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Pioneer and fighter answered a higher calling

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Brian Thomas Doyle was a pioneer in Australia of a more robust Catholic intellectual activism. Associate editor of Sydney's *Catholic Weekly* from 1944, he was a formidable opponent of B.A. Santamaria for invoking the authority of the church for partisan political goals. As editor of Brisbane's *Catholic Leader* from 1959, he became the most important gatekeeper in Australia for interpretations of the Second Vatican Council. He died in Brisbane on September 17 at the age of 88.

Born in Sydney in 1915, he studied brilliantly at the Marist Brothers at Kogarah and Randwick, being dux in 1932, and won the Freehill Scholarship for the best pass in a NSW Catholic school. He was unable to accept the scholarship as his father had died in 1929 and he needed to work to support his family.

He joined the staff of the Public Library of NSW for eight years and as acquisitions officer became aware of the Catholic intellectual ferment in Europe. He made it his life project to promote Catholic intellectual awareness.

Attending night classes at the Sydney University, Doyle completed a bachelor of arts in 1936 and a diploma in public administration in 1938, winning the John D'Arcy Medal. He later studied for two years at Sydney Law School.

A champion debater with a strong physique and powerful voice, he often addressed public events, university forums and church conferences. He was also a key activist in the Catholic Action movements in Sydney.

Doyle volunteered for the army in 1941, but as his unit was about to leave for New Guinea in 1942 he was appointed personal administrative assistant to the director-general of War Organisation of Industry in Melbourne, where he met and in 1944 married Philomene (nee Foster) at St Patrick's Cathedral.

He became associate editor of the *Catholic Weekly* in 1944, and also lectured part-time in public administration and political science at the universities of Sydney and NSW.

In the late 1940s Doyle attacked the socialist objective of the Labor Party. He later regretted his interpretation of church teaching on socialism as too literal. He often contributed to newspapers and radio and wrote political pamphlets.

Doyle greatly admired the leading Catholic writer Jacques Maritain, who stressed that lay Catholics must not instrumentalise the church for political goals. Santamaria studiously ignored Maritain's thought, which Doyle thought unconscionable. The Vatican intervention in 1957 against the anti-communist Catholic Social Studies Movement - backed by Santamaria - confirmed Doyle's views.

In 1959 Doyle became editor of Brisbane's *Catholic Leader* and provided in-depth coverage of the Second Vatican Council. With prodigious effort and minimal editorial assistance (except from his family), he established the *Leader* as the foremost religious paper in Australia, and lifted it to a flourishing financial position with a very successful printery.

His career ended unexpectedly in 1981 after his friend, Archbishop Rush, relayed to him a decision by the Australian bishops that Catholic papers were not to accept advertising from World Vision because of reports of proselytising.

Doyle regarded the direction as violating his journalistic independence and resigned, withdrawing to his family and circle of close friends.

He had hoped to write a history of the Movement, but was unable to summon the energy as his health deteriorated.

Requiem Mass was celebrated for him on September 19 at Holland Park, Brisbane, by Father John Nee and Archbishop John Battersby.

Doyle is survived by his wife, Philomene, their 10 children, 18 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Bruce Duncan

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