

**THE GREATEST  
SERVICE IN  
THE WORLD**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649373901

The greatest service in the world by G. H. S. Walpole

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**G. H. S. WALPOLE**

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# The Greatest Service in the World

BY THE RIGHT REV.  
G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D.  
BISHOP OF EDINBURGH

MOREHOUSE PUBLISHING CO.  
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

*Printed in England*

45205623 ✓

To  
THE THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM  
AND OF  
THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF  
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
IN SCOTLAND





## PREFACE

WHEN, two years ago, I received an invitation from the University of Durham to deliver a course of Lectures on Pastoral Theology to those who were preparing for Holy Orders, I accepted the invitation with the greatest interest, partly because of my associations with Durham many years ago, and partly because such an opportunity would force me to review a ministry which in a few years will have covered fifty years. It had been varied in place, seven years in New Zealand, seven years in America, nearly fourteen in Scotland, and the rest in England; and also in conditions, partly teaching in Theological Colleges, partly working as a priest in parishes, and partly administering a Diocese. And the strangest feature of all was that it was not intended by those who felt they had some right to determine my course. My father, after an adventurous life in distant parts of the world, entered the Army. Having served for some years, he married and took Holy Orders. The life of command necessary to the soldier was ill-suited to the work of the ministry, and was made more difficult, as from the very first he threw

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made, what can I say? In the first place, it has had more adventure. When ordained, I had no intention of going abroad to New Zealand, no thought of or wish to work in America. But "there is a Divinity that shapes our ends rough hew them as we will," and, when the time came, it was made quite clear that I was to leave home and cast my little bark on the untried ocean of the Colonies. It is impossible to over-estimate the gain thus bought. There were difficulties and disappointments, trials and troubles, but the advantages were out of all proportion to the disadvantages. I wish I could persuade all my brethren, after a short spell of work at home, to go out to the Colonial or Mission Field, there to see with their own eyes the power of the Gospel amongst those who, in the bush or the newly-built city, have to face the elemental difficulties of life stripped of all conventionalities, and learn afresh that man's need is the same everywhere. In the second place, the ministry has had, I feel, a wider outlook. They in business, or in one of the great professions, have naturally and necessarily been tied up to a somewhat small paddock, over the fence of which they can only look now and again. To the priest, all the fences are down, and every day it is his main work to see how things which seem distant can be brought quite near, and forces which

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seem to belong to another existence are really operative here. The Kingdom of Heaven, he feels, is right in the very midst. He is not guessing as to its probable influence or the date of its expected manifestation. He is living actually in it, just as the chemist in the wonders of his laboratory, or the musician in the harmonies of his instrument or orchestra. He is learning first-hand and all the time what the powers of the world to come are. His profession, if rightly followed out, compels this; the study, the visits amongst his people, the services in the Church are all profane unless made under the power of the Spirit of God. It is not that the priest intrudes religion into secular or social matters, but that they, so far from being alien, are the material through which religion works. Go deep enough and they are spiritual. There is no division in his mind as to the religious and the secular. So though the effort of faith is serious and sometimes exhausting, it brings its own reward in the larger field and the more distant horizon. He is ever a climber, getting a wider and wider range as he gets up. He makes no boast of this, no more than the Swiss guides whose work it is to be familiar with the great Alpine peaks and the paths that lead to them. It is his necessary work.

Lastly, it has given singular opportunities of knowing Christ's love. In a sense these are