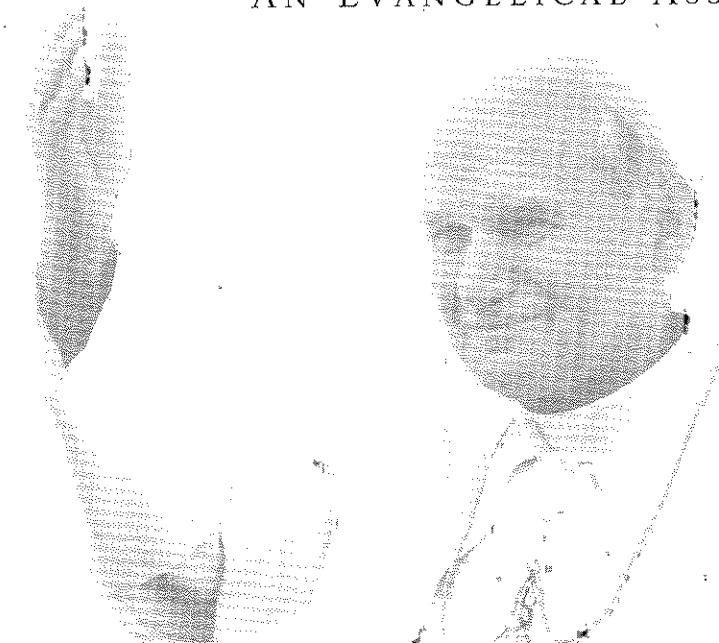


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AN EVANGELICAL ASSESSMENT



*The Legacy of*  
**JOHN PAUL II**

EDITED BY **TIM PERRY**

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## FOREWORD BY J. I. PACKER

Anyone who affirmed that the Roman Catholic Church had changed its position during the past half-century would be wrong. But anyone who denied that it has changed its posture would be wrong too. The old siege mentality has gone for good, and today's Roman Catholicism is outgoing, ecumenical, committed to evangelization and, despite everything, hopeful about its future in a way that is quite new. This is the *aggiornamento*, the sprucing-up, that John XXIII dreamed of when he called the Second Vatican Council; it has happened, at least in the upper reaches of the communion, which is where movements in Roman Catholicism usually begin. And it is the Council, plus the papacy of John Paul II, more than any other factors, that have brought about this change.

I have never been an enthusiast for the papacy, and I once put a Roman Catholic friend right off his dinner by describing the papal setup as a grotesque institution. (I am not proud of having done this, may I say.) The idea of one man being pastor-teacher of the entire Christian church, with supreme authority in all departments rising to doctrinal infallibility, and of communion with him and the bishops that he and his predecessors chose as being the test of whether or not one is fully in the church, has never seemed to me anything but strange, and the steady expansion of the Roman Catholic Church (for it does grow worldwide, whatever may be happening to it in the West) seems to me to increase rather than diminish its strangeness. For me, however, nothing has come closer to giving the institution credibility than the truly brilliant papacy of John Paul II.

John Paul, the first non-Italian pope since long before the Reformation and the first Polish pope ever, was a ten-talent man: philosopher, theologian, scholar, author, youth worker, ethicist, ecumenist, populist and more, he set a new style in "popping," if we may venture such a word. One cannot, for instance, imagine any of his predecessors putting his hand over an American evangelist's hand and say-