

**MOORE COLLEGE LIBRARY LECTURE**

**1988**

**DAVID JOHN DAVIES - A PRINCIPAL EMBATTLED**

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### D.J. Davies: a Principal Embattled

The year was 1934. The February heat hung heavily in the darkened Cowper Room. The old Archbishop had died, the new Archbishop had not yet arrived in the country. Seated in the ornately carved chair at the head of the table was a bishop with weary eyes. The Principal of the College was absent from this meeting of the College Committee; he was recovering from major surgery. He was thus unable to respond to a string of hostile resolutions passed by the businessmen in concert around the table. Most wounding of all was the motion directed against the Principal's wife:-

'That in the opinion of this Committee, it is not in the best interests of the College that any lady should conduct lectures or teaching in connection with Moore College.'<sup>1</sup>

The meeting concluded with prayer. The businessmen collected their papers briskly and the old Secretary hurried away to Newtown, his eyes brimming with tears.

David John Davies was born in 1879 in Bontgoch, Elerch, a remote village in western Wales. His mother, Sarah, and his father, David, were both schoolteachers who spoke Welsh in the home. His mother was a member of the Rhys clan who claimed descent from the Rhys who placed the crown on Henry Richmond's head after the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. His father was of farming stock from Carmarthenshire and showed great precocity as a child in languages, music and football. He took a master's degree at Trinity College, Dublin and taught at various schools in Wales and western England. Nine children were born to the Davies', David John being the eldest, but only four survived to adulthood. It was a constant struggle to feed, clothe and educate the family. When David was eight years old his father decided to seek ordination, having resisted this step for many years. After various curacies in Monmouthshire, the older Davies moved to Yorkshire where he became curate of a parish outside Bradford. Here the children were able to experience at first hand the problems of industrialization and urban poverty which existed

in northern England in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. As a result of the needs and distress that he observed about him as a boy, D.J. Davies became sympathetic to socialism and, indeed, any economic policy which would assist the poor. This attitude was to be reinforced by his studies at Cambridge where the influence of Brooke Foss Westcott and the Christian Socialists was paramount in theological circles.

The young Davies had arrived in England too late to enter Bradford Grammar School so he gained employment as a pupil-teacher and studied desperately at night to gain University entrance. At weekends he involved himself in the Sunday School movement as a visitor and organizer. To the delight of himself and his family, the news came in 1903 that he had won a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge. Life at University was even more of a struggle for him; he was a sizar—a poor student usually older than the others (he was 24)—who was expected to perform various duties in the College in return for tuition. He could afford neither adequate food nor fuel and was obliged to work in bed in order to keep warm and to study by candlelight. 'You have no right to be here' his tutor callously informed him but he hung on and, at the end of the year, acquired another scholarship, the Jeston Exhibition. His family often traced his later ill-health back to his privations at Cambridge but the hardship he suffered helped to make him sympathetic and generous to decades of Moore College students later on.<sup>2</sup>

The hours of grinding work bore fruit and Davies gained first class honours in Part I of his Historical Tripos and second class honours the following year in Part II. The following year he read theology at Ridley Hall and was accepted for ordination by the Bishop of Ely. As an evangelical he was readily appointed to a curacy at Holy Trinity Cambridge. This famous old church, wedged between the colleges, was the seat of Charles Simeon, the great evangelical leader of the nineteenth century, and sent out Henry Martyn, the pioneer missionary and Arabic scholar, to India and the Middle East.

Davies continued to read and tutor and was rewarded with the position of Director of Studies in History at Emmanuel College, a position he held for five years, culminating in the

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2      Family letters, D. J. Davies Papers, M.C.A.

award of a Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society. His academic career was to follow an historical rather than a theological bent and this was nowhere clearer than in Sydney, where his lectures in History and Economics for the University Extension Board were far more highly acclaimed than his lectures in theology at Moore.<sup>3</sup>

The greatest relaxation for Davies in these years of study—for he also worked to help put his brother through Oxford—was music. He loved to play the College chapel organs and to sing in university choral works. It was through music that he met his future wife. Grace Augusta Lawe was a woman of intellect, spirit and charm. She was one of the early students at Newnham College Cambridge. Her father was also a clergyman whose living was in Wiltshire but her social background was more elevated than that of Davies. Her uncle, Sir Lewis Dibdin, was Dean of Arches—advocate of the Archbishop of Canterbury—and it was he who had paid for her to go to Cambridge. Her cousin and godfather was Corry de Candole, the vicar of Holy Trinity and therefore David Davies' employer. The two were married in the summer of 1911 and had scarcely returned from their honeymoon when the invitation from Sydney came. Archbishop Wright had worked in Bradford as Archdeacon of Manchester and knew the Davies family; he also received a warm recommendation from members of the Charles Simeon Trust on behalf of the young Welsh academic. The offer of the Principalship of the largest Theological College in Australia was a tempting one. In migrating to a land of fairer climate and greater opportunity he was following a Welsh tradition of idealism and optimism, which dated from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

The new Archbishop of Sydney, John Charles Wright, was fortunate that the key positions in his Diocese fell vacant shortly after his enthronement. These were the posts of Dean of Sydney and Principal of Moore College. He himself had been elected by the liberal evangelical wing of the Diocese in preference to the conservative candidate, Griffith Thomas. Therefore it was no surprise that he chose men of similar outlook in Davies as Principal and A. E. Talbot as Dean. Talbot was one of Davies' closest friends during his time in Sydney.

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3 Synod and Proceedings of Diocese of Sydney, 1911.

*Sydney Diocesan Magazine*, 1 August, 1 September and 1 December, D. J. Davies papers.

4 P. O'Harris, *Our Small Safe World: Recollections of a Welsh Childhood* (Sydney, 1986) pp. 146-60.

They had known each other at Emmanuel College in Cambridge where Talbot won many prizes and they shared a concern for the plight of the working class—the bluff Dean being more politically aligned to the Labor Party than Davies. Talbot lectured for Davies at College and Davies preached for Talbot at the Cathedral. At the end of their lives they founded the Anglican Fellowship as a counterweight to the might of the conservative evangelicals.<sup>5</sup> It died with them.

David and Grace Davies arrived on the ship 'Aeneas' on 17 November 1911 on the second anniversary of Wright's enthronement. They were expecting their first child and were looking forward to their new home. Their vision of a mellow hall of learning set in beautiful grounds was quickly shattered. Rising out of bare earth and an occasional patch of grass was the old Broughton Chapel which had been moved from the first site in Liverpool; the main College wing contained the Vice-Principal's and students' quarters, a dining hall and small library. His own residence was joined on to this wing, sharing kitchen, laundry and telephone with the students. There was much to be alarmed about in the standards and fabric of the College. Nathaniel Jones, Davies' predecessor, had been an outstanding Principal and lecturer but the problems he had faced had helped to cause his early demise. The College was without endowment—or at least until the £1,500 debt left by a former Principal, the Reverend Thomas Hill, was wiped out. It was dependent on student fees, and there were only 23 of them. There was insufficient book shelving or cataloguing in the library, the chapel was shabby and without books, linen, plate or electricity. The rooms of students and the Vice-Principal, Rev. J.V. Patton, were damp and uncomfortable. Food was extremely unpalatable—the Davies' children never forgot the College's stale boiled eggs and the perpetual almond-flavoured custard; but it was difficult to attract good domestic staff when only the lowest salary could be offered.<sup>6</sup>

Davies set about attempting to raise funds for the College with great enthusiasm. He wrote letters and articles, addressed meetings and visited the rich. However, it was difficult to engender support in materialistic Sydney for theological education. Pleas to former

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5 S. Judd & K. Cable, *Sydney Anglicans* (Sydney, 1987) pp. 159-60.

6 Principal's Report, Diocese of Sydney *Yearbook* 1912, S.D.A.  
College Photographs 1911-1914 M.C.A.

students to give something back to their Alma Mater fell largely on deaf ears. Few Moore graduates were of comparable affluence with Cambridge graduates—they were too busy coping with large families on small stipends to be able to send back to their College any donation. Gradually a few gifts came in to help refurbish the library and the chapel and Davies was eventually delighted to report that Mrs. W. E. Shaw had endowed two scholarships for the College.

The new Principal introduced various disciplinary measures to raise the tone of the College and to bring it more into line with the Cambridge colleges he knew so well. Gowns were to be worn at breakfast and dinner in Hall and at all lectures and services, except those where surplices were mandatory. All resident students were expected at Compline after which service the College gates were locked. The daily routine was as follows:-

6:30 a.m.	-	Rising bell
7:30 a.m.	-	Chapel with Greek Testament reading
8:00 a.m.	-	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.- 12 noon	-	Lectures
1:00 p.m.	-	Lunch
6:00 p.m.	-	Chapel
6:30 p.m.	-	Dinner
10:00 p.m.	-	Compline

Davies introduced the following societies into College and insisted that all his students should join them: the Church of England Men's Society, the Australian Student Christian Movement, the Sports Committee and the Old Students' Union (when they left).

He began each term with a College Quiet Day addressed by visiting clergy from the Archbishop downwards. Regular College socials were held—from picnics in the National Park to 'squashes' in the Principal's lodge. A distinct rise in morale and College fellowship was soon commented on by many.<sup>7</sup>

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7 Report and Prospectus of Moore Theological College 1917 in Moore College Committee Box 79, S.D.A.

The greatest problems facing Davies were those of enrolments and academic standards. How was the College to attract more students of higher quality and, having enrolled them, how were the academic standards to be raised? He asked the Thomas Moore Trustees to raise £250 as a stipend for a Professor of Biblical Exegesis but he was 'whistling in the wind'. There was barely sufficient funding for himself and a part-time Vice-Principal. Visiting lecturers of varying quality and durability were invited in to lighten the enormous lecturing load of the two at the top. Moreover, the standard of candidates was very mixed, many of the men not having matriculated. Surely the answer to the academic problem lay in the proximity of the University of Sydney.

Davies decided to break the nexus with Oxford, Cambridge—and eventually—Durham Universities and link the College curriculum with the Australian College of Theology. Evening classes in Latin, Greek and English were established for those wishing to enter College at a future date. First year students were now required to study for matriculation before continuing to second year. Second year students had to attend at least one course at Sydney University, such as English or Philosophy, if not attempt a full Bachelor of Arts.<sup>8</sup> Towards the end of his first year he celebrated the renovation of the library by asking his Archbishop to give what might be regarded as a prototype of the Moore College Library Lecture. Wright gave a paper on 'The Reformed Pastor with special reference to Richard Baxter' which was warmly received.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of his second year, Davies was delighted to report genuine progress in numbers and efficiency at the College. 'Above all ...' he wrote '... there is a gradual uplifting in the spiritual tone and a growing sense of solidarity in College life'.<sup>10</sup> Ten new students enrolled in 1912, nine in 1913 and eleven in 1914; but further improvements were ruled out as the menace of the First World War affected the country. Only seven new men enrolled in 1915 and, by the end of 1916, eleven students had left College for the front and three had been killed. A former lecturer at College, the brilliant Irishman Dr. Everard Digges La Touche, died at Gallipoli. The war also brought about shortages of staff and income.

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8 Report of Principal, Proceedings of Diocese of Sydney, 1914 & 1915, S.D.A.

9 *Sydney Diocesan Magazine*, 1 August 1912.

10 *ibid*, 1 December 1912.

Arrears in fees and bad debts increased so that by the end of the war the College debt stood at nearly £2,500.<sup>11</sup>

The Archbishop and Synod decided to act in order to save the College. On 1 August 1919 a Diocesan Peace Thanksgiving Fund was launched with a target of £25,000. Four-fifths of the proceeds of this appeal was to go to Moore College. Although the full target was never reached the College was at least able to liquidate its overdraft by 1924.<sup>12</sup>

Davies was delighted with this financial assistance but he was apprehensive at a further step taken by Synod which he felt was designed to limit his independence as Principal. Up to this point he had governed the College, being answerable only to the Archbishop and the Thomas Moore Trustees—who were three—the Archbishop, The Rev. F. B. Boyce and the Rev. G. A. Chambers. Synod, for its part, felt that this was too unbusinesslike an arrangement and that it wanted greater control over the type of clergymen being produced by the College. So the Moore College Ordinance of 1919 was passed setting up a committee to administer the College, subject to the right of the Thomas Moore trustees to appoint the Principal—in consultation with the Committee—and to veto any action of the Committee.<sup>13</sup>

The Secretary of the Moore College Committee was the Rev. W. J. Cakebread who was warm and supportive of Davies wherever possible; but at least half of the new twelve-man Committee was suspicious of the liberally-minded Principal and attacked his admissions policy. In their view too many misfits were being accepted by Davies and then turned loose on the parishes. Unfavourable comparisons were made with Nathaniel Jones in the matter of the drop-out rate prior to ordination, but in actual fact the difference was a matter of only one student per year. Davies averaged a notional loss of three students per year deciding not to proceed to ordination and Jones two students. In May 1921 the Committee appointed the conservative Reverend S. E. Langford Smith as the Convener of a sub-committee to examine candidates. This sub-committee was changed into a Board of Reference the

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11 M. L. Loane, *A Centenary History*

12 Diocesan Peace Thanksgiving Fund, Papers of S.D.A.

13 Proceedings of Diocese of Sydney, 1919, S.D.A.

following year to whom the Principal was obliged to send each candidate before they could be accepted for training.<sup>14</sup> After a decade of service, a World War and a relentless struggle to build up the College, Davies was jaded and a little disillusioned. His health was beginning to falter and so he sought recuperative leave. This was willingly granted by the Committee and he set sail for his beloved Cambridge.

'Ben' Davies, as he was known to his students, was first and foremost a scholar. Universities in both hemispheres were quick to acknowledge his gifts and achievements. In 1912 he was granted an M.A. at Sydney University (*ad eundem*). The following year he became a lecturer in History and Economics with the Sydney University Extension Board. In 1916 he was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Theology. Two years later he became a Fellow of St. Paul's College, further cementing College links with the University. He and the other theological College Principals worked hard to have a Faculty of Theology set up within the University of Sydney. In 1921 he was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in Cambridge, his thesis being published with the title *The Church and the Plain Man*.<sup>15</sup>

This thesis was an elaboration of the Moorhouse Lectures which he had delivered in Melbourne in 1917 and which were published in Sydney shortly afterwards. The lectures were seven in all. In the first lecture problems of Church membership and attendance are discussed against the growth of Socialism culminating in the Great Strike of 1917 and the Russian upheavals. 'The Plain Man' is defined as the non-churchgoer who nevertheless harbours varying degrees of Christian sentiment. Davies points out the failure of the liberal presentation of Christianity in terms that should have pleased his critics in Sydney.

'Man is not brought to serve Christ merely by attempting to remove intellectual difficulties. No gospel will move the world which fails to use the moral leverage of the Cross. A programme of social reform that neglects the fact of sin and the power of the Holy Spirit will never accomplish its purpose.'

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14 Moore College Committee Minute Book, No. I, p. 63, S.D.A.  
15 D. J. Davies, *The Church and the Plain Man*, (Sydney, 1917).

The next three lectures deal with materialism and economic matters, technology, labour and education and the final three treat the strengths and calling of the Church with a special section on theological training. The three hundred and twenty four pages which these lectures occupy in print are impressively researched and compiled. They are undoubtedly Christocentric in emphasis.

'What the plain man wants most of all is the fact of God, revealed in Christ, and presented by one who already knows Him as the greatest fact in his own life. What the plain man wants is the consecrated personal touch, the true ministry of the Word of Life.'<sup>16</sup>

Davies was quickly involved in other spheres of service in the Diocese. Firstly he was expected to take responsibility for the inner city parish of Ultimo, then he was invited to join the councils of the Home Missionary Society, the British & Foreign Bible Society, Sydney Church of England Grammar School, the Cathedral Chapter and the Standing Committee of Synod. Closest of all to his heart was his membership of the Social Problems Committee of General Synod, for whom he wrote a number of papers displaying a profound knowledge of social and economic questions. Archbishop Wright was determined to show his gratitude to his young Principal for his hard work and leadership at the College and so, in 1917, he appointed him as an Archdeacon without jurisdiction. From then on he wore the black shovel hat and the gaiters which comprised the traditional uniform of archdeacons, much to the hilarity and admiration of his family. Both family and students missed him when he went overseas but were delighted that he was being refreshed physically and spiritually by his term as Chaplain of Christ's College Cambridge and Director of Studies in History and Theology at Downing College. It is possible that, while overseas, he enquired about preferment in the Church at home but there is no evidence that he returned to Australia in mid-1921 with any other outlook but one of pleasure and optimism about the future. He announced that his health had been fully restored and the College Committee voted him a considerable rise in salary to add to his optimism.<sup>17</sup>

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16      *ibid*, p. 87 and p. 226.

17      *Diocesan Year Book*, 1922.

However as the years went on, enrolments failed to increase and Davies' recovery of health proved to be only temporary. Before long he began to battle with asthma and a heart condition. Underlying all his health problems was a severe goitre which meant that his whole physical system was operating at twice the normal rate while he himself felt abnormally tired.

The health of Davies' mentor, J. C. Wright, was also never to recover after contracting Spanish influenza in 1919. Small wonder that the twenties was not a period of growth in the Diocese. Nor was it a time of expansion for the other churches. Rising materialism, the growth of leisure activities, radio and the motor car all contributed to the emptying of the church pew. Only four new students entered College in March 1921 and the same number the following year. It was not until the late twenties, when the Great Depression was looming, that numbers began returning to the churches and to the ranks of candidates for the ministry.

Davies laboured long and hard to improve conditions for his staff, students and family. He founded *Societas*, the student magazine, in 1924 as an 'indisputable factor in our College theory and practice of educating ourselves for the ministry'.<sup>18</sup> Amongst its editors were E. J. Davidson, Alan Begbie, Rudolf Dillon and Marcus Loane, each of them leaving their own particular imprint on the issues in question. Davies encouraged inter-collegiate sport as a means of improving the health and wellbeing of students and in 1925 he founded the Moore College Students' Union. The minutes of this body make interesting reading: at its first meeting the Senior Student occupied (sic) the chair and the first task of the Social Committee was to purchase a kettle and teapot for the students. The Friday night Open Air Service was initiated, a missionary endeavour which lasted into the early thirties; a procession of students in gowns would nervously make its way to Newtown Bridge or Paddy's Markets each week, to the derision of onlookers. In the final meeting for 1925 the Students' Union noted that the Treasurer's Report had blanks in all the important places and

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18 *Societas*, 1927, Principal's Report, M.C.A.

resolved to send Christmas greetings 'to the inmates of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute and also to the sisters of Deaconess House!'<sup>19</sup>

Davies found it relatively easy to attract good visiting staff to the College since these men already had a full-time position and adequate emolument. However he found it difficult to retain Vice-Principals because of their workload and low pay. They were obliged to act as minister in charge of Golden Grove, Darlington in order to make up their income and only the greatly loved Corrie Glanville, who was a bachelor and a man of private means, was able to remain in the job for any length of time. Davies rejoiced when there were periodic gifts towards bursaries such as the Sandy bequest but the general financial position of the College was a continuing headache for him.

In March 1926 it was decided to launch a fresh appeal for Moore College and Davies himself was appointed as Commissioner. He and the Archbishop visited prominent citizens, travelled and preached numerous deputation sermons but, after twelve months, only £1,650 had been raised out of a target of £15,000.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless the College went ahead with much needed plans for renovation and for the erection of a new Principal's residence. During 1927 the Professor of Architecture at Sydney University, Leslie Wilkinson, a friend of Davies, prepared plans for a newly aligned College which would face St Paul's and the sun rather than the colder, noisier south. There had been four purchases of land or housing adjacent to the College in Davies' time which made this re-alignment possible. As a first stage the beautiful and commodious house still occupied by the Principal was completed. In April 1929 the Davies family moved into it with great relief; at last they were comfortable and free from the noise, overcrowding and inconvenience of the old residence. The following month the house was declared open by the Governor in the presence of nearly five hundred people.<sup>21</sup>

Although Davies was not a practical man nor was he particularly efficient in the financial management of the College, which he was obliged to cope with without a bursar or

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19 Papers of Moore College Students Union, November 1925, M.C.A.

20 Papers of S. G. Stewart, M.C.A. and M. L. Loane, op cit, pp. 129-30.

21 Moore College Committee Minute Book, No. 2, p. 8.

manager, he was personally frugal and abstemious. 'He never put both butter and marmalade on his breakfast toast and was always preaching moderation in eating to us, a band of six healthy, energetic children . . . my mother made all our clothes and their one splash was renting a cottage for the summer holidays where my father was accompanied by thousands of Leaving Certificate history papers to correct as Examiner in History for New South Wales'.<sup>22</sup>

Expenditure on the children's education, and especially on music teachers, was the one outlay which the Davies' refused to give up. It was a close and loving family and church attendance and family prayers reinforced this bond:-

'Family prayers seemed interminable and the matting left prints on my knees. Also Sunday afternoon's fruitless attempts to learn collects and catechism were followed by acid drops as an undeserved reward.'

Although an ardent opponent of gambling in his position as President of the NSW Council of Churches, Davies loved playing cards, and patience in particular. He taught his children to play b  zique and cribbage but none of them enjoyed them as much as he did. They did, however, thoroughly enjoy music, each of them being tutored in a different instrument so that they were able to perform as a family ensemble on numerous occasions. Davies was a gifted musician; his son remembers him playing a Beethoven sonata arranged for four hands on the one piano. His daughter, Susan, inherited his brilliance at sight-reading, won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music and became a professional musician of distinction.

As part of the College's educational programme Davies was determined to impart some form of musical appreciation and voice production to his students so that they could appreciate the Anglican liturgy and lead services with acceptance in their future parishes. 'Although I did not realise it at the time, his weekly choir practice was of immense help to me personally when I had to guide the musical, as well as ritual and spiritual, side of the services in small country churches in the early days of my ministry' writes one of his

students. Occasionally he would help out neighbouring rectors with their choir practice; for example, he regularly conducted the choir for a time at St. Peter's Cook's River, where his friend the Reverend Arthur Reeves was Rector. 'At that time ...' writes the Rector's son '... Evening Prayer would mostly have an anthem, even presenting *Olivet to Calvary* and when ambitious, Steiner's *Crucifixion*. It was not uncommon for the Archdeacon to miss the last tram which left Cook's River bridge at 11:05 p.m. and so the two men would walk together to St. Peter's station and then Dad would return home and the Archdeacon continue on to Moore College.'<sup>23</sup>

The Davies' family home was always open to students. They were frequently invited to meals or taken there when suddenly ill. Mrs. Davies had worked as the unofficial housekeeper at the College in the early years when the Principal's residence had no separate kitchen and laundry. Students without houses to go to were always invited to spend Christmas with the Davies' where they were treated as one of the family. D. J. Davies never forgot his own days of poverty as a student and did not hesitate to help certain needy students out of his own pocket. When his salary was cut sharply in the Depression years and five of his six children were still dependent on him, he decided to employ his wife to tutor the unmatriculated students in English. She had already lectured gratis in Church History for some years and students were deeply appreciative of her teaching. However, censorious eyes were watching and they bided their time until Davies was absent from the College Committee meeting before passing the hurtful motion that it was not in the best interests of the College that 'any lady' should teach there.<sup>24</sup>

There are many reasons for the mounting opposition towards Davies which led to his feeling embattled and disillusioned with the Diocese. Firstly, he was increasingly under attack for his links with Freemasonry. Most conservative evangelicals regarded this movement as an un-Christian secret society which usurped the place of the church as a centre of fellowship and was totally untenable theologically anyway. There were, however, exceptions in the evangelical ranks and Davies was able to point out W.G. Hilliard,

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23 Letter of Archdeacon J. Reeves, 19 March 1988.

24 Moore College Committee Minute Book, no.2, p. 76.

John Bidwell, G.A. Chambers and numerous others as loyal evangelicals and Masons. Freemasonry was popular in educated circles in Wales at the turn of the century and it was especially strong in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Sydney where it became one of the paths to promotion for academic staff. As a young academic Davies joined the Isaac Newton Lodge in Cambridge and, on his arrival in Sydney, linked up with the Empress of India Lodge and the Sydney Lodge of Research. He became Foundation Chaplain of Lodge University and from 1925 to 1935 served as Grand Chaplain for the United Grand Lodge of N.S.W. He was acclaimed as 'one of the most learned and cultured of the craft', delivering lectures on such subjects as 'Foundations of Masonry' (1918) and 'Mithraism: An Ancient Attempt at Freemasonry' (1923). Davies attacked the concept of Masonry as a kind of convivial club, rather it should be a clearing house of ideas with a moral purpose—that of promoting 'the well-ordered and balanced life'.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the rationale he proposed for the movement, it is clear that he thoroughly enjoyed his nights at the Lodge, commenting on the papers given, proposing erudite votes of thanks and chatting to his academic friends.

It was for the intellectual stimulation of like minds that he also joined the exclusive 'Heretics' Club and membership of this esoteric society generated rumours that 'the Princ.' was on the slippery slope theologically. 'This august and arcane institution' as Professor Cable dubbed it in his un-published history, was the brainchild of Dr. Samuel Angus, the new young Professor of New Testament Theology at St. Andrew's College. It began meeting on 8 June 1916 and Davies was a foundation member, along with the other Principals of the Protestant theological colleges in Sydney and such learned clergy as Arthur Garnsey, the Warden of St. Paul's College. A paper would be delivered on a theological topic and discussion would take place, followed by an ample supper. Davies was President of the Society in 1922 and 1931 and read papers on such subjects as History and Metaphysics, the Atonement in St. Paul and Modern Scholastics. The Davies' children always enjoyed their turn in hosting the Club but watched with dismay as the delicious home-made cakes prepared by their mother were quickly consumed by the appreciative and generally portly Heretics.

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<sup>25</sup> Sydney Lodge of Research, 1918, pp. 93-104; 1919 pp. 159-63; 1923 pp. 57-78 M.L.  
K. R. Cramp & G. Mackaness, *A History of the Grand United Lodge*, Vol. 2, pp. 574-5.

The preponderance of members of the Club was doubtless liberal in theology, from the brilliant, egotistical Angus to the incredibly learned Thatcher, Principal of the Congregational College, who had a working knowledge of 37 languages. Davies seldom agreed with Angus theologically but he supported him later as a friend when the storm broke and members of the Presbyterian Church were howling for his blood. The witty intellectualism of much of the proceedings of 'The Heretics' Club is evident from the delightful minutes penned by the scribe, Arthur Garnsey. These were either in Shakespearean English, classical Greek, Old Testament idiom or some such recognisable style. The minutes of the meeting of May 1924 play on Davies' predilection for golf:-

'Davies then drove off on the subject of Church and State. Some thought he had got badly bunkered over such questions as the case of Bill Jones, the Church in Wales, State authority over Church property and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council . . . However, he extricated himself from these difficulties with a skill that was little short of marvellous and, making a clever approach shot with the thesis that an established church was usually more comprehensive than a non-established one, he succeeded in holing out ahead of bogey time.'<sup>26</sup>

For all its nonsense and intellectual self-indulgence, the 'Heretics' played a vital role in enabling Davies to feel at home in a new environment. He and the other principals felt the intellectual isolation of Sydney and the overtly secular nature of Australian society which had led to the exclusion of religion from tertiary institutions.

As Davies entered his second decade as Principal of Moore there were still glimmers of hope that calmer waters lay ahead. At least the enrolments were beginning to rise again. In 1931 eleven new men were accepted into College, in 1933 it was twelve. Despite—or perhaps because of—the Great Depression, interest in the ministry as a vocation soared. The total number of men in College in 1932 reached 34 as compared with 14 in 1921 and this did not include the students studying Greek part-time.<sup>27</sup> In December 1932 Archbishop Wright

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26 Minutes of the Heretics Club, May 1924.

27 Moore College Committee Minutes, 9 October 1931 and 8 March 1932, pp. 47 and 53.  
M. L. Loane, *op cit* pp. 126-7.

held his last and largest ordination with 14 deacons and 11 priests. However, the College overdraft showed little sign of diminishing and this allowed the businessmen on the College Committee—none of whom sympathised with Davies theologically—to keep up the pressure on him. The struggle for Davies became harder as his health grew steadily weaker. While Archbishop Wright remained alive he had some chance but once his protector died, his enemies would close in.

The friction between Davies and the Committee must be viewed against the background of party strife in the Diocese of Sydney of the day. The original consensus between the conservative and liberal elements of evangelicalism had broken down in England. Their joint opposition to Anglo-Catholic practice was insufficient to keep them together against a rising tide of liberalism in theology. The Church Missionary Society, once an evangelical monolith, split in two as the conservatives hurried off to form the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society in the 20's in England. On university campuses the Evangelical Union was formed as a breakaway movement from the Student Christian Movement. Not only was there a difference of approach to the inspiration of Holy Scripture, but one felt they had a Divine Commission to proclaim the Truth whereas the other tended to explore the Truth. The Diocese of Sydney was in a peculiarly sensitive position; whereas there had been a number of evangelical dioceses in Australia at the turn of the century, Sydney was now virtually the only See to retain its evangelical predominance. This induced a siege complex in the minds of such conservatives as Archdeacon Johnstone and W. G. J. Mann, who were members of the Moore College Committee and of the powerful Standing Committee of the Synod of the Diocese. They were determined to elect a conservative Archbishop to succeed J. C. Wright when he died early in 1933. With this in mind they organized most of the members of the Anglican Church League into a political body to vote for the conservative Howard Mowll at the forthcoming election.

Dismayed that they were now left-over men, Davies, Talbot and Garnsey attempted to marshal a moderate Anglican opinion behind them in support of a liberal candidate, the scholarly J. W. Hunkin. But it was to no avail; Mowll was overwhelmingly elected and Davies and his friends retired to lick their wounds. On 29 April 1933 they established a new

movement in the Diocese known as the Anglican Fellowship, which was based on the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement so close to Archbishop Wright's heart when a young man in England. The aims of this movement were held to be: To stress the historic character of the Church of England; to strengthen its intellectual life by freedom of enquiry and study; to give simplicity and beauty more emphasis in worship; to work for unity among all church people and for a Christian social order and to express these principles in the life and work of the church, including its synods. To the conservatives this was all too vague and idealistic and it opened the door to dangerous new theologies such as were gaining sway in Europe. The following month Davies and Talbot resigned from the A.C.L., a step which they might have taken earlier were it not for the conciliatory chairmanship of W.G. Hilliard. The Anglican Fellowship was never a match politically for the A.C.L.; it held lectures and discussion groups rather than issued 'how to vote' tickets and, as a result, its candidates were soundly beaten at Synod elections.

From the close of 1933 it was war between Davies and his Committee. Davies had unwisely allowed a student named Bernard Geary to come into residence in College in 1933, despite the recommendations of the Board of Reference that his application be deferred to the following year. When Geary re-applied for entry they refused to accept him and in what amounted to a vote of no-confidence in Davies, they further resolved, in 1934, that 'no student of Moore College may be employed as a catechist unless licensed by the Archbishop for the position'. The Board of Reference also made a point throughout the year of rejecting applicants so that the College opened in 1935 with only two new students. It was true that most of these sixteen applicants were unmatriculated but their presence would have helped the College's financial position. Meanwhile, student discontent rose as the library became increasingly chaotic and inaccessible owing to the lack of trained staff. Many chafed at the modernist emphasis of the Australian College of Theology's curriculum and set texts. They felt they had entered the ministry to win souls, not to indulge in textual criticism. This group often returned from their parishes on Monday where they acted as catechists, filled with criticism of the College—criticism which emanated more often from the laity than their Rector. Many had access to a prayer meeting held on the Sydney University campus which

urged intercession for the removal of the Principal and the Dean. Division in the student body became more pronounced in 1933 and 1934 as supporters of Davies, urged on by the ever-loyal Corrie Glanville, rallied round their Principal. Those who owned a car would sometimes pack him into it and take him blackberrying in the country or else down to Bondi where he would sit exhausted and gaze at the waves. They could not, however, match the organization of the conservatives.

Davies' position became even more untenable following the formation of an offshoot of the Anglican Church League, known as the Young Evangelical Churchmen's League, during his absence overseas. Twelve members of his small student body were present at the inaugural meeting of this organization which, to older members of the ACL, was 'a very hopeful sign of sturdy evangelicalism'. Thus opposition was formally institutionalized at a student level by mid 1934.<sup>28</sup> Davies for his part never spoke ill of his detractors. He was a stubborn man and refused to revise his method and theology to please his critics but of his honourable motives and humility there could be no question.

Davies' health was, by now, so poor that he was almost past caring about the opposition. Four months' holiday overseas—purchased by the sale of the family's mountain cottage—made little difference to his asthma, kidney condition and failing heart. He still worked till late into the night at his overflowing desk. His lectures grew feebler and a whole term of morning Chapel was spent on Acts 13, verse 1. College finances were sliding further into the red. He could not retire or resign with six mouths still to feed and no retirement provision for clergy apart from the microscopic Clergy Provident Fund.

As the New Year came in Archbishop Mowll longed to step in and introduce sweeping reforms but he was forced to wait while the frail Principal wheezed his life away. He was admitted to the Masonic Hospital at Ashfield in June 1935 and passed away singing his favourite Welsh hymns. He had been twenty-four years at the helm—the longest reign that Moore College had ever known.

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28 Meeting of 13 April 1934, A.C.L. Minutes, M.C.A.

The profound affection felt for Davies by his students and friends was obvious at his funeral at St. Andrew's Cathedral. Many clergy wept openly and fifteen cars were needed to take away the wreaths. Few of the one hundred and eighty six men who trained under him could do other than grieve at his departing. 'He was like an elder brother to us ...', 'He was a man of great kindness and understanding ...' and twelve years later, in response to the Moore College Appeal, 'I would be willing to contribute my little as one of those students who loved him so much'.<sup>29</sup> Part of his legacy to the Diocese lay in his forty odd graduates who were to petition the Archbishop, unsuccessfully, in 1938, in the so-called Memorial, to recognise the need for a diversity of thought, feeling and worship within the Diocese of Sydney.

In evaluating the life and work of D.J. Davies and the predicament in which he found himself, it must be concluded that most of the stress under which he was forced to operate was not of his own making. Only in the early years surrounding the Great War was he free to develop the College as he saw fit, with the total support of his Archbishop and Trustees. Even then he was under financial duress because of the heavy debt bequeathed to the College by a former Principal. As only one of two resident lecturers he was hideously overworked with responsibilities for his parish and membership of numerous Church committees as well. With the passing of the Moore College Ordinance of 1919 and the establishment of the College Committee he was confronted by a conservative backlash against the liberal tenor of his theology. Conservatives were opposed to the even-handed approach of Wright and Davies towards training clergy of various traditions. The liberals of the twenties were distressed at the way in which the old Evangelical party was being slowly rent apart by the quarrel over the inspiration and authority of Scripture. However, few of them changed sides or feigned acquiescence; they felt they could not ignore modern scholarship and personality when interpreting Scripture. Although Davies' sermons and papers read as the work of a perfectly orthodox theologian, it was his **approach** which irritated his critics. They felt that his lectures were skimpy and his Socratic questioning was lazy and inconclusive. They

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29 Letter to S. G. Stewart, 1947 - S. G. Stewart papers, M.C.A.

wanted a Principal who would lead them on to a vibrant, fruitful ministry, not a scholar who, in their view, had 'settled on the lees'.

Davies did his best to respond to the challenge of post-war turmoil and reconstruction by his active interest in social and economic problems, but he failed to see that the twenties and thirties were an age of polarization which would destroy the gentle liberalism of Cambridge. It was an age of rumours, of intolerance, of sectarianism, of Eucharistic Rallies and Reformation Rallies, of religious controversy thoroughly aired in the daily newspapers. Furthermore, a society which countenanced the existence of armed vigilante groups like the New Guard was quite capable of harassing individuals of differing viewpoints. If Angus could be impeached by his Church then Davies could be prised out of Moore College. The conservatives succeeded in this unstable era because they possessed greater spiritual certainty and drive. They were also ruthless politically and marshalled their forces to ensure that Sydney retained its conservative tradition. Davies' cause virtually died with him but he lived on in the hearts and minds of his students as a gentleman and scholar of great kindness.

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Grateful acknowledgement must be made to the librarians of Moore Theological College and the Mitchell Library and to the Archivists of the Sydney Diocesan Archives, as well as to the family of David John Davies and to his former students.

### ABBREVIATIONS

- M.C.A. - Moore College Archives  
S.D.A. - Sydney Diocesan Archives  
M.L. - Mitchell Library