

**PRACTICAL ADVICE TO  
THE YOUNG PARISH  
PRIEST; PP.4-124**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649677436

Practical Advice to the Young Parish Priest; pp.4-124 by James Duke Coleridge

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**PRACTICAL ADVICE**  
**TO THE**  
**YOUNG PARISH PRIEST.**

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TO THE  
RIGHT REVEREND  
THE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

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MY LORD,

WHEN I applied to your Lordship for permission to inscribe your name at the head of this small publication, I pledged myself that of whatever kind, or however numerous might be its imperfections, neither the general spirit in which it was written, nor the religious principles advanced in it, were such as I had reason to believe would incur your Lordship's censure. That pledge, I trust, will be found redeemed; so that whatever difference of opinion may exist as to its merits, there will be no just reason for any, as to its freedom from error in doctrine, or uncharitableness in feeling.

But, my Lord, there is another pledge which I cannot but be conscious was implied, though not expressed, in my application, and your Lordship's kind compliance with it,—and which I find it more difficult to fulfil, namely—that I would not indulge in the expression of that gratitude which I sincerely feel for all the patronage bestowed on me while you presided over the Diocese of Exeter, and for your uniform kindness and condescension to me during that period.

I will, therefore, wholly forbear:—most thankful for this additional act of favour, which permits me to conclude by fervently praying, that the Church may for many years possess your Lordship, as one of its most consistent and uncompromising defenders; and by assuring you, my Lord, of the dutiful regard, and unfeigned respect, with which I must always subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's  
Very grateful and obedient Servant,  
JAMES DUKE COLERIDGE.

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many more, a piety at once vacillating and lukewarm; in almost all, a preference given to things temporal over things eternal. The good resolutions made during a long confinement in a sick room, to which *he* has been the frequent visitor, he will too often see vanish into nothing, on the return of health, "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away." And when, after repeatedly conversing in private with a notorious despiser of ordinances, and in other respects an unholy liver, he feels himself abundantly rewarded by seeing him in the house of God, and learning that he has relinquished his evil ways, the Parish Priest must be prepared for witnessing, in many such cases, destruction to all his hopes of having wrought an amendment, and must not consider as a new or peculiar thing in the ministry of souls, that the seed which he has sown, although good in itself, has not fallen on a good soil. Again and again he will teach publicly the nature of the Lord's Supper, and the duty of being a communicant in it: he will seek opportunities of urging the same point in private; of drawing out the scruples of the fearful, removing the stumbling-blocks in the way of the ignorant and the prejudiced, and rousing the attention of the heedless; he will industriously circulate the most persuasive of the many excellent tracts that have been written on this sacrament;—

but the seed, alas! too often, falls on dry, or hard, or thorny ground, and bears no fruit; and the spiritual husbandman must submit, and be content to act on Samuel's resolution, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way." His plans for promoting the religious welfare of his flock he must expect to see opposed and often frustrated by a worldly-minded, or a schismatical spirit; and his motives for originating them misrepresented and abused; but while he may not be able to help feeling, in such circumstances, as a man, he must never, by word or act, appear to forget that he is a minister of peace.

These, among many others, are his trials of endurance; his temptations of a positive kind are at least as numerous. The apparent ill-success of his labours tempts him to distrust the Saviour's promise of being with his ministers to the end of the world, and he is almost inclined to lie down in despair, and give up the work as hopeless. Whereas, if it please God to bless his ministry with some visible fruits, and his Master's work seem to prosper in his hands; there is fear lest he should forget, even for an instant, how utterly insufficient he is of himself to do any thing as of himself, and that his sufficiency, if any, is of God. Self-confidence is the snare, and a dreadful fall the punishment he may justly expect. In a

small country parish, in which he is concealed from the observation of the world, he must especially beware of idleness and lukewarmness; of a slovenly preparation for the pulpit; a total neglect, or a hasty and superficial discharge of the other pastoral duties, as if the flock were less precious in God's sight because of its smallness, or, perhaps, of its confined range in mental cultivation. He has to resist the temptation which the absence of the world's censure holds out to him, of indulging, to the neglect of his duty, his favourite pursuits, bodily or intellectual; whether these latter be frivolous in their nature, or such as are strictly literary, or even wholly theological. The man who is deeply imbued with the love either of ecclesiastical history, or of the higher and metaphysic divinity, will not find it easy to check his pursuit of it, and will be inclined to appeal to the *character* of his reading in justification of himself; yet, if he has a parish under his care, he must forego every thing for its sake. "Virtutis enim laus omnis in actione consistit," must be his rule; "a qua tamen sæpe fit intermissio, multique dantur ad studia reditus," must be the exception; for the priest's lips, while they preserve knowledge, must pour it forth too in private as well as in public; and the shepherd must often go round about his fold, if he either wishes to prevent his sheep from going astray, or to save himself from being answerable for their doing so. The Country