to bring back harmony. If it would be impossible to make peace between husband and wife, then the Elder would separate them for a while. The necessity of such measures he explained thus: "Better to let them live separately so as not to fight and quarrel; otherwise, believe me, it is frightful if you don't take them apart, for there were cases where the husband would kill the wife or the wife would drive the husband to madness!" Father Herman especially loved children. He would give them crack-

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ers, bake for them pretzels; and the little ones were especially attracted to his gentleness. The love of Father Herman for the Aleuts would reach self-sacrifice.

An infection of deadly sickness and sores was brought by way of a ship from the United States to the island of Sitka and from there to the island of Kodiak. It began with a fever, intense runny nose and shortness of breath and would end in spasms: in three days the victim would die. On the island there was no doctor and no medication. The sickness, spreading through villages, quickly would embrace the whole vicinity. It affected all, even suckling babes. The death toll was so great that for three days there was no one to dig graves and the bodies lay all over unburied! An eyewitness said, "I cannot imagine anything more sorrowful, more horrible than that sight with which I was struck when I visited an Aleut dwelling place, Kazhim! This was a huge barn, or a barrack with bunk beds, where whole Aleut families lived and which could lodge as many as a hundred people. Some were already dead, cold and stretched out next to the living; others were dying; there was moaning and groaning that tore one's soul apart! I saw mothers already dead, upon whose already cold breasts crawled hungry little infants, futilely and with cries seeking food for themselves . . . one's heart was bleeding from pity! One would think, if one could with a worthy brush depict all the horror of this sorrowful picture, that even in hardened souls it would evoke a fear of death. During the whole time the sickness lasted, a whole month with a gradual decline, Father Herman, not sparing himself, tirelessly visited the sick, begged them to be patient, to pray, to bring forth repentance, or to prepare themselves for death.

The Elder especially cared about the moral enlightenment of the Aleuts. With this aim for the orphan Aleut children he made a school. He himself taught them the Law of God and church singing. With this aim in mind he would gather the Aleuts for prayer in the chapel near his cell on Feast Days and Sundays. Here his disciples read the Hours and other prayers for them, and the Elder himself read the Apostolic Epistles and Gospel and orally taught them, while his girl students would sing, and they sang very nicely. The Aleuts loved to listen to the instructions of Father Herman, and would gather to him by multitudes. These talks of the Elder were very interesting, and with a wonderful power influenced the listeners. About one such grace-filled impression of his word he writes himself: "Glory to the holy ways of the merciful God! He, in His unfathomable providence has showed me a new phenomenon which I have not yet seen in the twenty years of my living here. Now after Pascha one young woman, no more than twenty years old, who knows how to speak Russian well and who previously had never seen me or knew me at all, came to

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me; and, after hearing about the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of eternal life, became so inflamed with love towards Jesus Christ that she does not want to leave me at all. After begging with me for a long time she has persuaded me against my inclination, love of silence and seclusion to accept her. Disregarding all the hindrances and difficulties of which I warned her, she has already lived with me for more than a month and is not bored. I, with great amazement at seeing this, remember the words of the Savior: . . . *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.* . . . (Matt. 11:25)." This woman lived near the Elder until his death; she watched over the good behavior of the children who studied in his school; and he, when dying, willed her to live on Spruce Island and, when she should die, to be buried at his feet. She was called Sophia Vlasov.

Concerning the character of the Elder's talks Yanovsky writes: "I was thirty years old when I met Father Herman. It must be said that I was brought up in a naval academy, knew many sciences, and read a lot. But, unfortunately, the sciences of sciences, *i.e.*, The Law of God, I hardly understood superficially, and even that theoretically, not applying it to life, and was only in name Christian, while in my soul and my actions I was a free thinker, a deist. Moreover I did not accept the divinity and holiness of our religion, and I had read many atheistic writings, such as Voltaire and other philosophers of the eighteenth century. Father Herman noticed this at once and desired to convert me. To my amazement he spoke so powerfully, so sensibly, and argued so convincingly that it now seems to me that no education and earthly wisdom could withstand his words. We conversed with him every day until, and sometimes later than, midnight about the love of God, about eternity, about the salvation of the soul, and about Christian life. His sweet speech in an unceasing stream poured out from his lips . . . with such constant talks and through the prayers of the holy Elder, the Lord completely converted me to the path of truth, and I became a true Christian. For all this I am indebted to Father Herman: he is my true benefactor."

"Several years ago," continues Yanovsky, "Father Herman converted one naval captain, G., from the Lutheran faith to Orthodoxy. This captain was quite educated. Besides many sciences he knew many languages: Russian, French, German, Italian, English, and a bit of Spanish. In spite of that he could not resist the arguments and proofs of Father Herman: he changed his beliefs and was received into the Church through Chrismation. When he was leaving America the Elder said to him at parting: 'See to it that if the Lord takes away your wife that you will by no means marry a German woman; if you marry



THE ORIGINAL GROUP OF VALAAM MONASTERY
MISSIONARIES IN AMERICA IN 1795

Left to right: St. Herman, Hieromonks Athanasius and Macarius, Archimandrite Ioasaph, Hieromartyr Juvenal, two Hierodeacons Stephen and Nektary, and in front, monk Ioasaph being tonsured into small schema.

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a German woman she will inevitably hurt your Orthodoxy.' The captain gave his word, but did not keep it. The warning of the Elder turned out to be prophetic. After several years the wife of the captain did die, and he wound up re-marrying a German: evidently he either abandoned or weakened his faith, and died suddenly without repentance."

Yanovsky continues: "Once they invited the Elder to the frigate that came from St. Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a rather learned man, highly educated. He was sent to America according to the imperial decree for observation of all the colonies. There were at least twenty-five sailors with the captain who were also educated people. In this society sat a rather short-statured man with worn out clothing — a desert-dwelling monk, who with wise conversation brought all these educated people to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: 'Before him we were at a loss what to answer, like fools!' Father Herman asked one common question to all of them: 'What do you, gentlemen, love more than anything else, and what would you wish for your happiness?' Various answers began to pour out. Some wished for riches, others glory, others a beautiful wife, and others a wonderful ship on which he would be captain, and so on in the same vein. 'Isn't it true,' said Father Herman to them, 'that all your various wishes could be summed up into one, that each of you wishes that which, according to his understanding, he considers the best and more worthy of love?' 'Yes, that is true!' answered all. 'But still, tell me,' continued he, 'what could be better, higher than all, more superlative and most worthy of love if not the Lord, our Jesus Christ Himself, Who created us, adorned us with such perfections, gave life to all, upkeeps everything, nourishes, loves all, Who Himself is love, and most wonderful, more so than all people? Shouldn't one therefore love God more than everything, and in everything wish and seek Him?' All began to speak: 'Well, yes! That is self-evident! That is true in itself!' 'But do you love God?' asked the Elder. And all answered: 'Of course we love God. How can we not love God?' 'And I, a sinner, have tried to love God for more than forty years, and I cannot say that I perfectly love Him,' answered Father Herman, and began to explain how one must love God. 'If we love someone,' he said, 'then we always think of that one, we strive to please that one; day and night our heart is preoccupied with that object. Is it in this way, gentlemen, that you love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always remember Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His Holy commandments?' We had to admit that we did not. 'For our good, for our happiness,' concluded the Elder, 'at least let us give a vow to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive



HOLY HIERARCH IOASAPH (BOLOTOFF)

(1761 - 1799)

Equal-to-the-Apostles first hierarch of America.

A missionary-minded bishop who was responsible for the baptism of thousands of Alaskans and gave his life for the cause of Orthodoxy when he drowned in the ocean on his return from consecration in Russia.

Illustration by Fr. Damascene.

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above all else to love God and to fulfill His Holy Will!' What a wise and wonderful talk Father Herman conducted in our society: without a doubt this conversation must have been impressed in the hearts of the listeners for the rest of their lives! "

In general Father Herman loved to talk; he spoke wisely, to the point, and instructively, mostly on the points of eternity, salvation, the future life, and the ways of God. He would relate much from the Lives of the Saints, from the Prologue, but he never spoke anything empty. It was so pleasant to hear him that those who conversed with him, even Aleuts and their women, were delighted with his talks and infrequently, only with the dawn of day and as if unwilling, departed from him, as witnessed Creole Constantine Larionov.

Yanovsky describes in detail the exterior of Father Herman. "I clearly remember," he says, "all the features of the Elder's face, which shone with grace, his pleasant smile, meek and attractive look, humble, quiet manner and his pleasant words. He was not of a tall stature, his face was pale, covered with wrinkles, his eyes were gray-blue and full of brightness, and on his head he had a few gray hairs. His speech was not loud, but very pleasant." From his talks with the Elder, Yanovsky recalls two incidents. "Once," writes he, "I read to Father Herman Derzhavin's Ode: 'God.' The Elder was amazed, ecstatic, and asked that I read it once more, which I did. 'Is it possible that this was written by an ordinary, learned poet?' he asked. 'Yes, he was a learned poet.' I answered. 'It was inspired by God,' said the Elder."

"Another time I was telling him how the Spaniards in California captured fourteen Aleuts, and the Jesuits [Franciscans] were pressuring them all to accept the Catholic faith, which the Aleuts in no way agreed to. 'We are Christians,' they said. 'Not true, you are heretics and schismatics,' argued the Jesuits, 'and if you do not submit to accept our faith, we will torture all of you to death.' Then the Aleuts were placed in prisons by twos. In the evening with lamps and lit candles the Jesuits came into the prisons and again began to persuade two Aleuts there to accept the Catholic faith. 'We are Christians,' was the answer of the Aleuts, 'and will not change our faith!' Then the Jesuits began to torture them, at first one while the other was a witness. They cut off one joint on the Aleut's feet, and then the second joint, then one joint on the finger and then a second. Then they chopped off the feet and hands; the blood flowed, the martyr endured and firmly repeated the same thing: 'I am a Christian.' In such suffering and from loss of blood, he died. On the next day the Jesuits promised to torture his friend the same way, but in that night they received an order from Monterey that all captured Aleuts should immediately

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be delivered there with a convoy. Therefore in the morning they all, except for the deceased Aleut, were sent away. This was told to me by the Aleut witness, the friend of the martyred one who had escaped torture. About this I then reported to the headquarters at Petersburg. When I finished my description, Father Herman asked: 'And what was the name of the Aleut?' 'Peter,' I answered, 'but I do not remember his last name.' Then the Elder stood up before the icon, piously crossed himself and pronounced: 'Holy new martyr Peter, pray to God for us!' "

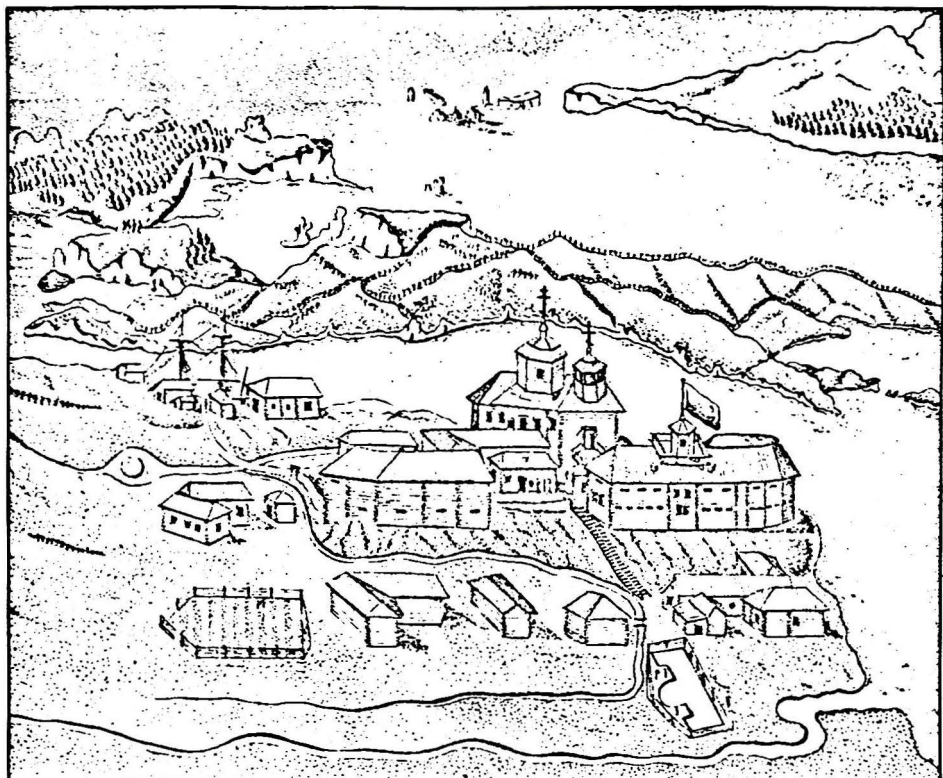
In order to somewhat express the spirit of Father Herman's teaching, we shall cite here the words of his own letter.

"A true Christian is made by faith and love towards Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the words of the Savior Himself. He deigned to say: not the righteous have I come to call, but sinners to salvation; there is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over ninety righteous ones. Likewise concerning the sinful woman who touched his feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: to one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. From these judgements a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith."

"Sin, to one who loves God, is nothing other than an arrow from the enemy in battle. A true Christian is a warrior fighting his way through the regiments of the unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland. According to the words of the Apostle, our homeland is in heaven; and about the warrior he says: *our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of wickedness under heaven* (Eph. 6:12)."

"The vain desires of this world separate us from our homeland; love of them and habit clothe our soul as if in a hideous garment. This is called by the Apostles the inward man. We who travel on the journey of this life and call on God to help us, ought to divest ourselves of this garment and clothe ourselves in new desires, in a new love of the age to come, and thereby to receive knowledge of how near or how far we are from our heavenly homeland. But it is not possible to do this quickly; rather one must follow the example of sick people, who, wishing the desired [health], do not leave off means of curing themselves."

He never sought anything for himself in life. For a long time after his arrival in America, out of humility he refused the rank of hieromonk or archimandrite, and remained forever a simple monk. Father Herman, without the slightest fear of those in power, worked for God with all his zeal. With meek



Видъ строяща Пасловской Мисіи; съ Северной стороны 1798

*A drawing made in 1798 of the first
Orthodox Mission in America:
St. Paul's Harbor, Kodiak*



*Father Herman,
protector of orphans*



St. Herman celebrating Pascha
with his orphans and Sophia, the matroness of his orphanage.
The kulich and Paschal eggs are placed on a stump covered with
luxurious moss, which is abundant on Spruce Island.

An illustration by Fr. Damascene.

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love, disregarding respect of persons, he reproached many in their unsober life, disrespectful behavior and oppression of the Aleuts. The self-condemning anger of these people rose against him, made all kinds of difficulties for him, and slandered him. The slanders were so powerful that often people of good will could not notice the lies in their accusations of Father Herman that were covered under external correctness, and therefore one must say that it was the Lord Himself who preserved the Elder. The governor of colonies Yanovsky, who had not seen Father Herman yet, wrote to Petersburg about the necessity of his being removed based on a [false] report given to him, explaining that he apparently was agitating the Aleuts against their authority. A priest who came from Irkutsk with great authorization gave Father Herman a lot of sorrow and wanted to send him away to Irkutsk, but a governor of colonies Muraviev defended the Elder. Another priest came to Spruce Island with a governor of colonies N. together with company employees to make an investigation of the cell of Father Herman, assuming they would find rich possessions there. When they did not find anything of value then the employee Ponomarkov, evidently with the permission of superiors, began to pull out floorboards with an axe. "My friend," Father Herman then said to him, "in vain hast thou taken this axe: this very tool will deprive you of your life!" After a certain period of time there were needed men for the Nikolaev redoubt. Several Russian employees were sent there from Kodiak. In this number was Ponomarkov and there, at the redoubt, the Kenai natives chopped his head off with an axe when he was asleep.

Father Herman also endured many sorrows from demons. This he revealed to his disciple Gerasim when the latter, entering the cell without the usual prayer, did not receive answers to any of his questions. The next day he asked for the cause of yesterday's silence. "When I came to this island and settled in this wilderness," Father Herman then said to him, "many times the demons came to me as if from some need, in the form of people and in the form of animals. I endured a lot from them: both all kinds of sorrows and temptations, and, therefore, I now do not speak to anyone who comes into my cell without prayer."

Having dedicated himself entirely to the Will of the Lord, zealously laboring in glorifying His All-Holy Name alone, far away from his homeland amidst many sorrows and deprivations, and laboring for many decades with lofty self-denial, Father Herman was endowed with many supernatural gifts from God.

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In the middle of Spruce Island a little river runs from the mountain into the sea. There were always large logs of driftwood at the mouth of this river, continuously brought there by storms. In the springtime when the river fish would appear, the Elder would dig in the sand so that the river could pass by and the fish in the sea would hasten up the river. "It would happen that Apa would say: 'Go and get a fish from the river,' " said Aliaga. Father Herman used to feed birds with dried fish and they in great number would nest near his cell. Under his cell there lived ermines. This little animal, after giving birth to its litter, is unapproachable, yet the Elder would feed them with his own hands. "Wasn't that really a miracle we have seen!" said his disciple Ignatius. Father Herman was also seen feeding the bears. "With the death of the Elder both the birds and the beasts disappeared; even the garden would not give forth crop if someone were to care for it willingly," asserted Ignatius.

Once there was a flood on Spruce Island. The inhabitants ran with fear to the Elder: then he took an icon of the Mother of God from the house where the students lived, carried it out and placed it on shallow ground. He began to pray. After the prayer, he turned to those who were there and said: "Do not fear, the water will not go further than the spot where the icon is standing!" The word of the Elder came into reality. Then he promised the same help, of the protection of the Holy Queen, from the icon in future times of need. He delegated to his student Sophia to place the icon on *laida* — shallow ground — in case of flood. The icon is preserved on the island.

Once at the request of the Elder, Baron F. P. Wrangell wrote a letter as dictated by Father Herman to Metropolitan _____. It was not our Metropolitan; it is not known which one. When the letter was finished, the Elder congratulated the Baron with the rank of Admiral. The Baron was amazed. This news in actuality was confirmed to him only after a long period of time, upon his departure from Petersburg.

"I feel sorry for you, my dear relative," Father Herman said once to the administrator Kashevarov, whose son was his godson, "I feel sorry for you; this change for you will be unpleasant!" After about two years when changes took place he was sent to the island of Sitka in bonds.

Once the forest on Spruce Island caught on fire. The Elder, together with his disciple Ignatius, made a clearing in the forest thickets about a yard wide to the foot of the hill, upturning the moss, and said: "Be at peace, the fire will not cross this line." The next day when, according to Ignatius' witness, there was no hope for salvation, the fire with great force came up to the moss up-



ST. HERMAN ADMIRING HIS SPRUCE ISLAND SETTLEMENT
as he secluded himself from everyone for the first week of Great Lent.
An artistic sketch by Archimandrite Cyprian of Jordanville, 1963.

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turned by the Elder, it ran along it, and stopped, not touching the forest on the other side of the line.

A year prior to the news that was received in Kodiak about the death of a Metropolitan (it is not known which one), Father Herman said to the Aleuts that their big spiritual leader had died.

The Elder often used to say that in America they will have their own bishop, and that there will never be a time when America will be deprived of a bishop, as reported by Bishop Peter. His prophecy came true in time.

"After my death," Father Herman used to say, "there will be a plague and many people will die from it, and the Russians will join with the Aleuts." And truly, evidently half a year after his death there occurred in America the smallpox epidemic, the fatality of which was atrocious: in several villages only a few people remained alive. This compelled the colonial authorities to unite the Aleuts: thus from twenty villages there remained only seven.

"Although much time will pass after my death," Father Herman used to say to his disciples, "My memory will not be forgotten and the place of my dwelling will not be empty: a monk similar to me, fleeing the glory of men, will come and will live on Spruce Island. And Spruce Island will not be without people."

"My little one," Father Herman once asked Creole Constantine, when he was no more than twelve years old, "what do you think? Will the chapel which they are now building be abandoned?" "I do not know Apa," answered the little one. "And really," said Constantine, "I did not understand the question then, although this whole conversation remains lively in my memory." The Elder, being silent for a while said: "My child, remember that on this place there will be a monastery in time."

"Thirty years will pass after my death, all those who live now on Spruce Island will be dead, you alone will remain alive, and you will be old and poor, and then they will remember me," Father Herman used to say to his disciple, Aleut Ignatius Aliaga. "It is remarkable," explains Ignatius, "how a man similar to us could know all the way ahead of time! However, he was not a simple man! He saw our thoughts and would involuntarily make us open them up to him and receive instructions."

"When I die," the Elder would tell his disciples, "you bury me next to Father Ioasaph. Kill my bullock at once: he served me enough. You bury me by yourselves and do not tell of my death in the harbor. The inhabitants of the port (Kodiak) will not see my face. Do not send for a priest and do not wait for him: your waiting will be in vain! Do not wash my body, place it on



THE REPOSE OF ST. HERMAN, NOVEMBER 15, 1836

Surrounded by his orphans the Saint leans on the shoulder of his adopted son Gerasim, who is reading the Acts of the Apostles: the cell becomes filled with divine fragrance and a light shines round St. Herman's head — as his soul ascends to God.

Illustration by Fr. Damascene.

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the board, fold the arms on the chest, bind me in my mantle and with its edges cover my face and my head with my klobuk. If someone would wish to say good bye to me, let him kiss the cross (in my hands); do not show anyone my face. After lowering me into the earth cover me with my blanket." This blanket, as we have mentioned, was the board that was always in his cell.

The time was approaching for the departure of the Elder. One day he called his disciple Gerasim to his cell to light candles before the icons and to read the Acts of the Apostles. After some time his face shone and he loudly pronounced: "Glory to Thee O Lord!" Then, ordering to stop the reading he said that it was pleasing to the Lord to prolong his life one week more. After a week, again according to his order, the candles were lit and the Acts of the Apostles were read. The Elder quietly leaned his head on the chest of Gerasim, the cell was filled with fragrance, his face was shining — and Father Herman was no more! Thus he reposed with the sleep of the righteous in the 81st year of his much-suffering life, December 13, 1837.⁷

In spite of the will of Father Herman expressed before his demise, his disciples did not decide to bury him without letting anyone in the harbor know about his death. They were afraid of the Russians, the Aleuts said; and also for some unknown reason they did not kill the bullock.

An envoy was sent with the sad news to the harbor. Upon his return the envoy informed them that the manager of colonies Kashevarov forbade them to bury the Elder until his arrival, that he had ordered a good coffin to be made for the deceased and that he himself would bring it without delay. However, such instructions were contrary to the will of the deceased. And so a frightful wind blew, rain began to pour, and there developed a terrible storm. The travelling distance from the harbor to Spruce Island was not a long one, only two hours, but no one would venture to go into the sea in such weather. It continued in such a way for a whole month; the body of Father Herman lay in the warm house of his disciples. There was no change in his face and not the minutest smell from his body. Finally with an experienced old man, Cosmas Uchilisshev, the coffin was delivered. No one from the harbor came, and the inhabitants of Spruce Island placed the earthly remains of the Elder into the earth themselves. So was fulfilled the last wish of Father Herman — and the wind calmed down and the surface of the sea was as smooth as a mirror.

7. This church calendar date was later shown to be erroneous. From original documents, Michael Vinokouroff, Archivist of the Library of Congress, obtained the actual date of November 15, 1836, Father Herman's age being 76 (*editor's note*).



ST. HERMAN PRAYING FOR THE WORLD
Spending nights on end wandering in the wilderness
as his beloved elder, Abbot Nazarius, used to do.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

The day after the death of Father Herman his bull began to miss him and from this despair hit a tree with his forehead and fell onto the ground dead.⁸

One evening in the village of Katari (on Afognak Island) an unusual pillar of light was seen over Spruce Island that reached to heaven. Stunned by this miraculous phenomenon the experienced senior citizens, Creole Gerasim Vologdin and his wife Anna said to themselves: "It looks like Father Herman has left us!" and began to pray. Subsequently they were informed that precisely at that time the Elder had passed away. This pillar was seen in other places by other people as well. That very evening, in another village on Afognak Island people saw a man who was lifted up from Spruce Island towards the clouds.

Having buried their father his disciples erected a wooden memorial over his grave. "I saw it myself," said Kodiak priest Peter Kashevarov, "and now I can say that it is by no means touched by time and looks as if it were nailed together today."

Seeing the glorious life of *podvig* of Father Herman, seeing his miracles, seeing the fulfillment of his prophecies and finally his blessed falling asleep, "generally all the local inhabitants have an awesome respect for him as a holy ascetic, and are entirely convinced of his having pleased God," witnessed Bishop Peter.

In 1842, five years after the repose of the Elder, while traveling by sea to Kodiak and finding himself in extreme danger, His Eminence Innocent, Archbishop of Kamchatka and the Aleutian Islands, looked at Spruce Island and said in his mind: "If you, O Father Herman, have pleased the Lord, then let the wind change!" And indeed, even a quarter of an hour did not pass, says the Bishop, when the wind became favorable to them and they successfully landed at the shore. Out of gratitude for his deliverance, Archbishop Innocent served a pannikhida at the grave of the blessed one.

Valaam
(written at the request
of Abbot Damascene)

8. Compare to the life of St. Gerasim of Jordan and the story of how his obedient lion died.



II

A Treasury of Saint Herman's Spirituality



ST. HERMAN ON HIS BELOVED ISLAND

Illustration by Fr. Damascene.

*... Thou didst purify thy soul and vest it in the primal
beauty. Becoming like to first-created Adam, and forest
beasts obeyed thee, sensing in thee paradise and the Kingdom.*

Canon to St. Herman, Canticle 5

A Treasury of Saint Herman's Spirituality

*A first compilation of Saint Herman's teachings on spiritual life
drawn from his letters and conversations.*

*From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive to love God
above all, and fulfill His holy will.*

— St. Herman of Alaska

I

THE WAY OF A CHRISTIAN

WITHOUT EXALTING myself to the rank of teacher, nonetheless, fulfilling my duty and obligation as an obedient servant for the benefit of my neighbor, I will speak my mind, founded on the commandments of Holy Scripture, to those who thirst and seek for their eternal heavenly homeland.

A true Christian is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the word of the Saviour Himself. He deigned to say: not the righteous have I come to call, but sinners to salvation; there is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over ninety righteous ones. Likewise concerning the sinful woman who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: to one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who

has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. From these judgments a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith.

Sin, to one who loves God, is nothing other than an arrow from the enemy in battle. The true Christian is a warrior fighting his way through the regiments of the unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland. According to the word of the Apostle, our homeland is in heaven; and about the warrior he says: our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, [against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of wickedness under heaven (Eph. 6: 12)].

The vain desires of this world separate us from our homeland; love of them and habit clothe our soul as if in a hideous garment. This is called by the Apostles the outward man. We, traveling on the journey of this life and calling on God to help us, ought to be divesting ourselves of this hideous garment and clothing ourselves in new desires, in a new love of the age to come, and thereby to receive knowledge of how near or how far we are from our heavenly homeland. But it is not possible to do this quickly; rather one must follow the example of sick people, who, wishing the desired [health], do not leave off seeking means to cure themselves.

(From a Letter of June 20, 1820)

II

LOVE OF GOD



ONCE THE ELDER was invited on board a frigate that had come from St. Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a man quite learned, highly educated; he had been sent to America by Imperial command to inspect all the colonies. With the captain were some 25 officers, likewise educated men. In this company there sat a desert-dwelling monk of small stature, in an old garment, who by his wise conversation brought all his listeners to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: "We were speechless, fools before him!"

Father Herman gave them all one common question: "What do you, gentlemen, love above all, and what would each of you wish for his happiness?" Diverse answers came out. One desired wealth, one glory, one a beautiful wife, one a fine ship which he should command, and so on in this fashion. "Is it not true," said Father Herman at this, that all your various desires can be reduced to one -- that each of you desires that which, in his understanding, he considers best and most worthy of love?" "Yes, it is so," they all replied. "Well, then, tell me," he continued, "can there be anything better, higher above everything, more surpassing everything and in general more worthy of love, than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who created us, adorned with such perfections, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes and loves all, Who Himself is love and more excellent than all men? Should one not therefore high above all love God, and more than all desire and seek Him?" All began to say: "Well, yes! That is understood!" "That speaks for itself!"

"And do you love God?" the Elder then asked. All replied: "Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?" "And I, sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him," answered Father Herman; and he began to show how one should love God. "If we love someone," he said, "we always think of him, strive to please him, day and night our heart is occupied with this subject. Is it thus that you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?" It had to be acknowledged that they did not! "For our good, for our happiness," concluded the Elder, "at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!" Behold what an intelligent, superb conversation Father Herman conducted in society; without doubt this conversation must have imprinted itself on the hearts of his listeners for their whole life!

(Yanovsky, in Life of Monk Herman of Valaam, 1868)

III

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD



TERRIBLE ACCIDENT has a power to awaken us to the realization of the existence of various calamities and dangers surrounding us, from which the Providence of God preserves us. At the same time it convincingly persuades us to acknowledge our own infirmity and weakness and to seek the Father's protection and His most powerful defense, which affirms us in the Wisdom and the Word of God, Which came down from above by the will of the Heavenly Father under a curtain of flesh like ours, woven by the Divine Might from the Most Pure Virgin, for our salvation. He became man and deigned to teach us to pray that we be not led into temptation. This reminds us from what Father we have our existence, and this in turn should make us seek our heavenly fatherland and our eternal inheritance.

(From a Letter to Baranoff, 1809)

IV

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE



NOT AMIDST THE STORMY waves of the sea are we tossed, but within the seductive and much-agitated world, suffering and wandering according to the Apostle's word. Although we do not have such Grace as the Apostles had, still our wrestling is against the same fleshless principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of evil under heaven, who strive to intercept and hold and prevent all travelers toward our heavenly fatherland; for, according to the word of St. Peter, our adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8); wherefore we weak and infirm ones most certainly have need to seek help from each other's prayers.

(From a Letter of December 13, 1819)

TREASURY

The Elder was occupied in his cell with handiwork, when suddenly his disciple Gerasim came to the cell and did not say the usual prayer ["By the prayers of our holy Fathers, O Lord God, have mercy on us"] at the door. Entering the cell, he said: "Bless me, Father." The Elder answered nothing; the disciple repeated his request several times, but the Elder did not answer. The disciple stood for several hours and finally decided to leave the cell. Coming again the next day, he said the usual prayer; the Elder answered: "Amen." The disciple said: "Bless me, Father"; the Elder blessed him and sat down at his work. Then the disciple asked him: "Father, why did you not bless me and answer when I asked you yesterday?" To this the Elder replied: "When I came to this [Spruce] island, many times demons would come to me in my cell, sometimes in the form of a man for some necessities, and sometimes in the form of a beast, and did many fearful and evil things to me; this is the reason why I do not receive anyone in my cell without the prayer."

(Notes of Lazarev, October, 1864)

V

APOSTOLIC FERVOR



H! HERE ENRAPTURED in spirit, in spite of all the shortness of time I will snatch a short minute to relate some narratives [of the missionaries' travels and apostolic fervor].

Finding myself between fair weather and foul, between joy and tedium, between sufficiency and insufficiency, satiety and hunger, warmth and coldness, in all my sorrows I find something that cheers me, when I hear conversations between the brethren about their preaching, and about their dividing up for this various regions among themselves -- especially the discussion between Hieromonks Makary and Juvenaly, for they set out around Kodiak, too, in the smallest little boats of hide, despite all the sea's dangers, and Father Archimandrite Ioasaph Bolotov remained with us, as if with little children, in the harbor.

And so these hieromonks extended their thoughts yet farther: Once when taking a stroll in our harbor, where I, sinful one, happened to be among them, we climbed a little hill toward the southern side, sat down facing the ocean, and among other things began to speak as to

which of us should go where to preach, for the time was then at hand for the departure of the ships on which they had to travel. And then an argument broke out between them which for me, humble one, was comforting and joyful. On Kukovsky's maps of the north, it is indicated that along a certain river Russians live; among us there are different rumors of them, about which we then recalled in our discussion, wishing somehow to see them. Father Makary began to speak: "According to my intention, if it please God, when I shall be in the Aleutian Islands, in all propriety I should go also to Alaska [the mainland],¹ to which place the Alaskans have already called me, too; and as that side is nearer those Russians, I shall find means somehow to learn something more certain about them." But Father Juvenaly, having heard about Alaska, and in his zeal not allowing the other to speak further, hastened to say to him: "Alaska in the whole belongs to my part, and so I beg you to yield to me and not offend me in this; since the ship now is setting out for Yakutan, I shall have to begin preaching from the south, and proceeding along the ocean toward the north and going round the Kenai inlet, I shall absolutely have to go by way of Alaska to go out to this harbor." Hearing this, Father Makary became shrouded in despondency and, having assumed a sorrowful air, said with feeling: "No, Father, don't hem me in with this; you yourself know that the Aleutian chain of islands adjoins Alaska, and so it absolutely belongs to my part, and from there the whole northern shore; but as for you, if you please, the southern part of America is sufficient for your whole lifetime." And I, lowly one, hearing such a debate went from joy to rapture.

(From a Letter to Abbot Nazary of May 19, 1795)

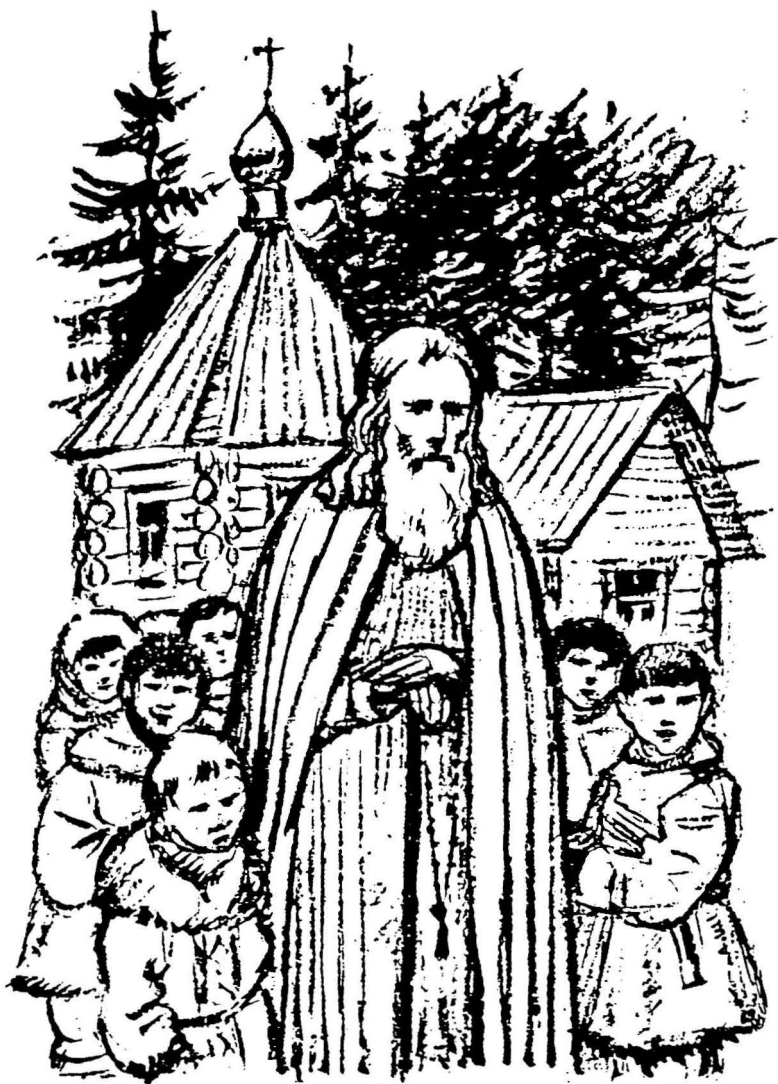
VI

PROTECTOR OF ORPHANS



AFTER FATHER HERMAN settled on Spruce Island, in the first years there was an inundation or tidal wave (it must have been from an earthquake), and the people, residents of the island, in fear let the Elder know of it. He had come from his cell to the home of

1. So identified in Kukovsky's (i.e., Captain Cook's) maps.



St. Herman with his Aleut Orphans.

A sketch by Popkov.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

his pupils, where every Sunday he served the hours, there being no chapel or church. Having taken up an Icon of the Mother of God from its place, he brought it out to the siltbank, and placing the Icon at the spot to which the water had risen the last time, he began to pray to God. And when he had finished praying, he informed those present that they should not be afraid, saying that above and beyond this spot where the holy object had been placed the sea would not go; which indeed came to pass! This has been confirmed by those who heard of this happening.

And when it was necessary to carry the Icon back, after instructing the people, Father Herman is said to have told to Sofia Vlasova (who was already in charge of the girl pupils [of his orphanage]) that in case there should ever be again such a rising of the sea, then this Icon should be placed on the siltbank, and he promised that the sea would not go beyond this spot. This Icon is to be found to this day on Spruce Island, called New Valaam.

(Notes of Constantine Larionov, May, 1867, Siska)

VII

SPIRITUAL POWER

I WAS THIRTY years old when I met Father Herman. Here it should be said that I was brought up in the naval corps, knew many sciences and read much, but unfortunately, of the science of sciences, that is God's Law, I scarcely understood the surface, and that theoretically, without applying it to life, and I was only in name a Christian, while in soul and in deed I was a freethinker, a deist, as are nearly all who are brought up in the military corps and in public institutions. How unfortunate that no attention is given this: that God's Law is everywhere taught superficially, even in the seminaries; yes, and even from the theological academies there come out students, even Masters, who are very learned, but do not have an active faith in their heart, and thus do not live in a Christian way.

All the more did I fail to recognize the Divineness and sanctity of our religion, in that I had read many atheist writings of Voltaire and other philosophers of the 18th century. Father Herman immediately noticed this and wished to convert me. But this was not easy! I had to

be convinced, to be shown the sanctity of our religion; and therefore there was required much time, knowledge, and the ability to speak well and convincingly.

To my great amazement, the simple, uneducated monk, Father Herman, being inspired by grace, spoke and argued so wisely, powerfully, and convincingly that, it seems to me, no kind of learnedness and earthly wisdom could withstand his words. In actual fact Father Herman had a great innate intelligence and sound thinking, had read many spiritual patristic books; and most important, he had the grace of God! But since in a short winter's day I had no time at all to devote myself to him, he therefore came to me every day for evening tea, and sometimes also for dinner, and we conversed with him until midnight, and sometimes after; he never stayed for the night. Neither rain nor snow nor storm kept the zealous elder from visiting me and returning alone at midnight a half mile! He came to me regularly every day in an old ryassa without a coat; I warmed him with tea and I conversed with him without ceasing: on God's Law, on eternity, on the salvation of the soul, on Christian life, and other things. A sweet discourse flowed from his mouth in an unceasing, enthralling torrent!...

Then at midnight, or after, the elder went home alone with his staff — in every kind of storm and cold weather; no one accompanied him on the slippery rocky path; but angels accompanied him and supported him: *For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways* (Ps. 90: 11). And Christian love warmed him, with which he was penetrated for the salvation of his neighbor.

By such constant conversations and by the prayers of the holy elder the Lord completely converted me to the true path, and I became a real Christian. For all this I am obliged to Father Herman: he is my true benefactor.

(*Letter of Yanovsky, November 22, 1865*)

VIII PRIDE



DURING THE SPRING of 1820 you sent me two books so that I could tell you my opinion of the author; but at that time I did not manage to look at them. But having read them later

I saw that he,¹ having flown high above the clouds in the pride of Western thinking, includes himself in the number of the prophets and thinks that through his high learning and calculations he can likewise write as the prophets wrote on the condition of governments; wondrous and most wondrous indeed how pride blinds one! He says that his writings may not please everyone, that some may ridicule, and he does not see that he has ridiculed himself first of all; he thinks that he affirms the truth, but he quarrels with himself and with Holy Scripture. It is boring to speak more of him, but you can see from these few words my opinion of him; a person who may not know the truth solidly should by all means avoid such books.

(From a Letter to Yanovsky, August 10, 1821)

IX HUMILITY

IN ALL MY LIFE HERE from my own Russians I have seen more of scorn and reproach and mockery, to which I have already become accustomed, and from such custom I think that in actual fact my lowliness is such.

(From a Letter of December 28, 1818)

X CONVERSER WITH ANGELS

AT THE END OF THE 1930's and the beginning of the 1940's, when the Russian Orthodox Church in America was under the Synod Abroad, I spent more than three years as a pastor in Alaska, where right and left I heard a great number of stories about Father Herman, the Wonderworker of Alaska. People told of his ascetic life, of his miracles, many cases of miraculous help from the water of his spring,

1. This unnamed author, from the description given here, was perhaps Saint-Simon or one of the other 'prophetic' socialist philosophers, predecessors of Marx, whose writings were as popular among the Russian and European intelligentsia in the early 19th century as Voltaire's and others' had been a little earlier.



View of the ocean from Monk's Lagoon during winter.

from placing earth from his grave on diseased places, cases of sight restored to the blind, of the healing of every kind of cripple, and so on. Of course, one doesn't remember everything. It was a long time ago, and for some reason I didn't write anything down then. I remember very well that a great deal was said. I myself spoke with those who had received miraculous help by the prayers of God's Saint.

While I was serving in Kodiak as a priest, the Aleuts there also told me much about Father Herman, and of this the following two incidents stand out sharply in my mind; as I recall, I've never come across them anywhere in print, but they seem nonetheless quite authentic.

The Aleuts related that when Father Herman was still alive and lived on Spruce Island, the local inhabitants used to go to the Elder for some reason or other. And more than once it happened thus: They approached the chapel where he celebrated Divine services, and they heard superb choral singing, a multitude of voices singing. They wondered where the people had come from. And all this time the singing was clearly audible, and such harmonious, sweet singing... They opened the door into the little chapel, and there Father Herman stood alone reading, chanting half-aloud, celebrating the Lord's service. And of course he was alone and there was no one there with him. Father Herman was not a priest, and he could only read and sing as on the cliros. And such a thing was noticed more than once. It was Angels of God who sang with him praise to the Lord. In the biography of Father Herman there occurs this incident. The Elder was asked: "How do you live alone in the forest, Father Herman?

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

Don't you become bored?" He replied: "No! I am not alone there! God is there, as God is everywhere. Holy Angels are there. And can one become bored with them? With whom is converse better and more pleasant, with men or with Angels? Of course, with Angels!"

Archpriest Prokopy Povarnitsyn

XI

A MIRACULOUS FEAST

*He answered and said unto them,
Give ye them to eat... And they
did all eat, and were filled.*

St. Mark 6: 37, 42



THE ALEUTS TOLD ME also the following incident, which took place on Spruce Island not long before Father Herman's death. Two American natives came to the Elder on the island, either hunters or fishermen. In any case, they came to look at the Elder, because much was said about him even during his lifetime. They were very hungry and, having greeted the Elder, asked him to feed them. The Elder readily agreed, but told them that they would have to wait a little, to which they agreed. Father Herman went to the little canal not far from his cell, which flowed into the creek, and that into the ocean. The Elder went down to the water and caught a little fish with his hands. He brought it to his cell and began to prepare it. The natives, seeing that one such little fish would hardly satisfy their hunger, called the Elder's attention to this. But the Elder only replied that they should not worry. And what happened? When the meal was ready and the Elder served it to them, he not only fed them until they were full, but there was a great deal left over from this little fish. Astonished and miraculously fed, they left and told many people of this. And this story came down to me.

Everything set down here I personally, being for three years in Alaska, heard from the local Aleut inhabitants.

*June 16, 1967
St. Tikhon of Kaluga
San Francisco, California*

Archpriest Prokopy Povarnitsyn

XII CHILDHOOD

SAINST HERMAN came from the merchant class of Serpukhov, a city not far from Moscow. Serpukhov was an ancient city with an old fortress and many monasteries. It had been sanctified by the steps of the great Sergius, Wonderworker of Radonezh and foundation-layer of the Northern Thebaid of Orthodox monasticism. When the fame of St. Sergius had spread far and wide, Prince Vladimir of Serpukhov, desiring to have a monastery near his city, asked the Saint to come himself and choose a suitable place for a monastery, leaving one of his disciples as abbot. The Saint chose his beloved disciple, whom he had tonsured himself with the name of the Athonite cœnobiarch Athanasius, and came with him to Serpukhov. Going about the vicinity, he found a beautiful place greatly to his liking on a high cliff overlooking the river, and he consecrated it for the future monastery. Having received the blessing and wise instruction of his Abba, St. Athanasius remained here, and soon there sprang up and blossomed a new and glorious branch of the monastic tree of the great Sergius. St. Athanasius was a man of learning, highly educated for that time. In his solitary cell he occupied himself with the copying of sacred books, and he took spiritual instruction from the great Holy Fathers, St. Basil the Great, St. Isaac the Syrian, and many others. Once there came to his cell a young boy who gently knocked at the door. St. Athanasius, opening the window a little, asked what he wanted. Finding out that the boy wanted to be made a monk, he said: "You cannot be a monk: monasticism is a great thing; you are young, and the rules of the elders are great. Many have come here but have become lazy and have not endured the difficulties of fasting and continence and have fled. Monks are called voluntary martyrs; but many martyrs, having suffered for a short time, have received their end, while monks their whole life long endure sufferings; even though they have not received wounds from torturers, yet by enduring warfare from the flesh and battling with mental enemies they suffer to their last breath. Therefore, my son, if you wish to serve the Lord, prepare your soul so as to endure with patience all the temptations and sufferings inflicted by the enemies." The boy fell to the Elder's feet and could scarcely utter: "Have mercy on me! The great Abba, the blessed Sergius, sent

me to you so that you might clothe me in the monastic habit." Hearing this, the Saint said: "Arise, child. Now your desire is fulfilled." And having performed prayer, he clothed Nikon in the monastic habit. And Nikon began to live in Serpukhov, in the monastery of St. Athanasius, and he attained to a high spiritual life in God, so that he was enabled to become the successor of the great Sergius himself.

The life of St. Herman begins in this same Serpukhov, where he passed his childhood in the shadow of St. Athanasius' Vysotsky Monastery under the protection of St. Sergius. Like St. Nikon, from early childhood he had great zeal for pious life, and already at the age of 12 we shall see him in Sarov Monastery, living in the dense Sarov forest in the cell of the ascetic-elder Barlaam. The protection of St. Sergius is visible for the whole length of his life: at the age of 16 he was in the St. Sergius Hermitage on the Gulf of Finland; on the feast of St. Sergius he stepped upon the earth of distant Alaska; and he died like St. Sergius, in a shining of unearthly light amid the fragrance of heavenly incense.

St. Herman was born in Serpukhov in a pious merchant family probably in 1757, or a little earlier. Judging from the notes of his close friend and fellow ascetic in Sarov and Sanaxar, the later Archimandrite Theophanes, his name in the world was probably Gerasimus. His family was very pious; it is known that one of his relatives finished her days in the Convent of the Theotokos of the Passion in Moscow, leaving behind some treasured letters of St. Herman from Alaska. His surname is not known [see Chapter XXXIV].

The merchant class at that time was distinguished by its special devotion to the Church. Its whole way of life was penetrated through and through by profound, age-old Orthodoxy, and it had preserved the ancient traditions of iconography and Znamenny chant, and the patriarchal customs and traditions. Although Russia in the 18th century had already been subjected to a powerful alien influence from the West, the merchant class was still untouched by it, and every aspect of life in Serpukhov, which was close to the ancient capital of Moscow, breathed the air of Holy Russia. In every merchant family with any means at all there were to be found such books as the Bible, the Lives of Saints, the Prologue of daily edifying readings, and collections and works of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church. These books were no dead capital, either, but were zealously read, and each new generation found instruction in them and drew lessons for life from this pure source. Reading and writing were

learned from church chanters, beginning with the Horologion and the Psalter, which disposed the soul from an early age to assimilate easily that which is elevated and truly beautiful, making it for the rest of one's life something deeply desired and natural. Therefore, life was naturally lived in the fear of God, with reverence toward parents and elders, its rhythm governed by the Church feasts and fasts, and not by cold laws and eternally changing fashions. Life proceeded in quietness, in concentration and seriousness, in sufficiency and yet with a harmonious yearning for the beautiful and true, for what is above.

There exist exact descriptions of life in Serpukhov at that time, written perhaps by relatives of St. Herman himself. Families were large, with the grandfather at the head and all the generations living together. Everyone arose with the sound of the bell for Matins. Not a single feast, with its All-night Vigil of many hours, was missed. After the feast-day Liturgy and the common festive meal, everyone sat down and would sing with contrition the "Psalms," or religious songs based mainly on the Psalter, with titles like "O Lord, he that dwelleth in Thy dwelling," "My soul doth strive to offer praise to the Master Almighty," "Oh, woe is me a sinner, woe to me who have no good deeds." The singing would be harmonious, without haste, and often with tears of contrition. Passersby would stop and listen, and the spiritual content of these songs would be poured into their souls. Worldly songs, however, were avoided, as unbefitting Orthodox Christians. The children, of course, took an active part in all of this, and their minds would be elevated and take wing, being inspired with spiritual reality. Frequent visits of pilgrims with their tales of holy places, contact with the God-fearing clergy, encounters with fools for Christ's sake, who fought against the fallen logic of this world — all left a powerful impression on young souls. And so the heart of the pious little St. Herman became filled with zeal for God.

In the Vysotsky Monastery in these years there was living a pious monk, Hierodeacon Joel, a relative of the future Optina Elders, the brothers Moses and Anthony Putilov. Many would come to visit this elder of holy life, bringing gifts, and he would reward them with loving spiritual conversation and a fond affection for the children, so that the latter would visit him with joy and reverence and be involuntarily edified.

The nearness to Moscow and the Lavra of St. Sergius could not but attract pilgrims from Serpukhov, and of course they would often visit the holy

Monastery. This would be a great event in the life of the children, and especially for such chosen ones of God as St. Herman. The pilgrimage would be made without fail on foot, a labor of love for St. Sergius, who was venerated from one end to the other of the Russian land. The shrine with the incorrupt relics, the magnificent churches, the whole choirs of monks would strike the young pilgrims with their other-worldliness, and tales of the beginning of the Monastery, taken from the Life of St. Sergius, would inspire young souls and draw young imaginations to thoughts of desert-dwellers, dense forests with wild animals, and holy monasteries far from the ways of this world. Celebrated at that time as such a monastery, with a strict and holy life, was Sarov. The soul of the young St. Herman was already striving toward this desert place where he was to become a young hermit. Perhaps he had an uncle or some other relative there, but in any case a twelve-year-old boy is not easily accepted into a monastery, much less such a strict one as Sarov. Therefore, we can readily conclude that this child already had upon him the seal of one of God's chosen ones when he was allowed to live in the forest of Sarov as cell-attendant of the Elder Barlaam, whose kinship to St. Herman is unknown to us.

And so the young St. Herman, like St. Nikon 400 years before him, went as a boy to live in the forest with an Elder and learn the monastic life.

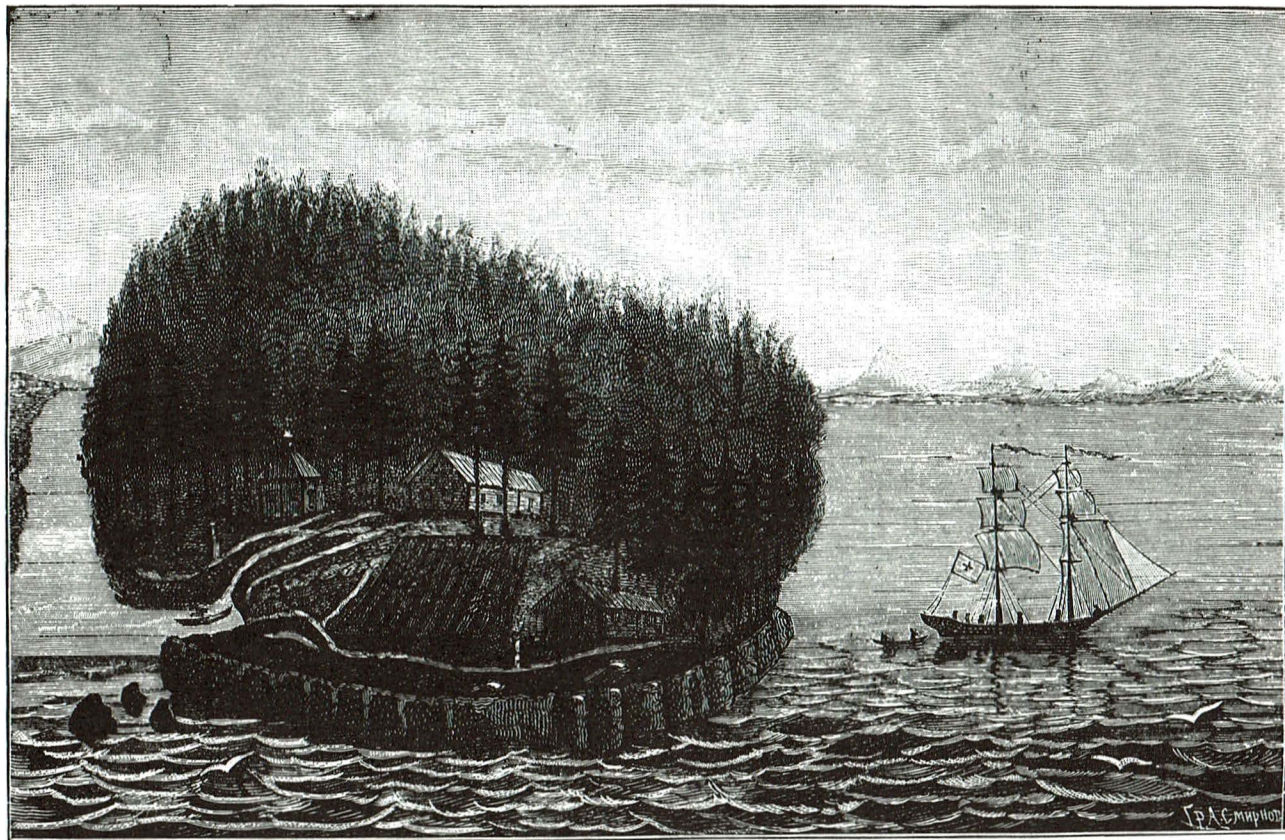
*(First chapter from the forthcoming book
Life of St. Herman and the American
Paradise by Abbot Herman)*

XIII

ST. HERMAN'S EARTHLY CASTLE



WE HAVE RETURNED from a 200-mile trip to the islands and to the coasts of our colonies. One of the most pleasant memories which we brought back from this trip was that of Father Herman, who has been living among the Indians now for forty years and has devoted himself completely to his civilizing mission. The vigor and liveliness of his mind, and his profound and true piety made him an amiable and instructive companion, and I regretted having to part with him.



Spruce Island during St. Herman's time
showing his vegetable garden, and his chapel of the Meeting of the Lord.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

The worthy clergyman was sent to the then still heathen Aleuts on the island of Kodiak in 1795. This territory, which is quite rightly called Land of Hunger, suffers from a severe climate. The mountains are bare, and the coasts and the inland are covered with virgin forests and swamps.

In 1795 a Mission of several clergymen settled in Kodiak. One of them became a victim of his own zeal. When he was on his way to visit some poor villagers, he was swallowed up in the swamp. Another one was sent back because of poor conduct. Father Herman kept faithfully to his post.

It was difficult to get to Herman. We had to force our way through the forest, where the storm had broken the dry branches of the trees and scattered them around and had uprooted many trees. In the middle of the island we found a half-collapsed hut. There he stood, a little old man of 76, bent over, with dazzling white beard and hair, and bright lively eyes which, however, were almost completely deprived of sight. He had a clear voice full of liveliness, which was the reflection of the nimbleness of a refined mind. His movements were energetic, as of a man thirty years old. He had a sense of humor, and it was difficult to understand how he could have retained so much elasticity and interest in everything after having lived forty years in solitude.

I expressed my wish to visit his hut. Herman remarked, laughing, that the sight of his castle would be too imposing. The hut stands in a clearing and is just about to fall to pieces. The inside corresponds to the outside. One enters through a kind of anteroom which is blocked up by a pile of wood and various other things. The main room is just as dark as the first room. There is a wooden bench along the walls all around the room, in the Russian manner. An oven of huge dimensions is a little sunk in; a leather cushion on its side serves as a bed. The blankets and the mattress are not there; the window-sill of the only window serves as the dining table. A table and a wooden bowl complete the household furniture, together with some cracked earthenware. In one corner one sees an old library, consisting of religious books which are approved by the Greek Orthodox Church. The books are torn from much usage.

Outside the hut there is a small field, which the Father cultivates and which furnishes potatoes, turnips, and radishes. It is two miles to the beach, and Herman has to carry all the seaweed from there himself, which he uses as fertilizer. The dry branches lying around supply him with firewood, and

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this excellent man assured us that no prince in his castle could be a more absolute lord than he is, and that he has everything in abundance. We saw some bread lying on the breadboard, and its origin was not quite clear to us. Herman told us that he dries potato slices on the oven and then grinds them to flour in a little hand-mill. His bread had a quite good taste.

At our request the Father agreed to take us to his schoolchildren. We started out, and when I saw that his weak eyes could hardly distinguish the obstacles in the way, I offered him my arm, and he seemed very glad that my 25 years were supporting his 76 years. Soon we came to the edge of a bay where there stood various huts, which were surrounded by meadows and small gardens.

"The men are away to get meat and furs," Herman said to us, "and the women are drying fish; but here in the house I see my small flock. Maria, come with the children."

Maria is a woman of mature age, who after a frivolous life was converted by old Herman, and who now looks after the children entrusted to her with earnestness and kindness. The parents, who are absent all summer, are happy to know that their children are well taken care of, that they learn to write according to their age, and that they are instructed in Christian teaching. We attended a religious lesson given by Father Herman. It was a model of heartfelt and simple warmth. Maria is doing also some farming in the area of the settlement, with great success. The smallest corners are utilized for planting vegetables and flowers. This year she managed to put aside 100 hundred-weight of potatoes, and this, together with the abundance of fish, will help to face the menace of hunger this spring.

Father Herman's eyesight is too weak to enable him to read the church services... He knows them by heart.

His admonitions and prayers at the farthest boundary of the inhabited earth will remain with us in blessed memory.

(From a letter of Elizabeth von Wrangell, nee Baroness Rossillon, to her parents in Reval from Sitka, about 1835)

XIV ZEALOT OF ORTHODOXY



ASKED the Father (Herman) why he was seeking his salvation in this melancholy solitude, and why he had voluntarily separated himself from his fellow citizens, whom he was supposed to be converting.

Herman: "You think that I am supposed to possess the truth, and my seeming idleness displeases you. But do you know what the truth is and where you can find it?"

I saw that it was necessary to emphasize our Lutheran Faith, and I replied to him: "We are convinced that we possess it because we respect the Faith of our brothers in Jesus Christ."

Herman: "No, no! Those who have left the true Orthodox Church are not on the right path."

This discussion displeased me, and I gave the bold monk to understand that we could make better use of our time.

"You see," Herman concluded the conversation, abandoning this subject, "my diocese is not very large, only a few hundred people. Fetishism disappeared from this region thirty years ago. I have seen many who have changed to a better life. I am happy now to wed the children I once baptized. Oh, if we only could have a chapel and a bell!"

This wish I could fulfill. A few months later a ship brought the necessary boards and beams, and with the strong help of the Aleuts the chapel was built.

(From the Diary of Ferdinand von Wrangell, 1835)

XV GIFT OF CLAIRVOYANCE



IN 1834, while Governor F. P. Wrangell was in Kodiak, Father Herman came to visit him at his invitation (just as the Governor's predecessors had likewise invited him, for the Elder was eloquent and



Baroness Elizabeth
von Wrangell

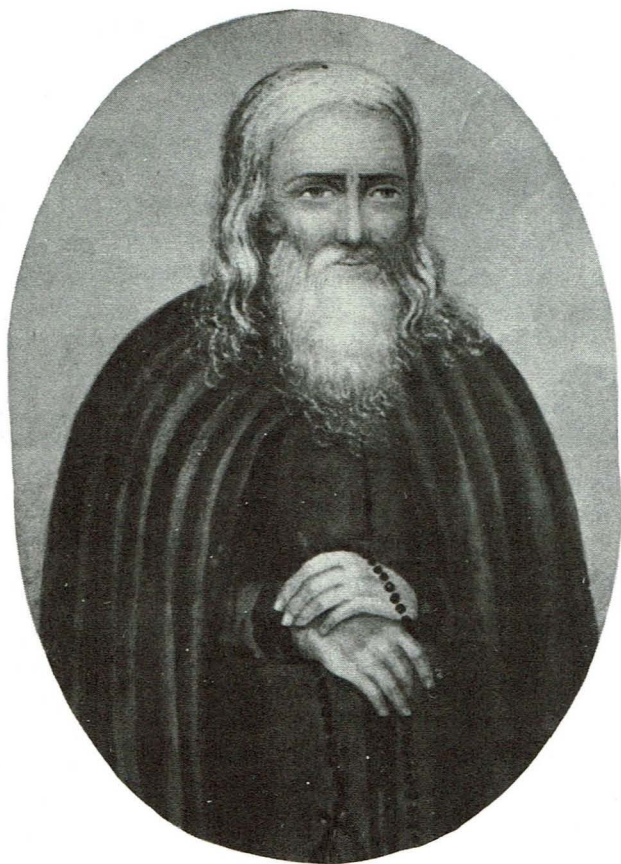


Admiral Ferdinand P.
von Wrangell

untiring in edifying conversations). A bed would be made for Father Herman in the study; and when they would come in the morning to make the bed, they would find it completely untouched and found the Elder always awake!

At that time, Father Herman one day asked Mr. Wrangell to write something (later I heard that it was apparently a letter to a Metropolitan, but I don't know which one), with the request not to polish up his language at all but to write just as he dictated. When it was finished he asked that it be read, and when he found it faithful to his dictation the Elder got up from his chair, thanked the Governor, and said: For your faithful labor, Ferdinand Petrovich: I congratulate you on attaining the rank of Admiral. Mr. Wrangell jumped up from his place with visible fright, and bowing he said: What do you mean, Father? To which Father Herman replied that he would receive it. And when Mr. Wrangell left for St. Petersburg, this prediction was fulfilled. Perhaps this good man is still alive and has not forgotten what happened.

*(Notes of Constantine Larionov, May 21, 1867,
Sitka, in: The Valaam Missionaries in America,
St. Petersburg, 1900, p. 174)*



ST. HERMAN'S MINIATURE

The original portrait painted with the instruction of St. Herman's spiritual son, Schema-monk Sergius, by his daughter Nun Elizabeth, on the 15th of November, 1866. The portrait was received in Valaam on the 30th of December, 1866, from Simeon Yanovsky.

Courtesy of New Valaamo in Finland.

XVI
ST. HERMAN'S ICON

A Letter of St. Herman's Spiritual Son to Abbot Damascene of Valaam

Most respected and highly honored Father Damascene!



I HAD THE HAPPINESS to receive your precious letter of the first of October. I have no words sufficiently to thank you for your great love and your sincere good will to me an unworthy sinner.

In order to save me, He in His limitless mercy sought me out at the end of the world, at the remote frontier of Russia — He sent me a holy elder, the recluse Father Herman, who after many labors and prayer brought me from error and free-thinking to the knowledge of the true God, taught me true faith — brought me from darkness to light! And when I departed from this God-inspired instructor and many times was inclined away from the true path — the great mercy of God did not reject me entirely.

According to your faith and for the sake of your holy prayers, I did not hesitate to undertake the fulfillment of your desire: to sketch Father Herman! First of all I fervently prayed to God so that he would renew in my mind the image of the venerable Father Herman, and the Lord is so merciful that my memory was cleansed of remembrances and I remembered all the features of his face which shone with grace: the pleasant smile on his lips, the meek glance, the meek and quiet manner, the friendly word; his height, way of walking, attractive glance; the blue-gray eyes — everything the Lord renewed by your holy prayers! I, being an eyewitness of this holy elder, while the portrait was being painted was only the guide and director as to how to paint; but it was my second daughter, the novice Elizabeth, who did the painting at my instruction. She paints well, as is evident from this portrait. We took much time and ruined more than ten portraits — none of them was a likeness. Finally the Lord helped us to depict a likeness of how I remember him, as if I had seen him just now! I am sending you, most venerable Father, this portrait.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

I assume that you, either as a supplement to the Description of Valaam Monastery or as a separate brochure, will publish (which I also would wish) the Life of the Valaam monk Father Herman, a member of the Orthodox Mission on the shores of Northwest America, on the island of Kodiak, who labored in seclusion on an uninhabited island near Kodiak. One could add to this publication his portrait and the drawings which I have sent to you. It seems to me that this would be good.

...Therefore it seems, perhaps, that the Lord endured my life so that I might give information concerning the life of the holy Elder...

The most humble servant of Your Reverence,
Monk Sergius (Yanovsky)

St. Tikhon of Kaluga Monastery
December 12, 1866

XVII

ST. HERMAN'S SPIRITUAL SON



IMEON IVANOVICH YANOVSKY, who was converted from atheism to the Orthodox Church by St. Herman, later became the Schema-monk Sergius. His son, Schema-Hieromonk Alexander, also became a monk, and his three daughters became nuns. Here is how St. Herman spoke of him in a letter, foreseeing the subsequent righteousness of his spiritual son:

"The All-powerful God in His unfathomable Providence deemed me worthy to have for a short time an acquaintance with you, and that I should see the zealous and heartfelt disposition of your virtuous soul for holy eternity, and your love for God, and your knowledge of the Scriptures — by which you can scatter every mist and darkness of ignorance and proceed on a straight path to the heavenly fatherland."

*(From a Letter of St. Herman
of August 10, 1821, New Valaam)*

XVIII
ST. HERMAN'S BISHOP

*Separately I have written to His
Eminence (Metropolitan Gabriel), asking him
to send us as a bishop either Father Joachim
of Sarov or Father Theophanes, the
former cell-attendant of the hierarch.*

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA
(From a Letter to Abbot Nazarius,
May 22, 1795)

METROPOLITAN GABRIEL (Petrov) of Petersburg and Novgorod, in whose diocese Valaam Monastery was located, was a heroic figure, in actuality a confessor, when one realizes in what a crucial time he lived and what a responsible position he held in regard to preserving the purity of Orthodoxy. He also was directly responsible for the revival of Valaam, the publication of the Philokalia in Russia, and the formation of the first Orthodox Mission for Alaska, which brought St. Herman to America.

Two close friends of St. Herman bear witness of the Metropolitan's spiritual height. Monk Innocent of Valaam, during the preparation for the building of the new church of Sts. Sergius and Herman in Valaam, saw a vision of Metropolitan Gabriel triumphantly arriving for the laying of the cornerstone, accompanied by Sts. Sergius and Herman themselves; and Father Theophanes of Sarov related the following in his biographical notes:

"After the early Liturgy he never ate; at nine or ten o'clock he would go to the Synod, and at three he would come back — and until this time he never ate. He always went to Vespers and Matins. He was always in tears; if he would offend anyone, he would weep later. When he went to the Court, first of all he would always pray, bowing down to the ground. Once I came when he was making prostrations. He said: 'May God grant that the present day will pass well.' He was going then to a service, where the Archpriest Samborsky,* whose beard was shaved off, was supposed to serve together with him.

* Archpriest Andrew Samborsky was previously a priest at the Embassy in London, and after his return to Petersburg he continued to go about in lay clothing. This event took place in 1788. (See the Life of Metr. Gabriel.)



METROPOLITAN GABRIEL
OF PETERSBURG
18th century engraving



ARCHIMANDRITE THEOPHANES
(SOKOLOV)
St. Herman's monastic co-struggler

Seeing Samborsky, the Metropolitan said: 'What kind of a man are you? Our Church does not accept those who shave the beard. Get out!' Pamphilov said to the Metropolitan: 'What are you doing? It is the will of the Empress!' 'I do not wish that our Church should suffer; if I serve with him, this means to give scandal to the whole of Russia, I myself having allowed this.' Then Bezborodko came and said: 'The will of the Empress is that he serve with you.' 'Then report to the Empress: I cannot serve with him; our Church does not accept those who shave the beard.' Well, I thought, it's a carriage to banishment for him! But His Eminence did not serve, although Samborsky did. Later the Metropolitan was called to dine with the Empress, and Samborsky was not there, and no one saw him serving anywhere after that incident.

"A week before his death I visited him with Father Nazarius (Abbot of Valaam). He sat with us at the table and said: 'My end is close.' When the new year, 1801, had just begun, he said: 'Oh, what a frightful century begins!' He received Holy Communion almost every day. He died sitting on the 28th of January, 1801."

*Archimandrite Theophanes
of the New Lake Monastery*

XIX
ST. HERMAN AND THE ANGELS

*We glorify thee, our holy Father Herman....
instructor of monks and converser with Angels.
Megalygnarion of Monk-Saints*

FILLED WITH THE SONG of Angels, thy forest cell was empty, save for thee alone, singing, while the people greatly wondered. And again an Angel served thee, sanctifying the waters with the Jordan's blessing, calling: O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord and exalt Him above all forever. *Canon to St. Herman, Canticle VIII*

XX
ST. HERMAN'S DISCIPLE — A CONVERSER WITH ANGELS

*With whom is it better and more pleasant to
converse, with men or with Angels? Of course, with Angels.
ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA*

DURING THE YEARS when S. Yanovsky was preparing himself to enter a monastery, after already living a true monk's life in the world for many years, he became seriously ill, and at that time he was deemed worthy, like his holy preceptor St. Herman himself, to converse with an Angel, as he himself related shortly before his death:

"In the night of the 17th to the 18th of the month of February (1860) I did not sleep for a long time, reflecting, and most of all I was occupied with the thought of God, about how merciful the Lord is to the human race: he became incarnate, he endured such terrible sufferings and death itself; and how ungrateful we are, and how distracted we are by the vanity of this world! Finally, towards morning, I fell asleep, and what did I see: It was as if there were nothing at all — neither the screen which stood near my bed, nor the window, nor the walls — but only the clear, blue, cloudless sky, and the air

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

was clear and warm. And as I was looking and admiring this, suddenly I saw an Angel descending from heaven in the form of a child of indescribable beauty, his glance so bright. With reverent attention I looked at him, and saw that in his left hand there was a beautiful apple branch. The edges of its leaves appeared to me as if gilded, and above there was an apple. With what ecstasy I admired the dweller of heaven, how everything about him was orderly, airy, transparent. What a smile he had; I had never seen such beauty upon earth. But his glance was directed not at me, and I thought that he would pass by. To whom, I thought, was he carrying such a precious gift of paradise? As soon as I thought this, the Angel stopped right opposite me, turned his splendid face to me, and directed his radiant eyes directly at me. His glance was so splendid that I forgot my illness, forgot everything on the earth. He addressed me and began to speak. His voice was extraordinarily clear and melodic, but not like the voice of a child but rather that of a youth, and he said: "This branch is for him who will weep over his sins, who will endure everything on the earth. Ask of God patience, and when you will have endured everything with patience, then you will likewise be given an apple!" Having said this, he flew away and was concealed from my eyes. I stretched towards him my sinful hands and cried out: 'O holy Angel, pray that God will grant me patience!' But everything had ended. There was no Angel. I awoke and began to weep and bitterly lament that by my sins I so frequently anger God and banish from myself my guardian Angel, who is just as splendid as this one was. It was already nine o'clock. I had forgotten the time, had forgotten everything, that children were sitting around me; I wept and could not stop my tears... The children immediately rushed upon me and began to ask: 'What is it? What has happened to you?' They called their mother, and she began to ask: 'What are you weeping about?' I could only say: 'I am weeping over my sins.' 'What sins? You just received Communion yesterday.' 'Yes,' I said, 'I received Communion, but I did not weep over my sins.' I asked them to leave me and call my spiritual father; I did not wish to tell them about it, fearing that they would tell it to others. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord! Wondrous is Thy mercy to sinful man!"

Schema-Monk Sergius (Yanovsky)

XXI

GOD'S CREATURES ON MONK'S LAGOON

IN THE MIDST of Spruce Island, a small spring runs down from the mountain into the sea, the mouth of which is always covered by logs and seaweed brought in by the high tide. During the spring, when the river fish would appear, the elder would dig away the sand at the mouth of the river so that the fish could pass by, and the first group of fish would rush into the river. Aliaga recalls the following: "At times, Apa* (Fr. Herman) would say, 'Go and fetch fish from the river.' With dried fish he would feed the birds, and they would fly around his cell in great multitudes. Under his cell there lived ermines. These little animals, when angered, are ferocious and cannot be approached, but the elder fed them with his own hands. 'Wasn't it a miracle that we saw,' his disciple Ignatius would say." They also saw how Fr. Herman would feed the bears. With the death of the elder, both the birds and the animals disappeared. Even his garden yields no crop when some-one plants there of their own will, Ignatius testified.

(*Prima Vita: The Life of Valaam Monk Herman, American Missionary, Petersburg, 1868, p. 19.*)

I did not stay long on Monks' Lagoon—less than a year. It is a frightful place. I got settled there on the shore of the roaring ocean in a half-dilapidated house, or rather a barn. I had to guard the door from the inside because mischievous bears wanted to break in. What I say is no fabrication. At times I would go with Fr. Gerasim to catch fish in a lake connected to the ocean by a stream. The salmon would swim through the stream in order to deposit their eggs. The bears would stand there and, with their paws, would scoop up the fish which were stuck in the tree branches of the trap. They would devour the fish and throw away the fish skeletons. Seeing this scene with the huge grizzlies, I would be paralyzed with fear. Fr. Gerasim, however, would yell at the bears, saying: "Hello, hello, Mishka, Mishka." ("Mishka" is an en-

* "Apa" is the Aleut word for "father."



The Kodiak Grizzly Bears

dearing form of the Russian word for bear.) These “mishkas” would look up, take a second look, and then, without paying any attention, continue devouring the fish. Fr. Gerasim, carrying a long poke, would then come to the trap and attempt to chase away the uninvited guests. Deciding to go away from this place, I would watch from afar how Fr. Gerasim was able to install order in his domain.

And so, while living in that beach house, which was not very close to Fr. Gerasim's dwelling, I had to conduct “vigils” day and night in order to avoid acquaintance with these grizzly “mishkas”. Although these repulsive animals would break trees, make noise, play around, and knock heavily on the door of my dwelling, I was protected from them by God. I later moved to Ouzinkie village and settled in a small house which belonged to either the church reader or the chanter, and which was only a few steps away from the church itself. Nevertheless, I had managed to live on Spruce Island for quite some time. While I was there, I occasionally served in the little church adjacent to Fr. Gerasim's tiny house and also in the farther church where St. Herman's relics used to be kept. There was nothing joyous about the whole thing. When I was leaving and getting in the boat to go to Ouzinkie, poor Fr. Gerasim was standing on the shore and weeping. I asked him why he was crying. “I'm sorry that you're leaving me forever,” he said. Those were his last words to me, a final farewell. Amen to Fr. Gerasim. Forgive me.

To be able to live in such wild seclusion, amidst foreign people, and for so many years is a great podvig; the Lord knows the rest. Peace be to Fr. Gerasim. As I think, so I say.

*(Hieroschemamonk Macarius, Holy Protection Skete,
Bluffton, Alberta, Canada, June 8/21, 1983)*

XXII

PRELEST

ST. HERMAN'S DISCIPLE, Schema monk Sergius (Yanovsky), remembers the following:

"I was thirty years old then. I knew many sciences and read a lot, but unfortunately, the science of sciences—the Law of God— I scarcely understood even superficially, and what I did know was only theoretical, not applied to life. I was a Christian by name only, while in my soul I was actually a free thinker, a Deist, just like the rest of those who had received an official education. Moreover, I did not accept the godliness and holiness of our religion (Orthodoxy), having read many of the atheistic writings of Voltaire and other eighteenth century philosophers.

Fr. Herman instantly noticed this and tried to convert me. His task was not so easy, however. I had to be convinced, I needed proofs of the holiness of our religion—and that required much time, knowledge, and the ability to express oneself with good and *convincing words*. To my great surprise, this simple, uneducated monk— Fr. Herman, being inspired by grace, spoke with such power, wisdom and conviction that no learned earthly wisdom could withstand it! Truly Fr. Herman had a great natural mind, a good knowledge of spiritual patristic books, and, above all, the grace of God! Since, during the short winter days, I would have absolutely no time to spend with him, he would come to me every day for evening tea, and sometimes for dinner also. Although we would spend half the night, sometimes even past midnight, in lively conversation, he would never stay overnight at our place. Neither rain nor snowstorm would prevent this zealous elder from visiting me, despite the fact that he would have to walk well over half a mile to get home. In a well-worn riasson he would visit me every day. I would without fail warm him with tea, while he would invariably talk about the love of God, about eternity, about the salvation of the soul, about Christian life, etc. His sweet converse would pour out of his mouth as out of an unceasing fountain. At midnight or even later, the elder would

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

take his cane and go home in the stormy weather and biting frost. No one would accompany him on his slippery, rocky path; he was accompanied by angels, who supported him. As it is written in the Psalms: *For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone* (Ps. 90)

Fr. Herman was penetrated with Christian love for the salvation of his neighbor. With such frequent meetings and the prayers of the holy elder, the Lord converted me entirely to the right path. I became a true Christian. In all this, I am indebted to Fr. Herman—he is my benefactor! He loved me as his son and rejoiced over my conversion to the knowledge of the truth...”

It is known that, when Fr. Herman was at Valaam, he received his spiritual upbringing under the leadership of the great ascetic of the Sarov forests, Abbot Nazarius. Fr. Herman was a doer of the Jesus Prayer when the Philokalia was first published from the translation of Paisius (Velichkovsky). At that time, Fr. Nazarius had been appointed as advisor to the editors because of his knowledge and experience of spiritual life. When Fr. Herman came to America, it is also known that he brought the Philokalia with him and that he was using the Jesus Prayer. Yanovsky continues:

“He tried to talk me into staying in America for good, but I had already requested a man to replace me. When the plague and the death toll apparently began to diminish, I hastened to return to Sitka, to the port of New Archangelsk, where many important matters awaited me. I parted with the venerable Fr. Herman, already as with a close friend, my instructor, my benefactor. I begged his prayers and then left.”

And indeed Yanovsky was departing already a different man. The world of spiritual life had been awakened in him. Not long before his death, the future Fr. Sergius revealed that Fr. Herman had taught him how to conduct unceasing mental prayer, in order for him to always bear Our Lord Jesus Christ in his heart and to have grace-filled awareness. The incident which occurred to him after his arrival in Sitka and a long exhausting sea storm shows with what zeal he used the mental prayer. Thanks to the prayers of Fr. Herman, he was saved from a danger greater than the elements of the ocean.

They left at the end of December and were trapped in a frightful storm. Huge waves rolled over their tiny brig, and time and again they

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were scared that these waves would take whatever was on board into the sea. They were especially afraid that the waves would, in their path, sweep away the people, who were by then soaked to their bones and shivering from the cold. This continued for a quarter of a day, and it was not until January 2, 1820, that they safely reached Sitka.

Many matters awaited Yanovsky in Sitka, to which he tended with his usual heedfulness. He could dedicate only his spare time, between all his occupations, to prayer and godly thoughts, but it is likely that the short Jesus Prayer deeply entered his heart.

"One late evening in 1820, I went to sleep, as usual, after midnight, in order to rest from my occupations. I was walking around the room and thinking about my past life, about my sins. It shocked me—such a fear descended upon me—how I had disobeyed God so much. Suddenly, it was as if a book appeared before me, in which were recorded all my sins from my youth, from the age of five. I was frozen with fear, and the hair on my head stood on end. I was as if at the Last Judgment without any answer, looking to find something good in myself and not being able to find it. I broke out in a cold sweat. Some voice whispered to me: "You see how great are your sins; God will not forgive you; you are damned; now hell is ready to swallow you up." It seemed as if the house was shaking, as if half of it had already fallen down. The floor seemed to fall through and there opened up a great pit, at the bottom of which was a frightening fire—this was hell. In despair I reached for the pistols (which were always loaded), wanting to take my own life. But some voice in my heart called me: "Do not despair; hope in the mercy of God; He is bountiful and full of mercy for those who repent; until the last moments of life, we must never despair."

This, of course, was the voice of my Guardian Angel. I threw down the pistols and, stepping back a foot, looked at the Crucifixion of Our Saviour. Tears burst out like torrents and ran down my cheeks; I fell to my knees and wept until I fell asleep on this spot.

"Waking up, I arose. It was morning, there was nothing around, everything was in its place, and in my soul there was peace. 'O Lord,' I thought, 'how great is Your Mercy!' The next day, I received the Holy Mysteries and then became completely calm."

All this he described to his spiritual father, Herman, from whom he received a reply in the now famous letter dated June 20, 1820. This

letter, which was written at New Valaam, begins thus:

"I had the honor of receiving your kindly disposed and loving letter, including the curious news and together with a package. I extend my sincere gratitude, but there is no other way in which I can repay you. I thank the all-powerful God for having preserved your life, for it is He Who protects people from all calamities, both on the earth and on the sea, and Who, in His mysterious ways, shows the way to the truth, by following which we will reach eternal blessedness. And by fulfilling the designation of our existence, we will fulfill the will of our Creator, Who brought us into being for this sole purpose.

As you were once kind to me even before meeting me, the lowly one, personally, so also do not deprive me in the future, and, according to your meekness, do not disdain my unworthiness. Also, just as you have shown me, the lowly one, more and more of your humble and man-loving kindness, so have I become more and more daring before you, hoping that you will not be angry at my simplicity and crudeness, but will great-heartedly accept what I have to say.

Without exalting myself to the rank of teacher, nonetheless, fulfilling my duty and obligation as an obedient servant for the benefit of my neighbor, I will speak my mind, founded on the commandment of Holy Scripture, to those who thirst and seek for their eternal heavenly homeland.

A true Christian is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the word of the Saviour Himself. He deigned to say: not the righteous have I come to call, but sinners to salvation; there is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over ninety righteous ones. Likewise, concerning the sinful woman who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: to one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. From these judgments a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith.

Sin, to one who loves God, is nothing other than an arrow from the enemy in battle. The true Christian is a warrior fighting his way through the regiments of the unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland. According to the word of the Apostle, our homeland is in heaven; and about the warrior he says: our warfare is not against flesh and

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blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of wickedness under heaven (Eph. 6:12).

The vain desires of this world separate us from our homeland; love of them and habit clothe our soul as if in a hideous garment. This is called by the Apostles the outward man. We, travelling on the journey of this life and calling on God to help us, ought to be divesting ourselves of this hideous garment and clothing ourselves in new desires, in a new love of the age to come, and thereby to receive knowledge of how far we are from our heavenly homeland. But it is not possible to do this quickly; rather one must follow the example of sick people, who, wishing the desired (health), do not leave off seeking means to cure themselves.

I do not express myself clearly because I am in a hurry and time does not allow; however, I hope that you, with the sharpness of your mind and with your flaming desire for the beloved heavenly homeland, will also reveal to others, not only to yourself, the path to the holy truth. Now I shall speak about matters of another nature..."

(Gleb Podmoshensky, "Schema monk Sergius, Disciple of Blessed Herman, Miracle Worker of Alaska," Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1964)

XXIII

NEW VALAAM MONASTERY

Upon the arrival of the Mission in 1794, Archimandrite Ioasaph founded a school consisting of fifteen children. It was located in the house of the Mission and had Nektary as its teacher. Before his departure, the archimandrite entrusted Fr. Herman with the care of this school. It remained in the Mission house until 1802, when it was taken over by the company (the Russian-American Company) and a certain Russian scout and explorer, Yudin, began to teach the children under the supervision of the Kodiak office. After he arrived on the ship Neva, Hieromonk Gideon founded the school again with Nektary as the teacher, and eighty boys were gathered into it. Rezanov ordered that an agricultural school be organized under the surveillance of Frs. Herman and Athanasius, and for this pur-



Spruce Island in Saint Herman's time
where the Saint originally conducted agricultural
experiments, and later had a good-sized garden
that provided food for his orphanage.

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pose twenty of the eighty boys were selected in 1805. These boys were sent to Afagnak where at that time the fathers were busy cultivating the earth. This school existed until 1825, but was unsuccessful... All these various plans concerning organizing schools were not altogether without benefit, however. In the colonies today, there are several Creole bookkeepers and administrative personnel who were all students of that time.

...And so, from the entire Mission there remained one monk, Fr. Herman, and it was this monk who was the most worthy member of the Mission. He stood from all the others by his piety and by his good mind, and was actually the one who governed the Mission, being a simple monk. It is a pity that he could not keep his co-brothers on the path of piety. Being of a fiery nature, he could not tolerate the insults and persecution which the other members of the Mission frequently had to endure from the authorities. He would become heatedly involved for the rights of the local natives (which were being violated by the agitation, crudeness and immorality of the explorers and the authorities), and thereby became the victim of many malicious animosities. However, it was he alone, out of everybody, who was able to withstand all these things, and who can now serve as an example of diligence, piety and strict morality.

This respectable man belongs to the ranks of outstanding people. A native of the Voronezh region, from rather poor peasant stock but of a family of sufficient means, he was increasingly drawn inwardly to another type of life. At seventeen years of age, he secretly left home and became a monk in a neighboring monastery in Sarov. Being drawn by an unquenchable passion towards seclusion and absolute detachment from people, he at first made two attempts to flee. Once he even went as far as Astrakhan in order to cross the border into Persia, but he was subsequently returned to the monastery. Having persuaded three brothers to go with him, he left again, this time with permission to found a new monastery on the island of Valaam in Lake Ladoga (for it seemed to him that it was much too noisy in his old monastery). He was an active co-laborer in this cause until he finally decided to go to America, answering the first call for aspirants.

When the Mission was almost dissolved in Kodiak, and he alone remained out of everyone, he secluded himself on Spruce Island where, in a hut in the denseness of the forest, he lived as a recluse in complete solitude. He occupied himself by growing a vegetable garden, and he diligently planted potatoes, cultivating rows of them by himself. He

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taught and instructed both Aleuts and Russians. Since he did not know the Aleut language, however it seems that his speeches did not make an impression on the Aleuts.

One Aleut woman, the wife of a Russian explorer, came once to Herman's hut wanting to find out from any man who came from Nushagoka about her husband, who happened to have been sent there. She heard a small sermon from Herman, since it was his habit not to let anyone leave without first having heard several words about religion. His words deeply entered into her imagination. She was of loose behavior, and for the first time experienced the reproach of her conscience. After returning home, she found her former life to be unbearable, and she soon went again to Herman, declaring her determination to faithfully stay with him and work out her salvation. Herman was already old (sixty years of age) at this time. Having overcome his initial apprehension at this unexpected event, and having made peace with the thought that in his old age he would live with this woman, he accepted her and eventually settled her in a special little house on the seashore. The woman, whose name was Sophia, learned how to read and write Russian in one year and came to speak Russian well. Soon, several orphan girls of Aleut and Creole extraction joined Sophia. Under the supervision of Herman, she became the superior, while at the same time increasing the land under cultivation, acquiring skill in handicrafts, and instilling in the orphans the habit and love of labor. In 1831 I observed their agricultural work in a blossoming state. The orphan girls, healthy and apparently joyful, showed that they were happy with their lives. Seeing this, I ordered the government office to subsidize Herman by building for him a chapel and rendering any other needed assistance. This request was carried out, and his place was called New Valaam. In 1834 Sophia had five girls (two left by themselves, having violated the celibacy that was expected of them there). Five families moved in and settled not far from them and, receiving sustenance from Valaam, would render help. On Valaam they now produce 120 barrels of potatoes and also cultivate turnips, garlic, cabbage and carrots. From early morning to evening, Sophia and the girls are at work. During the summer they work in the vegetable garden and catch fish, storing ukel and oil, while during the winter they occupy themselves with sewing, weaving baskets and performing various household tasks. They also have ten horned cattle.

I tried earnestly to persuade Fr. Herman to train the girls in housework as well as confirming them in the worship of God, and, when the

girls had become accustomed to this occupation, to give them in marriage and settle them near him, having previously prepared good men from the Aleut villages. But all my attempts were futile; he held to the monastic rules, and those who did not want to remain in a virgin state were compelled to leave New Valaam. What a pity!

The good of this institution, however, is made apparent through its beneficial influence upon the neighboring Aleuts, even though the basis of this is not very firm. Fr. Herman is Orthodox in his faith, to which he is devoted without any fakery and lies. Since he is gifted with a quick mind and a firm memory, his thoughts are, so to speak, perpetually roaming through the Bible, sacred history and the canons, all of which he knows almost by heart. And although he has not been reading and writing already for ten years due to weak vision, his memory finds, in the aforementioned writings, rich sources for reflection and conversation, which for him are never exhausted but are poured forth in rapid discourse, despite his old age. One can see from his appearance that he is an ascetic. Not only does he not care about clean outfits and clothes, he also does not even wash himself. He has a very joyful nature, loves to laugh at something funny, and stays informed of all current events, especially the historical ones. On these subjects, however, he does not dwell long, and inevitably returns to his own subject, religion.

On Spruce Island, he found the seclusion and quiet life which he had been pursuing for his entire life. During his earlier years on Kodiak, however, he had to endure an opposition from people which he apparently would have never encountered in Russia. If he had not followed his path with endurance, he would not have had to break the established laws, avoid the authorities and seek detachment from people. But these violations of his did not hurt anyone, for they were done not from an evil heart. He drank a bitter cup that was foreordained for him, and for this he received a reward in the absolute stillness of his spirit.

Seeking no praises, he refused many offerings which would have been accepted with joy by people who seek higher positions in society. He did not want to be an archimandrite, understanding well that with each elevation he would be more and more bound and would be estranging himself from his beloved aim of glorifying God as a recluse.

(K.T. Khlebnikov, "America in the Unpublished Notes of K.T. Khlebnikov," Leningrad, 1981)

XXIV
SOUL OF A POET

Schema-monk Sergius Yanovsky writes in his reminiscences of St. Herman the following:

...He was not tall of stature. His face was round, pleasant and joyful, with a smile. His speech was not loud, always pleasant, very captivating, and always instructive and profitable. He loved to talk and spoke intelligently, in a business-like manner, and to the point. He talked mostly about eternity, about salvation, about the future life, about miracles of God, about saints, and he would never say an empty word. He would recount episodes from the Lives of Saints or from "The Patericon." It was so nice to listen to him, and the ordinary Aleuts and womenfolk just loved to hear him talk. There was not much gray hair on his head, his beard was of medium size, his face was pale and full of wrinkles, and his blue-gray eyes sparkled with joy. He was then 65 years old....He loved me as a son and rejoiced greatly over my conversion and my acquisition of the Truth.

One day, I recited by heart to him the ode "God" by Derzhavin. Amazed and inspired by the work, he asked me to read it to him again. I repeated:

O Thou eternal One! whose presence bright
All space doth occupy, all motions guide;
Unchanged through time's all-devastating flight:
Thou only God! There is no God beside!
Being above all beings! Three in One!
Whom none can comprehend and none explore;
Who will'st existence with Thyself alone:
Embracing all,—supporting,—ruling o'er—
Being whom we call God—and know no more!

In its sublime research, philosophy
May measure out the ocean-deep—may count
The sands or the sun's rays—but, God! for Thee
There is no weight nor measure: —none can mount

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Up to Thy mysteries; Reason's brightest spark,
Though kindled by Thy light, in vain would try
To trace Thy counsels, infinite and dark:
And thought is lost ere thought can soar so high,
Even like past moments in eternity.

Thou from primeval nothingness didst call
First chaos, then existence: —Lord! on Thee
Eternity had its foundation: —all
Sprung forth from Thee: —of light, joy, harmony,
Sole origin: —all life, all beauty Thine.
Thy word created all, and doth create;
Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.
Thou art, and wert, and shalt be! Glorious! Great!
Light-giving, life-sustaining Potentate!

Thy chains the unmeasured universe surround:
Upheld by Thee, by Thee inspired with breath!
Thou the beginning with the end hast bound,
And beautifully mingled life and death!
As sparks mount upwards from the fiery blaze.
So suns are born, so worlds spring forth from Thee;
And as the spangles in the sunny rays
Shine round the silver snow, the pageantry
Of heaven's bright army glitter in Thy praise.

A million torches lighted by Thy hand
Wander unwearied through the blue abyss:
All gay with life, all eloquent with bliss.
And what shall we call them? Piles of crystal light—
A glorious company of golden streams—
Lamps of celestial ether burning bright—
Suns lighting systems with their joyous beams?
But Thou to these art as the noon to night.

Yet as a drop of water in the sea,
All the magnificence in Thee is lost:—
What are ten thousand worlds compared to Thee?
And what am I then? Heaven's unnumber'd host,

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Thou multiplied by myriads, and array'd
In all the glory of sublimest thought;
Is but an atom in the balance weigh'd
Against Thy greatness; is a cypher brought
Against infinity! What am I then? Nought!

Nought! But the effluence of Thy light divine,
Pervading worlds, hath reached my bosom too:
Yes! in my spirit doth Thy spirit shine
As shines the sun-beam in a drop of dew.
Nought! but I live, and on hope's pinions fly
Eager towards Thy presence; for in Thee
I live, and breathe, and dwell; aspiring high,
Even to the throne of Thy divinity.
I am, O God! and surely Thou must be!

Thou art! directing, guiding all, Thou art!
Direct my understanding then to Thee;
Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart:
Though but an atom 'midst immensity,
Still I am something, fashion'd by Thy hand!
I hold a middle rank 'twixt heaven and earth,
On the last verge of mortal being stand,
Close to the realm where angels have their birth,
Just on the boundaries of the spirit-land!

The chain of beings is complete in me;
In me is matter's last gradation lost,
And the next step is spirit — Deity!
I can command the lighting, and am dust!
A monarch, and a slave; a worm, a god!
Whence came I here, and how? so marvellously
Constructed and conceived? Unknown! This clod
Lives surely through some higher energy;
For from itself alone it could not be!

Creator, yes! Thy wisdom and Thy word
Created me! Thou source of life and good!

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Thy light, Thy love, in their bright plentitude
Over the abyss of death, and bade it wear
The garments of eternal day, and wing
Its heavenly flight beyond this little sphere,
Even to its source — to Thee — its Author there.

O thought ineffable! O visions blest!
Though worthless our conceptions all of Thee,
Yet shall Thy shadowed image fill our breast,
And waft its homage to Thy Deity.
God! Thus alone my lowly thoughts can soar;
Thus seek Thy presence — Being wise and good!
Midst Thy vast works admire, obey, adore;
And when the tongue is eloquent no more,
The soul shall speak in tears of gratitude.*

Then he asked me, "Is it possible that it was written by an ordinary learned poet?" I said, "Yes, he was a learned poet." Then he said, "It was inspired by God."

(Russian Orthodox Mission 1794-1837, *Valaam Monastery, 1894*.)

In his life of Gabriel R. Derzhavin, Profiriev describes precisely how this poem was inspired: the very idea for this ode was conceived during the Paschal matins of the Holy Resurrection of Christ in 1780. Having come home, he at once wrote the first verses of the ode; but his work and various cares did not allow him time to finish it. After he retired in 1784, he went to Narva, and here, having rented for a time a small room from an old German landlady, he finished the ode in the course of several days. How strongly his imagination was aroused at that time can be seen from his own account concerning his completion of the ode. Not yet having finished the last verse, in the early hours of the night just before dawn he fell asleep, when suddenly it seemed to him that rays of bright light ran up and down the walls; he got up and, by the light of the vigil lamp burning before an icon, he wrote the last verse.

* A rather loose translation published by the Russian Convent of Our Lady of Vladimir, San Francisco, California.

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This ode received world acclaim. Translated into many languages and many versions (15 in French, 8 in German), it gained high praise not only as an outstanding poetic creation, but also as a work of theological significance. There is no question: it is not merely a creation of poetic genius; it is the fruit of profound theology, thus occupying a unique place in world literature. One can safely say that the poet's inspiration for this ode was indeed a visitation of God.

(Lectures on the History of Russian Literature, by
Archimandrite Constantine Zaitsev, Jordanville, NY, 1968.)

XXV

PAISIAN TRACES IN AMERICA

St. Herman, Enlightener and Patron Saint of America, entered the monastic path at twelve years of age in Sarov, which was a bulwark of Orthodoxy at the time, where he matured in the company of great ascetics: Abbot Ephraim, Nazarius, Mark, Basil (Kishkin), Theophanes, his close friend, and Theodore (Ushakov) who was in contact with St. Tikhon of Zadonsk and Blessed Paisius. When restoring the neighboring Sanaxar Monastery, Theodore was joined by many young men from Sarov who sought an even more severe life of poverty and deprivation. In 1778 Theodore was unjustly banished and his disciples turned to the holy Paisian monk Cleopas, who had just come from Dragomirna. After some time in the Roslavl Forests, Theophanes went south to Paisius, and St. Herman went north, where he later joined his spiritual father Abbot Nazarius in Valaam. There he led the life of a desert dweller and went as a missionary to Alaska, already having a copy of the *Philokalia*, which he put to good use among his spiritual flock in America. One of his disciples, Schema-monk Sergius (Yanovsky), upon returning to Russia found his spiritual home nowhere else but in Optina, which is an indication of St. Herman's kinship with that Paisian center. Stemming from the Paisian company, he was a true carrier of his ideal: his missionary zeal, love for the desert, practical application of patristic teaching, and the preoccupation with the *Philokalia* and the *Jesus Prayer* are all strikingly Paisian. He even reposed on the

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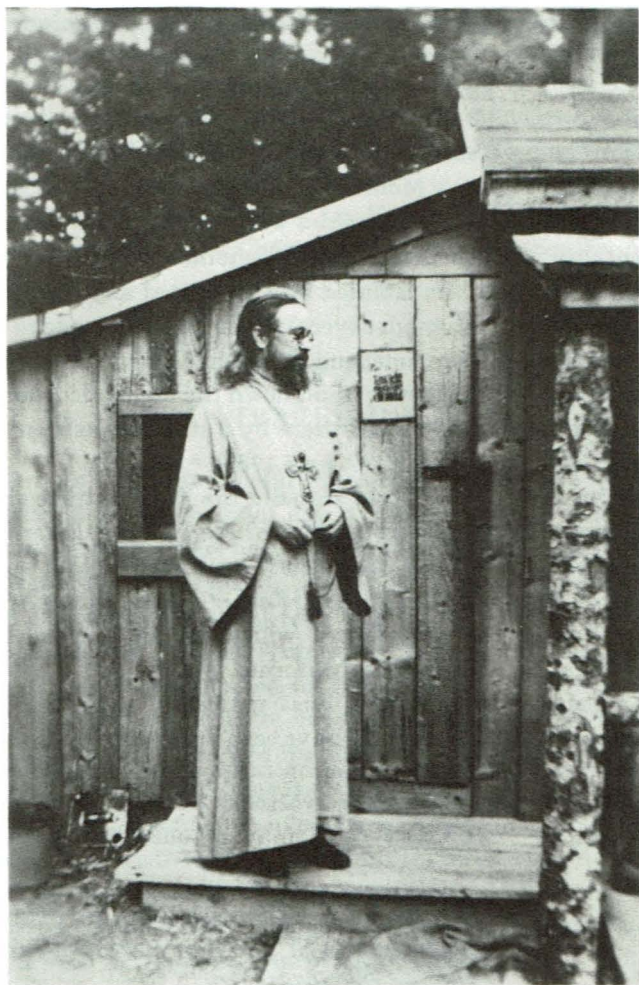
same day as Paisius, November 15th, and hence they both are commemorated together (F.A. Golder, *Father Herman, Alaska's Saint*, San Francisco, 1968).

A century or so later, the future desert dweller of Spruce Island (about whom St. Herman predicted) Archimandrite *Gerasim* (1888-1968) arrived in Alaska from St. Tikhon's Monastery in Kaluga, which was revived by Optina Elders, himself being in contact with *Elder Joseph*. His genuinely Paisian mentality met a clash from the anti-monastic clergy and politicalizing bishops, which left him isolated and prevented any continuation of his monastic tradition, although several attempts were made to establish a monastic community there independent of him. Being without any roots and lacking in love for those who hand down the monastic tradition, they failed. But the fragrance deposited there by Father Gerasim is unmistakably Paisian (*The Orthodox Word*, no.6, 1969).

Only after the Second World War did the Paisian trace show itself again in America. First, in Jordanville, where *Valaam Elder Philemon* and later *Archbishop Averky* consciously continued in that spirit; then the disciples of Optina Elder Nektary, *Father Adrian* (later Archbishop Andrew) in New-Diveyevo Convent, which he established, and also Hierarchs Tikhon and Nektary of California.

This Paisian spirit, however, does not easily yield to being transmitted. Various attempts and claims have been made, sometimes outwardly seemingly successful, but their imitation is apparent: a touch of modern criticism, attraction for glitter and correctness, and lack of loving contact with the tradition, even when there may be outward contact with a bearer of it.

(Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, by Schema-monk
Metrophanes; *St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood*
Platina, Ca. 1976)



Archimandrite Gerasim in front of his new cell, built by him next to the site of St. Herman's original dwelling, about a third of a mile inland from Monk's Lagoon on Spruce Island.

Photograph taken on Pascha, 1936.

XXVI

A PROPHECY FULFILLED



ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO the rumor reached Valaam Monastery, located on an island in Lake Ladoga, that one of the former residents of the monastery, the monk Herman, who left as a missionary to Alaska in the time of Catherine the Great, was revered there as a saint. It was said that he had led a holy life and passed away in Alaska as a real saint. The abbot at Valaam then was the venerable Father Damascene. He quickly established contact with Alaska, and they started sending him information on the life and deeds of the blessed and humble monk Herman. With this information as a basis, a brief biography of him was soon compiled, and it, up to the present day, is the main source of information about this clairvoyant representative of Holy Russia and certain candidate for canonization as a saint of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Of extraordinary interest is one of his prophecies. It was fulfilled in our time, and in fact we are witnesses of it. Bishop Peter of New Archangel (Sitka), Vicar of Kamchatka diocese, reported in his *Information on Father Herman* on May 21, 1867, the following prediction: "Still more he (Father Herman) used to say that although a long time would pass after his death, he would not be forgotten, and the place where he used to live would not be deserted; that a monk like himself, fleeing worldly glory, would come and live on Spruce Island."¹

This prediction was fulfilled when the Very Rev. Archimandrite Gerasim Schmaltz came to live there. Fr. Gerasim left his native town of Aleksin not far from Tula and entered the Pustyn of St. Tikhon of Kaluga. This beautifully-located hermitage-monastery was founded in the 15th century by a hermit, St. Tikhon, who at first lived there alone in the hollow of a great oak tree and dug a well, the waters of which

1. *Outline of the History of the American Orthodox Mission* (in Russian), Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894, p. 179.

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became wonderworking. It flourished in the 16th century and became well known again late in the 19th century thanks to Optina Monastery, with which there was a constant contact. It was here that Fr. Herman's student, Fr. Sergey Yanovsky, became a monk and died in 1876.

Fr. Gerasim left St. Tikhon's Monastery in 1915 and on May 4th arrived in New York. He came as a missionary for the Russian Church and spent his first years in New York as the Bishop's helper, and then in Chicago where he served as a priest. In 1916 he came with Bishop Philip to Sitka, Alaska, and in 1917 to Afognak Island north of Kodiak where he served as a priest for many years.

Fr. Gerasim visited Spruce Island for the first time in 1927, and it was then that Fr. Herman called him. It was on May 27 (May 14 according to the Julian Calendar used by the Church), soon after the Radiant Feast of Easter. It was a quiet, sunny morning. He was accompanied by Archpriest Nicholas Kashevarov and two female pilgrims. It took them an hour and a half to arrive by boat. On the site of the hut where Father Herman had lived, and which had now completely disintegrated, there stood only a wooden memorial. A little farther on there was a church over the grave of the blessed Starets, and there Fr. Gerasim served a panikhida. It was a glorious day, spring birds were singing, and Fr. Gerasim liked the spot very much; it didn't seem like Alaska, but rather like some monastery in Russia. On the way back they again came to the clearing in the woods where Father Herman had lived and where, on his death-bed, he had shone with the light of Mt. Tabor, his cell being filled with the fragrance of heavenly incense. While his companions went on ahead, Fr. Gerasim got down on his knees and, overwhelmed with joy, exclaimed: "Christ is risen, Father Herman!" And suddenly he sensed in the air a marvellous fragrance of incense surrounding him. He even shuddered. He thought that it might have come from the cassock of Fr. Nicholas, but the latter was dressed in an overcoat and was already too far away. And the aroma was such a fine one, and so pleasant! With a quiet joy in his heart he then addressed the Starets as if he were alive: "I thank you, dear Starets, Father Herman, that you have found me worthy to visit this beloved spot of yours! Father Herman,-- I too have fallen dearly in love with this spot; if there should come a time when I will be able to come here to you to stay -- accept me!" And Father Herman fulfilled his wish. Within nine years he had moved into the hermitage for good. But before that he had yet to suffer much.

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When it became known that Fr. Gerasim was preparing to go to the island to live, the local clergy opposed this and resolved to prevent it. Vassily Skvortsov, who had intended to accompany Fr. Gerasim, came to him in Afognak and informed him that they were going to expel them from the hermitage with the aid of the police. He himself, out of fear, had decided not to go. Fr. Gerasim was very much affected by this, but he replied that if it wasn't going to be pleasing to Father Herman, then that's how it was going to be. He was so disturbed about it that before going to bed he hadn't even strength enough to say his prayers.

And then he had a dream, in which he was walking somewhere through a beautiful forest: spruce trees, in the distance a hill and straight ahead a clearing with tall grass. And he heard someone pealing a bell and its sound joyfully echoing somewhere nearby. In the clearing he saw two bushy little spruce trees, and between them a monk of small stature with a thin little beard and wearing a small monk's cap. He smiled and greeted Fr. Gerasim, saying: "It is I who am here ringing the Easter bells." And then kindly: "Batiushka,¹ don't be sad! It is Father S-y who stirs people against you. Have patience and all will pass!..." At this the dream ended. In the morning Fr. Gerasim got up joyfully and resolved that there was no one to fear if Father Herman was with him. Following the advice of blessed Herman, he safely moved to Spruce Island on September 8, 1935. And he has been living there ever since, alone on the almost uninhabited island among the age-old spruce trees and gloomy storms.

Besides Father Gerasim there has been no one on the island since the death of Blessed Herman who has ever lived there so long. This gives us grounds to consider Fr. Gerasim as the very monk "fleeing worldly glory", about whom the Wonderworker of Alaska prophesied more than a hundred years ago.

During my pilgrimage to Father Herman's grave, Father Gerasim himself dictated all this information to me, on the twenty-seventh day of August in the year of our Lord 1961.

Gleb Podmoshensky.

1. "Little father": the affectionate name by which Russians address their priests.

XXVII DESERT PASCHA

*Entering the mental paradise of virtues, thou has brought
forth multitudinous blossoms of good deeds. by which thou
givest fragrance to the world, O Father Herman, even to this day.*

5th Canticle of St. Herman's Canon

“There were still white patches of snow here and there in the fields and dales, but in the dark spruce forest, where it is not easy for the sunbeams to penetrate, winter still reigned. But the roar of rushing water from all sides gave out the truth. Emerald green moss and slender evergreens, saturated with melting frost, fill the air, like church incense, with the fragrance of the rapidly approaching spring. Still lifeless are the birches, expecting the mystical call of nature in to, at a moments notice, cover themselves with tiny pink leaves...And suddenly, the whole Sarov forest resounded with the Paschal ringing of the bells, which flew out from the churches of Sarov Monastery, echoing amidst the surrounding fields and dales, woods and groves, and distant villages. And over the whole of Holy Russia, this Paschal ringing would proclaim the joy of Christ's Resurrection, promising to *all* resurrection! In those days in the Sarov forests great men of God were laboring in asceticism. Like a homeless wanderer, the desert-dweller Mark roamed throughout the night, filling the wilderness with his constant singing “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...” Completely lost in this green desert vastness, in a little cabin, a 12 year old St. Herman himself, served as a cell-attendant to an old ascetic, Elder Barlaam...Elders Theodore of Sanaxar and Theophan his old friend, and many other lived as desert-dwellers there. What fervent prayers and what exalted thoughts has this desert seen!!”

* *Sarov Pascha* in “Faith and Life,” No. 3, 1974, St. Elias Brotherhood Publication, Forestville, California.



St. Herman ringing the Paschal bells, as he appeared to Archimandrite Gerasim, upon which appearance the latter settled on New Valaam for good.

Iconographic painting by Gleb Podmoshensky, 1961.

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Such were the thoughts of spring and Pascha as St. Herman remembered Sarov and Valaam and other monastic places known well to him in Russia. Having arrived in America right into the busy town of traders and trappers of *Kadiak*, he immediately felt the need of seclusion and silence. The work at the Mission was good and needed, and of course it was Apostolic. But his heart was that of a desert dweller. He was raised in the best ascetic tradition — that of Paisian and Sarov disciples and hence, he deliberately abstained from the priestly rank in favor of being alone with God. Almost immediately upon their arrival, the fathers of the Mission began to make experiments by planting vegetables. St. Herman wrote about this to Valaam: "with some effort, there could be found suitable places for such undertakings." While other members of the Mission, especially those in the priestly office, zealously moved about in various directions, baptizing and serving the new flock of Christ, St. Herman remained a simple monk and secluded himself with gardening. Not far from Kadiak lay the beautiful Spruce Island, which was known for its tall trees as masts in ship building. He chose this island and visited it.

Tradition claims that when he stepped ashore, St. Herman crossed himself stating, "this will be that blessed place which will render my soul salvation." Looking around the island, he found it to his liking: it was desolate and rough, overgrown with a thorny bush (known as "devil's club"), filled with swampy lakes and impenetrable terrain. In appearance it was more like the arctic wasteland of Solovki, rather than his beloved park-like Valaam, which he bore constantly in his heart, and he immediately called the island New Valaam, claiming it for the monastics as a refuge of serenity and "other-worldliness." The rugged and craggy shoreline was almost identical to that of Valaam and his heart could not contain the joy which he experienced, for he had found a monastic haven for himself and those of like-mind who would come after him fleeing "the world and all that is in it." Yet, instigated by the devil, the "world" of the "New World" of America, remained hostile to him for the rest of his life, slandering and persecuting him out of envy to such an extent that they did not even give him a proper funeral (it took another monk, Father Gerasim, who fled the world a century later, to do it properly in the dead of night). Only in the 1830's was the island officially turned over to him:

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"The whole of the eastern part of Spruce Island is to be called New Valaam and given over to Monk Herman for the type of living as he sees fit."

He chose a suitable place in a clearing some distance from the shore where a tiny stream flows down a cliff. There he erected a large Cross and dug for himself a half-earthen cell to live and pray in, while in the clearing he began to cultivate his garden. On the shore he also had some agricultural attempts made with peas, which after his death grew wild and thereafter every year came up early in Spring around Pascha until very recently, with the death of Father Gerasim, they disappeared altogether. From the shore he would carry seaweed to fertilize his garden, which according to his early report, produced potatoes and turnips.

The first years of his desert-living were relatively undisturbed, save for his active participation in the Mission during the winter months, where his duty was to keep storerooms in order, as he so endearingly described to A. A. Baranoff. But with years, when his persecution increased and he saw that there was no one to care for the abandoned native children, he moved to the island for good managing to combine a desert-dwelling existence with the care and feeding of orphans. In one of his letters he mentions his hesychasm: "My state of silence, on one hand, seems to be developing for the better. While on the other, there seem to appear causes disturbing my silence. But how precisely the Providence of the Most High will deign, it is not known. May His holy will be done!" (Letter of 1821)

St. Herman was undoubtedly endowed with divine power and God's help in his unseen warfare with the unclean spirits. It is well known how they appeared to him causing confusion, fear and inner turmoil. But it is also known how God's angels appeared to him; how they were heard singing in a majestic choir, while he alone was performing his monastic rule; how they helped him to carry heavy loads of seaweed and logs; and how, as he himself stated, angels conversed with him. If on the Eve of Theophany an angel blessed holy water for him, then how much more his soul rejoiced with the angelic host celebrating Christ's Resurrection on Pascha night?! This is hidden from us by the meager biographical information we have on him. But the experience he must have had while living with the great desert-dwellers in Russia, who, stripped of all earthly comforts and almost in total deprivation, these angel-like men celebrated

Pascha with unearthly anticipation of God visiting them. And He, seeing their absolute devotion and suffering, undoubtedly sent them mystical confirmation that He is risen indeed! The desert on the Paschal night blossoms in unearthly grandeur. The natural elements celebrate in inaudible, whispering jubilation, when all trees, plants, and flowers become arrayed in multi-colored, rainbow-like lights, and the wind silently sings. The souls of many who crucified themselves alone in the desert cannot but feel also the jolts of the awakening rushing Life on that sacred night. Thus St. Herman undoubtedly experienced this in America also and wanted to share with the guileless orphans and natives who would come to hear him speak. It is touching to read, at times even in his own words, from the original *Vita Prima* of 1868, bits and portions where Pascha is mentioned. Thus C. Larionov describes how St. Herman celebrated Pascha:

"Father Herman taught his students how to sing church hymns, when during Father Herman's conducting church services a boy would replace a Reader and other girls would make up a choir, who sang very lovely, for I myself attended several times the Paschal Matins and the Bright Week hours...Those who were there listening to his enthusiastic talks would get so enwrapped in them, that when, in the morning, the day dawned, only then would they come to themselves and leave the elder to rest, but even then Father Herman would not give himself over to sleep."

"Now," writes St. Herman himself, "after Pascha, one young woman, no more than twenty years old, who knows how to speak Russian well, and who previously never knew me or had seen me at all, came to me. Hearing about the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of eternal life, she became so inflamed with love towards Jesus Christ, that she does not at all want to leave me, but after begging me for a long time, has persuaded me to accept her against my inclination and love for seclusion and silence. Disregarding all the hindrances and difficulties of which I warned her, she has already lived here with me for more than a month and is not bored. I watch this with great amazement, remembering the words of the Saviour: "What is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed to infants."

Lowly Herman, 1820"

XXVIII

PASCHAL CONFIRMATION

When Fr. Gerasim was about to move to Spruce Island, he hesitated not knowing whether or not he should move to that desolate wilderness — that veritable mirror of Valaam. And then he received an answer from St. Herman himself. The Saint appeared to him in actuality, about which Father Gerasim revealed to me as to his friend with whom he was corresponding for many years. Perhaps he did not tell or write this to anybody else beside me, I do not know. This is what Fr. Gerasim revealed to me, word for word in 1951. He saw with his own eyes, in the middle of the day how St. Herman appeared to him and at that very moment Paschal pealing of many bells resounded, although there were none to be seen around. And he clearly heard these words of St. Herman: "It is I ringing the Paschal bells" which are in the heavenly monastery. The vision then vanished and the bells were heard no more. Then Father Gerasim understood that this was the blessing of St. Herman to stay there forever. When he had completed his duties in the world, Father Gerasim moved to the island and remained there for good. He wrote to me at that time: "Then I understood that St. Herman blesses me to stay and settle here, which I did."

Archpriest Steven Lyashevsky

November 1983

Veiled in secrecy for God alone didst thou desire to work, and didst make a cave thine abode. Striving to bury the passions of the flesh, that in soul thou mightest arise, overarched by heavenly illuminations, foretasting the sweetness of eternal Pascha.

Service to St. Herman, Canon, Canticle 5

XXIX
VISITATION OF GRATITUDE

The Spirit breatheth where He will.
St. John 3: 8

IN HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY near Jordanville there labored in asceticism a monk who bore the name of St. Nikodim the holy prosphorbaker of the Kiev-Caves Monastery. In his youth he came to love monasticism, made a pilgrimage to Valaam, stayed for some time in the Pskov-Caves Monastery, and for many years served and was the cell-attendant of the New Martyr John, Bishop of Riga (d. 1934). When Nikodim was ordained and sent on a new obedience to the monastery of St. Job of Pochaev in Munich, his abbot, in sending him on his way, gave him a secret commission: to go to New Valaam in Finland and give Communion there to several old monks who had been without Communion for many years because of their faithfulness to the Church Calendar; for on Valaam the uncanonical New Calendar had been forcibly introduced, and many monks — led by the later Schema-monk Michael of holy life — had not acknowledged it, even though they remained in the Valaam brotherhood. Fr. Nikodim gave the Holy Mysteries of Christ to these confessors, and to one of them — who, having awaited this moment, immediately reposed in the Lord — he also gave the last rites. Having fulfilled his obedience, he returned to his own Holy Trinity Monastery, and in several years the Lord called him also. He died while at his obedience of monastery baker, and he was buried thus, according to the monastic custom, with dough on his hands. His mother, overwhelmed with grief, came to live out her own days near the monastery, so as to be near the grave of her son. There she lives to the present day.

But in the Lord all are alive. And the grateful about-to-be-canonized St. Herman, accepting Fr. Nikodim's labor for his own Valaam brethren who had acquired crowns of glory for themselves by their labor of confession, did not leave without consolation the sorrowing mother of Nikodim and secretly visited her and comforted her with heavenly joy on the eve of his canonization. "Yesterday I was reading the Life of St. Herman," she writes, "and I

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came to love his splendid face and kissed his image. And suddenly I felt a certain fragrance. I began to smell the page, the book, to look and see if there weren't some flowers nearby. But they gave little aroma, since lately it had been raining every day. But I, to be sure, am unworthy of this." Later she added, "Sometimes, when I am alone, this happens again." (Signature: Raissa Gavrilovna Zemmering, July 316, 1970.)

(Translated from RUSSIAN LIFE Daily, San Francisco, No. 7075, 1970.)

XXX

THE SAINT'S LESSON THROUGH HIS SPRING

IN THE CITY of Kodiak up to the present time there has lived a certain V. K., a Protestant by faith, who is married to one of the granddaughters of the ever-memorable Archpriest Nicholas Kashevarov, a very zealous daughter of the holy Orthodox Church. Mr. V. K. likes to have a drink; however, he never gets seriously drunk. By nature he likes fishing and hunting. Every year, whether the fishing were good or bad, he would unfailingly go to Spruce Island to go visiting, as he said, with Blessed Herman and Archimandrite Gerasim, who was living at that time on the island and was the guardian of the relics and objects relating to Father Herman. Unfailingly V. K. would visit the chapel built on the site of Father Herman's cell, and would admire and marvel at the Elder's chains that were kept there, his preserved kamilavka and other objects connected with the Elder's life; he would ascend to the church, in which the Saint's remains were found, and, although not Orthodox, would bow down before the Saint's tomb with the Saint's image covering it, and place a candle. Then he would go to visit Fr. Gerasim, and before leaving would go to the spring to drink the cold, pure water, take this water home at his wife's instruction, and set out on the return trip.

This time V. K. was not alone, but with other residents of Kodiak. On the way to the spring V. K. remembered his wife's request to bring St. Herman's water. But he had no bottle, except for a bottle with wine which was being saved for the return trip. Without thinking long about it V. K. drank the contents, proposing to rinse the bottle and fill it with Father Herman's water...



SAINT HERMAN IN HIS DESERT ON SPRUCE ISLAND,
at the foot of a large wooden cross which he erected.

*Oil painting by Hieromonk Seraphim of March 5, 1929
(this painting is presently lost).*

We discovered a sheet of paper with this painting printed on it (from *Our Way*, a monthly periodical), on the back of which was the writing of Fr. Gerasim: "The chapel on the site of the blessed repose of Father Herman is not finished yet; the dimensions inside are 12' by 14'. It is of wood construction, with plywood inside, and has two windows. Everything must be simple there, just as was the cell of Father Herman. But I will turn it into a Greek *Paraklis* . . ." (dated May, 1936).

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Coming to the spring, however, V. K. saw that the water was as if boiling, raising to the surface various kinds of filth, and for as long as V. K. waited the water continued to be turbulent, becoming muddy and unsuitable for drinking. And so he left for Kodiak, without drinking the water or bringing any home.

"For a long time," V. K. told me, "I told no one of this, but I didn't stop thinking of what had happened until I went again to Spruce Island." This time he took with him no "provisions." After landing on Spruce Island, he went immediately to the spring. The water was transparent, as pure as tears! "I drank the water for a long time and came to believe that the Elder, showing me such a sign, was really a man of holy life," he told me. Having returned home, he related what had happened to him. And from that time no one again would dare to go to Spruce Island without proper reverence, but would go there to venerate the Saint and be refreshed by his holy water.

This incident, so similar to the incident of St. Seraphim of Sarov and the Decembrist at the spring — whose suddenly muddy waters, the Saint related, were a sign of the evil nature of this revolutionary's schemes — has never appeared in print before. Wondrous is God in His saints!

Archpriest Alexander Popov

XXXI

A CALL TO SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

*The Prophet Elijah said, I have been
very jealous for the Lord of Hosts; for
the children of Israel have forsaken Thy
covenant, thrown down Thine altars,
and slain Thy prophets with the sword.*

III Kings 19:10

AND WHAT can one say of today?

1. The whole of Russia is inundated with blood, and the same fate awaits America!

2. The Orthodox Russian people, dispersed by God Himself over the whole world in order to testify of the One True Faith — are paralyzed before the advance of world-wide evil — and remain inactive.

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3. The Orthodox hierarchs of the other Churches turn coldly away from the cries for help which come from crucified Russia and occupy themselves with deeds which are clearly destructive of Holy Orthodoxy!

4. The Soviet hierarchs loudly deny before the whole world the persecution against the faithful in Russia, cooperating with the persecutors, who were anathematized by the last lawful Patriarch, Tikhon.

5. Every kind of sectarian, Uniate, and all those who distort the Divinely-revealed teaching of the Orthodox Church greatly prosper in their intensified propaganda both here and in Russia!

6. Converts to Holy Orthodoxy, whose hearts God Himself touches, after becoming full members of the Church, so often reject the suffering of heart that comes with growth in true Orthodoxy and seek a path that can be harmonized with their self-love; and few of them prosper or even survive spiritually.

And I sit away the precious time, the immense opportunities, and the freedom given to me by God and, seeing all this, I do not even shed tears!

LORD, WHAT SHALL I DO?



SO THE APOSTLE PAUL asked (Acts 22:10), when the Lord in miraculous fashion called him to serve in His field. And the Lord showed him!

The Lord calls everyone to labor in His grace-filled field, which has long since become yellow unto harvest. In the life of every man, sooner or later, there is a single critically important moment, when the Lord clearly calls his soul and waits for the soul, wounded by His love, once and forever, by its own will, to give itself up entirely to Christ.

This decision, as to whether you are with Christ or have renounced Him, is the most important decision in the life of every man. This decision constitutes the basic attitude in one's spiritual life and is called *determination* or *commitment*.

Having made the step of determination, which has in itself an enormous power and inspiration, a spiritual energy, a man dies to the world which lies in evil and becomes Christ's. By this also there is opened to him a new real life, a life filled with unutterable joy, with a spiritual enjoyment unknown to the world, for the sake of which it is worth while to sell everything, to give every-

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thing away, and of which there will be no end, for this is the life in Christ and for Christ!

Orthodox Christian! Now you are called upon to make this step of determination! Do it before it is too late!

The soil of this continent of America on which we now find ourselves has been sanctified by the footsteps and deeds of its first enlightener, the Apostle of America who came from Holy Russia, the meek missionary Herman, Wonderworker of Alaska.

Here he labored planting and nourishing the first sprouts of Holy Orthodoxy. Here, having attained sanctity in the Lord, he died a blessed death in the fragrance of his wonderworking relics. Here also he is the Guardian Angel of the Orthodox Christians who dwell on this continent. To him first of all is it fitting to direct our fervent appeal of prayer. Leading his life as a *conscious Orthodox Christian* and seeing clearly through the spirit of his times (that is, the reforms of Peter and the French Revolution, which are the fundamental causes of our own disordered times), he taught, and to this day he teaches how to become and how to be an active Orthodox Christian, while at the same time being under the cannon-fire of the spirit of the time of apostasy.

His zeal according to God is extended to us also, his distant followers, and it can cover us with his inspired protection, if we will take to ourselves his own words, as the Lord's answer to our sincere and repentant entreaty: *Lord, what shall I do?*

ARISE AND GO! (Acts 22:10)

Such was the answer the Lord gave to the Apostle Paul! So also should you arise from your traitorous sleep of sloth and stony insensibility, and with your whole soul strive to make your own the following basic attitudes, in the words of St. Herman himself:

I. MAKE THE STEP OF DETERMINATION!

"What do you love most and best of all, and what would you desire for your happiness? Is it not true that from all your various desires one may draw one conclusion? Each one of us desires that which he considers to be best and most worthy of love. And what could be better, higher above everything, more

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worthy of love, more surpassing all else than God Himself, Jesus Christ, Who created the heavens and adorned everything, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes all, loves all, Who is Love itself — more splendid than all mankind!

"Should we not above everything else love God, more than everything else desire Him and seek Him? I, a sinner, for more than forty years have been learning how to love God, and I cannot say that I love Him completely! How should we love God? If we love someone, we constantly remember him, strive to please him day and night. Our heart and mind are occupied by the object of our love. Do you love God in this way? Do you turn to Him often? Do you remember Him always? Do you always pray to Him and do His will, His holy commandments?

"For our good, for our happiness, let us at least make ourselves a vow: that from this day, from this hour, from this minute, we shall strive *to love God above all and do His commandments!*"

II. HAVE A CONSCIOUS FAITH!

"A true Christian is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder a Christian, according to the word of the Saviour Himself. He deigned to say: *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons.* Likewise, concerning the harlot who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon that to one who has much love a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love even a small debt will be exacted. By these reflections a Christian should lead himself into hope and joy and should pay no heed whatever to an inflicted despair. Here there is needed the *shield of faith.*" (Which in our time is (1) knowledge of and love for the Orthodox Divine services, tradition, history, and (2) a fuller understanding of the *spiritual* side of contemporary heresies and sects, ecumenism, the charismatic movement, communism, and of what is happening now in the Soviet Union and in the whole world. This is the *shield of faith.*)

III. WAGE CEASELESS WARFARE!

"We are not tossed about on the waves of the sea, but we suffer and wander about in the midst of a deceptive and much-disturbed world. Although we do not have the grace which the Holy Apostles had, nevertheless our warfare

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is against the same fleshless powers and authorities, against the powers of the darkness of this world, against the spirits of wickedness under heaven, which strive to intercept all the pilgrims and travellers to the homeland and keep them from entering therein. According to the Holy Apostle Peter, *our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

"Sin, for one who loves God, is nothing but an arrow from the enemy in battle."

IV. HAVE ALWAYS BEFORE YOU THE PURPOSE OF LIFE!

"The true Christian is a warrior making his way through the regiments of the invisible enemy to his heavenly homeland."

"The vain desires of this world remove a man from his heavenly homeland. Love for them and habit clothe our soul in a hideous garment. This is called by the Apostle the *outward man*. We, pilgrims in the journey of this earthly life, calling on God for help, must put off that hideousness and *be clothed in new desires, a new love of the future age [the acquisition of the Holy Spirit]*, and through this to know whether we are near or far from the heavenly homeland.* But it is not possible to do this quickly; one must follow the example of sick people, who, desiring dear health, do not cease to seek out means for healing themselves."

V. BE A MISSIONARY OF TRUE ORTHODOXY!

"Oh, how enraptured I was in spirit! Finding myself between fair weather and foul, between joy and tedium, between sufficiency and insufficiency, satiety and hunger, warmth and coldness, in all my sorrows I find something that cheers me, when I hear conversations between the brethren about their preaching, and about their dividing up various regions among themselves for this purpose."

"Glory to the decrees of merciful God! By His unutterable Providence He has shown me now something new, which I had never seen while living in Kodiak for a long time. Just now after Pascha a young woman who did not know me and had never seen me, came to me and heard about the Incarnation of the Son of God and concerning eternal life, and she became so inflamed

* St. John of Kronstadt advised for this reason that one should keep a spiritual diary; this helped him very much in acquiring a habit for spiritual life.

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with love for Jesus Christ that she does not in the least wish to leave me. Looking at this with great astonishment, I remember the words of the Saviour, *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* Seeing her, there are already other volunteers; and there are also many young men."

"But those who have departed from the true Orthodox Church are not on the right path!"

These are the authentic words of a Saint! With fervent prayer they can inspire your soul on the path of confession and missionary labor, which is what our much-suffering Holy Russia expects from the sons and daughters of the Orthodox Church. May God be our help! *Arise and go! saith the Lord* (Acts 22:10). ENTER UPON THE RIGHT PATH! BE ALSO A DISCIPLE OF ST. HERMAN.

(A lecture given at the first St. Herman Pilgrimage at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1973, by Monk Herman of Platina)

XXXII

LOVE FOR CHILDREN

While staying with Archimandrite Gerasim on Spruce Island in 1961, I learned a lot about St. Herman from him. Being curious about miracles which took place at the site of his relics, I asked him to tell me all he knew. He told me one striking case of miraculous help that occurred to a crippled girl: that she, being cured, sent her crutches to that very chapel where the cure had occurred. When I expressed a desire to see them, he told me that they had been around for a long time but that lately he could not find them. He then told the story of Alexandra Chicheneva, who for years kept sending money for the upkeep of the lamps over the coffin with the relics of St. Herman. When I asked for her address all he could tell me was that she lived in Seattle, Washington and was a member of St. Nicholas Cathedral. I was determined to visit her personally if I ever got to that city.

In the middle of the September of that same year I did get to Seattle and began to look for such a person, but to no avail. No one in all the Orthodox churches in Seattle knew of Alexandra Chicheneva. I checked the telephone directory and that did not help.

It was the eve of the commemoration of Bishop Ioasaph of Belgorod, who is known as a protector of children; and I decided to implore him to help



Alexandra Chicheneva in 1912.



The Kodiak Resurrection Church as it looked at the turn of the century.

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me get in contact with this woman who had been a child healed by St. Herman. During the Vigil on Saturday night, I was in church taking part in the services when all of a sudden I was overcome by a sense of despair, realizing that I would have to leave Seattle without ever getting hold of Alexandra. Moreover, Fr. Gerasim had insisted that the bishops didn't care for Blessed Herman and that if I would not locate her then no one would since even high prelates who have personally interrogated her have never bothered to publish it, as even she herself had written to him. Since the miracle took place way before his settling on Spruce Island, he could not verify it personally. A sense of urgency made me leave the altar during the Kathisma and keep calling by telephone again all those people whose names vaguely resembled Chicheneva. Well, St. Ioasaph heard my prayer. Some woman told me that her old aunt was a Chicheneva but was married to a Kruger, and that her first name was not Alexandra but Alice. She even said she would do some investigation and call back. When I hung up I walked around the block in anticipation. And God helped me: she called back and gave me the telephone number of her aunt, who indeed turned out to be the very same person. I begged St. Ioasaph to allow me to meet her personally. That same night she invited me to come to her, even stating that she did not feel good health-wise and that I had better hurry. After great difficulty in locating her apartment, which was in one of the poor-people housing projects, I finally entered her little dwelling place that at once struck me with St. Herman's presence. She was limping a bit since one of her legs was shorter than the other. She was half Aleut, slender and quite beautiful, of about 60 years of age, very frail, and she spoke with great emotion. She told me she feared the miracle which had taken place would never get published since all forgot St. Herman. With tears and in full detail, she dictated to me her tender story, telling a lot about her sad adult life, her trouble with her husband, the church difficulties, her economic situation. Before me sat a wonderful Christian believing soul, sort of rejected from our worldly society, which crushed her. She wept from happiness also that someone had cared enough for St. Herman to bother to find her, and she expressed her unworthiness and thankfulness. She also told me that years ago Fr. Gerasim had sent her some dried flowers from Spruce Island, and that these flowers kept on smelling once in a while, especially before some important event in her life, as if St. Herman was giving her a sign of his closeness. She also showed me her leg, which remained shorter due to the sickness in her childhood. We parted great friends.

Upon arriving home, I typed out her story and translated it into Russian, sending her both versions to verify and sign if all was correct, which she did.

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That same year I collected all the cases of St. Herman's miracles which I was able to get hold of and published them the next year in a Russian periodical (*Pravoslavnaya Rus'*, no. 12, 1962, Jordanville, NY), and a few years later, after the *St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood* was founded, we published them in our own periodical *The Orthodox Word*. I printed them also in our edition of *Father Herman Alaska's Saint* by F. A. Golder (San Francisco, 1969), but by that time Alice Kruger was dead. I had hardly received a letter or two from her when her sister informed me of the death, sending along a photograph of her taken on Spruce Island a few years after the miracle of St. Herman had taken place there, and stating: ". . . she never used her crutches from the day she received the healing at Fr. Herman's chapel, she led a normal life and was even able to dance . . . she passed away on August 13, 1963 of lung cancer" (letter of Elizabeth Hirzel on December 11, 1971).

Gleb Podmoshensky

The following three accounts of St. Herman's healing of children begin with Alexandra Chicheneva's story:

1. Alexandra Chicheneva

I WAS BORN IN KODIAK and lived there when this miracle happened. When I was two or three years old I became very sick. Dr. Silverman was in charge of my case and from his medical point of view my trouble was tubercular hip. My leg would go up towards my back, causing terrible pain. What could they do at that date but to keep me in bed and as comfortable as possible? I was perfectly willing, as I was much too ill and in pain to do otherwise. They did try to stretch my leg by a can full of sand attached to my leg and each day added to the weight more sand. When I was able to walk I had to walk on crutches. By the time I was seven years old my sick leg was smaller than the other one and still causing pain.

On Spruce Island they had services once in a while. Some summer day in 1907 we went there on a hired little private passenger boat. On the way I got terrible pains which would not stop. When we arrived, they put tents on the beach to eat and sleep in. There were some 30-40 people, including Fr. Kashevarov and the choir singers. At night I got worse and could not sleep the whole night.

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In the morning everybody went to church, built over the grave of Fr. Herman. A tiny narrow path leads to it through thick woods. It exhausted me. I had crutches and was crying from pain, hardly moving. Then mother took me on her back, hoping to speed the distance, but it did not help since I was too heavy for her. And no one could help us because we were left far behind.

At the chapel they would not start the service because I needed confession and they waited and waited for us. Then, five young men came and carried me on their arms like a baby, right to the church steps. I used crutches to come to the coffin with the remains of Fr. Herman, which is in the middle of the chapel, a little to the right. By the coffin I was about to lay my crutches on the floor, when they slipped under me and I fell with all my body on the coffin, head down, in full exhaustion. And I cried and prayed to Fr. Herman.

Then, all of a sudden, something happened to me! The pain was all gone. I felt I was not tired any more. I stood up and walked away from the coffin without crutches across the church to where mother stood, to the great surprise of everyone. Since I was two years old I always used crutches to walk -- this was the first time I walked without them as I walked to mother. The whole church assembly gasped in amazement, being a witness to it. I stood next to mother throughout the whole service and walked to receive Communion. After the service we went back to the tents on the beach to eat and I walked the self-same path as easily as if I was on air, without touching the ground. But mother insisted that I use crutches, fearing I should fall. After dinner everyone went to pick berries, including myself, and we walked way past the church. I carried crutches with me, but really did not use them, taking them only because mother insisted.

My leg, of course, remained shorter than the other, but there really was no more trouble with it.

I do not know why I should be so sensitive about it, but I am.

My mother is still living and is ready to testify to the validity of this miracle, and so would likewise all those who were present then in the church, if they still are alive.

Mrs. Alice Kruger (Alexandra Chicheneva).

Seattle, Washington

September 16, 1961

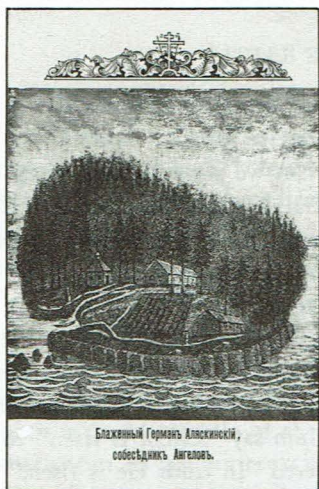
2. *Andrusha (Andrew) Ivans*

Joy came to our house just in time, when we were all very upset over my grandson Andrusha (Andrew). In general he hasn't been very enthusiastic about going to school, and lately every morning I've taken him in tears; he wept and said that he was very frightened in school, so frightened that he was ready to run away from school.

One day I saw a dream: Some monk came into our house, went to the corner where the icons are, and sang the Paschal canon, and then turning to me said loudly: "Christ is risen!" I answered him: "In truth He is risen!" and led my grandson by the hand and made him say "Christ is risen" to the monk. Andrusha said it and the monk answered "In truth He is risen," and stroked him on the head. And I woke up and thought all the while: why does he greet us like that when it isn't Pascha, and why does he not give a blessing? And what kind of saint or batushka is he? Thus I thought for the whole day after waking up.

That same day, having taken Andrusha at 9:30 to school and given him over to the teacher, I went to the bank and on other errands for the children — while Andrusha ran away from school. And the school isn't very close to us, and more important, the streets are dangerous; and he never goes anywhere alone. Of course there was panic at school. His father was called away from work. We phoned and looked everywhere and were terribly worried. But, glory be to God, his father found him after a great deal of searching in all directions around the school. Andrusha, his head hanging down, was walking with his suitcase. This event distressed us all very much — and not only us, but all our friends too, for he is a modest child. We asked him, but he only wept and said: "I don't know why I'm frightened. I just took my suitcase and left. I wasn't running away, and I knew that I would be punished for it..."

And then, just at this time, what joy!... All this day I had been thinking: who could it be that I saw in my dream? And going out to look at the mailbox, I found in it a letter from Abbess Ariadna with a little icon of St. Herman, and I received the answer to the question that had been troubling me. It was St. Herman I had seen in my dream, just as on the icon I received from Abbess Ariadna. With the icon there was a leaflet (see following page): on the first page was Spruce Island, and inside it told about the



Cover of the San Francisco
canonization brochure
*The caption reads: Blessed Herman
of Alaska, converser with Angels.*



Andrew Ivans, the Australian boy
who received St. Herman's intercession.



Elizabeth Baumann of Argentina, who received St. Herman's help
on the day of his canonization.

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miraculous feast of the American native hunters on one small fish, and about how the Aleuts who came to Spruce Island had heard the singing of a choir of angels when the Saint was praying in the chapel. Of course, Andrusha and I with great joy kissed the little icon, gently poured water over it out of a teaspoon into a dish, and Andrew drank this holy water.

Glory be to God, from that time on he has gone to school quietly, and not once has he remembered his fear... Together, he and I morning and evening pray in front of the little icon, and he always has to ask to be blessed with the icon and kiss it, and then he peacefully goes to school. Now, glory be to God, he goes happily.

*Antonina A. Vajin
Fairfield, N. S. W.*

3. Elizabeth Baumann

In Argentina the day of St. Herman's canonization was transferred to a week later, and the moleben had to be celebrated not on the 9th, but on the 16th, of August. In his sermon our priest read, with particular feeling, the description of one miracle by the prayers of St. Herman which occurred to the wife of a lighthouse-keeper in Alaska, Naumova, who was healed by earth from the grave of the holy Elder.

On this very day, August 16 by the new calendar, in the house of Alexander and Maria Baumann, there were guests, and their daughter, 12 year old Elizabeth (Liza), became sick just at the most inopportune time. By five in the afternoon pains appeared in her stomach, and they increased with every hour. The poor mother was torn between the guests and her sick daughter. No medicines did any good. Finally, at eight in the evening, Liza said in tears that she had no more strength to endure it — and generally she is a patient child. At such an hour on Sunday it is difficult to find a doctor, and besides, there were guests...

The mother remembered that she had earth from the grave of St. Herman, sent to her by a friend, and because of the canonization this earth was lying on a table nearby. She prayed fervently to St. Herman and said to her Liza: "Pray hard to St. Herman and put the envelope with earth on the sore place." The girl barely managed to place the envelope with earth on the sore

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place and turn over on her side, when in an instant she fell sound asleep! To be sure, around 2:30 in the morning the pains returned and again began to increase. The father wasn't home, and without him they didn't want to do anything; and while they waited for him the girl again became unable to endure the pain, and the mother in despair again hastened for help to St. Herman. This time she poured two or three pinches of earth into holy water, following the example of Naumova, and praying fervently gave it to Liza to drink. In about ten minutes the pain completely passed and the girl became well.

The next day they called a doctor all the same, more in order to find out what kind of pains these had been. He diagnosed an attack of appendicitis, but reassured them that the appendix was now in such a condition that there was no danger and one could forget about it.

*M. Hoerschelmann
Buenos Aires, Argentina*

XXXIII SPEEDY HELPER

1. Saving of a Family

THE FOLLOWING INCIDENT occurred in South America a week before the canonization of St. Herman.

A young man was given the Life of St. Herman to read by his mother, who reminded him while doing so that at the canonization of a saint miracles by his prayers increase. Many sorrows had fallen to the lot of this family of late; and the last blow was the serious illness of the father, the family's sole provider. The young man, his son, had recently married and was expecting an addition to his family, so that he was in no condition to support his parents and his brother and sister of school age. There was no way out; help was needed, something had to be done — but how, what?

At this point the young man just at the right time received an icon of St. Herman. This was on Thursday, July 30. At night he prayed long and fervently before the image of St. Herman, begging him to help his father to find a different kind of work when he recovered so that he could quit his

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present difficult work, and in general to help in the hopeless situation of his family.

On Saturday early in the morning a friend and co-worker called him excitedly on the telephone: "Do you remember how three of us bought a lottery ticket recently?" "Oh, yes, that's right; I forgot all about it and don't even know the number." "Well, now know that we won three million pesos, one million apiece — 800,000 to take home." And the average income of a worker is from fifty to seventy thousand a month!

Here there was intertwined yet a second miracle, not of a material nature. The young wife, who is self-indulgent, not only obediently agreed to give almost all the money to her father in law, but herself offered to do this, and in addition joyfully bought gifts for his whole family.

This money made it possible to pay off debts and borrowed money, and for the father thus not to work beyond his strength as before. It doesn't need to be said that the whole family revived and warmly thanks God and His wondrous Saint for such evident and speedy help.

M. V. Ioasafov

1970

2. Removal of a Swelling

I would like to tell you of a small miracle before my icon of St. Herman.

A bunch was growing in my left armpit for a week, which I thought was a swollen lymph node or a boil. This was last August [1971]. Finally, pain occurred when I moved the arm. I had thought it would go away but it kept growing so that it could be seen.

I went before my St. Herman icon. I placed the fingers of my right hand under the left armpit, over the growth. Then I entered into ten minutes of intense prayer, asking St. Herman to pray for me.

Then at the end of ten minutes, the bunch slipped from under my fingers. I had a hard time locating it. When I did, it was the size of a pea. Three days later it was completely gone. The pain left at the end of the ten-minute prayer period.

A friend of mine saw it before and after the prayer period. I consider St. Herman as one of my patrons.

Sincerely,

Dennis Delano

October 6, 1971

Los Angeles, California

3. Healing of Legs

It was in 1962. My batiushka Fr. John was priest of the Ascension Church in Sacramento. I became ill and then could not even get out of bed because of the severe pain in my legs. This continued about a month.

At this time I received the periodical *Orthodox Russia*; in its supplement *Orthodox Life* (in Russian) there was a portrait of St. Herman and a description of his life.* This lay on the table by my bed, and I picked it up and started to read it. Then I appealed to St. Herman [then not yet canonized] with a prayer: "If you have obtained grace with God, pray for me that I might get up and walk and that the pain might stop."

The next day I tried to get up, and — a miracle! — my legs didn't hurt, and so I began to walk. There was still a time when it was difficult to go downstairs, but I could go up easily, and the whole affliction quickly passed away. Batiushka and I gave thanks to St. Herman.

Matushka Macrina Volkov

November 7, 1973

Sacramento, California

4. Healing of an Arm

The year before last I felt pain in my right shoulder; thinking that it was a slight sprain, I waited for it to pass. But the pain increased, and from the pain I could not sleep at night. My right arm had been injured in 1963 in an automobile accident and I was treated then with cortisone injections. I did not want to take such injections now and I turned to specialists in acupuncture; they diagnosed that I had a pinched nerve. The treatment did not help, and the pain tormented me; and I couldn't move my hand backwards or lift my arm because of the pain.

I have holy oil from the Holy Sepulchre, and I anointed my arm twice, but it was no better and I thought: God has given this; I have to suffer and endure the pain. But the pain only increased for a month.

Suddenly I remembered the words of Archimandrite Metrophan in San Francisco, who once after the blessing of water had told everyone that holy water should be used to drink and anoint oneself if there is a pain. I also have earth from the grave of St. Herman of Alaska, which you sent me a long time ago; I have kept it on a little table under the holy icons. And so I took holy

* In the article "Apostolic Podvig" by Reader Gleb Podmoshensky, October, 1962.

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water and a little bit of the earth, mixed them together, and looking at the icon of St. Herman I entreated: "Holy Righteous Herman of Alaska, help me, ease the pain so that at least I might be able to sleep at night" (I am over 60 years old and I thought that I would have a chronic infirmity, and this is why I did not ask for a complete healing.) It was cool when I anointed my arm, and I instantly fell asleep for several hours.

And so, anointing my arm every night, I began to sleep longer and longer; but what was strange was that in the daytime the pain did not leave me and was no better at all. I think that this was so that I would not dare to think that I was better as a result of the treatment I had taken (which I had already given up). Usually diseases get worse at night, but with me it was just the contrary. In June I became completely well. About two or three weeks had passed, and before that I had been sick for four months. And so I was delivered from the pain by earth from the grave of St. Herman of Alaska and by holy water. I immediately had a moleben served to St. Herman of Alaska.

Mrs. Lydia Liu

May 26, 1982

Honolulu, Hawaii

XXXIV

SAROV, VALAAM AND OPTINA

ON SPRUCE ISLAND in 1961, while I was conversing with Fr. Gerasim, that renowned representative of pre-revolutionary Holy Russia, he mentioned among other things that he read somewhere that St. Herman had known St. Seraphim of Sarov personally, but he did not remember where he read it. Such a document we were not fortunate enough to unearth. In our research, however, we did discover that St. Herman lived in Sarov since he was 12 years old. And in his *Prima Vita* it is stated that: "at 16 he went to join the life of monks" [precise translation]. While St. Herman was living in Sarov, St. Seraphim was not there. The latter arrived there in 1779, when he was 19 years old, and by that time St. Herman was elsewhere. But St. Herman could have accompanied his abbot, Nazarius, when that renowned Sarov monk was visiting his monastic home from Valaam; by that time St. Seraphim was well known as a zealot. We also know that Abbot Nazarius visited the Roslavl Forest to help one of his spiritual sons, Paul, when he was in trouble, and then met there various elders

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like Cleopas, Basiliscus and Zosima (Theodore of Sanaxar was already banished by that time). Describing his Sarov experience and the monks there at that time, the lifelong and best friend of St. Herman, Archimandrite Theophanes (Sokolov) mentions the following, which sheds light on the previously unknown childhood of St. Herman in Sarov, and his contact with Elder Theodore of Sanaxar. Right after his description of the desert life of Father Nazarius, the future Abbot of Valaam, he switches to St. Herman and records:

“Father Herman (he is now in America) from young age lived in the desert wilderness with Father Barlaam. One day Fr. Barlaam had to be absent and left him, a little boy of 12, all by himself. It happened that some mushroom pickers lost their way in the forest and accidentally wandered to the cell of the desert-dwellers. When he came out to them, they even became frightened seeing him, so unusual it seemed to them, his presence there in the denseness of the forest.”

And in another place, he writes: “When they were ground-breaking for the Sanaxar church, where the altar was supposed to be, suddenly a swarm of bees flew and settled right on that very spot. Father Theodore ordered St. Herman to scoop them into the beehive, and since then there were bees in the monastery.”

It is interesting to note here that in another version of the same account, Father Theophanes calls St. Herman “Father Gerasim.” This is yet another indication supporting the claim of Michael Z. Vinokourov that St. Herman’s name before his monastic tonsure was Gerasim, since years later St. Herman adopted a Creole boy and gave him his own name, both his first name and his family name, Zyrianov.

St. Herman is bound up with three major monasteries of Holy Russia: Sarov, Valaam, and Optina. Sarov is where St. Herman laid his beginning, just as Abbot Nazarius had done when he came there at the age of 17; while the famous Paisian transmitter, Elder Basil Kishkin, had come there at an even earlier age than St. Herman — at 7 years of age. It is very rare that children at such an early age become so deeply rooted in monastic anchoritic life. The Sanaxar and Roslavl Forests, so closely bound up with Sarov, were neighboring places from where St. Herman received direct contact with Paisian disciples. Valaam Monastery was where he matured and from where he went to America, always considering himself a Valaam monk. And finally, Optina Monastery, that inheritor of Paisian and Roslavl Tradition, is where St. Herman’s disciple, Schema-monk Sergius (Yanovsky) found St. Herman’s spirit and became a monk. Fr. Sergius reposed in Optina’s neighboring sister-monastery, that of St. Tikhon of



St. Seraphim in his Sarov Forest garden
Painting by S. Zhevotovskiy

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

Kaluga, where just a few decades later the future Father Gerasim of Spruce Island laid his monastic beginning under the supervision of the Optina Elders' disciples. This Father Gerasim went to Alaska, and upon him the prophecy of St. Herman was realized — that a man similar to him would flee the glory of the world and live on his New Valaam. . . .

The spirit of all these major monasteries is bound up with St. Herman, and was planted in American soil thanks to the ascetic labors both of St. Herman and of Father Gerasim — who in turn was the founder of our *Father Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Inc.*, which now has a permanent monastic dwelling place on his Spruce Island — the *New Valaam Monastery*, keeping and guarding that very spirit which is almost extinct today.

(Notes from the Life of St. Herman
of Alaska and the American Paradise)

XXXV

PERSECUTION ON SPRUCE ISLAND

1.

Schema-monk Sergius Yanovsky writes: "Because Fr. Herman revealed many as leading a life of drunkenness, as being revoltingly sinful and oppressing the Aleuts, he made many enemies, and brought upon himself much unpleasantness and slander. He suffered all this and bore his heavy cross in silence... I must confess that I myself heard such slanderous tales about Fr. Herman that I had begun to write back to St. Petersburg about him, even before I had met him. It was reported to me that he was encouraging the Aleuts to rise in rebellion against the authorities there [in Kodiak]. But in the following year, 1819, I set off by ship to make a tour of inspection of all the colonies, and in November I arrived at the island of Kodiak. Fr. Herman immediately came to see me. He explained local conditions to me, how poor the Aleuts were, in what need they were, and how they were in various ways oppressed, and he asked me to protect them. I promised to look into all this and do what I could...

"After my period of office Fr. Herman was subjected to great pressure and persecution, so that he carried his cross to the end. In my letter from other

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sources I was told that after I had left a priest arrived from Irkutsk with wide-ranging powers from the bishop. This priest dispatched Hieromonk Ioasaph, back to Irkutsk; the hierodeacon was already dead. He harried Fr. Herman, inventoried and took away everything he had, which came to the sum of eight thousand paper rubles. This money and other items had been collected for the building of a new church to replace the whole of the old rickety structure. He had himself told me how he was making this collection. Other people looked upon it as Fr. Herman's 'personal fortune,' but this cannot have been the case. It is true that he never refused to accept offerings, be they food, money or other articles; but he also gave out again many things to those who had nothing, while the money was put aside for the reconstruction of the monastery. He himself always wore no shirt, having next to his bare skin a deerskin *kukhianka*—a kind of shirt which, as he himself told me, he had not taken off or changed for eight years. As a consequence, the fur had already rotted and gone thin, and the skin itself was stained. In addition, he wore canvas breeches, *bashmaks* or shoes, a cassock, an ancient threadbare riasson and mantle, patched and darned in many places, and a klobuk (cowl). Wearing these clothes he would appear before me in all kinds of weather—rain, blizzard, storm or cold! This is what Christian love means—far different from earthly! What did he expect from me, what was he looking for? He only wished to save the soul of someone in error! May the Lord remember him in His Kingdom and may he enter into the joy of the Lord!

"And so the priest from Irkutsk was harsh and rude to him in many ways and even wanted to send him back to Irkutsk; but my successor would not let him do this and protected the elder."

*From a letter by Yanovsky to
Abbot Damascene of Valaam,
November 22, 1865*

2.

The former chief managers of the colony, Messrs. Chistiakov and Muraviev, several times rowed out to Spruce Island in baidarkas at night so as not to be noticed by people, together with the former administrator of Kodiak, Nikiforov and the priest Frumenty. They came ashore on Spruce Island at a point where they would not be noticed, and they hid in the forest as though waiting in ambush and kept watch on what Fr. Herman was doing. Since they were not noticed they returned quietly the same night without, of course, having seen anything prejudicial and so they could not blacken or calumniate the elder.

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In 1825 when the priest Frumenty Mordovsky arrived on Kodiak, for what cause or reason I do not know, he went to Spruce Island and began to investigate (so they still say now) the way Fr. Herman lived! With him were the Administrator Nikiforov and Russian employees of the company. When they found nothing of value amongst his possessions, then one of the Russians, Ponomarkov, took an axe and began to tear up the floor-boards (presumably with the permission of his superiors). Then it seems Fr. Herman said with a sigh, and in a spirit of resignation: "Oh, unfortunate man, you should not have picked up that axe." And he prophesied to him that it was by means of such a weapon that he would lose his life. And so, shortly afterwards people were needed to carry out duties at Nikolaevsk redoubt and so some Russian employees were sent from Kodiak, amongst them Ponomarkov. There some short time later some Kenais cut the man's head off while he was asleep. Thus did the offended elder's prophecy come true.

*From the notes of Constantine
Larionov: Sitka, Alaska,
May 21, 1867*

XXXVI

THE HERMIT-HESYCHAST

I have heard that Father Herman, towards the closing stages of the Mission, put a lot of care into the establishment of the school, in which Aleut orphan girls would be taught to read and write under the guidance of a worthy woman of good character. Everything that Father Herman earned by his own labors, he spent on food and clothing for the girls, on books for them; he himself taught them church singing and good behavior.

But in his last years he lived a more secluded life, completely isolated in his little cell, not far from the chapel where three families lived and where the school was situated. He never received anyone into his cell, and what he did therein God alone knows. In the summertime he would tend the vegetable patches near his cell, spreading fertilizer made from seaweed which he collected on the seashore, and would plant mainly potatoes. This, it would seem, was the full extent of his external activities! But his main business was in spiritual feats of prayerful contemplation within his isolated cell, where no one saw what he

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was doing. It could only be heard from the outside how he sang and conducted the holy Services according to the monastic Rule.

Many people have told me that he had a gift of clairvoyance from God, telling the future. He foretold, for example, how America would have its own hierarch at a time when no one had even considered it and when indeed there was no hope at all of it ever coming to pass. He also foresaw and foretold the time and circumstances of his own death, saying, "I am soon going to die. Do not wait for a priest to come; he will not come. Bury me in your own time." When he died a strong wind blew up with rain, which made it impossible to sail from Spruce Island to St. Paul's Harbor [Kodiak] to fetch the priest for the burial (it was necessary to make a two or three hour journey by light baid-arka across quite a wide strait). The wind blew without letting up for twelve days, and the inhabitants were forced to bury Father Herman themselves, without a priest, as he had foretold.

In general, all the local inhabitants have a sincere reverence for Father Herman as towards a holy hermit, completely convinced of his having pleased God with his life.

*Bishop Peter of New Archangelsk
Sitka, Alaska
May 12, 1866*

XXXVII

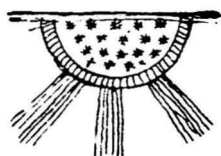
ST. HERMAN'S *PHILOKALIA*

"The foxes have plundered our supplies and belongings, and I am sending you the remaining books . . . *Dobrotoliubie*, etc."

*from a letter to St. Herman
from an unknown author*

St. Herman's elder, Abbot Nazary of Valaam, was appointed as consultant when the first edition of the Slavonic *Philokalia* — *Dobrotoliubie* — was being published. The book came off the press in 1794, the very year that the Alaska Mission set out for America. St. Herman most probably took the book along on the long journey: either the whole volume (or two) or fragments in separate signatures (booklets) as we can see from the letters of Yanovsky, his

Monk Theophanes'
Ladder
from the Greek and
Slavonic *Philokalia*.



Ι	ΕΘΕΡΨΗΝΕΣΤΟ .	Τελειότης	
Δ	προσεβύσεντες εὐαγγ.	Καρδίας Φωτισμός	ι' 10. Perfection
Η	ωστάντες στράννοι .	Ξενή	θ' 9. Enlightenment of heart
Ξ	ἐνδύσιν τάνηστους .	Ἑλλαμψίς	η' 8. Strange illumination
		Μυστηρίων θεωρία	
Θ	ὠνημένους οὐκ .	Νοός καθαρσις	ζ' 7. Mystic vision
			ϝ' 6. Cleansed mind
Θ	μύρις πόμπαιων .	Λογισμῶν εἰρήνη	ε' 5. Peaceful thoughts
		Καρδιακά δάκρυα	δ' 4. Heartfelt tears
Α	ἐλπίς ἐρεχθία .	Ἁγία ἐνεργεια	γ' 3. Holy energy
Γ	ἀκρίστοι εὐοί .	Καρδιάς θερμὴ	β' 2. Warm heart
Β	τελειότητα εὐαγγ.	Καθάραι προσευχῇ	α' 1. Pure prayer
Α	μοιῶντα χήσται .		
	Βοσκοπάειν		
	ἐκτενέων .		

Slavonic

English

ΑΝΑΒΑΣΙΣ
ΘΕΙΑ

Read from the bottom, up.

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future spiritual son. Yanovsky wrote the following brief letter to St. Herman, probably from Sitka:

"I am sending four casks of red wine for the church and some Sandwich [Island] grain for you; I am humbly begging you to send me for a time 'The Ladder of Theophanes' and *The Rock of Faith* [a popular book at the time by Stephen Yavorsky].

With utmost respects,
your Reverence's humble servant,
S. Yanovsky [no date] "

St. Herman was a faithful promoter of the Philokalia's wisdom, even in such remoteness as Alaska; and he had put it to good use. A certain Basil Tretiakov, for example, borrowed the Philokalia from St. Herman and Father Ioasaph and used it on Shuyak Island, in difficult primitive surroundings. The teaching of a "spiritual ladder of virtues," mentioned in the above letter, was based on St. John Climacus' concept. It was written by some unknown ancient monastic author and included in both the St. Paisian and Macarian Philokalias. It is in brief outline form, containing poetic imagery, and it is easy to remember; evidently it appealed to St. Herman, and its influence is felt in his letter writing. Here is the full text:

THE LADDER OF THEOPHANES

A contrite monk, Theophanes by name, has set forth a ladder of Divine gifts which experience has made known to the God-bearing ones.

1. The first (step) is most pure prayer.
2. From it proceeds a certain warmth of heart.
3. After it, a strange and holy activity.
4. Likewise, heartfelt Divine tears.
5. And for this sake, peace from diverse thoughts.
6. From this comes forth cleansing of mind.
7. And the vision of higher mysteries.
8. After this, a strange illumination in an unspeakable manner.
9. From it, an unutterable illumination of heart.
10. And from this again, imperfect perfection.

Moreover, this (last) step has an endless breadth, even if it is enclosed in a single verse.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

The first step on the ladder is the lowest step, which shows only pure prayer; but its forms are very many, and if we wished to enumerate them now, it would prolong our words.

But understand me, beloved, that on all the steps experience is the teacher of them, and not words.

It is a ladder strangely leading up to the heights. Its ten steps are a strange giving of life to the soul. Ten steps proclaim the life of the soul.

And one of the God-bearing ones somewhere said this: strive not to acquire life here; let not the soul be deceived by vain hope, for only there will it obtain life.

The ten steps are a Divine love of wisdom. The ten steps are the fruit of all books. The ten steps reveal perfection. The ten steps lead up to the heavens. The ten steps make one to know God.

The ladder is beheld most briefly in its length. If anyone should receive it by experience within the heart, he will acquire a wealth the world cannot contain and a Divine fountain gushing a strange life.

An extraordinary teacher is the ladder, to make known clearly to each his measure.

Beholding the Divine ladder of ten gifts, if you think to stand securely on it, say on which step of it you are, for the benefit of us disconsolate ones.

If you wish, O beloved, to study these things, be without care for all things irrational, in the opinion of the blessed ones. For you will learn nothing unless you be without care.

These things are known by experience, and not by words.

And this, merely as a reminder, I say to you: If the word of the holy God-bearing ones enters the hearing with difficulty, and one finds himself on none of the steps or is constantly studying them, (then) at the end and at the time of death he will have in truth great fear and trembling and limitless fears lest he be cut off.

The verses end in fear, and most profitably does it happen thus. For it is not most of all by good things that the hard-hearted--of whom I am first--are led up to repentance and goodness, but by terrible things that cause fear.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And do you also who have written these things hear and understand: How have you dared to utter such things, a man who has nothing whatever of them; and how were you not terrified to teach of them? Have you not heard that Uzzah suffered, wishing to put right the Divine Ark?

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Think not that I teach and say things except to accuse myself by them, beholding the honors of victory for those who struggle and my own fruitlessness in everything.

Slavonic *Philokalia*, Vol. 1

XXXVIII

THE REPOSE OF ST. HERMAN

1.

The elder's earthly eyes were blind for some seven years before his death. When he was near his end he said to his pupil Gerasim, "Go and call the girls who are there," meaning his pupils. Then he began by telling Sophia that she should go on living on Spruce Island, and that when she died she should be buried at his feet. He instructed several of the others to take husbands, and he also ordered his pupil Gerasim to marry and continue living on Spruce Island. He gave him his books for safe-keeping, saying, "When I die, kill the bull, because his labors for me are already done."

Perhaps we should say more about this animal. When the villagers had come to Spruce Island they had presented the elder with a young calf, and the elder had raised and nurtured it. When the old man died, the others were unwilling to kill this bull; the next day the animal ran headfirst into a tree and died.

The elder said: "When I die, do not tell them at the port, but bury me yourselves next to Fr. Ioasaph." Then he went on, "Burn a candle before the icons and let my pupil Gerasim read from the *Acts of the Apostles*. . . . After several lessons from this holy book the elder's face lit up and he said, "Praise be to Thee, O Lord." Then he ordered the candles to be extinguished and he told them that the Lord had granted him another week of life. When a week had passed the elder as before ordered that the candles be lighted and that Gerasim read from the *Acts*. After a short while he lowered his head onto Gerasim's chest, his face suddenly began to shine and the cell was filled with a divine fragrance, and they all knew that the elder was dead. His pupil did not dare *not inform* the authorities at the port of the elder's death, because everyone loved him. In answer to his news, he received instructions not to proceed with the burial but to wait until a priest came and brought a coffin. As soon as the



THE FALLING ASLEEP OF SAINT HERMAN

*Underneath it says: "A painting by Archimandrite Seraphim of Tarentum,
Pennsylvania. July 9, 1929."*

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coffin had been made, the weather worsened and a fierce wind blew so that it was not possible for the priest to set out—and the elder's body was left lying for twelve days. Gerasim and the other pupils resolved to bury the elder and they had no sooner placed the body in the earth when the weather became calm and clear. At this point, the priest arrived with a fine coffin, but he decided not to exhume the body as it obviously pleased both God and the elder to have it buried as it was.

*(From the Narrative of the
Pilgrim Lazarev Concerning
the Life of the Monk Herman
October, 1864)*

2.

“During our stay in the village of Katani (on Afognak Island) one evening, we could see an unusually bright column of light rising into the air above Spruce Island—then experienced old men and Anna's husband and creole Gerasim Vologdin said: ‘It looks as though Fr. Herman has left them,’ and they straightway began to pray to God. When they subsequently learned of Fr. Herman's death, they found that it had occurred on the very night of the vision.

“I have heard of this from many sources, people who saw it from various places, and others who saw it while at sea in their baidarkas.

“On the same evening from other villages and also from Afognak a figure was seen in the sky below the clouds over Spruce Island.”

*(From the Notes of Constantine
Larionov: Sitka, Alaska,
May 21, 1867)*

3.

Today is November 15/28. I served Liturgy during the night. It was good to pray when it was quiet and peaceful, and the whole sky was strewn with stars. And involuntarily I thought: probably the same type of night was in 1836 on the 15th of November, when Blessed Elder Herman died.

*(From a letter of
Archimandrite Gerasim,
Spruce Island, Alaska)*

XXXIX

FINDING THE TRUE DATE OF HIS REPOSE

*A*s is evident from an article by Bishop Alexey Pantaleev of the Aleutians and Alaska, he tied the building of his monastery to the 100th anniversary of the death of Father Herman. Bishop Alexey began precisely with this: "December 13/26, 1837, is the 100th anniversary of the falling asleep of Holy Elder Herman, who labored on Spruce Island..."

How is this possible? Actually, we all *have missed* this 100th anniversary! It turns out that Elder Herman died not in 1837 but in 1836!

In our Mission Church Archives (which in 1927 were transferred to the Library of Congress by the writer of this article), there have now been found documents which clearly indicate this mistake.

The first document, preserved in the Congressional Library, is the Log Book (or Book of Statistics) of the Kodiak Resurrection Church for the year 1836. Page 6 bears the following entry made by the hand of Priest Alexis Sokoloff: "On December 13th, Monk Herman of the Spiritual Mission—died." Further, it states that the deceased was "76 years old," that the "cause of his death was paralysis," that he was "not confessed and communed," but was "buried on Valaam Island."

Thus this statistics entry (i.e., the most "official" document possible) confirms that Father Herman died in 1836.

But how could such a mistake have occurred, and who was the first one to mix up the dates? To this I venture to give the following explanation:

In June of 1839, the famous Alaskan priest Father John Veniaminoff presented the procurator of the Holy Synod, then Count N.A. Protasov, with a special report, entitled: "A Survey of the Orthodox Church in Russian Settlements in America, with a Proposal for Improving Its Condition." This was presented in the year of the first and memorable stay of Father Veniaminoff in Petersburg, whence in 1841 he returned to Alaska already as Bishop Innocent.

* The author of this chapter, Michael Z. Vinokourov, was an archivist in the Library of Congress and a close friend of Archimandrite Gerasim. See *The Orthodox Word*, No. 131.

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In 1840, this Report, now titled "The Condition of the Orthodox Church in Russian America," was printed in the "Journal of the Ministry of the People's Education (see Vol. XXVI, no. 6). And at the same time, also in Petersburg, in the printshop of the Imperial Academy of Science, Father Veniaminoff's most important library work in two volumes was being printed--his famous and memorable *Notebooks of the Territory of the Unalaskan Islands*.

In these two above-mentioned works of Father Veniaminoff, we find a few words also about Father Herman. He mentions several times the death of Father Herman, as if it occurred in 1837...

This is where, evidently, the mistake originated about the time of Elder Herman's repose, which mistake began to be repeated. As a reason for Priest Veniaminoff's mistake, I can give the following, and so far the only, explanation:

The information concerning Father Herman's death, which occurred in the middle of November, 1836, could have reached Sitka (more precisely, New Archangelsk, then the main "center" of the whole of Russian America, where the Manager of the Colonies resided and where his main office and chancery was located) only about in April or the beginning of May, 1837. Contact between Kodiak and Sitka at that time of year (that is, winter and early spring) was, of course, quite difficult, especially in those days.

Therefore, it is quite natural that Father Veniaminoff, while drafting the Report in 1839, would most likely have recalled the year 1837, when he had first heard in New Archangelsk (in Sitka, when he served as a priest) about the death of Father Herman. He evidently had no opportunity to verify the exact date with the statistic books of the Kodiak church.

Besides, he does not give anywhere in his literary works the exact date, but only indicates the year--1837.

So that is how Father John Veniaminoff made a mistake. But then, significantly later, in September, 1867, another bishop, Peter (of Yakutsk, transferred to Ekaterinoslav from Alaska) sent from Yakutsk to Valaam Monastery a manuscript folder titled "Information on Father Herman," compiled at his request by a Kodiak citizen, the creole Constantine Larionov. In this folder, in a footnote on the bottom of the page, Bishop Peter wrote in his own hand: "Father Herman died on December 13, 1837..."

From these dates (i.e., date and month), it is now quite evident that Bishop Peter either saw himself, or received information (which he thought was precise date) from a person who "saw" the *original notation* concerning the repose of Fr. Herman in the log book of the Kodiak church.

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But why did he (if he himself or some other person who gave him this data saw the notation) not correct this mistake of Father Veniaminoff, then already a bishop, and himself make a mistake? After all, the entry of Fr. Herman's death--December 13th--as we know now, was made in the statistic book for 1836 but not for the year 1837!

I cannot, unfortunately, so far give any explanation for this apparently "involuntary" mistake.

Nevertheless, from this "carelessness," this mistake began to be constantly repeated everywhere in the dating of Father Herman's death. And finally this mistake led to the sad consequence of the wish to solemnly celebrate the centennial of the repose of Elder Herman and to build by this date a whole monastery at his grave...

But that's not all...

In the Library of Congress, among the same old Alaskan Church Archives, I chanced to find another document, half-decayed from the effects of weather and age, which places under great suspicion even this "precise date"--December 13th. The document is called "The Case Concerning the Repose of the Main Administrator of the Russian American Company." This "case" began, as the title page indicates, "on December 4, 1837," and in all it consists of only two pages.

The "reference," dated October 29, 1837 under No. 1455, was sent from St. Petersburg (where at that time the Head Office was located) to the city of Irkutsk, and it was addressed thus: "To his Most Eminent Eminence Innocent, Archbishop of Nerchinsk, Yakutsk." Its contents are as follows:

"The Head Office of the Russian American Company, having received a dispatch from the Head Governor of the Russian American Colonies' Civil Couriers, Captain of the first rank Kupreanov, for May 5th of this year, No. 137, about the death of Monk Herman, which occurred on November 15th of last year, 1836, considers it its duty respectfully to inform Your Eminence."

Then follow signatures. On top, by the hand of the prelate Innocent, is this "Resolution": "Investigating after December 4, 1837." On the reverse side of the sheet is written: "Order: to be taken into consideration"--and that is all.

Thus it follows, as we can see, that Father Herman could have died not even on the 13th of December, but on the *15th of November, 1836!*

And I personally believe precisely this date. This is why:

In the first place, after a close examination of the statistic books of the

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Kodiak church, it is evident that priest Sokoloff never had the habit of entering both the dates of death and the times of burial. So it is impossible to understand whether he was writing the time of the funeral service or the date of death. It is true that above the column he has an indefinite heading: "When and namely who precisely died." And only later on, after 1839, did he incorporate into the statistic books two parallel columns, as is customary now. I involuntarily got the impression that he intended to register the date when he held the funeral.

In the second place, the period between the statistic date marked and the date of the above-mentioned "reference" of the Head Office addressed to Bishop Innocent of Irkutsk (Alexandrov), comes to about a month (28 days), which quite well coincides with the dates and traditions which we have already "recorded" in the vast literature on Father Herman (based on the Valaam Monastery publications) and especially in the stories concerning his death and burial. [We know from these sources that, because of violent storms which prevented a priest from coming to Spruce Island, Father Herman's funeral occurred about a month after his repose. Thus, the author concludes that Father Herman *reposed* on November 15/28, 1836, and *his funeral was held* a month later, on December 13/26, 1836—the date recorded by Priest Sokoloff in the statistic book].

Michael Z. Vinokouroff

XL

OPENING OF THE RELICS

1. A Letter of Michael Z. Vinokouroff to Archimandrite Gerasim

I remember, late in the evening (in 1940) in your little Spruce Hermitage house, you brought out from the small chapel which was built on the site where Elder Herman died, a fragment of his coffin, telling me, then I thought it was like a confession, in all details of what you had found there. I went to you to Spruce Island because I hated you then. Yes, I hated you because of what Father Andrew Kashevarov wrote to me the first time about what you

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have done with Elder Herman. I wept feeling sorry for him and could not be consoled, calling you a "gravedigger," judging and criticizing you.

That evening at his grave I felt that you also loved Father Herman — and your love was no less than mine, in fact, much more, and what is more important — you put it into practice. In your life you made for his memory a thousand times more than all those who composed all those troparia and akathists. From that moment on I loved you.

I would have given a lot in my life in order to put down adequately on paper what you told me that night in the candlelight. I confess I attempted to do that several times, but I could not, I have no power. . .

Thus, my dear one, in the name of everything that is holy, for the sake of our friendship and mutual love towards Father Herman, I beg you, I implore you, Father Gerasim, do that for me! Write! I know that you can do it and do it well.

As soon as the springtime settles in, you, of course, will again be drawn to your beloved desert, to him, and there you will be alone with your thoughts, with your prayers and labors — and then, after a fervent prayer before his grave write down with your own words, I'd add, with your tears, — write it down how it was: how it happened that you while clearing up that spot of his grave, struggling with some plant (Devil's Club) you chanced to discover a part of his grave and so on. You know very well, that after your death they all (Leontyites) will begin to create "legends" about you about your life, and of course will begin to "justify" themselves and to slander you. I think that you know and feel it yourself, that I am saying the absolute truth. And to protect and defend your memory there will be nobody around. Believe me, my dear one, I know them all too well and I perceive into their cunning. And therefore I beg you to do that for me. I repeat, I beg and I adjure you in the name of everything that is holy, in the name of Father Herman.

Michael Z. Vinokoureff

February 23, 1959

2. The "Gravedigging"

(From the letters of Archimandrite Gerasim)

There was no "gravedigging" of Elder Herman's. Under the chapel then there was something terrible: dry rotten posts, after they were replaced with the



Shroud of St. Herman covering the coffin, into which

Fr. Gerasim placed the relics in 1936.

The shroud was painted on canvas by Archimandrite Seraphim at the order of Fr. Gerasim, following the latter's instructions. It is still covering the old coffin in the Monk's Lagoon church, but the relics were moved to Kodiak against the expressed will of Fr. Gerasim.



Archimandrite Gerasim in the southeast corner of the St. Sergius and Herman of Valaam Chapel, standing near the reliquary coffin of St. Herman.

*Photograph from the Russian daily Novaya Zarya,
San Francisco, January 24, 1959.*

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new ones, the old ones were thrown all over the place. There was no mound over Elder Herman's grave, it looked like a hole and around it — a total "abomination." In the corner of the eastern side, where a door made by me is now located, there was a pit and in it old moss. Mr. August Nyman told me in Kodiak that the bootleggers used to hide their alcohol in there (during the Prohibition).

While still in Afognak the Petellins told me that one woman-teacher informed them that she herself saw in a hold of a boat a coffin with the remains of Elder Herman. She also was reported to have said that a certain Nicholai Larionov, a Russian from Perno, Estonia, did the following: together with some shady individuals from the States he secretly dug up the coffin and took it to the States.

When I heard such a thing, I at once visited Fr. Nicholas Kashevarov and told him all I heard. Fr. Nicholas told me that he also heard this and visited Spruce Island, checked the grave and found no change under the chapel.

Way back in 1917, in July, Bishop Philip Savitsky was visiting Kodiak. We often had walks together in the woods and talked about many things. One day Bishop Philip told me:

"It wouldn't be bad to examine the grave of Elder Herman to see what is in it. But it must be done secretly, not to make it public. Of course it would be good to assign this task to some two or three priests. But where are they here? To Fr. Nicholas Kashevarov, who is drunk for weeks, such a task cannot be entrusted. But among these kreols here I do not see any deeply believing man. No, one cannot entrust such a task to a man who drinks. Oh, what a pity, that there are no monks here, no Russian monks! Then it would have been so easy."

You see, Bishop Philip had such a desire — to examine the grave of Elder Father Herman without any permission from Church authorities!

There were cases in Russia when accidentally the coffins of our ascetics would get opened.

When repairs were being made in a basement of Zadonsk Monastery, then they had to open up the grave of St. Tychon. Archbishop Anthony entrusted several monks to do this at night, while he himself kept praying in his cell. Late at night the monks came to him and said: "Your Eminence, we have discovered holy relics of Hierarch Tychon." Then Archbishop Anthony has-

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tened to the grave of St. Tychon and saw the incorrupt relics, knelt down before them and began to kiss the holy relics. Only after that he informed the Holy Synod about that. And all that was done without the permission of the Higher Church authority. Yet I know, I heard myself how some hierarchs, priests and monks denied the existence of holy relics, even the holiness of icons.

I, however, venerated God's Elder, Herman; I gathered his remains, placed them into a new coffin, and placed this sarcophagus inside the chapel, decorated it and lit the holy light before the relics. And now, for over 25 years I protect and guard this wonderful spot. Last summer I served there 44 liturgies.

As I said before, I wrote about it all to Metropolitan Theophilus, and personally reported to Bishop Alexy how the grave got opened. But I did not open it. It was quite apparent that the coffin was not buried deep in the ground, not much more than a foot. Bear in mind that in those remote years winters used to be terribly ferocious in Alaska, and the poor Aleuts did not have then either picks or other tools in order to cut deep into the frozen earth.

What they will write about me after my death — I really don't care.

Yes, Elder Herman was persecuted badly, they slandered him. I read somewhere that it used to reach such a low degrading state that some people would deliberately go all the way from Kodiak on baidarkas to S. Island and there at night would watch if women would go to Father Herman's cell. See, to what extent their hatred would reach!

Father Sisinius King told me that once when Bishop Alexy, Archimandrite Theodosius, himself and two laymen were sailing in May of 1936 and were not far from Spruce Island (Monks' Lagoon), Bishop Alexy said:

—"Isn't it boring for Father Gerasim to live all alone in such remote denseness?" To that Kulchinsky said:

—"How do you know that he lives there alone? Women visit him there! Last time when we were there, we saw an American woman visiting him. She did not remain to stay there only because we were in their way." And such a thing he said before the laymen!

An educated American lady, Mrs. B. Parker, wife of a doctor who drowned in the beginning of January 1936 — that was. The unfortunate one was half dead from grief, bitterly weeping over her kind husband's death. She was leaving Alaska and came to say good-bye to me.

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Father Sisinius was astonished that Bishop Alexy, an educated man himself, did not stop the slanderer, that barking dog.

Their Metropolitan was no better, when he did not defend me, when they slandered me in newspapers that Rasputin was alive, only he changed his name to Gerasim and was hiding on Spruce Island. They, Platonites, hate me because I know who they are.

When I moved to Spruce Hermitage in 1935 how miserable everything looked there in church . . . there was really nothing there. And now there is everything. . .

It is sad to think, that there are no monks who wish to live in this Elder Herman's desert.

May 10, 1960

Now we have fixed the chapel over Elder Herman's grave. We changed all posts, made a new framework and new double floors. We also constructed a new narthex, absolutely different with a window — and now it is light. Also we put on siding on the walls and finished off the floor. Also, built a porch outside, and did skirting all around the building. We even managed to put on one coat of paint. But even that made a big difference; now the church looks cheerful.

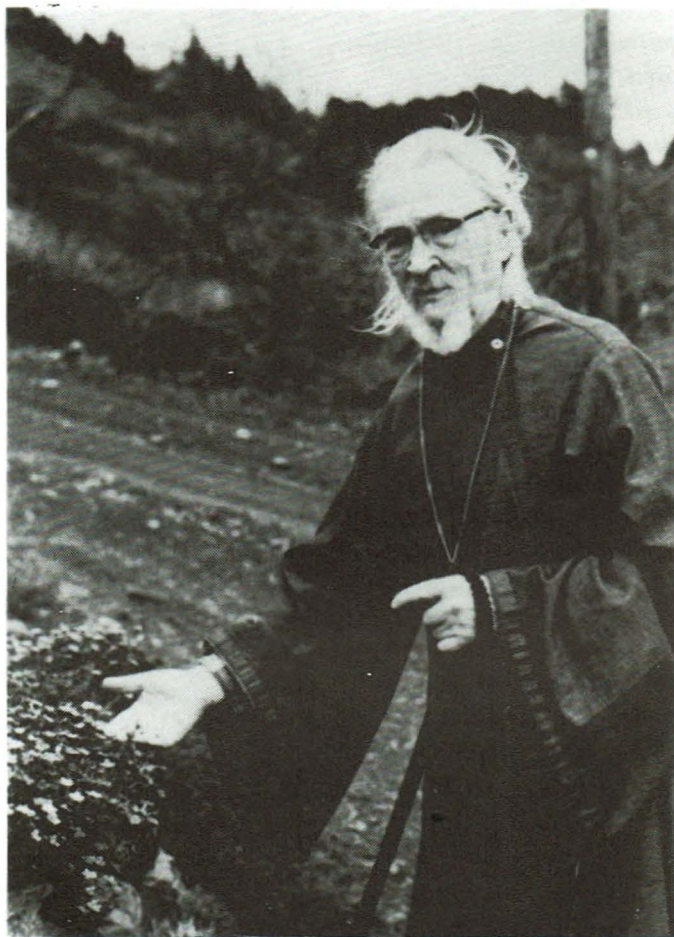
Now involuntarily one thinks of a skete; it's a typical skete church. All we need now is three or four monks and we have a skete. This place indeed is most suitable for a skete. All true ascetics escaped to forests, or some deserted islands. Mt. Athos is also mostly a desert — no women there, just a few laymen who live in a little town and keep small business. Some monks out of love for the desert life, solitary life, would ascend to such precipices that it is even terrifying to climb up. And they love their places, their poor cells and are not bored to live there. Who has God in his heart, who remembers Him always — to such a one the desert feels like paradise.

Our bishops who wrote about Spruce hermitage, did not at all have in mind such sketes. No, they were thinking of missionary monasteries like the Catholics have.

11 - 6 - 1945

Our bishops do not know about my life in Alaska for 46 years -- at all.

1 - 18 - 1963



ARCHIMANDRITE GERASIM IN OLD AGE.

1888 - 1969

His last years were spent in the city of Kodiak in a house
specially built for him by his godson.

Courtesy of Gene Sundberg Collection.



St. Paul's Harbor — Kodiak City, ca. 1916, the year
Fr. Gerasim arrived in Alaska and settled in Afognak.

Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Baldwin.

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In the ancient time of Christian era there were no canonizations of saints. Christians then gathered pieces of people's bodies who were killed for Christ; they preserved their holy relics and conducted liturgy over their coffins.

In Tula diocese there were only one [of] such relics (*i.e.* a saint's intact preserved body) that of St. Macarius of Zhabynsk, Wonderworker of Belyov. In 1913 a certain educated priest in Tula told me that St. Macarius was never canonized with the blessing of the Holy Synod, the Highest Church authority. He was glorified by believing Christians, of course not without miracles and at his grave. They erected over his grave a church, a fancy silver reliquary and a decorated canopy over it. Upon the reliquary there was placed an icon of him and around his reliquary there were many hanging lampadas. And in all local Menologions of Saints his name was mentioned every year.

11 - 24 - 64

Archimandrite Gerasim
Spruce Island



The casket made by Fr. Gerasim, where he preserved the relics. Now it is emptied of the relics and is in the Monk's Lagoon chapel.



III

The Complete Extant
LETTERS
of St. Herman



VALAAM MONASTERY IN THE 18TH CENTURY

A painting in the E. T. Schwartz Collection.

PREFACE TO THE LETTERS



BEFORE PRESENTING for the first time Complete Letters of St. Herman in their entirety, which were never yet published altogether in any language, it is important to say a few words of their origin and whereabouts. We were able to collect only eleven existent letters from various sources and in footnotes indicate these sources. There surely have been many more, but they have never reached us. Only letter eleven reached us in the original manuscript form of St. Herman,

which we were able to decipher and thus are entirely responsible for its translation. Their content is both spiritual and official, that of the Alaska Mission business. Nevertheless their interest lies in the fact that they were written by the Saint himself. The style is personal, warm, and to the point, not devoid of some poetic lyricism in parts. Even the prosaic subject matter is treated by St. Herman in a very endearing way. When it comes to spiritual instruction, it becomes very flowery and Patristic in nature. A third of the letters presented here reached us in rough drafts, partially incomprehensible, but the semi-Slavonic language used by St. Herman is clear enough to reconstruct in its intended meaning. Both the Valaam and *Russian American Messenger* versions strive to publish them without editing which in the latter case only brings confusion to the reader and gives little justice to St. Herman's words. We have personally translated from the original into contemporary English so that the reader will benefit by seeing both the style of St. Herman's writing and understand the context from which these letters stem.

Our delight and happiness of being able to present all these letters of St. Herman's in the English language prompted us to supplement them with the collected sum of Russian ascetic Fathers who comprise the *Little Russian*

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Philokalia, and thus places St. Herman's instructions among such luminaries as St. Paisius Velichkovsky (Vol. IV), St. Seraphim of Sarov (Vol. I), Abbot Nazarius (Vol. II) and: Theodore of Sanaxar, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, Theophan of New Lake, Schema-Abbot Herman of Zosima Hermitage and others (of the proposed future Volumes).

Of course, these letters are not entirely of an instructive nature, designed to help one on the path of Philokalic piety. And of course, the spiritual instructions therein were directed actually, only to one particular individual, St. Herman's spiritual son, whom he converted. But, from between the lines, one can discern the spiritual caliber of the author of these incidental letters which to us are of inestimable value. While reading them, especially in their benevolent tone, one can clearly feel the breathing and the heart beat of a loving heart of a saint. The sensitive reader should benefit by the tone itself, which makes the content of several instructions a veritable treasure and a help for those who strive to follow the path of the traditional ascetic practice.

It is with great hope, publishing these letters, that we anticipate perhaps other letters to be sought by God-loving scholars; who knows, perhaps other letters of St. Herman will turn up. But even the little bit that we were able to collect and present here is sufficient to limn the character of his personality that is potent to serve as a direct link between this holy Father of Paisian tradition and us living in our modern Godless age.

May the reader approach these fragments of sanctity with proper Godly attitude, and benefit from them for the salvation of his soul.

Abbot Herman
New Valaam Monastery
Spruce Island
Pascha, April 21/May 4, 1986

Opposite:

On the Valaam Monastery portrait of Abbot Nazary

the scroll reads:

Humility is firmness
And patience — defense,
While love is protection,
And where there is love there is God
And where there is God — then
There is all goodness.



Abbot Nazary of Valaam, 1864 engraving

No. 1

TO ABBOT NAZARIUS OF VALAAM* *of May 19, 1795*

Rejoice in the Lord, O most blessed and most honorable Fr. Nazarius, together with thy Valaam brethren in Christ. Thy paternal kindness and deeds of love towards my lowliness, shall in no way ever be erased from my heart. Neither the terrible impassible Siberian wilds, nor its dark forests, neither the rapids of great rivers, nor the mighty ocean can quench these feelings of mine. For in my mind I imagine my beloved Valaam, and constantly behold it across the great ocean. But because of the great distance, it is impossible for me with my own voice to express to you my gratitude and instead I am obliged to send you, my beloved Batiushka, this little piece of paper. I shall try at the same time to give you a report.

By the grace of the Most High God and thanks to your holy prayers, we have safely reached the American territories, all ten men. The briefness of time does not allow me to describe such a great voyage in detail. Nearly the whole year was spent travelling. We did not meet with any adventures worth recording, although some impressed themselves by reason of the novelty of the place and the varied forms of travel. For the sake of conversation, you can tell those who are curious for news that while travelling on horseback along the Okhotsk road, we were attacked by bears. And on the ocean we saw several kinds of sea animals: whales, dolphin, sea otter, elephant seals and others of which we spotted quite a number. There have been no big storms except one.

* *Valaam Monastery and Its Ascetics*, no author (Valaam Monastery, 3rd edition, St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 126-131.

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We are located on the island of Kodiak, but this is not to be permanent. Our intention is to go to the mainland, although we are not sure just what place will be to our liking. The Americans are very eager for baptism -- nearly seven thousand have been baptized. On Unalaska, while passing through the Aleutian chain, we were driven by an opposing wind to a place where the Aleuts amazed us with their zeal and readiness to be baptized.

Together with this letter, Fr. Makary is setting off for the Aleutian, Fox and Adrianovsk Islands in order to preach and to baptize. Fr. Juvenal will be leaving shortly for the mainland starting on the Kenai peninsula and then heading to the Chugachi, the Alegmint and further to the Kolosh and other tribes, even to the Chilliket.

Oh! Here enraptured in spirit, in spite of all the shortness of time I will snatch a short minute to relate some narratives [of the missionaries' travels and apostolic fervor].

Finding myself between fair weather and foul, between joy and tedium, between sufficiency and insufficiency, satiety and hunger, warmth and coldness, in all my sorrows I find something that cheers me, when I hear conversations between the brethren about their preaching, and about their dividing up for this various regions among themselves -- especially the discussion between Hieromonks Makary and Juvenal, for they set out around Kodiak, too, in the smallest little boats of hide, despite all the sea's dangers, and Father Archimandrite Ioasaph Bolotov remained with us, as if with little children, in the harbor.

And so these hieromonks extended their thoughts yet farther: Once when taking a stroll in our harbor, where I, sinful one, happened to be among them, we climbed a little hill toward the southern side, sat down facing the ocean, and among other things began to speak as to which of us should go where to preach, for the time was then at hand for the departure of the ships on which they had to travel. And then an argument broke out between them which for me, humble one, was comforting and joyful. On Captain Cook's maps of the north, it is indicated that along a certain river Russians live; among us there are different rumors of them, about which we then recalled in our discussion, wishing somehow to see them. Father Makary began to speak: "According to my intention, if it please God, when I shall be in the Aleutian Islands, in all propriety I should go also to Alaska [the mainland], to which place the Alaskans have already called me, too; and as that side is nearer those Russians, I shall find means somehow to learn

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something more certain about them." But Father Juvenal, having heard about Alaska, and in his zeal not allowing the other to speak further, hastened to say to him: "Alaska in the whole belongs to my part, and so I beg you to yield to me and not offend me in this; since the ship now is setting out for Yakutan, I shall have to go by way of Alaska to go out to this harbor." Hearing this, Father Makary became shrouded in despondency and, having assumed a sorrowful air, said with feeling: "No, Father, don't hem me in with this; you yourself know that the Aleutian chain of islands adjoins Alaska, and so it absolutely belongs to my part, and from there the whole northern shore; but as for you, if you please, the southern part of America is sufficient for your whole lifetime." And I, lowly one, hearing such a debate, went from joy to rapture.

Ah, what a pity, Batiushka, that because of the shortness of time, I cannot tell you more about the customs, habits, and all about the way of life in this country, as well as about our own brotherhood. Cosmas Alexeyevitch was tonsured, receiving the name of Ioasaph. We are now together in the bread bakery. Forgive me, my beloved Batiushka, forgive me -- I have no more time to write. I am asking your holy paternal prayers and your blessing. I remain,

lowly Herman

P.S. To all my beloved and dear Valaam brethren, I most fervently bow down before you and ask your holy prayers.

May 19th, 1795, Kodiak

[The following letter from Archimandrite Ioasaph was appended to St. Herman's letter to Fr. Nazarius.]

Batiushka, Father Nazary!

Thanks to your holy prayers we reached America safely. Everywhere along the way, everywhere, starting in Yakutsk, we baptized the Yakut natives who were most eager for it. Wherever there was a river we would stop to baptize. Although there are preachers there, they charge dearly for baptizing. It took only two days' travelling by sea along the Aleutian chain to reach the island Unalaska where we baptized more than a hundred people. They live among the Russian traders and for this reason were ready long ago for baptism. And on Kodiak we baptized over 6,000 people. They accepted baptism with such zeal that they

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

smashed and burned all their shaman paraphernalia. Although you warned us of their nakedness, thanks be to God, they do have some idea of modesty. While they are not fancily dressed, they are not naked and even appear neater than the Russians. The clothing they wear is not expensive -- it's made from bird skins -- but it is long, extending all the way down to their feet; it is fashioned in the manner of a sticharion-vestment, with an opening for the head.

I have Fr. Herman working in the bakery together with Fr. Ioasaph, the former Cosmas Alexeyevitch. Fr. Makary of Konevits, beyond all my expectations, is very well suited for these parts. I thought that he would not be able to make it up here, but he travelled around half the island, almost single-handedly baptizing and marrying people. On this transport he made his way to the island of Unalaska and other nearby islands in order to baptize people. Athanasius is getting experience in serving here, but most of his time is spent in taking care of the vegetable gardens and digging the ground. Fr. Hierodeacon Nektary and also the kind Juvenal are most capable, and his brother who was ordained hierodeacon, Fr. Stephen, although still a young man, is so kind, simple, eager, and intelligent. Not only is he as good as any Valaam brother, but it would be difficult to find such a brother anywhere -- even with a candle in daylight -- so suited is he to these parts. Thanks to your holy prayers, God has given me good and loving brothers. What lies ahead I do not know -- as God gives us strength. But just now all is well.

I would have given you a full description of all our activities but, forgive me, I still can't find the time; either the people come to be baptized or to be married, or they come for religious instruction. To refuse them would only sadden or hurt them, and that we don't want to do. In addition, the Russians also come for various needs: to have a talk and for confession. I also have to keep an eye on the building of the church. Prior to the departure of the ship, I had to write a report to the bishop. I sent off letters to the members of the company in Russia concerning various difficulties and our own needs, etc., etc. With these few words I am seeking from you one consolation for myself -- that you would not exclude us from the number of the beloved Valaam brotherhood, that you would consider us your children, and that you would not forget us in your holy prayers.

Having been here only a short time, we haven't yet made extensive investigations. This coming spring I plan to go with Juvenal to the mainland of America -- to Kenai; and from there to Chugachu, to Uglanichma, and further to

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Yakafan. If it is pleasing to God that the preaching of the Gospel meet with success, and if we live longer, I'll try to send you a more detailed account with the next ship.

I am asking all the Valaam fathers and the beloved brotherhood not to forget us, the "wild natives," in your prayers, for we are in the midst of the world with all its cares. Forgive me, Batiushka. And so, asking your prayers and blessing, I remain

lowly Monk Ioasaph with brothers

May 19, 1795, Kodiak Island,
St. Paul Harbor

No. 2

TO ABBOT NAZARIUS OF VALAAM* *of May 22, 1795*

Most reverend and holy, my dearest Batiushka, Fr. Nazary, with all my beloved brothers in the Lord, Rejoice in the Lord!

I wrote to you one rather unclear letter which had to be given to Fr. Archimandrite to be sent over to you through company personnel, whose reading of it could not be avoided. For this reason I could not write in it so that you would understand about our state here. Through the prelate, to whom I secretly wrote about many matters, you can find out from him yourself.

In that letter I mentioned also about certain Russian people, but did not tell how they came to be here. Here, rumors have it that they are Novgorodians who, during the reign of Tsar Ivan Vassilievich, went to Siberia and travelled down the Lena River to Kolyma. They constructed seven ships of a type which they call "kochka," and continued from Kolyma to Anadyr. There one vessel was shipwrecked. Those who came ashore began to live there; they built a church—the ground floor of which is still preserved — and founded the town Anadyrsk. The other ships went into the sea and five of them landed in Izhiga, in Yakuma, in Tansk; the sixth was lost without a trace. It is believed that this ship was the one that landed in America where these people live to this day, for we hear about them all the time.

Just as I was mailing off this letter of mine, which I quietly finished writing in my little kitchen, I came into the room where our brothers live (where the church services are conducted — many people come to them—) and I heard from

* *Valaam Monastery and Its Ascetics*, no author (Valaam Monastery, 3rd edition, St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 131-134.

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the people who came from the mainland -- from the Lebedinsk Company -- that these Russian people are located not far from them. Although they have not seen them yet, we hear that they received from them large knives with inscriptions from these very Russians. We also hear that they live on a large river where there are fish just like in the Siberian rivers, which we in Kodiak do not have. They also have the Russian fish, pike and eel. If only, O father, we had some help from the Tsar, we could get a lot of goods. But with the merchants here, it is very difficult to conduct business with the local natives, because all the merchants care about is money and they hurt the poor Americans. I wrote about this to His Eminence at some length.*

I am asking you, my dearest father, please render some help with your intercession concerning that report of mine on behalf of the poor local people. I especially asked His Eminence that he send to us as a bishop either Fr. Ioachim from Sarov or Fr. Theophanes, the former cell-attendant of the hierarch. It seems to me that they have little attraction for possessions, and it is of utmost importance that there be no greed here. I think, however, that it will be difficult here for Fr. Ioachim due to his old age and his not being accustomed to being in the midst of such worldly bustle. I would, therefore, very much like to see Fr. Theophanes here, and I think that it would not seem too wearisome but quite agreeable to his nature. We always have a lot of news and conversations.

The hieromonks are truly exceptional: Fr. Macarius and Fr. Juvenal are always aflame with zeal and anxious to go off in all directions to preach, while Fr. Athanasius stays home with us, so that we will not be without a hieromonk. He conducts the services and baptizes those that come to us. And if the company people would only stop offending the Americans, then life here would really be quite pleasant.

I must say that we are quite poor in bread, but perhaps some wheat could grow here if an effort were made. One can find suitable places for it. The governor here is Baranoff, a man rich, and proud at that. He lives extravagantly and makes no effort towards any improvements here. You wouldn't believe what showings-off we have here; one would hardly find the likes of it in any Russian town. Our harbor is very much like some European town. They cast a

* Concerning this mysterious 16th - 17th century Russian settlement in Alaska see *Life of Gerasim, the 4th Archbishop of Siberia and Tobolsk* by A. Butkevich, in *Pravoslavny Put'*, Jordanville, N.Y. 1968, pp. 118-142.

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bell of some 75 pounds and ring it before every service. In the morning and evening they make reveille with the playing of drums and flute. At the present the church services are conducted in our living quarters; a wooden church structure is under construction, but is not yet finished. On feast days travellers and settlers together with their friends attend church services; the governor also comes as well as seamen, the sturmen, and even some officers.

Here we can grow turnips, potatoes, and all garden vegetables; but cucumbers and wheat have not yet been tried. One summer a newcomer planted a pound of millet and harvested a whole pood and a half, while another summer nothing came up. There is so much sea fog here that nothing grew!

Forgive me, Father, forgive me! I sorrow and regret that I cannot talk to you any longer. The ship is about to set sail. I fervently bow down before all the dearly beloved Valaam brothers. Also, Fr. Ioasaph, the former Cosmas Alexeyevitch, who lives with me in the bakery, sends his warmest greetings. We ask your holy prayers and blessing.

lowly Herman
May 22, 1795

P.S. From Moscow I started off on January 22, 1794. We celebrated Holy Pascha in Irkutsk. There I stayed a month or so. From Irkutsk we sailed by way of the Lena River more than two thousand versts -- a very smooth and pleasant journey. The brothers all rode on horseback the more than one thousand versts from Yakutsk to Okhotsk, while all our belongings were carried by one hundred horses. Going by river was nice, but it was even better on horseback. The forests, the mountains, the hills -- we saw everything to full satisfaction. Everywhere there were green pastures, for it was a perfectly delightful time of year -- May, June, July; but only the bears use the pastures -- and we saw plenty of them! Although they are quiet, they are real masters when it comes to harassing the horses! On July 13th we arrived in Okhotsk which is located on the very shore of the ocean. Then we passed by Kamchatka via the Kurill chain and the Aleutian islands. Now God brought me to see with my own eyes that which I had scarcely heard of in my life: sea otters, seals, beavers... We also saw plenty of whales, swimming on the surface of the water and playing right next to our ship. These

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little animals are not too big -- only some hundred feet long and their heads another twenty-five!

Since the 24th of September, 1794, I have been living on Kodiak Island. Glory be to God, I baptized more than 7,000 Americans and performed more than 2,000 weddings. We've built a church, and if time permits, we'll build another, then two more chapels to use while travelling, and then a fifth one we shall build. We live happily: they love us and we love them. The people are good, but poor. Both men and women walk around in the same type of outfit, made of bird skins, without undershirts, like sticharions. Those who want to show off wear beaver coats. Their food is fish and all kinds of roots.

Notice my love for travelling; I'm quite happy with my lot.*

*The name of the author of this postscript is not indicated. It was probably written by Archimandrite Ioasaph.

No. 3

TO S. A. YANOVSKY*
of December 28, 1818

Your Honor,
Kind Sir

Simeon Ivanovich!

As it is the nature of noble souls to everywhere pour out their virtues, so you, not having met me and not knowing me at all except from what you have heard about me, and knowing my humble self little or not at all, have not disdained in your so well-disposed letter to pay me a visit, for which I have nothing with which to repay my obligations to you. But in order to express to you the way my feelings have been struck with amazement, I shall be so bold as to say in simple words that I offer my wholehearted gratitude, and consequent with your taking up your duties I offer my most respectful congratulations, and may God speed and keep safe the ship in which you sail.

As you have been so gracious as to open to me the path of boldness and audacity to you, it is now with the hope of your favorable inclination that I shall speak.

The Creator has given to our beloved fatherland this region like a newborn babe, still without strength or knowledge of any kind, nor sense, which demands not only protection, but also, because of its weak and tender age, support. But it is still not even possible to ask anyone to do this. And as the dependance of this people is a blessing of Holy Providence, given as it is into the hands, for an unknown period of time, of the Russian authorities here, and now given into your hands, for the sake of this I, the most humble servant of the local peoples and their nurse, stand before you with bloody tears and write my request: be

**Historical Sketch of the American Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission (Kadiak Mission 1794 – 1837)*, no author (Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 150-152.

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a father and protector to us! We, of course, know no eloquence, but we say, with the halting tongue of children, wipe away the tears of our defenseless orphans, soothe the sorrows of aching hearts, let us know what joy is like!

Most gracious sir, in this brief description you, with the subtlety of your intellect and your penetrating insight, may for yourself determine the full breadth and scope of the peoples' sorrows. We wait expectantly to see what kindness the Creator will place in your heart on behalf of the poor. We wait more, however, in the expectation from our new master of new kindness, new joys, and new life in this area. The silent sighs of gratitude and excited joyful exclamations will pierce through the clouds and fly to the throne of the Almighty King, wishing for you, our kind father and benefactor, success in everything, the continuation of days, and eternal blessedness.

And I, the last of the last, assure you that just as in the first instance, before you had seen my humble state, you were willing to show such favorable inclination, I hope that this will continue and so remain

Your Honor's,
My dear Sir's
obedient servant,
lowly Herman

28th December
1818

No. 4

TO ABBOT JONATHAN OF VALAAM* *of December 13, 1819*

Your Reverence, kind sir, respected Father Jonathan, with all Christ-loving brethren in the Lord, we wish you to rejoice.

To our great amazement your much-desired and beloved letter suddenly, beyond expectation, was as a bolt of lightning to us infirm ones. Removed by great distances and by a long time, in a dark night of impenetrable density and covered in oblivion, we were lit up beyond joy by this letter of November 8th, 1818, which arrived to us on November 10, 1819.

We find no means or possibility by which to show gratitude for your love, apart from this insignificant scribbling by our infirmity, by means of which we most assuredly give thanks for your first letter, and we ask if it would be possible on your behalf to vouchsafe us, as you have done now, with another written visitation, and to inform us how Father Nazarius went from Valaam to Sarov Monastery and for what need, whether he went of his own will, and also in what year and month he died; also, to inform us how many hieromonks and hierodeacons are in your Holy Valaam Monastery, and who they are, whether they are from former acquaintances or are already new ones.

We beg you, since you have vouchsafed to remember us and to visit us with your writing, to think of us and commemorate our unworthiness before Almighty God in your holy prayers. We are not storm-tossed on the waves of the sea, but in the midst of the alluring and much-agitated world we suffer and wander, according to the Apostolic words. Although we do not have that grace which the Apostles had, our combat is with the same fleshly principalities

**Historical Sketch of the American Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission (Kadiak Mission 1794 — 1837)*, no author (Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 190-194.

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and powers, with the rulers of this world and the darkness of this age, with the spirits of evil under heaven, who strive to capture all pilgrims bound for our heavenly homeland, and to hold and not loose, according to the word of St. Peter: "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour";* in such cases we are unutterably infirm and have need to seek help from your holy prayers.

Do not forget, our most beloved Fathers, do not forget to remember our lowliness before the Almighty Heavenly King. We beg this of all those in your holy Monastery.

About our country and place, and about the conditions we live in, we have the honor of informing you. Our land is known to you as America.

The main island is Kodiak, upon which there is the Company harbor and a church dedicated to Christ's Resurrection. Here a little house was given to us by the Company as soon as we arrived. The land is cold. Winters are occasionally not so cold, but are unpredictable, with snow and rain intermixed. The summer begins unevenly and is a cold one. From vegetable gardens there are only turnips, radishes and potatoes, and nothing else grows. Bread grain does not grow here and no one plants it, and only a handful of it is brought here from outside. There are wild vegetables and roots. The first, called *sarana*, is somewhat bitter, but is held in high esteem here. At first it is boiled; then they mix it with berries and call it *shiksha*. It is covered with whale oil and becomes, once accustomed to, our mighty food. The other, *makarsha*, is small and hard to gather. It is used raw and also boiled; it tastes somewhat like nuts, but there is not much of it here. Of berries there are raspberries [*malina*] — not the Russian kind, but a different variety. There are also cranberries and whortleberries [*moroshka*], and a very small amount of blueberries. There are enough for a year, but most of all there is this *shiksha*, which is gathered in rather big quantities and preserved for winter in whale oil. We also have *sarana* in Valaam, but we don't use it there, and we call it *voronitsa*.

There is fish here of various kinds and in great quantities. Also, there are whales, which are considered the best. Different sea animals are also used here. The people who are here and on other islands are called Aleuts. They are meek and quite poor; many speak Russian and are kindly disposed to us, and many are our friends. The mainland is some 40 versts away to the north. On the eastern side there are people known as the Kenai, the Chugoch, and Kolosh, and many of them are quite well known to us.

*Cf. I Peter 5:8

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As for ourselves, we are all Valaamites, three of whom are known to you; and we do not live all together. Father Athanasius lives 25 or more versts from the church on Afognak Island, which is separated from Kodiak by a narrow (*ouzinkie*) strait. Father Ioasaph, whom you mention as having been a novice with you then, is in the harbor at the church in that little house of which I made mention above, in order to take care of the library and sacristy, and on Sundays, together with certain boys from the school, to conduct church services. And I am located some 10 versts from the harbor, on a separate little island which is named New Valaam. Close by me there is quite a little river, in which during the summertime there is plenty of fish. I live alone; only two versts from me live three families of Americans. They, with great love, help me in my needs. Father Ioasaph often comes to visit me in little American leather boats which are locally called *baidarkas*. Together we have a garden, and everything we have in common. The Americans who live near me consider us as their relatives and help us in everything.

Concerning other of our brethren, I think that you have heard. In the first year after our arrival, two hieromonks, Father Macarius and Father Juvenal — the latter of whom had been a novice in our Monastery called James Theodorovich, formerly in the rank of officer, and had been tonsured in the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra and called Juvenal — went out on mission, Macarius to the Aleutian Islands of the Fox chain, from where he went to Russia, and Juvenal to the eastern shore of the mainland, at first to Chugach Bay. Having baptized people there, he [Juvenal] went northward along the coast, crossing the mountains to Kenai Bay. There he spent the winter, baptizing the local people. Going further north, he crossed to Aliaska, and there was killed by some people, though the hearsay is not consistent as to what manner and by precisely which people; and even unto now there is no precise information. After this, our Father Archimandrite was summoned to Russia in order to be made a bishop. Having accepted the consecration in Irkutsk, he was returning in the company of the above-mentioned Hieromonk Macarius; and they were already close to Kodiak, judging from the pieces of ship washed up, when the ship was wrecked in the sea, in an unknown place. And now only three of us remain alive, thanking Almighty God. In spite of all our melancholy circumstances and adventures, our life is joyful and peaceful. There is only one concern: how to reach the heavenly homeland; and for this we ask you and pray and implore our beloved holy Fathers: help us, the infirm ones, with your holy prayers — in hope of which I remain:

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Your Reverence's
most obedient servant
and diligent novice,
lowly Herman

P.S. Along with this I am asking you to bear witness to my sincere respect to Father Jacob, formerly John Alexeyevich, the brother of our monk Iosaph, although I did not have a chance to know him personally. Also, greet Gabriel Terencevich. I rejoice much over them and thank God.

lowly Herman

13th December
1819
America, Kodiak Island

No. 5

TO S. A. YANOVSKY*
of June 20, 1820

Your Honor

Gracious Sir

Simeon Ivanovich

I have had the honor to receive your kind, pleasant and gracious letter containing its interesting news, and the packet with it. I offer my heartfelt gratitude; I have nothing else with which to recompense you. I thank Almighty God for preserving your health and protecting you from all misadventure on land and on the sea, but even more for having in His incalculable ways shown you the true path by following which we may all achieve eternal joy, and by thus fulfilling the duty of our existence we shall fulfil the will of our Creator, who brought us into life for this sole purpose!

I had already been assured of your good disposition towards my humble self even before I met you personally. I hope to retain this affection in the future. Indeed out of your meekness and not disdaining my unworthiness you have shown more and more of your man-loving kindness towards my lowliness so I also become more daring before you hoping that you will not only not be angry at my simplicity and crudeness, but that you will most graciously pardon me. Without exalting myself to the rank of teacher, nonetheless, fulfilling my duty and obligation as an obedient servant for the benefit of my neighbor, I will speak my mind, founded on the commandments of Holy Scripture, to those who thirst and seek for their eternal heavenly homeland.

A true Christian is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the word of the Saviour Himself. He deigned to say: not the righteous have I come to call, but sinners to salvation; there is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over ninety

**Historical Sketch of the American Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission (Kadiak Mission 1794 — 1837)*, no author (Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 145-149.

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righteous ones. Likewise concerning the sinful woman who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: to one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. From these judgments a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith.

Sin, to one who loves God, is nothing other than an arrow from the enemy in battle. The true Christian is a warrior fighting his way through the regiments of the unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland. According to the word of the Apostle, our homeland is in heaven; and about the warrior he says: our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, [against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of wickedness under heaven (Eph. 6:12)].

The vain desires of this world separate us from our homeland; love of them and habit clothe our soul as if in a hideous garment. This is called by the Apostles the outward man. We, travelling on the journey of this life and calling on God to help us, ought to be divesting ourselves of this hideous garment and clothing ourselves in new desires, in a new love of the age to come, and thereby to receive knowledge of how near or how far we are from our heavenly homeland. But it is not possible to do this quickly; rather one must follow the example of sick people, who, wishing the desired health, do not leave off seeking means to cure themselves. I am not speaking very clearly for I am hurrying, for time does not otherwise permit. But I hope that you, with your sharpness of intellect, and your ardent desire of striving toward the heavenly homeland, may discover the path to Holy Truth, not only for yourself but for others also.

Now I shall talk about matters of another kind.

When you left Kodiak, either through God's wrath or His holy workings for our good, the epidemic continued for a while. It caused the death of many of the young women and left their children orphans. Amongst the dead were the godmother of Leonty Andreanovich and Anna Alexandrovna, the wife of Christopher the employee at the Church, but it did not touch my late daughter's five young children. To the glory of the holy mystery of God He has recently, through His unfathomable Providence, shown me something which in all my twenty-five years here on Kodiak I had never seen before. Just after last Pascha a young woman of no more than twenty who spoke good Russian and who was previously unknown to me and whom I had never seen, came to me and heard about how the Son of God was made flesh, and about eternal life and she was so filled with love for Jesus Christ that she would not leave

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

me, but she pleaded with me with great conviction, against my inclination and my love of solitude and in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties I mentioned, to accept her, and she has been living here now for more than a month and is not bored. I have observed this with great amazement, recalling the words of the Saviour that what is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed to babes. Seeing her other women are desirous to do the same. But the trouble is that I have not the strength to build a separate dwelling for them. There are also many male aspirants who would like to come but there is no room for them.

Jeremiah who lives on Katmai came to see me with his children, and with a toyon [native village chief] who apparently had made a complaint against Jeremiah to Epiphanov. But this toyon, who had previously been an interpreter with the Russians, told me himself that the complaint had been wrongly made in anger to Epiphanov about Jeremiah by the present toyon, and Jeremiah himself told me that, concerning the sea otters, he had given Ershov 680 pelts, and Ershov had given Epiphanov 300, and that he had for a great many years been a faithful servant to various baidarshchiks [a leader in native sea-mammal hunts], for which he had received a medal from Alexander Andreevich [Baranoff], and that there were now surplus otters against the company goods, and only Ershov was short, and where could he have put so many—it all seemed an obvious lie.

Please be so kind as to despatch my letter to Valaam whenever you are able.

Farewell, farewell, our kind benefactor, time does not allow me to write more. Forgive my poor writing, even it is carried out in conditions of great hardship, for my eyes almost refuse to serve me. Forgive me also that in return for your kindness and blessing I can pay nothing but gratitude from myself and my companion Ioasaph. We accept your gracious kindness not only with feeling but with surprise. It is with wholehearted gratitude that I remain

Thanking your Honor

Your obedient servant

lowly Herman

I offer my respects to your noble and kind lady, Anna Alexandrovna, and your dear little son Alexander Simeonovich.

lowly Herman

I also assure Kyril Timofeevich [Khlebnikov] of my respect.

June 20th

1820

New Valaam

No. 6

TO S. A. YANOVSKY*
of August 10, 1821

Your Honor,
Kind Sir,

Simeon Ivanovich,

Almighty God in His unfathomable ways has granted me the opportunity of making your acquaintance for a short time and seeing the way your soul is disposed, ardently fervent and virtuous as it is, to holy eternity, and to love of God and to a knowledge of the Scriptures, by which you may drive away all fog and darkness of ignorance and go by the straight path to the heavenly homeland. But I confess before you that I am guilty in that, at the time of your departure from America, the weather did not permit me to send to the harbor a prepared letter conveying to you my respects and my gratitude, an impress of which will forever remain in my heart.

During the spring of 1820 you sent me two books so that I could tell you my opinion of the author; but at that time I did not manage to look at them. But having read them later I saw that he, having flown high above the clouds in the pride of Western thinking, includes himself in the number of the prophets and thinks that through his high learning and calculations he can likewise write as the prophets wrote on the conditions of governments; wondrous and most wondrous indeed how pride blinds one! He says that his writings may not please everyone, that some may ridicule, and he does not see that he has ridiculed himself first of all; he thinks that he affirms the truth, but he quarrels with himself and with Holy Scripture. It is boring to speak more of him, but you can see from these few words my opinion of him; a person who may not know the truth solidly should by all means avoid such books.

**Historical Sketch of the American Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission (Kadiak Mission 1794 – 1837)*, no author (Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 167-168.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

I had the honor to receive your last letter dated 3rd May, 1821, and the attached package. They were delivered to me by Matthew Ivanovich [Muraviev] and I am deeply grateful for them.

There is not much I can say about conditions here in our America: the people are already weighed down with enough sorrow; and what the Creator has in store for them we do not know. My silence on the one hand seems to develop for the better, but on the other hand there are causes for the disturbance of this silence. But what the Providence of the Almighty will wish is not known. May it be according to His will.

Sending to you, kind sir, Simeon Ivanovich, and your kind wife Anna Alexandrovna together with Alexander Simeonovich, for all your kindness and attention, my heartfelt gratitude and fervent respect, I remain

Your Honor's,

My kind Sir's

obedient servant

lowly Herman

10th August

1821

New Valaam

No. 7

TO A. A. BARANOFF*
(Head of the Russian Colonies)
of 1809

Your Lordship, Alexander Andreevich:

May the Father of bountifulness and God Almighty, Who preserves the universe, preserve also your life and prosperity; to Him Alone should we give glory and thanksgiving forever.

Your terrible mischance forcibly awakens us to the thought of the misfortunes and dangers that surround us, from which God's Providence preserves us. How convincingly we are compelled to acknowledge our own infirmity and weakness and seek the Father's protection and almighty defense; to this we are brought by the Wisdom and Word of God, Who came down by the will of the Heavenly Father, under the veil of flesh like ours, woven by the power of God of the Most Pure Virgin for our salvation. He was a Man and deigned to teach us to pray that we be not led into temptation. And thus we are reminded from what Father we have our existence, and how we should seek our heavenly fatherland and our eternal inheritance.

In this letter I deem it needful to report to you the following: Your first letter, earlier, came with honey; and now I have received one with nuts, and likewise garlic and onion bulbs. I offer you my thanks. But the letter of request enclosed therein, for all my love toward orphans, obligates me beyond my powers. This is, of course, a deed of virtue, and with all my heart I would wish to be of service. But a characteristic tendency toward unconcernedness and a natural inclination to solitude constitute a

*P. A. Tikhmenev, *History of the Russian American Company*, (St. Petersburg, 1863). Also: *Russian American Messenger*, No. 2 (New York, N.Y.).

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

great obstacle to this, inasmuch as one who desires to be instructed in anything by immaterial things must absolutely flee this world of cares. Therefore it is quite impossible for me to fulfill that obligation, even though I should wish to.

Now I have the honor to report to you: We in Kodiak are peaceful and prospering. All are alive and well. Likewise in your house, Antipater Alexandrovich (Baranoff's son) is studying with the boys, but all of them have not been gathered together yet.

The "Neva" did not forget to bid farewell to us, but against its will the unfavorable weather compelled it to come back to us to spend the winter. And Leonty Andreanovich (Hagemeister, Captain of the "Neva"), as a sign of his love toward these regions, and to his unforgettable remembrance, had Christofor's son Dimity baptized — he was born October 26th — and was godparent together with Irene Alexandrovna (Baranoff's daughter) on November 8th.

A Kiltis man from the Mednov region was baptized on your names-day; you were made his godfather, and your name was given to him. I congratulate you on your new son. I beg you to take care of him and hold him dear and to be a loving father and benefactor to him and the inhabitants, one and all, of that region.

From Okhotsk we have had no ships and no news at all. Perhaps they are spending the winter in Unalaska? We don't know. And indeed, in spite of all my innate curiosity, I greatly cherish the quietness of the present time, when on holy days we gather somewhere and enjoy each other's company in peace and comfort, or leaf through some literature in our archives. And the time flies by, and it remains only to leave time to inspect the storerooms wherein our provisions for eternity are stored up, so that, the time having passed, we may not go hungry when the time of rejoicing shall come.

In the meantime, we have been occupied with various opinions regarding your circumstances. We heard rather bad rumors, and the whole summer, until we received reliable information, we were alarmed with uncertainties and gloom. Diverse rumors forced us to expect some sudden danger for ourselves as well. But thanks be to God! From the "Neva" we heard the news first about you, and then about the Albion voyagers. I am sorry about the failure of the settlement. Ivan Alexandrovich had inspired in us not a little love toward those places.

LETTERS

For the rest, I wish a joyous success to your good intentions. May your labors be seeds of heavenly fruits of patience unto eternity! May they be crowned by a crown of immortality! The which with all fervency I wish to Your Lordship.

1809

lowly Herman

I beg you not to be alarmed, but I have a small request. Christofo's mother must be in Sitka. She was married to Lisovsky, but we have heard that the husband has died. If she has not married again, could you be so kind as to send her back to Kodiak to her son?

No. 8

TO K. T. KHLEBNIKOV*
of December 28, 1818

To my most gracious Lord, Sir Khlebnikov

Most gracious Lord Cyril

(I do not know your patronymic, forgive me!)

I have received a book sent by you. I extend my gratitude. This kindness extended by you to my unworthiness is even more appreciated because in all my life here, from my own Russians I have seen much scorn and reproach and mockery, to which I have already become accustomed; and from such custom I think that in actual fact my lowliness is such.

You, however, not having seen me, not knowing me at all, to my great amazement touched me with such gentleness, for which I thank you indeed.

Your Merciful Lordship's
most obedient servant,
lowly Herman

P.S. Concerning the book, I would wish to speak much, but the hindrance of my eyes prevents me: even this little bit I write with great difficulty. Besides, there is no time. They just said that the ship will be leaving soon.

28th December,
1818

[On the same draft sheet is the following letter, also with no date or name of addressee]

**Russian American Messenger*, No. 17 (New York, N.Y., 1898), pp. 466-467.

No. 9

BELIEVED TO BE ADDRESSED TO YANOVSKY*

No date

Dear Sir,

I heard that the Lord God has blessed you with outward prosperity and partially even with abundance. But we, as you well know, are responsible for the care of church property consisting not merely of things belonging to the church, but also of other household things which are not our personal property but God's property placed in our care only for the poor. For this reason I ought to remind you concerning objects taken by you from us to use for the shortest time: dining-room silverware, tablecloths, napkins, knives and forks (some of which you sent from Unalaska).

Perhaps such a long period of time has covered your mind with forgetfulness? So as to avoid being careless as regards duty, albeit through forgetfulness in keeping that which belongs to the poor, you would not be subject to the wrath of God and would bypass this danger, if you would be so kind — if it is not too difficult — to return it, or at least substitute it with something else of equal value.

Your merciful Lordship's
obedient servant

Editor's note: Michael Vinokouroff believes this letter was written to Yanovsky around 1820, when the latter left Kodiak and later Sitka. Yanovsky allegedly took to Russia some silverware and did not return it to St. Herman. The Saint was later accused of hiding church property, a treasure of silver and gold; and the floor of his cell was broken up by searchers, as indicated in his *Prima Vita*.

**Russian American Messenger*, No. 17 (New York, N.Y., 1898), p. 467.

No. 10

BELIEVED TO BE ADDRESSED TO BARANOFF*

No date, no beginning

. . . The care of livestock together with haying takes almost the whole summer here. During the entire winter they hardly manage to have enough firewood cut and hauled (without any gain, they merely protect themselves from the cold). Even the building constructions, due to the damp climate, are not solid enough and are unstable. The long winter, as in this case and in others, binds hand and foot and in everything causes hindrances. The cold weather keeps the ships idle most of the winter in the northern places, not to mention all the details. Add to this the vastness of the continent, the timber industry, and the countless advantages of the southern regions. So we succeeded in influencing Leonty Andreanovich [Hagemeister], and he, with great enthusiasm, agreed to wait for you until April 10th, while before that he had unfailingly wanted to go in the middle of March to Kamchatka. But having changed his intention (to go to Kamchatka), he is waiting for you and, if such is your will, to go in his own ship to help our settlers there. Likewise, I tried to explain to our *promysblenniki* the futility of fleeing to what has been undertaken in California [Fort Ross] (by *promysblenniki*) compared to the great gain of those who will settle in these places and who will be faithful to our homeland. And many were enthusiastically assuring me of their faithfulness, especially the married ones, bringing forth their families as proofs, which, as they said, would be impossible to abandon.

And so we were expecting you with great anticipation. But it did not happen. So be the will of God!

Now we are sending you Anna Grigorievna with all [her?] children. May God grant that she reach you successfully and that you, in joy, see each

**Russian American Messenger*, No. 17 (New York, N.Y., 1898), pp. 467-469.

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other. I advised her to spend the winter here with us, thereby avoiding all danger (of bad winter weather and freezing), and to go in the spring. But she and Antipater did not agree (I regret greatly). I praise Anna Grigorievna highly. From many of her actions she seems to me to be quite smart, especially when upon her arrival, without anybody telling her, she herself asked that a thanksgiving Liturgy and Moleben be served, had confession and, together with all her household, received the Holy Mysteries. We were quite pleasantly surprised at her wise action.

[The following paragraph is actually struck out but is readable. We feel it should see light for historic reasons, as part of St. Herman's epistles:

But concerning Antipater Alexandrovich I cannot write to you anything. How he lived with us I know little. Before sending off this letter, while being in one tavern I heard that he, together with my Father Ioasaph, had used a lot of vodka. But it seemed to me that this was said with a motive (of envy). I did not know how to better the situation, fearing to evoke anger upon myself, since already, because of your kindness towards me, I am enduring hatred from others. But God be with them. I am not seeking anything for myself. This is their business, let them do what they want. I lay my hope upon God.]

We do not have a school at the harbor settlement. Ivan Kulikov was transferred to the office. I was not told a word about it. Last year he was asking me to take him in, but I could not dare to permit it without you. But now I ask you not to get angry with me. It was not my will. A certain part of the smaller school pupils are in Karluk under the supervision of Christopher Chumovitsky. One [boy] remained at the church and lives with us. To my amazement, given the maximum of liberty, the envy does not diminish. However, I beg you to look after [not abandon] this orphan.

Concerning Zosima Theodorovich Bazhenov: he mentioned some sort of instruction from you, unknown to me. He showed towards you plenty of good will and kindness. I thank you (although presently he is already no longer here in the harbor, I thank you very much).

You deigned to mention in the beginning of your letter about my inquiry concerning prisoners. I verified the releases [documents] which remained with me. But there was nothing in them. What is written in the white one — I cannot understand anything. Forgive me.

As for myself, I will venture to report that after this release I remained, by the mercy of God, alive, healthy and well, and expecting from you some other new communication. If you please, do satisfy [our] curiosity. But do not be displeased with us because we cannot repay you with the same. For we

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sat here stranded for a whole year as if in some kind of reclusion, and heard nothing from anybody.

As for Kodiak — there is nothing to write about. All are alive and well. But as to how they live, I think enough people write about that without me. Getting into others people's business would for me be immodest. I remain friends with all even if they chew me out. Because of that I will not fade out.

I most diligently wish you all the best.

Forgive me, forgive me, my most merciful Sir. Forgive!

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,
lowly Herman

No. 11

NO ADDRESSEE*

No date

It is not out of brazenness and audacity that I venture to address you, but out of fear of being silent. I am bashful to grieve you with our needs.

During your stay in Kodiak, it was pleasing to you to give out an order that we receive provisions on credit from the Company from Nicholai Petrovich. And after your departure Ivan Ivanovich refused to issue [them]. In spite of all our attempts to convince him, he stated that he does not dare lest they, with the arrival of the "Neva" last year, demand [provisions] for the sailors. He himself ordered for us to receive [provisions], but soon afterwards took [some] back, leaving for us a portion. But now he has hardly given any to us, with Ioasaph: 3 poods [approximately 50 lbs.] of tare and 2 of hardtack. However, I hear that you in Sitka have a sufficient amount of hardtack. Thus, would you please be so kind as to personally designate from your abundance, and dispatch with transportation from Sitka, some amount — whatever God will enlighten you with for a year's supply of provisions: hardtack and grain, and wine for church. For the lack of the latter we have Liturgies rarely, and soon there will be altogether nothing to serve with.

lowly Herman

**Russian American Messenger*, No. 17 (New York, N.Y., 1898), p. 469.

EPILOGUE TO THE LETTERS

Three Letters of St. Herman's Close Contemporaries

*I*N ORDER TO portray a cross section of the mind and soul of the monastic representatives of the Paisian revival spirit, we bring here three epistolary documents, of men personally known to St. Herman. The first:

FATHER THEOPHANES (Sokolov †1832), was his close companion before his Valaam days, at first in Sarov and then apparently in Sanaxar and with Elder Cleopas' community. The second document is from the pen of an outstanding writer of his time,

ELDER ZOSIMA (Verkhovsky †1833), who with his Elder Basiliscus originally came from Roslavl Forests to Konevits Monastery, to lead a hesychastic way of life, and who "was known on Valaam as a great elder" (see *Solovki Patericon*). The third is:

ELDER CLEOPAS' (†1778) rare, and evidently his only extant letter, which has come down to us and speaks so colorfully in the exact language of St. Herman.

No. 1

ELDER THEOPHANES OF THE NEW LAKE*

A Letter to the Nuns of Goritsky Convent

YOUR LIFE is called *angelic*: therefore it is necessary for it to correspond to its name, so that love for the Lord would be in you and there would be love among yourselves, that there would be no divisions, contradictions, envy, idle talk — but instead obedience and humbleness.

When we are in the state of unsubmission or disobedience or strife among ourselves, then the Lord God cannot be with us.

But when in a monastery a peaceful life is preserved, pleasing to the Lord, then the angels are present there.

It is my duty to tell you that tranquility, peace, and love among yourselves should be preserved. Any authority is from God. Therefore submit yourself with diligence and love: this is Godly work. In your submission may the Lord remember you; while we ourselves do not want to humble ourselves! In a monastery everyone should be as if they are one man, in such quietness. Let us love one another that in one mind we will confess Father, Son and Holy Spirit! If God will vouchsafe us to live in meekness and patience and love, then here there will be the Kingdom of God, heavenly tranquility.

Honor your mother superior not only externally, not by laws, but in heartfelt honor; this is what God has commanded. Perchance someone will imagine that she is not learned: Christ the Son of God chose for the Apostles fishermen, who did not study grammar!

If there should arise some need, come to the abbess, having prayed beforehand, so that the Lord will wisen her: then even an infant can be of some use. Pray for her, that the Lord would strengthen her.

For the sake of God live in harmony among yourselves, in unison, in love. To perish does not take long but to get saved is laborious.

* "Spiritual Instructions" by Archimandrite Theophanes, *Strannik* monthly, No. 3, 1862, Moscow.

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In a monastery everyone should be honored as a saint, and regard only oneself as a sinner — all should be regarded as Angels of God, and [the monastery] as an earthly heaven!

Father Cleopas used to say: "One ought to have one thought, that on earth there is only I and God, and imagine no one else. If there is only one man upon the earth then there is no one to fight with. There were such who accomplished this!"

Always in meekness and with quietness, should one talk to another, and with love, so that even glances will be well-pleasing. If your eye is dark, then your whole body will be dark also; if your eye is simple then your whole body will be light also. And if we have a bad inclination, then dark will be our thought, dark will be our deeds also.

One man can do a lot of good, just as one man is able to do a lot of evils also. A single man can evoke dissension, scatter the whole flock of Christ; while just one man who lives virtuously can bring all into peacefulness.

Archimandrite Theophanes
ca. 1823

No. 2

ELDER ZOSIMA VERKHOVSKY*

There is nothing in desert-living that would prevent or distract one from the divine services, or would hold one back from studying the Holy Scripture and nourishing oneself by going deeper into the contemplation of God. Instead there is every occasion, and each object forces one here, to reach out to God. Around is the deep forest; one's glance may reach without hindrance toward the pure heaven, as one desires to be vouchsafed to be translated to that blessedness. Then again, the voices of singing birds draw the soul together with them to offer a doxology to God the Creator.

In a word, every occasion, each object seen and heard turns one to contemplation on the omnipotence, the wisdom, the goodness of God — how He, to all of creation, gave its particular abundance, comfort and enjoyment. For if there were no full satisfaction in all the created things, then there would be

* *Sayings of Elder Schema-monk Zosima and Excerpts from His Writings, Including the Life of Monk and Desert-Dweller Basiliscus and Peter Michurin.* Moscow, 1863.

LETTERS

no satisfaction and none would rejoice. But instead, we see how trees and all plants grow, and thanks to enjoyment and satisfaction, become verdant, and even, for the abundance of satisfaction, bring forth fruits also. In the same way, one sees also how all beasts and animals and birds, and also all living things mutually admire each other, every kind of them, and enjoy themselves and reproduce. And from much enjoyment, each living kind, according to its nature, in its own voice raises praise of thanksgiving to God Who created it. From all this one can clearly see the good-heartedness of God's Providence, which looks after the whole creation. . . .

With such encouraging talks, enlightening each other, we learn how much the desert-dwelling life enhances non-acquisitiveness and passionlessness. Besides, it becomes more apparent that everything which occurs in this world, all passing, corrupt and fleeting things, and even we ourselves, are actually not dwellers of this world, but involuntarily feel in our souls absolute repulsion to all that is in this world. And we only regret that up until now we have not realized what a sweet-melancholy life and what a transcendence in mind is given to those who live for God in the desert. For often there arises a two-fold realization in the soul; at times it rejoices over its obtained tranquility, and in living undisturbed for God alone; while at other times it is sad not knowing whether our sins are forgiven. After such thoughts, we wonder about saints — is it not amazing that they would cry and weep over all the lovers of this world, seeing them so unconditionally and passionately attached to this world, with which they will inevitably have to part and abandon everything so insignificant. . . ?

Monk Zosima

1799[?]

No. 3

ELDER CLEOPAS OF VVEDENSK*

A Letter to Hieromonk Serapion, abbot of Ploshchansk Monastery

My beloved in Christ, honorable among hieromonks, Father Serapion!
Rejoice in the Lord!

* Fr. Serapion, to whom this letter was addressed, was subsequently abbot of Ploshchansk hermitage, while Cleopas was the superior of Vvedensky [Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple] Monastery in the Vladimir diocese.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

Health to you, my spiritual brother in Christ God!

Your letter was received by me, your Cleopas! I thank you for your good counsel; you are imploring me not to leave the monastery, and I too am begging you that you continue wandering in the forests. O brother, it is better to live with wild animals than with men who do not fear God. How much better, O my spiritual brother, it is to live in silence and quietness (*hesychia*), in the midst of which is the God of peace, rather than in the world, confusion and tumult, in the midst of which is the devil, the prince of this world. . . .

Yea, my spiritual brother in Christ, how mightily the enemy wars against those monks who in our present time flee to desolate places and live in silence. . . . Be it known to you, my brother, that in monasteries nowadays there are no more those who struggle to attain mastery over the passions, but instead to attain the diaconate, or to become hieromonks or superiors, or to get comfort and honor, and also those who labor to get salary and income. But what is better, my dear father, what is better? Disturbance for a little while, and then silence, or temptation at all hours and [worldly] tumult? Yea, it is better for a little while than for always.

O brother, I wish very much not to die the death of a common man, but to die either by a sword of a heathen or by some other violent way to end my temporal life. Oh, blessed would I be, if at this time I were on Mt. Athos or in the land of Volynia [Moldavia, etc.]! Then perhaps God would vouchsafe me to receive a martyr's crown. Christ died for us, brother! His blood, the Master's, is priceless, while our blood is that of slaves, not worthy even of water.

Therefore, O brother, live in the forest, continue living there for the sake of God, and God will help you. Do not take in these roaming marauders, there are few who come truly for the sake of God.

Your brother and spiritual friend in Christ God, who always prays for
you, your unworthy

Elder Cleopas

I bow down to you and ask your holy prayers.

Thus, my brother, pay heed to yourself; you see for yourself it's the end times. . .

The marauders are roaming, the marauders are roaming. . .

Cleopas

ca. 1770

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The above letter was published in Russian Monk, No. 7, for April, 1911, on p. 35, by a certain Hieromonk Theodosius (perhaps the Optina Skete superior who published similar texts from the Optina Scriptorium Collections: see the books of S. Nilus of 1903 - 1916) with appropriate Afterwords. This particular classic letter discovered by him has the following appendix, which we present here in its entirety as a proper afterthought to the collection of St. Herman's letters:

CONTEMPORY MONASTICISM

The above-cited letter of Elder Cleopas, as my beloved reader of *Russian Monk* can see for himself, was written almost a century and a half ago. Sorrow and melancholy wafts from these ancient lines of the Elder, who was gray-haired with wisdom. This severe ascetic is crushed by the state of his contemporary monasteries and their superiors, and deeply grieves that there were few struggles for salvation. And he states that it would be better to live in forests, in mountains and desert wildernesses, than to live with people who forget God.

That was still a long time ago, over a century and a half. Naturally, a question arises: what about now, are there monasteries now and how do people live in them? It is hard to answer: are we better than those monks who were contemporaries of Elder Cleopas, or have we grown worse? They will tell me: just as then there were those who struggled and were saved, so are there now also . . . Yes! But I will say something else. Glory be to God, today there are still those who pay heed to the work of their salvation. There are many monks who, consequently, will be saved. The world spits upon us, and continues to spit upon us — that's why it is the world — but we after all are not of this world. If we were of the world then it would love us. What are we? Infirmities are part of us — we deserve that. Remember, my dear brother, who was hated before us? And remembering, you cannot but be consoled. "If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

And thus let not your heart be troubled, sayeth the Lord.

But I return to the question posed above: are monks of our times better than the ones of Cleopas' time who lived 150 years ago? I will not say: better. It is said: let no flesh praise itself before God, and any praise is from God. But I must emphatically state that they are not worse.

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

A layman perhaps will be surprised. But listen to me first. During the time of Elder Cleopas there was indeed a sort of seeming decline in the monastic world, if one may say so. But after that, for almost a whole century there was such an outpouring of ascetic aspiration, such blossoming of the most idealistic monasticism everywhere [in Russia], that indeed one may say without exaggeration: it was at the height of its calling. I don't know how you feel, my dear brother, but I, when looking back and mentally moving from Kiev to Sarov, from Sarov to Valaam, Solovki, Optina, Glinsk Hermitage*, and other places, my spirit rejoices and is involuntarily compelled to labor, seeing a whole regiment of great Fathers who strove in fasting, *podvig*, and in possessing various gifts of the Holy Spirit, and some of who have been already glorified [canonized as saints] (like St. Seraphim of Sarov): Nazarius of Valaam; Leo, Macarius, Ambrose, and Archimandrite Moses of Optina; Iliodorus, Jonah, Abbot Philaret, Innocent, and Macarius of Glinsk; Parthenius of Kiev; Basil Kishkin, and a whole multitude of stars of secondary grandeur which sprinkled the heavens of the last century. These elders are Seraphims according to the expression of St. Isaac of Syria, having already lived long after Elder Cleopas and so close to us that their light is still shining and their great spirit hovers amidst us.

After this who will dare to utter that now monks are worse than those? Even now there are great ascetics, but they are not seen or known . . . And that is good . . . Nowadays this is the only way to save oneself so that no one would know. Otherwise they would have no place upon this earth.

And so, my dear brother, do not despair. Be zealous, be zealous for God; do not say that it is impossible to be saved, that there are no holy Fathers and that the time is not the same. There are Fathers, and the time is good for working out one's salvation. And those who say otherwise, as witnesses St. Symeon the New Theologian, are raising blasphemy against God, which will not be forgiven [according to the Scripture].

This is therefore what I can say as consolation to those who heed to their salvation.

I. Th., 1911

* Now we have in English a Glinsk Patericon including the latest fathers who died within the last decade: *Glinsk Patericon* (St. Xenia Skete ed., St. Herman Press, 1984, 339 pp. 12 ills.) by Monk Theodosius Clare. Such a complete Patericon for this monastery has not existed in any other language before the Revolution or afterwards.

APPENDIX

The Books of St. Herman's Library

[This document was written most likely by St. Herman's own hand. It is a listing of books of his own use, belonging officially to the Mission and under the protection of Platon Bushkovsky. It contains 235 volumes.]

Catalogue of Kodiak Spiritual Mission of books belonging to Father Herman, which are under the auspices of Platon Bushkovsky in 1825:

- 1 Bible of New Testament, large, in gold covering
- 1 Bible of New Testament, large, but in simple covering
- 6 volumes of the Bible in 4 parts
- 1 Homilies on the New Year, Part 1
- 1 Blagovestnik*
- 1 St. John Chrysostom's Instructive Homilies
- 1 The Rock of Faith [by Stephen Yavorsky], large size
- 1 same, small size
- 1 same, small size
- 1 The Search [?], large size
- 1 The Church Typicon
- 1 Homilies to Apostolic Epistles, Part 1
- 1 The Margarite
- 3 volumes of St. Basil the Great
- 3 volumes of the Dobrotoliubie [Philokalia]
- 1 Prashchitsa [?]
- 2 The Rudder, Parts 1 & 2

* Commentaries of Blessed Theophylact, based on St. John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Gospels.

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- 2 The Ladder of Divine Ascent by St. John Climacus
- 2 Brief Instructions
- 1 Condemnicon [anthology]
- 1 Commentary on the Book of Apocalypse
- 2 volumes of St. Ambrose of Milan
- 1 Ecclesiastical and Civic Duties
- 1 Talks on Repentance
- 1 St. Basil the Great: Talks on Morality
- 1 The Staff
- 1 The Incorruptible Saw
- 10 Sluzhebniki [priests' service books]
- 4 volumes of St. Dimitry of Rostov
- 1 Epistles of St. Ignatius the God-receiver
- 1 Commentary on the General Epistles
- 3 volumes of Homilies of St. Macarius [the Great]
- 2 Pastor's Duties [Pastoral Theology of George Konissky]
- 1 Desaderia
- 1 State Obligations
- 1 Spiritual Flowers
- 6 volumes of the Acts of Peter the Great
- 10 Additions to the Acts of Peter the Great
- 18 Economic Magazines
- 7 Natural Histories
- 1 Sulpicius Severus [on St. Martin of Tours]
- 1 Brief Guidebook
- 5 John Arndt [On True Christianity]
- 1 St. Symeon the New Theologian
- 1 cook book
- 1 Symphonia [Concordance]
- 1 The Truth of Religion
- 3 On True Christianity in 3 issues [St. Tikhon of Zadonsk]
- 1 Letters on Various Subjects
- 1 Anthology of Good Writings
- 1 Latin Grammar
- 1 Textbook on Geometry
- 5 Lexicons in Russian and French
- 2 Large Survey of the Earth
- 1 The Duty of a Christian

У Кашапова Кадьяжской Духовной
приказе французских Книжамъ Отца Еермана,
въ прикормотроми Иплатона Буриковскаго.

Въ 1825 году

Р.ч.

1. Библия новаго Завета Большая, въ золотомъ окладѣ.
1. ————— то же, ————— и то же, — — — — — проста, —————
6. Библия Четвертная, —————
1. похвальный въ колодезѣ 1-я часть, —————
1. Благовѣстникъ, —————
1. похвальный Слова Свя: Иосифа Маттея.

The original manuscript of the catalog of the books in St. Herman's
personal library, written in his own hand in 1825.

Vinokouroff Collection - Alaska State Library, Juneau, Alaska.

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- 1 Elective Experiments
- 1 On Agriculture
- 1 Small Vespers
- 2 Calendars with listing of civil dignitaries for 1803 & 1812
- 6 Calendars of various nationalities, French and German, large and small,
some of which are already old
- 1 Three Instructions
- 1 Condemning Exposure
- 2 The True Essence and Responsibility of Christian Faith
- 1 Commentary on the Psalter
- 1 Orthodox Confession, Part I
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Platon Bushkovsky

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