Christian Masculinity

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It is one of the overarching hypotheses of the Lund-based research project, of which some findings are given here, that a ‘masculinisation’ was an integral part of what the German historian Olaf Blaschke has termed a ‘second confessional age’. In this anthology we find examples of how the renewed Christian enthusiasm of the nineteenth century coincided with conscious attempts to make Christianity more manly, sometimes even muscular. Yet, this was not the only trend that can be observed at this time; to create a Christian ‘hyper-masculinity’ was not always seen as necessary by those who struggled for a Christian extension amidst the manifold troubles that beset the churches during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Werner, among others, paints the contours of a Catholic manliness rooted in ideals of humility and of obedience - virtues, once of universal Christian significance, but increasingly regarded as troublesome in some circles when used as descriptions of ideal manhood towards the end of the nineteenth century. In her article Werner also mentions that there were similarities between the Catholics of her study and those men drawn to evangelical (Protestant) Christianity. She points out, that in spite of their mutual antagonism, these two groups were united in their positive appraisal of the expression of male religious emotions - a phenomenon regarded as anathema in a hegemonic, stiff-upper-lip, vision of true manhood. Though we can find many examples of how evangelicals praised, and even institutionalised the necessity of religious emotions (above all in their vision of ‘conversion’ - the experience of becoming a born-again Christian), they were radically different from monastic Catholic men in their fundamental commitment to the bourgeois ideal of ‘domestic manhood’.

1 See the chapters of Blaschke, Prestjan and Tjeder in this volume.
2 See Olsen, “Daddy’s Come Home”; Tosh, A Man’s Place.
In spite of the fundamental importance of the ‘home’, and of the specific roles of men and women, both in the doctrine of evangelicals and in their mental universe, international evangelicalism remained highly complex and many times contradictory in nature, even when it came to questions of gender. It is today well known that within the evangelical milieu we can find early expressions of a Christian feminism, and that ‘transgressions’ of the ideology of ‘separate spheres’ were frequently to be found; we also know that the seemingly subdued domestic man lived side-by-side with an evangelical machismo which was (and still is) built on physical prowess, patriarchy and a hard-line Protestant orthodoxy. If we look at the evangelical world from a distinctly social perspective, it is equally filled with ambiguities. Even though many scholars have found evangelical religiosity to be the spiritual expression of the middle-class; it is still well known that above all radical evangelical groups - associated above all with the radical phalanx of the Holiness Movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century - came to attract, and to provide a forum for, proletarian men and women. If we connect social and gender history (as I believe we should) we may therefore come to the conclusion that the evangelical milieu, and the fields of interaction it provided, became an interface where differing conceptions of manhood came to meet and intermingle at a time when Western society in general became increasingly stratified. Regrettably, this encounter, and its possible outcomes, has been given little scholarly attention.

In this essay I will examine how evangelical activism could be a road to the appropriation of a middle-class ideal of manhood. My focus will be placed on one working-class man, Alfred Fagerholm, drawn to evangelical religion during the late 1880s and subsequently volunteered for missionary work in China, came to understand his formation of adult manhood and how this gender identity came to influence his missionary life. Themes such as social advance, the appropriation of middle-class’ ideals and a fatherly domesticity can be found with this man, but hidden beneath these themes we still can find traces of values and ideals circulated in his original social setting. Masculinity as such seldom emerges in the available studies on missions. Most scholars approaching the question of the construction of masculinity among missionaries, the question of the influence of a muscular Christianity has been of paramount importance.

The most important source to this chapter is Fagerholm’s manuscript ‘Autobiography’. This document was composed sometime before the commencement of

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3 Dayton and Dayton, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy”; Zollinger Giele, Two Paths to Women’s Equality; Melder, Beginnings of Sisterhood; Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism.
4 See for example Lemberts Bendroth, Fundamentalism and Gender, 54-127; Kirkley, “Is it Manly to Be a Christian?”.
5 Phrased most provocatively in a classical Marxist way in Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution.
6 For further discussion, see my recent book, The Making of Manhood Amongst Swedish Missionaries in China and Mongolia, ch. 5.
7 Cf. Stanley, “Hunting for Souls”. A different approach, however, has recently been offered by Semple, “Missionary Manhood”.

the Great War (possibly in 1913), written when Fagerholm was in his early forties.\textsuperscript{8} Like most other evangelical autobiographies this text was written as an account of a spiritual journey where the experience of Divine grace at conversion and a subsequent calling to become a missionary are important landmarks. As a description of missionary activities and personal life this account leaves much to be desired; yet, as a narration of the formation of a male identity it remains of much use. This document has been supplanted by a lesser number of letters and reports written by Fagerholm and his wife.

**GOING TO CHINA**

Alfred Fagerholm was born in 1871 in the small town of Högsby on the Swedish mainland. In spite of its modest size, Högsby prospered by being the centre of a rich and developed agricultural region in Southern Sweden. At the time of Alfred’s birth, his father worked as one of the local master blacksmiths. Since the least affluent segments of rural Swedish society hardly ever produced large batches of children at this time, it is safe to assume that the all in all ten children that were born into this family, of which Alfred was the fourth, are testimonies to a modest respectability. A series of moves, the first of which took place in 1879, seem to suggest that the family economy experienced some kind of setback in the latter half of the 1870s. Alfred later accredited this to ‘speculations’ done by his father.\textsuperscript{9} For the Fagerholm children this meant that hopes for further education did not materialise at this time. Alfred recorded that he started working at the age of twelve at his father’s workshop, “already before his confirmation”\textsuperscript{10} - a rite that was generally viewed as an initiation into adulthood at this time.

When he describes the religion of his parental home he conforms to yet another evangelical pattern - whatever piety existed in the household of his birth, this was due to the influence of his angelic mother who struggled to teach her children religion and morality. His father on the other hand was an unruly character that influenced his offspring in quite another direction. His mother was described as ‘devout’. She was the one who taught him “to lift his eyes to God”, to say grace before every meal and to conclude each day with a prayer. In Alfred’s reminiscences her pious guidance was balanced and undermined by his father. He recalled that his “father’s influence in the home was of a completely worldly nature and quite frequently he sacrificed his hard-earned money on the altar of Backhoes”. His fathers smithy was described as a place of “drunkenness, swearing and indecent language”, an environment that corrupted the young man and led him away from God. Yet, if the text is read carefully, it becomes obvious that his father should not be regarded as a completely secular figure. Obviously, there was a clash between the middle-class evangelicalism Alfred

\textsuperscript{8} Since this document suddenly comes to a stop, after having gradually been transformed to resemble diary notices, in 1913, it seems reasonable to assume that it was composed about that time.

\textsuperscript{9} Stockholm, Missionskyrkans arkiv, MS Alfred Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar (autobiographical notices), 3 (henceforth Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar).

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 3.
later came to espouse and the traditional artisan culture of his father. But this conflict had also a religious dimension. Alfred mentions that his father demanded that those children who had excused themselves from worship should instead listen to a sermon that was read aloud at home (presumably by the male head of household). At the time he composed his autobiography he still remembered how he, as a boy, had been with his father to the town church to listen to Peter Fjellstedt (1802-1881), former missionary to India and at that time the most celebrated missionary protagonist in Sweden. It is also evident that the family owned not only a hymnal and a Bible, but also religious literature of an old-fashioned pietistic flavour. It is not unreasonable to assume that his father conformed to a ‘high church’ Lutheranism that did not bother so much with such niceties as teetotalism but emphasised the need to conform to the ordinances of the National Church. Together with a secular socialism, it was exactly this kind of sentiment that many Swedish evangelicals tried to combat; Alfred’s evaluation of his father’s religion owed at least a bit to the vitriol produced by this clash.

In the descriptions that Alfred offers of the religious conditions of his home and of the county in which he first lived there are certain features missing: from other sources we know that this was a region from which a number of both male and female evangelists and missionaries were recruited. Prominent Swedish female Holiness preacher Nelly Hall (1848-1916) had visited Högsby at least twice before Alfred left his home. This young blacksmith may not have been included among those who flocked at the local mission hall to listen to this celebrated revivalist preacher. But his exclusion may also have been due to the fact that Nelly Hall had become a rather suspicious character to Swedish revivalist in the early 1910s due to her association with Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. We need therefore not be surprised that she is left out of this account. What is more startling is his failure to mention that two of his sisters, Hilda and Paulina Fagerholm, whom he mentions as born-again Christians, had been inspired by Hall and worked themselves as lay evangelists. Alfred’s failure to mention these activities on the part of his sisters, of which he must have been aware, is intriguing. Are their activities simply seen as lacking in relevance? Or can this lacuna be interpreted as a conscious attempt to keep ‘irregular’ female activities out of sight by a man of quasi-clerical stature?

At the age of seventeen Alfred left home for the first time in search of work elsewhere. At that time his brothers had grown old enough to be able to take his place at the family workshop. He recalled that his mother tried to convince him to take a Bible with him, “but he did not find such company appropriate for a young man who wanted to taste what the world had to offer”. A suitable place of work was found at a tile-works at Eskilstuna, an expanding industrial city in Central Sweden, south of Lake Mälaren; Alfred soon exchanged this job for a new position with a local blacksmith at Hällby, a village on the outskirts of Eskilstuna. This move may have been much more
important for his religious development than he later were able to recall or willing to acknowledge. His new employer, August Bergman, was a Baptist and it was probably he who persuaded his apprentice to start visiting the nearby Baptist chapel. As is the case in most evangelical autobiographies, the circumstances surrounding his conversion experience is recorded in great detail. Alfred recalled that he was present at the local chapel on 4 January 1892 to hear John Walborg preach, at that time a student at the Baptist seminary in Stockholm. This sermon touched him deeply and Alfred “sank down in remorse under a flood of tears”. Assisted by the preacher, he “called upon God to forgive his sin” and found that “the peace of forgiveness was beginning to flow into the heart of the young man”.\textsuperscript{16} If Alfred’s narrative is read carefully, we realise that this episode was but the final stop on a much longer religious journey. For some time he seems to have been drawn to revivalist Christianity, but this profound experience intensified and deepened his religiosity. He mentions that he now started to live a rigorous devotional life and that he paid frequent visits to several local evangelical congregations. Among these he appears to have found the Salvation Army particularly attractive: “In their testimonies and holiness meetings he found much that appealed to his tender heart. Their zeal for the salvation of others and their way to attend to the needs of those deepest fallen in sin seemed attractive to the recently converted young man, who was burning with a sanctified desire to deepen in holiness and to do something for the salvation of others.”\textsuperscript{17}

Sometime during the spring of 1892, Alfred enrolled as a soldier in this organisation. His evangelising zeal and youthful enthusiasm probably made him an attentive listener when Fredrik Franson (1852-1908), Swedish-American extraordinaire who toured Scandinavia and the Continent with a revivalist message inspired by Dwight L. Moody during the 1880s and 1890s, appeared at Eskilstuna in late August or early September 1892. Franson’s aim was to convince young men and women to take part in the Bible course he was about to offer in Stockholm, and ultimately to recruit new missionaries for the north China venture recently launched by the New York-based International Missionary Alliance.\textsuperscript{18}

Alfred vividly describes a burning speech on the urgent need of the Chinese and the responsibility of every Christian to listen to the missionary call. Franson summoned those “young men and women who had thought of the heathen and who had felt the call of God, to come forward for continued discussions after the congregation had been dismissed”.\textsuperscript{19} Alfred remembered that he rather hesitantly stayed with this group who continued in discussion until late at night. After a few days of hesitation the decision had been made: he was to leave his work at Eskilstuna to join the other aspiring students who gathered in Stockholm hoping for a future on the mission field. The section in which Alfred describes this short, but fateful, period in his life is sadly missing. All we know is that Alfred, after a few weeks’ intense train-

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{18} Hereafter IMA; in 1897 this agency was re-organised as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, hereafter C&MA.
\textsuperscript{19} Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 8.
ing, was included among those who were seen as fit for missionary work. With pride he recalls that out of all the candidates that he had known from his Eskilstuna days, only two remained. Together with several others he left Sweden for Britain in January 1893. After a few weeks English-language training he was on board the steamer bound for China.

One may have guessed that Franson’s heated missionary enthusiasm should have bore the brunt of the burden for the troubles that lay ahead of this company of young men and women. Instead, transformed by Alfred’s imagination, this celebrated Swedish-American evangelist becomes a mere agent, sent out only to fulfil the wishes of the IMA. It was their defective ideas concerning missionary training and equipment, and not Franson’s well-meaning enthusiasm, which was the source of the ultimate failure of this mission. In reality, Franson’s missionary radicalism by far surpassed that of his US backers. To be absolutely fair to the agencies brought to life by A. B. Simpson, it has to be pointed out that they too realised the need to give missionary workers at least a rudimentary training. Already in 1883, Simpson had established the New York Missionary Training Institute (now Nyack College), the first of the numerous Bible Schools that were to appear in the US during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, to equip those who were sent to preach “a complete saviour and a full Gospel”. To Alfred, however, the IMA did not care much for any kind of education but was merely on the look-out for candidates “who were not pampered, but who, in addition to being God-fearing, were in possession of physical strength so that they can endure the hardships of a missionary life”. For him such physical primitivism and mental simplicity were never sufficient qualifications, neither for a missionary, nor for a true man.

DISAPPOINTMENT OF MISSIONS

Unlike several others enrolled in this missionary undertaking, Fagerholm produced an account in which his missionary life in China during the 1890s was seen as, at the same time, absurd, adventurous, tragic and fruitless. These men were in fact fellow travellers for more than half a decade, yet it is as if they were describing completely different experiences. In Alfred’s reminiscences, after a pleasant journey on board the Norddeutscher, a long and arduous path to inland China takes its beginning. With a morbid attention to detail Alfred records the gruesome realities of travel in China and how they covered long distances on foot because their superintendent was an “indefatigable pedestrian” who wanted to save the mission’s resources. He also recalled that there was an outbreak of smallpox among the missionaries due to their

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20 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 8-10.
21 It should be noted however that Franson had issued a particular call to the educated to join this China venture. See Trons Segrar, August 1892, 254.
22 Brereton, Training God’s Army. Quote taken from a contemporary report on the courses given at this institution, see Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly, 1 May 1895.
23 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 8.
24 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 15.
being forced to live at a miserable guesthouse in Beijing. Alfred consequently arrived in Baotou, where he was about to start his language training, down-spirited and with chafed feet, still weakened from the disease he had contracted in the Chinese metropolis. Once settled, their leader’s fervent belief in the imminent return of Christ resulted in inadequate language training. The study of the written language was deemed unnecessary, they were just to learn to speak Chinese as quickly as possible in order to “teach the masses who had not heard of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus”. Alfred describes how, after only six weeks of training, the recently arrived missionaries were sent out to practise their skills as itinerant preachers. Accompanied by a little band of native ‘helpers’ they were to “empty all their theoretical knowledge of the language in front of a staring street crowd”.

Alfred evidently, and far from surprisingly, is critical of this method. In one of the few letters, written in the 1890s, that has survived, he mentions that without knowledge of the written language and the Chinese characters, any Christian enterprise will become “a tourist mission”. In his reminiscences he points out that such a disregard of preparations will undo the founding of a permanent Christian settlement. What appears to have been more troublesome to Alfred, and probably an even greater source of discontent, was his failure to secure placement at a permanent missionary station from which he could operate. His autobiography mentions repeated and unsuccessful attempts to rent a house for this purpose in several villages in Shanxi province. Alfred was forced to live a peripatetic existence as an itinerant evangelist with only brief sojourns at the stations of his colleagues. He appears to have become a kind of helper who performed the duties other missionaries were unable, or unwilling, to fulfil. For example, he was commissioned to assist and guide Fredrik Franson when he visited the Chinese mission during 1895. Even though Fagerholm tried to be fair and glories in the memory of Franson as a man of prayer, one cannot escape to observe that Franson is here portrayed as a rather ridiculous character who showed a great deal of squeamishness, and lack of good sense, when encountering the realities of Chinese life. At the time of writing it is evident that such a task appeared to Fagerholm as yet another distraction that tore him away from studies and real missionary duties.

A large part of this section of his autobiographical notes is filled with narrations of his rather adventurous journeys, most of which took him to still uncharted nearby desert areas. Alfred was in all likelihood writing at the time the reputation of the celebrated Swedish explorer Sven (von) Hedin (1865-1952) had reached its apogee, both nationally and internationally. Fagerholm was back in China when this noted explorer was triumphantly received in Stockholm in 1909, but he cannot have

26 Ibid., 16.
27 Fagerholm papers: Fagerholm to Eskilstuna missionsförening n.d. [1895?] (intended to be included in Fagerholm’s autobiography).
28 Ibid.
29 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 16.
30 Ibid., 19-22.
31 The longest, and best, of these is the description of his spectacular escape from the Boxers in 1900, in Ibid., 30-42.
been unaware of the immense interest with which Sweden received the stories of the adventures of one of its now most illustrious sons. In his autobiography, Alfred is not only targeting a religious readership that desired to come close to the life of a missionary, but also a more general public that had developed a taste for reading first hand accounts of adventurous lives. Such a move could have provided Fagerholm with an opportunity to claim the same kind of colonial hyper-masculinity others so willingly espoused at this time. Yet, he failed to do so. As we are about to see, Fagerholm’s own ambitions and his ideal of true manhood drove him in a completely different direction. What to other men would have seemed like an investment in true masculinity was for Fagerholm just an unwanted obstacle. For all his willingness to write adventure stories, he cannot disguise his immense dislike of this peripatetic existence. Even worse, at hindsight he had come to regard such a missionary life as lacking in significance, not yielding the rewards that could have been harvested if he had been living under more orderly conditions. Summing up his first five years in China he came to the conclusion:

My work had hitherto been like ‘throwing one’s bread in the lake’ and to ‘sowing beside all waters’. I had crossed rather large parts of the provinces of Shiti [Hubei], Shanxi [Shanxi] and Kansuh [Gansu]. I had ventured to preach, to talk to the people, to sell Bibles and other Christian books, though much of my time was spent travelling. My work had defects, but it was the Word of God that I had sown amongst the hoards of heathens whom I encountered. … To me was not given to stay and cultivate what had been sown; others have been sent to do that. But on the Day of the Great Harvest the one who has sown and the one who has reaped shall rejoice together.32

EMASCULATION AND ITS ANTIDOTE

In 1899, Alfred, together with several of his missionary brothers and sisters, had got tired of working in connection with the C&MA. The relationship with the New York committee and its Swedish missionaries then seems to have reached a new all-time-low. In his autobiography Alfred describes a situation that was rapidly becoming much more desperate for every month. The Swedish group, that was lacking support, turned to Hudson Taylor, founder of the highly regarded and, at this time, rapidly expanding China Inland Mission, in their need; a proposal that the China Inland Mission were to take responsibility for the C&MA’s work in Shanxi and Inner Mongolia, was turned down by the New York committee. As a last resort one of the Swedish missionaries were to be sent to the US in order to plead their case face to face with the board. With much resentment Alfred describes how his colleague Emil Jacobson (1859-1904) was sent to New York for an interview with Simpson. According to Alfred’s account this was a brief affair; Simpson snubbed Jacobson, and the Swedish missionary was sent back on the street again without even having been offered accommodation. What

32 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 25.
ever happened at Simpson’s office, it is interesting to see how Alfred interprets this in terms of manhood. The encounter between the powerful missionary organiser and the humble on-the-field worker becomes an image of masculinity called in question. But it was not only the recollection of an incident in which one of their own had been humiliated by another man that Alfred found particularly offensive and unjust. The entire situation in which they, in reality, were forced to beg for their existence clashed with contemporary notions of male autonomy and self-support.

Alfred’s riposte to such effeminising conditions was to engage in an activist strategy. During the autumn of 1899 he wrote to the chairman of the Swedish Mission Covenant in Stockholm33, E. J. Ekman (1842-1915), asking to be included in their growing body of missionaries in China. Alfred’s decision to associate himself with this agency had obviously a dimension of rational calculation; as a rapidly expanding religious organisation that offered education and a fixed salary to its missionaries, the SMC was a good choice for a disheartened, but still zealous, missionary stranded on foreign soil. It could also be seen in terms of a quest for something more ‘orderly’ than the fragile structure provided by the C&MA (see further comments below). The SMC was not prepared to take him in their employ without an interview and without further training; he was asked to return home in order to establish a first hand contact and to demonstrate his dedication and ability.34 Alfred must have been aware of the educational demands that the SMC imposed upon its missionaries, so he was probably not expecting to return in the foreseeable future when he left his field of work in early June 1900. He had planned to go to Shanghai by way of Beijing and Tianjin, but the clamour produced by the Boxer uprising forced him to retrace his steps and instead of going south, go further north and cross the border into Mongolia. At Haraua, north of Zhangjiakou, Alfred and a handful remaining Western missionaries met the convoy that Frans August Larson (1870-1957), the most adventurous of these Swedish IMA/C&MA workers, had prepared.35 “So we came to realise that God, in advance, had prepared this convoy for us, without which we could not have travelled into the desert.”36 The passage to Ulan Bator took the company more than thirty days; in the Mongolian capital, they were assisted by the Russian consul who enabled them to continue to Kiachta in Siberia. Alfred recalled that they entered Russian territory on a Sunday at noon, at about the time the Liturgy had ended. When Alfred looked back on these events, the sight of friendly Christian faces and the awareness that they now were completely safe from the Boxers, made Siberia seem like ‘Canaan’.37 After a few weeks of rest, the company continued on their way to Sweden and 23 September 1900 they landed in Stockholm.38 The returned C&MA missionaries were hailed as heroes

33 Hereafter SMC.
34 The correspondence between the SMC board and Fagerholm has been impossible to retrieve in the still unorganised archives of the SMC at the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet) in Stockholm.
35 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 29-33. A brief account is included in Broomhall, Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century, VII, 335.
36 Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 33.
37 Ibid., 39.
38 Ibid., 40-43.
Swedish China missionaries in 1899.
[Lund University Library, Manuscript Department]
Together with the rest of the missionaries Alfred stayed in the vicinity of Stockholm for a few days; among other events they visited the annually returning Holiness conference at Södertälje (twenty miles south of Stockholm) - an event of the magnitude of Keswick to many Swedish evangelicals. Alfred recalled: “O, how lovely it was to sit down and listen to the word of God in the native tongue after all anxiety, a tiresome passage of the desert and a hurried journey in a foreign country. It was a foretaste of the peace and tranquillity that awaits all men after a happily ended pilgrimage.”

At this stage in the narration, Fagerholm’s nationalism, always a sub-theme, becomes fully developed. His love for his native land, for speaking Swedish and for enjoying the company of compatriots is a constant theme of this section in the autobiography. To be sure, his newfound spiritual home, just as Swedish society at large during the years before the Great War, resounded with nationalism. It is only to be expected that such popular sentiment added to Alfred’s hostility towards the Simpson mission. Whatever had been the reason for his dislike of the C&MA in the first place, at the time of writing it is evident that he resented the Americans in part, at least, for not being Swedish. In Alfred’s view, the lesson to be learned from the experiences he and his missionary brothers and sisters had had in China was simply that a foreign organisation should not be trusted. In spite of the international rhetoric of the Evangelical world, everyone looked to their own; foreigners were always given second rank. As a result, only national agencies could be depended upon; it was only such organisations that could be trusted not to let their missionaries suffer unnecessary hardship and to force them into becoming mere beggars at the mercy of their benefactors.

It has been noted that nationalism and patriarchy often goes hand in hand. Nationalism in general gives “supportive, symbolic, often suppressed and traditional roles” to women, and thereby assigning a central position to men in the building of nations, empires and organisations. As an organisation influenced by early twentieth-century nationalism, the SMC certainly demonstrated the truth in such an interpretation. If the Swedish evangelical revival at large had displayed some ‘irregularities’ in terms of the gendered division of roles, as a national organisation the SMC represented a return to patriarchal ‘normality’. At the turn of the twentieth century, women were denied lay rights, and consequently could not be elected board members; female preaching, that was quite common in other strands of Swedish evangelicalism, was prohibited by the central leadership of the SMC. One may wonder if Alfred’s choice to join the SMC, and his nationalism, also can be said to represent a desire to return to institutionalised patriarchy? His autobiography gives at best circumstantial evidence...
in support of such an interpretation. He never mentions the need for a patriarchal organisation and a ‘proper’ division of roles between men and women directly, but such things do not necessarily need to be spilled out in a man’s biography at this time. They were simply taken for granted as the normal state of affairs. On the other hand, he never singles out the way in which women operated in the ‘Franson mission’ for criticism, but, as we have seen in previous chapters, the departure from bourgeois norms were never as great as has sometimes been imagined. Yet, his quest for patriarchy was primarily aimed at securing domestic respectability and a clerical identity for himself. It was with hopes that such dreams were to be fulfilled that he had turned to the SMC.

**WRITING ADULT MANHOOD**

At the time Alfred arrived in Sweden the studies at the SMC Missionary Training College had already begun. In order to earn a living before he could begin his studies, this former China missionary now returned to the vicinity of the family home and took up the position of assistant preacher at Mönsterås on the Swedish east coast. Alfred remembered this as a time of hard ministerial work, but he also recalled how his past experiences continued to haunt him. The aftermath of the dramatic terminus of his first period in China seems to have turned into something similar to what is today called post-traumatic stress disorder:

> Due to my seven years of work in China and the arduous journey through the desert, I would have needed a few months of complete rest ... Throughout the winter I experienced repercussions from the escape and the nervous system was affected from time to time. Frequently, I had the most terrifying nightmares in which I was trying to escape the Boxers. I woke from such dreams in a state of anxiety and it took me a little while until I could ascertain that I was out of danger.\(^45\)

Alfred ended his ministry at Mönsterås in May 1901. In September that year he finally enrolled as a student of the Missionary Training College in Stockholm. It is evident that Alfred saw this as a decisive step in his life. It seemed perhaps like a late spring to the writer, a time to live, perhaps for the first time, the life of an adolescent. Alfred recalled this as “a time of few sorrows”, even though he found it strange “to be at school again at the age of thirty”.\(^46\) Like in most students’ reminiscences, Alfred filled his account with loving and humorous depictions of what school life was like. Eccentric teachers, codes of conduct and of language are recorded in great detail, often with the covert object of illustrating his main point: ‘theoretical knowledge’ was needed for successful missionary work.\(^47\) His attitude should not only be understood as the expression of a particular view of missionary preparation; it was simultane-

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\(^45\) Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 44.
\(^46\) Ibid., 44, 46.
\(^47\) Ibid., 44.
ously a mild gloss over the peculiar kind of independent self-making through intellectual endeavour that we can see among some of his former co-workers. Implicit in Alfred’s remarks is the belief that it was not enough to try to reach new levels through ‘self-help’. What was needed were education and the habits and prestige it awarded among your fellow men if you were to attain to true manhood. Yet, they both aspired to a male clerical identity. Hidden beneath Fagerholm’s middle-class dreams and aspirations we still can find the ideal that the ‘clergy’ (albeit, in this case, in a communion that had seceded from the ecclesiastical establishment) is the highest ambition imaginable for a young man from the countryside.

It was perhaps an unconscious literary strategy, but a central section of this autobiography thus becomes structured as a story of growth, maturation and a re-negotiated identity. If Emil Jacobson’s treatment in New York becomes the most appalling expression of the childlike emasculation that the ‘Franson missionaries’ suffered in China, Alfred’s schooldays in Stockholm represented a time of growth that prepared him for entering full manhood as a proud, and educated, missionary of the SMC. As a further confirmation that his life had now reached maturity, Alfred introduces the story of his engagement to Lydia Olsson, who eventually was to follow him to China as his wife:

Another circumstance, that for all my future life would be of indefinite significance both for myself and the missionary work, was that during this time in my native land I found that part of my own humanity which according to God’s ordinances were to complete the half life that every solitary human lives. I found my God-given aid when he brought in my way that noble woman who has made my life so rich and happy. I had certainly felt the disadvantages of loneliness and the half human’s unfilled longing after its divinely appointed twin-soul when I had done missionary work in China. Though my searching eye long had been looking for that person, I found her during this stay in my native land. Shortly before I went out as a missionary for a second time, I became engaged to Miss Anna Lydia Olsson from Stockholm.  

Alfred did not mention that his ‘searching eye’ had already found a companion in China; in the letter Alfred sent to Bingmark’s sisters, he mentioned that his fiancée (possibly Miss Emelie Erikson) had also been killed by the Boxers. For some reason, that important detail is left out when he composed his reminiscences. Maybe it seemed inappropriate to talk about lost sweethearts at the time of writing, but the omission may also have been produced by the narrative structure Alfred imposed on his life. To hint at the possibility of marriage and a nascent domestic life while being in China for the first time, would have gone against the image of a chaotic experience he was trying to convey. For all in all, as the quote above reveals, the ideal of married life was central, both to Alfred’s idea of true manhood, and to his conception of missionary work. Even though he enjoyed the company of his fellow missionaries with which he worked upon his return to China in 1904, he regarded male homosociality as a tran-

48 Ibid., 47.
49 Landsarkivet i Visby, MS Bingmark papers: Fagerholm to Hilma Bingmark, 21 February 1901.
sitory, unsatisfactory phase.\textsuperscript{50} Marriage even assumed spiritual connotations since Alfred regarded it as being of equal importance to “birth, conversion and calling to be a missionary”.\textsuperscript{51} His union with Lydia in 1907 meant that a new page was turned for the blacksmith’s son: “Now commenced in many respects a new life for me”\textsuperscript{52}, he recorded in his autobiography.

Lydia Fagerholm was to be his companion in China from 1907 until Alfred died in 1923. Her mother’s house outside Stockholm was to become their refuge in Sweden while on furloughs. It has also to be pointed out that his commitment to this woman could be seen as putting a seal on the social advance Alfred by now had reached.\textsuperscript{53} Lydia’s father, who had died already in 1883, had run his own business as a private contractor. Through her mother, Lydia could even trace her pedigree back to an older bourgeois family. Like many contemporary women belonging to these social segments, she had received some education and had had a professional career both as a teacher and as a clerk at the publishing agency that was run in conjuncture with the central office of the SMC.\textsuperscript{54} In China she was to assist her husband in his various assignments as language instructor and head of the congregations in, first, Wuhan, and later Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{55} Five children were born into the family (of which one died at an early age); the published reports that appeared in the SMC periodical, Missionsförbundet, reveal that the family lived a well-organised and settled middle-class life in China.\textsuperscript{56} For all his respectable leanings, he was not immune to the world of enthusiastic revivalism that had once driven him to China. When the first signs of a Pentecostal revival occurred in China a few years before 1910, he communicated his favourable impressions to the home audience.\textsuperscript{57}

Mr Goforth, who has been the appointed visible means of this profound revival that has swept like a mighty wind over the Christian congregations of Manchuria, has communicated his experiences in a series of meetings that were held during one week. Heart-rendering were his portrayals and soul-searching his candid presentations. Fervent shouts of prayer and sighs of the heart have therefore risen to God that a breeze from the wing-stroke of the Holy Spirit may reach of Christians in Central China.\textsuperscript{58}

Yet, the attraction of Pentecostalism never made him abandon the SMC and the life-project that he had seen fulfilled within that body. Summing up his second seven-

\textsuperscript{50} Fagerholm papers: Självbiografiska anteckningar, 48-49.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{53} It is profitable to compare Fagerholm’s experience with those of male missionaries in the Norwegian Missionary Society. See Nyhagen Predelli, “Marriage in Norwegian Missionary Practice”.
\textsuperscript{54} Information about Lydia Olsson can be found in Biografiskt album för Svenska Missionsförbundet, 89; Stockholm, Missionskyrkans arkiv, Biografier: Missionärer i Kina, Vol. V, no. 36.
\textsuperscript{55} Engdahl, ”Missionär Alfred Fagerholm”.
\textsuperscript{56} Missionsförbundet, 15 June 1909, 13 October 1910.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 15 November 1908.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 344.
year period in China, which ended in 1911, it was not his missionary work nor his religious leanings but his domestic life that came to occupy the foremost place in the mind of Alfred: “I had been given a beloved wife by the hands of God, a precious treasure of eternity, who had gone before me to the heavenly home, and a little eternity creature who had stayed in our small family circle. I could not but feel my heart being filled with thankfulness to God for his mercy during the past seven-year period.”

CONCLUSION

Among those who had once enrolled in the IMA during the 1890s, and who had managed to escape the Boxers, no less than five (Fagerholm included) entered the SMC. The protracted conflict with the American sending agency and the miserable condition under which some of them had been forced to live during their first period in China probably made some of these men and women reluctant to once again throw themselves in the arms of organisations that seemed to be run along similar lines. Did they share Alfred’s ideological views on missionary training? Did the male members of this group concur with his views on the making of the male self?

Fagerholm eagerly embraced the new template of ideal manhood he found within the evangelical environment. His evangelical creed became a safe road to social advance and with it followed the components to manufacture an appropriate gender identity. It should be noted that these ideals were not far removed from those to be found among the upward-looking working class. Within these circles the prestige afforded by an orderly marriage and proper schooling were highly rated; we should therefore not understand his appropriation of middle-class, domestic, manhood was an act that included transgressing past ideals. Yet, it should be pointed out that his creation of an adult male identity was a conscious choice, which included, as often is the case, acts of rejection.

Fagerholm did not only leave behind working-class manhood, he also chose to refuse flirting with contemporary conceptions of a self-confident, aggressive, masculinity. Even though such concepts were to be found even among some of his fellow workers in China during the 1890s, he remained loyal to ideals that were likely to be found within the world of his origin. We can only speculate about the reasons for this choice, but it should be noted that the habits of the social environment into which he was born came to influence his identity formation in a different way as well. In spite of his joining a free-church, anti-clerical, organisation, his male dreams did not stop at securing respectable domesticity. Like many generations of gifted countryside boys before him, it was the male persona of the clergyman that was his highest aspiration. Even though we can see clear signs of how this priestly ideal made him emphasise the need of education, and how it in all likelihood framed the duties and responsibilities of his wife, we know less of how it influenced his missionary work. Were he in

59 Ibid., 54.
60 Claesson, Kinesernas vänner, 323-343.
fact much closer to the, at that time increasingly unfashionable, ideal of the clerical missionary? We should at least bear in mind that the category of missionary workers to which Fagerholm belonged were in fact much more likely to be dreaming of a stodgy orderliness that an emotional ‘irrationality’, as is many times assumed even today.