

attitudes is plainly one essential condition of effective public action in a federal system where power in social and economic matters is so widely dispersed. It is a tragic reflection that

the genuine aspirations and initial achievements of the poverty programme have since been blighted by the consequences of the war in Vietnam.

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JOHN XXIII, SIMPLETON OR SAINT? by Giacomo Lercaro and Gabriele de Rosa. Translated by Dorothy White. *Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1967*. 120 pp. 18s.

This book has three parts—'Suggestions for Historical Research', by Cardinal Lercaro; 'Angelo Roncalli and Radini Tadeschi', by Professor de Rosa; and an appendix, 'Selected Passages from the Works of John XXIII'. Cardinal Lercaro is suggesting how an appraisal of Pope John should be approached; Professor de Rosa is following his advice; and the appendix provides a fraction of the available sources.

Cardinal Lercaro's talk is very remarkable, and we should remember it was given in 1965. He states his firm belief that Pope John was not only a saint, but also 'the great Doctor of the Church in the new era he himself inaugurated'. 'He is either a holy Doctor of the Church or he is nothing.'

There are those, says the Cardinal, who suspect that he is nothing, just a good old man, 'not expert and not cultured', who released forces and permitted freedoms that in the end worried him because, so they say, he realized he could not control them. Most of those who think like this are in positions of authority, men of intellectual and moral stature who lack 'a clear understanding of the most advanced position taken up by this Pope, above all of his mature and firm determination to throw all his energies into the changes he wished to make inside and outside the Catholic Church'. As a result of this failure to understand what he was about, Pope John lived in 'a great institutional solitude', surrounded largely by people whose views and aims were in marked contrast with his own. There should be a serious historical examination, says the Cardinal, 'of the relations between the Pope and his immediate collaborators'. There will be found, he believes, a considerable 'contrast between the constant, insistent and unvarying intentions of the Council, in the mind and words of Pope John, and the projects elaborated [by his collaborators] during the whole of the preparatory phase'.

For those responsible, cultured and intelligent people who are ready to pay lip service to Pope John while regretting what he did, it will come as a surprise to read the Cardinal's urgent appeal 'to reconstruct the master lines of the most general and original resolutions of Pope

John, his major ecclesiological and historical theses'. He fears that these have only partially been accepted, 'while the possibilities which he pointed out to us are still . . . for the most part unexplored'. The Council was 'only a preliminary movement in the order of actual consequences and institutional applications'.

The Cardinal maintains that Pope John's life was all of a piece, that he was not 'merely a pure-minded innocent, a "Gospel-child" who because of his simplicity and purity was able to become, without any qualifications of gifts, knowledge and experience, a docile instrument of the Holy Spirit'—rather 'he was filled not only with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but also with exceptional treasures of knowledge and experience, not infused from on high, but patiently and laboriously acquired'. One of our troubles is that 'we could not keep up with him for we could not walk at his pace'.

Cardinal Lercaro roundly affirms that 'this man whom all judged to be without profound culture or great experience had decided, from the moment when he was elected Pope, and with the clearest possible purpose in his mind, to become a truly universal pastor and teacher'. If we do not understand that, he says, we do not understand Pope John at all.

We need a systematic and detailed inventory 'of all the material he left concerning doctrinal premises, theological pluralism, and the order of priority among the truths of Christianity, his theological view of history, his conception of the nature of the Church, of ecumenism, of the internal reforms of ecclesiastical organizations, reform of the priesthood and of religious life, of the relations between the Church and secular governments, etc.'. 'A careful and thorough search, such as heirs generally make, has not yet been begun, and perhaps we had no desire to make it.'

'If we do not begin without delay to inquire most earnestly into the reasons why and how we left him in such solitude, our devotion and our admiration may, earlier than we imagine, become tinged with hypocrisy, corrupt and sterile, and with a sterilizing effect upon the whole Church of God.'

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