



Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit

Richard Coles

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit

Richard Coles

Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit Richard Coles

The memoir of popular BBC Radio 4 SATURDAY LIVE presenter, the Reverend Richard Coles. The Reverend Richard Coles is a parish priest in Northamptonshire and a regular host of BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Live*. He is also the only vicar in Britain to have had a number 1 hit single: the Communards' 'Don't Leave Me This Way' topped the charts for four weeks and was the biggest-selling single of its year. *Fathomless Riches* is his remarkable memoir in which he divulges with searing honesty and intimacy his pilgrimage from a rock-and-roll life of sex and drugs to a life devoted to God and Christianity. Music is where it began. Richard Coles was head chorister at school, and later discovered a love of saxophone together with the magic of Jimmy Somerville's voice. Against a backdrop of intense sexual and political awakening, the Communards were formed, and Richard Coles's life as a rock star began.

Fathomless Riches - a phrase characteristic of St Paul and his followers - is a deeply personal and illuminating account of a transformation from hedonistic self-abandonment to 'the moment that changed everything'. Funny, warm, witty and wise, it is a memoir which has the power to shock as well as to console. It will be hailed as one of the most unusual and readable life stories of recent times.

Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit Details

Date : Published October 16th 2014 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson

ISBN :

Author : Richard Coles

Format : Kindle Edition 289 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Autobiography, Religion, Music

 [Download Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit Richard Coles

From Reader Review Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpit for online ebook

Lady Drinkwell says

My five stars are probably for the subject matter of this book. As a Christian who takes a nuanced view it was wonderful to read the story of a Christian who takes a nuanced view. Richard Coles' journey is beautifully described and his conversion is very moving. It's awarts and all autobiography, not just regarding sexuality but also the petty thoughts that went through the author's mind. He is an intelligent and cultivated man and it is very well written. My only slight quibble was that for somebody who claimed to be socially inept Coles knows an awful lot of people and it was rather difficult to keep track of them all. On the whole I adored it.

Andrew Wiggins says

Difficult to review a book written by a friend, especially when it is a very personal look back at his life. It's the first time I think I've read a friend's memoir, so it was interesting to put certain jigsaw pieces in the right places and gain a great many more pieces to almost complete the puzzle.

Richard is witty and self-effacing, it's a very enjoyable read. Though I imagine those interested in the gay pop star years may struggle with the finding God years, and vice versa. I found myself wishing the book was a little longer, especially the first half. Here's to volume 2.

Jo Hurst says

I really enjoyed this book. I admired the honesty which at times does not put the author in the best light. However if we are all honest with ourselves who would come out great I wonder? I was left feeling deeply saddened as I read about loss after loss to the AIDS crisis and felt the pain associated with this leap of the pages. As a teenager in the 80's I enjoyed reading about the Communion years, but for me the best bits of the book were the bits relating to Rev Coles' conversion and faith journey. Who would have thought an autobiography could teach me about prayer and answer questions I have carried for years? I was also overjoyed to see a reference to Prinknash Abbey a place where I have some wonderful spiritual memories. My only criticism is that at times the text jumped around a little which was confusing at times.

Julian says

A very entertaining biography all the more so for having witnessed his rise as a pop star during the 1980s. The spirituality sections are not heavy and it is an easy reading of his remarkable "journey".

Aunty Janet says

A fascinating autobiography from a 'local boy done good'! I follow Richard Coles on social media and love his 'turn of phrase', he makes me smile every day. I have followed his career through local press, met him a couple of times and was delighted to read Richard's 'take' on his career so far.

The book is not complete to his life now, but ends around 10 years ago when he was ordained as an Anglican priest. The days of the Communards are told with searing honesty, describing Richard's jealousy of the attention received by fellow band member Jimmy Somerville. Richard's career has been interesting and also included broadcasting on various programmes on the BBC, particularly on the radio.

I love Richard's writing: he is warm and funny if a touch smug at times! I will be reading part 2 when it comes out next year.

Chris Hinchley says

I really really enjoyed this. The Communards were a big part of my own story back in those far flung days, but what I enjoyed most of all was Cole's unflinching honesty about his own brand of spiritual, flawed humanity.

Jonathan says

A very entertaining autobiography from one time half of The Communards and now media-friendly Reverend Richard Coles. His early life skips along quite breezily, introducing us to his family and background, establishing his middle-class roots in Northamptonshire, before his burgeoning sexuality instigates a move to London and he finds himself involved with a gay theatre group, and later with friend and ex-Bronski Beat singer Jimmy Somerville, establishing one of the best, and most important, gay pop groups of all time (no objectivity here).

Along with success, and good fortune comes the advent of AIDS, and this story is as much a tribute to his many friends who succumbed to the disease at a time when research and drugs were as absent as acceptance and understanding. It can still shock when you read about so many people dying, about the continual phone calls about friends being admitted to hospital, and the never ending cycle of funerals. However, it also serves as a reminder that the gay community came together to do something about it, and to support each other when the government wouldn't.

Moving on, after The Communards split, Richard Coles became a bit of a party animal, living a life of worrying excess. Eventually this came to an end with his decision to visit a church, and, after a few journeys, as he puts it, over the Tiber and back again, his eventual ordination into the Church of England.

Now known as much for his radio presenting as his pop past, this book establishes him as a funny and often movingly honest writer. There is enough of interest for whichever aspect of his life appeals the most, and although I can imagine some of the sexual adventures may be quite shocking to one group of fans, so might the religious zeal to others. In the end there is something for both, or a bonanza for gay Christians, written in an inclusive and witty style.

Luke Leighfield says

The story of how Coles went from drug-fuelled pop star in the Communards to vicar in the church is wild,

and he tells it with frankness and humour.

"I have frittered much in splendour and awfulness, and I have tried to be as candid as I can about that, in order that – if disgraced myself – I do not disgrace Paul's calling: to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ."

Sophie says

I've listened to BBC Radio 4's 'Saturday Live' with Rev Richard Coles for a few years now but only over Christmas did it dawn on me with the encouragement of a relative that this Richard Coles was in fact the same Richard Coles of The Communards fame in the 80s. Wow.

After a brief scan of Richard Coles' Wikipedia entry, I was vaguely interested in hearing more about his life.

At a loss with what to read next I found 'From Pop to Pulpit'.

Firstly Coles is a great talker and an even greater storyteller. His life has been interesting from his coming out, to his sally into an unexpected 80s pop career and more latterly a religious life pivot.

Alone this makes for great storytelling but what makes Coles' writing stand out is his ability to contextualise his place in society with crystal clarity again and again, as his circumstances, actions and society as a whole shifts. His understanding and observation of his own thoughts and feelings within this context renders the autobiography much deeper than the superficial life events trotted out in chronological order of a pop star turned vicar. It instead offers perspective, hindsight and thoughtfulness to a turbulent socio-political period.

The ability to frame his own life events within a much larger picture means we are spared the tedious self-indulged personal detail prominent in so many autobiographies. Instead Coles offers snappy, punctual, humorous anecdotes which carefully bestow upon the reader the impact of the period to Coles himself, a flavour of the event and a reflective self mockery.

Coles autobiography reads as a social history from a very personal (and somewhat unique perspective). It breezes through his life and with each of his changing seasons comes a fresh perspective and lens of which to critically evaluate and self-reflect. It is a story of growth and self realisation against an interesting social backdrop.

The writing style is easy and humorous. Coles is personable, eloquent, intelligent and the personality I've come to know from 'Saturday Live' shines through.

Sally says

Cried and cried....really moving

Amy Westgarth says

For those of us who only know Richard as the kindly vicar presenting arts programmes and failing endearingly on *Strictly Come Dancing*, this was quite eye-opening.

I knew the '80s song *Don't Leave Me This Way* by his band The Communards, but I had no idea how popular and famous they were at the time. Richard talked about the ups and the downs of his pop career and his life before and after, including some sobering thoughts on his sexuality and the AIDS crisis around that time.

Truly, Richard held nothing back and I admire him for that. I remain a little sceptical at his later-life interest in Christianity. As often seems the way, the church manage to find and scoop people up when they're at their most vulnerable, and that's exactly what happened here. Richard talks in the later chapters about bible passages and various church folk he met and became friendly with. I could have done with a bit less detail here, but I understand this calling is important to him.

I didn't know Richard had been involved in so many things. He's led quite a life, a life which I'll bet most people have no idea about. There were loads of interesting anecdotes which I kept having to Google and find out more about. I'm definitely seeing him in a whole new light now.

Helen says

Very enjoyable, well written. Richard Coles is of the same generation as me, so it was interesting to me to see the same things from a slightly different angle. He was of middle England and middle class like me, but of the rather more well-off sort that could afford private education. However, whereas I went down the expected route of respectable 'O' levels and stayed on at school for even more respectable 'A' levels and then straight to university, Richard went a bit off the academic rails and left Wellingborough after 'O' levels for a much more interesting time at a performing arts college/drama college in Stratford, and then off to London. His world and my world crossed a bit during the 1980s and 1990s - recognisably the same, but I think he had a lot more fun. This memoir takes us through his years as a pop star and a gay man in 1980s London. His time with the Communards seems to have been a lot more glamorous than I would have imagined (and in some ways more squalid too). His subsequent conversion and turning eventually to the Anglican church also touches, at different moments, my own life in London at the same time, much of the atmosphere very familiar (e.g. the early rumours of AIDS, although obviously it was far more devastating for someone like Richard Coles seeing so many of his circle affected than it was for me: the only AIDS funeral I attended was at the church where he experienced his conversion, oddly enough). This book is more or less in three parts: the childhood/school/early homosexuality; the pop star years; the religious part, ending with his ordination which is now nearly 10 years ago. His path to the priesthood was tortuous as you might expect. He caught up with his missed higher education after his pop star years. (I had no idea that he had converted to Roman Catholicism and then back again: "Popping" was very common at the time, but usually associated with opposition to the ordination of women or to the remarriage of divorcees, neither of which seems to have been the case here). I attended (and was "not recommended" at) a bishops' selection conference a little before his conversion, and my sponsoring bishop was the grand (and very obviously gay - surely?) Anglo-Catholic prelate who confirmed him. His description of Mirfield is surprisingly negative - it seems to have included all the bad things which could be said of another well-known Anglo-Catholic theological college without the advantages of location which the latter had. I enjoyed this book very much, anyway: reflective and honest, and a wonderful picture of its time (1980s and 1990s especially). It particularly appealed to me because of all the recognisable things (to me: I am of course much more in the shadows, but our worlds are in some respects similar). I wonder whether some readers might be more sympathetic to one part of his experience than the other and therefore find the other part harder to take (gay 1980s London v. religious life), but they

did in fact coincide quite a lot at the time for many people. Painfully honest, too (and I think feeling a bit hurt that so many people did nothing to hide the fact they Jimmy Somerville was more interesting to them is a perfectly legitimate feeling to have had). Great: look forward to whatever comes next!

David Meldrum says

On the face of it, I have little in common with someone like Richard Coles. Although we are both ordained in the Church of England, he's a former pop star, cultural commentator, gay, high church Anglo-Catholic. I'm not. But his humility shines through this book, telling the story of his life up to the point of starting his curacy. Not only is his conversion story the sort of story that wouldn't be out of place at a Billy Graham rally, what's more important is his honesty. Although the set dressing of his life is very different to mine, the constant quest is universal - and the swithering over ordination, the desire to authentically relate to a God who is at once close and distant allow us deep points of connection. It's beautifully written, very funny and very moving. It's a really terrific autobiography, quite different in tone to the usual 'Christian biography' model but deeply faith building and consoling. A book worth dwelling with

Jennifer says

For the first third or so of the book I felt I'd struck gold - I read with a permanent smile on my face and laughed aloud several times. I enjoyed the rest of the book but not in the same way.

The combination of the promiscuous, sex-obsessed culture and the issue of religious faith was fascinating and bemusing.... and downright disturbing at times, especially his description of the atmosphere at Mirfield where he trained as an Anglican priest. I suppose faith and behaviour are not the same thing but he depicts a world in which many people don't appear to think they are related, even in an aspirational way.

He seems to have coped pretty well with the end of 'stardom', perhaps because the spotlight was never quite on him in the first place (however exasperating that was at the time)... and there was some sound financial management too. I also wondered if the fortunes of the family shoemaking business in his teens had helped prepare him for the ways in which circumstances can change and be adapted to.

I was quite frustrated with where the book stopped - his ordination, especially as you were told the first funeral he would have to conduct was of a child killed by a hit and run driver, but not how that went or how he felt about it.

Sarah Louise Leach says

Biographies are so hard to review, you sometimes feel you are giving people star markings for their lives, and I suppose in a sense I am here. I enjoyed this book, and Coles is an excellent writer, there are pages I will cherish and read again for their illumination on various points of religious experience and human psyche. The word I would use to describe the book though is limited. In the sense that I had expected salacious insights into a successful band on tour shennanigans, it is limited, I suppose by Coles writing it in retrospect as an ordained member of the Church of England, so while he is candid about his own activities, he does not offer any gossip about other celebrities, and even in portraying his own past, there is much talking around the detail, rather than detail itself. It is again limited in the sense that he understandably sees

things through the prism of his own sexuality, so the description for instance of his training for the priesthood in Mirfield is only a description of himself and the other gay trainees experience there, not the experience as a whole. It feels like his life experiences as a gay man although rich and varied, are limited rather than enhanced by his sexuality, in the way that some people regardless of sexuality, have. It was interesting to see how closely linked being gay and the politics of the far left were in the 80s, and although boring as hell, he did a good job of recounting this rather than insufferably proselytizing. He admits throughout the book that he struggles with intimacy, and similarly the book is limited in that you can never quite get the feel for him. The only time it does not feel limited is in his descriptions of his religious experience which are sublime , original and palpable. If there is ever an audio version of this book I am sure I may give this another star, as I am certain that verbally he would imbue his words with the warmth missing on the page, as he does have the most charming voice and manner on the radio. I am not a Christian, but if I was I would want to be one of his parishioners because of the clarity, fierce intelligence and affability he brings to the subject.
