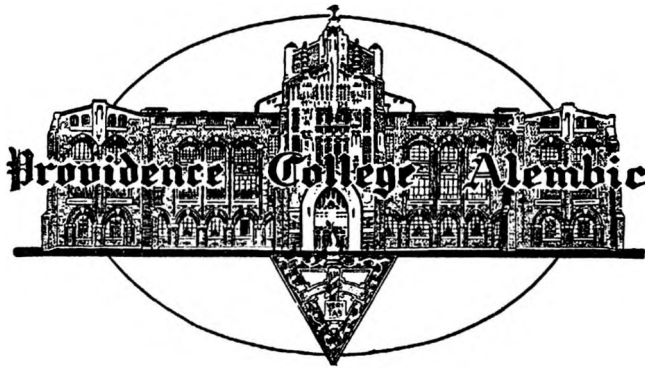


# THE ALEMBIC



MAY, 1953

# THE ALEMBIC



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY  
BY THE  
STUDENTS OF PROVIDENCE COLLEGE  
PROVIDENCE, R. I.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME XXXII

MAY, 1953

NUMBER 4

---

---

EDITORIAL ..... 3

## FICTION

DOC AND THE KID..... 14  
*Phil Griffin '54*

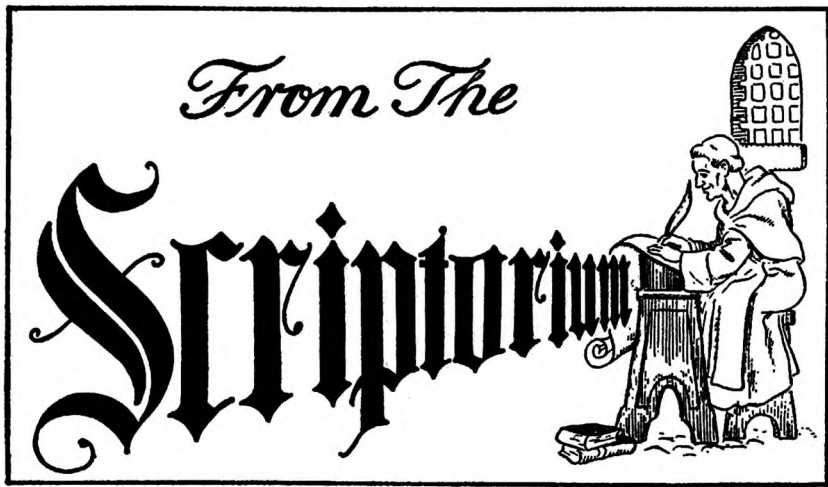
## NON-FICTION

THE IMMORTAL FATHER PAUL..... 6  
*Robert E. Hoyer '53*

PHILOSOPHY IS NOT AFTERNOON TEA..... 19  
*John Martiska '53*

## VERSE

COMMENDED SPIRIT ..... 30  
*Edward Kelly '54*



WITH the end of a school year, student thinking can take one of two courses. It can either look back over the year that is just being completed or it can look forward to the one that is to come. For the seniors the choice is particularly difficult. For them, there are four years of memories and experiences to survey. For them also, the future is painfully present. Four years of Dominican guidance and education are coming to a close with the approach of June. June means graduation, and graduation launches them into new fields. What of the other students? The freshmen? The sophomores? The juniors? What are they thinking of now?

For them the future is still the future. They still have one, two, or three years to spend at Providence College. With the close of the school year, their thoughts are on summer vacation and what the next year will be like. For them gray flannel and white bucks are the uniform for the day and not combat boots and olive drab garb. The war in Korea is a distressing reality, and the recurring draft examinations remind them that military service for them is a very real possibility.

Looking back over the year may be a pleasant or an unpleasant experience for them. Poor grades may cause some consternation, but, at best, it is only a passing worry. Memory is kind to us in that we usually remember best the good things we have done. This year may have seen some of them making strong friendships, writing for campus publications, running for student offices, belonging to clubs and societies, and attending the more notable dances. Of course, not

## *The Alembic*

every student took the trouble to take part in extra-curricular affairs. They have attended the College, to be sure, but they have missed an important part of their college lives. It is these students that we have in mind as we write.

Providence College is not just a group of buildings located at the juncture of River Avenue and Eaton Street. To think of it only as a place where classes are held is, so to speak, "missing the boat." True, the buildings are inanimate. They do not leap up and shake our hands as we walk by them. But, within these buildings is a spirit, a unifying spirit that makes all students proud to say that they are part of Providence College. A college can become no greater than the caliber of the students who attend it. If they come here in the morning to attend classes and then leave in the afternoon, taking part in nothing else, they have contributed nothing to the College. Worse yet, they have no spirit.

How does one get this spirit. It cannot be given by an imposition of hands, nor can a hole be cut in one's head to have it poured in. No. Each student has to get it himself. How? It isn't hard. Voting in student election. Running for office when possible. If you have the ability to write, joining the staff of either the *ALEMBIC* or the *Cowl*. Those with talent in acting or speaking can find an outlet in the Pyramid Players or the Barristers. For the musically inclined there is the Glee Club; business students have the Ship and Scale Club; and the Phi Chi Club exists for the science majors. These are some of the activities. There are others for those with other interests. The idea is to get in them; to do something more than just occupy a seat in a classroom.

Perhaps you may think it odd to be talking of taking part in extra-curricular activities and school spirit now that the year is drawing to a close. It is. Editorials such as this should be written at the start of the year. But, now as we are surveying the close of a year, we can see how much we have missed by not taking part in activities. We can resolve, firmly resolve now, that next year will be different. For seniors, the time is past. They have had their chance. The other classes, however, still have the time. We sincerely hope they will, as the saying goes "jump in and get their feet wet" next year.

J. M.

# THE STAFF

## *Editor-in-Chief*

HENRY P. GRIFFIN, '54

## *Associate Editors*

JOHN MARTISKA, '53

ROBERT E. HOYE, '53

PHIL GRIFFIN, '54

EDWARD KELLY, '54

# The Immortal Father Paul

By ROBERT E. HOYE '53

**H**ISTORY has given the world many notables, but only God could give us in the twentieth century a man who measured to the likeness of the Poverello of Assisi, a man who through self-sacrifice and good works has found his way past the gates of heaven. This lover of poverty was Father Paul James Francis, the Father-Founder of the Society of the Atonement, better known as the Graymoor Friars.

"My God, and my all," were the words spoken by St. Francis as he retired for the night. These words were also the guide of Father Paul's life. Born the son of an Episcopalian minister, Lewis Wattson, who later became Father Paul James Francis, was educated to become an outstanding minister in the Anglican Church. From the very outset of his career he proved to be of eternal value. By special dispensation of the Episcopal Bishop of New York, young Lewis Wattson was ordained to the priesthood at the age of twenty-three, one year previous to the required age. He pledged his loyalty to the teachings and beliefs of the Protestant Episcopal Church and in all good faith advanced to the pastorate of St. John's Church in Kingston, New York. His flock loved him and he preached to exceptionally huge crowds. His work at St. John's was very successful, but he possessed a firm desire to leave the parochial life and enter into what one might call, the monastic life.

He was desirous of founding a religious community of men dedicated to the preaching apostolate. From his

## *The Immortal Father Paul*

early childhood he wanted to belong to a group like the Catholic Paulist Fathers. He specifically stated the Paulists because of an early contact with their work and a deep admiration for their zeal. The Anglican Church had a religious community of unmarried priests called the Associate Mission of Omaha, Nebraska, and when they were in need of a superior, it was Father Lewis Wattson who was assigned to the position.

The atmosphere of the Associate Mission was quite monastic. The members lived a common life under a superior, who guided rather than directed, and all worked zealously for a common end. While there was no hard and fast horarium, as is usually found in religious houses, "we did have a prayer, study and work," wrote one of its members, "but it was a simple one." With the arrival of the new superior, the life at the Associate Mission changed considerably. Father Wattson imposed a stricter discipline that brought the community closer to his dreams of a monastic community.

Although Father Wattson noticeably expanded the work at Omaha, he saw little hope of the community uniting with him to form the Society of the Atonement, the name that he had chosen for the organization. It was while as superior at Omaha that he received a letter from a young woman, Lurana White, who was seeking information concerning an Episcopalian sisterhood that was vowed to corporate poverty. Father Wattson could only send one answer, that there was none.

Subsequent correspondence between Father Wattson and Lurana White revealed that they shared a common desire in the founding of a religious community. It was mutually agreed that after sufficient preparation, a community of sis-



ters would be established under the direction of Rev. Mother Lurana and would constitute the Second Congregation of the Society of the Atonement.

Father Wattson resigned his headship of the Associate mission and hastened to Warwick, New York, the ancestral home of Mother Laurana. On the eve of St. Francis' Day, October 3, 1898, the first meeting of the co-Founders of the Society of the Atonement took place. The Mother Foundress in her "Memoirs" has described this meeting and what transpired on that great day.

"Our Father arrived in Warwick toward the evening on October 3rd, the Eve of St. Francis Day. On that memorable day we met for the first time. The future Father Founder told the story of his call and of his hopes and I told him of my search for St. Francis and Corporate Poverty. Then there came to us both the dawning realization of the oneness of God's Call.

"I told him, also, of my strange meeting in the London Convent, with Sister Mary Angela, the American Sister, and how we had corresponded ever since. I showed Father the last letter the Sister had written me, all about a little abandoned church in the country which had been discovered by the three friends of Sister Mary Angela's cousin, Miss Alice Redmond; their three friends were the Misses Elliot of New York City, and Miss Julia Chadwick, the latter residing most of the year on the old family homestead in Garrison. Sister Mary Angela's letter described how these three devoted Anglican women had, during one of their drives together through the country-side around Garrison, discovered this little brown church, deserted and desecrated; it had been used as a wayside inn by tramps and was in ruinous and filthy condition. The

## *The Immortal Father Paul*

good ladies had cleaned it and restored it with their own hands. It was deeded to them by the Rector of the Garrison parish. Sister Mary Angela continued in her letter to tell me that they dearly loved Saint Francis and longed to have Sisters, preferably Franciscans, to live somewhere near the church and work among the country people. The letter concluded with an appeal to me to consider very seriously, and pray earnestly, as to whether this might not be the Call of God for me. Father was deeply interested in it all."

The tract of land, which was some twenty-four acres of rocky woodlands, was to become the first foundation of the Society of the Atonement. Located in the most beautiful surroundings that one could imagine, Graymoor is almost directly across the Hudson River from the United States Military Academy at West Point. On both sides of the famed Hudson River, soldiers were to be trained, but soldiers with a different motivation.

"The Mother Foundress, S.A., arrived at Graymoor on the Octave Day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 15, 1898. It was a cheerless scene which confronted her on that cold and dreary winter day, but her heart was warm with faith and courage. The Society of the Atonement for which she and Father Wattson had worked and prayed so long was a reality at last. She did not wonder about the future as she surveyed the cheerless scene. There were no doubts in her mind. Her faith had conquered them all and she had entrusted all things to the loving care of Almighty God.

"Meanwhile Father Wattson had entered the novitiate of the Episcopalian Order of the Holy Cross to be trained in the principles of the religious and ascetical life, preparatory

to his future work at Graymoor. From Holy Cross Monastery in Westminster, Maryland, he continued to direct and guide the Mother Foundress in the difficult work of organizing a nascent religious life at Graymoor through his letters, which came regularly and without fail. Although he had intended to undergo the full two years of training prescribed by the Holy Cross rule, circumstances which had arisen at Graymoor prevented him from carrying out his original plans. So it was that in the following September he set out for Graymoor to take up duties for which he was urgently needed at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Atonement. He was now thirty-six years old.”\*

On his way back to Graymoor from Baltimore, Father Wattson visited the famed Franciscan Monastery in Washington, Mount Saint Sepulchre, for it was that he wished to establish a Franciscan community. He was well received and shown through the spacious monastery by one of the friars. After dinner in the refectory, Father Wattson disclosed his plans to the superior and asked for a blessing in his venture. He received the wholehearted blessing of the Catholic community of friars.

Because there were no adequate facilities at Graymoor, Father Wattson converted an old carpenter shop for his quarters. He called his little shed the “Palace of Lady Poverty.” On many a rainy night he was forced to recite his prayers in top boots, overcoat and an umbrella over his head for protection from the elements.

The Sisters made a habit for Father Wattson from a coarse grey-brown material and because there was no one to invest him, he officiated at his own investiture. This habit,

---

\*“Graymoor” 1950, a descriptive booklet.

### *The Immortal Father Paul*

that was so dear to him, was to be one of his greatest crosses of burden. Father Wattson never wore anything but his brown Franciscan robe wherever he went. He was constantly looked upon with disfavor for wearing his habit in public as the Episcopal Church had no rules governing the attire of the clergy. In the cities and towns of the Hudson Valley, Father Wattson became a familiar figure in his brown habit and white cord.

On July 27, 1900, the Father Founder made his profession of the vows of religion to his ecclesiastical superior, the Episcopal Bishop of Delaware, who was present for the occasion. He took the religious name of Father Paul James of the Atonement. Besides the triple vows of Poverty, Obedience and Chastity, Father Paul also made a private vow never to handle money. This brought him closer to his beloved Saint Francis. Many times he would leave Graymoor without money and would be forced to rely on the charity of the world to pay his expenses. Vowed not to touch money, he would allow friends to place their offerings between the pages of his breviary. When the creditors were knocking on his door at Graymoor, he would place his faith in God to see him through the crisis. This was one of the many instances of his strong faith in the Almighty.

It must be remembered that Father Paul embraced the Episcopal Church as his governing authority, but conscience led him to another course. Asked to speak at a meeting of the Anglican Archdeaconry of Long Island, Father Paul stated the truths that he held in common with Mother Lurana. He urged "the submission of the Angilcans to the authority of the Holy See." He urged the corporate reception of the Anglicans to the one true fold, "the Chair of Peter."

Of course, Father Paul became very unpopular among many Anglicans, but many others shared his convictions. He organized the "Chair of Unity Octave": an eight-day period of prayer, extending from January 18, feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome, to January 25, feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, for the reunion of Christendom. At their annual meeting in 1921, the Catholic hierarchy of the United States decreed that it be observed throughout all the dioceses of the United States. The present Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, has blessed this devotion and enriched its indulgences. Father Paul also organized a very efficient magazine called "The Lamp." It was devoted to Catholic Unity and the Missions.

Father Paul was forced by his conscience and his search for truth to enter the Roman Catholic Church. He was asked by his Episcopalian superiors to submit his beliefs. He defined his position thus:

(1) That the Catholic Faith is the faith as now defined by the Roman See;

(2) That the Papacy was established "jure divino" as the necessary bond of unity in the Church;

(3) That Anglicanism is properly represented by the Church of England in pre-Reformation times and in the reign of Queen Mary; and yet

(4) That Anglican Orders are valid notwithstanding the papal condemnation of them.

Although he was in error concerning the validity of the Anglican Orders, his beliefs were more Catholic than Protestant and he was advised to pursue the religion of his conscience.

Father Paul contacted Monsignor D. Falconio, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, who in turn notified

### *The Immortal Father Paul*

His Eminence Cardinal Merry del Val in regard to the corporate reception of the Society of the Atonement into the Catholic Church. The Cardinal asked Pope Pius X in a special audience: "Holy Father, let them in." The Pontiff answered: "Yes, we will let them in."

One could not say that all was solved for Father Paul and the Society of Atonement after their corporate reception. Because his Anglican Orders were held invalid, he was forced to attend a seminary before he could be ordained as a Catholic priest. Jealousies among some of the friars at one time threatened to end the Society, but through the perseverance of Father Paul, the Society of the Atonement survived and at this writing is one of the Church's most valuable assets. Both at home and on the mission fields, the Graymoor Friars are spreading the Word of God.

Father Paul James Francis will certainly be everlastingly remembered for his work with the Society of the Atonement. In these times of conflict, hero-worship and destruction of the faith, it is most gratifying to recall a leader like the immortal Father Paul. Father Paul left this world in 1940 after a life of prayer and self-sacrifice.

# Doc and the Kid

By PHIL GRIFFIN '54

DOC stood on the dugout steps and looked out over the vast emptiness of the stadium. It was still early, and dew covered the shadow-blanketed grass of the infield, while the stadium stared vacantly at the apartment houses across the street. It was a big arena, seating well over fifty thousand, and soon it would be jammed with many shirt-sleeved fanatics screaming and waving their scorecards at the performers on the turf below. The Yankees were in town, one game out of first place and roaring down the stretch with blood in their eyes. It was a tough spot for young Kochenik to step into. First major league start, and here he was facing Reynolds. But Lloyd had to save Fleming and Graber for Sunday's double header, and the rest of the staff was laid up with ailments, real and imaginary. Columbo's bone chips, Petrani's lame back, Riley's asthma, and so on down the line. Doc didn't envy Lloyd. A manager's lot wasn't a happy one.

He heard the clatter of cleats on the ramp behind him. Kochenik was coming up, head down, fumbling with the zipper on his jacket.

"Not going to pitch batting practice, are you, Walt?" It was a weak attempt, but Doc saw the kid was nervous.

"No, Doc." He was dead serious. "Just out to get a little exercise."

"Don't even think about it, kid. These guys aren't any better than those fellas you mowed down in the Texas

## *Doc and the Kid*

League," he lied. "Feed 'em that knuckler, and they'll be wavin' all afternoon."

Kochenik wasn't listening. He was staring out at the well-manicured pitcher's mound, the elevation from which he would direct his baseball destinies this afternoon. Why did it have to be the Yankees on the first try? Why not Washington, Detroit, St. Louis, or anybody but the Yankees? He could feel the power slipping out of his arm already. He knew he'd get shelled. After today it would be all over, then back to the endless round of chilly night games and broiling day games.

Doc looked at the kid and remembered. "Sit down a minute, Walt. I'd like to tell you a story, the story of my first day in the majors. That is, if you'd care to listen."

Kochenik didn't have any place to go, so he sat down. Doc looked out over the field for a minute, as if to gather his thoughts, then turned back to the youngster reclining against the back of the dugout.

"You know, Walt, when I first came up to the big time, I felt the same way you do today: scared . . . Oh, yes you are, we all are on the first day. Anyway, my first job was against the Yanks, too, and we were battling 'em right down to the wire just like you fellows are. And not many teams did that in those days. Them were the Yanks of Ruth, Gehrig, Lazzari, Dugan, and Meusel. And my first job was against Lefty Gomez. He was goofy, all right, but he won quite a few that year, kid, quite a few. But, I beat him that day, an' you know why? Well, I'll tell ya.

"I was sittin' here in the dugout, just like you are, thinkin' about pitchin' that afternoon, and I looked up and see this old guy sittin' on the front part here like me. He was the fella that kept home plate and the bases in good shape,



and, on occasion, helped the groundskeeper with the grass in the outfield. He sat there toying with his rake and lime-bucket until I looked up, and then he began to talk. You wouldn't a heard of him, kid, but his name was Rory Chandler, and when I was a kid he was the greatest thing around. Won a bundle for the White Sox more than one year, and lost a bigger bundle to the nags more than one year, too. And here he was talkin' to me, just like I'm talkin' to you. Well, I didn't want to listen to him; he was just a bum to me, and I was a major leaguer, or almost, but I didn't have anything else to do, and it was a relief to have someone to talk to. In them days, kid, the other guys didn't talk to ya for the first three months, and after that they cursed you for the next two. It was quite a fraternity.

"Anyway, he talked and told me about his first game. It wasn't against the Yanks, I don't think, but that doesn't matter. Said he was scared, too, but he just went out there full of vinegar and spit in their eye. Threw it at their heads, and things like that. Wound up with a five hitter, and he was around for ten years. He told me to go out and do the same thing, old Rory did, so I did, and I beat Gomez one-to-nothing that day. And you know, kid, I stuck for quite a while myself.

"Oh, it wasn't easy. In the sixth I gave up a double to the first man and a scratch hit to the next one. Then the guy swiped second. Don't remember who they were, although it might have been Dugan and Lazzeri. Anyways, there were men on second and third with no outs, and me ahead by one run. It was a natural spot for me to walk the next hitter, 'specially since it was Ruth, but Gehrig followed him, so that was out. Instead I slipped a little spit on the ball, an' he popped up. I was strictly legitimate with Gehrig, though,

## *Doc and the Kid*

an' he lined into a double play. After that it was easy, an' ol' Doc was made."

Kochenik wasn't impressed. What's all that got to do with me? They don't throw spitters any more, unless you're real handy at makin' the most of a little sweat, and I'm not goin' to stand up there and throw it at their noggins in my first game.

"So what?" Doc was getting a little sore that the kid wasn't getting anything out of his life story. Don't forget, you haven't got any Ruths or Gehrigs up there either, and there wasn't anyone, then or now, who could touch Gomez on a good day.

Then Doc stopped. He was boasting again about the old days, and if there was anything the kids nowadays hated to hear about it, it was tales of the dear dead days beyond recall. That is, if you claimed the old boys were better than the ones today. So he changed his tack.

"Look, kid, I've been around the game for some time, and it won't hurt you to pay attention to me. I maybe popped off a little, but it's all the truth, ain't it. I didn't think that the old geezer that gave me a line knew much, him bein' nothin' but a caretaker and all, but I profited by what he said. You could do the same. Just remember, your fast ball is as fast as it was in Texas, and your curve ball's just as sharp. So, just go in there and chuck, and things will come out dandy. Take it from a guy what's been around the game for some time."

"Sure, Doc, sure. Look, I gotta go out and run the kinks out, so I'll be seein' ya around. Thanks for the advice."

But Doc knew the kid wasn't serious. He was just trying to get away. Doc stood there for a minute watching the kid and talking to himself.

*The Alembic*

“Be back in Texas tomorrow. . . . Didn’t listen to a word I said. . . . Kids nowadays won’t pay any attention to any of the ol’ pros. . . . Know it all they do. . . . I’ll speak to Lloyd, and he’ll fix him. . . . Lloyd knows that I’m a valuable man to have around. . . . What would have happened if I hadn’t listened to Chandler, and him only a caretaker. . . . Would have never made the grade. . . . I’ll talk to Lloyd, I will . . .”

The rest of the squad was filing up the ramp now, and that meant the workout was starting. Wouldn’t do to be in the way. Doc picked up his rake and pail and walked into the clubhouse.

# Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea

By JOHN MARTISKA '53

SOMETIMES we are firmly convinced that we know the meanings of the terms we use quite well. We persist in our illusion until asked questions about them. Then, our bliss is somewhat rattled because our knowledge seems to have evaporated. When asked what they mean, we find that defining them is difficult and tortuous. Life is one. So is truth. A third is philosophy. Just what is philosophy. Many have asked the question and many have been the answers given in response to the query. A busy wage-earner for instance, if prodded to speculate on the finer points of universals, might answer that "Science is ham and eggs, but philosophy is strictly afternoon tea." We could agree with him and leave philosophy to salon palavers but philosophy is much too important to all of us to do that.

For lack of more precise knowledge, we might fall back on etymological definitions. However, this is not always a good procedure because etymological meanings are notorious for their ambiguity. Metaphysics, for instance, means after physics. Sociology, the science of companions. The word "philosophy" means love of wisdom. But, using this definition only serves to get us into more difficulties because we then have to establish what is meant by wisdom, and who it is that is to love it. Perhaps a better method of looking at philosophy is to understand what it is not first.

Philosophy is often confounded with a manner of doing things or with personal beliefs. A man might put forward

as his "philosophy" such things as abstinence from tobacco or alcohol, taking a daily walk, or speaking only when spoken to. Another man might be a firm believer in astrology and since this a rather complicated form of knowledge, he is looked upon as being philosophical. A third, because he does not get excited by the ups and downs of life, is called a philosopher also. A case such as this would be the sailboat skipper who overturns in the middle of Long Island Sound and then only worries about his tobacco getting wet. These synthetic views of philosophy are quite popular today. Many books are written along this line, Sunday supplements feature it, and there is a radio program called "This I Believe," which exemplifies this idea well. The word philosophy is used here but it only means hodgepodge ideas overlaid with personal dreams, prejudices or sentimentality.

Also, philosophy is not just concerned with giving people material on which to speak glibly and ponderously on any matter. Most fools have silver tongues in their heads but a flood of words is not a valid criterion of wisdom, much less knowledge. What is important in philosophy is not how much we know, but what we know and how we use this knowledge.

Because man has the power to reason we have philosophy. There is a quest in man's mind for the knowledge of the "why" of things. He is not simply content in knowing something. He wants to know why things are as they are. It was for this reason that philosophy came into being. God has no use for philosophy because He is the author of reality. Angels can get along without it too, for they have no need to reason. Philosophy is eminently a human science. Its only sources are man's sense experiences and his rational thought. It starts with experience and proceeds by way of

## *Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea*

reasoning. Now, it has to begin somewhere. Sure it does. It begins in wonder.

Aristotle, writing in the first book of his *Metaphysics*, explains this well. "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, *e.g.* about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and the stars and about the genesis of the universe. Therefore, since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end."

Wonder—the attitude of mind of one who perceives an effect of whose cause he is ignorant, like the man who sees someone looking up at a building and wonders what he is looking at—is the beginning of philosophy. Now a man can wonder about a lot of things; in fact he can wonder about everything. That is why philosophy is not solely concerned with this or that slice of reality. It is concerned with anything that does exist or has the possibility of existence. Stars, planets, solar systems, men, beasts, ideas, dreams, atoms, electrons, the oak tree in the acorn, the blade of grass in the seed all fall under its pale. It is easy enough to see how man would be interested in the material things about him, but what is this about an oak tree in an acorn. Isn't that sort of far-fetched? Not at all.

In order to understand this we have to go back quite a few centuries. Prior to Aristotle's time, philosophers had not yet arrived at a satisfactory explanation of change. No one had an answer to the paradox of Parmenides: since being cannot come to be from being or from non-being, change, that is coming-to-be, is impossible. It was Aristotle who finally

solved the problem by pointing out that change is not a simple occurrence. It is not just a case of a thing coming from being or non-being. There is a third consideration, sort of a combination of being and non-being. This third entity is called potentiality. To get back to our acorn.

We know that when we plant an acorn, we expect to see an oak tree develop from it. After a few weeks, we see a young sprout. There has been a change. The acorn is no more. It has been replaced by the tree. Now take a rock. It can be planted in the same manner. We can fertilize it, water it for months, even pray over it too, but we do not get an oak tree out of it. Why? Because the acorn has the potentiality of becoming an oak tree while the rock is neither actually nor potentially an oak tree. Not all acorns will become oak trees, but they all have the possibility of becoming trees if they are planted. Rocks never will. The point is that potentiality is something real; it is not another name for non-being. What a thing is, is called actuality; what a thing has the capacity to become is called potentiality. Because this potentiality is something real, it falls in the province of philosophy.

While philosophy has a great deal to do with the things that are obvious to man, it is also interested in things that are difficult for man to know. Such things as immaterial beings and causes interest both the philosopher and the scientist. The scientist deals more in proximate causes, but the philosopher follows gradually pyramiding causes to some one focal point, from which emanates an order in the universe which is essentially immutable. The crowning point of the philosophical sciences is metaphysics, the science which treats of first causes and being simply as being.

In the modern world metaphysics has suffered violence.

## *Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea*

It is not even regarded as a science in the present day. When someone speaks of metaphysics now, they usually mean something that is vague, incomprehensible, or concerned with things that do not exist. It is the science of fools in other words. Others think that metaphysics is only concerned with the good, or the true, or the beautiful.

The most charitable thing that can be said about these opinions is that the people who hold them are misinformed. Reality is the province of metaphysics. People who study things that do not exist ought to see a doctor. Metaphysicians want nothing to do with chimeras. What they are interested in is reality and the causes that are found in this reality. Metaphysics is the highest of sciences because it is the science which is interested in the ultimate make-up of reality. It does not look with scorn on the other sciences. The principles of physics and mathematics are not dismissed as useless. But, these principles are not the highest. They help us to understand reality; they do not explain it. They cannot answer such points as the nature of reality, the ultimate constitution of the physical world, or the nature of knowledge.

All the sciences have knowledge as their objects. Some are of a more practical nature, such as the natural sciences. Others, are highly speculative but this does not militate against them. This is what Aristotle meant when he said, "All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this (Metaphysics), but none is better."

Metaphysics does not go soaring into the ethereal or fly in the face of the impenetrable. It, too, has knowledge as its object, and this knowledge is that of causes. Men do not think they know a thing until they have grasped the "why" of it, that is causes. In this sense, we are all as little children, perpetually asking "why this?" and "why that?" It is this yearning that metaphysics attempts to satisfy.



Metaphysics, as do the other sciences, uses a process called abstraction to arrive at its knowledge. There is nothing mysterious or sinister about this process. It is simply a means of studying reality under one aspect to the exclusion of another. It is important to remember that it is real things we are studying, not things manufactured by the mind. Let us say we are looking at a cat. We can see it has fur, a tail, and four legs. It also eats, purrs when satisfied, and has a certain size, weight and dimensions. There is another factor. The cat is something, that is, it exists. This is what metaphysics is interested in, its being. The other characteristics of the cat are not annihilated. They are still there, but are forgotten for the moment. The same process of abstraction can be applied to anything: tables, chairs, dogs, people, buildings, moons, and the stars. In all of them, we arrive at the same conclusion; they are all beings.

Obviously, before men can go this far, they have to be sure that what they are studying is something real, something which the mind can know. This brings us to a consideration of Thomism. Before looking at the principles of this system of philosophy, one thing must be made clear. While Thomism is used a great deal in Catholic theology, it is not theology. Theology rests on divine foundations; Thomism has never made any pretense of classifying itself as a divine science. It is not based on articles of faith but on reason, human reason.

The single, outstanding quality that makes Thomism so radically different from the conglomeration of other philosophies is that it is based on objective reality, an objective reality that the mind can know. The greater portion of non-Thomistic philosophies begin by denying something obvious, or making some sort of startling statement. Many of the systems begin by denying that we can really know things, in

## *Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea*

other words fundamental skepticism. Not so Thomism. Can we know the outside world? Of course we can. To deny that we can gets one nowhere except into quarrels over ideas, wrangles about terminology, and large learned tomes dedicated to expounding nothing.

Thomists maintain that the intellect, through the senses, can and does know being. We have already seen how the mind arrives at the examination of being. It is about this stand that the entire system of Thomism gravitates. If the mind cannot know being, it cannot know anything for there is no simpler concept than that of being. Without an affirmative stand on the validity of sense knowledge and the ability of the intellect to know being one cannot have a philosophy to explain reality. One then only indulges in mental gymnastics. With an affirmative answer, Thomists have erected a magnificent system of thought.

Opponents are sometimes quick to hurl charges at Thomism because they think it is too abstract or too theoretical. Yet, in much touted science, there are many abstractions—energy, gravity, space, force. In his system Kant speaks of noumena and phenomena. Certainly Thomism is theoretical, theoretical in the strict sense of the word meaning a beholding of reality, not in the modern sense of something that is simply plausible. A theory is something that is manufactured by the mind, but to be of any use, it has to be a theory that is practical. This is precisely what Thomism has done, beginning theoretically but ending in practicality. Thomism's singular achievement has been to distinguish principles from theories, a certain mark of a realistic and practical intelligence, and then use these principles to solve the great difficulties and problems that confront the human mind.

Without making any bones about it, I can say that

Thomism is true. Why? Well, for one thing, true principles are unchanging. Once they are had, they do not disintegrate into error of themselves. Only man can corrupt the truth, not nature. That is why Thomism does not change basically; it is built on true principles. How do we know it is true? Because it was authored by a saint? Because it is the philosophy of the Catholic Church? No. There is another reason, one that has nothing to do with divinity.

For a philosophy to be true, that is the knowledge of the mind conforming to the outside world, two conditions must be met. It must not contradict any human experience and it must give a satisfactory explanation of man's experiences. If a philosophy does not meet these two requirements, it is not true. In the case of Thomism, both of these conditions are fulfilled. However, two observations must be made here. One is that Thomism does not hold itself up as the complete corpus of truth. Second, the certitude of Thomism does not mean that all other philosophies are completely false.

There is only one occasion when a man can be certain of having the complete truth and that is when he possesses the Beatific Vision. Outside of this, man can only aim for the truth, the complete truth that is. Thomism can never be accused of the colossal presumption of claiming itself the complete truth. Thomists are certain of their principles, but the use of these principles in a particular problem can, and indeed do, vary. Being a Thomist does not place one in the awkward position of being in an intellectual strait-jacket.

In regard to the second point we turn to Aristotle once again. "No one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but everyone says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by

## *Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea*

the union of all a considerable amount is amassed." (*Metaphysics* II). There is found in other systems of philosophy, much that is true, but along with the true there is error. How do we know it is error? Easily. We simply view the questionable matter in the light of the two conditions that were mentioned before. Saint Thomas synthesized all previous philosophies, in that he took the best from them and incorporated these principles into his own system. Since his time there have been Thomists who have done the same with philosophies that have appeared on the intellectual horizon from century to century.

Thomism, you see, is a living philosophy; it is not static. Immobility in a philosophy would soon lead it to decadence and death. Men are not very interested in problems they have already solved; they yearn for solutions to new problems. Thomism is kept ever alive because there are men in every age who have taken its principles and proceeding on them, have interpreted the thought of their day through them, extracting what was good and casting aside what was bad. In this way the thought of Saint Thomas can be seen in all ages, always present, and always new.

What of the other philosophies. Much time is spent in secular universities on Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Russell, Dewey and James. Thomism is a unified system which is generated out of a stand on objective reality. Non-Thomistic philosophies, paradoxically, find their unity in their diversity. Few of these other philosophies agree with one another. However, they do have something in common, their revulsion towards anything absolute. Calling them skeptics is not entirely correct. Doubters is a better word to use in classifying them. They are not willing to take a stand on anything, but take refuge in the dodge that we cannot be sure of any-

thing. Their dictum is to doubt everything except the principle that everything is doubtful.

Being doubtful is not itself a vice. A man can and should be skeptical about some things or else he will be "taken in" any number of times. If someone tries to sell you a mink coat for two hundred dollars, you had better be skeptical. But, when systematic doubt is applied to all judgments, it becomes vicious for it undermines all knowledge. One of the largest gulfs between Thomistic philosophy and other philosophies concerns the existence of unproved truths.

Thomists believe there are truths which can be accepted without proof. This is a reasonable position for if all truth depended on proof, we could never accept anything as true. Whatever we took as true would have to be proved by something else and that in turn would require proof also *ad infinitum*. Non-Thomistic philosophies frequently are caught in the fallacy that since whatever is proved is true, something is true only when it is proved. The classic case, to illustrate this fallacy concerns our own existence. Can you prove your own existence? No. Then you are not sure that you exist. Ridiculous you say. Yes, but there are many who will go along with the doubt.

A student from a secular college and one from a Catholic school have the same appearance. Both are dapper. Both like convertibles. Both like to go dancing. Where is the difference? It is in the place where differences are all important, in the mind. The Catholic boy guided by the principles of Saint Thomas, has no qualms about facing up to the world. He has answers to the problems that may confront him. He can speak familiarly about the makers of the modern mind, for these men and their ideas are examined to show their

## *Philosophy Is Not Afternoon Tea*

errors or their distortions of the truth. What of the other student?

Oddly enough, the way he lives and the way he thinks will not be quite the same. If he gets hit on the jaw, he will not wonder if it is really himself who was struck. He will not tell the bill collector that since he cannot be sure of the bill's existence, he will not pay. But, ask him if there are unproved truths and the chances are that his answer will be in the negative, therefore admitting that he cannot be sure of anything. Ask him about Thomism. It is any old system of philosophy propounded by a saint who never saw much of the world. What does he know of its principles? Well, as a matter of fact, nothing. He was not that interested in a disproven system.

Sometimes, we as Catholics might be tempted to say what's the use. Because we are sure of the truth, we may assume a superior attitude toward non-Catholic philosophers. This attitude is understandable. But, we must bear in mind that outside the Church there are many sincere searchers for the truth. God has been kind to us in blessing us with the Faith. Others have not been so fortunate. It rests upon our shoulders to show to others the paths to truth and pray that they will not be long in coming to the guardian of that truth, the Holy Roman Catholic Church. It is a task that requires patience and understanding. Most of all it requires charity. God grant to us all three.

# Commended Spirit

By EDWARD KELLY '54

This flesh droops on crossed pine.  
Rusting spikes uncork divine veins  
To fill eternal decanters.  
This knotted wood blackens against an orange  
distance—  
A sky cut by vaped hills  
Cloaks a shroud of regal purple:  
His Divine passion terms.  
As cardiac murmurs a final beat,  
A vague rumble in distant valleys  
Resounds from hills and mountains.  
Slowly, steadily, loudly it comes  
From drums which roll on seraphic towers,  
From cherubic cannons announcing death,  
It comes,  
The thunder comes  
To mark the hour,  
To make it known.  
Three is the hour.  
The Prince is dead.

Look back to the place called "Skull."  
Hear the voice,  
The agonized voice of an infinite spirit  
Crying out to cut these hearts.

*Commended Spirit*

Wait! Don't run!  
Listen, as it echoes to this roof  
Where we are far and hidden.  
Listen, as Roman acoustics magnify the words:  
"Forgive them, Father!"  
"Forgive them."  
We should run for His cloak  
If military dice did not roll for possession.

Look! Hold on.  
Those columns are shaking!  
And the ceiling bursts into arteries  
Flowing with the murk of scudding clouds,  
And to the right, the Pagan glory that was  
The temple is split and laid to gilded rubble.

But now in that place called Skull, there is light,  
And mists convene in scarlet frames  
To form a marbled way.  
His commended spirit rests for return.  
And bannered trumpets symphonize  
To things accomplished.



