

## WOODBINE WILLIE AND WORLD WAR 1 CHAPLAINS

Tuesday 12 June 2018

### **1 – Papplewick chaplain**

### **2 - Ponteland**

I first gave this talk in 2014 at my last parish in Ponteland. We did quite a lot of work at the start of the War, doing our best to commemorate the 42 people from the Village who gave their lives. When I sat to write the original version of this talk, I realised how little I knew about WW1 Chaplains. I decided I could name two ... Tubby Clayton and Woodbine Willie. Tubby Clayton started ToCH - not that I've much of an idea what ToCH is - and Woodbine Willie handed out cigarettes. That was about my sum knowledge, so I did a bit of research.

### **3 - Tubby Clayton**

Philip 'Tubby' Clayton was Vicar of All Hallows by the Tower, in the City of London, which is where I came across him when I went to take a memorial service there a few years ago. In December 1915 he had opened Talbot House, a soldier's rest-house behind Allied lines in Belgium at Gasthuisstraat - it became known as Toc H. After the war he worked with others to form Toc H - an organisation, a network, an attempt to cultivate and sustain fellowship, to forge an inclusive Christianity. They had four points of the compass:

- Friendship - to love widely,
- Service - to build bravely,
- Fairmindedness - to think fairly,
- The Kingdom of God - to witness humbly.

The organisation continues to this day.

### **4 – Hoy**

When I thought about it, I could manage a few other Chaplains. In Orkney in 2011 we came across Henry Dixon Dixon-Wright, the Chaplain of *HMS Barham*. He was one of four officers and 22 men killed in the Battle of Jutland, 31 May 1916. He rests in the naval cemetery at Lyness, on the island of Hoy, overlooking the waters of Scapa Flow.

### **5 – Noel Mellish**

In the church of Great Dunmow in Essex back in 2014, I found a memorial to Noel Mellish, the first Chaplain to gain the Victoria Cross in World War One. He was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. On 27 March 1916

they fired some enormous mines under German trenches, and then the British troops attacked. To quote the Regiment's Official history – "The episode seems, on calm reflection, to have been the most tragic of any in which the Royal Fusiliers figured. The attack was launched at 4.15 am. The men ran forward on the explosion of the mines, but they were met by intense rifle, machine gun and artillery fire. The Germans appear to have been fully on the alert, and the battalion at once lost heavily. They stormed the German wire, unbroken as it was, and took the first German trench. But they had been so weakened and the opposition was so heavy that they could get no further, and the ground was consolidated." Mellish was a non-combatant, he carried no weapon, but, to quote his obituary, "On the final day of the battle, without any assistance, he brought in ten wounded men, and on the second he went back and rescued twelve more. His conduct resulted in the saving of many lives." He was awarded the VC for such incredible bravery. He went on to be Vicar of Great Dunmow from 1928 to 1948 - and had to announce the commencement of World War Two from this pulpit (I wonder what his thoughts were that Sunday). He died the month before I was born, in 1962.

## **6 – Herbert Butler Cowl, Half Shilling Curate**

Over the last few years, various people have written the stories of their own family members – and this is the story of Herbert Butler Cowl, written by his granddaughter, a Northumberland lady called Sarah Reay. If you don't fancy spending #25 on the book (although I am happy to lend it) she has a website [halfshillingcurate.com](http://halfshillingcurate.com), which is worth a read.

## **7 – Gedling**

On one of the Heritage Open Days last year we went to explore various Nottingham churches. By the time we reached Gedling, Julie had had enough – and as there is a steep flight of steps up to the church, she said she would wait if I popped in for a quick visit. I got caught by a churchwarden who insisted on giving me the full tour – sorry darling. He showed me the 1920 East Window, and here is an image of a Chaplain at work.

## **8 – Selby Abbey**

The other week we visited the gorgeous Selby Abbey in Yorkshire – and another war memorial window with Chaplain

## **9 – Selby Abbey 2**

## **10 – Faith under fire**

This is an excellent book, *Faith under Fire*, by Edward Madigan – a scholarly book, the quality of footnotes and references will make any historian a very happy bunny – but actually a very readable book too. Again, happy to lend it – it is #22.50. Incidentally, we do have a donation pot by the door – these talks do cost a bit of money to put on, so any donations gratefully received. There are other books, and there is a Museum of Army Chaplaincy

## **11 – Amport House**

here at Amport House near Andover – it's the headquarters of the Chaplaincy Department. You have to make an appointment to visit the museum, and apparently it's a site due to be sold by the Ministry of Defence by 2020 – so that's another place to get on the list.

## **12 – Papplewick**

The other Bank Holiday Monday we went to Papplewick Pumping Station just outside Nottingham. If you haven't been, I highly recommend it. Wonderful Victorian engineering, steam, and there were a group of WW1 re-enactors there. One of them was the Chaplain, and I had a great chat with him. While talking, my mobile went off, and it was one of next year's wedding couples wanting to chat about the Order of Service for her wedding. Bank Holiday Monday afternoon, an afternoon off, and some bloody bride wants a chat – I was, as always, my normal charming self. I did think though that when I'm talking to a man who has served in the trenches, I had no right to complain.

## **13 – Bishop Odo**

Priests have been on the battlefield since time immemorial - it is important to have God on your side. William the Conqueror's brother was Bishop Odo of Bayeux - he led 120 knights into battle at Hastings. Chaplains first appear in standing orders in 1621, and in Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army of 1645 each Regiment had their own Chaplain.

## **14 – WW1 flag poster**

At the start of the First World War there were 117 chaplains in the army, of which 89 were Anglicans (Madigan, page 48). Over the first few months of the War, about a thousand clergy applied to serve as Chaplains. Through the War there was a constant tension between sending clergy to the Front to serve, and serving the needs of the people at home. Indeed some men only serve for a year

or so, before returning to England. Many did an amazing job, others didn't – Madigan's book is very honest about some of criticisms that have been made. At the end of the War there were 1,698 serving Chaplains (Madigan, page 56) Around 180 chaplains gave their lives in the course of the War.

## 15 – WW

We'll tell the story of Woodbine Willie, and in telling the story of one - we will remember them.

## 16 – WW books

Two books on Woodbine Willie. This one Woodbine Willie; an unsung hero of World War One by Bob Holman is a straightforward, well written, biography. This one Running into No Man's Land; the wisdom of Woodbine Willie by Jonathan Brant is from a more evangelical stable, looks at his writing, and challenges us through it. It has bible references, study notes, material for discussion groups - good, sound stuff. The two made a good combination. I want to look at Woodbine Willie's life, and at the big question - basically, where do you find God in the trenches?

## 17 – St Mary's Leeds

Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy was born in Leeds on the 27 June 1883. His father William was a priest, an Irishman who had come to England with a vocation to serve the poorest in society. There were many children - five from William's first marriage, and nine (including Geoffrey) from his second - they lived in a noisy and loving house, a family with little money. The parish, St Mary's Leeds, was a working class parish - row upon row of back to back houses. This is the church before it was demolished in 1978. Life was tough. William was one of those hundreds of clergy who devoted their lives to serving their parishioners, and the son learnt from the father. One author, Michael Grundy, writes

"Here was born his profound affection for the poor. ... He was always to feel genuinely at home amongst them. He saw the strong bonds of community and comradeship that waited them and discovered that though they might be poor materially, they were rich in spirit. His whole life was to be committed to the further fulfilment and enrichment of such lives" (Holman, page 14).

## **18 – Trinity College, Dublin**

Geoffrey had little early education but at 14 went to Leeds Grammar School. The sort of lad who worked hard and played hard. From there he went as an external student to Trinity College Dublin (pictured here) and gained a first class degree in classics and divinity. Then went to teach at Calday Grange Grammar School in West Kirby - on the Wirral, not far from Liverpool. He was popular with his pupils - you can imagine the rather muscular Christianity, the bright young man who also played rugby and boxed.

## **19 – Ripon Clergy college**

He then felt a call to the ministry, trained at Ripon Clergy College in Yorkshire, and was ordained in 1908. He entered the Church of England at a time when it was going through a difficult period. Church attendance was in decline, especially in urban areas and among working class people. Bishops and clergy tended to align with the gentry, the professional people. There were more careers open to able men - the civil service, education, journalism - so fewer went into the church. There were - as there always have been - challenges to faith. Studdert Kennedy was one of those who had a real calling, he had a sense of what the Christian gospel demanded of him personally, and he was a priest who was going to serve the people, the people at the bottom of the heap. The College Principal, Canon Battersby-Harford, described him as "a quiet and self-contained, able man. ... One felt that underneath there were gifts and fire which in crisis would blaze out."

## **20 – Rugby church**

Studdert Kennedy was ordained at Worcester Cathedral, and went to serve his curacy in Rugby - at that time in the Worcester diocese. Rugby had one big parish church (pictured here), and other mission chapels. Like his father, Studdert Kennedy was happiest working with the poor, he loved them, he gave most of his money away. A fellow curate, Percy Herbert, wrote this about him:

"I can see him again, that small slim figure strolling into the unattractive public houses where his beloved lodging house tramps were to be found, and standing up in the bar in his cassock to sing Nazareth while half his audience 'felt within a power unfelt before' - they loved him for his great laugh, the smile that transformed his face, the inimitable Irish brogue, but most of all because of his love for them. He was entirely at home in the dirtiest of kitchens, and would sit for hours smoking or watching by a sickbed" (Holman, page 20).

## 21 – Leeds Parish Church

In 1908 Studdert Kennedy's mother died and four years later he returned to Leeds. He was one of a team of curates attached to Leeds Parish Church, but was freed to be a curate to his father. Once again, he was an exemplary curate, working with the poor of the parish. He also learnt how to address a crowd - at that time there was an atheist movement in Leeds which went in for public lectures, often in the Open Air. The church responded by putting forward their own speakers and Geoffrey revelled in the atmosphere, the heckling from the crowd, and the opportunity to interact with those who never entered a church.

Best of all, in Leeds he met Emily Catlow and they married on 25 April 1914. Shortly afterwards Geoffrey's father died. He was 88, still working - none of this retirement lark - proper Vicars in those days - and then his son decided to leave Leeds. The parish wanted the son to succeed the father, but that is never a good idea. Other parishes in the city were interested. He could have had a nice parish - nice suburban parishes wanted him for his dynamic preaching and his committed pastoral care.

## 22 – St Paul's Worcester

Instead he and Emily travelled to the very poor parish of St Paul's in Worcester. Apparently he said to her:

"St Paul's has the smallest income and the poorest people - go and look at the house and, if you think you can manage it, I will accept" (Holman, page 25).

He was one of those traditional, High Church Anglican, priests. The day started with Holy Communion at 7 am - every day - the bread and wine a constant reminder of the suffering that Christ had endured for us all. Worship was done properly, ritual an aid to worship, worship to draw men and women closer to a personal God. He visited tirelessly, hours a day, going from house to house, the poor, the needy, the sick. His generosity was legendary - actually, their generosity. In all of this, never forget Emily. Her generous husband would be generous at her expense - on one occasion he apparently gave away the marital bed. Her welcoming husband meant she had to welcome all to the Vicarage, to her home:

"A constant tide of folk came to the doors of the large vicarage - not just regular members of the congregation, but the lonely, the anxious, alcoholics, the suicidal, drug takers, the conscience-laden and the penniless" (Holman, page 27).

## 23 – WW1 poster

When the First World War broke out, Studdert Kennedy did not enlist immediately. His vocation was to care for the poor of his parish, and, like many others, he assumed that this war would be short - "over by Christmas". There was no doubt in anybody's mind, that this War was right. Church leaders from the Archbishop of Canterbury downwards were certain what had to be done. Studdert Kennedy wrote in his September 1914 parish magazine:

"I cannot say too strongly that I believe every able-bodied man ought to volunteer for service everywhere. There ought to be no shirking of that duty. Those who cannot volunteer for military service can pray. Let us work and pray. It remains for us to keep a brave face, to shed our tears in secret and wear our smiles in public, to be sober and chivalrous in victory and patient and steady in defeat" (Holman, page 31).

Most Sundays members of the Worcester Regiment were marched to the Cathedral for Church Parade. The Dean had a high opinion of Studdert Kennedy's preaching skills, and he was often called on. He could hold the attention of a Cathedral full of soldiers - when he spoke, they listened.

## 24 – Woodbine Willie and his cigarettes

On 21 December 1915 Father Geoffrey was appointed a chaplain. Within four days, he was conducting a Christmas Day service in a village square in France. The rain poured down on 400 soldiers, but it did not dampen the singing of the carols. Writing to a Worcester newspaper, Studdert Kennedy wrote:

"Then the glorious part came ... I went to a shed in the farmyard and the communicants came to me. There were not many, but they meant it. No lights, no ritual, nothing to help but the rain and the far-off roll of guns, and Christ was born in a cattle shed on Christmas Day" (Holman, page 31).

At the start of 1916 he was posted to Rouen, where he spent most of his time in a large shed on a railway siding. It was a canteen where soldiers waited on their way to the front. What does a chaplain do? He would stand to sing and entertain them, he would write letters home (many of the men were practically illiterate), he would hand out cigarettes.

## 25 – New Testament

More importantly, he would hand out New Testaments - "Yes, I'll 'ave one, sir, you never know your luck; it may stop a bullet". He would listen, he would pray, he was there.

## 26 – Somme 1

In summer 1916 he went into battle. The bombardment of the Battle of the Somme began on 1 July 1916. The guns could be heard in southern England. The men waited in flooded trenches, then moved forward. They climbed out, weighed down by ammunition and tools weighing 66 lb, and attacked. They found that much of the barbed wire in No Man's Land had not been destroyed, that enemy machine gun posts were still active, that enemy troops were concealed in holes and tunnels so, once British soldiers had passed, they would emerge and shoot them in the back. By the end of the day, 21,000 men had been killed and 35,000 injured. 21,000 - that's about a tenth of the population of Derby today.

Father Geoffrey went with the men who were to dig a kick-off trench in front of the front line - in the pouring rain, water up to their waists. The men entered No Man's Land and started to dig. After two hours the captain in charge asked their Chaplain to move to the men to cheer them up. This is what Studdert Kennedy later wrote:

"Fear came. There was a pain underneath my belt. Of course, I had to go. It was the parish. We crept out. We could not get out into the two-foot ditch that they had made, it was crowded with men. We went along the edge. I whispered some inane remark as I passed by, and was rewarded with a grin which even darkness could not hide, and often when I had passed with the muttered comment, 'Gaw blyme me if it ain't the padre!' Vaguely I felt that this journey was worthwhile" (Holman, page 35).

## 27 – Somme2

Some German flares went over, a warning of what was to come.

"You'd better get into the trench, Padre, whispered the Captain. I was in it before he said it. I never moved so quickly in my life. There was silence for what seemed an age and must have been a minute. The men had ceased to dig. Then a hail of machine gun bullets burst over us with a noise like bitter hatred and foul words. A cry or a grunt here and there told me that some men were hit. Then it stopped, and I could hear nothing but a voice close by muttering, 'God, God, God!'



through set teeth with a swift hissing intake of breath between each word. Then like a sudden thunderstorm the shelling burst upon us ... I can remember kneeling up to the waist in water watching the reflection of the bursting high explosive on the surface of it, saying the Lord's Prayer and wondering about Death, the beauty of the silver reflections, fear and bloody mothers' meetings. Presently I mastered the terror in my inside and became more conscious of those around me. The man immediately in front of me had lost his nerve and was crying and pleading with God for mercy. The man behind me was better, he was swearing steadily at the Germans, and kicking me and saying between his oaths ... 'Go on! Go on!' 'I can't go on,' I shouted back; 'the chap in front of me has got the hump or the blue jibbers or something.' A tremendous kick was the reply, and then in tones of puzzled fury - 'Who the hell's that?' The situation was getting comic. 'This is the Church,' I roared back. Then came the great question. 'And what the \*\*\*\* is the Church doing here?'" (Holman, page 35).

That was just the first battle. He spent the summer with the men, in the trenches, in No Man's Land, he sought out the wounded and the dying. When the fighting died down, he would go with the burial party, he would write letters home. You can imagine the mental and the physical toll - this was a man who, since his childhood, had suffered from asthma. As a Chaplain, you were unarmed, you couldn't fight back. How brave is that?

## **28 – First Aid**

On 15 June 1917 he was in an advanced collecting post for the wounded in the Ypres Salient. A collecting post under fire. A collecting post full of the wounded, we need morphine. There is no morphine. The Chaplain goes out, under fire, to get some. For his bravery he was awarded the Military Cross. His citation reads:

"He shewed the greatest courage and disregard for his own safety in attending to the wounded under heavy fire. He searched shell holes for our own, and enemy wounded, assisting them to the Dressing Station, and his cheerfulness and endurance had a splendid effect upon all the ranks in the front line trenches, which he constantly visited" (Brant, page 6).

## **29 – ruined church**

Let's look at the way Studdert Kennedy tried to understand what was going on - I almost wrote "make sense" of it, but I'm not sure he would claim that. He had a sharp mind and was willing to wrestle with God. His sermons as a curate

regularly generated controversy, and after the War he set down his thoughts in writing. His book "The Hardest Part", which was published in 1918, looked at the challenge that War must be to a Christian belief in our omnipotent God - the God who has unlimited power and authority. God has this power and authority, yet the armies of supposedly Christian nations were using all the technology and industrial resources that they could muster to destroy one another. The horror of war had been elevated to a new level of mechanical destruction and a new scale of casualties and fatalities. Everyone believed God was on their side. Studdert Kennedy wrote:

"God is helpless to prevent war, or else he wills it and approves of it. There is the alternative. You pay your money and you take your choice. ... Christians in the past have taken the second alternative and have stoutly declared that God wills war ... If you cling to God's absolute omnipotence, you must do it. If God is absolutely omnipotent, He must will war, since war is and always has been the commonplace of history. ... If it is true, I go morally mad. Good and evil cease to have any meaning ... If God wills war, then I am morally mad and life has no meaning. I hate war, and if God wills it I hate God and I am a better man for hating Him, that is the pass it brings me to" (Brant, page 41).

So, unable to believe that God wills war, Woodbine Willie developed his most radical theology:

"The truth is, that history drives one to the knowledge that God cannot be absolutely Almighty ... I would gladly die to kill the idea of the Almighty God ... I want to win the world to the worship of the patient, suffering Father God revealed in Jesus Christ" (Brant, page 41).

### **30 – Slaley 1**

Back in December 2013 I visited the little church of Slaley, near Hexham, up in Northumberland. It was a difficult time as our eldest son Gareth was in hospital – he died a couple of weeks later. One of the windows in the church is this memorial window - "To the Glory of God and in ever affectionate remembrance of our dear Son Wilkinson Rowell who gave his life, France October 1916, aged 20, this window is erected by his parents Thomas and Hannah Rowell." The window was made by the firm of A.L. Moore of Russell Square in London – and it sums up for me, Woodbine Willie's understanding. For him, God is a suffering God at work in the world through a process of patient struggle and even failure. Studdert Kennedy writes from a pastoral motivation. The vision of Almighty God provided little comfort to the petrified soldiers and their worried families. When he was himself under heavy fire and terrified, he observed:

"It's funny how it is always Christ upon the Cross that comforts, never God upon a throne. One needs a Father and a Father must suffer in His children's suffering. I could not worship the passionless potentate" (Brant, page 42).

### 31 – Slaley2

The West Window at Slaley church is another Moore window. "To the glory of God, and in proud and sorrowing memory of five of my gallant friends, Captains Guthrie, Laymey, Joicey, Ross and Jackson who gave their lives for King and Empire ..." Even here, with Christ in Glory, you have the idea of them looking up to the cross. God almighty is a suffering God.

### 32 – Rough rhymes

Woodbine Willie was also a poet. Not one of the great War Poets of the First World War, but his work spoke to people at the time, and some of his work speaks to us. This is his poem "The Comrade God":

Thou who dost dwell in depths of timeless being,  
Watching the years as moments passing by,  
Seeing the things that lie beyond our seeing,  
Constant, unchanged as aeons dawn and die;

Art Thou so great that this our bitter crying  
Sounds in Thine ears like sorrow of a child?  
Hast Thou looked down on centuries of sighing,  
And, like a heartless mother, only smiled?

Then, O my God, Thou art too great to love me,  
Since Thou dost reign beyond the reach of tears,  
Calm and serene as the cruel stars above me,  
High and remote from human hopes and fears.

Only in Him can I find a home to hide me,  
Who on the Cross was slain to rise again;  
Only with Him, my Comrade God, beside me,  
Can I go forth to war with sin and pain.

Brant, page 42

Here, in 2018, having seen all the suffering of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - and the 21<sup>st</sup> century continues as a suffering century - we are probably more comfortable with the idea of a suffering God, than people were at the start of the First World War. A Victorian God is a more powerful God, an English God, a God of

victory and triumph. The First World War was a time of re-evaluation, of finding a different faith. God is a God who suffers in the moment of the crucifixion, and His suffering continues down the ages as he relates to a broken world and a lost humanity that he loves. We have the freedom to love God, but we also have the freedom to reject God. Studdert Kennedy wrote:

"Human strife is not God's method, but His problem ... a problem that arises from absolute but temporary necessities inherent in the task of creation. Strife and warfare arises from the limitation which the God of Love had to submit to in order to create spiritual personalities worthy to be called his sons. War is the crucifixion of God, not the working of His will" (Brant, page 44).

### **33 - No man's land**

This is not a counsel of despair. Studdert Kennedy still believed that God would bring his plans to fulfilment. His faith remained strong even as he looked out onto the barren desolation of No Man's Land:

"Poor old patient mother earth, with all your beauty battered into barrenness by man's insanity. He who made you is not dead, though crucified afresh. Some day he will rise again for you, and all this wilderness that man has made will blossom like the rose, and this valley will laugh with laughter of summer woods and golden grain, and cottage homes in whose bright gardens children play at peace and unafraid" (Brant, page 44).

### **34 – Slaley both windows**

Personally, as someone who knows a little about suffering – we've lost two sons, Gareth at age 24 in 2013, and Theo just before his second birthday in 2008 - I too want a God who understands, a God who is there. I remember when Theo, my other son, was in intensive care talking to an Indian dad whose daughter I think it was, was in the next cot. As two religious people, me a Christian, him a Hindu, we tried to make sense of what we were going through. Both of us found strength and comfort in the belief that our God, our Divine power, was there with us, that he (for want of a better word) understood what we were going through, and was walking with us through the pain.

Yet I can also celebrate because I need to believe in a God who has the final victory - that suffering has ended, that death has been defeated. I will also make it personal - that Gareth and Theo's suffering has ended, and that death has been defeated. To quote Studdert Kennedy again:

"I can still stand facing East whence comes the Dawn, and say 'I believe in God the Father Almighty,' and in those glorious words

confess my faith that the final Victory of God is as sure, nay, surer than the rising of tomorrow's sun. God is suffering his agony now, but the day will come when his agony and ours will be ended, and we shall sing our praise to the triumphant God of love" (Brant, page 46).

Studdert Kennedy knew much a lot about suffering, even before he went to War. His own health was not good, asthma is an illness where you struggle to breathe - and breathing is so vital to human life that the inability to breathe surely brings you close to your own mortality. He knew a lot about suffering because he worked with the poor - witnessing a poverty that most of us have never seen. And then came War. This is perhaps his best known piece of writing:

"On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1917 I was running to our lines half mad with fright, though running in the right direction, thank God, through what had been once a wooded copse. It was being heavily shelled. As I ran I stumbled and fell over something. I stopped to see what it was. It was an undersized, underfed German boy, with a wound in his stomach and a hole in his head. I remember muttering, 'You poor little devil, what had you got to do with it? Not much great blonde Prussian about you.' Then there came light. ... It seemed to me that the boy disappeared and in his place there lay the Christ upon His Cross, and he cried 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones ye have done it unto me.' From that moment I never saw a battlefield as anything but a Crucifix. From that moment I have never seen the world as anything but a Crucifix" (Brant, page 131).

If you believe this, and if we seek to follow the Christ who hung on the cross, then there has to be application of Woodbine Willie's theology. Christians must be willing to look suffering full in the face – and that is never easy.

Our faith does not stop with the cross. We must also preach the victory of Christ as seen in the resurrection - hope always remains. This is a poem Woodbine Willie wrote to his son, the poem is called "To Christopher":

Bear thou the Christ,  
 My little son.  
 He will not burden thee.  
 That Holy One.  
 For, by a mystery,  
 Who bearest Him he bears  
 Eternally,  
 Up to the radiant heights  
 Where angels be,

And heaven's crimson crown of lights  
Flames round the crystal sea.

Brant, page 96

### **35 – Edmund King and Martyr**

Studdert Kennedy returned home in March 1919, back to his parish in Worcester. But he was too good for the church to leave in one poor parish, more and more demands were made on him - the Church is incredible good at putting far too much on a few people, and Studdert Kennedy was incredible bad at saying "no". In 1921 appointed as "messenger" for the Industrial Christian Fellowship, basically employed as a travelling evangelist and itinerant spokesperson. His family continued to live in Worcester, but Studdert Kennedy was the Vicar of a small City of London church, St Edmund King and Martyr in the City of London. The idea was that that would give him a base, and a source of income - but what it really meant was that he was rarely at home, and that he would travel hundreds of miles a week on the train. Now I think that sounds fun - but the hours Studdert Kennedy worked were ridiculous. He was constantly preaching, constantly writing - "writing furiously" says one of the books - constantly travelling - even to the USA and Canada. He was labelled a prophet - "his voice came to be heard as one of great importance and of radical challenge to all parts of society" (Brant, page 31). He was made a chaplain to the King. His books, his poetry sold incredibly well - it has been suggested he would have been one of the richest clergy in the land, but he gave it all away. That was the sort of man he was.

### **36 - Civic Funeral in Worcester**

The constant travelling and speaking weakened him and worsened his asthma. In 1929, at the age of 45, he caught the flu, and that rapidly turned into pneumonia. He died in Liverpool on 8 March, a decline so quick that Emily and his sons Patrick, Christopher and Michael were unable to get there in time. What a price his family paid. King George V sent a telegram of condolence to his family; ex-servicemen sent a wreath with a packet of Woodbines at the centre; 1,700 people filed past his coffin in a single day as it lay in a Liverpool church. He was given a Civic Funeral in Worcester - 100 unemployed men marched from the Labour Exchange to Worcester Cathedral to pay their respects. The nation mourned. Canon Raven of Liverpool Cathedral said: "We let him work himself to death ... he gave his life for us".

### **37 - portrait**

This portrait is by John Christian Johansen, and hangs in Worcester's guildhall. We should like Studdert Kennedy have the last word.

"We must die to live, and we can never do it except through the power of his resurrection. It is the risen and ascended Christ that saves. The fourfold picture is one in Truth. A new birth without a crucifixion is impossible, a crucifixion without a resurrection would drive any human being stark staring mad. ... To see the world as a crucifix without an empty tomb would be a vision too terrible for any human being to look upon, it would drive him, like Judas, shrieking with horror into the night to which there are no stars. We must have the whole faith. The meaning of life is Advent, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Day, Ascensiontide, and Pentecost - for the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us - and that was the manner of His dwelling" (Brant, page 132).

Peter Barham  
Derby, 9 June 2018