

NEVILE DAVIDSON

A Personal Memoir

Nevile Davidson's obituaries have amply demonstrated that one of the greatest and humblest churchmen of our time has joined that Communion of Saints where Christ's men glorify Him in perfect service. I have been asked to write in personal vein as one privileged to share his friendship these forty years. Perhaps what I say may strike chords with others of like advantage.

The Dunkeld Retreat, 1938. Nevile is chairing a lively discussion, interrupted by an elderly brother with a totally irrelevant outburst against Adolph Hitler. All explode into laughter at such drollery – except Nevile who waits for silence, then says with those smiling eyes of his, 'I don't think we've understood the important point you're making; could you take it further, please?' Always his *gentlemanliness* sought out the awkward, the diffident, even the fire-brand, finding beneath the outward appearances, the essential value of his brethren so that they felt their fumbling contributions were actually of real significance.

Christmas, 1960. Television cameras visit Glasgow Cathedral for a series of three services. Nevile finds the inevitable publicity and exposure to the viewing public distasteful and disturbing. But he believes the new medium must be used to the Glory of God, thus opening the worship and witness of the church to the multitudes upon whom the Master had compassion as sheep without a shepherd. On Christmas Eve he explains at the West Door, 'O Come all ye Faithful!' and with that natural dignity of his, processes through the Nave packed with all sorts and conditions of men and women, into the Sanctuary. Nurses in uniform, young people in party-garb, parents with families, civic leaders, thread-bare old folk from the Townhead tenements – all flock to exchange the Christmas greeting with him as the service ends. For he was minister to City and to Parish and he loved both.

The Cathedral Manse at any time. It was in his high-flatted home in Hill Street that one understood best the secret springs which nourished his life. The City lay all around him, with a glimpse of Highland hills beyond. Inside was the warm graciousness of Peggy and himself. One shared in their laughter, their serious intent and the splendid hospitality so freely offered to all who entered the circle of their home. For this was his Citadel of Faith. It was impossible to enter, in person or by phone, before his morning prayers were said. Then he would speak freely of all that was nearest his heart for Scotland and her Kirk.



Very Rev. A. Nevile Davidson, D.D.

All this and much more besides flooded my mind in the Resurrection Glory of his Funeral Service. For me, for you, for many a soul besides.

† RONALD FALCONER

This typical contribution is in its own way also our memorial to 'Ronnie' who himself died suddenly in May 1977.—Ed.