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ST. ANDREW AND THE MIRACULOUS ISLE OF VALAAM

by St. Ignaty Brianchaninov

The 19th-century writer and ascetic, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov (+1867), one of Russia's most respected and esteemed theologians, visited Valaam Monastery in 1846 and later wrote about the island, asserting his own conviction of St. Andrew's early presence. Following is an excerpt from the Russian original, now in the archives of New Valaamo Monastery in Finland.

T*heir sound has gone forth unto all the earth and their words to the ends of the world.*" This is what Scripture witnesses about the apostles' journeys. Their work does not belong to just one people but to all mankind; their care, the love of their hearts was not attracted by higher education, an advanced civil system, nor earthly power, but by the trouble that fallen man found himself in, whether he be Scythian or Barbarian, Greek or Jewish. Why then could not Holy Apostle Andrew have come to our forefathers, the Slavs and their Scandinavian neighbors? Why could he not have visited a place blessed for people to worship at, and planted there the true knowledge of God and true worship? Why can't we admit that God Himself inspired this lofty, holy intention in the apostle and gave him the strength to fulfill it. A wild, unknown, remote land and a difficult journey are not reason strong enough to reject the tradition. Only a short while after the apostolic era huge armies walked along these roads, so why could not the apostle have also walked here, led by the hand of God and by his own apostolic zeal?

We also have a tradition, not so distant, but an exact and purely historical one: monastic life on Valaam and Eastern Christianity began to flourish in that land much earlier and with greater vigour than a traveler might think who came there for a short and superficial sojourn. One has to look closely, to spare some time to listen carefully to the accounts of both Valaam monks and local people in order to single out those things worth inscribing on the tablets of history... ✦

All photos courtesy Monk Savvaty, www.foto.orthodoxy.ru.



