

# James Vincent Duhig: Rationalist

James Vincent Duhig, (1889-1963), medical practitioner, was born on 22 November, 1889, in Brisbane, son of Thaddeus Duhig, carpenter, and his wife Ellen, nee Shine, both Irish-born. Educated at Holy Cross Convent School, Wooloowin, the Eagle Junction State School and St. Joseph's College, Nudgee, he distinguished himself in the 1907 leaving certificate examination by taking first place in five subjects and winning the Queensland exhibition; next year he entered the University of Sydney as a language student, but in 1909 he changed to medicine (M.B., Ch.M., 1914).

On 3 January, 1917, in Sydney, Duhig married Kathleen Mary Taylor and in June he left for Europe as a medical officer in the Australian Imperial Force. After service mainly in field ambulances and general hospitals, he was demobilized as a major in 1919 and undertook postgraduate work in pathology at King's College Hospital, London, from April to July. On his return, he established pathology laboratories at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in 1920 and the Brisbane General Hospital in 1924. From 1920 he practised as a pathologist in Wickham Terrace. He became Australian president of the Association of Clinical Pathologists and urged the establishment of the College of Pathologists of Australia, of which he was later an honorary member. A militant campaigner for the establishment of a medical school in Queensland, he was first professor of pathology at the University of Queensland in 1938-47. He founded the Red Cross Blood Bank in Queensland.

A man of brilliant intellect, Duhig was not restricted by his profession. He investigated the venomous fish of Queensland and contributed dissections of the stone-fish venom apparatus to the Queensland Museum. President of the Royal Queensland Art Society for 10 years, he left much of his personal art collection to the university. Co-founder of the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society, he won the Laura Bogue Luffman prize with his one-act play, *The Ruling Passion*, published in 1935. In 1942-43 he had some association with C.B. Christesen and *Meanjin Papers*.

Often controversial but never dull, Duhig was especially noted for his vigorous, outspoken opposition to all forms of hypocrisy. A nephew of Brisbane's Archbishop James Duhig, he was brought up as a Catholic, but became a president and patron of the Queensland Rationalist Society. He took an impish delight in publicly baiting his distinguished relative,



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announcing that religious beliefs frustrated honest thinking. He was a vigorous opponent throughout his life of book censorship and was president of the Book Censorship Abolition League of Queensland in 1935. At the same time he advocated the prohibition of

alcohol and, in 1946, was president of Queensland Co-operative Hotels Ltd, an offshoot of the Liquor Reform Society. Reform of military drinking, he believed, should begin in officers' messes.

Small, slight but furiously energetic, Duhig allied himself during the Depression with radical causes and led deputations demanding help for the unemployed. Because of these activities, the fact that he had visited Russia and his medical aid to Russia's campaign in World War II, he was branded as a fellow-traveller by many. They failed to realise that he could never have espoused communism because he was always a champion of free speech and free thought.

Duhig died in St. Andrew's Hospital, Brisbane, on 14 April, 1963, following a myocardial infarct. He was survived by his wife, two daughters and two sons, both pathologists. His ashes were transferred to the grave of his wife at Nudgee cemetery after her death. A portrait by Roy Dalgarno is in the University of Queensland; another by Sylvia Harris is held by the family.

## Sources

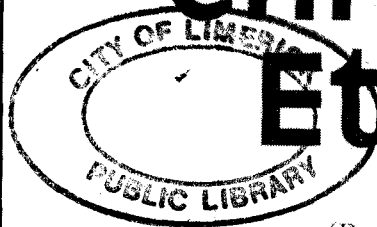
*Rationalist*, Feb., 1946, p 360, Mar., 1947, p 15; *MJA*, 17, 24 Aug., 1963, p 269, 336; *Courier Mail*, 15 April, 1963.

C.A.C. Leggett

(Reprinted from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*)

Do good, for good is good to do;  
Spurn bribe of heaven and threat of hell.  
—The Kasidah of Haji Abdu el Yezdi.

# Christian Ethics



(Revised Edition)

By Professor J.V. DUHIG of Queensland.

**UNCLE AND NEPHEW:** The cover of *CHRISTIAN ETHICS* by James Vincent Duhig, an essay which originally appeared in *The Rationalist*, February, 1948. Written across the bottom of the cover of this copy of the booklet were the words: "... is a nephew of the Bishop in Brisbane. When people asked the Bishop about the above (he) said: "Jimmy was reading the wrong books!"