

Messenger and Visitor

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1896.

SYSTEM IN CHURCH WORK.

One most important department of church work has to do with the exercise of watch care over the members. In most churches this is left to the pastor, the church doing nothing until the delinquent member has strayed away so far that it is necessary to take action with a view to exclusion. Then a formal committee is appointed, the brother or sister is visited, a report is brought in, and the church takes action according to the information afforded. We profess to believe that the church is a family, that all members are brothers and sisters in the nearest and dearest sense. What would be thought of the family that would permit one of its members to drift away from home and its restraints and privileges, and make no effort to reclaim the straying one until the question of disowning him, out of regard to its own reputation, was forced upon it? No, brethren, this is not the true way. Each member of a church should feel that he could not see any one getting into danger through inattention to privileges or duty, or through worldliness and perilous associations, and not use his kindest impetuosity to arouse him to a sense of his condition. Such efforts as, 'on the part of fellow members, often are more effective than any exhortation of the pastor. His visits are regarded as ex officio, while those of fellow members are felt to be due to pure kindness, to personal and loving interest in their best welfare.

What grand work might be done, how many might be saved from inconsistencies which mar their usefulness and cripple the moral power of our churches, how many who make shipwreck of profession might be held to safe anchorage, how much higher the average of christian service might be made, were all our churches to adopt system in the matter of watch care over its members, and employ the energies of their members as generally as possible in this useful work! What a help it would be to those who sought to hold the weak and the erring to safety and service! How hard it would be for Satan to wrest any away from the clinging hands of this general and loving watch care!

Neither would it require much effort. Let there be a certain number whose special concern it shall be to look out for the tempted, the unwary and the weak. Let there be appointed as head of this department one of the most earnest, discreet and loving of the members. Let those who have the oversight of this vital interest of the church meet once a month, say. If any have been neglectful of any of the services of the church, if they have not appeared at the preaching, prayer-meeting, but especially at conference or the Lord's Supper, let it be arranged for some of their best friends to speak to them in a kindly way. Those who have charge of this department need not do all the work themselves, only see that it is done. The best way would be to find out the best friends of the delinquent ones, and get them to use their influence. In this way young converts could be cared for; measures could be taken at the beginning of the lapse into carelessness, before more confirmed indifference was reached, and the most effective work be done. If a simple plan like this were adopted, we believe all our churches might have full prayer-meetings, after a time, and there would be little occasion for extreme discipline. Such watch care as this has to do with the very foundations of church success. It would do more than can be told to keep all the services of the church well sustained. The habitual attendance of all the members would lead the way for a much larger attendance of others. The work would go on steadily, instead of in the fitful way which is now so common, and which is so disheartening. Who can tell what such regular and systematic watch care should not be exercised? If we are all our brother's keepers, in any relationship, surely we are in this. If our Lord desires us to act in harmony with the great law of love to our brother, there can be no doubt, but that here is one of the ways in which it should be displayed. What pastor will attempt to get his people to adopt some plan in dealing with the erring and the neglectful in his church? Is the matter not of enough importance? Especially should this be attempted when churches are revived; because they are in a better position to attempt such work, and because such work is especially needed to prevent a lapse into old coldness. Most of all it is needed on behalf of the young converts, to give them work to do, and to help them over the dangerous time when the first flush of new love and enthusiasm are passed, and they settle down to the warfare of the Christian life, which must be done steadily to ensure constant victory and onward progress.

OUR FINANCES.

Have all our readers read the financial statement contained in Bro. Colborn's last report? Have those who have read it taken in its serious import? More than half the year gone and only about \$1200 received, while \$8,000 are needed to carry on the operations of the year. This means we have received but about one sixth of what is imperatively demanded to close the year free from debt. This state of things is staring us in the face, notwithstanding that this has been a year of special blessing in our home mission work. Reports which have cheered and stirred our hearts have been coming in week after week. Wonderful power has attended the labors of our general missionaries. On many destitute fields a rich harvest is being gathered in. Other than mission churches are receiving outpourings of power. And yet where our hearts should be all aflame with an ardor of self devotion, the work of the Lord is left to suffer and to be in danger of being crippled because the Lord's people do not give the means necessary to carry it on with efficiency, and there is a probability that we shall require the Lord for his special goodness by flinging a debt into his face when the year ends. We do not wish to evade; but it does seem too bad that our great denominational enterprises must be left for the most of each year to be run on borrowed money, and be saved, if indeed they are saved, from a crippling debt only by means of frantic appeals. This way of doing things by spasms is not helpful to either growth in grace generally, or to a deep interest in the great work of our body in any of its departments. If the demand made by our work for aid were unreasonable, it would be different. But surely it is not too much to expect that 40,000 Baptists should give \$40,000. If they gave half of this to the convention fund we should have more than we now receive. A few of our churches give regularly, but the most delay their contributions until the last of the year. This leaves the work of the various Boards hanging in uncertainty during the eleven months of the year. It is impossible, under these circumstances, to carry on the work with the confidence which is either most comfortable or most conducive to success.

We have mentioned but one department of our work; but this is a sample of all the rest. It will not do for us to delay longer. The means must come in better than they promise, up to date, or our work, never more promising, will have to be curtailed, when in full career. If this necessity is forced upon our Boards, will the Lord hold us guiltless. For us to compel the limitation of a work which God is blessing so abundantly must be especially displeasing to him, for he gives success to stimulate to greater devotion. Let not any one who has not given as the Lord has prospered him, pass by this appeal with indifference. These words are spoken on the Lord's behalf, and he will hold each reader responsible for the way in which they are regarded. It is not pleasant to write thus or to read what is written; but the state of our finances must be laid before our people in order that the danger which threatens the Lord's work may be averted. Let there be an immediate effort all along the line. If the churches have not yet begun to work on any system or plan, let them begin at once. If the Lord is blessing any church with special outpouring, let no one suppose this anything but a stronger reason why this effort should be made.

There can be no doubt but that the Lord would reward the devotion of the people's means to his work with still greater blessing. There is a great responsibility resting upon our pastors in this matter. It is expected that they should lead in all denominational work. Unless they do so, they act as hinderers rather than helpers. Our ministers are loyal and true, we believe, still some of them may have been a little careless. Let every one now, for the sake of the great interests imperilled, do his best to meet the pressing demand. It is a matter which has to do with the salvation of precious souls, and so is of unpeakable importance. Our Lord expects it of us.

CHURCH LETTERS.

A member of a church is granted a letter of dismission from his own church to unite with some other church. To whom should this letter be sent? To the dismissed member, or to the church to whose watch-care he is commended? It is the general practice to send the letter to the member dismissed; rather than to the church. Is this proper: is it best? We believe it is neither. The letter of dismission is addressed to the church to which he is dismissed. It seems but proper, therefore, that the letter be sent to the clerk or pastor of this church.

If it were always done, it would save many members from drifting away from church membership altogether. As it is, a member receives the letter of dismission and it is put into his trunk. He goes to his new home. His spiritual life may be at a low ebb; the sense of loneliness in new surroundings is upon him; he may be a little timid about presenting his letter; the sentimental dislike to sever connection with the old church comes upon him with redoubled force; he is a stranger, perhaps, and there may be a sense of coldness which repels him; he may be tempted to take time to look around; the pastor is not notified of his coming, and does not pay him the attention which is so much relished at this time—these and other reasons cause

him to delay handing in his letter. Because he does not identify himself with the church where he lives at once, he fails to gain interest in her work. Indifference grows upon him. Finally, when the pastor finds out his case, it may be that he no longer cares to take upon himself the yoke of church membership, and makes one more of the great army of those who drift hither and thither, and waste their lives. How much better had the letter at first been sent to the church to whose watch-care he was dismissed.

Just here, it would be well if our churches would attend to another matter. Perhaps it might naturally develop upon our pastors, chiefly. Our members leave for other places. They take no notice. They are not urged to do so. No notification is given to the pastor of the church whither they go. There is no one to have a kindly care over them. Many of them never settle down, as church members, to christian service. All this might have been saved had they been commended to some church or pastor on their departure. Some of the other denominations are justly very careful about this. Shall we not also, be equally solicitous about our members as they begin life elsewhere?

We are glad that brethren in the United States are beginning to bestir themselves in this matter. We have received the following communication, which we gladly publish, and commend the suggestions contained in it to the attention of our pastors and churches:

OFFICE OF THE SOCIAL UNION COMMITTEE ON CHRISTIAN WORK, BOSTON, MASS., Feb. 18, 1896.

Dear Brother:—An Exchange has been established in this city by the Committee on Christian Work for the purpose of aiding young men and young women from the country to find a home in some Baptist Church and Sunday School, where they may be under religious influence, and thus, in a measure, protected from the many temptations incident to a city life. In order to make this benevolent agency a success, the Pastors in the country must co-operate with the Exchange. The method suggested is for the Pastor to notify the Exchange promptly, when a young man or young woman comes to Boston, of their place of business and residence in the city.

After receiving this notification, the Secretary will at once see that they are called upon by some one who will take a friendly Christian interest in them, invite them to some place of worship and Sunday School, and introduce them to the Pastor and Superintendent. Will you heartily co-operate with us in this good work?

Yours very truly, REV. T. J. B. HOWE, Sec'y, 41 Temple Place, Boston, Mass.

QUESTIONS.

What is to be done with a member of a Baptist Church, in good standing, who joins a Methodist Church? He has disowned the church and her doctrines. The church he has left has no choice but to ratify his action and withdraw the right hand of fellowship from him.

Can you tell me why Ministers and Evangelists, who say that baptism means sprinkling, are continually praying "Lord baptize us with the Holy Ghost?" They probably mean by this expression, give us the spiritual power bestowed upon the disciples at Pentecost. They do not stop to consider that if the sprinkling of a few drops of water constitutes baptism, their words express the very opposite of their desire. It is only when baptism is regarded as immersion, and the true translation, baptism in the Holy Ghost, is given, that there is any force in these words. Still we doubt if it be well for Baptists to pray to be baptized in the Holy Ghost, as it is pretty evident that baptism in the Holy Ghost was the special and overwhelming influence and possession of the Holy Ghost peculiar to apostolic times, to endow men with miraculous gifts and fit them for the special work then to be done.

1. "Is it right to use the Articles and Covenant of the American Baptist churches or St. John Baptist churches, in a Nova Scotia Baptist church, instead of their own Articles and Covenant." 2. "Is it right for a Baptist minister to invite a minister of another denomination to preach in his pulpit, without the consent of the church he preaches to." 3. "Is it not according to Nova Scotia church usage, to invite members of sister churches, in good standing in their own churches, to their Communion?" 4. "Has a minister any right to alter the usages of the church, without the consent of the church?"

1. (a) There is very little difference between the Articles and Covenants mentioned. (b) No single church is bound by any Articles; it does not adopt, it matters not if they have been sanctioned by associations. (c) When there is no conscientious scruple in the way, it is better for all our churches to use the same Articles. (d) The pastor should use the Articles and Covenants adopted by the church. 2. The church gives the pastor charge of its pulpit. If there is no objection to having brethren of other denominations preach, we see no reason why the pastor should need permission from his church to invite one of these to preach for him any more than to invite a minister of his own denomination. 3. Yes. 4. Certainly not. He accepts the pastor's, knowing the usages of the church. The church accepts him as pastor on the understanding that he concurs in them. He should be true to this tacit understanding. If he ever finds his conscience in re-

volt against these usages, he should state the change in his views, and give the church a chance to act, or he should withdraw. There are minor usages, however, relating to methods of church work, &c., and involving no doctrine or scripture principle, where the same case is not needed. In no case, however, is it expedient to attempt innovations until the church has considered the matter and decided favorably.

"Which is best, to ignore the Scriptural Ordinances of the church as the Salvation Army do, or change them as the Pedobaptists have done?"

Sincere Pedobaptists do not consciously ignore Christ's commands. Hence the moral effect is not so bad as though they did not suppose they had obeyed them. On the other hand, it is probably harder to convince them of their error because of their supposed obedience, and when they are convinced, they are apt to think the old ceremony counts for something, because of the sincerity with which it was associated, to quiet their consciences, and refuse to act.

The Churches' Need.

If ever there was a time when the churches, composed of professed evangelical Christians, needed a fresh edition of the letters dictated to the Apostle John by the Spirit of God, given us in the opening chapters of Revelation, it is in this period of the world's history.

As we see the members of our churches through our rinks and theatres, dancing, playing cards, reeling under the influence of intoxicating drink; when we see the costly display of clothing and jewelry in our church pews, and listen to the frivolous and perhaps slanderous chatter emanating from the lips of those who profess to belong to God, we seem to hear again the trumpet tones of the voice that spake those words of warning to the seven churches of Asia. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place unless thou repent." "All the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent."

In all these warnings we see the reiterated assertion that unless the churches repent of their backsliding under condemnation. Ought we not to take heed to ourselves lest the same threatened condemnation light on us? "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which shall persevere in His goodness; otherwise thou also art cut off."

It is easy for us to sit in our easy chairs and pass on the Salvation Army. But see the fruits of their efforts. What church can show such an ingathering as they? Allowing that some of their conversions are spurious, can we with our defective membership dare to "cast the first stone" at them? Gamaliel might have addressed to us the words he spoke to the council at Jerusalem, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God."

Surely their self-sacrificing lives ought to shame us who are so self-indulgent, so worldly, so half-hearted. And yet we owe the Lord as much as they. His life was laid down for us, by his stripes we are healed; and the salvation of others ought to be a matter of equal importance to us as it is to them, but—is it?

The want of a deeper spiritual experience in church members may be due in a large measure to the superficial way in which the bible is studied, if studied at all. When our Lord said, "search the scriptures," he meant search, and not read only. We must compare passage with passage, and study one epistle at a time, find out the state and character of the people to whom it was addressed, so as to get at the true meaning of the apostle's words. Some people are apt to take a single text and base their belief upon that instead of considering the context of the passage. For instance, take John 10, 28; how many quote that text to prove that their eternal life is secured to them by the initial act of faith with which their Christian life began, quite irrespective of their present attitude to God.

But they have merely divided a sentence and ignore the first half. Let us read it as it stands in the bible; "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

So we see "eternal life" is promised to those who hear the Saviour's voice and follow him. Now, is it "following" Jesus to engage in worldly amusements, or anything on which we would hesitate to ask God's blessing? Is it not rather a "forsaking" instead of a following? Then we dare not claim this promise, for he says, "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven" and, "if we deny him, he will also deny us."

Then another hindrance to our progressive godliness may be found in the passive acceptance of a low state of religious feeling. How many of us get no further along than the 7th of Romans, and have no practical conception of the Apostle Paul's meaning when he wrote the second verse of the 8th chapter—"For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Miss F. H. Havergal says "it is impossible that the 25th verse of the 7th chapter of Romans could have been written at one and the same time as the 2nd verse of the 8th chapter. They are clearly consecutive."

When we come, through faith, to this blessed realization of freedom from the bondage of sinful habits, desires, and passions, then we begin "to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint," because we are "looking unto Jesus" and in the sunshine of his smile our fleshly appetites and self-pleasing desires have no longer any power over us, and we know by glad experience that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

The full assurance of eternal salvation can only be truly realized by those whose lives are utterly surrendered to Christ, and "as we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

God grant that we as church members, Christ's professed followers, may indeed follow him fully, and that the reproach of worldliness, of lukewarmness, of unfaithfulness may no longer rest upon us.

Halifax, N. S. M. S.

The MESSENGER AND VISITOR has tried to hold the standard of church life high, as its readers can testify. We would not lessen the force of words of protest against the inconsistencies of church members. May the Lord apply to the hearts of those who need their searching power every passage quoted from his word! Still we think the picture of church life drawn does not represent the general life of our churches. We believe the statements in the first paragraph a slander upon the most of our churches, and a correct representation of none. Still some of the charges, perhaps all, may be true of a member of our churches here and there, and we have to mourn lax discipline. We do not like the disposition to see nothing but evil in our churches, and nothing but good in other organizations. We prefer to make the best of the body which seeks to follow the commands of Christ as to organization and ordinances, rather than the one which submits to the despoiling of Gen. Booth, as he disregards both the organization and the ordinances. So far as the Salvation Army excels our churches in any way, we hope they may be quickened to a similar or a greater devotion. But we do not propose to help disseminate prejudice and suspicion of the body through which our Lord designs to press forward his purposes of grace—"through which" we say; for the church was formed for this purpose, and God will still use her to this end until it is accomplished. We have no doubt but that the churches are doing the work to-day upon which alone very much dependence can be placed. Very properly, they do not sound a trumpet before them, and their work may not fill so large a place in the public eye, comparatively. Neither do we believe that our pastors suffer in comparison with the officers of the Salvation Army. Having to minister to the same people longer than a few weeks, they require more time for study than do those who remain in any one place so short a time, and who need to do so little thinking anyway. So far as the reference to the easy chair of the editor of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR is concerned, the one who occupies it is willing to compare records with the hardest worker in the Army. Neither do we think the advice of Gamaliel is well applied. If we understand it aright, it teaches us that we are to let anything alone, and wait to see its issue, when we cannot determine whether it is good or bad. This would make it necessary for christian people to hold aloof from the Salvation Army until their work had proved itself. So far, however, as anything is in direct violation of the plain teaching of scripture, there can be no doubt as to its nature, in respect to that thing, and there is no need of any arrest of judgment. If Mormons should come into the place, should we need to let the teaching of polygamy alone? Why, then, should we feel compelled to allow the systematic ignoring of Christ's commands as to the ordinances, etc., alone? Do we think it can be right to disregard what our Lord commands for the sake of what Gen. Booth enjoys? We would leave them alone to do anything good; but as long as

we can hold a pen, or speak a word, we shall protest against what is plainly contrary to the teaching and principles of this New Testament.

In future we shall require correspondents who criticize our utterances in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR to write over their own name. This is but requiring in our own behalf what we insist upon in the case of others.

Our Great Need, and How to Supply It.

We have shown that the chief cause of our great dearth of efficient pastors is insufficient support; and have prescribed the remedy. Until it is remedied, do what we will to increase the supply, I have no hope of permanent improvement.

We pass now to consider another cause, viz., the absence of sympathy for young men desiring to enter the ministry. This want of sympathy is seen—

1. In the church to which the young brother belongs. No matter how poor he may be, how hard he may have to struggle to get a start, or how much self-denial he may have to practice in order to obtain the education necessary to fit him for the work, but seldom does the church proffer the helping hand. Is it surprising that there should be but little affection for the church which manifests so much indifference? And does not this indifference prevent the formation of one of the ties that should bind our young men to us?

2. In the reluctance of many churches to receive the services of the student missionary. If the young brother has proved himself to be a good workman, and is reputed to be a good preacher, they are ready enough to say "Come;" but if he has not yet had the opportunity to prove himself, they shrink back. Now, it is readily admitted that the churches cannot be too careful in guarding themselves from unworthy men. They should receive none who are not satisfactorily recommended. But to refuse the services of a worthy young man simply because he has had but little experience in preaching is to put a barrier in the way of his gaining that experience. The church should remember that the young man whom they now refuse may in a few years be the one they will wish to secure as pastor.

3. In the little attention given by the denomination to the matter of assisting ministerial students. True, we have had a Ministerial Education Board for some time; but reference to their financial statements will show that the amount received by any student has very rarely exceeded \$20 per year. In consequence of this, several young men have left our institutions and sought assistance elsewhere, and so have been lost to us. Thus, after going to the expense of establishing and maintaining institutions of learning, in order that our young men may receive their training at home, we fail to keep them with us, because of our neglect at this point. Here is a mistake that should be rectified at once. Some way should be devised by which the ministerial students at Wolfville could receive sufficient assistance to enable them to complete their course there.

Now, there are two methods by which assistance is given to ministerial students. The one usually followed by Ministerial Education boards is to donate to each student a certain amount. The other, followed by Toronto Baptist College, is to furnish employment to the student sufficient to enable him to earn the needed funds. To my mind the latter is the better plan. At any rate, in the present state of denominational finances, it seems to me to be the only one by which we can give any adequate assistance to our young men.

For the carrying out of this plan let the Home Mission and M. E. Boards cooperate. Let the H. M. Board on the one hand furnish employment during vacation to all licentiate satisfactorily recommended at a fixed rate, say \$7.00 or \$7.50 per week, clear of board and travelling expenses. And let the M. E. Board on their part, pay to the Home Mission Board a fixed sum, say \$30.00 or \$40.00 for each student so employed. By this arrangement, each student employed would receive about \$120.00 per year instead of the \$20.00 now paid by the M. E. Board, and that too without having to feel that he was dependent. Should further assistance be needed, the Home Mission Board could arrange to furnish some work during term time, and the M. E. Board could deal with special cases. In this way we believe that with a comparatively small outlay, all our young men could be helped through their course at Wolfville. At the same time they would be doing much valuable mission work, and be made acquainted with our churches and our churches with them. As the result of this mutual acquaintance more of them would return to our churches at the completion of their theological course.

A. CROSBY, Hebbron, N. B., March 2nd, 1896.

—Rev. Dr. Eaton whose work brings him in contact with the Theological Seminary at Louisville, has discovered a new disease among the students. He calls it "matrimonial bronchitis." He says it is fatal to theological students and often puts an end to their theological studies. When seriously afflicted with "bronchitis," they usually leave the Seminary and the next thing that is heard of them is that they are married.

Student Free The constitution of the Society of Ministers changed the faculty are aimed at around missionary work as its work as existing mis- denunciations trespass on the difference? executive com- We therefor of all churches the coming (1) Chur- port stand- apply to the alion Board w- located. (2) quire aid will signed. As the stud- ist May to be made Jyo. H. Garri- Chair- McMaster I. Recogniz- The follow- cognition serv- Baptist church- new pastor, Th- Thursday of Rev. J. C. Bl- church, presi- Voluntary In- vocation, An- them, "I- choir. Prayer, by Hand of Dykeman, by Eymon of W- Address to Address An- them, "I- choir. Address of Dykeman, C- collection. An- them, "I- sing," by the Benediction. There was a- standing, the- were pleased- is that the div- tant blessing Feb. 26, 188- Seventh In connect- "Seventh Day- a word of testi- "By their f- What is the- stitute the Se- Lord's Day? about 50 years- tells me that h- to the strictest- ventists in a- were quite au- of the doctrine- vation, is that- are brought up- ance, observe I- Seventh Day- elements tend- England Sabba- gets into the r- right to oppos- off. Dosto- "VITAL ORTHO- On Monday, Cook delivered series of his lec- The re-ude w- enology of the Cook spoke of- ance with muc- His audience w- Two nation- earth, mourn- many mourn- his emotions, I- intellect, in his- far of fire thro- morning watch- troubled the ho- off their chario- John B. Gon- library work- who has add- people, and wh- than would rea- globe. Mr. Cook gav- Gough's early a- one time he wa- to buy rice and the age of 20, John B. Gough- ance. He said, for his tempera- he ran through- vious exhaustio- of the drunkard- Let God be in- evil into good- suffering, with- we should never- pathy with the- denos that the- be uplifted from Mr. Gough w-