

## PAPER V

# THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AQUINAS LIBRARY 1933 - 1991

## 1 INTRODUCTION - BISHOPS AND LIBRARIES

Down through the ages the Church has been the guardian of learning and culture. The monastic and other libraries founded by the Church preserved for posterity the great works of religion, of literature and of science: the common heritage of us all. It would be interesting to know what role the bishops took over the centuries in these matters, but, in modern times, episcopal lack of support for Catholic libraries, while perhaps not legendary, is certainly not new.

In 1883, the University College of Dublin was placed under the control of the Jesuits. When they arrived there, they found that the library had been transferred by the bishops to the Diocesan Seminary. Gerard Manley Hopkins said it was there "acquiring antiquity and the interest 'of worming'". The Jesuits appealed to the bishops. The bishops resolved that the library should be returned, but they really did not believe that the books had been transferred to the seminary in any case.

Despite the resolution, nothing was done, and, when Cardinal Cullen was approached, his reply was "a diplomatically phrased archiepiscopal letter", but no action. While Hopkins was at the college, the books were in various other Catholic institutions throughout Ireland. Eventually a small library was put together, but by that time the original library space was being used in other ways.<sup>1</sup>

Then closer to home and to our time, there is the case of the Catholic Central Library in Sydney, taken over by the Grail in 1951, and conducted by that lay organisation of women until 1958. This library had been opened in 1929 by the Knights of the Southern Cross, and fulfilled the same purpose in Sydney as the Aquinas Library did in Brisbane.

The difficulties faced by the Grail are well documented by Sally Kennedy.<sup>2</sup>

In her account of the Grail's dealings with Cardinal Gilroy and Bishop Carroll, there are references to "the location of the library, or rather, the covetous eyes cast upon it" and "the sacrifice of a viable and effective centre for Catholic intellectual life in Sydney in the interests of commerce".

Has all this a familiar ring? It does, because similar things happened in the history of the Aquinas Library, the first phase of which finished in the same year as the Grail stewardship of Sydney's library ceased.

Yet the Australian and New Zealand archbishops and bishops paid lip service to the concept of Catholic libraries in 1937. In a Joint Pastoral Letter, after stating that a great factor in spreading and defending the faith was the distribution of Catholic literature, they went on to say that "the Catholic Library movement has recently come into existence to fulfil a long-felt need, and we should like to see it supported and extended as much as possible".<sup>3</sup> The extent of the support given in Brisbane to the concept can be gauged as the story of the Aquinas Library unfolds.

## **2      *COMPARISON WITH ROMAN EMPIRE***

The Roman Empire rose, became the wonder of the ancient world and eventually fell, as great states and institutions have done before and since. The Aquinas Library was a great institution in the city of Brisbane, in two phases, for almost four decades. Unlike the Roman Empire, however, it had two rises and two falls.

It rose first in the heady days of the 1930s and existed as an integral part of the Catholic intellectual life of the city until 1958 when it fell, principally because of the lack of support of the then Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Duhig. It rose again in 1977 because of what appeared to be the enlightened attitude of Archbishop Duhig's successor but one, Archbishop Rush, only to fall again in 1991 for a similar reason. The Aquinas Library does not exist any longer. Yet, on each occasion it fell, an Archbishop could have saved it.

## **3      *EARLY REFERENCES TO CATHOLIC LIBRARY IN BRISBANE***

As early as the 1880s, there were Catholic literary societies in Brisbane. Throughout that decade there are references to them in *The Australian* under various titles: Catholic Young Men's Literary Society; Brisbane Catholic Literary Society; Brisbane Catholic Literary and Debating Society; Catholic Literary and Debating Society; Catholic Literary, Debating and Dramatic Society.

They met in St Stephen's Schoolroom (from whence it could be said the Aquinas Library sprung), St James's Schoolroom and the "Central Reading Rooms Queenstreet". They could be regarded, perhaps, as the forerunners of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association with its various societies.

Of particular interest is the report of the weekly meeting of the Brisbane Catholic Literary Society on 9 December 1880.<sup>4</sup> There was a resolution at the meeting "to request the permission of his Lordship the Bishop for the establishment of a library for the use of the members and the Catholics generally - the secretary to receive donations of books in the mean-time, pending his Lordship's reply". By 1883, "the number of volumes received for the new library was already 153"<sup>5</sup>, but there was no mention whether "his Lordship" (then Bishop Dunne, in 1880 Bishop Quinn) had replied.

Until the Second World War, Brisbane was regarded the biggest country town in the world. Yet James Duhig had a great vision for it, and by the 1920s he had set about bringing that vision to fruition. His crowning glory was to be the Holy Name Cathedral, and the great pageant of the laying of the Foundation Stones for the never-to-be-built edifice in 1928 was one of the great moments in the city's history.

The Archbishop lured all the luminaries from the Eucharistic Congress in Sydney to Brisbane for the great event. Rev. C. C. Martindale, a famous English Jesuit preacher and writer, was one of Archbishop Duhig's invitees, and to him is attributed the suggestion that Brisbane needed a Catholic library.<sup>6</sup>

Archbishop Duhig himself claimed to have recommended to the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association "the establishment of the recently acquired Aquinas Library at the Catholic Seamen's Institute, George Street".<sup>7</sup>

#### **4 FOUNDATION OF AQUINAS LIBRARY**

Despite anything that happened previously, or any claims made subsequently, the motivating forces behind the establishment of the Aquinas Library were the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Literary and Debating Society, which met weekly in St Stephen's schoolroom, and the dynamic energy and intelligence of its President, John P. Kelly, then a Queensland public servant and about to graduate from the University of Queensland.

The year was 1932. The worldwide revival of Catholic intellectual life had reached Australia, and Brisbane Catholic intellectuals were about to burst into flower. One of the first results of this flowering, and perhaps the greatest, was the Aquinas

Library.

The debating society was an activity of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association, a prominent organisation in Brisbane in the 1930s and earlier. Membership of the association was open to all past pupils of Christian Brothers' colleges. It had a Dramatic Society; it published a monthly periodical, *The Risen Sun*, during the 1930s; and its main event of the year was the Annual Communion at St Stephen's Cathedral followed by a breakfast at the City Hall, which attracted thousands of participants.

Members of the debating society wanted a library in which they could find the latest Catholic literature, not available elsewhere in Brisbane. A subcommittee, consisting of Messrs John P. Kelly, C.K. Carmondy and C.A. Harrington, was set up to investigate the feasibility of establishing such a library. Archbishop Duhig was asked for his approbation, and also for any books he might be able to donate.<sup>8</sup> A public appeal was made, and friends and sympathisers canvassed.

Those concerned with starting such a library were not unaware of the thorny path ahead of them. The words of Rev. William Hackett, SJ, of the Central Catholic Library in Melbourne, must have depressed them at first:

You will find opposition where you least expect it and you will get any amount of cheap advice and silly suggestions. Hence you need to mark out your ideas clearly from the start.<sup>9</sup>

Father Hackett had his own problems with the Central Catholic Library. For example, although he was on intimate terms with John Wren, nothing came of Father Hackett's way from the £2 000 000/- which Wren claimed to have given to church foundations.<sup>10</sup> In 1947, Father Hackett was still as enthusiastic about libraries<sup>11</sup> as he was when he advised the Brisbane novices in the early 1930s.

Another enthusiastic adviser was Rev. Stephen Browne, SJ, who had established a famous Catholic Library in Dublin:

Of course I am delighted to have the privilege of helping such an enterprise as yours. You are putting your hand to a big job, but one that is supremely worth while. If you lay your plans aright and follow them with enthusiasm your library will be the centre of light for all Queensland. It ought to be in closest touch on the one side with education and on the other with the press.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the problems, and the opposition of one of the members of the subcommittee, C. K. Carmody, the debating society decided at its meeting on 28 June 1932 to proceed with the establishment of a library. Three trustees, in whom the property of the library was to be vested, were appointed, as was a subcommittee of

five to conduct it.

Sixty-three books were donated at the meeting, so it could be said that the birthday of the Aquinas Library, although it did not then have a name, was 28 June 1932. The books were housed in a secondhand linen press which cost £3/10/-.<sup>13</sup> In the main, they were books which these men had used at school.

The next problem was the finding of more permanent housing for the precious nucleus of the library. After many futile efforts to obtain harbourage for them, they came ashore at the rooms of The Catholic Seamen's Institute, Gray's Building, 240-242 George Street, Brisbane. Gray's Building was on the southern side of George Street, four doors removed from Queen Street. The tenant who provided the harbourage was the St Vincent de Paul Society.

By October 1932, the library consisted of over two hundred books. At its meeting on 17 October 1932, the subcommittee gave it a name: The Aquinas Library. The Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association took control of the library from the debating society, and decided to apply 25% of the net proceeds of its functions to the library's finances.

The stage was now set for the Aquinas Library to take its place in the Catholic life of Brisbane. With approximately five hundred books, it was opened officially on 7 March 1933, the then feastday of St Thomas Aquinas, after whom it was named and who was such an inspiration to its founders.

The original opening hours of the library were: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.; Thursdays 5.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.; Fridays 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.; and Saturdays 12 noon to 1.00 p.m. Looking at those hours and thinking of some of the men involved in the library at that time and where they worked - John P. Kelly, Titles Office, Treasury Building; Stan Hegerty, Stamps Office, Treasury Building; Justin McCarthy, Lands Department - it is not fanciful to see them hurrying from their offices across Queen Street after work to staff the library and help their dreams come to fruition.

Later in 1933, the property of the library was vested in the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association itself, which then vested it in a specific body, the Aquinas Library Association. The members of that association were John P. Kelly, who was appointed librarian for life; Rev. Dr Ray O'Donoghue; Stan Hegerty; Condon Byrne; Brendan Ahern; and Justin McCarthy.<sup>14</sup> This association controlled the library until its removal from George Street to Queen Street, but how effective its administration was is another matter.<sup>15</sup>

## 5 *REMOVAL TO QUEEN STREET*

After its three-year period in George Street, the Aquinas Library moved in 1936 to what would be its home until its first closure in 1958. With the approval of Archbishop Duhig, a public company limited by guarantee and entitled Catholic Central Library Limited was formed and incorporated under the provisions of *The Companies Act of 1931* on 30 April 1936.<sup>16</sup> The assets of the previous Aquinas Library were vested in the company, but the name of the library did not alter.

The company leased the basement in the building of the Australasian Catholic Assurance Company Limited at 270 Queen Street, opposite to the General Post Office. The services of a firm of architects, Messrs Addison, McDonald and Ahern, were retained, and the necessary alterations to, and remodelling of, the basement were supervised by that firm.

May 1936 must have been a busy month for those associated with the library. The finalisation of the alterations and remodelling would have been a constant source of anxiety to the management committee. Then there was the transporting of the library books from George Street to Queen Street. It is of great interest to note that the library had the assistance of some thirty boys from St James's and St Laurence's Christian Brothers' Colleges in this work.<sup>17</sup> These boys were supervised by Brother McElligott.<sup>18</sup>

The first red-letter day in the Aquinas Library story was Sunday, 31 May 1936. On that day the new home of the Aquinas Library was opened, and the undertaking blessed, by Archbishop Duhig. The Archbishop carefully explained, before the blessing, that "the work only, and not the building, was to be under the patronage of the Church".<sup>19</sup> He went on further to say that "he had often longed for a central Catholic building to house all the Catholic organisations and movements but owing to the insistent demands for churches, schools and other institutions, it had not been possible to provide one".<sup>20</sup>

In the course of his appeal for financial support for the library, Rev. E. S. Barry, PP, made an incisive point. He said that the Aquinas Library was different from the Catholic library in Melbourne in that it was mainly the work of laymen.<sup>21</sup>

The opening of the library in its new premises rated an article and a photograph in the secular press as well as in the *Catholic Leader*.<sup>22</sup>

## 6 *LIBRARY PREMISES IN QUEEN STREET*

To reach the library from Queen Street, a visitor went past a Casket Agency and then down a set of steps. Before entering the library the visitor saw a Sports Store, run for a considerable time by Vince Kelly and used subsequently by Bill Watson as his bookshop, and, to the right, a little tea room rejoicing in the name "White Horse Inn".

The main library room, with the working area immediately to the left of the door, was a large, inviting room with extensive shelving on the right-and left-hand walls. Fiction was on the left-hand shelves, non-fiction on the right. The two lower shelves were angled to make it easier for subscribers to read the titles of the books housed in them.

The floor was polished red stringy bark, and the ceiling was plastered, with dark stained strips of wood at regular intervals enhanced by six large covings evenly spaced above the shelving on each side.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of the room was "a huge timber table, which was spread often enough with all the worthwhile periodicals of the English speaking Catholic world", as Martin Haley remembered.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of the main library room there were two sets of double leadlight swing doors, one set leading to a reading and reference room, and one, by means of a passage, to a lounge and billiards room, used originally by the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association, but subsequently as a storeroom for, amongst other things, chairs and Bill Watson's "things".<sup>25</sup> The only water in the premises was in this latter room, and the successive sub-tenants of the library who ran the "White Horse Inn" had to get their supplies there.<sup>26</sup>

Books formed the main decoration of the library, but the cultured men who managed it were aware also of the benefit of the visual arts. A picture of St Thomas Aquinas was hung in a prominent position in the library.

On the 14 June 1937, the first anniversary of the death of G. K. Chesterton, a superbly framed print of the last photograph of Chesterton, which was taken by Howard Coster, a famous London photographer of the day, was unveiled by Very Rev. John English, DD, DCL, a great supporter of the library, during a programme devoted to the works of that eminent Catholic author whose life and work inspired the founders and friends of the Aquinas Library.<sup>27</sup>

Other works of art on the walls of the library were reproductions of etchings by Sir Frank Brangwyn, a famous English Catholic artist of the time.<sup>28</sup>

## 7 LIBRARY ACTIVITIES IN QUEEN STREET

From the beginning, even in its infancy in George Street, the Aquinas Library became what its founders had hoped it would be: the centre of Catholic culture in Brisbane.

Regular lectures became a feature of the library when it moved to Queen Street, but that tradition commenced in George Street. John P. Kelly lectured there in August 1935,<sup>29</sup> and in November 1935 Manek K. Vajifdar, a graduate of Bombay University, spoke on "Life in India".<sup>30</sup>

In Queen Street, the lectures were held generally on Sunday nights after Benediction at St Stephen's Cathedral, with the night's topic being announced from the pulpit. A sampling of the lecture titles and the lecturers between 1937 and 1942 shows the wide variety of subjects in which Catholics were interested and which occupied their minds at a very important period in the world's history, and the diversity of people who were prepared to speak on them.

John P. Kelly spoke on "The Catholic Literary Revival"<sup>31</sup>; "The Lie about Spain"<sup>32</sup>; "Spanish Bombs and British Ships"<sup>33</sup>; "Who are the Poles?"<sup>34</sup>; "Dr Salazar: Portugal's Great Catholic Statesman"<sup>35</sup>; "The Prophecies of St Malachy"<sup>36</sup>; "Catholic Action and Politics"<sup>37</sup>; and "The Negro in American History".<sup>38</sup>

A. S. Hegerty, renowned for his long series of articles on social justice and Catholic Action in the *Catholic Leader* during the 1930s and 1940s and author of a handbook on social studies used in schools after the Second World War,<sup>39</sup> predictably spoke on such subjects as "Reconstruction of Society"<sup>40</sup>; "The Way to Social Peace"<sup>41</sup>; and "Catholic Social Action Today".<sup>42</sup>

Very Rev. John English contributed "Christ in History: Are the Gospels True or False?"<sup>43</sup>; "The Papacy through the Ages"<sup>44</sup>; and "The Vatican and the Nations".<sup>45</sup>

Dr T. J. Gaffney lectured on "The Catholic Answer to Sterilisation"<sup>46</sup>; V. B. Jones on "The Church and the Nazis"<sup>47</sup>; F. W. Murphy on "The Wonder of Lourdes"<sup>48</sup>; Rev. E. S. Barry on "Maryland: A Notable Experiment in Civil Liberty"<sup>49</sup>; Archbishop Duhig on "The Attitude of the Church to Cremation"<sup>50</sup>; B. P. O'Kane on "The Church and the New Order"<sup>51</sup>; M. V. Fogarty on "St Thomas More: Saint and Scholar"<sup>52</sup>; Paul Grano on "Are we educated, and if not, why not?"<sup>53</sup>; and Rev. J. Tamulis on "Catholic Lithuania".<sup>54</sup>

From these lectures, the first series of formal Aquinas Lectures from 1944



until 1950 evolved. These latter lectures were to be held on or about the feastday of St Thomas Aquinas, the library's patron, and bring the wisdom of the saint to bear on the problems of modern times.<sup>55</sup>

The inaugural lecture, "Aquinas and Modern Practices of Interest Taking", was delivered by John P. Kelly in the rooms of the library on 7 March 1944, with the Chief Justice of Queensland, Sir William Webb, presiding.

Subsequent lecturers were D. G. M. Jackson; Colin Clark; A. E. Shaw; Donagh MacDonagh; Martin Haley; and Arnold Lunn, who delivered his lecture at the City Hall.<sup>56</sup> A leading article in the *Catholic Leader* considered that the annual Aquinas Lecture was "an intellectual highlight of the Catholic year".<sup>57</sup>

Interesting comments on Donagh MacDonagh's 1948 lecture, "The Function of Tragedy: Thomist Light on an Aristotelian Problem", are contained in a letter from Frank Kelly who attended it.<sup>58</sup> After detailing the title of the lecture to his correspondent, he went on to say that it was:

... very learned and profound with stuff about 'catharsis of the emotions' and 'the positively heartrending fate of Cordelia'. One had a fear that Nigel<sup>59</sup> might get up and say, 'Cut it whichever way you like, as good old Al Smith said, it's still baloney'. But Nigel held his peace and it was as well. Seriously the fellow seems to have an outstanding mind and ability to express himself on abstruse subjects with wonderful lucidity.

Many other activities took place in the library in those days. There were Chesterton nights; Belloc nights; community singing; verse readings; concerts; card evenings; book-binding classes; meetings of the Aquinas Library Debating Society, successor to the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association Debating Society from which the library sprang; and meetings of the Aquinas Library Gramophone Society. All these were directly under the auspices of the Aquinas Library and its management. They all deserve further attention, but let a further consideration of one activity suffice for the moment.

The Aquinas Library Gramophone Society was established in 1941, and conducted by the younger brother of the library's founder, Francis Sylvester Kelly, who had a great interest in, and appreciation of, classical music. It was a haven for Brisbane music enthusiasts in those days of wartime in dimly-lit Brisbane, and even for servicemen who yearned for classical music. One of these last-mentioned was an American soldier who years afterwards, when Frank Kelly died in 1985, remembered fondly the musical evenings in the library.

An interesting sidelight on the Gramophone Society is given by Brenda Holmes

who worked at the library in the early 1940s:

Music Masters Radio lent us the machine, and patrons with record collections lent us the record albums, and I sat in the reference room turning the records over as fast as I could. This was before the automatic drop device and before records were numbered 1-8, 2-7, 3-6, and 4-5 (in the case of a 78 rpm symphony), but 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8. I got pretty good at this, and also at putting the needle into the first groove. I still had the drunks peering in the window and getting sick in the lane. But the worst night was when a huge swarm of moths flew in the window into the lighted room (the big room being in darkness for the music), and fell all over me, the radiogram, and the records. We were playing the Bruckner 7th at the time, and unless you have heard this scored with moth corpses, you haven't heard the real Bruckner. I blundered through the curtain into the audience area screaming and waving my arms, and scared the daylighters out of 25 music lovers.<sup>60</sup>

A typed programme of one of the recitals is extant. It was held on "Monday, 22nd March, at 8 pm", but the year does not appear, although other evidence suggests that it was 1943. The recital was a "modern programme", and consisted of the Fifth Symphony of Sibelius; "Matthias the Painter" (Hindemith); "Serenade to Music" (Vaughan Williams); and the First Violin Concerto of Prokofieff.

Were these records among "some old 78s from the Gramophone Society" which the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee gave permission to sell in 1977. At the same committee meeting when this permission was granted, a committee member suggested that "this Society should be refurbished".<sup>61</sup> It never was, but there are people still living who speak with affection of the Aquinas Library Gramophone Society.

In a way envisaged by its founders, the Aquinas Library was home to most Catholic societies and organisations in Brisbane. The Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association used the library while the association continued to exist.

The Catholic Poetry Society, founded in 1936 by Paul Grano, but shortlived, and numbering in its members James Devaney, Gwen Belson, Joseph O'Dwyer, Paula Fitzgerald, Frank Francis, Martin Haley and Vince Fogarty, held its meetings there. Its successor, the Catholic Writers' Movement, begun in New Zealand by Pat Lawlor and in Brisbane, in 1944, by Paul Grano, and changing its name in a short time to the Catholic Readers and Writers' Society, met in the library from its foundation until the library closed in 1958. For a great deal of that time and subsequently until his death in 1980, that society was under the benign influence of Martin Haley.

The library was the centre of Catholic Action in Brisbane. When the Archdiocesan Secretariat of Catholic Action was established in Brisbane in 1938, John P. Kelly was appointed its lay director and it was housed temporarily in a por-

tion of the library.<sup>62</sup> The Campion Society and its Groups<sup>63</sup> met there. The Grail rehearsed "Everyman" in its rooms.<sup>64</sup> The Legion of Mary met there.<sup>65</sup> The Newman Society met there.<sup>66</sup> And, in 1958 as the library was closing for the first time, the Patricians were meeting there.<sup>67</sup>

## 8 *MEMORIES OF QUEEN STREET*

A place which becomes a legend produces many memories. The Aquinas Library in Queen Street was no exception. For almost a quarter of a century in the one location, known and loved by so many people, it has remained in the memories of those who worked there and patronised it.

Brenda Holmes, mentioned previously, has vivid memories of the three years she worked at the library. She started when she was sixteen years old, and was paid twelve shillings a week, working Monday to Friday from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm or from noon to 8 pm. When she was seventeen, John P. Kelly told her the library could not afford the resultant increase in wages, and she would have to leave. Fortunately, at this stage the library received a bequest, and her services were continued.

She remembers that she used to disguise her handwriting and use a fictitious name when recording requests for books which she wanted to read in a large book provided for patrons of the library for this purpose. However, when John P. Kelly, the Honorary Librarian, checked the book after each such insertion, he never failed to say to her, "You wrote this, didn't you?"

The best part of the job, according to Brenda Holmes, was the arrival of shipments of new books from England. She could read the books first! Another of her memories concerns the drunks from the Royal Hotel, next door to the library. They used to peer into the library through the window guards and, calling out, "Hey, Blondie!", a few times, find their way into the library itself.<sup>68</sup>

Kevin Carpenter remembers meetings at the library during the Second World War. Unattached members used to repair to the Astoria Cafe, at the corner of Edward and Queen Streets, after the meetings for refreshments which were spartan because of food rationing.<sup>69</sup>

Maureen McNeill worked at the library at the end of the Second World War. She remembers Christian Brothers being allowed to take out as many books as they wanted without charge because of their early association with the library, but that this concession did not apply to Marist Brothers. Nevertheless, Marist Brothers from Ashgrove and Rosalie still patronised the library.<sup>70</sup>

Brother Stan Adams remembers the Aquinas Library in Queen Street well. He frequented it, and, like many others, has memories of Bill Watson helping in the library. When John P. Kelly delivered the inaugural Aquinas Lecture in 1944, he was present.<sup>71</sup>

When Mamie O'Keeffe worked at the library in the 1950s, John P. Kelly would not allow the collection to be weeded out. This meant that the books had to be repaired often. The finances of the library did not run to the purchase of the necessary glue, so the glue had to be made on a gas ring at the rear of the library premises. It had a nice smell, like that of an apple tart with cloves.<sup>72</sup>

Denise Sweeney used the library in Queen Street from 1943 until it closed in 1958, and still remembers the spirit of community it engendered. She also remembers Bill Watson and his supply of Catholic Truth Society pamphlets. If you were not quick enough, he would ask you to give him a hand, and you would be left in charge of the stall until he returned.<sup>73</sup>

## 9 *JOHN P. KELLY*

Many people deserve recognition in the Aquinas Library story, and some have been recorded in this account, but one name, which has occurred many times, deserves further mention. As was said at the reopening of the Aquinas Library on 31 July 1977:

If there is one man whose name is synonymous with that of the Aquinas Library that man is ... Mr John P. Kelly ... the man who was at the helm when the Aquinas Library was launched in those troubled times almost fifty years ago, the man who controlled its destinies over the years until 1958 when it went into temporary oblivion, the man who husbanded its books carefully against the time when they would come into their own again and the man who, when that time had come, willingly handed them over to His Grace Archbishop Rush so that the Library could come into its own again.<sup>74</sup>

John P. Kelly was born at Brisbane on 15 February 1907. He was educated by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart on Thursday Island and by the Christian Brothers at St James's and Gregory Terrace. He entered the Queensland Public Service when his schooling was completed and did part-time study at the University of Queensland, graduating Bachelor of Arts in 1932 and being admitted to the Queensland Bar.

He went into practice as a solicitor in 1934 and, when his brother Frank was admitted as a solicitor in 1939, established the firm of Messrs John P. Kelly & Co., which is still in existence and whose senior partner is Margaret Keily, the eldest of John P. Kelly's four daughters. John P. Kelly died at Brisbane on 12 June 1984.

The activities of John P. Kelly in the Christian apostolate have been mentioned already in the story of the Aquinas Library, but should be detailed a little more fully. He was President of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association and President of its Debating Society. He was a trustee of the St James's Jubilee Fund.<sup>75</sup> He was instrumental in founding the Campion Society and its associated Groups in Queensland.

He wrote regularly for the *Catholic Leader*, including a weekly book review column, "Aquinas Library Book of the Week", for some nine months in 1937 and 1938, and for the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association's periodical *The Risen Sun*.

He was to the fore when Catholic Action was introduced to Brisbane and wrote handbooks for students of Catholic Action.<sup>76</sup> He served as President of the University Catholic Federation of Australia and lectured at its conferences.

John P. Kelly was involved in the more public arena also. He was a stalwart of the Sisters of Mercy, and for over forty years was Chairman of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospitals Advisory Board. He was a member of the Board of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Queensland.

He edited various legal periodicals and publications. He served on the Queensland Literature Board of Review from 1954 until 1977, for the last twenty years as Chairman.

He was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1966 for his services to the community.

## 10 *FIRST CLOSURE OF LIBRARY*

Financial concerns bedevilled the Aquinas Library from its beginnings. The original guarantor of the library, in 1936, was Daniel O'Donoghue<sup>77</sup>, a Brisbane hotelier and father of Rev. Dr Ray O'Donoghue, one of the founders of the library. He required his guarantee to be supported by those of twenty people involved with the library.<sup>78</sup> When he died in 1939, a guarantee of £500/- was obtained from Archbishop Duhig.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout the history of the library, there were constant endeavours to raise money, constant appeals for support. Not a great deal of support was forthcoming. After a decade of existence, less than £500/- had been received by way of direct donation.<sup>80</sup> John P. Kelly said, when recounting the history of the library, that "the whole history of this venture was financially precarious"<sup>81</sup>, and in one of the efforts

to raise money the following point was made:

To establish a library of this nature an endowment is essential. The trite talk that lending libraries should pay for themselves bespeaks a misunderstanding of the position.<sup>82</sup>

An examination of the Balance Sheets of the Catholic Central Library Limited required by law to be filed in the Companies Office<sup>83</sup> indicates that the accounts were summarised as time went on, thereby making it harder to understand what they were meant to reflect. However, it is obvious that by 1942, when the last Balance Sheet was filed, the financial position of the company had deteriorated.

Because of this, and no doubt for other reasons, the members of the company ("Mr John Patrick Kelly, President, Denis Francis O'Shea, Miss Anne Kathleen Russell, Francis Sylvester Kelly, and Bernard Patrick O'Kane") formed themselves into "a body of trustees to be known as the Catholic Central Library Association" on 23 May 1945.<sup>84</sup> The company was struck off the Register on 8 September 1945.<sup>85</sup>

After existing in such a perilous fashion for so long, it is ironic that the immediate cause of the library's closure was white ants. They brought down a considerable part of the ceiling in the library's premises. Extensive renovations would have been necessary. The rental would then have been increased substantially. The library could not cope with this along with its other financial problems.

In April 1958, after talking personally with Archbishop Duhig about the crisis in the affairs of the library, which he had no doubt done on many an occasion, John P. Kelly put the position in writing.<sup>86</sup> He reminded the Archbishop that he had been more or less responsible for establishing the library in the first place and for its conduct and support, and indicated that the burden had become too great. The library needed £1000/- to pay debts and buy new books. Unless it received support, the library would have to close.

John P. Kelly drew on the experience of similar libraries in other States which received assistance, and reminded the Archbishop again that the Aquinas Library had never been a charge on the archdiocese. He suggested that the people of the archdiocese be given an opportunity to show support for the library by means of a retiring collection at Masses.

Whether Archbishop Duhig answered the letter, or whether the retiring collection was permitted, is unknown, but before long the Archbishop received another letter from the same correspondent, somewhat shorter and sharper than the previous one, advising him that the tenancy of the library had been surrendered, its affairs

were being wound up and the debt of nearly £1000/-/- owing to John P. Kelly would have to be satisfied by the sale of library assets.<sup>87</sup>

It is remarkable that Archbishop Duhig, who supported the library and the Classics Department of the University of Queensland, on whose Senate he sat for many years, and indeed had a Jesuit agent in America buying items for this purpose, would not support a local Catholic library which had run successfully for so long mainly because of the vigour of one man. That man's *cri de coeur* at the most critical moment in the history of the Aquinas Library went unheeded.

The library closed on 23 October 1958 and the final curtain was drawn on its first phase in late December 1958 in an article in the *Catholic Leader* entitled "The Aquinas Library Goes Into Cold Storage".<sup>88</sup> The article was unattributed, but its style is unmistakably that of John P. Kelly.

After announcing the closure of the library "indefinitely", the article gave the immediate and the basic reasons. The premises occupied for over twenty years had to be vacated, but the real reason for the closure was financial difficulties. A short history of the library, showing how it came into being as a result of the enthusiasm of a few members of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association and grew from a small number of books to almost 20,000 without any financial endowment at all, was then given.

High book prices and high rental (and lack of ecclesiastical support although the writer of the article was too charitable to say this) forced the closure of the library. The aims of the library since its foundation, and the philosophy that lay behind it, were then summarised.

The article concluded significantly, firstly by advising the Catholic public that the nucleus of the library had been stored at private expense in the hope that one day it would, Phoenix-like, arise again and resume the place it had occupied for so long in the Catholic life of Brisbane, and, secondly, by requesting any subscribers who still had books on loan to return them to Catholic Publications in Adelaide Street, presided over by none other than "the man in the grey dust coat", the saintly Bill Watson, whose name is mentioned always in the Aquinas Library story.

## **II ATTEMPTED REVIVAL OF LIBRARY**

At some stage between 1959 and 1966, and probably before 1965, there was an attempt to revive the Aquinas Library. An unsigned and undated memorandum of sixteen paragraphs, supported by a sketch plan, proposed that the library be re-estab-

lished and a Catholic Centre established on the upper floor of the Catholic Leader building, then in Ann Street.<sup>89</sup>

Early in the memorandum the writer gives the reasons why the library should be re-established:

There is an urgent necessity to do this. Brisbane is the only metropolitan Archdiocese not operating such a library. The books are in storage, which is costing money. There is a very real demand for the library. Considerable dissatisfaction exists because the library is not functioning. The repute of Brisbane as a major Archdiocese is being damaged.

The premises were tenanted, but the lease had expired. Financial support had been promised by "leading wealthy Catholic laymen". The editor of the *Catholic Leader* (a professional librarian) was prepared to act as honorary librarian of the library. John P. Kelly and people who had been involved with the library previously welcomed the proposals and would support them practically.

Despite all this, nothing happened. The memorandum submitted that "a similar opportunity to re-establish the Catholic Library in Brisbane is unlikely to arise again". It did, but, nevertheless, many interesting questions remain to be answered about the abortive attempt.

Who was the writer of the memorandum? Did it arise from a meeting chaired by the editor of the *Catholic Leader* "held for the purpose of discussing the library situation with a view to making representations to His Grace the Archbishop" referred to in the memorandum? Was the age and infirmity of Archbishop Duhig a factor in the matter? Who made the decision not to proceed with the proposals? These questions may never be answered.

## 12 LAY REACTION TO CLOSURE OF LIBRARY

The loss of the Aquinas Library was felt deeply by the lay Catholics of Brisbane. Throughout 1965, for example, there was a series of letters to the Editor of the *Catholic Leader* deploring the absence of the library and seeking its re-establishment. All the writers, except two, used pseudonyms, as was the custom in those days.

The series commenced with "Stop, Look and Read" lamenting, "Is there no hope of reviving the Aquinas Library in Brisbane? Such a library is indispensable to the Catholic community in a city like Brisbane".<sup>90</sup> "Interested Reader", Camp Hill, and "A Most Ardent Reader", Charleville, responded immediately, and both agreed on the necessity for a Catholic library.<sup>91</sup>



They were followed by "Scribe", Ashgrove, who suggested that the Catholic Readers' and Writers' Association or the Y.C.W. could work out a plan, and "Four Leaf Shamrock", Brisbane, who said "It is books, books, books we want".<sup>92</sup> Paul Martin, Hamilton, wrote a reasoned letter stressing the philosophical need for a Catholic library, before turning to the practicalities of location and control.<sup>93</sup>

Martin Haley, well-known writer and poet and President of the Catholic Readers and Writers' Society, who had connections with the old Aquinas Library since its early days<sup>94</sup>, put his finger on the problems. He said that the first problem was "domicile", and that if the library were resurrected, it would need "direct support from Church funds".<sup>95</sup>

A later correspondent, "Hopeful", Brisbane, suggested that the Society of St Vincent de Paul might be able to undertake the running of a Catholic library in the city.<sup>96</sup> The year closed with yet another correspondent, "Rip Van Winkle", Brisbane, "yearning for a Catholic library".<sup>97</sup>

### 13 *BLACKFRIARS BOOKROOM*<sup>98</sup>

In 1946, a young South Australian, beginning his theological studies in Washington DC, was asked to review a book for the students' quarterly periodical *Dominicana*. It was the inaugural Aquinas Lecture previously mentioned: *Aquinas and Modern Practices of Interest Taking*, by John P. Kelly.

The reviewer was amazed when he took up that small publication. What was this Aquinas Library in Brisbane? How could it start a series of lectures and have the first one, on such a subject, published? How could the library get it to a theological college in the United States so soon after the ending of the Second World War?

Later that young reviewer, by now a Dominican priest, arrived in Brisbane and met John P. Kelly. He then knew how all these things had happened, and marvelled how a small group of laymen, under the inspirational leadership of the same John P. Kelly, had accomplished so much with so little ecclesiastical support. The reviewer was Rev. Louis Durell.

Father Durell became much involved in the affairs of the archdiocese, and realised very quickly after the closure of the Aquinas Library in 1958 how necessary it was for the people of the archdiocese that it be reopened, or that something equivalent take its place. Despite a heavy workload, he decided to do something positive.

With great difficulty and with permission granted grudgingly by, but without the ecclesiastical support he sought from, the then Archbishop of Brisbane, Arch-

bishop O'Donnell, he established the Blackfriars Bookroom in part of the premises rented by the Catholic Missions Office in the Hibernian Building, 246 Queen Street, Brisbane, in June 1968.

By a strange quirk of fate, that situation was only a short distance from the old Aquinas Library. Rev. Frank Moynihan was Director of Catholic Missions at the time. He agreed to sub-let the space to the Blackfriars Bookroom, but insisted that rental, electricity and cleaning fees had to be paid.

Father Durrell discussed with John P. Kelly whether the Aquinas Library books could be incorporated into the Blackfriars Bookroom, but, while he was completely sympathetic with Father Durrell's endeavour, he wanted some form of commitment from the archdiocese, or other permanent body, that the library would be re-established permanently. This was not forthcoming.

The Blackfriars Bookroom began with a lecture by Professor James Cameron, who was then Master of Rutherford College and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kent, and an internationally-known Newman scholar. John P. Kelly was chairman on that occasion and maintained his interest in Father Durrell's enterprise until the end.

Although it helped fill the gap and was the bridge between the old and the new Aquinas Library, the Blackfriars Bookroom lasted until 1970 only. It had a broad range of Catholic theological works, periodicals and reference books; it brought world-renowned lecturers to Brisbane; but it did not get the support it deserved.

## **14 REVIVAL OF LIBRARY**

So matters stood: Brisbane without a Catholic library and the Aquinas books still in storage, possibly missing being inundated by the 1974 flood, having been transferred from a storage depot which was affected by that disaster.<sup>99</sup>

The acquisition by the Catholic Church of the Edwards Dunlop and Company Limited building, 143 Edward Street, Brisbane, is the next highlight in the Aquinas Library story. Since its acquisition the building has been known as the Catholic Centre. A Catholic Centre Committee of Advice was set up by Archbishop Rush in August 1975 to advise him, *inter alia*, on the disposition of space in the centre.

Consideration was given to providing space in the centre for a Catholic library. A Library Establishment Subcommittee was set up, and it is interesting to note that one of its members was Mamie O'Keeffe, a well-known name to patrons of the

library in its first phase.

John P. Kelly was consulted and, and considering that what he hoped for so long had come to pass, namely the provision of a permanent home for the Aquinas Library books, agreed to hand over the books to the archdiocese. This time, it was Marist Brothers' boys who unpacked the books from the seventy-six tea chests in which they had been stored.

Early in 1977, the Library Establishment Subcommittee submitted a report and its recommendations to Archbishop Rush. The report suggested names for the library - The Catholic Centre Library, The Newman Library - and that a Marist Brother be appointed to the permanent committee, the creation of which it recommended. It dealt with numerous other matters and reported also that, with the co-operation of the Presentation Order, Sister Antonia Bremner, PBVM, had been appointed librarian.

A copy of the subcommittee's report was supplied to John P. Kelly by Archbishop Rush. In his frank comments on the report,<sup>100</sup> which he admitted could be regarded as severe, he dealt with the name of the library, particulars of the suggested permanent committee and the constitution of the library. He had this to say about the name of the library:

There were certainly no strings to the handing over of the Aquinas Library books etc., but I feel that I would have been entitled to assume that the books would be used to carry on the Library under its name "The Aquinas Library". Indeed, it never entered my head that there would be any proposal to the contrary and it is difficult to appreciate why there should be any such proposal.

The first part of the first sentence is significant. This could be regarded as John P. Kelly's fatal mistake. Another interesting comment made by him was that a Christian Brother could be considered as a representative on the permanent committee in view of the early association of the Christian Brothers with the library.

By letter dated 7 April 1977, Archbishop Rush issued invitations to certain people to constitute the permanent committee of the Aquinas Library, subsequently known as the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee. The inaugural meeting of the committee was held at "Wynberg", with Archbishop Rush presiding, on 25 May 1977. The members of the first committee were Rev. Peter Grice; Sister Antonia Bremner; Mrs Jill Weld; and Messrs Manus Boyce, Dan Flynn, Adrian Halliday and Frank Hills.

## 15 *REOPENING OF LIBRARY*

The second red-letter day in the Aquinas Library story was Sunday, 31 July 1977. Following a special Concelebrated Mass at St Stephen's Cathedral, with Archbishop Rush as the principal celebrant, invoking the blessing of Almighty God on the project, the Archbishop blessed the premises on the third floor of the Catholic Centre which had been made available to house the Aquinas Library books after their long hibernation, and blessed the books themselves which were about to take up their apostolate again.

Archbishop Rush spoke at the Mass<sup>101</sup> and at the blessing and reopening. In his homily at the Mass he struck a warning note:

Ahead of the Committee lies the awesome task of conceiving ideas which will facilitate the miracles that must be wrought if the Aquinas Library is to grow steadily and never again face the tragedy of having to close its doors.<sup>102</sup>

John P. Kelly, on what would have been one of the proudest moments of his life, addressed the large gathering present at the blessing and reopening.<sup>103</sup> His address conjured up what life was like in Brisbane when the Aquinas Library came into being, and traced the library's history until its forced closure in 1958, but more importantly, he spoke about the spirit of the library and expressed the hope that, as its next chapter was about to commence, it "would offer to Christians the opportunity to raise their voices loudly and clearly". Finally, John P. Kelly thanked Archbishop Rush for his generosity in making the reopening of the library possible.

## 16 *LIBRARY ACTIVITIES IN EDWARD STREET*

The activities conducted by the Aquinas Library in its second phase at the Catholic Centre were not unlike those of its first phase, but in the main they were not as varied or as frequent as they were previously.

Very early in its existence, the advisory committee decided to inaugurate a series of formal lectures similar to those which were given under the auspices of the library in its earlier phase. Each lecture was combined with a dinner and the Aquinas Memorial Dinner and Lecture became a feature of Catholic life in Brisbane. The first of these new lectures was "James Quinn: Monarch of All He Surveyed", by Rev. Dr. T. P. Boland, and it was delivered on the third floor of the Catholic Centre, adjacent to the library, on 12 November 1979.

From 1979 until 1987, the Aquinas Lectures were arranged by the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee and were printed in series.<sup>104</sup> There were three lectures

between the disbanding of the advisory committee in 1988 and the closing of the library itself in 1991.<sup>105</sup> Of these, two were not capable of being printed, relying as they did on slide illustration, and one has been printed by the Australian Catholic University, Mitchelton Campus, the inheritor of most of the Aquinas Library books.

The regular Sunday night lectures which were such a feature of the Aquinas Library in its first phase did not occur in the second phase for a number of reasons. Benediction at St Stephen's Cathedral had been superseded by Sunday evening Mass, the prerogative of the young; public transport at night had virtually disappeared; the whole of life in the 1970s and 1980s was so different; and the interest in the affairs of the mind had diminished dramatically.

Despite all this, the advisory committee endeavoured to do what it could. Between 1983 and 1987, it supplemented the formal lectures with a series of Discussion Evenings. Each Discussion Evening consisted of a short lecture followed by a period during which members of the audience were able to question the lecturer and develop their own ideas on the topic of the evening.

It could be said, perhaps, that the topics of the lectures at the Discussion Evenings were more intellectual and more religious than the formal Aquinas Lectures. For example, John Gilfedder, Senior Lecturer in the History of Music at the Conservatorium of Music and a former member of the Campion Society in Melbourne, spoke on "Phases of Catholic Thought in Australia"<sup>106</sup>, and Rev. Michael Putney's topic<sup>107</sup> was "Ecumenism: A Question for Catholics Today".<sup>108</sup>

Sister Anne McLay's book on Bishop Quinn<sup>109</sup> was launched by Rev. Dr. T. P. Boland at the Aquinas Library.<sup>110</sup> Two tapestry displays were mounted in conjunction with a Sydney importer. The late Father Frank Douglas co-operated with the library in having an Open Day at his historic residence "Glengariff" in aid of library funds. Book sales, a stall one year at the Spring Hill Fair, raffles and other fundraising activities occupied the advisory committee in its endeavour to raise funds for the library.

Another important initiative of the advisory committee, but produced completely by Sister Antonia, was the publication *All About Books* which appeared monthly, from the reopening of the library until the end of 1978, and then every two months until production difficulties dictated its cessation at the end of 1981.

*All About Books* gave information about the holdings of the library and new books purchased. From time to time it contained historical information about the first phase of the library. It sometimes included original contributions.<sup>111</sup> The open-

ing of the Aquinas Bookshop on 15 May 1978 elicited the comment in an issue that "one of the primary purposes of the Aquinas Bookshop is to act as a support for the Aquinas Library".<sup>112</sup> By and large, this did not occur.

## **17 DONATIONS TO LIBRARY IN EDWARD STREET**

One of the features of the Aquinas Library in its second phase was the acquisition, by donation or purchase, of important collections of books.

Many books from the extraordinary library of Martin Haley<sup>113</sup> found their way on to the shelves of the library and helped to bridge the gap between 1958 and 1977. It was fitting that books from the collections of John P. Kelly and Frank Kelly also were donated to the library.

Other considerable special collections held by the library were the Oxenham collection,<sup>114</sup> the Murphy collection,<sup>115</sup> the Flood collection<sup>116</sup> and the Roberts collection.<sup>117</sup> Numerous other donations of books were made to the library by their owners or from the owners' estates.

A donation of Queensland historical significance was that of "parliamentary books" by the McDonnell family in 1977.<sup>118</sup> An anonymous donor presented to the library in 1989 a valuable reproduction edition of the famous 1931 Golden Cockerel edition of *The Four Gospels* with engravings by Eric Gill. This was in memory of John P. Kelly.<sup>119</sup>

Not only books were donated. Before the establishment of the Corinda and Graceville parishes, Mass was offered on the sideboard of the railway gatehouse near Sherwood Railway Station. Special flower vases were purchased for use at these Masses, and those vases were donated to the library in 1977 by Father Denis Byrne.<sup>120</sup> The Sisters of Mercy donated \$10,000 as the J. P. Kelly Endowment.<sup>121</sup>

## **18 SISTER ANTONIA BREMNER**

John P. Kelly was Honorary Librarian of the Aquinas Library in its first phase, with unqualified and qualified staff working under his direction. Sister Antonia Bremner occupied the position of librarian for the whole of the second phase of the library.

Sister Antonia was born at Brisbane in 1918, and was educated at All Hallows' School. She entered the Presentation Order when she was twenty-one years

old. In her early years she did considerable study up to postgraduate level at the University of Queensland. She qualified as a librarian at the Queensland Institute of Technology, now the Queensland University of Technology.

All Sister Antonia's working life has been spent as a teacher or as a librarian. When the Aquinas Library was being re-established, she was recommended for the position of librarian by the Library Establishment Subcommittee.

From the beginning, Sister Antonia threw herself wholeheartedly into the affairs of the library. Her almost single-handed efforts from 1977 until 1991 in all aspects of the library's activities deserve the utmost praise. She carried out the normal duties of librarian, in the course of which she endeared herself both to Brisbane subscribers and to those country people who benefited from the country extension service which she introduced.

In addition, for most of the period she was secretary of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee; she participated actively in the functions and affairs of the library, often being solely responsible for their organisation; she used every effort she could to raise funds for the library; and, at the end, fought vigorously for its retention as a separate entity. When the full story of the Aquinas Library is written, Sister Antonia will figure prominently in it.

## **19 DISSOLUTION OF AQUINAS LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The seeds of dissolution of the second phase of the Aquinas Library, for those intelligent enough to see it, were sown at the inaugural meeting of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee at "Wynberg". Under the heading "Archdiocesan Control" the minutes of that meeting<sup>122</sup> disclose that the library "would remain Archdiocesan in nature, and subject to such authority through Mr Dan Flynn, Secretary of the Archdiocesan office, and under both the patronage and authority of the Archbishop".

The minutes further disclose that "His Grace advised that the Archdiocese could fund up to \$30,000 in the first year of operation of the Library but ways and means would have to be found to make the Library financially viable at the expiration of this period".

The seeds of dissolution germinated slowly through the following years. Firstly, space was taken from the library. The efforts of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee to maintain the library's space in the Catholic Centre when it was threatened in 1982, elicited the petulant remark from Archbishop Rush, "Who was responsible for

setting up this Library and bringing it all together?"<sup>123</sup>

Later in the year, the Archdiocesan General Secretary referred to the Archbishop having "actioned the recommendation of the sub-committee of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council to re-establish and re-house the Aquinas Library in the newly acquired Catholic Centre".<sup>124</sup> There was constant reference in the minutes of the meetings of the committee to its inability to make money.

In 1985, after the Report of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee was presented to Archbishop Rush, he advised the chairman of the committee that he had read the report "with great interest and admiration for all the hard work and self-sacrifice that it represents". He assured the chairman of his "undiminished enthusiasm for the Aquinas Library" and promised "all the support of which I am capable."<sup>125</sup>

Yet, a little over a year and a half later, on 16 December 1987, Archbishop Rush wrote to Mr D. L. J. Flynn, Archdiocesan General Secretary, not to the president of the committee, nor to its secretary, suggesting that there was "no further need for the Committee and that an in-house group, answerable to me through the Vicar for Administration, would be in a better position to achieve more".<sup>126</sup> The Archbishop went on to suggest that Mr Flynn should "share" his thoughts with the committee.

Most members of the committee knew nothing about this letter until close to the date of the next meeting, 12 February 1988. The committee members present dutifully tendered their resignations, protesting that they had felt honoured to have served on the committee.<sup>127</sup> After the dissolution of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee, Archbishop Rush maintained that he had "no intention of letting the Library die".<sup>128</sup>

## 20 *END OF AQUINAS LIBRARY*

The way, however, was now left open, in the fullness of time and not too much time at that, and with lay involvement in the library at an end, for a priest to suggest the removal of the library from the Catholic Centre.

Various committees of the Archdiocese (such as the Finance Committee and the Catholic Centre Committee) considered the matter on the bases, allegedly, of what was the best for the library, what was best for the archdiocese and what was best for the Catholic Centre. It was then taken to the Archbishop's Council, a body consisting of the auxiliary bishops, the various vicars and others, which obviously recommended to Archbishop Ruch that the library be removed from the Catholic Cen-



tre. The archdiocesan records are not available for perusal.

Having determined to be rid of the library, free up the valuable space it occupied and dispose of the financial incubus which had been a sore point since 1977, the question to be decided by the archdiocesan decision-makers was what to do with the books. They were hawked around. The Banyo Seminary Library refused to take them, or did not want them, but the fledgling Australian Catholic University jumped at the opportunity, as well it might.

In April 1991, it was announced that "Brisbane Archdiocese's Aquinas Library is to be given a new home on the Australian Catholic University (ACU) McAuley Campus at Mitchelton".<sup>129</sup> Honeyed words followed in the announcement, but towards the end of it Mr Graham Joyner, archdiocesan property manager, let the cat out of the bag. By "relocating" the library at Mitchelton, he said, part of the Catholic Centre ("a building which has been under great pressure for years") could be reorganised.

An agreement between The Corporation of the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, the owner of the Aquinas Library after its books were handed over by John P. Kelly, and the Australian Catholic University regarding the books taken by the University (some 20 000 of the library's estimated holdings of 35 000) has been, or is to be, executed. Conveniently for the archdiocesan decision-makers, the agreement was to be drawn by Messrs John P. Kelly & Co., Solicitors, thus giving an air of verisimilitude to the transaction.

The books selected by the university were removed from the library premises on 25/26 June 1991. They are on permanent loan to the university; the university undertook to continue the philosophy of the Aquinas Library; the books are to be marked to show their provenance; and the tradition of the Aquinas Lectures and their publication is to be continued. Two lectures have been delivered since the closing of the library.<sup>130</sup> The books are housed in an air-conditioned room at Mitchelton, and the old material is behind glass.

The books taken by the university are being catalogued gradually on to the university library's computer system. While this is being done, the university will determine the fate of each book received from the Aquinas Library. Old, valuable and historical material is to be retained in the "Aquinas Collection", but other books will be incorporated into the general library of the university.

Some of the balance of the Aquinas Library books which the Australian Catholic University did not want are held in the rooms of the Catholic Women's League in the

Catholic Centre, but the fate of the remainder is unknown.

The space in the Catholic Centre, previously occupied by the Aquinas Library, has been turned into offices and meeting rooms. Thus the Aquinas Library is now no more.

## 21 CONCLUSION

In some ways the story of the Aquinas Library is a sad one, but in other ways it is an heroic one. In its first phase, against all odds, the library survived for a quarter of a century. When it was established it had three purposes -

- (a) To provide a general lending library service for Catholics which would conform to standards of morality, decency, and good taste;
- (b) To provide for Catholic students literature and books not normally otherwise available to them;
- (c) To provide in a limited way a Library service for Catholic scholars.<sup>131</sup>

As its motto, "High Brow, Low Brow, No Brow," proclaimed, it was for everyone.

The stated purposes of the library were achieved without subsidy or endowment of any sort. A fine library was built up and a meeting-place provided for Catholics and Catholic societies and organisations in the heart of Brisbane. The contribution of the library to the religious, educational and cultural development of Brisbane, particularly, and Queensland is yet to be recounted, but it must have been substantial.

The re-establishment of the library in 1977 in the Catholic Centre was greeted with enthusiasm and hailed as a progressive step by clergy and laity alike. In its second phase, the library was faithful to the philosophy of those men in the 1930s whose vision was responsible for its foundation. In a central position in Brisbane it made available its wonderful resources, built up over half a century, to the Catholic people of Brisbane and Queensland.

A library cannot support itself. Whether it be State, Municipal or Catholic, it is a service to its particular community and must be funded accordingly. The Archdiocese of Brisbane supported the Aquinas Library from 1977 until 1991, but then declined to do so.<sup>132</sup>

Are the ghosts of the Dublin Jesuits and the Ladies of the Grail hovering on

the third floor of the Catholic Centre? How does episcopal support for Catholic libraries rate as the twentieth century draws to its close?

## NOTES

Abbreviations used in these notes are -

AAB	<i>All About Books</i> , Aquinas Library, Brisbane
AL	Aquinas Library
ALAC	Aquinas Library Advisory Committee
BAA	Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives
CCLL	Catholic Central Library Limited
CL	<i>Catholic Leader</i> , Brisbane
CM	<i>Courier-Mail</i> , Brisbane
QSA	Queensland State Archives
RS	<i>The Risen Sun</i> , Brisbane

<sup>1</sup> See Robert Bernard Martin, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life* (Harper Collins, London, 1991) at page 371

<sup>2</sup> In her book *Faith and Feminism: Catholic Women's Struggles for Self-Expression* (Studies in the Christian Movement, Sydney, 1985) at pages 264-271

<sup>3</sup> Concilium Plenarium IV Australiae et Novae Zelandiae, Habitum Apud Sydney, Editio Officialis, 1937, at pages 186-187

<sup>4</sup> *The Australian* 18/12/1880

<sup>5</sup> *The Australian* 17/2/1883

<sup>6</sup> See T. P. Boland, *James Duhig* (University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1986) at page 215

<sup>7</sup> CL 22/6/1993 at page 16

<sup>8</sup> President of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Literary and Debating Society (John P. Kelly) to Archbishop Duhig 17/6/1932 (AL file, BAA)

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in "The Aquinas Library" ("Aquin"), CL 14/5/1936 at page 15

<sup>10</sup> See James Griffin, "A Vaudeville of devils: New light on John Wren", *Eureka Street*, Vol. 2 No. 7, August 1992, at page 34

<sup>11</sup> "What is an adequate Library", *Twentieth Century*, Vol. 1 No. 3, March 1947, at page 58

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in "The Aquinas Library" (by "Aquin"), CL 14/5/1936 at page 15

<sup>13</sup> "Can Brisbane's Catholic Central Library of past days be re-established?", CL 31/10/1976 at page 8

<sup>14</sup> Report on the Aquinas Library tendered to the Catholic Central Library Limited by John P. Kelly, undated, but 1936 (AL file, BAA)

- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> No 47 of 1936, QSA A/34065
- <sup>17</sup> CL 4/6/1936 at page 16
- <sup>18</sup> John Evangelist McElligott (1899-1957), Teacher of English, one of the greatest Christian Brothers to have taught in Queensland. He would have been in complete agreement with the aims and ideals of the founders of the Aquinas Library.
- <sup>19</sup> CL 4/6/1936 at page 16
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> CM 1/6/1936
- <sup>23</sup> CL 21/5/1936 at page 19
- <sup>24</sup> CL 21/11/1976 at page 8
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with Mamie O'Keeffe (Brisbane), 16/5/1992
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> CL 3/6/1937 at page 15; 10/6/1937 at page 19; 17/6/1937 at page 24
- <sup>28</sup> Now in possession of author
- <sup>29</sup> CL 22/8/1935 at page 19
- <sup>30</sup> RS 1/11/1935 at page 14
- <sup>31</sup> CL 28/10/1937 at page 21
- <sup>32</sup> CL 24/3/1938 at page 24
- <sup>33</sup> CL 30/6/1938 at page 21
- <sup>34</sup> CL 14/9/1939 at page 20
- <sup>35</sup> CL 22/5/1941 at page 11
- <sup>36</sup> CL 3/7/1941 at page 16
- <sup>37</sup> CL 16/10/1941 at page 13
- <sup>38</sup> CL 20/11/1941 at page 13
- <sup>39</sup> *Notes on Social Studies for Senior Classes in Secondary Schools* (Linehan & Shrimpton Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1945)
- <sup>40</sup> CL 2/12/1937 at page 19
- <sup>41</sup> CL 18/5/1939 at page 19
- <sup>42</sup> CL 4/9/1941 at page 13
- <sup>43</sup> CL 2/12/1937 at page 19
- <sup>44</sup> CL 16/3/1939 at page 21
- <sup>45</sup> CL 17/4/1941 at page 15
- <sup>46</sup> CL 17/3/1938 at page 17
- <sup>47</sup> CL 28/7/1938 at page 23
- <sup>48</sup> CL 30/3/1939 at page 17
- <sup>49</sup> CL 22/6/1939 at page 22
- <sup>50</sup> CL 17/7/1941 at page 15
- <sup>51</sup> CL 24/7/1941 at page 12
- <sup>52</sup> CL 21/8/1941 at page 13
- <sup>53</sup> CL 28/8/1941 at page 16
- <sup>54</sup> CL 4/12/1941 at page 9
- <sup>55</sup> CL 2/3/1944 at page 8
- <sup>56</sup> The titles of the lectures not mentioned in the text were "Aquinas and the Modern Gentiles"

(D. G. M. Jackson, 1945); "Higher Education in Australia" (Colin Clarke, 1946); "The Evolution of the Evolutionary Idea" (A. E. Shaw, 1947); "The Poems of Aquinas" (Martin Haley, 1949); and "Europe under the Shadow of Moscow" (Arnold Lunn, 1950).

<sup>57</sup> CL 10/3/1949 at page 5

<sup>58</sup> F. S. Kelly to K. Carpenter 4/5/1948 (copy held by author)

<sup>59</sup> Nigel Bonsey (1905-1992), scholar, prominent in AL from its inception, regular contributor to CL and RS in the 1930s

<sup>60</sup> Typescript from Brenda Holmes (USA), January 1992, held by author

<sup>61</sup> Minutes ALAC 5/12/1977 held by author

<sup>62</sup> CL 29/9/1938 at page 21

<sup>63</sup> Augustine Group, Ozanam Group and Marian Group, CL 13/5/1937 at page 16

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Denise Sweeney (Brisbane), 14/5/1992; Interview with Mamie O'Keeffe (Brisbane), 16/5/1992

<sup>65</sup> Mamie O'Keeffe, *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> CL 18/10/1945 at page 7

<sup>67</sup> CL 1958, *passim*

<sup>68</sup> Typescript from Brenda Holmes (U.S.A.), January 1992, held by author

<sup>69</sup> Holograph from Kevin Carpenter (Brisbane), 26/4/1992, held by author

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Maureen McNeill (Brisbane), 29/7/1992, held by author

<sup>71</sup> Telephone conversation with author, 18/5/1992

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Mamie O'Keeffe (Brisbane), 16/5/1992

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Denise Sweeney (Brisbane), 14/5/1992

<sup>74</sup> MS held by author and quoted in typescript "Tribute to Mr John P. Kelly on behalf of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee at the Aquinas Library Discussion Evening on 15th June 1984" by author and held by him

<sup>75</sup> CL 2/9/1943 at page 5

<sup>76</sup> CL 11/5/1939 at page 9

<sup>77</sup> CL 1/6/1939 at page 17

<sup>78</sup> CL 7/8/1977 (Queensland Scene) at page 3

<sup>79</sup> Minutes CCLL 15/7/1940 (AL file, BAA)

<sup>80</sup> CL 25/11/1943 at page 8

<sup>81</sup> CL 7/8/1977 (Queensland Scene) at page 3

<sup>82</sup> CL 23/12/1943 at page 8

<sup>83</sup> QSA A/34065

<sup>84</sup> Minutes CCLL 23/5/1945 (AL file, BAA)

<sup>85</sup> *Queensland Government Gazette*, No. 75, 8/9/1945, at page 459

<sup>86</sup> John P. Kelly to Archbishop Duhig 23/4/1958 (AL file, BAA)

<sup>87</sup> John P. Kelly to Archbishop Duhig 18/7/1958 (AL file, BAA)

<sup>88</sup> CL 24/12/1958 at page 4

<sup>89</sup> AL file, BAA

<sup>90</sup> CL 25/2/1965 at page 2

<sup>91</sup> CL 11/3/1965 at page 2

<sup>92</sup> CL 25/3/1965 at page 2

<sup>93</sup> CL 8/4/1965 at page 2

<sup>94</sup> See "When Brisbane had a Catholic library: some recollections", CL 21/11/1976 at page 8

<sup>95</sup> CL 22/4/1965 at page 2

<sup>96</sup> CL 20/5/1965 at page 2

<sup>97</sup> CL 28/10/1985 at page 2

<sup>98</sup> This section relies heavily on typescript from Rev. Louis Durrell (Brisbane), 29/4/1992, and conversations between him and author.

<sup>99</sup> Oral tradition

<sup>100</sup> John P. Kelly to Archbishop Rush 24/3/1977 (copy held by author)

<sup>101</sup> CL 7/8/1977 (Queensland Scene) at page 2

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> CL 7/8/1977 (Queensland Scene) at page 3

<sup>104</sup> The titles of the other lectures were "Life Style and the Built Environment (Robin Gibson, 1980); "From Greene to Gordon: The Changing Accent of Catholic Literature" (Karl G. Schmude, 1981); "Church Law 1982: Farce Fiction or Freedom?" (Rev. Dr O. K. Oxenham, 1982); "The Meaning of Dr. Mannix" (Rev. Edmund Campion, 1983); "Chinese Society Since Mao: Religion and Family" (Professor Colin Mackerras, 1984); "Boree Log: Early Australian History in the Poems of 'John O'Brien'" (Rev. Frank Mecham, 1985); "The Ascent of Tabor: Writing the Life of Archbishop Duhig" (Rev. Dr T. P. Boland, 1986); and "Embodiment and Incarnation: Notes on Preparing an Anthology of Australian Religious Verse" (Les A. Murray, 1987).

<sup>105</sup> "Michelangelo Returns to Glory" (Dr Walter Persegati, 1988); "St. Stephen's Restored (Very Rev. Frank Moynihan, 1989); and "Borromini: Genius of the Baroque" (Rev. Peter Grice, 1990)

<sup>106</sup> On 30/11/1983

<sup>107</sup> On 14/3/1986

<sup>108</sup> The topics of the discussion evenings not mentioned in the text were "The Challenge Facing the Catholic Press", by John Coleman, Editor of the *Catholic Leader* (24/3/1983); "A Contemporary Look at Hilaire Belloc: The Man and his Works", by Rev. Dr O. K. Oxenham (17/6/1983); "Laity and the New Code", by Rev. Dr James Spence (23/3/1984); "Religious Congregations and Education in Queensland: An Historical Perspective", by Sister Rosa MacGinley (15/6/1984); "The Church and the Arts", by John Gilfedder (24/5/1985); and "A Turn of the Century Conversation with John Henry Cardinal Newman", by Rev. S. Byrne (27/3/1987). "The Spirit of Merton", by Rev. Dr O. K. Oxenham (22/7/1988) was the only Discussion Evening held after the advisory committee was disbanded.

<sup>109</sup> Yvonne Margaret McLay, RSM, *James Quinn: First Catholic Bishop of Brisbane* (Graphic Books, Armadale, 1979)

<sup>110</sup> On 25/3/1980

<sup>111</sup> For example, by John Tracey, Poet, a member of the Catholic Readers and Writers' Society and Madeleine O'Hagan (d.1990), Poet, and widow of John Denis O'Hagan (d.1956), former Under Secretary of the Department of Justice and a contributor to RS

<sup>112</sup> AAB Vol. 2 No. 4, May 1978

<sup>113</sup> Martin Nelson Haley (1905-1980), Poet, and President of the Catholic Readers and Writers' Society from 1947 until 1975 (see also note 94)

<sup>114</sup> Rev. Dr Owen Kevin Oxenham, DCL, OBE (1927-1991), supporter of AL in both its phases

<sup>115</sup> John Joseph Murphy (1939-1984), Solicitor, member of ALAC from 1979 until his death

- <sup>116</sup> Dr P. J. Flood, former editor of the *Catholic Leader*
- <sup>117</sup> Monsignor Cornelius Roberts, former Rector of Banyo Seminary
- <sup>118</sup> Frank McDonnell (1862 - 1928), of McDonnell & East and McDonnell Medal fame, sometime President of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association
- <sup>119</sup> Personal knowledge of author
- <sup>120</sup> "History of the vases donated by the late Father Denis Byrne to Aquinas Library 26/9/77", photocopy typescript given to author by John Joseph ("Jack") McLaughlin (1930- ), former Queensland Sheffield Shield cricketer and great-grandson of one of the purchasers of the vases
- <sup>121</sup> Minutes ALAC 7/8/1978 held by author
- <sup>122</sup> Minutes ALAC 25/5/1977 held by author
- <sup>123</sup> Minutes ALAC 10/5/1982 held by author
- <sup>124</sup> Minutes ALAC 26/10/1982 held by author
- <sup>125</sup> Archbishop Rush to T. R. Hartigan 24/4/1985 (copy held by author)
- <sup>126</sup> Archbishop Rush to D.L.J. Flynn 16/12/1987 (copy held by author)
- <sup>127</sup> Minutes ALAC 12/2/1988 held by author
- <sup>128</sup> Archbishop Rush to author 2/3/1988
- <sup>129</sup> CL 14/4/1991 at page 3
- <sup>130</sup> "Building Other Towers: Archbishop Robert Dunne in Colonial Queensland" (Rev. Dr Neil J. Byrne, 1991) and "Whatever could make a university Catholic?" (Professor Helen Sungaila, 1992)
- <sup>131</sup> CL 13/11/1947 at page 9
- <sup>132</sup> Archdiocesan General Manager, Finance & Administration (A.J. Dixon) to author 2/5/1991

Frank Hills

Frank Hills was born in Brisbane in 1931. He was educated by the Sisters of St Joseph at Mary Immaculate Convent, Annerley, and by the Christian Brothers at St Laurence's College, South Brisbane. Although not a lawyer, he spent his working life in legal offices of the Queensland Public Service. He is at present working, on a casual basis, in the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel. Mr Hills was a friend of John P. Kelly, the founder of the Aquinas Library, in his later life, and of Frank Kelly from 1949 until his death. From both these men he acquired not only information about the original Aquinas Library, but also a sense of its history and of what it had meant to them and those associated with it. When the Aquinas Library was re-established in 1977, Mr Hills was invited to become a member of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee and remained a member until the committee was disbanded in 1988, often acting as Chairman. Some years ago Mr Hills presented an occasional paper to the Catholic Readers and Writers' Society on subjects such as Hilaire Belloc, Maurice Baring and Charles Waterton. His paper on Belloc was printed in instalments in the *Catholic Leader* in 1970, and that on Waterton in *Twentieth Century* in 1972. Mr Hills delivered the Occasional Address, "Some Memories of St Laurence's 1942-1991", at the 1991 St Laurence's Speech Night. This address was printed in the 1991 College Annual.