

**PASTORAL WORK
IN COUNTRY
DISTRICTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649668151

Pastoral Work in Country Districts by V. S. S. Coles

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V. S. S. COLES

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PASTORAL WORK IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS

LECTURES DELIVERED IN THE DIVINITY
SCHOOL AT CAMBRIDGE, LENT, 1905

BY

V. S. S. COLES, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE PURKY HOUSE, OXFORD

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1906

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PASTORAL WORK IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS

I

MISSIONARY AND PASTOR

MY privilege of speaking in this place is very great. For twenty years I have known at Oxford what an opportunity is open to a teacher, who though he may be so made that the knowledge of books is not easily held in his mind, and so far to blame that in his younger days he took little pains to mend the defect, has yet not been allowed to lose the gift of faith, or to be wholly blind to what God has been doing about his path ; and the generous invitation which brings me here sets me free to say, "What I have, I give." Generous it certainly is, for it must be well known that part of what I have, coming from the Pusey House, is a deep conviction of the divine character of the Oxford Revival, springing as it does (it is not ended yet !) from the appeal to the Church undivided, and aiming, as it always must, at the

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Church reunited. There is, indeed, a deeper possession which we all have in common—the conviction of faith in our Incarnate Lord. This is the best of the things which any man has, so that he can give them to others. But also, I ought to add that I am fain to use one other thing which has been given me—a life-long tie with village people in the West of England, among whom I was born and brought up, and served them for twelve years, and love them better than Oxford or Cambridge, for their own sake, and the good hand of God upon them.

So it is of Pastoral Work that I am to speak, and specially pastoral work in English country life.

And I begin by saying that, strictly speaking, pastoral work is only one part—the greater and higher part no doubt, but yet only one part of that for which we are called. There is the other great work of the missionary, besides that of the pastor.

The Holy Scriptures, while they show us that it is the will and plan of God to work on men by men, give us two pictures of the agent called and sent to this work: the picture of the Fisherman and the picture of the Shepherd.

No doubt the Shepherd's office is the higher, for our Lord Himself bears it. He is the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd Who goes after the lost

sheep, and it is His own example that He sets forth when He says: "Be the shepherd of My sheep," while it is the disciples, and not, by that name, the Lord Himself, who are to be fishers of men. But the lower work is the preparation for the higher, and indeed goes along with it, ever ready to supply need and amend defect; the two offices are closely interwoven; marks of each are found in the other. Nevertheless, it is by seeing the distinction between them that we can best learn what is common to both.

In every Christian country the missionary has come first. St. Aidan and St. Augustine were to us what Bishop Hannington and Bishop Smythies have lately been to Uganda and Central Africa. In that first stage the leader is prominent. The subordinate pastor has not yet his local limits and his appointed flock; it is war time, and every officer is at his general's disposal; they are seizing, buying their opportunities; taking keen advantage of every right moment, and yet daring to act at what, but for utter need, would be the wrong moment; ready for everything, in that "rare" good sense which the Lexicon allows to St. Paul's *πανουργος*, catching with guile, catching alive for repentance and knowledge and recovery the fish hidden in the wide waters, that they may be brought to the fire of the Lord. Very different is all this from the ideal of the Shepherd—calm,