
The present study of Erik Sidenvall (Honorary Lecturer in Church History at Lund University) offers a very valuable and interesting introduction to the China and Mongolia mission undertaken by Protestant missionaries from Sweden covering the last period of Imperial China and the first years of the Republic (c. 1890 - c. 1914).

The *Introduction* (pp.1-21) and the first chapter titled *The Swedish Missionary Revival Context* (pp. 23-47) elaborate on the background and growth of the Swedish missionary movements since the first half of the nineteenth century. It is impressive to observe how the sense of missionary obligation which had sprung up in diverse evangelical groups in the US and in England converged to inspire and to encourage the same seedlings in Sweden which, by the growing emigration movement to America, had already become wide open to the trends in the English speaking countries. The first inspiration, the author points out, came from the Moravians who, in spite of the tragic events in the course of their history, had developed a strong feeling for the missionary calling of the Christians. In the context of this phenomenal emergence of missionary awareness in Sweden, we meet with all the highlights of the spiritual reawakening in the evangelical communities in Europe and the US: John Wesley and the Methodist inspiration of the diverse “Holiness Movements”; the pre-pentecostal awakenings with the experience of a new life in the Spirit; Hudson Taylor, the founder of the “China Inland Mission”; the impetus of the famous English “Cambridge Seven” (1885) who were to join Hudson Taylor’s “China Inland Mission”; H. Taylor's resounding call for the sending of 1,000 new missionaries to China during the 1890 Shanghai Missionary Conference; the American “Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions”, fruit of the summer student conference at Northfield (Massachusetts, 1886), led by the powerful evangelist Dwight Moody, which made John R. Mott become one of the 100 young men who pledged to devote themselves to the foreign mission, with the slogan “The evangelization of the world in this generation!” (John R. Mott became one of the most influential evangelists, helped to organize the great mission conferences, was called “father of the ecumenical movement” and “father of the young people of the world”, and in 1946 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize); the “Laymen's Mission Movement”; the enthusiastic Ecumenical Conference of New York in 1900, and the World Mission Conference of Edinburgh, 1910. Fruit of such spiritual awakenings and the experience of a new-born Christianity, encouraged by the encounter with missionary movements in the evangelical world elsewhere, was the founding of missionary groupings/alliances in the Swedish communities which soon started to spring up and to send missionaries to China.

In Chapter One, III (pp. 40-46), the author sums up the common traits which characterized the early Swedish missionaries: “These Christian workers believed in the alliance of all true (Protestant) Christians. Denominational boundaries were considered to be of little importance.... Their ideal was a pan-Protestant alliance of true Christians within which a degree of variance was permitted.... A pre-millenarian understanding of Christian eschatology and a fervent expectation that the end was near fuelled their missionary zeal. To some of them, the anticipation of the imminent return of Christ turned out to be a all-consuming preoccupation.... Fundamental to the ideal of a Christian alliance was the notion that it should be composed of those who had been 'born again'... Conversion involved both a recognition of human depravity and a acceptance of the believer's total dependence upon the sacrifice of Christ for his/her salvation.... At least during the first years of their work, cultural differences were not considered; the Evangelical message of sin and redemption was simply considered to be the classic and unchanging Christian message.... This message created a great deal of confusion among their Chinese audiences, and a great deal of impatience vis-à-vis Chinese codes of civility and a general curiosity of foreign customs and ways of living....” “Their religious outlook can be said to reflect the concerns prominent in Holiness circles. Apart from their interest in apocalyptic speculation, connection can easily be established by examining their views...
on Divine healing..... Belief that human health could be restored through Divine intervention or that pre-emptive medicine, such as vaccinations, was unnecessary for the true believer.... A majority of Swedish missionaries working in China towards the end of the nineteenth century appear to have regarded the use of medical aids as incompatible with Christian healing practices (such as a prayers and anointment with oils)

Unlike other groups of “Holiness” movements, which postulated upon conversion a ‘second blessing’, often identified with 'speaking in tongues', this Swedish group under the inspiration of Moody and Fredrick Franson (1852-1908, the organizer of the early Swedish missionaries) did not talk about an entire and sudden sanctification after first conversion but understood the second experience of the Spirit as a “normal walk or growth in grace, not as some new experience or some new status.” For them “the idea of a spiritual empowerment... for Christian service is a central and fundamental motivating belief....., every born-again Christian was called to service and divinely endowed to fulfill this task.” The egalitarianism hidden in the concept of divine empowerment could be used to justify the employment of rather lowly educated people in the work of evangelization, turning upside-down the social hierarchies. “It was not those with connections, education and a refined taste who were the ones best suited to fulfill the Lord’s task. Christian service was best carried out by those of little social significance, who, through their often troubled lives, had come to realise that they needed to rely solely on God’s grace.... People of ‘good -birth’ and a solid education were not always welcomed among these men and women.” As the missionaries themselves had not to give great regard to their own social standing, so they should in their work in the first place address not the elites, but those of little significance, their social equals in China.... All the previous failures of Protestant missions were due to the aspiration to influence the upper crust of Chinese society”.

On the background of the spiritual fermentation of the time, the main four chapters of the book (pp. 47-135) expand on the missionary adventure of four exponents of the early Swedish missionary engagement in China and Mongolia: Chapter Two - A Public Missionary and a Domestic Man - Olof Bingmark, 1875-1900; Chapter Three - Extending a Male Private Sphere -Otto Öberg, 1869-1817; Chapter Four - The Making of a Domestic Adventurer - Frans August Larson, 1870-1957; Chapter Five - Education and the Problem of Missionary Self-Making - Alfred Fagerholm, 1871-1923. All of them had been enlisted for the China mission by the Swedish-American Evangelist Fredrick Franson (1852-1908), who after his conversion and rebirth, had become an indefatigable promoter and organizer of the Swedish mission engagement. All of them shared the above described common characteristics.

One certainly cannot but admire the faith of these missionaries, men and women with their children, living and proposing the gospel among people proud of their ancient culture, steeped in their religious and philosophical world view, certainly not anxiously waiting for another message. The violent atmosphere of the Boxer uprising, just around the time they threw themselves into their mission, was a shrieking signal for the opposition how their message and their way of proposing it was being received by the Chinese addressees: twenty-eight Swedish missionaries in all paid for their vocation with their blood, among them Olaf Bingmark at the age of 25 years, with his young wife and two children.

The last chapter Masculinising Missions -- Consequences and Departures and the Conclusion (pp. 137-163) reflect on the specific theme of the book The Making of Manhood among Swedish Missionaries in China and Mongolia. Here we are before a specifically Protestant theme which in this way does not concern the Catholic missionaries who to the greatest extent were/are men and women belonging to religious congregations consecrated by the vow of celibacy and living their missionary vocation under the guidance of the ecclesiastic hierarchy. For our Protestant missionaries, exemplified by the four Swedish heroes, domesticity, Christian marriage, Christian family life and home were integral parts of their mission, where the Christian message was to be seen in the example of their lives and appreciated by the “heathen world”, a certainly very laudable aspect, which, however, added another ponderous demand on the missionaries. These missionaries,
coming practically all from lower rural or urban middle-class people, sons and daughters mostly of rural and urban working class parents, mostly without higher education, shared with their class peers a humble aspiration of social advancement. Through the experience of Christian rebirth, they had become members of another class of persons who pursued other values in life. Apart from the values of domestic life, it was faith in Jesus and divine empowerment which were considered to be the only necessary equipment and justification for their missionary work.

The well known changes in social life and values towards the end of the nineteenth century which became predominant and universally accepted in the twentieth century became a serious challenge for the values of these humble missionaries. Education became more and more available to all classes, and with that education became the key for social advancement; education became the prerequisite for any position of leadership. Modes of business and management were developed in scientific ways. The abiding enthusiasm for the work of evangelization kept in step with the trends and developments of the time which consequently brought about radical changes in outlook and practice of the mission work. With faith in God and understanding of the ways of sanctification, education became the basic condition for being taken in consideration as missionary. In view of the enormous task of evangelization, well prepared people, with broad views and gifts of leadership, were invited to step into the missionary workforce. At the Student Volunteer gathering in Liverpool in 1896, the delegates were told, “Long ago it used to be thought that if a man was not good enough for the home ministry he might be sent out as a missionary. Thank God that day has gone, and the question to-day is not ‘Is he good enough to stay home?’ but ‘Is he good enough to go out?’“ With regard to the problem of missionary finance, a chronic pain for all organizers and many missionaries, businessmen increasingly vocal within the missionary movement insisted that the principles of economic rationality should penetrate every aspect of the missionary world. “Missions need to be conducted on business principles” become an oft repeated slogan.

By the time of the Great War, the new principles had gained universal acceptance. The early type of missionaries had to undergo profound adaptation in outlook and performance. Their enthusiasm and generosity are living on in the activity of the numerous Pentecostal missionaries.

The Appendix lists the names of some fifty male and female missionaries who in the late 1890s and early 1900s went to China and Mongolia. The author indicates the years and places of birth, the occupation of their fathers (if known), the occupation of the missionaries prior to their engagement for China, the year of their going to the mission and the abbreviated names of their sending missionary organizations, the year of their marriage and names of the partners, information about emigration occurring within the family and comments mainly on evangelistic courses taken, mostly in Sweden in 1892.

Not only the saga of individual persons and their work, as described in the pages of Eric Sidenvall's study, but also the investigation into the ideological, theological and sociological context is inspiring reading. Rich bibliographical information in the footnotes and the appendix is a precious gift to the missiological study, and at the same time a very welcome contribution to the ecumenical must of the churches. - Wilhelm K. Müller, SVD.