

PAPER VI

JOHN P. KELLY

(1907—1984)

Catholic Lay Leader

Acknowledgements

My first thanks are due to the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society and its president, Father Tom Boland, for giving me the opportunity to address the society on John P. Kelly.

I knew the man in his later life, and knew that he was an important figure in the Catholic life of Brisbane. It was only when I commenced my amateur research for the address on the Aquinas Library, which I gave to this society in 1992, that it became more and more apparent to me that John P. Kelly was a giant of a man.

My next thanks are due to the children of John P. Kelly living in Brisbane—Margaret Kelly, Moira Mann, Carmel MacDonald and Xavier Kelly—who have given me their time, and answered my questions about their father.

Others who have assisted me, and deserve my thanks, are Brother Leo Ansell CFC (archivist of the Christian Brothers); Sister Norah Boland RSM (archivist of the Sisters of Mercy); Father Ed Campion; Sister Josephine Crawford RSM (archivist of the Mater Hospitals); Manfred Cross; Ian Diehm (historian of the Queensland Rugby Union); Father Louis Durell; John Gilfedder (for memories of the Campion Society in Melbourne); Doss Gilmour (Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives); Peter Jones (one-time member of the Literature Board of Review); Pat Maguire; Father Denis Martin (archivist of the Archdiocese of Brisbane); Tim Moroney; Colin Pearson (one-time secretary of the Literature Board of Review); Dermot Peters; Archbishop Francis Rush DD; and Eric Shaw.

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This is my version of the John P. Kelly story, and it is a short one. It goes without saying that I am responsible for any inaccuracies which occur in it.

Frank Hills

He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
Hamlet, 1. II. 187-188

..... Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, 'This was a man'!
Julius Caesar, 5. V. 74-75

Introduction

An apparently sombre figure, walking down Queen Street from his office in the Bank of New South Wales Chambers and later in the Prudential Building, with his hands clasped tightly behind his back, on his way to lunch with, perhaps, his two doctor friends, Norm Behan and Eric Shaw, or in earlier days off to the Aquinas Library, this man was a familiar sight in the city of Brisbane for decades.

But did the people of Brisbane who saw him in those far-off days—a sober-suited, heavy man—realise that they were seeing a man who had contributed so much to the city and, in particular, to the Brisbane, and indeed Queensland, Catholic church?

The ordinary person who saw him, the man who had just got off the Tarragindi bus for example, would not have known that the man he saw was an intellectual giant, and one who had done so much good in his lifetime.

Yet that same bus traveller could not avoid thinking, when he saw him, that the man, proceeding with such solemnity down the street, was no ordinary man, such was his presence even walking down the street. The man, of course, was the subject of this paper: John Patrick Kelly.

Family Details

John Patrick Kelly was born at Brisbane on 15 February 1907, the second son of Michael Egan Kelly and Beatrice Annie Kelly (née Baldwin). Michael Egan Kelly was born at Thurles in Ireland and came to Queensland in the 1870s. Beatrice Annie Baldwin, who was of English stock, was born at Barolin Station, Bundaberg, the eighth and last child of her parents, on 22 October 1873.

The Kellys were married at Bundaberg, and had four other children. Their eldest child, Michael Joseph Kelly, died as a young man of 20 years of age at Brisbane on 4 December 1922. Two girls died in infancy, one at Brisbane and one at Thursday Island, where her father was stationed as an officer of the Queensland Police Force. The last child in the family was Francis Sylvester Kelly, born at Thursday Island on 8 April 1912, Easter Monday.

Michael Egan Kelly died at Brisbane on 8 October 1914, aged only 50 years, leaving his widow with the responsibility of rearing and educating her three young boys, one of whom was taken from her also not long afterwards. She herself died at Brisbane on 29 February 1936, aged 62 years.

John P. Kelly married Margaret Maud Hishon at St Patrick's Church, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, on 23 January 1937. Margaret Maud Hishon, a conveyancer, was the eldest daughter of Patrick Mortimer Hishon, a police magistrate, who later became Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, and his wife Catherine Mary Hishon. She was born at Gympie on 24 August 1906.

The marriage was blessed with five children, four daughters and a son. Mrs Kelly took a great interest in working for charities. She was President of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospitals Ladies' Auxiliary for a time. She died at Brisbane on 6 September 1968, aged 62 years.

John P. Kelly himself died at Brisbane on 12 June 1984, aged 77 years. Frank Kelly, his devoted brother who had never married, followed him soon afterwards, dying at Brisbane on 9 May 1985, aged 73 years.

John P. Kelly was buried at Hemmant Cemetery with his wife. There is an inscription giving details of his death and burial on the Kelly family monument in Toowong Cemetery, where his father and mother, his two brothers and one of his sisters lie buried.

Education and Working Life

The young John P. Kelly received his early primary education from the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Thursday Island when his father was stationed there.

When the family returned to Brisbane, his primary education was completed by the Christian Brothers at St James's School, Fortitude Valley. He sat for the State Scholarship examination there in 1918. The class photograph for that year shows him, neatly dressed and standing sturdily, in the back row.¹

The Christian Brothers were responsible also for John P. Kelly's secondary education. He attended St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace, from 1919 until 1924. Here he completed the Junior and Senior examinations, and received the Junior Public Certificate and Senior Public Certificate of the University of Queensland.

He was captain of Terrace in 1924. Professor James Mahoney, Rhodes Scholar and later Professor of French at the University of Queensland, was one of his contemporaries.

In those days in Brisbane, walking would have been the main method of locomotion. On many an occasion John P. Kelly would have walked to school from his widowed mother's home at Hale Street, Petrie Terrace. Later he was accompanied by his younger brother, Frank. What did they talk about, these two boys who lived the whole of their lives together? For, in the future, John P. Kelly never forgot his dying mother's behest, "Look after Frank".

For the rest of his life after leaving school, John P. Kelly maintained a devotion to the Christian Brothers and an interest in their affairs. This will be evident when consideration is given to his activities in the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association.

When he left school, he entered the Queensland Public Service and worked in the office of the Registrar of Titles, which was situated then in the Treasury Building, Queen Street, Brisbane. There would not have been much gambling there in those days!

Anxious, no doubt, to prosper in life and to be a support to his widowed mother, John P. Kelly began external study at the University of Queensland, then situated at the eastern end of George Street, Brisbane. It was not much of a walk for an athletic young man after his day's work in the Titles Office.

For in his young days, John P. Kelly, remembered perhaps in post-war years as a man of Chestertonian bulk, was a remarkable sportsman. He was, as one of his oldest friends says, "a star footballer, champion swimmer and an avid cricket watcher".²

At Terrace he was outstanding in a number of sports. In 1923, he was captain and wicket-keeper of the college's First XI and also captain of the First XIII (in those days GPS schools played rugby league). In addition, he represented Terrace in athletics and swimming.

When he left school, he played rugby league for Western Suburbs Rugby League Club, graduating through the junior ranks to the A Grade team. The captain of this team was the famous Jeff Moores, who subsequently went to England and played with an English rugby league club. John P. Kelly then took over the captaincy.

When rugby union was revived in Brisbane in 1928 after its long hibernation since the First World War, John P. Kelly transferred to that code and played the rest of his football career with Past Brothers' Rugby Football Club. There is a suggestion that he played rugby league and rugby union for Queensland, or played in some representative teams, but this cannot be substantiated as yet. He played first grade cricket at Ipswich.

Upon graduating Bachelor of Arts (in law) in 1930, John P. Kelly read for the Bar and was admitted as a barrister of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1932. Holding the title of Barrister-at-Law from that date, he went into practice as a solicitor on his own account in 1934. In 1939, when legislative amendments made it necessary, he elected to continue in practice as a solicitor and was enrolled as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

After his brother, Francis Sylvester Kelly, was admitted as a solicitor on 27 April 1939, the firm of Messrs John P. Kelly & Co. was established. John P. Kelly practised, as senior partner, in this firm for the remainder of his career. When he retired from the partnership in the 1970s, he remained as a consultant with the firm until his death.

The firm of Messrs John P. Kelly & Co., under the same name, still exists in Brisbane. John P. Kelly's eldest daughter, Miss Margaret Kelly, is its senior partner.

One of the most noteworthy actions of John P. Kelly's legal career was when, in the 1950s, he briefed a non-Catholic and a Freemason, A.D. McGill QC, to appear for his most famous client, James Duhig, in the celebrated case of *Hennessey v. Duhig*.³

During his legal career, John P. Kelly was a regular contributor to legal periodicals, and was the Queensland editor of various Australian legal publications. Some of these were *The Australian Encyclopaedia of Forms and Precedents*, the Queensland supplement to *Real Property Law of New South Wales*, *The Australian Lawyer* and *The Conveyancer and Solicitor's Journal*.

Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association

When the young, athletic John P. Kelly put his hat on and left Terrace for the last time in 1924 and, no doubt, joined the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association shortly afterwards, little did he know what was in store for him.

Frank McDonnell, of McDonnell & East and McDonnell Medal fame, was then president of the association. John P. Kelly was to succeed him eventually after being president of the Literary and Debating Society of the association.

From that came all that was to follow: editorship of *The Risen Sun*; the Aquinas Library; the Champion Society; Catholic Action; the long chairmanship of the Mater Misericordiae Hospitals' Advisory Board; and all the ancillary activities that fell to the lot of an emerging Catholic lay leader.

The Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association was founded in Brisbane in the early 1890s, but was disbanded during the First World War. It was revived in 1921.⁴

Membership was open to past pupils of all Christian Brothers' colleges and schools. Its aims and objects were the promotion of the spiritual, intellectual and physical welfare of its members and the preservation amongst them of the ideals and traditions of the Christian Brothers.⁵ At its peak it had some 2 000 members.

Queensland was the first State in Australia to have such an association, and the association's badge proclaimed proudly "C.B.O.B.A. Queensland".⁶ A similar association was formed in Sydney in 1935,⁷ and there were efforts to form associations in other States.

It is interesting to note that long after these associations fell into desuetude, a move is afoot, once again in Queensland, to have a single association of past pupils of the Christian Brothers. The new association is to be called Christian Brothers' Past Students' Association.⁸

The Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association in the 1930s, under the presidency of John P. Kelly, was a hive of activity. Its Literary and Debating Society met weekly. There were monthly luncheons. There was an annual ball. The association had teams playing in the Queensland Catholic Lawn Tennis Association fixtures and in various other sporting fixtures.

A Dramatic Society was formed. A monthly journal was published for over five years. The great event of the association's calendar, though, was the Annual Mass and Communion followed by a Communion Breakfast.

John P. Kelly, in his first capacity as president of the association's Literary and Debating Society, and later as president of the association itself until the Second World War, was heavily involved with the organisation and running of all these events. In addition, he was an active participant in many of them.

For example, when the Dramatic Society of the association was formed in 1932 and four one-act plays were performed as its opening production on 22 April 1933 at the Cremorne Theatre, John P. Kelly had a part in one of them. He was the convict in *The Bishop's Candlesticks* by Norman McKinnel, which was based on an incident in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*.⁹

It may be that the theatre lost a star because of all the other activities which filled John P. Kelly's life. The theatre critic of *The Catholic Leader* had this to say about his performance—

The very difficult part of the convict was played by Mr Jack Kelly with strength and conviction. He brought out clearly the vicissitudes which had changed the convict from a man to a wild beast, and then the awakening of his conscience by the forbearance of the bishop.¹⁰

On 10 December 1932, John P. Kelly, a young man twenty-five years of age, wrote respectfully to the then archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Duhig, after arranging for a copy of the first issue of *The Risen Sun*, the newly-published journal of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association, to be sent to him.¹¹

In his letter he spoke of the hopes that the association had for the journal—the exposition of the ideals of the association; the influencing of national affairs; the assertion of the Christian concept of society; and the resistance of the spread of anti-Christian principles and propaganda—and he asked for the archbishop's approval of the venture.

The approval was not forthcoming. Opening his reply of 11 January 1933 with the formal words "Dear Sir", the archbishop rebuked the association for not seeking his approval before the publication and distribution of the first issue of the journal.¹²

The archbishop went on further to say that what was wanted was the strengthening of existing Catholic periodicals or newspapers, not new ones. He seemed to perceive that *The Risen Sun* would be a competitor of *The Catholic Leader* for which he was responsible, particularly in attracting advertising. Although he disapproved of the publication of *The Risen Sun*, the archbishop did not prohibit its publication.

Originally with John P. Kelly and Stan Hegerty as joint editors and later with John P. Kelly as sole editor, it existed for some five years. Throughout its existence, John P. Kelly wrote countless editorials, articles and book reviews for it.

It was patterned on *The Tablet* (London) and the American Jesuit magazine *America*, and was printed by *The Catholic Leader*. The print run was 2 000 copies,¹³ and it sold originally for twopence a copy, but later for a penny.

Nigel Bonsey, who was Business Manager of *The Risen Sun*, has said that its publication was terminated by the hierarchy (Archbishop Duhig?) after it reprinted an article from the London weekly *The Colosseum* which referred to the conditions of the unemployed and criticised the stand taken by the Catholic church

on birth control. However, Bonsey admits that at this time, close to 1940, financial support for *The Risen Sun* had diminished.¹⁴

Although it was short-lived, the journal is important historically. As Edmund Campion has said—

The impact of the world-wide Catholic literary revival of the 1930s was clearly seen in its pages and it remains a valuable archive of the Catholic history of its time.¹⁵

A consideration of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association would not be complete without some further reference to the Annual Mass and Communion and the Communion Breakfast, particularly in the 1930s under the inspiring leadership of John P. Kelly.

The Annual Mass and Communion seems to have started in 1917, even though the association itself was then disbanded. The concept of the Communion Breakfast seems to have come a few years later.

The Mass was held in August for most of the 1930s, but in September and October respectively in 1938 and 1939. It was held at St Stephen's Cathedral at 9.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Thousands of past pupils of the Christian Brothers attended and received communion. As the decade progressed, a further Mass had to be held in the cathedral grounds to cater for the increasing numbers.

Many of the communicants went on to the breakfast, held early in the decade in the Catholic Daughters of Australia rooms in Queen Street, but later at the City Hall because of the vast increase in numbers attending. There was no breakfast in 1939. The Second World War had just broken out.

The year 1935 was the diamond jubilee year of the Christian Brothers in Queensland. That year was the high point of what had become one of the greatest Catholic events in Brisbane. In that year, 3 800 past pupils attended Mass and received communion. Other features of the diamond jubilee year were a concert and a ball, both organised by the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association.

From 1934 until 1939, four spiritual retreats for past pupils of the Christian Brothers were conducted prior to each Annual Mass and Communion. They were held at St Joseph's, Gregory Terrace, St James's, St Laurence's and St Columban's. Archbishop Duhig had suggested having retreats in 1933. The idea obviously appealed to the spirituality of John P. Kelly, and was adopted enthusiastically by the association.

John P. Kelly's presidency of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association in the exciting days of the 1930s and with the world heading towards war, his promotion of Christian principles at all times and his dissemination of them in the pages of *The Risen Sun* and *The Catholic Leader*, for which he wrote also, made him stand out at the time as one of a new breed of Catholic lay leaders.

There is no doubt whatsoever that this man of Christian culture was the driving force behind the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association in the years leading up to the Second World War.

*Aquinas Library*¹⁶

One of the most enduring monuments to John P. Kelly as a Catholic lay leader is the Aquinas Library which existed in Brisbane, in two phases, from 1932 until 1991. It is a monument to him still, although it does not exist any longer, *per se*. It is one of the greatest Catholic lay achievements in Brisbane.

Based on models in Ireland, England and the Continent, it was among the first such libraries in Australia. Perhaps it was the most significant of them all.

From 1932 until 1958, in three locations in the city, this library fulfilled its stated purposes—

- (a) To provide a general 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; and
- (c) To provide in a limited way a library service for Catholic scholars.¹⁷

Its motto was "High Brow, Low Brow, No Brow". It was for everyone, and everyone regarded it as theirs.

Through its imposing leadlight doors, when it moved to Queen Street in 1936, and to the activities which occurred there constantly, everyone trooped—bookworms and businessmen, intelligentsia and ignoramuses, poets and priests, scholars and students, teachers and tramps—contributing in a unique manner to that great surge in the Catholic intellectual world which affected life and thought in Catholic Australia so much in those days.

Some representatives of some of these categories who frequented the library in those heady days were Vincent Fogarty, Paul Grano, Martin Haley, Stan Hegerty and Father Archibald Mills.

In the 1930s, John P. Kelly was President of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Literary and Debating Society which met weekly in St Stephen's schoolroom in the grounds of St Stephen's Cathedral. The members of the society thought there was a real need for a Catholic library. John P. Kelly was the right man in the right place to ensure that the need became a reality.

A subcommittee, under his chairmanship, was set up to see whether it would be possible for such a library to be established. John P. Kelly—vigorous, dynamic and intelligent, and, remember, only twenty-five years of age—lost no time in contacting Archbishop Duhig about the project. It must have been one of his earliest contacts with the hierarchy.

On 17 June 1932, he wrote to the archbishop from the Titles Office, Brisbane—

The Christian Brothers' Old Boys Literary and Debating Society are very anxious to establish a library which would supply both their own needs and the needs of the Catholic public. The scheme has arisen out of a suggestion by one of our members that we should set up a library in conjunction with our debating activities. However admirable this latter scheme might have been from our own point of view, we feel that as an active Catholic lay body we should take upon our shoulders the burden of trying to establish a public Catholic library which would be open to the general body of the Catholic laity.¹⁸

There was leadership here, together with vision and a concern for the Catholic laity in general. It would have been comparatively easy to establish a library for the limited purposes of the society, but John P. Kelly saw the broader picture.

Never one to miss an opportunity, John P. Kelly went on in his letter to enquire whether the archbishop had any spare books which he could donate to the embryonic library! He ended by asking the archbishop for "some letter of approval to us so that we could be certain that we are proceeding along lines which you generally countenance".

The approval must have been forthcoming. The society, despite many difficulties including the opposition of one of the members of the subcommittee,

would not have decided to proceed with the establishment of the library without it. The library eventually started in St Stephen's schoolroom on 28 June 1932.

The library moved subsequently to the rooms of The Catholic Seamen's Institute in George Street. Then, in 1936, it leased premises in the building of the Australasian Catholic Assurance Company Limited in Queen Street, opposite to the General Post Office. These architect-designed and comfortable premises were its permanent home until its first closure in 1958.

In Queen Street, in particular, the library was the focus of Catholic intellectual life in Brisbane at a time when there was intellectual ferment in Catholic circles. The present Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Sir Gerard Brennan, has referred to it as "the centre of Brisbane intellectual life".¹⁹ Many people and institutions have cause to thank John P. Kelly for what he did for them over the years, but those people whose lives were touched by the Aquinas Library have more cause than most.

Throughout the whole of its first phase, John P. Kelly was the guiding light of the Aquinas Library. He was appointed librarian for life in 1933. In 1936, when the library was relocated to Queen Street, he organised the formation of a public company limited by guarantee, entitled Catholic Central Library Limited and incorporated under the provisions of *The Companies Act of 1931*, to place the library on a proper legal footing.

He delivered regular lectures at the library on Sunday evenings after Benediction at St Stephen's Cathedral. His subjects were as diverse as "The Catholic Literary Revival"²⁰, "Dr Salazar: Portugal's Great Catholic Statesman"²¹ and "Catholic Action and Politics"²¹.

He spent many of his lunch hours at the library involved in its day-to-day running. He supported the library, which was always in a precarious financial situation, from his own funds often enough.

When the library was being wound up in 1958, a debt of nearly £1 000 /- was owing to him. When it was closed, he stored its books for almost 20 years at his own expense in the hope that the time would come when they would see the light of day again.

That time did come. In 1977, the archdiocese of Brisbane, having acquired the Edwards Dunlop building in Edward Street, Brisbane, adjacent to St Stephen's Cathedral, decided to establish a library in The Catholic Centre, as the building became known.

John P. Kelly was approached and agreed to hand over the Aquinas Library books to the archdiocese. He had some reservations, although, as he said in reply to a letter from the then archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Rush, about the handing over, "There were certainly no strings to the handing over of the Aquinas Library books etc."²³

The Aquinas Library was reopened after a Concelebrated Mass at St Stephen's Cathedral on Sunday, 31 July 1977. John P. Kelly was present and addressed the large gathering which attended the blessing and reopening. He described what Brisbane was like in the days when the library started, and he recounted its history from 1932 until its first closure in 1958.

He referred to the spirit of the library, and hoped that the new library "would offer to Christians the opportunity to raise their voices loudly and clearly"²⁴ He concluded his address by thanking Archbishop Rush for his generosity in making the reopening of the library possible.

John P. Kelly does not figure as prominently in the second phase of the Aquinas Library as he did in the first, of course, but until his death in 1984 he had regular contact with it. It was never far from his thoughts.

Members of the Aquinas Library Advisory Committee, which was established by Archbishop Rush when the library was reopened, sought his guidance from time to time. He attended the early Aquinas Lectures, the series which succeeded the first series of lectures started in 1944 with his own lecture *Aquinas and Modern Practices of Interest Taking*.²⁵

This 1944 Aquinas Lecture aroused considerable interest, both nationally and internationally. It was reviewed as far afield as Washington DC, in 1946,²⁶ and there were some spirited articles with it as a basis in *Twentieth Century* in 1946 and 1947.²⁷ That the subject is still of interest is evidenced by an article by Donald Nicholl entitled "Why Church teaching on usury should be reinstated" in the June 1993 edition of *AD 2000*.²⁸

The re-establishment of the library in 1977 was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. Its philosophy was the same as it had been in the 1930s, but, eventually, it was not supported by the church. It was closed in 1991, with most of its books being given on permanent loan to the Australian Catholic University, McAuley Campus, Mitchelton, Brisbane.

There were two specific, and major, donations to the Aquinas Library to honour John P. Kelly's unique involvement with it.

The Sisters of Mercy, in 1978 when they were celebrating the fortieth anniversary of John P. Kelly's appointment as chairman of the Mater Misericordiae Hospitals Advisory Board, donated \$10 000 to the library as the J.P. Kelly Endowment.²⁹

In 1989, an anonymous donor presented to the library a valuable facsimile copy of the Golden Cockerel Press's edition of *The Four Gospels*, with engravings by Eric Gill, in memory of John P. Kelly.³⁰

Campion Society

After the Aquinas Library was established in Brisbane, its members were exhorted frequently by Archbishop Duhig to form study groups. Various experiments were tried. The committee of the library, led by John P. Kelly, decided that it would model Brisbane study groups on those in existence at the time in the Campion Society in Melbourne.

The Campion Society was said by Archbishop Mannix, the then archbishop of Melbourne, to be "the flower and fruit of the Australian Catholic school system".³¹ It was university-based, and took its name, of course, from the English martyr (the then Blessed) Edmund Campion.

It sprang from the activities of a group of young intellectuals in Melbourne. Some of them were Val Adami, Arthur Adams, Gerard Heffey, Denys Jackson, Kevin Kelly, Murray McInerney, Frank Maher, John Merlo, Frank Quaine and Bob Santamaria. It was the seed-bed of Catholic Action in Australia.

The fire the Campion Society started in Australia had itself been started, and fanned, by the Catholic intellectual, literary and philosophical revival overseas. This was led by such writers and thinkers as Hilaire Belloc (whom John P. Kelly admired greatly and whom he resembled in many ways), G.K. Chesterton, Monsignor Ronald Knox, Christopher Dawson, C.C. Martindale SJ, Sigrid Undset, Charles Peguy, Henri Gheon, Francois Mauriac, Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson.

The Campion Society was remarkable in that its leaders were laymen. It was not remarkable that its leader in Brisbane was John P. Kelly, for Brisbane laity was looking to him for leadership, and he did not deny them.

Three study groups functioned in the Aquinas Library from 1936: the Augustine Group, the Ozanam Group and the Marian Group.³² In 1937, additional groups were formed at Nudgee College and at Moorooka.³³

Why was there a group at Moorooka and not at New Farm, say, or Coorparoo? Arthur Stanislaus Hegerty, short and rotund, but another of the intellectual giants of the time and an able lieutenant of John P. Kelly, lived at "Padua", Beaudesert Road, Moorooka.

All these groups were subsequently amalgamated into the Aquinas Branch of the Champion Society (Brisbane). By letter of 20 November 1937, John P. Kelly, as he had done earlier when the Aquinas Library was mooted, asked Archbishop Duhig for his approval, and for the appointment of a spiritual director for the society.³⁴

The society was placed under the patronage of St Thomas Aquinas, St Thomas More and (the then Blessed) Edmund Campion. A constitution was drawn up, no doubt by John P. Kelly himself, who at that time had been in practice as a solicitor for several years.³⁵

The constitution was adapted, with slight alterations, from the constitution presented and approved at the Champion Society's second quarterly meeting at Melbourne on 6 July 1932.³⁶ A consideration of three sections of the constitution is interesting.

The society's objects were—

- (a) to promote Catholic Lay Action in its intellectual aspect;
- (b) to encourage its members to attain to a fuller realisation of Catholic culture;
- (c) to ensure the development in harmony of the spiritual and mental lives of members;
- (d) to extend the influence of these conceptions so as to assist in the development of a more intense Catholic atmosphere among Australian Catholics; and
- (e) to place the Catholic viewpoint adequately before non-Catholics when the occasion demands it, particularly on questions relating to the Social Order.

Prayer was its basis—

The following prayers shall be said at the opening of such meeting—

- (a) The Prayer of the Society— "Oblatio Sui".

- (b) The prayer for the conversion of Australia.
- (c) The "Ave Maria" once.
- (d) The Invocations to St Thomas Aquinas, St Francis Xavier, Saint Thomas More and Blessed Edmund Campion.

Lay activity was at all times to be directed by the church—

The members of this Society are at all times prepared to act under the direction of His Grace, the Archbishop of Brisbane and to co-operate with him in carrying out the wishes of the Holy See with regard to Catholic Action.

By April 1938, the society had grown to ten groups, and the Very Rev. John English DD DCL, who was then Administrator of St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane, was appointed by Archbishop Duhig as its spiritual director.³⁷

John P. Kelly himself said about the obligations of the members of the Campion Society—

Their spiritual obligations are to recite every day the "Oblatio Sui" of St Ignatius, to attend an annual spiritual retreat, and to participate in the scheme of daily representation of each group at Mass. The groups are first centred about the Mass and only after that about the masses.³⁸

Catholic Action

The fourth plenary council of the Catholic archbishops and bishops of Australasia was held at Sydney in September 1937. One item considered was the establishment in Australia of Catholic Action, which Pope Pius XI called "the apple of his eye".³⁹ It is otherwise known as the lay apostolate.

The Pope considered that the crisis which Christendom was facing in the first half of the twentieth century necessitated Catholic laity abandoning the passive and defensive attitudes which had previously characterised it. Subject to the bishops, the laity was to organise itself actively and exert Catholic influence in all spheres of human endeavour.

A decision of the council established the National Secretariat of Catholic Action. Thus Catholic Action commenced in Australia. The duties and responsibilities of the secretariat were—

- (a) to apply the principles laid down by the Pope to the situation in Australia;
- (b) to recommend to the episcopal committee on Catholic Action, set up by the council, what was to be done in Australia to put the Pope's wishes into force; and
- (c) to establish whatever movements of Catholic Action the bishops deemed desirable.⁴⁰

One of the chief lay officials of the national secretariat, Frank Maher, who died as recently as 1994, came to Brisbane in August 1938. He spoke on Catholic Action to a gathering that filled the Aquinas Library. Archbishop Duhig was present, and John P. Kelly was chairman.⁴¹

The result of Frank Maher's visit was the establishment of an archdiocesan secretariat of Catholic Action in Brisbane. John P. Kelly, of course, was appointed lay director. Dr English was to act as the archbishop's representative and ecclesiastical assistant to the secretariat. Where else was the secretariat housed, but in part of the Aquinas Library.⁴²

John P. Kelly threw himself into Catholic Action with his usual vigour. But it is incorrect to think that this was his first venture into the field. Right through the decade of the 1930s, and even earlier, he had been involved in Catholic "action": the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association; the Aquinas Library; study groups; lectures; and the Champion Society were Catholic "action". It was only late in the decade when it became organised as Catholic Action.

John P. Kelly wrote handbooks for the Catholic Action groups: *Catholic Action for Men* and *Catholic Action for Girls*. They were priced at sixpence each, and evoked the following comment from Father R.H. Thompson, editor of *The Catholic Leader*—

As to the contents of these books (20 and 21 pages of ordinary newspaper type) I shall say no more than that, after delving into all the literature I have been able to get during the last eight years on Catholic Action, and after examining the literature of the Catholic Actionists in Italy, France and Belgium, I sincerely recommend these two books as being exactly what is required as guides to the successful conducting of Catholic Action guilds or circles in our Australian environment.⁴³

The first Australasian conference of diocesan organisers of Catholic Action was held in Melbourne in February 1939. Almost a year later, John P. Kelly wrote an article for *The Catholic Leader* entitled "Catholic Action is Catholic Life".⁴⁴

It spoke of the work of the Australian diocesan organisers and of how the principles of Catholic Action should be applied.

There is a record also of John P. Kelly's attending the 1946 conference in Melbourne⁴⁵, but in between something of significance occurred. The diocesan organiser had tendered his resignation to Archbishop Duhig.

His handwritten letter of resignation (from Coolangatta) dated 13 April 1942 to the archbishop ran as follows, *inter alia*—

Increasing business and domestic responsibilities have constrained me to sever my official and active connection with Catholic Action and I am accordingly formally notifying Your Grace of my decision.⁴⁶

He thanked the archbishop for the confidence that had been placed in him in the past, and assured the archbishop, "if assurance be necessary," that he would do all he could in the future to be of assistance.

The resignation, if it ever did, must not have come into force for some time. However, when the news of it reached the national secretariat in Melbourne considerable alarm was felt.

Frank Maher wrote to Archbishop Duhig on 10 March 1943, almost a year after John P. Kelly's resignation letter. After expressing his concern about the proposed resignation, he acknowledged John P. Kelly's outstanding qualifications in the field of Catholic Action and went on to say—

I feel that his resignation will be a serious loss to Catholic Action and I am writing this letter in the hope that Your Grace may be able to persuade him to change his mind and to continue his splendid work for the Church.⁴⁷

Perhaps it may never be known what happened. Did Bartholomew Augustine Santamaria have something to do with it? Did Archbishop Duhig use his influence as he had done earlier, in 1938, when the Sisters of Mercy approached John P. Kelly to be chairman of the Mater Misericordiae Hospitals Advisory Board?

John P. Kelly's great success in the field of Catholic Action over the years demanded sterling qualities of character. A Draft Statement on Catholic Action (ca 1948) set out the main qualities required of a Catholic Actionist. They were four in number, and John P. Kelly had them all—

- (a) Holiness;
- (b) A clear intellectual picture of the world, its problems and the Christian solutions;
- (c) Courage in the face of difficulties; and
- (d) Great self-sacrifice.⁴⁸

The Sisters of Mercy and the Mater Hospitals ⁴⁹

In 1938, John P. Kelly was 31 years of age. He had been practising as a solicitor in Brisbane for four years, and had married in the previous year. His first child was to be born in the following year.

The Sisters of Mercy, in that year of 1938, invited him to be chairman of the Mater Misericordiae Hospitals' Advisory Board. He was a young man without any experience in, or knowledge of, hospital administration and management. He may have been reluctant to accept the position.

Archbishop Duhig obviously was enlisted by the Sisters of Mercy to persuade John P. Kelly to agree to their invitation. The archbishop summoned him to "Wynberg".

Archbishop Rush, when he spoke at John P. Kelly's funeral Mass, takes up the story—

He was led into the Archbishop's presence, greeted and invited to sit in an ornate baroque chair. Gingerly he sat in it only to have the armrest come away in his hand.

I have always enjoyed the story (continued Archbishop Rush) because, in telling it, Mr Kelly revealed a side of his character which not everybody knew—an inability to take himself too seriously, warmth and wit and a quiet enjoyment of the absurd.⁵⁰

In one of his plays, a comedy admittedly, Shakespeare had this to say—

... be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em.⁵¹

John P. Kelly's origins were humble; he achieved greatness in the 1930s by the sheer weight of his intellectual brilliance and his Christian culture; but when he was invited to become chairman of the Mater board it was a case of having greatness thrust upon him.

He accepted the position, though, and devoted himself and his great talents, in an honorary capacity, for the next 42 years to the Sisters of Mercy and their great institution on Mater Hill.

He could have spread his efforts more widely across society, but he chose to exercise his talents, abilities and qualities almost exclusively, in post-war years at least, for the benefit of the Sisters of Mercy and, in particular, their Mater hospitals.

It must be remembered, however, that despite everything John P. Kelly and his board did for the Mater hospitals it was an advisory board of which he was chairman. The latent sense of humour of John P. Kelly recognised this. On more than one occasion he was heard to say, in his wry, engaging way, "The nuns on Mater Hill run that hospital".

But that little bit of humour aside, why did the Sisters of Mercy donate \$10,000 to the Aquinas Library as the J.P. Kelly Endowment in 1978? Why did they commission William Dargie, one of Australia's greatest painters, to execute a portrait of John P. Kelly?

Why did they appoint him, after his retirement from the advisory board, deputy chairman of the Hospital Council, the decision-making body for the Superior-General of the Sisters of Mercy in all matters governing the Brisbane Mater hospitals' complex?

Why did they establish in 1982 a perpetual tribute to him by the initial substantial funding of the John P. Kelly Mater Research Foundation, the income from which is used for vital research projects at the Mater?

It is easy to understand why the Sisters of Mercy did what they did. They were indebted to this man more than to any other layman in the long history of the Mater hospitals in Brisbane.

The qualities which he brought to the advisory board were many and varied, but Sister Catharine Courtney RSM, Superior-General of the Sisters of Mercy when the Mater was celebrating John P. Kelly's 40 years chairmanship of the board, went right to the heart of his character—

... the two qualities of mind and heart that best described him were wisdom (which is much more than knowledge) and fidelity (which is more than loyalty) . . . 40 years ago we Sisters of Mercy found a wise and faithful friend. Had he not been faithful to an extraordinary degree, his friendship could not have survived the crises and vicissitudes of all those years.

We could have sought and found legal advice from many another, but from few could we have felt the same security that comes from consulting a wise man. These are not human qualities—wisdom and fidelity—but spiritual gifts.⁵²

Sister M. St Gabriel Corbett RSM, who died this year, was Assistant Administrator, and Administrator, of the Mater Public Hospitals for 15 years. What she thought of John P. Kelly and how she felt about him was brought out feelingly by Mr Pat Maguire in his eulogy at her funeral Mass—

Mr Kelly was at the Mater some 14 years prior to Sister's appointment, and he gave her much help and encouragement during her office at the hospital. He was her confidant, confessor and, above all, her good friend. She would not send a letter to the Health Department without Mr Kelly's approval. In fact, Mr Kelly would have written most of those letters.⁵³

The man himself considered it an "extraordinary privilege"⁵⁴ to have been chairman of the advisory board for so long, and he counted it a "benediction"⁵⁵ to have worked with the Sisters of Mercy, and so many others, on Mater Hill.

When John P. Kelly took up his position as chairman of the advisory board, it was a period of crisis for the Mater hospitals. The Queensland government had enacted *The Hospitals Act of 1936* to socialise public hospital services in the State, abolish all other hospitals and abolish the honorary medical system in public hospitals.

In addition, there was a long-running dispute at the Mater between the honorary medical staff and the administration, that is, the Sisters of Mercy. The dispute centred around whether there should be separate advisory boards for the adult public and children's hospitals, or a joint one.

The dispute between the honorary medical staff and the administration was settled. The Mater public hospitals service and facilities were eventually recognised by the Queensland government as part of its public hospitals system.

That these major achievements were brought about, was due, in no small measure, to the application which John P. Kelly brought to his new position, combined with his legal knowledge and the energy and enthusiasm which characterised all his undertakings.

The Commonwealth Hospital Benefits Scheme, providing for a free public hospitals system, was introduced on 1 January 1946 after reciprocal Commonwealth and State legislation had been enacted. The Mater Public Hospital did not come within the ambit of the scheme, but, putting its trust in providence, ceased to charge its patients.

Telegrams were sent to Canberra. Who physically sent the telegrams? The chairman of the advisory board, of course—

I well remember sitting on the front steps of the GPO at 1 a.m. in January 1946, after sending telegrams to Chifley and the cabinet ministers saying we couldn't open our doors without some sort of Government assistance.⁵⁶

The Prime Minister, J.B. Chifley, to his credit, directed the then Premier of Queensland, F.A. Cooper, on 27 January 1946 to recognise the Mater as a public hospital and to contribute towards its maintenance. The State government reluctantly agreed, and so another battle was won under the leadership of John P. Kelly.

For many years the Sisters of Mercy wanted to establish a maternity hospital to complete their hospital work in Brisbane. This was the genesis of the Mater Mothers' Hospital, which was one of the biggest Catholic projects ever undertaken in Australia.

Right from the start, John P. Kelly was involved. An appeal organisation was created in 1946 to raise funds for the building of the new hospital. John P. Kelly was on the executive of the fundraising committee and was appointed deputy chairman. The committee had the massive task of raising £2 000 000.

One of the avenues for raising this substantial amount of money was the Mater Art Union. John McCann was appointed its director in 1954. He had a difficult task, but John P. Kelly was always there to help him. As John McCann has said—

My support during this trying period came from John P. Kelly, Solicitor, and Chairman of the Mater Hospitals' Board for more than 40 years. This great man had a vision and he gave me the benefit of his considerable legal skill, his fighting spirit, and unquenchable optimism. He was my mentor and, eventually, my great friend. Any success I had in the Mater job was due, in a large part, to him.⁵⁷

The bulk of the money was raised, and when the Mater Mothers' Hospital was opened in 1960 the debt was £600 000. The total cost was £2 000 000, but the State government contributed a mere £70 000.

When John P. Kelly spoke at the opening of the Mater Mothers' Hospital on 1 December 1960, he referred to the latter fact. He mentioned also that the money to build the entire complex on Mater Hill, worth at that time between £9 000 000 and £10 000 000, had been raised by the Sisters of Mercy virtually without any government capital subsidy.⁵⁸

However, the winds of change were blowing, and the culmination of the work of John P. Kelly and many others, over such a long period of time, on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy and the Mater hospitals was at hand.

The State government announced, in late 1975, that it would fund totally the building of the new Mater Adult Public Hospital, which had long been desired by the Sisters of Mercy. The estimated cost was \$18 000 000.

The hospital was duly built. It was blessed by Archbishop Rush on 12 December 1981, and opened by the then Governor of Queensland, Sir James Ramsay, one of a long line of Queensland Governors, starting with Sir William Macgregor, who had dealings with the Mater.

Sister Angela Mary Doyle RSM, who was Sister Administrator of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospitals at the time, paid tribute to John P. Kelly on this occasion—

Mr. Kelly guided and shaped the destiny of the Mater and ensured that human and spiritual values were consistently placed above institutional considerations.⁵⁹

Sadly, because he was then frail, the man who had done so much to make that occasion on Mater Hill, and so many others in the past, occur was not able to participate in the formal proceedings of the day. But John P. Kelly was there, watching a little distance apart from the official celebrations.

Did he remember that day long beforehand when the armrest of the elaborate chair at "Wynberg" had come away in his hand? Was he thinking of the countless hours and words which he had expended on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy and the Mater hospitals? Or was he giving thanks to his God, whom he had served so well over a long lifetime, for the achievement of yet another milestone in the great endeavour on Mater Hill?

Miscellaneous Activities

When John P. Kelly's major activities in the lay apostolate are considered, there is reason to wonder how he could have fitted any more activities into his life. It has to be remembered that, while all this was happening, he was engaged in a busy city solicitor's practice, often acting for the Catholic church and church entities. Furthermore, he had married, and was becoming the father of a large family.

In March 1938, he proposed the toast "The Day We Celebrate" at the annual St Patrick's Day Dinner in the rooms of the Queensland Irish Association and in the presence of the Governor, Sir Leslie Wilson, and Archbishop Duhig.⁶⁰

He was involved with the University Catholic Federation of Australia. At its conference held at Brisbane in January 1948 at Marist Brothers' College, Ashgrove, he spoke on "The Student and Reading".⁶¹ Other speakers were Colin Clark, Donagh McDonagh and Eric Shaw.⁶²

The 1949 conference was held at Brisbane at the same venue. John P. Kelly had become president of the federation. He spoke at this conference on "How to equip the Mind of the Catholic Undergraduate for the Lay Apostolate".⁶³ Other speakers were Colin Bennett, Max Charlesworth and Gerard Brennan. As chairman of the conference, John P. Kelly conducted the sessions "with tact, humour and good sense".⁶⁴

Another notable public occasion in the life of John P. Kelly was when he delivered the occasional address at the All Hallows' Speech Night on 10 October 1963. This was the first time the speech night was not held at the school—it was at the Brisbane City Hall—and it was the first time such an address formed part of the speech night.

The address, entitled "Education in the Life of the Ordinary Man", excited great interest in the community, and was printed in full in *The Catholic Leader*.⁶⁵

Literature Board of Review ⁶⁶

On 30 March 1954, the Honourable William Power, Attorney-General in the Gair Labor government, introduced into Parliament a Bill for an Act to be entitled *The Objectionable Literature Act of 1954*. In doing so, he said, *inter alia*—

This Bill concerns a great menace in our midst today, one that threatens to destroy the very basis of our Christian civilisation, one that will not easily be removed and consequently requires to be faced by all sections of the community.⁶⁷

Parliament duly passed the Bill, and it was assented to on 20 April 1954. The Act commenced on 13 May 1954. It remained in force until it was repealed, as from 27 November 1992, by the *Classification of Publications Act 1991* which replaced it.

The basic object of the Act was to provide ways and means of preventing the distribution of objectionable literature in Queensland. A comprehensive definition of “objectionable” was included in the Act.

Many people at the time considered that there was an increasing volume of literature, which could be considered “objectionable”, becoming available in Queensland. This literature was distinct from publications that came within the scope of *The Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act of 1931* or the *Criminal Code [1899]*. The Act and the Code had provisions to deal with “obscene” publications.

The Literature Board of Review, which was to consist of five persons appointed by the Governor in Council, was constituted. Its principal function was to examine and review literature so that literature which the board considered objectionable, within the terms of the Act, could be banned from distribution in Queensland.

The Solicitor-General of the day, W.G. Hamilton QC, was appointed chairman of the board and John P. Kelly deputy chairman.⁶⁸ He served in this capacity until 1957 when he became chairman. He remained chairman until 1977 when he reached the compulsory retiring age of 70 years.

He thus gave twenty-three years of service directly to the State of Queensland. This service could be regarded, perhaps, as his major contribution to Queensland in the areas of government and administration.

With his great love of classical literature, John P. Kelly found difficulty in coming to terms with the volume of dubious literature that he had to read—and form an opinion on—as a board member. It was totally out of character for him, but, nevertheless, he fulfilled his onerous task with dedication. Sometimes he wryly compared the cover of a “girlie” magazine with a gold mining prospectus: the cover offered more than the contents.

He often reminded board members, who sometimes expressed the view that a particular publication was “rubbish” and should be prohibited, that the board did not have a charter to prohibit “rubbish”. He made it perfectly clear that only when a publication fell within the definition of “objectionable” in the Act could it be prohibited.

The Act required that the board take into account “community standards” when considering a publication. Here again, John P. Kelly regularly reminded board members that their determination could not necessarily take into account their own moral standards. The basis of the decision had to be on what could be perceived as “community standards”. With his own high moral standards, this required considerable adjustment on the part of the chairman.

When dealing with publishers of the class of literature which came before the board—people whom he would eschew in normal life—he was always scrupulously fair and courteous. Where practicable, whenever the board was considering prohibiting a publication, he would allow the publisher to appear before the board to present his case.

John P. Kelly had a disarming manner of dealing with such an appearance. He would bury his head in his hands and invite the publisher to present his case. The publisher often would think him asleep, and proceed to overstate the case. John P. Kelly, of course, was not asleep, but had been listening intently. The publisher’s argument was then demolished by a few pertinent questions.

As chairman of the board, John P. Kelly had more respect for those publishers who admitted that they went as far as they could go legally without prohibition, than for those who endeavoured to justify their questionable publications on the grounds that the publications were educational and in the public interest.

Representatives of the mass media hounded John P. Kelly continually because of the controversial nature of the legislation which he and his board administered. When questioned, he always maintained that the board was only performing its statutory function.

On a particular occasion he was asked, “Does Mr Kelly think that this material would harm children and adolescents?” He replied, “That is not our concern. The legislature obviously thinks so or they wouldn’t have the board”.⁶⁹

The board exercised its powers sparingly. As John P. Kelly himself said—

In practice the board's policy was that, if there was any doubt, it had to be resolved in favour of the publication or the author.⁷⁰

That the board exercised its powers sparingly is borne out by the fact that during the year which ended on 30 June 1966, for example, the board issued prohibition orders against six publications only. It held 19 meetings during that year.⁷¹

As a secretary of the board has said of John P. Kelly—

Contrary to what a lot of his critics would claim he never considered that his role was to ban as many publications as he could. Each publication received careful examination and I was always of the view that he recommended banning a publication only when he and the other members were completely satisfied that the contents contravened the provisions of the Objectionable Literature Act.⁷²

The reputation of the board throughout Australia was substantial. It was regarded as a successful organisation, fulfilling its statutory obligations properly. John P. Kelly's wisdom and sense of balance, his fairness and keen legal mind, would have contributed in no small measure to this and to the reputation which the board established during its existence.

Legislation of the nature of *The Objectionable Literature Act of 1954* was controversial and sensitive, and bound to have its critics. As the Honourable William Lickiss, Attorney-General in the Bjelke-Petersen government at the time of John P. Kelly's retirement as chairman of the board, pointed out, the board would never have functioned so successfully without the wisdom and prudence which John P. Kelly displayed over the long period of his service on the board.

The 1977–78 report of the board paid tribute to its retiring chairman—

It would be inappropriate if the Board in its report did not pay tribute to Mr John P. Kelly who retired as Chairman on December 31, 1977. Mr Kelly has served continuously on the Board since its inception in 1954. He was chairman from May 13, 1957, until his retirement. Those Board members, who had the privilege of serving with him, will be ever mindful of the wise guidance and counsel he brought to meetings of the Board.⁷³

It is interesting to note that, although John P. Kelly was appointed to the board by a Labor government, his tenure of office was confirmed from time to time by successive conservative governments.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the board, under the control of John P. Kelly, whose Christian concern about the damage which objectionable literature would do to the young and others, used its powers in a mature and adult way.

Although his service on the Literature Board of Review, perhaps, has no direct relevance to his Catholic lay leadership, it is interwoven with it. It was an important part of his life, and should not be overlooked.

Death and Tributes

Death came for John P. Kelly on 12 June 1984. On 14 June 1984, Archbishop Rush came to his parish church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Cavendish Road, Coorparoo, Brisbane, where he had been a parishioner for 32 years, to preside at the Requiem Mass for this "mighty man of valour".⁷⁴

The man had been the archbishop's friend since the archbishop succeeded to the metropolitan see of Brisbane in 1973 and, indeed even before, since, as Bishop of Rockhampton, he had been secretary to the Queensland Bishops' Conference and had had dealings with John P. Kelly in that capacity.

A large congregation assembled, representative of all the spheres of Christian endeavour through which John P. Kelly strode like a Colossus during his long lifetime, to hear his friend the archbishop say of him—

Forty-six years ago J.P. Kelly brought to his chairmanship of the Mater Board and to the immediate task of solving a serious administrative crisis, qualities of mind and will which had already won him a reputation in the City's legal circles. His rare intelligence, profound knowledge of law and intolerance of humbug made him, as someone described him yesterday, a "formidable opponent".

J.P. Kelly's faith in Christ and the Church gave an added quality to his natural gifts and hard won integrity of character. His faith, with that of the Sisters of Mercy, was the guarantee that the Mater Hospitals would always be a powerful witness to Christian values in this City and State.

To give special mention to his chairmanship of the Mater is not to disregard J.P. Kelly's other achievements in the Church and the community. They were of one piece. They all drew their inspiration from the same source. It was J.P. Kelly's Christian culture that gave distinction to his chairmanship of the Literature Board of Review, to his work as author, editor, President of the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association and founder of the Aquinas Library, and, not least, to the variety of services he rendered this Archdiocese through three Archbishops.⁷⁵

The Sisters of Mercy added their tribute later in the year in the 1984 Annual Report of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospitals⁷⁶ —

As long as the Mater Hospitals exist in Brisbane, the name of John P. Kelly will be remembered and honoured. The John P. Kelly Mater Research Foundation, which the Sisters of Mercy established in 1982, gives permanent and concrete expression to the perpetuation of Mr Kelly's monumental and unique links with the Mater.

While John P. Kelly's achievements on Mater Hill will remain as a major part of the history of Queensland Hospitals, his social and cultural contribution to the general community in this State was, in fact, just as great. He gave a lifetime of service to Queensland, contributing importantly to the welfare of the people.

Conclusion

But it did not need death to bring forth these eoniums, justifiable as they were. Long before, when he was in his prime, John P. Kelly's outstanding qualities were recognised.

In the 1930s, when there was such a renaissance of Catholic life and thought throughout the world, John P. Kelly was the most outstanding layman in Catholic movements and activities in Brisbane. People in other States of Australia recognised this.

Even though he was such a young man, he was regarded as the natural leader in Brisbane of the Catholic literary movement, and in the development of the tenets of Catholic social, economic and political thought which occupied the minds of Catholics so much in that decade.

Over 40 years before his death, Frank Maher, the Director of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action, Melbourne, in a letter to Archbishop Duhig, said of him—

Mr Kelly is one of the best-informed men in Australia . . . and his general learning, his energy and his organising ability make him, in my opinion, one of the finest laymen in the country.⁷⁷

Not many official honours, public or ecclesiastical, however, came John P. Kelly's way, but in 1966, he was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for his services to the community. The citation recorded his "meritorious service in the field of social service in the public hospital sphere and his devoted contribution to the public good in the fields of literature and law".⁷⁸

His name is on the Queensland list for inclusion in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Manfred Cross, Chairman of the Library Board of Queensland and a member of the Queensland committee of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, says that it is highly probable that John P. Kelly will be included, and that he will be supporting the inclusion strongly.⁷⁹

One of John P. Kelly's great friends, Eric Shaw, has said of him—

The most outstanding feature of John P. Kelly's life was his wholehearted commitment to the serving of God's will by his endeavour continuously to employ his vast intellectual resources towards the accomplishment of this purpose.⁸⁰

And someone who has lived in Brisbane for many years, and who has had dealings with the highest and the lowest, has said that, in that time, he has had contact with two saints only in the city.⁸¹ One was Bill Watson, of course, but the other was none other than the subject of this paper—the man who had such great devotion to the Mass and was a daily communicant for most of his life—John Patrick Kelly.

Key to Footnotes

Abbreviations used in the footnotes are—

AL	Aquinas Library
ALAC	Aquinas Library Advisory Committee
BAA	Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives
CA	Catholic Action
CL	<i>Catholic Leader</i> , Brisbane
CM	<i>Courier-Mail</i> , Brisbane
MHA	Mater Hospitals Archives
MS	Manuscript
RS	<i>The Risen Sun</i> , Brisbane

- 1 Reproduced in *St. James's: A History of a City School* by B.W. Steele CFC (St. James's School, Brisbane, 1993) at p.13.
- 2 Typescript from Eric Shaw (brisbane), 10/3/1995, held by author.
- 3 Undated holograph from Dermot Peters (Canberra), held by author.
- 4 RS 1/5/1934 at p. 24
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 RS 1/11/1933 at p. 14
- 7 RS 1/10/1935 at p. 14
- 8 CL 2/10/1934 at p. 17
- 9 CL 20/4/1933 at p. 14
- 10 CL 4/5/1933 at p. 24
- 11 AL File, BAA.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 See "The Southwellian, 1938, and the Catholic Poetry Society" (Dissertation submitted by Joan Davis BA (JCU NQ) in August 1986 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Letters (predominantly by coursework in the Faculty of Arts , JCU. NQ) at p. 13.
- 14 Ibid. at p. 3
- 15 "Lay initiatives in Brisbane", *Madonna*, March 1994, at pp. 39-40.
- 16 For more details of this aspect of John P. Kelly's life see my paper "The Rise and Fall of the Aquinas Library 1933-1991 in *Proceedings, BCHS*, Vol.4 (Church Archivists' Press, Virginia, Qld 1994).
- 17 CL 13/11/1947 at p. 9
- 18 AL File, BAA.

- 19 Letter to author, 14/6/1995.
- 20 CL 28/10/1937 at p. 21.
- 21 CL 22/5/1941 at p. 11.
- 22 CL 16/10/1941 at p. 13.
- 23 John P. Kelly to Archbishop Rush 24/3/1977 (copy held by author).
- 24 CL 7/8/1977 (Queensland Scene) at p. 3.
- 25 Published with an introduction by Colin Clark, by the Aquinas Press, Brisbane, 1945.
- 26 Op.cit. *Proceedings, BCHS*, Vol 4, at p. 63.
- 27 Vol.I No 2 December 1946 at pp 43-49; Vol II No. 1 September 1947 at pp 53-72; and Vol.II No. 2 December 1947 at pp. 111-113.
- 28 At pp. 12-13, reprinted from *The Tablet* (London).
- 29 Minutes ALAC 7/8/1978 held by author.
- 30 Personal knowledge of author.
- 31 *Advocate* (Melbourne), 20/8/1936.
- 32 CL 13/5/1937 at p. 16.
- 33 John P. Kelly to Archbishop Duhig 20/11/1937 (AL File, BAA).
- 34 AL File, BAA.
- 35 A copy of this constitution is held by BAA (AL File) and by author.
- 36 See Colin Jory, *The Champion Society and Catholic Social Militancy in Australia 1929-1939* (Harpham Pty Limited, Sydney, 1986) at pp. 37-38.
- 37 CL 7/4/1938 at p. 23.
- 38 CL 11/8/1938 at p. 5.
- 39 Draft Statement on Catholic Action, Chap. I, ca. 1948 (CA File, BAA).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 CL 25/8/1938 at p. 16.
- 42 CL 29/9/1938 at p. 21.
- 43 CL 11/5/1939 at p. 9.
- 44 CL 18/1/1940 at p. 5.
- 45 CA File, BAA.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.

- 49 The undated typescript "Mr John P. Kelly" from MS by H.J. Summers held by MHA was of considerable assistance in compiling this section of the paper.
- 50 CL 24/6/1984 at p. 6 and typescript held by author.
- 51 *Twelfth Night*, II. v. 156-158.
- 52 CL 24/12/1978 (Queensland Scene) at p. 3.
- 53 Undated typescript held by author.
- 54 Foreword to *They Crossed the River: The Founding of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Brisbane, by the Sisters of Mercy* by H.J. Summers (UQP, St. Lucia Qld, 1979).
- 55 Mater Misericordiae Hospitals South Brisbane Annual Report (Report of Chairman).
- 56 CM 16/4/1980.
- 57 From *How it Happened* by John McCann (Written between 23rd January and 16th March 1993 at 4/61 Ryans Road, St Lucia, Brisbane, Queensland) at pp. 35-36.
- 58 CL 8/12/1960 at p. 16.
- 59 Letter to author 18/12/1981.
- 60 CL 24/3/1938 at p. 33.
- 61 CL 24/12/1947 at p. 2; 4/3/1948 at p. 11.
- 62 CL 24/12/1947 at p. 2.
- 63 CL 16/12/1948 at p. 2.
- 64 CL 20/1/1949 at p. 5.
- 65 CL 17/10/1963 at pp. 8,10.
- 66 This section relies heavily on undated typescript "Mr John Patrick Kelly" from MS by H.J. Summers held by MHA; holograph from Peter Jones (Brisbane), one-time member of the Literature Board of Review with John P. Kelly, 26/7/1995, held by author; and letter from Colin Pearson (Brisbane), one-time Secretary of the Literature Board of Review, 3/8/1995, held by author.
- 67 *Hansard*, Vol. 208, 1953-54, at p. 1759.
- 68 *Queensland Government Gazette*, No. 26, 15 May 1954, at p. 205.
- 69 "The Porn Hunters" by David Dale in *The National Times Magazine* 2/4/1973 at pp. 20,21.
- 70 CL 15/1/1978 (Queensland Scene) at p. 1.
- 71 CL 15/9/1966 at p. 5.
- 72 Letter from Colin Pearson (Brisbane), 3/8/1995, held by author.

- 73 Quoted in undated typescript "Mr John Patrick Kelly" from MS by H.J. Summers held by MHA.
- 74 1 *Kings* xi, 28.
- 75 CL 24/6/1984 at p. 6 and typescript held by author.
- 76 At p. 2.
- 77 F.K. Maher to Archbishop Duhig 10/3/1943 (CA File, BAA).
- 78 Queensland state Archives File Batch 240-2 Honours - Recommendations and Awards and CL 16/6/1966 at p. 3.
- 79 Telephone conversation with author, 31/8/1995.
- 80 Typescript from Eric Shaw (Brisbane), 10/3/1995, held by author.
- 81 Telephone conversation with Rev. Louis Durell.

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