Preface

Michael W. Brierley and Georgina A. Byrne

It was a common enough scene in those days, an advanced collecting post for wounded in the Ypres Salient, on the evening of June 15, 1917. Twenty men all smashed up and crammed together in a little concrete shelter which would have been full with ten in it. Outside the German barrage banging down all round us. The one guttering candle on the edge of a broken wire-bed going out every five minutes when a salvo of 5.9's from Pilkom Ridge shook the place to its foundations. A boy with a badly shattered thigh in a corner moaning and yelling by turns for "Somefing to stop the pain." So it had been for an hour or more. Between this Black Hole of Calcutta and Battalion H. Q. Death and Hell to go through. Hell inside and hell out, and the moaning of the boy in the corner like the moaning of a damned soul. "The pain—the pain—my Gawd—the pain. For Gawd's sake gimme somefing to stop the pain."

There was no morphia. That was the horror. Some one must go for it. I went. I went because the hell outside was less awful than the hell in. I didn't go to do an heroic deed or perform a Christian service; I went because I couldn't bear that moaning any longer. I ran, and as I ran, and cowered down in shell-holes waiting for a chance to run again, I thought—thought like lightning—whole trains of thought came tearing through my mind like non-stop expresses to God knows where. I thought: Poor devil, I couldn't have stood that a minute longer. I wasn't doing any good either. If I get through and bring the morphia back, it will be like bringing back heaven to him. That is the only heaven he wants just now, dead-drunk sleep. If I bring it back, I will be to him a saviour from hell. I'd like that. It's worth while. I'm

> glad I thought of that. I can't pretend that it was that I came for. It wasn't. Still I'm glad. He wants to forget, to forget and sleep. Poor old chap. Heaven in a morphia pill.[2]

So runs the account by Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy of the episode during the First World War for which he was awarded the Military Cross. The official citation in August 1917 spoke of his "attending to the wounded under heavy fire," his searching "shell holes for our own, and enemy wounded, assisting them to the Dressing Station," "his cheerfulness and endurance," and his "constantly visiting" the frontline trenches.[3] It was arguably the pinnacle of Studdert Kennedy's work as a chaplain to the British troops in the war, for which he was justly famous, and for which he acquired the nickname "Woodbine Willie."

In the summer of 2014, the air was thick with the centenary of the First World War. The war had featured as a theme in the Three Choirs Festival hosted by Worcester Cathedral, and the cathedral, like many other churches, was holding a service at the beginning of August to mark the outbreak of the war. Two neighbours on the cathedral green, both residentiary canons of the cathedral, both with interests in twentieth-century church history—Georgina Byrne had studied the period 1850–1939, and Michael Brierley, the twentieth century as a whole—viewed the centenary from a theological perspective. They were familiar with recent revisionist history of the church and the First World War offered by a number of scholars, such as Michael Snape and Adrian Gregory;[4] but were not aware of any volume of essays that addressed the First World War from a theological angle. Indeed, they came to the conviction that a theological treatment of the war could be of considerable interest and help to those churches and other faith communities who would be preparing to mark in November 2018 the hundredth anniversary of the armistice. All it took was a bibulous Sunday lunch between the two neighbours at the end of the Three Choirs Festival in 2014 for the idea of a book of theological essays on the First World War to be conceived and set in motion.

2. Studdert Kennedy, *Lies!* 198–99.

3. Carey, "War Padre," 143.

4. For example, a great deal of work has been done in the last decade on British Army chaplaincy in the First World War: see Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, 83–116; Snape, *Royal Army Chaplains' Department*, 175–260; Parker, *Whole Armour*; Madigan, *Faith under Fire*; Snape, "Church of England Army Chaplains"; Howson, *Muddling Through*; and Snape and Madigan, eds., *Clergy in Khaki*. For the post-war activity of Anglican army chaplains, see Parker, "'Shell-shocked Prophets'" and *Shellshocked Prophets*.

Worcester Cathedral was particularly well-placed to produce such a volume, for all three of its residentiary canons held theologically-related doctorates.[5] To our credit, we were not so taken with this distinction as to investigate whether, apart from Christ Church, Oxford, this was unique among English cathedrals. On the other hand, it seemed sufficiently unusual to consider whether our theological propensities might be worth putting to some use. There were further members of the cathedral community with academic inclinations who could be involved in such a project, including the dean, Peter Atkinson, and the bishop, John Inge, who both had theological books to their names;[6] Mark Dorsett, one of the cathedral minor canons (and chaplain of the King's School), who had a PhD on the church and politics; and David Bryer, a lay canon of the cathedral chapter who had a doctorate in medieval Middle Eastern theology.

Worcester was also well-placed to produce a book of essays on faith and the First World War, on account of Studdert Kennedy, who, as well as being one of the best-known chaplains of the war, was one of Worcester's adopted sons: he was the vicar of St. Paul's parish in the city when he volunteered as an army chaplain in 1915; indeed, a commemorative "blue plaque" was erected on the outside wall of St. Paul's Church in 2014. Studdert Kennedy provided the natural starting-point for a series of studies of faith and the First World War. Taking their impetus from his example, the essays would be of relevance not only to historians and churchpeople with a general interest in the First World War, but also to local people. A book of such essays would be a highly fitting tribute for the centenary of his Military Cross, and the return of the Three Choirs Festival to Worcester in the summer of 2017 presented the ideal occasion at which the anniversary could be publicly observed.

A memoir about Studdert Kennedy, *G. A. Studdert Kennedy: By His Friends*, had been published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1929, within six months of Studdert Kennedy's death;[7] and thus far, two further biographies had been written about him. The first was published in 1962 by William Purcell, himself a residentiary canon of Worcester, a clerical biographer

5. Alvyn Pettersen had been awarded a PhD from the University of Durham in 1981 for a thesis on Athanasius; Georgina Byrne received one from King's College London, in 2007, for a thesis on spiritualism and the Church of England; and Michael Brierley one in the same year from the University of Birmingham on the rise of panentheism in British theology.

6. Atkinson, *Friendship*; Inge, *Christian Theology of Place*, drawing on his PhD thesis of the same title from Durham University.

7. Other early reflections include Matthews, "Studdert Kennedy," and (Hugh) Studdert Kennedy, *Arise Shine*, 107–14.

and a former producer of religious programmes.[8] The second was written in 2013 by Bob Holman from the perspective of community action against poverty in Glasgow.[9] In addition, local newspaper material was mined in 1997 by Michael Grundy, a life-long journalist with the *Worcester News* and a member of the congregation at the cathedral, to produce a booklet, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness*.[10] The biographies tip towards the hagiographical; they cannot be described as critical; and they are the product of single voices. There was room for a collection of theological essays that benefited from different voices and that was also academically rigorous. It is telling that while the hagiographical treatments of Studdert Kennedy followed history that suggested that the church performed poorly in the First World War, as though the church wished to narrate a "good story" about itself, the more nuanced assessment of Studdert Kennedy in this book follows the more balanced treatment of the church's role in the First World War provided by the recent revisionist school. During the course of work on this book, we became aware that a new biography of Studdert Kennedy was in progress, by Linda Parker, whose doctoral work on the contributions to the church by former British army chaplains after the First World War had been supervised by Snape and added to the output of the revisionist school, and which she followed up with a biography of another well-known First World War chaplain, Tubby Clayton.[11] We have shared ideas with Parker as much as publication schedules have allowed, and we look forward to her completed volume.

A book of essays on faith and the First World War, evoked by the life of Studdert Kennedy, would not only have local appeal and engage those with an interest in the war, but would also have theological implications for how God and suffering might be associated more broadly still. That is to say, if it is possible to speak of God in the context of the horrors of the First World War, then it might be possible, in other tragic situations, to speak of God in related ways. Hence the title of this book, *Life after Tragedy*: it conjoins two

8. Purcell, *Woodbine Willie*. Purcell (1909–99) was a residentiary canon of Worcester from 1966 to 1976. See further, the obituaries by Richard Holloway in the *Guardian*, 30 September 1999 (http://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/sep/30/guardianobituaries2), and by Richard Harries in the *Church Times*, 8 October 1999, 20.

9. Holman, *Woodbine Willie*. It was reviewed by Mark Chapman in the *Journal of Anglican Studies* 12 (2014) 237–38, and (among other books) by Michael Brierley in *Modern Believing* 55 (2014) 305–11. For Holman (1936–2016), see the obituary in the *Guardian*, 16 June 2016 (http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/15/bob-holman-obituary).

10. See also Walters, "Introduction."

11. Parker, *Shellshocked Prophets*, and *Fool for Thy Feast*, reviewed by Michael Brierley in *Modern Believing* 57 (2016) 457–59.

subjects that are often regarded as remote from each other; indeed, the fact or "problem" of suffering is often cited as the most significant reason for rejection of belief in God. This volume is not "theodicy," in the sense that it does not set out to justify the existence of God in the face of suffering. Rather, it asks the question of how God, or "Life" (to use the Johannine term intimately associated with the divine), might be spoken of in the midst and wake of tragedy. It represents a recognition that both the language of "faith" and the language of "suffering" need to be taken seriously. Such a recognition refuses to let the former prematurely dissipate the pain of the latter, or the latter obliterate the possibility of the former. "Anything less than this sells short both human suffering and God."[12] There is no easy path between tragedy and life, between suffering and glory. To use an ecclesiastical analogy, it is like wearing black or purple vestments in liturgical contexts of death, rather than the alternative of white: black or purple vestments do not deny hope of resurrection, but allow full expression to the emotion of bereavement; and only by attending fully to the situation of suffering does Christian hope carry any sort of weight or traction. "Perhaps . . . a way forward is to be found only once the full extent of what is happening has been confronted and expressed, so that the prayer of protest becomes a small but vital part of that process of facing the reality of the present."[13] Or as a recent volume on the relation of Christian theology to the dramatic representation of tragedy has put it, "An attentiveness to tragedy is vital to a properly disciplined Christian theology and . . . by the same token, Christian theology can be a way of vouchsafing the true significance of tragedy. With the breakdown of . . . caricatures of Christianity and tragedy, new possibilities for conversation are opened up."[14]

This is ultimately because Christianity has an experience of tragedy at its heart—the torture and execution of an innocent human being. "The theological interest in tragedy has its source in the proximity of the genre to theological questions."[15] As the early sixth-century philosopher Boethius said, the incarnation is a "tremendous tragedy."[16] A number of theologians, in debt to (if not following the refinements of) Han Urs von Balthasar, characterise the fundamental Christian condition in terms of "Holy Saturday": living in the wake of tragedy, and awaiting its redemption.[17] For the last two

12. Walters, "Introduction," 2.
13. Mursell, *Out of the Deep*, 156.
14. Taylor and Waller, "Introduction," 1.
15. Hedley, "Sacrifice," 208.
16. Taylor and Waller, "Introduction," 7.
17. Cf. ibid., 9.

thousand years, Christianity has been speaking of God in the light of the crucifixion and its aftermath, and it would therefore be odd if Christianity had nothing to say to contemporary situations of suffering.[18] Yet it needs to do so in ways that do not diminish the integrity of the experience of suffering or explain it away. The life of Easter can only be understood in the context of the passion of Good Friday. To focus too much on joy and hope is to negate the significance of Christ's suffering; to speak too comfortably of "life" is to deny the experience of many of the world's citizens. It is a difficult balance to learn what to say and what not to say in the context of tragedy—Rowan Williams has referred to "the holding of tension, not a resolving into false simplicities."[19] It is often pastorally appropriate, initially, to say nothing at all, perhaps for a long time.[20] Williams has recently shown, however, how speaking of tragic situations, recounting the narrative of tragedy, can be part of ensuring that it does not have the last word.

> Speaking about and showing the risk of disaster and the cost of different sorts of loss, in a language that is not just individual but allows listening and sharing of perception and emotion—this liturgical [and, we might add, theological] activity is [a] way of affirming our recognition of one another as participants in a continuing labour. And it signifies that we—as a community and as individuals within it—are not exhausted by either the experience or the memory of loss.[21]

That is to say, the danger of not speaking theologically about tragedy is an expansion of the sphere of terror, "an expanded place for action that arises from ignorance and anxiety":

> To *avoid* confronting the worst atrocity is to make the self and the city less secure; to be silent about extremes of suffering is, by a stark paradox, to invite a more serious risk of being "silenced" as an active self or a civic community, because what we do not name or confront, what we refuse to know, becomes the greater danger.[22]

18. Indeed, British theology has distinctively maintained the importance of the category of tragedy in the work of Donald MacKinnon and those who have been influenced by him: see Waller, "Freedom, Fate and Sin," and cf. Quash, "Four Biblical Characters," 21.

19. Williams, *Tragic Imagination*, 14.

20. Cf. the silence of Job's friends for an entire week on their arrival after the disasters that had afflicted him (Job 2:13).

21. Williams, *Tragic Imagination*, 16.

22. Ibid., 17, Williams's emphasis.

The naming of loss is itself a refusal to settle for passivity, resignation, or despair. The narration of trauma has the capacity to generate "unexpected new readings," an open-endedness that can "move us towards truthful and just action."[23] While it may show us that the dangers, too, are open-ended, in the sense of indicating what human beings are capable of, they "can be shown in a way that changes the world we inhabit"; re-telling the story of tragedy can be "a showing of the sacred, that excess of unearned, unexpected life."[24] As Ben Quash has written,

> Christianity (at its best, which is to say its most responsible) does not evade the actual challenges to interpretation presented to it by the experiences we habitually call tragic. It does not round off their jagged edges into some reassuring shape that will comfort us. On the contrary, it looks all the harder at them, in all their angularity and discomfiting resistance to assimilation. It does so in the hopeful expectation that there is more, not less, to them than meets the eye.[25]

Allowing tragedy to be re-told has the potential to contribute to its redemption. This is not to idealise the First World War as a type of tragedy to which all others must conform or through which they must be viewed; it is to see what possibilities of meaning might be discernible in that enormous tragedy, in order to offer hope that meaning might be discernible in other tragedies as well.

The core of this book thus consists of seven essays, all by ministers of Worcester Cathedral, who use the work of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy as a springboard for surveying how different aspects of faith impinged on, and were impacted by, the tragedy of the First World War, and how the re-shaping of faith during the First World War applies to the possibilities of faith amid the tragedies of today. In the first of these seven essays (chapter 3), John Inge points to Studdert Kennedy's ability as a pastor to integrate experiences of suffering with experiences of God. Inge establishes a parallel between the doctrine of God for which Studdert Kennedy became known, a God who is "at home" with suffering, and Studdert Kennedy's integration of suffering and faith in the places where he carried out his pastoral work. In a development of his own Christian theology of "place," Inge identifies "home" as the place of integration of negative and positive experiences, and examines some of the implications of this for the nation state as the "home" of its citizens, and indeed, for Europe as a continental "home."

23. Ibid., 141 and 27.
24. Ibid., 7 and 27.
25. Quash, "Four Biblical Characters," 33; cf. 16.

In chapter 4, Peter Atkinson looks at Studdert Kennedy as a poet, and tells "a tale of two Geoffreys," comparing Studdert Kennedy with the last poet to survive the First World War, Geoffrey Dearmer. Atkinson shows how Studdert Kennedy has been treated unfairly in twentieth-century literary criticism, and in challenging readers to consider afresh what makes poetry "good," demonstrates the role of poets' contexts in determining what they are able to say and how they are received.

In chapter 5, Michael Brierley analyses Studdert Kennedy as a passibilist, that is to say, one who subscribes to the idea that God suffers, indicating how this element of Studdert Kennedy's legacy was a particularly powerful and popular expression of a doctrine that had already been articulated in British theology before the war. In parallel to the idea in Inge's essay of God and suffering humanity being "at home" with each other, Brierley shows how Studdert Kennedy's doctrine of God "being with" people in their suffering was an outworking of, and further spur to, Studdert Kennedy's own principle of associating as closely as possible with those in his pastoral charge. Having acknowledged Studdert Kennedy's deconstruction of the image of a divine throne, Brierley develops the hints of doctrinal reconstruction within Studdert Kennedy's work, towards the metaphor of God as an eternal stretcher-bearer, who is forever roaming through No Man's Land to locate, retrieve, and heal creatures in their injury, distress, and brokenness.

In chapter 6, Georgina Byrne places Studdert Kennedy as a preacher alongside Arthur Winnington-Ingram and Maude Royden, and traces how their approaches to sermons changed (or not, as the case may be) during the course of the war, from its outbreak, through its central years, to its end. These voices represent a bishop who essentially echoed back the populist sentiments of his listeners, a powerful speaker who was limited by his vision of social reform, and a laywoman who exercised a forthright and radical critique of the status quo. Byrne makes connections with prominent preachers who have spoken in more recent contexts of conflict, and invites us to respect the diversity of genuine, honest attempts to grapple with complex issues from the standpoint of faith.

Mark Dorsett, in chapter 7, picks up on Studdert Kennedy's role as a prophet, and is less sympathetic in his assessment. Like Byrne, Dorsett compares Studdert Kennedy to two others, in this case the then bishop of Lincoln and R. H. Tawney, and uncovers the deficiencies of Studdert Kennedy's social vision, urging the church in our own day to be actively involved in the particularities of reform, in partnership with other bodies that care about human flourishing in contemporary pluralist society.

Chapter 8 alludes to Studdert Kennedy as a pacifist, or at least as a person who developed leanings in that direction, the First World War

having effected significant changes in his attitude to war. David Bryer seeks to reveal how the war acted as a critical point in the history of humanitarian concerns, enlarging humanitarian sympathies in general. The scale of the war meant that emerging humanitarian needs were unprecedented and unexpected. Churches were very rarely at the vanguard of concern and activity; and the development of humanitarianism is a story of individuals on the fringes of faith, well-networked and affluent, who used their influence to alleviate suffering, and initiate movements that have had profound effects on the contemporary humanitarian scene and the ways in which conflict is conducted today.

Finally, in chapter 9, Alvyn Pettersen examines Studdert Kennedy's public addresses as a parish priest in Worcester in the immediate aftermath of the war, when memorials were being established to those who had been killed. Pettersen draws on the longstanding link between the cathedral of Worcester and the cathedral of Magdeburg in Germany,[26] in order to compare the First World War memorial of the former with that of the latter, and he uses the life of Antony of Egypt to critique the conceptions of glory and sacrifice implicit in English memorialisation. This raises significant questions about the employment of theological motifs in the context of war, in ways that are healthy, wholesome, and constructive.

Pastor, poet, passibilist, preacher, prophet, pacifist, and parish priest: in this way, the seven central essays of this volume each take a different dimension of Studdert Kennedy's work as a gateway to exploring various fields of faith and the First World War. Not all of these aspects of Studdert Kennedy's work were equally important to his ministry; neither have they received equal treatment here, some essays being focused exclusively on Studdert Kennedy, others utilising him in passing, the volume pressing Studdert Kennedy into service precisely insofar as he illuminates the broader aspects of faith and the First World War that the authors wish to study.

Taken together, these seven central essays represent a significant contribution to the subject of faith in the First World War; they cast light on the person of Studdert Kennedy; and they indicate the capacity of twenty-first-century cathedrals to be places of theological fertility and enterprise. In recent years, collections of essays have appeared, edited by Stephen Platten, about the distinctive contributions that cathedrals can make to contemporary church life;[27] indeed, Leslie Francis has inaugurated a "science of

26. The diocese of Worcester has had a partnership with the Protestant church in central Germany, now the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, since 1992.

27. Platten and Lewis, eds., *Flagships*; Platten and Lewis, eds., *Dreaming Spires?*; and Platten, ed., *Holy Ground*. For a slightly older collection, see *Cathedrals Now*, edited by Iain MacKenzie, a residentiary canon of Worcester from 1989 to 2001.

cathedral studies."[28] These works suggest that cathedrals have much to offer the contemporary church, and our own experience, conviction, and hope is that collaborative theological endeavour can and should feature among such goods.[29]

That is not to say that cathedrals should operate within their own bubble, and as editors, we have been delighted at the interest in this volume taken by such prominent academics as Michael Snape and Mark Chapman, and their keenness to contribute to it. Michael Snape, ideally positioned to provide an overview of recent themes and relevant literature on the subject of faith and the First World War, sets the scene for the seven central essays with an introduction to the subject (while Michael Brierley introduces the life of Studdert Kennedy). Mark Chapman provides the other "book-end" to the essays, distilling, from his expertise in theology of the period, how the war impacted on theology in the immediate aftermath of the war, into the 1920s. The collective relevance of the essays to issues of faith in the longer term is ignited by a concluding editorial piece by the editors, which stemmed from discussion with their cathedral colleagues. In this way, this volume of historical theology functions and has value as practical theology: all theology should make a difference to the way in which life is lived, and the best theology indeed makes such a difference.

Theology is always a matter of dialogue: no group holds a monopoly on truth. And it has therefore been our special pleasure as editors to have these essays topped and tailed by different voices again: Andrew Studdert-Kennedy has, more than any of the writers, lived with the legacy of Geoffrey, his grandfather, and kindly provides the foreword. And the last word is given to Ilse Junkermann, the bishop of Magdeburg. John Inge in his essay writes about the importance and power of integrating memories and perspectives of different kinds, mentioning the German contribution to the service in Worcester Cathedral in July 2016 that commemorated the battle of the Somme, and Bishop Ilse's contribution to this volume is particularly valued and welcome.

Producing a book alongside the day-jobs of residentiary canons has been an enjoyable challenge, dependent on the goodwill and help of a great number and variety of people. In addition to thanking the contributors to this volume, the editors would like to express their sincerest thanks to Dr. David Morrison and his volunteers in the cathedral library; Dr. Adrian Gregson, the collections manager (and diocesan archivist) at the Worcester

28. Francis, ed., *Anglican Cathedrals*.

29. Six of the contributors, for example, reviewed books in a recent issue of *Modern Believing*: see *Modern Believing* 57 (2016) 449–54, 457–61, 464–66, and 481–82.

Archive and Archaeology Service, whose own specialism lies in the First World War;[30] Canon Paul Tongue, for furnishing us with local copies of Studdert Kennedy's books; Chris Guy, the cathedral archaeologist, and James Atkinson, the diocesan digital media adviser, for providing us with images for this volume, along with Michael Sussmann, the retired master of fabric at Magdeburg Cathedral, Arthur Moore of St. Mildred's Church, Whippingham, Jack Deighton, Tudor House Museum, Worcester, and the Imperial War Museum; Worcester Cathedral Enterprises and the Friends of Worcester Cathedral for support with costs related to the volume; Susie Arnold, the cathedral chapter secretary, who has kindly given administrative assistance; Robert Beattie, cathedral verger, for his compilation of the index as well as his willingness to follow up odd leads and tie up loose ends; and Dr. Robin Parry of Wipf and Stock, who has been a wise, generous, and patient publisher, as well as an exceptionally stimulating theological colleague.

All proceeds from the sale of this book are being split between the cathedral, which nurtured Studdert Kennedy and which continues to nurture its current clergy, not least through its congregations; and St. Paul's Hostel, a charity for the homeless in Worcester. The latter not only reflects Studdert Kennedy's concern for the poor; it was founded by local churches in 1977 in the derelict vicarage attached to St. Paul's church, in which Studdert Kennedy himself once lived, and from which he left to embark on those periods of service as a chaplain in the First World War which were to prove so formative.

Worcester
8 March 2017

30. Gregson, "1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment."