

On Fire for China, the Story of Erik Pilquist, Pioneer Adventist Missionary to China

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ABSTRACT

Erik Pilquist and his wife, Ida Gran are shadowy figures in the early history of the first efforts to establish an Adventist presence in China. This paper is a preliminary study of the impact that they had on the initial training of the first group of Adventist inland China missionaries and their methods for bringing the Gospel to the non-Christian Chinese. Erik, raised in Sweden as a member of the state-run Lutheran Church, was successively a Baptist, a Seventh-day Adventist, a member of the Free Church of Sweden in the US, a missionary under the auspices of the China Inland Mission and the British and Foreign Bible Society, once again a Seventh-day Adventist, and finally, an independent Sabbatarian. After converting his wife and rejoining the Adventist Church, Erik and Ida passed on the missiological principles they had learned as members of the China Inland Mission and their subsequent experiences with the British and Foreign Bible Society. While further research is necessary to evaluate the full impact this had on the effectiveness of the Adventist pioneer missionaries, I believe that Erik and Ida had a significant impact on the opening of the Adventist work in China by urging J. N. Anderson to go to China as the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary and on the career of Harry Miller, the China doctor. Requesting a medical missionary and a printing press to further his work, Erik encouraged Harry Miller to come to China to serve as a doctor and start the Adventist printing work. While the full story remains to be told, this paper provides the foundation for understanding the work and the legacy of the Pilquists.

Keywords: Erik Pilquist, Ida Pilquist, Seventh-day Adventists, China, missions, missiology, Harry W. Miller, A. C. Selmon, J. N. Anderson

Newly arrived in Shanghai, Erik Pilquist and a fellow missionary stood at the doorway of the China Inland Mission headquarters on the bright, beautiful morning of Tuesday, February 17, 1891. Two men and a woman who were expecting this group of missionaries from America hastened to greet them. They immediately asked how many were in the party the two men represented. Erik promptly and cheerfully replied, "We are thirty-five – seventeen men and eighteen sisters – and there are ten more on the way, who will be here next week perhaps!"¹

That day marked the beginning of Erik Pilquist's personal quest to bring Christ to China's millions. Erik Pilquist and his wife, Ida, have been shadowy figures in the story of the Adventist mission to China which officially began ten years later in 1901 with the appointment by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists of Jacob Nelson (J. N.) Anderson, his wife Emma Thompson, and Emma's sister, Ida

¹ M. Geraldine Guinness, "Part of the Coming Thousand," *China's Millions* 1891, 63.

Thompson as missionaries to China. This paper is the story of how Erik Pilquist came to play an important role in launching the Adventist China Mission.

The standard histories of Adventism and even the excellent history, *Mission Advance in China* by John Oss, which was published by Southern Pub. in 1949, state that while on furlough from China in 1901, Erik and Ida Pilquist visited Battle Creek, Michigan for their health and were converted to Adventism. Erik then encouraged J. N. Anderson to volunteer as a missionary to China. The story continues with the information that in 1901, J. N. Anderson, his wife, and sister-in-law were appointed as missionaries to China and the Pilquists returned to their station in inland China. After obtaining their release from the British and Foreign Bible Society on December 31, 1902, they began working for the Adventist church on January 1, 1903. On February 14, 1903, J. N. Anderson baptized six believers prepared by Pilquist and the next day formed the first SDA church in China, which consisted of the six newly baptized believers and the Pilquists.²

As I rethought my research, originally conducted in the 1980s, about J. N. and Emma Anderson and their roles as missionaries to China, I began to wonder about the sudden impact of these new converts, Erik and Ida Pilquist, on plans to send Adventist missionaries to China and their roles in the creation of the first SDA church in China. Digitization of resources at SDA and other institutions, services such as Ancestry.com, search engines such as Google, and the implementation of the Internet are expanding our ability to access information, and I soon discovered that there is much more to the story.

This story begins in Sweden. Erik Karlsson Pilquist, the son of Karl Jacobson and Anna Kristina Andersdotter, was born on May 30, 1857 at Stangafallet, Kafalla in Nora Parish, Orebro County, Sweden and was christened on June 1, 1857. He was the sixth of thirteen children. Three of his younger sisters and a younger brother all died as infants. His father rented a very small plot of land called Pilbo (Pil, a willow tree and bo, a place) from the Kafalla iron mine owner to cultivate for his family's needs. For this plot of land he was required to work a certain number days each week for the iron mine owner.³ Even though they were very poor, Erik's parents provided him with a good education. He was taught in a private school in their home from 1865 until 1868 with his mother as the teacher. From 1868 until 1874, he attended a public school.⁴

Erik's mother died on April 12, 1872 when he was not quite 15. When Erik was 16, he left home and began working as a common laborer on the large farms and for the small businesses in the area. Although he was raised as a Lutheran, the state church of Sweden, when Erik was 24 he was converted and baptized by a Baptist minister in August 1881 in the village of Nora. The Baptists were included among the Separatists, those who dissented from the State church. Erik was a Sunday school teacher for the Baptists.⁵

² J. N. Anderson, "Central China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 18 (May 3, 1903): 11.

³ "Sweden Church Records, 1500-1941, C10b, 1857, Image 18, P. 24", www.ancestry.com (accessed August 30 2014); Yvonne Johansson Oster August 31, August 31, 2014; Erik Pilquist, "Biographical Information, 1905," Silver Spring, MD.

⁴ Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

⁵ *Ibid.*

Eventually, Erik moved to the city of Orebro (population, 12-14,000 in the 1880s), which lies 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Nora. Orebro is a medieval city located where the trade routes met the river that gave access to the Baltic Sea. The road heading north led to the important mining and forest districts of Sweden. It was the old pilgrim way that led to St. Olav's tomb in the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway. The county of Orebro is in south central Sweden about midway between Oslo, Norway and Stockholm, Sweden. In Orebro, Erik began an apprenticeship with Carl Johan Lindblad, a master painter/decorator.⁶

Pilquist and the Adventists

The Adventist message was first brought to Sweden by John (Jonas) P. Rosqvist in April 1880. Rosqvist was a Swede who had become an Adventist in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway. After his evangelistic meetings led to the organization of an Adventist church in August 1880 in Grythytted, Sweden, Rosqvist was asked by the local Lutheran minister not to labor against him. Rosqvist ignored the request. As a result, on January 4, 1882, he was imprisoned for eight days on bread and water with inadequate clothing in a dark, cold room in the round tower of Orebro's old castle, Engelbrekt Slott, for refusing to pay a fine of 50 kroner (\$13.50). This aroused sympathy for the Adventists and by 1885 the citizens of Orebro were known for their liberal principles and resistance to the State Church. Carl Norlin, a Swedish Adventist colporteur, sold tracts in Orebro in 1883. He sold the "Saints Inheritance" to a deacon of the Baptist church who told John G. Matteson, a missionary from the United States, that his wife was keeping the Sabbath and he would do so as soon as he got his affairs in order. Another merchant was planning to build a hall seating 500 persons wishing to hear the Adventist message. Erik was among the Baptists who became interested in the Advent message. In 1884, Erik and his employer, Carl Johan Lindblad, became members of a company of Seventh-day Adventists in Orebro. In 1905, Erik stated that he was brought into the church by reading *Early Writings* by E. G. White and some other tracts. Perhaps Erik read tracts and books sold by Norlin.⁷

On August 1, 1885, Erik and Carl Johan Lindblad were elected as deacons of the newly formed, 14-member, Orebro SDA Church. Olof Johnson was the first minister of this church. Johnson later served as president of the Swedish conference from 1889 to 1893 and again from 1901 until 1907. A conference was held by John G. Matteson in Grythytted on September 3, 1885. At that time, Erik and three others were licensed as colporteurs. He was also qualified as a Bible instructor. In October 1885, Ellen G. White and John G. Matteson visited this little group of Adventists in Orebro. They stayed two days and held three meetings.⁸

⁶ "Pilgrim's Route." *Wikipedia*. www.wikipedia.org, accessed October 18, 2014; Henry E. Andren, "The Centennial of the Orebro, Sweden, S. D. A. Church, p. Box 2, Folder 25, Henry E. Andren Collection, Berrien Springs, MI; John G. Matteson, "Sweden [Report Dated March 25, 1885]," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 62, no. 16 (April 21, 1885): 252; Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

⁷ "Carl Norlin [Obituary]," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 68, no. 27 (July 7, 1891): 431; *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-Day Adventists*, (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 68-70; John P. Rosqvist, "Sweden, in Prison for Preaching the Truth," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 59, no. 9 (February 28, 1882): 139-140; Matteson, "Sweden [Report Dated March 25, 1885]": 252.

⁸ "SDA Forsamlingens i Orebro Protokollbok, 1885-1/7 1902, 1885," Rimbo, Sweden; *Historical Sketches*, 199-200; Andren, "The Centennial of the Orebro, Sweden, S. D. A. Church."; Matteson, "Sweden [Report Dated March 25,

In addition to being a colporteur and Bible instructor, Erik also conducted evangelistic meetings in 1886. Eager to pass on the Adventist message and not having access to further education in Sweden, Erik decided to move to the United States. He departed from Goteborg, Sweden on June 18, 1886. He gave his age as 29 and listed his destination as New York City. Erik was traveling alone on the Juno with the first stop to be Hull, England. This was the usual route from Scandinavia to America. At Hull, Erik probably took a train to the west coast of England and continued by ship to New York.⁹

No information has been located about Erik's activities during his first two years in the United States. He must have spent some time learning English and he made contacts with the Adventists and the Swedish-American community. In the 1889 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, although listed as working for the Nebraska Conference, Erik's address was in Clyde, a railroad station, in Cloud County, Kansas. Erik was probably in the area canvassing the Swedish settlers in Cloud County and other areas of Kansas. In 1890, there were 17,096 Swedes in Kansas.¹⁰

Erik attended the Seventh-day Adventist mission school in Lincoln, Nebraska taught by Lewis A. Hoopes and Andrew J. Cudney in 1888. He probably attended the session that began on January 15, 1888 since A. J. Cudney was lost at sea later in that year.¹¹ A. J. Cudney resigned as Nebraska conference president to found the Lincoln, Nebraska city mission in rented quarters in February 1886. His goal was to train laymen and preach the Gospel to the people of Lincoln. By the fall of 1886, the Nebraska conference committee had built a two-story building at 1505 E Street. The students were drawn from a pool of conference workers. Erik was listed as a missionary licentiate (licensed to preach) in the Nebraska Conference in the 1889 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Usually the Yearbook is about one year behind in the location of workers. In the summer of 1888, Erik sold books and tracts in Omaha, Nebraska.¹²

The classes offered to Erik at the mission school included religion, practical theology, practical knowledge and experience in canvassing, missionary work in general, modern languages, and electives such as music, bookkeeping, and shorthand. Because there were so many Americans of foreign birth in Nebraska, especially Germans and Scandinavians, Cudney felt that at least a rudimentary knowledge of more than one language would be advantageous to the Adventist workers. Students were expected to pay tuition. However, those who were too poor were sponsored by the conference. The school normally

1885]": 252; John G. Matteson, "Sweden and Norway, Grythytted, Orebro, and Christiania, Nov 11," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 62, no. 48 (December 8, 1885): 764.

⁹ "Swedish Emigration Records, 1783-1951", www.ancestry.com (accessed August 12 2014).

¹⁰ *Yearbook of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1889), 19; Emory Lindquist, "The Swedish Immigrant and Life in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1963). http://www.kancoll.org/khq/1963/63_1_lindquist.htm.

¹¹ A. J. Cudney, "Nebraska Notice!," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 64, no. 50 (December 20, 1887): 800; Michael McGuckin, "The Lincoln City Mission: A. J. Cudney and the Seventh-Day Adventist Beginnings in Lincoln, Nebraska," *Adventist Heritage* 2, no. 1 (1975): 26; Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

¹² *Yearbook of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*; McGuckin, "The Lincoln City Mission"; Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

lasted about 4 months. L. A. Hoopes estimated in 1887 that student expenses were about \$1.75-\$2.00 per week. This was enough for food, fuel and lights. All students were expected to sell books part time.¹³

As previously stated, Erik spent the summer of 1888 colporteur in Omaha, Nebraska. The records do not state where he spent the fall of 1888. Since he spent parts of 1889 in Chicago and Iowa, he may have worked as a colporteur among the Swedes in Iowa. On January 8, 1889, Erik began attending an Adventist mission school for Scandinavians in Chicago, Illinois. The school was conducted by John G. Matteson, who had returned from Scandinavia because of bad health. The school of 52 students was conducted in the small Scandinavian Advent Chapel at 269 West Erie Street in Chicago. Matteson gave close attention to subjects such as bookkeeping, grammar, composition, and practical knowledge of the Danish and Swedish languages so that the Scandinavian workers could more effectively work with their own countrymen. Matteson required the students to frame Bible readings from sermons, and to hold Bible readings in the class. Sometimes the students wrote compositions on assigned topics, sometimes they wrote missionary letters, and at other times Matteson allowed the students to choose their own topics. Each composition was corrected with reasons given for the corrections. Matteson's report about the mission school that he conducted in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the fall of 1888 gives an example of the rigor that he expected from the students, "The majority of the students had written and rewritten their last composition three times before they brought it into the class."¹⁴

Matteson also provided both practical and theoretical training in canvassing and in the different branches of Bible work. Thirty of the students took part in canvassing from February 1 until the school closed on May 1. No doubt Erik Pilquist was one of them. The students spent their time canvassing from noon until 6 pm when school began again. During this three-month period, the students sold \$1,539.89 worth of books and papers. The Danish and Swedish health journals made up one-third and books two-thirds of the materials sold. The students visited about one thousand Scandinavian homes during this time. The four-month school was considered to be very successful with Matteson reporting that the students "all show a commendable interest in trying to learn." The "remarkable success" of the schools for the German and Scandinavian workers caught the attention of the members of the General Conference committee who felt that mission schools should also be conducted for the American workers.¹⁵

Pilquist and the Free Church of Sweden

In May 1889, Erik Pilquist turned 32 years of age and had been in America three years. Erik had attended two four-month long intensive sessions in 1888 and 1889 in Seventh-day Adventist mission schools preparing to spread the Adventist message through preaching, Bible studies, and colportering. He had

¹³ L. A. Hoopes, "Lincoln, Nebraska Mission," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 62, no. 24 (June 14, 1887): 375; McGuckin, "The Lincoln City Mission": 31.

¹⁴ H. R. Johnson and L. Johnson, "The Scandinavian School in Minneapolis," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 66, no. 1 (January 1, 1889): 12; John G. Matteson, "Scandinavian Mission-School at Chicago," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 66, no. 23 (June 4, 1889): 364.

¹⁵ General Conference Committee, "A Practical Canvassers' Institute," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 66, no. 23 (March 12, 1889): 176; John G. Matteson, "The Scandinavian Mission," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 66, no. 9 (February 26, 1889): 140; Matteson, "Scandinavian Mission-School at Chicago": 364.

been searching for meaning in his life for many years. His mother died shortly before his fifteenth birthday. He was the sixth of nine surviving children in a very poor family. He left home at 16 and began working as a day laborer. He became an apprentice in Orebro where he joined the Baptist Church in 1881 at the age of 24, probably due to the influence of his employer, Carl Johan Lindblad.

Erik's willingness to strike out on his own to further his education in America tells us that he was independent, willing to take risks, and perhaps a bit impulsive. His letters sent to Sweden over the years show that he was intelligent and had become a good writer. Erik was unmarried and had no known family ties in America. He did search out other Swedes and Scandinavians. At some point in 1889, Erik seems to have been attracted to the ideas expressed by the members of the Free Church of Sweden, founded in Boone, Iowa in 1884. Probably because of his rebellion against the state church in Sweden, Erik was very ambivalent about organized churches and denominations. In 1905 he wrote on a biographical information sheet that from the time he became a Baptist until 1900 he had not been a member of any denomination. He stated, "I found them all corrupt." While not strictly true, as he had been baptized into the Baptist Church and he had been voted to be a deacon in the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1885 and he is listed as an Adventist church employee in the 1889 yearbook, it does tell us something about his worldview.¹⁶

When I read the views of the early Swedish-American members of the Free Church of Sweden, I can see why Erik was attracted to and became a member of that American born church in 1889. The members of this church were very independent and proud of that independence. In a 1934, 50-year history of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of the U. S. A., the church leaders wrote, "Because of this trait [independence] among both leaders and the churches, all organization work among us has made slow progress. To begin with, the churches could hardly be called organized congregations. No records were kept, no constitutions were adopted, no prescribed methods of work were followed. Their great ambition was to steer clear of denominationalism. They were afraid to be connected with any denomination. As a matter of fact there are a considerable number within the Free Church who to this day maintain that the organization is not and never can be a denomination in the general sense of the word. These contend that the Free Church constitutes only an affiliation of local, independent churches for the sole purpose of propagating missionary work at home and abroad." As with the Adventists, the imminent return of Christ "gripped the hearts and minds of the Free Church pioneers."¹⁷

Erik appears to have stumbled onto the free-church movement while working as a colporteur for the Adventist Church. He was naturally drawn to the Swedish settlements as he dealt with learning a new language, coping with the customs of another country, and the loneliness of being cut-off from his family and friends. In 1889, Erik is listed as a visiting preacher and licentiate in the Swedish Free Mission Church located on East Main Street in Ottumwa, Iowa. This church, regularly organized in 1880 and

¹⁶ Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

¹⁷ *Golden Jubilee: Reminiscences of Our Work under God, Swedish Evangelical Free Church of the U.S.A., 1884-1934*, ([Minneapolis, MN]: [Swedish Evangelical Free Church], [1934?]), 16, 29.

incorporated in 1886, was part of the Des Moines River Association of seventeen churches in southern Iowa.¹⁸

Ottumwa, Iowa is a railroad center with four separate lines providing easy access to Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Kansas City and St. Louis, and Omaha and Denver. As an itinerant colporteur, Erik would have become acquainted with these transportation routes and used them to visit the Swedes along the route.¹⁹

Erik was ordained as a minister in the Free Church of Sweden, also known as the Swedish Mission Church, on May 17, 1890 by August L. Anderson. Anderson is listed as the third minister of the church in Ottumwa and Erik is listed as the fifth minister to serve this church. August L. Anderson was born on October 3, 1848 at Brodde Torp, Vastergotland, Sweden and came to America in November 1869 at the age of 21. He had a license as a lay minister in the Congregational Church and was ordained at Knoxville, Illinois in 1878. August took a leading part in the formation of the Free Church of Sweden at Boone, Iowa in 1884. He served as the Free Church superintendent of missions and may have held that position in 1890-91 at the time that Erik decided to go to China as a missionary.²⁰

Missionary to China

Erik turned 33 years old in 1890. He had been in the United States for four years, his English language skills were improving, and now he had accepted ordination and was settled as the minister in the Swedish Free Church in Ottumwa. Erik hadn't found a wife but he was making friends and was no longer an itinerant colporteur without a stable home or intent on seeking more education. At this point he made a decision that was to change his life forever. In the middle of January 1891, Erik had gathered in Omaha, Nebraska with Fredrik Franson and his fellow Swedish Free Church pastors to see off the first group of missionaries gathered in the United States by Franson in answer to J. Hudson Taylor's 1889 plea for a thousand new missionaries to evangelize China's millions. They planned to accompany the departing missionaries on the train westward for the first 60 miles of their great adventure.²¹

On Friday morning while Erik was visiting with the China-bound missionaries, a fellow pastor approached him and said he thought Erik was preparing himself to go to China. Erik replied cryptically that he could not go now. That evening before the final dedication service, Erik was asked again about going to China. Erik replied that the needs were great here and he had no money. It was pointed out to Erik that the needs were great everywhere. Would he go if money could be found? On inquiry they found that the Des Moines church wished to support a missionary and knowing Erik, would be glad to support him. Erik felt the need to spend an hour in reflection and prayer before he made a final decision. At the end of the hour, Erik felt that he had God's assurance. When asked why he had to leave

¹⁸ *Minutes of the General Association of Congregational Churches and Ministers of the State of Iowa at Their Fiftieth Annual Session at Creston, May 15 to 19, 1889*, (Hull, IA: Iowa Index Print, 1889), 108, 111; Harrison L. Waterman, ed. *History of Wapello County, Iowa*, 2 vols. (Chicago, IL: S. J. Clarke, 1914), 1:167-168.

¹⁹ Waterman, ed., 1:167-168.

²⁰ *Golden Jubilee*, 18-19, 286; Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

²¹ Guinness, "Part of the Coming Thousand, 63-64.

with this group, Erik, replied, "I will go at once and as I am; then I will also be freed from the sadness that accompanies a farewell." That Friday night, January 16th, the dedication service was held in Rev. Johannes A. Hultman's Swedish Mission Church. A laying-on of hands service was held by Hultman and the visiting pastors. On the following morning, photographs were taken to sell for supporting the group. That evening, the missionary band of young men and young women met for an hour's prayer before boarding their train. The missionary band, now joined by the impetuous Erik, marched the two miles through the streets of Omaha to the train depot singing all the way in Swedish or Norwegian. Inspired by the singing, hundreds of people followed them and asked who they were and what were they doing, they responded, "We are going to China to live and die for Jesus."²²

Erik Pilquist's mission to China was the result of the convergence of the lives of two men – Fredrik Franson and J. Hudson Taylor. Taylor operated a "faith" mission, the China Inland Mission, without denominational assistance. They raised money by "informing church audiences and praying." "Directed from China, its missionaries adopted Chinese dress, identified with the people, and evangelized. This enculturation went contrary to denominational missions in foreign lands. The 'faith' mission goal of enculturation for missionaries required them to learn how to communicate within the rules and regulations of established cultural behavior. The missionary internalized normal patterns of everyday life in order to contextualize insights of the culture as a conduit for bringing the message of the Gospel to the inhabitants. China Inland Mission missionaries lived among the people to whom they sought to bring ministry in order to have a greater identity with them."²³

Pilquist was directly influenced by Fredrik Franson. Franson, born in Sweden in 1852, was a missionary evangelist. He had migrated to the United States as a young man. In his late teens, Franson became convicted of the need to spread the Gospel and joined Dwight Moody in Chicago where he learned his aggressive evangelistic techniques. He returned to Sweden in 1881 to preach faith in Christ as the assurance of salvation. Franson polarized his audiences, when he spoke "there was either a revival or a riot, and sometimes both." He was in trouble with the authorities throughout Scandinavia. Franson was preaching in Germany when he learned of Taylor's call for a thousand missionaries. After praying about the call, he changed his focus as an evangelist and announced that he was called to recruit ten per cent of the thousand missionaries. After sending out a small group of missionaries to China from Germany, Franson left for America. He contacted Swedish-American and other Scandinavian friends in the free church movement in the Middle West and developed a plan to send additional missionaries to China. Inviting attendance through Swedish religious papers, Franson held two-week courses in Brooklyn, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Omaha for young people interested in foreign missionary service. The courses focused on Christian character and Bible study. His motto was "constant, conscious communion with God." One of his students later reported the "great appeal made for missionaries to China. O, how he prayed for China and how we sang about China."²⁴ Franson's contacts included August L. Anderson,

²² Anna Marie Claesson, "Kinesernas Vanner: En Analys Av Missionens Berattelse Som Ideologi Och Utopi" (Ph.D. dissertation, Lund University, 2001), 128, translated by Yvonne Johansson Oster; Guinness, "Part of the Coming Thousand, 64; Claesson; Josephine Princell, *Missionar Fredrik Franssons Lif Och Verksamhet* (Chicago, IL: Bladet, 1909), 126-127, translated by Yvonne Johansson Oster.

²³ Jon P. DePriest, *Send the Light Team and the Evangelical Mission, 1890-1975* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007), 16.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7, 14, 18, 30-31; Edward Torejeson, "The Legacy of Fredrik Franson," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 15, no. 3 (1991): 125-128.

Pilquist's mentor in the Swedish Mission Church. In October 1890, Anderson made a report on Franson's activities in relation to the "China Mission" and the plans and concepts for the emerging China Mission Alliance (later called the Scandinavian Mission Alliance).²⁵

The group of prospective missionaries was happy to have Erik join them because he was an experienced pastor and well-trained colporteur. Erik was already known to a few of them. He probably did not have the musical or entertaining skills Franson required of the others but he did value music as an evangelistic tool. Erik did meet the qualification of being unmarried. Franson asked the members of the group to commit to remaining unmarried itinerants during their first three years in the mission field, not even becoming engaged. The thirty-five members of the group, 18 women and 17 men, included 30 Swedes and 5 Norwegians. They were from places such as Boston, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha, and now, Ottumwa, Iowa.²⁶

This group had been carefully chosen by Franson. After each two-week session, each candidate had to apply and convince Franson that they possessed a call to go to China. They were required to be Christians, have good references, demonstrate ministry experience and have monetary support from a local church or other organization. Franson asked each candidate three questions, "Are you saved? Have you led a soul to Christ? Are you willing to suffer for Christ?" One researcher speculates that "willingness to suffer must have been an important point because he rejected so many of the candidates." Of the seventy who enrolled in Chicago, Franson chose only sixteen to go to China. "Fransonian Missionaries" were known for being eager to evangelize and willing to adapt to difficulties. Prayer was one of their most important evangelistic tools. "Faith set to music was the atmosphere they carried with them."²⁷

Early on the morning of January 21, 1891, the tired band of missionaries to China were met in Oakland, California by Reverends C. Anderson of San Francisco, J. Nyren of Oakland, four members of the Swedish Mission Church, and a representative of the railroad. Too tired for sightseeing, they were taken to the homes of the members of the Swedish Mission Church to rest. As reported in the *San Francisco Call*, that evening after a welcome by Rev. Anderson, they spent three hours singing to the music of their guitars and banjos and each speaking in Swedish about their commitment to serve in China to a spellbound, standing room only crowd in the church at 538 Jessie Street in San Francisco. At the close of the service \$100 was raised for their support.²⁸

Leaving San Francisco by ship, the missionary band with their unofficial leader, Erik Pilquist, reached Shanghai and the China Inland Mission headquarters on February 17, 1891. This party of 35, the largest number of missionaries ever known to arrive in China at one time, was followed within two weeks by 15 more for a total of 50 sent out by the Scandinavian Mission Alliance. Although the China Inland Mission staff were hard pressed to accommodate such a large group with little time to prepare for their arrival,

²⁵ August L. Anderson, "Franson Kinaexpedition, Oct 28, 1890, 1890," Papers of Fredrik Franson (coll. 87), Box 6, Folder 4, Wheaton, IL.

²⁶ Guinness, "Part of the Coming Thousand, 63-64.

²⁷ DePriest, *Send the Light Team and the Evangelical Mission, 1890-1975*, 34-35.

²⁸ "Enroute for China, Arrival in the City of Thirty-Five Swedish Missionaries," *San Francisco Call* 69(January 22, 1891). <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/> (accessed August 12, 2014).

within a few days all were in Chinese clothing and working hard to learn the Chinese language and customs.²⁹

After listening to words of encouragement from J. Hudson Taylor just before a group of the Scandinavians left for the interior in March of 1891, Erik Pilquist raised his voice to express the gratitude they felt for their welcome by the China Inland Mission staff. He turned to Taylor and said, "I have found a father here in China and a home!" He thanked the Mission staff "on behalf of the Scandinavian Churches of America and on behalf of the whole party." After Taylor responded, the room rang with their "soul-filled music."³⁰

By January 1, 1893, Erik was settled at K'uh-wu, a city 40 miles south of P'ing-yang-fu in the Province of Shansi (Shanxi) with the veteran missionaries, Duncan Kay, his wife, Caroline Mathewson, and their 3 children aged 3, 4 and 5. Kay was a 31 year old Scotsman who had come to China in 1884. The Kays fled this station on July 4, 1900 and were murdered by the Boxers on August 30, 1900 before they could escape from the Province. Along with Erik were three of his fellow Scandinavians who had accompanied him in 1891. They were Mary Nelson, Elsa Seger, who died in 1900 of typhoid fever, and Victor L. Nordland.³¹

Reconnecting with the Adventist Church

In 1894, Abram La Rue sent a letter to the *Adventist Review* stating that he had met a Swedish missionary named Pilquist, who had embraced Adventists beliefs. He stated that Pilquist was about 1,500 miles up the river from Shanghai (K'uh-wu, Shansi Province) and that he is in communication with the Foreign Mission Board. Nothing is recorded in the Foreign Mission Board minutes about any communication with Erik. However, this is the first hint that Erik was interested in reconnecting with the Adventist Church.³²

Erik was married on April 1, 1895 at Kuci-hua-Ching, China by Rev. D. W Le Lachine to Ida Gran of Stockholm, Sweden. Kuci-hua-Ching is probably located in Shensi (Shaaxi) Province since they were both attending a Scandinavian Mission Alliance conference at Singan (Xian) on March 29, 1895. At the time of their marriage, Erik was 35 and Ida was about 27. Rev. Le Lachine has not been identified. Ida was born about 1868 in Sweden. She arrived at Shanghai, China on April 16, 1893 along with twenty-one other young women to serve the International Missionary Alliance in Shansi Province in northwestern China.³³

²⁹ M. Geraldine Guinness, *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, UK: Morgan & Scott, 1894), 2:497; Guinness, "Part of the Coming Thousand, 63.

³⁰ Guinness, *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, 498-500.

³¹ "Stations and Missionaries of the China Inland Mission," *China's Millions* 1893, 58-59; "1910 U.S. Federal Census, Chicago Ward 31, Cook County, Illinois", www.ancestry.com (accessed October 6 2014); Robert C. Forsyth, *China Martyrs of 1900* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1904), 75; J. W. Stevenson, "Shanghai Notes," *China's Millions* 1900, 47.

³² Abram La Rue, "[Letter]," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 71, no. 50 (December 18, 1894): 800.

³³ 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Chicago Ward 31, Cook County, Illinois; "Missionary Journal, Arrivals," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 24, no. 5 (May, 1893): 252; Pilquist, "Biographical Information."

The newlyweds were stationed in Ning-sha fu, which was located in Kansu (Gansu), a northwestern province of China on the upper reaches of the Yellow River. The years 1895 and 1896 were hard for the Pilquists and other Franson missionaries. An excerpt from a book by Tore Zetterlund, states that “even for the most cheerful ones such as the Pilqvists in Ningsia, there was an anxiety below the surface, an awareness which they didn’t dare to utter even to themselves, other than as joking comments, ‘Well, I haven’t converted very many this year,’ missionary Pilqvist said jokingly at the dinner table over the meager yellow porridge on the table, ‘An ambivalent old woman and an orphan girl, that’s all!’ ‘People were much kinder when we arrived,’ his wife smiled, ‘But after the unfortunate defeat by the Japanese, it seems as if they don’t want to have anything to do with any foreigners at all. One of these days they will probably drive us out into the desert.’ ‘If we haven’t done them the service to starve to death before that!’ her husband added in a jovial tone.” Although his book is a work of fiction, Zetterlund claims to have used sources for his information. The tone of the conversation with Ida fits with the type of humor Erik expresses in his writing. Many of their colleagues in these north China provinces died during the Boxer Rebellion.³⁴

The situation for the Pilquists seems to have improved by 1897. Sven Hedin, the Swedish explorer, describes visiting the Pilquists in the Chinese town of Ning-sha, arriving on January 18, 1897. He gives us a vivid picture of their lives as missionaries.

“It was a real pleasure to meet my own countrymen—Mr. and Mrs. Pilqvist, and three assistants, two of them young men, the other a young lady, as well as to rest two whole days in their hospitable house. What a luxury to sleep in a well warmed room, and actually in a bed! No need that night to cover myself with a heap of furs, to prevent myself from being frozen to death. . . . Missionary enterprise is carried on in Ning-sha with energy and success. There was a community of thirty Christian Chinese, and Bible readings were held both morning and afternoon. The Evangelical Scriptures written in Chinese characters were scattered broadcast, in the shape of fly-leaves, through the streets, and these had tempted many Chinese to the mission-house, in most cases no doubt simply to gratify their curiosity. Mr. Pilqvist rented a hall in one of the principal thoroughfares and there held services, which passers-by used to stop and listen to. It was grand to watch Mr. Pilqvist preaching of an evening in his own house in the purest Chinese. The congregation were ranged on narrow benches in front of the table at which the missionary sat; and preach he did, with such energy that the very walls shook at the thunder of his voice and banging of his fist on the table. The Chinese sat like statues, hardly daring to breathe—no fear of *them* dropping off to sleep and not hearing what was said!”³⁵

On April 15, 1897, Ida gave birth to a daughter, Hannah Elizabeth, in Ning-sha fu. Eight weeks later on June 14, 1897, Erik took the decisive step of separating himself from the Scandinavian Mission Alliance and the China Inland Mission. He stated in a letter published in Sweden that he had decided to keep all of the commandments of God and he and Ida had begun keeping the Sabbath. He felt great peace at the time of his disfellowshipping. His wife had endorsed the Biblical truths found in the Spirit of Prophecy some time before this step was taken. Although they were now alone on the northern border of China,

³⁴ Tore Zetterlund, *De Frammande Djavlarna*, [the Foreign Devils] (Hoganas, Sweden: Bokforlaget Bra Bocker, 1977), 142, translated by Yvonne Johansson Oster.

³⁵ Sven Hedin, *Through Asia*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1898), 2:1241-1242.

they did not regret their choice. As soon as the month of July passed, Erik planned to make the month-long journey to the coast. Perhaps they would go to Hong Kong and connect with Abram La Rue. In the meantime, Erik planned to translate some tracts into Chinese and proclaim the last message of grace to both Chinese and foreigners. It was Erik's daily prayer that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists would start up a mission in China. He hoped to be a humble tool to awaken more interest in China.³⁶

Before Erik and Ida could make the trip to the coast, Erik had an opportunity to connect with the British and Foreign Bible Society. The reality of supporting a wife and newborn child may have led to the decision to take this position. He became their subagent for Shensi and Kansu provinces with the principal depot being in Si-ngan fu in Shensi Province. Erik and Ida had not given up their Adventist beliefs. In November 1898, Erik had an article on "China's Needs" published in the Adventist Foreign Mission Board's *Missionary Magazine*. Erik pointed out that China was "wide open for the third angel's message." In his travels, he found that "there seems to be a hungering after knowledge that did not exist two or three years ago." He further states that China differs from other non-Christian lands, "it is a literary country. It is really necessary to have our good tracts and books translated into Chinese. . . As I have heretofore written you, I have already translated some of our tracts, but can not make the work complete, for I have neither the time or money to do what I could and should do if I were free to devote my whole strength to the work of spreading the third angel's message. . . Come over and help us!"³⁷

The 1900 report of the British and Foreign Bible Society reluctantly reported that "Erik Pilquist, after two and a half years' service for the Society and nine years residence in China, found himself, early in the summer [of 1899], unequal to the strain of another hot season, and a furlough was pronounced to be imperative." During the previous year, canvassing sales in Shensi had nearly doubled. Erik had "a large staff of native workers for the first part of the year, and in his own wide itinerations he was very successful." Erik himself reported, "In less than a year, I sold over sixty thousand Bibles, New Testaments, and portions of the Bible. Besides this, I sold seventeen thousand Scripture calendars with a text of Scriptures for every day in the year."³⁸

Erik, a very pregnant Ida, and two year old Hannah traveled to Battle Creek Michigan, where Erik rapidly and completely recovered his health. In August, 1899, Ida gave birth to their second daughter, Ellen Maria Josefina. That fall the Pilquists met a fellow Scandinavian, J. N. Anderson and his non-Scandinavian wife Emma in Battle Creek. The Andersons had been approached at the 1899 Wisconsin camp meeting by Irvin H. Evans, president of the Foreign Mission Board, about going to China and had not felt they could go at this time. Erik encouraged J. N. to go to China as a missionary.³⁹

³⁶ Harry W. Miller, "Medical Missionary Work in China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 101, no. 36 (September 18, 1924): 24; Erik Pilquist, "From China," *Missionaren* 8, no. 1 (August, 1897): 75, translated by Yvonne Johansson Oster.

³⁷ *The Ninety-Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for the Year Ending March MDCCCC*, (London, UK: The Bible House, 1900), 241; Erik Pilquist, "China's Needs," *The Missionary Magazine* 10, no. 11 (November, 1898): 413-414.

³⁸ *Ninety-Sixth Report*, 241, 246-247.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 246-247; John Oss, *Mission Advance in China* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1949), 91-92; Ida Pilquist, "Something for the Little People," *The Youth's Instructor* 52, no. 35 (June 21, 1904): 5.

On August 1899, Erik published an appeal in the *Review* for missionaries to China. He wrote that a traveler could ride his horse over hills and plains through the cities, towns, and villages day after day through all of China without meeting a single Adventist missionary “to carry the *third angel’s message* to the poor Chinese.” These missionaries would need to speak and write Chinese, provide for the medical and spiritual needs of the people, and translate Adventist publications into Chinese. Erik shared that “about nine years ago God impressed me to pray for China. . . . God told me to forsake all my friends and comforts God told me to give up my position as minister of the Gospel at home,” and go to China! Now he called for Adventists “to offer both lives and money” to carry our message to China’s millions.⁴⁰

Always the salesman and promoter, Erik traveled to Sioux City, Iowa to attend a general meeting of Scandinavian Adventists, seeking support as a missionary to China. The meeting began on October 27, 1899 and lasted for ten days. Erik spoke on several occasions about China’s great need for the Gospel and the opening for beginning an Adventist mission in China at this time. In response, the attendees passed the following resolution: “Believing that God has called Brother Pilquist to the Chinese field, and realizing that the Foreign Mission Board is not financially able, at the present time, to support this brother in the field, we Scandinavian brethren of the Seventh-day Adventists in council assembled, do pledge ourselves to raise the necessary funds for his support, and we respectfully request the Foreign Mission Board to send him to that field as soon as he can consistently go.” On March 26, 1900, August Swedberg, editor of the Swedish Adventist paper, *Sanningens Harold*, presented a bill for \$18 to the General Conference Committee for Erik Pilquist’s traveling expenses for his trip to Sioux City, Iowa for the Scandinavian council meetings. This brought up the issue of opening a mission in China and that the treasury had \$600 reserved for mission work in China. They discussed the fact that the Scandinavians attending the meeting were under the impression that Erik “was a full-fledged Seventh-day Adventist” and that he would not return to China as part of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The committee agreed that any money raised by the Scandinavians for the support of Pilquist would be sent to the Foreign Mission Board through the proper channels. During the meeting, it was stated that the *Review* and *Herald* treasury held \$34 that had been deposited for Erik. The committee passed a motion “that instead of granting the \$18 traveling expense, the whole amount of \$34 be turned over to Erik Pilquist.” The committee was being cautious because Erik had not been voted by any official Adventist committee to be sent out as a missionary to China. Erik was following the example that had been set for him by Franson and Taylor, “faith” missions are supported by presenting your needs to an audience and praying.⁴¹

Although Erik had solicited commitments of support from the Scandinavian community, employment by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a missionary to China was not settled when Erik took Ida and their children to Sweden to visit family and friends. As an employee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who were paying for their furlough, he felt an obligation to return to his post in China. In Sweden, Erik and Ida attended the annual conference meetings held in June 1900 on the school farm in Nyhyttan. Nyhyttan is in Nora Parish, Orebro County and is about 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) north of the village of

⁴⁰ Erik Pilquist, “China Our Great Mission Field,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 76, no. 15 (August 29, 1899): 558.

⁴¹ Erik Pilquist, “Expense Request, March 26, 1900,” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Committee Minutes, 78th Meeting, March 26, 1900, Battle Creek, MI; C. A. Thorpe, “The General Scandinavian Meeting in Sioux City,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 76, no. 51 (December 19, 1899): 825-826.

Nora. Erik gave two talks on China and he and Ida sang several songs in Chinese. They expressed their desire to return to China as soon as the Boxer troubles were settled. The audiences gave liberally to support their mission in China. Nora Parish is Erik's former home and they visited several relatives and acquaintances. Olof Johnson, the conference president, had been Erik's pastor in 1885 and 1886.⁴²

Although the Boxer Rebellion was not over, Erik left Sweden to return to China in March 1901. He left Ida and their girls in Sweden because of concern for their safety. No doubt he felt that he could no longer delay returning to his post with the British and Foreign Bible Society. On March 25, 1901, Erik, a passenger on the *Preussen*, departed from Southampton, England bound for Shanghai, China. After his arrival in China, Erik took over as subagent at Tientsin in May, 1901 pending the arrival of Rev. I. F. Drysdale, who was then stationed in Shanghai. The city of Tientsin is located on the Gulf of Chihli a few miles upstream on the Hai River about 50 miles from Beijing. The war with the Boxers was not over, and a large number of Allied troops were in and around Tientsin. Active hostilities were still occurring in the surrounding areas. Locally the Chinese people were quiet and seemed well-disposed to foreigners. The business life of Tientsin was gradually and cautiously reviving. The various Christian missions had resumed meeting with the people and the local British and Foreign Bible Society committee approved a plan that their workers should "quietly and judiciously canvass" Tientsin. "I find the people very kindly disposed all over the city," Erik reported in early June, "I am out in the streets nearly every day and all classes are quite ready to buy books." Erik took full advantage of their good will and canvassed all summer and fall, visiting all parts of Tientsin, its suburbs and areas in the surrounding countryside. His sales were an impressive "16,000 Gospels and other books of scripture." His supervisor reported, Mr. Pilquist "has said little about himself, it is the greatest pleasure therefore to quote the following appreciation from a senior missionary: 'Mr. Pilquist needs no words of commendation from me or any other man, but it is right that I should say that he is the most indefatigable worker and the Society is fortunate in having such a man at such a time. I am proud to bear this testimony because it is so well deserved.'"⁴³

Ida, who was staying in Orebro, Sweden, submitted an article to a Swedish missionary journal to share news from Erik about what the Boxers had done to the missionaries in northern China, many of whom were from Sweden. Two Chinese Christians from the interior came to Tientsin and shared with Erik that many of the mission stations had been looted, torn down, and burned. Some of the Chinese had given up their Christian faith, looted the missions, taken up opium smoking and were persecuting the remaining Christians. One of them, a man who was known to Erik, was sure that he was safe because he felt the foreigners would not return for twenty years. Erik told of writing him a letter warning of the consequences of his actions. The Sha-ri-tsing station in Shansi (Shanxi) Province was totally destroyed by the Boxers and Klara Hall, a Swedish missionary who came out in 1893 and was probably known to Ida, was murdered along with many of the twenty-two children in the orphanage that she operated. Erik reported that only eight of the starving children were known to have survived. The two Chinese Christians only knew of one of the interior stations, Pao-teo, in north Shansi that was not destroyed.

⁴² J. N. Loughborough, "Scandinavia," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 77, no. 34 (August 21, 1900): 539-540.

⁴³ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960", www.ancestry.com (accessed August 3 2014); *The Ninety-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for the Ending MDCCCII*, (London: The Bible House, 1902), 268-269.

There believers had sold the belongings of the missionaries and were keeping the money safe until the missionaries returned.⁴⁴

The unsettled conditions in many of China's provinces after the end of the Boxer Rebellion caused the British and Foreign Bible Society to refrain from aggressive work and engage in "patient waiting and gradual reconstruction." However, special edicts from the Throne gave the foreign missionaries a new standing and welcome and the rights of native Christians were favorable. The tone was set for a new spirit of inquiry which benefited Western learning and religion. With Erik in charge for the first three months of 1902, he and the 14 men on his staff sold 42,000 books. Rev. Drysdale took charge of the sub-agency at Tientsin in the middle of March and after Erik departed reduced the number of colporteurs on his staff from fourteen to five.⁴⁵

In answer to Erik's expressed desire to join the newly created Adventist mission to China, on January 15, 1902, the Foreign Mission Board voted that because part of his passage money would need to be refunded when Erik severed his connection with the Bible Society, "J. N. Anderson was authorized to arrange for the release of Brother Pilquist on the best terms possible." In April 1902, J. N. Anderson received a good, hopeful letter from Erik, who was still in Tientsin. Erik urged J. N. to visit him soon but pointed out that he would be in Shanghai in a few weeks to meet his family. J. N. made plans to meet Erik in Shanghai in the latter part of May. Ida and the children arrived in Shanghai on April 19, 1902. In late May when Anderson met with Erik and his family in Shanghai, he found Erik anxious to begin working for the Adventist mission as soon as possible. J. N. promised to pay Erik not less than \$13 per week. J. N. and Erik arranged with the Bible Society to refer his terms of release to their headquarters in London. Erik's plan while he continued to work with the Bible Society was to "scatter Bibles and preach the Sabbath."⁴⁶

Erik and his family arrived in Honan (Henan) Province about June 1, 1902 and made their headquarters among the mountains in the south in Sin-Yang-Cheo (Xinyangzhou). This city is located on the Hankow and Peking Railroad, a joint venture of the Chinese government and a French-Belgian company, about 125 miles north of Hankow. Hankow, the commercial center of central China, is 600 miles west of Shanghai, a three and one-half day trip by river steamer on the Yangtze River. Over the next seven months, Erik had excellent sales reaching a population that had seldom been visited. Erik also visited Cheo-kia-keo and the mission stations to the north and arranged for the supervision of several native colporteurs by the missionaries in that area. Erik reported at the end of November, that he, Ida, and his native worker had been able to sell "nearly thirty thousand Bibles, New Testaments, and portions of Scriptures." He had not been itinerating through the countryside but had been working from his home in Sin-yang-cheo. Early in the morning he met the farmers coming into town to trade their produce and handed out portions of the Bible. If they stopped to read, Erik would sit with them to explain the Word of God and preach the Sabbath. Erik and Ida had rented a native house with room enough to house two

⁴⁴ Ida Pilquist, "Fran Kina (from China)," *Trosvitnet*, no. 19 (October 1, 1901): 149-150, translated by Yvonne Johansson Oster.

⁴⁵ *Ninety-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for the Year Ending March MDCCCIII*, (London: The Bible House, 1903), 257, 259.

⁴⁶ "China, Foreign Mission Board of Seventh-Day Adventists Minutes, January 15, 1902."; "China, Foreign Mission Board of Seventh-Day Adventists Minutes, May 15, 1902."; "Missionary Journal, Arrivals at Shanghai," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 33, no. 5 (May, 1902): 264.

families. They had started a Bible class and engaged a native teacher to help. Erik had convinced him to keep the Sabbath and felt that eventually he could become an evangelist because he was highly educated. News of his telling both the foreign missionaries and the Chinese about the Sabbath and not to eat pork had reached his Bible Society supervisor in Shanghai, who promptly wrote a letter to Erik warning him not to do so. Erik replied that his mandate was to distribute the Bible Society's literature and to do his best to tell the people what is in the Bible. Since he wished to end his work for the Bible Society as quickly as possible, Erik was not concerned about disapproval from his supervisor.⁴⁷

Initially the British and Foreign Bible Society did not wish to release Erik until his replacement arrived from England. However, Erik's teachings about the Sabbath and not eating pork may have convinced his supervisor to end the relationship as soon as possible. Erik reported to the Foreign Mission Board that the claims of the Bible Society could be settled for \$250 and he would be released on December 31, 1902. The Bible Society was holding on deposit \$150 retained from Erik's salary and Erik offered to use the money to pay part of the \$250. The Foreign Mission Board felt that to be fair the Board needed to pay the entire amount. In their annual report for 1903, the British and Foreign Bible Society reported Erik's successes in the Sin-Yang-Cheo area but that Erik had resigned. The report lamented that "a wide open door has been set before us but the lack of a sub-agent" meant that the opportunity would have to be delayed. Erik built on the hard work of the previous seven months for immediate success in his work for the Adventist mission.⁴⁸

An Adventist Voice in Honan, China

Prior to January 1, 1903, the Adventist mission in China was limited to Hong Kong, Kwangtung (Guangzhou) Province, and its capital, Canton (Guangzhou). Erik Pilquist, whose twelve years of experience included working in Kansu, Shensi, Chihli, Honan, Shansi, and Shantung provinces, and his wife, Ida's ten years of experience, gave the Adventist mission two missionaries with a varied and extensive knowledge of China. They both knew the Mandarin dialect which is spoken in fifteen of the eighteen provinces of China. J. N. Anderson believed that the missionary work of Erik and Ida would "lead the way in what we hope and believe to be a great work for central and north China." When J. N. Anderson and his wife, Emma, arrived on February 4, 1903 at Sin-Yang-Cheo for their first visit to this Adventist mission outpost, they discovered that Erik and Ida had prepared through daily Bible studies over the previous seven months, six Chinese men for baptism. On February 14, as part of the Sabbath service, J. N. baptized these six men in a little stream that flowed just outside the city walls. The next day, J. N. organized this little band along with the Pilquists into the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in mainland China. Erik took J. N. on a visit to an outstation from Sin-Yang-Cheo to demonstrate the interest and need in the surrounding area. In addition to Bible studies and preaching, Erik and Ida were distributing portions of the New Testament which was arousing interest in the Adventist message over a

⁴⁷ *Ninety-Ninth Report*, 266; Erik Pilquist, "A Voice from Honan, China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 79, no. 50 (December 16, 1902): 14; A. C. Selmon, "Hankow, China," *Youth's Instructor* 52, no. 25 (June 21, 1904): 1.

⁴⁸ *Ninety-Ninth Report*, 252, 259; Mrs. J. N. Anderson, "Our Work in China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 6 (February 10, 1903): 11; W. A. Spicer, "Letter, to J. N. Anderson, Dec 26, 1902, R. G 48, Bk 21, 1902," Silver Spring, MD.

large area. A fourteen member boys school had been started by Erik in Sin-Yang-Cheo with one of the newly baptized church members as the teacher.⁴⁹

Even before his release from the British and Foreign Bible Society, Erik had begun translating hymns and Adventist literature into Chinese. W. A. Spicer reported that in a letter to the Mission Board, Erik wrote, "I am working with great delight on the preparation of a hymn book for our use." He was also translating *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*. In July 1903, Erik published an article describing the hymn book, "Songs of Truth" and the first Sabbath calendar issued in China both published in Chinese. He had printed two hundred copies of each, using lampblack for ink. The 2,300 Chinese characters for the hymn book had been hand carved on wooden blocks. The calendar was also printed from hand-carved wooden blocks. Erik stated, "We want to sing the truth as well as preach it here." In this same article, Erik appealed for more missionaries for inland China, a doctor to serve the two million Chinese in Honan Province could not be too much to ask, and a printing press was needed for printing Adventist literature.⁵⁰

During the winter of 1902-03, while planning to go to China as a missionary, Harry Miller received a copy from Erik of his poorly printed hymn book, the first Adventist publication translated into Chinese. Erik appealed to Miller to come to China and bring with him a small printing press to publish much needed literature for the Chinese. Inspired by Pilquist's poorly printed booklet, Miller was finally referred to Barnhart Bros. & Spindler of Chicago. After hearing Miller's purpose and need, they donated a press and some supplies. On July 26, 1903, Erik wrote A. C. Selmon in reply to a letter received from him dated June 15 which was full of questions about China. After telling Selmon of the urgent calls Erik was receiving to teach them of the second coming of Jesus, he told a story of a visit to the city of Sin-tsai, where he held meetings for more than a week. The friends Erik made asked him to move there. When Erik asked for proof that God wanted him there, they found the son of a military officer, one of Erik's best friends when he lived in the city of Ningsha-fu in Kansu Province. This man offered to rent his house in Sin-tsai for \$28.19 per year because, "my father knew Pastor Pilquist in Ningsha-fu and we all want to hear of Jesus." Erik encouraged Selmon to bring the two nurses along because not only did he have a place for the Selmons and Millers, but he also had room for the nurses. Three days before his letter arrived some friends from Sin-tsai spent the Sabbath with the Pilquists. One of them, a well-to-do man, told Erik, "I will let you have one of my courtyards free of charge." Erik had gladly accepted the offer to house the two nurses. He told Selmon of the native workers which included three evangelists, two Mandarin teachers, and a native doctor. In typical Pilquist humor, Erik wrote that the doctor knew anything that did not include common sense. He knew that when "a donkey gets a sore back, the best remedy is to tie an old shoe to the donkey's tail." Erik expresses his willingness to help them learn the Chinese language. "The first year while studying the language you should not be alone. I have been working with the China Inland Mission eight years and they have it so arranged that new-coming missionaries always stay in the training school or with an older missionary for study of the language.

⁴⁹ J. N. Anderson, "Our Work in Central China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 28 (July 14, 1903): 16; Anderson, "Central China": 11.

⁵⁰ Erik Pilquist, "A Letter from Honan China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 29 (July 21, 1903): 15-16; W. A. Spicer, "Hymns of Zion in a Strange Land," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 79, no. 51 (December 23, 1902): 5.

After a few months study we can go out together to see the field and select a place, if we think it is best to move on, but never be alone the first year or until you get the language."⁵¹

China Inland Mission missiology

Missiology has been defined as the study of religious missions and their methods and purposes. Erik Pilquist drew upon the missiological methods that he learned in the seven years that he worked with the China Inland Mission (CIM) in training the six American missionaries who had joined him in Honan Province. Hudson Taylor's personal philosophy defined the operation of the CIM and is well-expressed in this quote: "We wish to see churches and Christian Chinese presided over by pastors and officers of their own countrymen, worshipping the true God in the land of their fathers, in the costume of their fathers, in their own tongue wherein they were born, and in edifices of a thoroughly Chinese style of architecture." Erik was an example of a missionary who completely identified himself with the philosophy and methods developed by Hudson Taylor. One instance of this can be seen in his method of teaching the Chinese language and not allowing the missionaries to be on their own until they could communicate with the natives as explained above. Examples of Hudson Taylor's methods such as the priority given to the unreached in the inland provinces, identification with Chinese dress and wearing the pigtail, indigenization through training Chinese co-workers, living and worshipping in Chinese houses, treating the sick, widely distributing Christian literature, and working shoulder to shoulder with native workers can be found in the articles written by Pilquist and in the descriptions by others about his activities. A. C. Selmon described Erik's itinerations through the countryside, "I have been very much surprised to find little companies of inquirers springing up here and there wherever Brother Pilquist has stayed a week or so and preached. He has just returned from a few days visit to a city of fifteen thousand people about forty miles from here. He was there last year, and preached to them, and now there is a company of ten or twelve who are inquirers. They have meetings in private homes, and are keeping the Sabbath as best they know how." In the year previous to the arrival of Selmon and the other new missionaries, Erik described opening three preaching stations, starting a company of ten in a place 100 miles from Sin-Yang-Cheo, and having more calls than he could answer. Sometimes Ida and the two girls traveled with him, riding in a wheelbarrow that shook, sometimes kicked up dust and sometimes slogged through mud, while Erik walked along beside them. Although Erik had two well-trained workers, Mr. Fan, the school teacher and Mr. Chai, the evangelist, he hoped to add one or two more soon. Selmon and Miller studied Erik's methods and made plans to itinerate in the same way. They wanted to fit up a Chinese cart as a traveling dispensary and travel around preaching the Gospel and healing the sick.⁵²

⁵¹ Harry W. Miller, "The Beginning of the Printing Work in China," *Mission Quarterly* 6, no. 5 (extra) (1917): 13; Harry W. Miller, "The Outlook in China," *The Welcome Visitor* 7, no. 24 (September 9, 1903): 3-4.

⁵² Justice Anderson, "An Overview of Missiology," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John M. Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 7-8; Justice Anderson, "The Great Century and Beyond (1792-1910)," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John M. Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 214; Pilquist, "A Letter from Honan China": 15; A. C. Selmon, "China, Sin Tsai Hsien," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 81, no. 15 (April 14, 1904): 17; A. C. Selmon, "Honan, China," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 29 (March 17, 1904): 15; A. J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century, Book Four: Survivors' Pact* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), 356.

J. N. Anderson expressed his thanks to God and described Erik's first meeting with the new missionaries in Hankow. "Less than one year ago Brother Pilquist asked for one new worker and a small hand-press, and now that has been multiplied by six . . . I do not wonder that Brother Pilquist smiles and feels elated with his new children, whom he is now assisting in getting settled and acquiring the language." One of the first things that Erik suggested to them was the need to provide themselves with Chinese garments. He quoted a Chinese proverb, "When you enter a city, inquire its customs." He further explained that many westerners had found it best to adopt Chinese clothing to avoid drawing undue attention to themselves as "foreign devils." On Sunday, November 1, 1904, they went shopping in the Chinese section of the city to choose Chinese garments. Erik interpreted for them but there was much confusion over the styles and colors. Unfortunately the men chose dark blue gowns, such as servants wear, rather than the light blue that they should have purchased. The women could not bring themselves to wear the trousers that Chinese women wear and "compromised by wearing black skirts and blue kimono-like, knee-length gowns. The men and women felt like the 'awkward squad' . . . But as they moved on they were glad they made the change. More and more they would belong to China and merge their interests with those of the people." There is no adequate description of the two men adding pigtailed to their everyday attire. Sometimes missionaries pinned the pigtailed to their caps while others braided them into their hair. The Chinese clothing and the wearing of the pigtail is part of the training Erik received from the China Inland Mission staff.⁵³

Further Research

This paper has been an attempt to discover the backgrounds of Erik and Ida Pilquist and how they came to play such a significant role in the initial development of the Adventist China Mission. I have attempted to explain the early influences that shaped their work in China and how they impacted the methods used by the early Adventist missionaries in bringing the Gospel to China. Further research is needed to complete the story of Erik and Ida. The careers of other missionaries such as A. C. and Bertha Selmon need to be researched and made part of the story of Adventism in China. How the Pilquists influenced Harry Miller needs to be addressed. A good missiological history of the Adventist work in China needs to be written. However, in researching the early beginnings and the work of Erik and Ida Pilquist, I am awed by the magnitude of the task these early missionaries took on.

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⁵³ J. N. Anderson, "[Letter]," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 81, no. 8 (February 25, 1904): 20; Harry W. Miller, "From the Diary of Our Missionaries to China," *The Welcome Visitor* 8, no. 3 (January 20, 1904): 1; Bertha L. Selmon, *They Do Meet: Cross-Trails of American Physicians and Chinese People* (New York: Preben Press, 1942), 26.

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