

Foreword

Andrew G. Studdert-Kennedy

I cannot read this writing of the years . . .
I can but hand it in, and hope
That Thy great mind, which reads
The writings of so many lives,
Will understand this scrawl
And what it strives
To say—but leaves unsaid.
I cannot write it over,
The stars are coming out,
My body needs its bed.
I have no strength for more,
So it must stand or fall—Dear Lord—
That's all.¹

IN THE FINAL DECADE of his comparatively short life, in the poem “It Is Not Finished,” my grandfather wrote not just of his sense of failure, but also of the incompleteness of his ministry to which he had given himself so unsparingly. Nearly ninety years later, this remarkably wide-ranging collection of essays can be seen as endeavouring to carry on the work that he himself began.

A charismatic and intriguing character, the story of his life and ministry is simultaneously impressive and impossible: impressive, because he clearly practised what he preached, impossible because the circumstances

1. From “It Is Not Finished,” in Studdert Kennedy, *Sorrows*, 121–22.

in which he did so were so different from those of today. As a fellow-priest, let alone as a grandchild, I wish to emulate him and yet know that I cannot.

His life presents us with a tension because we want to learn from it and yet we are not sure which parts of it can or even should guide us today. The different contributors to this book recognise both the challenge and the opportunity that his ministry presents. While some specifically focus on Studdert Kennedy himself, the book as a whole uses his ministry as a peg on which to hang wider-ranging thoughts and reflections that apply to contemporary Christian life. Each of the essays invites some sort of a response from the reader and is thus an invitation for all of us to learn from the events of the First World War.

The death of both my father, Christopher Studdert-Kennedy, aged ninety-four, in September 2016, and my uncle, Michael Studdert-Kennedy, aged eighty-nine, in January 2017, makes this publication all the more poignant: my grandfather's life, although now even more removed from the current generation, still seems able to feed it. Such distance, however, also provides clarity, and it is striking that the contributions in this book, while appreciative, are not in the least bit hagiographical—a feature of which my grandfather himself would surely have approved.

Accordingly, the family as a whole are greatly indebted to the chapter of Worcester Cathedral for the genesis of this project and we are pleased that it should emanate from Worcester itself—the place that my grandfather regarded as home and where for thirty-five years after his death in 1929, my grandmother Emily (an invisible element of the story) continued to live.

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