

**THE CLASS-LEADER'S MANUAL:
BEING LETTERS ADDRESSED TO
A CLASS-LEADER, ON ALL
MATTERS RELATING TO HIS
OFFICE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649532780

The Class-Leader's Manual: Being Letters Addressed to a Class-Leader, on All Matters Relating to His Office by Henry Fish

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HENRY FISH

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LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO A CLASS-LEADER,
ON ALL MATTERS RELATING TO HIS OFFICE.

BY

HENRY FISH, M.A.



THE great multiplication of virtues upon human nature results
upon societies well ordained and disciplined.—**Lord Bacon.**

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR:
SOLD BY J. MASON, 66, PATERNOSTER-BOW;
AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1849.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY JAMES NICHOLS,
HOXTON-SQUARE.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

	Page.
Of the Office of Class-Leader.....	1

II.

Of that Species of Christian Communion which makes the Office of Class-Leader necessary.....	15
--	----

III.

Of the Qualifications which a Class-Leader should possess	43
---	----

IV.

Of the Duties of a Class-Leader	60
---------------------------------------	----

V.

Of the Duties of a Class-Leader to his Members ...	72
--	----

VI.

Of the Duties of a Class-Leader, as it respects the financial Regulations of the Connexion, his Brethren in Office, the Ministers of the Word, and the Meeting, of which, by Virtue of his Office, he is a Member	86
---	----

LETTER VII.

	Page.
On the Difficulties with which a Class-Leader has to contend	123

VIII.

On the Advantages and Duty of Christian Com- munion	134
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THE
CLASS-LEADER'S MANUAL,
&c.

LETTER I.

OF THE OFFICE OF CLASS-LEADER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—In addressing you respecting the office which you hold, it may be well for me, in the first place, to say something which will serve to illustrate the relative position which you occupy with regard to the Wesleyan-Methodist ministry and churches.

The church of Christ, ever since its formation, has had various orders of office-bearers. The New Testament scriptures and ecclesiastical history abundantly confirm the truth of this statement. In the primitive church there were "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and

teachers." (Eph. iv. 11.) "God," says the apostle, "hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. xii. 28.) All these offices were of Divine institution. They seem to have been necessary to the state of things which the gospel dispensation introduced. They were adapted, by Infinite Wisdom, to the exigences of the times in which they were exercised. The whole of them, however, were not intended to be of permanent duration. Some of them were altogether of a supernatural order, and these came to an end with the age of miracles: the gift of prophecy failed, and of tongues ceased, and of knowledge by inspiration vanished away; but others of them were ordinary, and intended to be as durable as the world. These remain, and are exercised among us at this day.

But, in addition to officers of Divine appointment, the church of God has always had officers of human appointment; although such officers have had nothing contrary to holy scripture connected either with their appointment or their duties. The appointment of *such officers*, whether it be the appointment

of precentors, as among the nonconformists, or of churchwardens, as among episcopalians, may be ranked among positive institutions, or prudential regulations, needful either to the financial or spiritual well-being or to the good order of the churches in which persons so appointed officiate. Such is the nature of the office with which you, as a Leader in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, have been invested. It is purely of human institution, although from the beginning it has evidently been stamped with the Divine approbation. The circumstance in which the office originated was, in itself, simple; but the beneficial and glorious results which have followed prove it to have been providential, and therefore of God. It may be interesting to you to know what that circumstance was. I will furnish you with an account of it as it is given by John Wesley. It appears that what were designated "Religious Societies," existed previous to the formation of Methodist Societies, and the appointment of Leaders, of which I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.* To

* One of these "societies" met in Baldwin-street, Bristol, previous to the period that Mr. Wesley visited this city. Of this Mr. Durbin, of whom there is some