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IS GOD ALMIGHTY?

"**B**UT with God all things are possible." These are the words of our Saviour, but taken from their setting, and glibly quoted as they often are prolific of confusion and care. Their misapplication has sent many earnest souls heavily burdened on the pilgrim way.

In the 19th chapter of St. Matthew we read of our Saviour leaving Galilee and journeying in the regions beyond Jordan followed by great multitudes. Some of the Pharisees who were among the multitude came and drew out Christ to speak on the subject of husband and wife and he lays down a new law on the subject of marriage; and the ideal of a pure and inviolable marriage is prepared as the symbol of the Church's Life. In verses 13-15 he then deals with the subject of children. If we remember the relation of this chapter to the idea of the Church, we cannot hesitate to see that the Church is a Christian nursery, in which the tendency of the disciples to despise the little ones is corrected by Christ's own loving interest and welcome of them.

Next to the question of wife and children, the most important practical regulation in the Church is that on property. In verses 19-34 we have Christ's teaching, further enforced by a characteristic incident. The point of the incident is this: worldly possessions may obtain such a hold over even a well intentioned mind that wealth may be a real hindrance to living the life of filial obedience to God. In the case of the young ruler (Luke xviii., 18) the whole danger is laid bare. His great possessions were an idol. The suggestion of surrendering this idol shewed

him his own heart, notwithstanding all his other good purposes he was the servant of Mammon. In this chapter Christ shows the difficulty of entering the Kingdom with a load of wealth. To the Disciples it seems impossible after Christ has used the figure of the camel and the needle's eye, and in reply to their astonishment Jesus says "with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." The only remedy for possessions, the only way by which riches, great or small, can cease to bar the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven is to let God into our life and let Him work. If God has complete control, and if He is recognised as the only Good, then goods are no longer a danger or a barrier; all things belonging to the Kingdom become possible then.

How many people detach these words and quote them in a meaningless fashion. They tell the children that God can do everything, and many grow up with an idea of God's Omnipotence which is misleading and harmful. During the years when the great war was raging, how often the cry came from those whose hearts were pierced with great sorrow and whose homes had been made desolate—Oh why does not God stop the war! How can a God of Love allow such things to go on? Is He not all powerful, we have been taught that with God all things are possible. Then at times some have gone further and with David Elginbrod have said what they would do if they were Lord God. These troubled hearts thought that by some material physical means God should interfere and break the power of the mighty. God does break the power of the mighty, but His ways are not our ways. Man's method of fighting social and moral evil is to go for it direct. God's way, Christ's way is to hide a little leaven, or bury a seed and wait. It would save much confusion in later years if parents and teachers were to point out to the children that there are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot call back the word that is spoken, the arrow that is sped, the days that are wasted.

"Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds:
You can't do that way when you're flying words,
'Careful with fire' is good advice we know,
'Careful with words' is ten times doubly so,
Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead
But God Himself can't kill them when they're said."

To say at times you recognise the limitations even of God Himself, and there are good earnest souls look at you in amazement as though you might be among the sceptics, but God must be limited by his own nature, character and purpose. If God be Love, He cannot do those things in which love has no place. If God be Holy and Just, He cannot deal with us in ways that are unjust and unholy. If God's purpose regarding us is that finally we shall awake bearing his likeness, He cannot interfere with those chequered experiences which are working out that great purpose. We have only to think a little and we shall see that God is limited by His own nature, character and purposes.

God must also be limited in His work. We read that on one occasion Christ could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief. Even God cannot make man free without giving a twofold possibility to men. The possibility of using that freedom aright, or abusing it and using it for wrong ends, make wars or bring about peace, make sorrows or make joys. God could not make man free, give to him a sense of values, of things higher and lower and then make sin impossible and while appreciating the higher, could not go for the lower.

There are certain departments of life in which God can do nothing without human co-operation. He can never make men receive His redeeming grace apart from their own will. There are cases where even God cannot help a man because the human factor needed is missing. There is the place of *if* in all the great matters of human life. *If* any man thirst. *If* any man will open the door I will come in. The potential greatness of human life is found in this, that a man can stand up and oppose God, and when God says "come" he can say "I will not" or he can say "Yes. Here am I send me." Men can co-operate with God and find the life, that is life indeed, or he can oppose God and go on his way to his doom.

We can be sure of this that if God has given to man a freedom within a certain realm, God will not sacrifice His own honour, and seek to interfere with that freedom. Life may be described by a series of concentric circles. There is the great outside world of which we take little heed and from which we get little notice. Then there is an inner

circle of acquaintances, then an inner circles of friends, then another more inward, in which are a few intimate friends, just as Christ had the three he chose to go with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration. Then there is a circle into which the one goes who is more than friend and finally the one where God and the Soul meet; God only goes in there where we lift up the latch and open the door and say "Come in." He is always ready to come in "if any man *will*." He won't force His way. His honour is at stake. He has given to man his freedom, He won't abuse it. In that central chamber the man himself is master. In every life there is an executive government, that executive government is the will. Force of character is proportioned to strength of will. We can have our wills recharged from the superabundant energy of the strong son of God, but God Himself won't act for us against our will. To do it He would be untrue to Himself and that, He cannot be.

It is when we get into that inner or rather inmost circle, that we come face to face with personality, that which lifts its voice and says—"I"—and saying it, stands for ever separate from all the rest of humanity. What do we mean by this letter or word, "I." It is the shortest, most mysterious, most wonderful word in this or in any other language. It is always on our lips, and yet on the crowded high-ways of the world, the one person we know least of all is this personality that lifts up its voice and says "I."

All day long we are using this little word "I." I do, I think, I feel, I love, I remember. It lies deeper than *thought* or *feeling* or *will*. It is that which thinks and feels and wills. How soon though are we made to realise our limitations. How often we have to say, "I cannot." But there is no danger or fear of forgetting our limitations even though there may be of forgetting God's.

We read in St. Mark's Gospel vi. 36, that the disciples came to Christ and asked him to send the hungry multitude away to go and buy themselves bread, for they had nothing to eat. These disciples were asking Christ to do the Divinely impossible. No, Christ could not send the hungry multitude away. He turns on the disciples and says "Give ye them to eat" he commands them to do the humanly impossible, to feed such a multitude with such

small supplies. But to talk of a Divine impossibility sounds like a contradiction in terms and to many the words at once come to the lips "with God all things are possible." How do we realise that things are impossible with us? Our powers of execution are not equal to our desires and purpose, we can will, but cannot execute. We are sharing in an experience of the great Apostle Paul when he declared, Romans vii., 18, "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." We can *will*, but cannot *do*. God knows not of this contradiction. What He wills, He can perform. In this respect Christ is the same. He said "I have power to lay it down (His life) and I have power to take it up again." When at the end Peter felt drawn to use his old sword to fight for his master and Christ had told him to put his sword into its place (Matthew xxvi., 52) the Saviour further says, "Thinkest thou now that I cannot now pray to my Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Under the aspect of weakness our Saviour knows that he possessed immeasurable strength.

What then do we mean by a Divine impossibility? Have you ever had news brought to you by some tale bearer of one whom you have loved and honoured having done some deed you felt to be incredible. You could have trusted him with uncounted gold and now report has it, that he has been dishonest. After hearing the report you exclaim "Oh he could not do it." Do you mean that physically he could not stretch forth his hand and take it. Oh no, you are not thinking of any physical impossibility, but a moral one. You feel that the act is so contrary to the character you know, that to you it is morally impossible. Divine impossibilities then are deeds altogether contrary to the Divine nature and character. In that sense it was impossible for Jesus Christ to send the hungry multitude away. It would have been a contradiction of His character, Jesus Christ, Friend of needy men, and Saviour of all would not have been true to Himself. He would have ceased to be the Christ who came to seek and to save that which was lost, if when the day was far spent He could have sent the hungry crowd away and never lifted His hand to help them in their need. In that case also Jesus Christ was limited by His nature and character and purpose, but the recognition of the fact does not detract from His

greatness, but only serves to crown Him with greater honour and glory. While recognising such limitations in God and finding Salvation from some disappointments, we are not less ready to sing Hallelujah, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

MORTON GLEDHILL.



“THIS MINISTRY”—THINGS FOR THINKING OUT. No. 2.

ONE preliminary word. This is the *second* of a brief series of articles. Various things have caused delay and so it is twelve months since the earlier script appeared. For any delay due to himself the writer hereby offers apology.

In writing these articles we are keeping the mirror on our table and setting it right in front of us, so as to keep in mind of what sort we are, and so to write that we shall be speaking to men of like passions (and powers) as ourselves. We are not writing for men of genius—*they* are so few that we should scarcely find enough readers to reward us, moreover *they* have no need of such suggestions as “just an average rank-and-file man” can give them. And we are not going to the other extreme and write for the “duds.” There is no room for them in “this ministry.” Even the smallest and most obscure church needs other than such, perhaps *needs* the able man even more than stronger churches do. No! this is a rank-and-file utterance for rank-and-file men.

The present article is concerned with “THE FIRST DAYS OF OUR ACTUAL MINISTRY.” The days of preparation, few or many, well-used or ill-used, are over, and the man is now face to face with his hoped-for and longed-for work, or at least with the prospect of it. *Where* and *how* shall we begin? Various openings will probably appear. Churches of various sizes, demands, and opportunities will seek his services. How shall he choose? The *ideal* way will be with one or other of these two things. *An assistant pastorate in a strong church with an experienced minister, or a pastorate in a village church.* If the former is chosen the senior pastor will see to it that

the beginner shall not be overwhelmed by *outside* calls. If the latter is chosen there will not be the temptation arising from a multiplicity of engagements. Now I realise there are things to be said per contra, and so I want to deal with them—to consider (1) the objections that may be raised, and (2) the advantages that should accrue.

1. *Objections* to either of the two courses above-mentioned may be various. First of all the student ready to “settle” may, with some plausibility of argument, say “Have I not already given four years to the work of preparation, four years of strenuous classwork under the guidance of well-equipped, experienced and wise teachers? If, even now, I am not prepared for the responsibilities of pastoral life and work when shall I be?” In reply to which let it be said a very little experience will show disparity between that which a man possesses and that which he needs, and further experience will go to show still greater disparity. The work of a minister of the gospel is always exhaustive in its character, and exacting in its demands, and never more so than in the present day, and in urban life, so multiplied and so various are these demands that a man settled as pastor in a populous place will find himself before he has gone far, condemned to a wretched hand-to-mouth existence, and work as he will his output will be in substance thin and poor. “But if I got a village pastorate, with its few sheep in the wilderness, shall I not be in danger equally great? Not of the same character, of course, but just as real though of the opposite sort—viz:—stagnation.” Thus the young man may argue—to which we reply with a question “What sort of man are you?” Stagnation! with, say fifty souls to care for, two sermons every Sunday, an address for the week-night service every week, and with those books on your shelves *waiting to be read*, not merely turned to for help when sermonising, and so only glanced at, but read, thought about, meditated on. Stagnation! If you are in danger of that, get back into business, dear brother, “This ministry” is not for you. “But the isolation, the lack of fellowship, the want of quickening contact with other and kindred minds. Buried away in some little Slocum-in-the-Marsh, I shall surely lose all zest, and forfeit all chance of usefulness.” My dear brother—possibly in an earlier day there might have been something in what you say, although, even then

what resources were there! To speak of nothing else, *those books* on your shelves and God's great wonder-book all around you, but now, to-day, with all the multiplied and varied facilities for travel—motor-bus, motor-cycle, even the poor almost-despised "push-bike." What occasion is there for isolation of any kind except that which is altogether helpful, i.e., the isolation of quiet which gives a man his best unbroken-into opportunity for study. But turning from one alternative to the other—the Assistant-Pastorate—"I want room and opportunity to test my powers and develop them." The assistant-pastorate will surely give these. It would be one of the easiest of tasks to point to man after man in different denominations where such pastorates have been the prelude to great things. In our own denomination one could name men who to-day are our leaders, and amongst our Presbyterian brethren, one could turn to man after man in the foremost ranks to-day, who yesterday, served under the wise and gracious guidance of a Senior Pastor.

2. But now what are the *advantages* likely to accrue from one or other of these alternatives? These may be briefly stated. In the case of the village pastorate there is *opportunity for laying broad and deep the foundations of knowledge*. The *great books*, not of quotations and illustrations wherewith to spice the sermons, but the great books that furnish a basis for our life-work. These can be quietly, and without break, studied, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. Then character, more individualistic in the Country Village than in the town, can be studied more fruitfully because the canvass is not so crowded. Fewer specimens, each more marked. Finally nature, that great always-open volume can be read more clearly in the country than in the fog and murk of the town.

"He builds for aye who builds on nature's solid ground." Quiet communion with nature is hearing HIM who speaks in "the voice of gentle stillness." In the case of the assistant-pastorate there is equal opportunity, but of a different kind. *Opportunity of seeing how it is done*. Assistant-pastorates can, of course, only be where and with men who have laboured successfully, and to be with such, to see and note how they work, with what tools and instruments, in what fellowship and with what

following, how they lead and guide, with what tenacity, and yet with what tact, they seek to use and make great the opportunity afforded them as leaders of a great and consecrated community of men and women, this surely is for the young minister a privilege and opportunity of incalculable worth. How many mistakes might be avoided, how many lessons learned, how much fitness be acquired for the following years by the young man who thus "moves on" from College days into the incomparably great work of "This Ministry."

CHAS. INGREM.



RELIGION IN SWEDEN—STATE CHURCH AND FREE CHURCH.

An Address at the Croydon Minister's Association by the President, Rev. Gilbert Laws.

THE permanent introduction of Christianity into Sweden is chiefly, though not entirely, due to the work of an Anglo-Saxon missionary from England, Seigfreid by name, who, with English and Danish co-adjutors, began the work of converting the Swedes in the eleventh century. Within a century the work was completed and the country has been nominally Christian since the reign of Eric the saint, the outstanding monarch of the early period of Swedish history. That twelfth century king was a practical compound of our Alfred the Great and our Edward the Confessor, and round his name the first history lessons in the kindergarten gather to this day.

In Eric's time Sweden obtained its own Metropolitan, by separation from the diocese of Hamburg. The new bishop settled at Uppsala. Notwithstanding all the changes that have come about since, first the Reformation, then the shearing away of political power and privilege, and then the changes due to the rise of democracy—changes neither few nor small, that ecclesiastical chair has never been overturned, nor has it ever lacked an occupant. It is a fair claim that Dr. Nathan Soderblom, the present adroit, versatile, capable, and sincere cleric who is Arch-

bishop of Uppsala, stands in unbroken succession to King Eric's first Christian bishop.

But Sweden was affected greatly by the upheaval on the continent in the sixteenth century, Luther's influence passed over the Baltic and became potent in the Scandinavian countries. In Sweden it became paramount and ever since the country has had a strong German element in its culture, and strong German affinities in many directions. Gustavus Vasa, the grandfather of the better known Gustavus Adolphus, and the real maker of modern Sweden, worked with and through the Reformation. Himself a convinced adherent of the reformed doctrine he employed scholars in the translation of the Bible. The Swedes have had the blessing of the Scriptures in their vernacular since 1526. The ecclesiastical establishment was under Gustavus Vasa, new-modelled on Lutheran lines, and in spite of some debate between Lutheran and Reformed, of which Rome sought to take the utmost advantage, a settlement was quickly effected. With ourselves the Reformation was a protracted affair, but the Swedes somehow quickly arrived at an understanding, and the Lutheran State Church then set up has lasted until now.

I.—The State Church of Sweden as it exists at present has some features of interest to-day when ecclesiastical questions are receiving so much attention. Its government is episcopal. Sweden is divided into a number of dioceses in subordination to that of Uppsala. The very close reliance of the church upon the throne is seen when a bishopric becomes vacant by the death, resignation, or promotion of its occupant. Three likely men are nominated to the king, I think by the Archbishop, but I am not positive about that. Observe that the nomination is made to the sovereign, not to the Prime Minister or Parliament, and the king personally makes the final choice, which the church accepts. The church then proceeds to the ecclesiastical part of the due installation of the new bishop. The Church has always been, and still is, associated with the privileges of the throne rather than the authority of Parliament.

About this Swedish episcopate there are grave dubitations at Canterbury. Canterbury has not made up its mind about Uppsala in the same decided way that

Rome has made up its mind about Canterbury. From the point of view of apostolic succession, Canterbury cannot bring itself heartily to acknowledge the Swedish episcopate as sufficient. To use a Lambethian distinction it seems to be real but lack authority! Yet Canterbury is too polite and well-bred to put Uppsala where Rome puts Canterbury. In fact Canterbury is more perturbed about the matter than Sweden is, for I gathered that most of the Swedes are as little disturbed about Canterbury as our Evangelicals are about the Pope.

During a four days journey on steamers in company with a suffragan bishop of the Church of England, the reasons why Canterbury looks with a doubtful eye upon the Swedish episcopate were explained to me by my fellow traveller. One is that the ministry which is dependent on these bishops has no diaconate. There is no third order of ministers. There are only the two orders—bishops and presbyters (*prest* is their word, meaning either presbyter or priest according to the predilection of the man using it, just as among high and low church here in England). This is a terrible affair in the eye of my informant the bishop, this ordaining of men direct to the priesthood (or presbyterate, if you like the term better). In vain did I assure the bishop that Canterbury itself had no deacons, all the deacons in England being in Free Churches, and that those junior ministers of his Church, call them what he would, were not deacons in any scriptural sense. This remark of mine caused a distinct chill and I subsided. The bishop was there to teach, not to be answered.

Another Anglican doubt about Swedish orders, which the bishop mentioned to me, arises from the fact that Confirmation among the Swedes is not a rite which can only be administered by a bishop. It is in fact usually administered by the Kyrkoherdar, that is to say, the vicar or incumbent of the parish. I said that if there must be such a ceremony upon the admission of young people to full membership in the church, the local minister who knew them best was a fitting person to administer the same. This to the bishop was another shocking idea.

This state church, whatever Anglican superciliousness may think about its orders, have been a most effective barrier against Rome. Romanism is practically non-existent in Sweden, and the Swedes are the despair of the

Pope. There might be found, say in Stockholm or Gothenburg, a Romish place of worship, but it would be used by foreign diplomats or traders. Popery was finished, absolutely finished, at the Reformation. The nation with its virile qualities, its open eyed love of freedom, and its devotion to education is Protestant through and through. No seeds of Rome's revival have been preserved in Sweden's national church as they have in ours. Sweden has no more use for Popery than for Mahomedanism or Buddhism.

From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, the state church had Sweden to itself. It had a clear field and no competitors, or shall I say, in more kindly phrase, no other church to help it in the evangelization of the Swedish people. The laws against dissent in any form were very stringent in their character and were rigidly enforced. The state church retained much of the old Roman framework of organization, though it rejected the Roman doctrine in favour of the evangelical, or at least Lutheran, system in belief. And it also retained not a little of the Roman spirit of intolerance and exclusiveness. The clergy did not lose their political power by the reformation. They continued to form the fourth estate of the realm down to as late as 1865. And how this power was used may be inferred from the fact that down to 1860 conversion from Lutheranism to any other denomination was punished with exile and confiscation of property. The first Baptists were victims of these laws: some being sent out of the country. Nilson, the first Baptist pastor in Sweden was imprisoned. I have had in my hands the lock off his prison door which is preserved as a relic in the office of the Baptist Union in Stockholm.

Exclusive privilege is bad for any church and secular power in ecclesiastical hands is sure to be abused. Exclusive privilege, protection of the law, special favour at the court and from the throne, did not preserve the church from formality and deadness; indeed, it is arguable that those doubtful prerogatives contributed to that deadness and formality. In the middle of the nineteenth century it was said that the emigration which then assumed such dimensions as to frighten the government was caused as much by the barrenness of the Swedish church as by the barrenness of the Swedish soil. It was out of the soul-

hunger of a people by nature religious, reverent and worshipful that the Free Church movement, to which I shall refer in a moment was born. Seventy years ago religious life was so low that sufficient candidates for the ministry could not be obtained; and such a shortage obtained in the ministry itself that there were not enough clergy to supply the parishes.

Before I pass on to speak of the modern Free Church movement let me say something of the state church as it is to-day.

The usual dress of the clergy resembles the presbyterian rather than the Anglican. The bishop is not distinguished from his fellow presbyters except by the gold cross he wears. The music in cathedrals and churches is different from ours. The choir, for instance, sits not in the chancel, but over the west door, or, as *we* might say, in the back gallery. This is universal, in cathedral, church, (and dissenting chapel) alike. The clergy sing versicles from the altar, and sing them beautifully in the larger churches, and the choir sing the responses from their place over the west door. This part of the service, as rendered at the cathedral service at the Life and Work conference, for example, was very impressive, the sonorous tones of the precentor coming down the long church and the deep tones of the organ and sweet voices of the women in the choir floating back again in an answering wave of sound. When an anthem is sung all the choir members rise from their seats and come together in a compact little group in the balcony before the organ. They are conducted with a baton by the leader, as with us on oratorio occasions. This looks queer. But inasmuch as they are not in the eye of the worshippers it is not as disturbing as one might think it would be. Women and men, no boys, compose the choir, and they sing divinely. The congregational praise consists of chants and hymns. The hymns are of the German chorale style, and, of course are sung slowly. The people sing in unison, the men have strong voices, use them freely, and the effect is that of men singing unison, with the organ providing the harmony. The organs I heard are tremendously strong in the diapason quality, the voicing of the pipes being much rougher than we are accustomed to. They seem, as an organist would say, all bottom. The sweet tones of our English organs I did not

once hear, either in church, town hall or musical academy. Speaking of church praise I may here remark that Sweden's Free Church people have drawn freely on American and English hymns and tunes of the Sankey type, and it is a little curious at first to hear them sing some lively tune, say "Diadem," about the pace of the Dead March. In a Free Church you may be caught that way. You will be listening to the hymn and a sense of familiarity will come over you, but you will be baffled to identify the tune. The notes will seem friendly, but the hymn will be over before it dawns upon you that it is a Sankey tune sung slowly. I like their own tunes much better, some of the old Swedish church music, sung in a country church for my special benefit was very fine. My friend and interpreter, Pastor Swedberg, who arranged my tour among our people in Norrland, tells his people that they are foolish in trying to sing these tunes which do not suit them, and which they do not understand. They had better stick to their own tunes, he says; and any one who has heard them sing "Hela Världen" or "Ack Saliga Dag" would agree with Pastor Swedberg.

II.—I must now pass on to say something about the Free Church movement in Sweden. There are three Free Churches in Sweden. The first I can only call Congregational, though the Churches of this group do not bear that name, and I do not know how they stand in reference to English or American Independency. The group is called SVENSKA MISSIONS FORBUNDET. The popular name for their buildings is Missions Kyrkan, I believe it was not permitted to any one in former times to use the word "Kyrka" for any building not a state church, but that is now relaxed. The Congregationalists, as I will call them, have 80,000 members. Some of their church buildings are very fine. From my bedroom window in Stockholm I could see a building with two galleries, one above another, seating over two thousand persons. A few years ago it was full every Sunday. The Congregationalists have a good College near Stockholm. I was invited to go and see it and say a few words to the men, but my engagements did not permit.

The Methodist Church of Sweden is the smallest of the Free Churches. They have about 30,000 members. Their origin is due to the labours of George Scott, an

Englishman who went over there, learned the language, and settled down to do his life's work among the Swedes. I had the pleasure of meeting the daughter of that able and devoted man in the home of one of our Baptist professors when I was over there this last time. Like all the Scott family they have both languages with the perfection of natives. For a Swedish lady to be accomplished in English is nothing unusual, but for an English lady to be accomplished in Swedish is another matter. Few trouble to learn the language of a nation who only number in Europe six million people.

The Methodists have been supported financially by American methodists. In one or two places where I came across Methodist chapels, I did not find, on enquiry, that they were making much headway. Ministries that have to be supported from without do not make much advance. It is the same everywhere on the continent. Especially is this so in the Latin countries. The money that has been spent in promoting evangelical work in Italy and in Spain has produced only the poorest of visible results. It is of course different in the north. The Baltic has a different air from the Mediterranean, but still even in northern Europe it is a doubtful blessing to sustain from without a work that cannot hold itself up from within.

If I say more about the Baptists than the other two churches it is only because I know more about them, and have lately spent three weeks in visiting their churches in different parts of the country. Seventy-seven years ago the cause was started and to-day there are 600 congregations and about 60,000 members. The Congregations are much larger than the membership. In proportion to the population of their country the Swedish are stronger in numbers than the English Baptists.

Seventy-seven years ago a Swedish sailor named Nilson was converted in a seaman's Bethel run by Baptists in America. Nilson was baptized and, full of zeal, he worked for Christ among seamen and their families on the quays at Gothenburg. He won many to the Saviour, and they naturally looked to Nilson as the big brother and friend. Nilson forsook the sea and became the shepherd of the little flock that the Chief Shepherd had given him. Very great difficulties were encountered by the infant church. There was the difficulty of their position before

the law. They had no right to be. Their very existence was illegal. In short they found themselves in the position of the early Separatists in England. They were harassed by the police, denounced by the clergy, and insulted by the mob. The upshot was that after a few years of it Nilson's church in church meeting assembled resolved that all who could should sell up and go to the United States of America, which they did. So in 1853 an unnamed, unknown and unsung "Mayflower" departed from Gothenburg more than two hundred years after the original "Mayflower" sailed from Plymouth.

Nilson's story is too long to tell—how he sojourned in the states, returned to his native land, appeared before kings as well as before magistrates, departed again to America and disappeared from the front line, relapsing into silence, no man knows why, broken in nerve, it may be, or broken in heart, belike.

Time would fail to tell how endurance of the Free Church anvil finally broke the hammers of state oppression ecclesiastical and civil. And it is not necessary to tell the heirs of Barrow, Green, Wood and Penry, and of Bunyan and Keach, what the story is. It is just our father's story over again in Sweden in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Powerful reinforcements came in time to the faithful few. The son of a nobleman adopted their views and was prepared to preach them and take the consequences. Another recruit appeared—a university scholar who had had six unhappy years with his conscience, trying in vain to believe the pure doctrine of Lutheranism that infants were regenerated in baptism, and lost without it. He also felt the difficulty of his position when compelled by law to administer communion to manifestly unconverted people, graceless and profane. This ex-clergyman undertook to convince the Baptists of their errors and started a treatise for that purpose. But as his studies advanced the treatise began to point to an unwelcome conclusion. When it was completed and published, the eagerly awaited book was found to be an argument for the faith he had undertaken to confute. He also followed his conscience and took the consequences. Wiberg was an accesion. His university training made him an admirable Principal for the seminary the Baptists established when liberty actually came in the seventies.

Baptists and other Free church men in Sweden stand in close touch with America. There are many Swedes in the States, and there are young men going out and men who have made their bit going back home continually. The links are many. Everyone has relatives in America. Many of the Free Church pastors are American trained, and have perhaps held Swedish pastorates in the States. Most of the Swedish pastors I know have been to America. The Northern Baptist Convention for years helped the work in Sweden, though now there is no longer need for them to do so. They helped the work with their money in the best of all ways. They trained men for the work. They found and sent over a young American-born Swede who had been a Colonel in the United States Army. This young soldier, K. O. Broady, was a Colgate University man, and an earnest Christian. He came over to Stockholm and for fifty years was principal of the Bethel Seminary which has done so much for the evangelization of Sweden. I had the privilege of giving the opening address at the Seminary last session to the forty men and ten women who are being trained there for the home ministry or for the foreign field to-day.

The pastors at work in Sweden are fine men. In the towns they have large congregations and exercise a wide influence. The President of the Baptist Union of Sweden, Dr. Ayström, was a member of parliament for twenty years and a good number of Free Church laymen have also served their country in parliament. Even in the country-places the men I saw and stayed with were of high intelligence. They could all read English and German, both languages being taught in the Seminary. It was a great pleasure to walk round a village as I did on many different occasions, with the pastor and see the respect in which he was held; and then in the evening to address a meeting in the chapel, which would be crowded to the doors, although the harvest season was not yet over. In some places nearly the whole population will be found in the Free church. Behind that fact there is usually the story of a hireling ministry in the parish church, or a worse story still. In another parish the Free Church may not have any footing at all, and behind that there will be the story of a live and powerful ministry in the parish church. There as here churches live not by ecclesiastical

principles be they never so unassailable, but by the gospel itself. The best principles will not avail without good men, and poor ecclesiastical arrangements cannot prevent good men from doing good.



LIBRARY NOTES.

The new boxes have now all been despatched and we are greatly indebted to the Librarians who undertake to distribute the books each month.

Librarians are urged to collect the books and to *promptly* despatch the boxes on the dates mentioned on the printed list pasted inside the cover.

Our usual plan is to send a box of five books to a group of five members of the B.M.F.U., but we are pleased to hear from any member who may be too remote to join such a group with a view to supplying him with books for his own reading.

All communications respecting the Library should be addressed to the Hon. Librarian, Rev. W. H. Pratt, 235, Selhurst Road, South Norwood, S.E. 15.



SECRETARY'S NOTES.

WILL members please note that the Annual Meetings will be held at Leeds this year on Thursday, May 6th. The Meetings will be as follows, viz. : Business Meeting in "The Snug" at Oxford Place Chapel at 4.30 p.m., a United Tea in No. 1 room at 5 p.m., and the United Meeting with the British and American Fraternal in the same place will follow the tea, when addresses will be given by our President, Rev. F. Goldsmith French of London and the Rev. Dr. Cameron from Canada.

All Subscriptions for 1926 were due on 1st January, 1926, and should be paid not later than the Annual Meeting at Leeds. It is only as the Subscriptions are paid promptly and regularly that we are able to issue the "Fraternal" regularly each quarter.

Any Nominations for the Council must be sent to the Secretary by the middle of April next.

PRAYER UNION NOTES.

WE are quite sure that our Prayer Union Members will be glad to have the following greeting from Dr. F. B. Meyer, who was the founder of our Prayer Union, and for so many years its President. It was intended for the New Year, but was a little late for insertion in our last number—

Dear Brethren,

It is a real pleasure to salute you once more in the Name of our Lord. The ranks of the veterans are becoming thinned; but, thank God for younger men, who are catching the torch from the failing grasp of the old generation and are bearing it forward.

I am deeply impressed, as I travel in this country and beyond, at the urgent need for teaching on the mystical or spiritual aspects of our Holy Religion. In so many cases, congregations welcome with special emphasis, references to the New Birth, the Pure Heart, the Life hidden with Christ in God, the anointing of the Holy Spirit for Service etc.

I am aware that the members of this Brotherhood will be always at work in keeping these to the front; and I only note them to encourage the maintenance of such testimony.

As I review my life, one of the outstanding matters for thankfulness, is that Mr. Birrell, in my first charge, urged on me, and led me to adopt the habit of systematic exposition of Scripture. I owe to that habit more than I can express, for nothing is more salutary to Pastor or People, than to let down our pitcher into the deep truths of Psalm, Gospel, or Epistle.

With my love,

Your Brother and Friend,

F. B. Meyer.

During the past three months, we have heard from several old members asking for New Cards of Membership. These we are always pleased to send on. The following New Member has been enrolled.

W. R. Weeks, B.A., Astley Bridge, Bolton.

Brethren wishing to join the Union, or writing for New Cards of Membership should communicate with the Prayer Union Secretary—J. E. Martin, The Manse, Erith, Kent.