

## **WANTED: A PSYCHOLOGIST**

**A** VERY interesting book was once written by an American doctor on the authors and heroes of modern fiction. He submitted the writings of certain novelists of the United States and of these islands to an elaborate study, showing in the light of recent experimental psychology the various complexes of these authors and the public confessions which they involuntarily displayed in their books. Just as nowadays a man should be cautious about telling his dreams at the breakfast-table (an early amusement of the Victorian epoch) since dreams have been now Freudianly tabulated and will reveal at once his inhibited desires; so equally a modern author should be extremely careful how he writes and of what he writes, since inadvertently he is revealing not so much what he does, as what he would like to do if he dared.

On the same lines it would be very interesting if some psychologist would take in hand the authors who love to write on the Inquisition, whose delight it is perhaps to ferret out stories of torture, of unjust cross-examination and of intolerance. It would be interesting, because we feel sure that the conclusion would be reached that these authors chose this particular subject because they were themselves the nearest examples we have left of the Inquisitorial character or caricature.

Take my friend Dr. Coulton. Read carefully his books, pamphlets and letters for a description of an Inquisitor. Then visualise such a man and you will have a rather unpleasant caricature of Dr. Coulton himself, grim, intolerant, glad to score a purely debating point, and without the faintest sense of humour. Is there not a phenomenon described by psycholo-

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gists as 'a defence mechanism' ? If I understand it rightly, the term refers to that aggressive attitude of self-protection which a man will unconsciously or sub-consciously adopt in a subtle effort to conceal or at least distract attention from his own failings. Thus preachers are sometimes known to denounce most violently from the pulpit what turns out to be their own particular pet sin. Could not one draw a general conclusion that it is the fanatical, intolerant historian, grim, humourless, and anxious to score a debating point who deliberately, or rather we think indeliberately but inevitably, drifts towards this topic?

We believe that such a verdict could be upheld in the case of a recent book, *The Albigensian Heresy*,<sup>1</sup> by the Rev. H. J. Warner, B.D.

I. In reviewing this book it is very easy first to make a list of blunders such as :—

p. 2. 'Dominicans were as much fatalists as Moslems'—a pretty fair specimen of the type of mistake he indulges in when he deals with theology and philosophy. Certainly Moslems as well as Dominicans would deny this statement.

p. 32. The choice of St. Dominic and his companions fell upon the 'Order of St. Augustine.' Will Mr. Warner kindly explain how St. Dominic was able to found a new order by choosing an old one to which he already belonged. Of course the Dominicans neither joined nor, at that time, had even heard of an 'Order of St. Augustine.'

p. 38. 'Nunneries were practically a failure; for fifty years Prouille was the only one: eighty years after the death of St. Dominic there were only three.'

Of course there were three nunneries founded by St. Dominic in his lifetime, as any novice in the Order

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, S.P.C.K., 6/- net.

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could have told him : by 1277 there were fifty-eight such nunneries (*cf.* Mortier : *Maîtres Generaux*, I, p. 349.)

p. 51. ' St. Mary's Day ' (July 22, 1209) should of course be ' St. Mary Magdalene's Day.'

p. 124. ' Two monks taking possession in the name of the Master General of the Dominican Order ' : for ' monks ' read ' friars.'

p. 133. ' Summa. ii, 9, 11 ' : this is how he cites a reference to ' the great Summist, Aquinas.' Has he looked up this reference, even in the English translation? The ignorance here shown is typical of his lack of familiarity with medieval material.

p. 141. ' Gregory IX in proclaiming the canonization of Dominic and fixing his day on August 4 . . . ' Gregory did not fix it for August 4.

p. 143. ' The Pope elevated the prior of the Order in Paris to be the master-general of France and Toulouse.' What can this confused statement possibly mean?

II. An even longer catalogue of unproved statements could be compiled. Here are a few :

p. 3. ' The blameless lives of the heretics.' The medieval accounts of the heretics certainly do not show them to have been *blameless*. Their austerity is acknowledged in large measure ; but men who are austere can yet be blamed. Austere inquisitors are blamed by the Rev. H. J. Warner.

p. 3. ' The preaching of Dominic was at first, at any rate, as much a protest against the corruption of the Church as . . . '

There is no proof that St. Dominic did preach against the corruption of the Church. He may have done so, of course. We do not however find record of it.

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p. 24. 'It was this smiling country that he (St. Dominic) was to deluge with blood and blacken with fire.' There is no proof of any kind that St. Dominic was responsible either for the blood or the fire: the only definite statement made by contemporaries about him is to the effect that while de Montfort used the sword of war, Dominic used the sword of prayer. When the Rev. H. J. Warner goes on to interpret the vision of Fanjeaux as 'no message from Heaven of inclusive love but of destruction,' he is merely drawing upon his imagination. Here is a simple instance of the sort of imagination he has and of how it runs at once to blood and destruction.

p. 84. 'We are prepared for (Innocent III's) pusillanimity.' It will astonish the ordinary reader of medieval history to find it taken for granted that Innocent III should be pusillanimous. Innocent III! Consult any other account of the Pope, anywhere, in any language!

p. 99. 'For an age which regarded violence as strength, treachery as cleverness, and mercy as weakness, Simon . . . .' As a description of the thirteenth century this is an unfair generalisation; if it were ever a true generalisation, it would be more applicable to the era of the Reformation than to the middle ages.

p. 151. 'The depraved character of the Bishop of Toulouse.' No proofs are brought of this depravity, no references given to substantiate the accusation. This mere statement is not good enough in a book intended to serve as reliable history.

III. Then, thirdly, there is a series of statements in which the author out of sheer dislike of the Inquisition chooses to interpret anything connected with it in the worst possible light.

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p. 18. 'Fulk, the troubadour of Marseilles, saw that success must ultimately rest with the Church and in that way lay honours and wealth. He became a zealous Catholic . . .' This Coulton touch is again typical of the Rev. Bachelor of Divinity who implies (without proof other than his own particular form of imagination) that Fulk's Catholicism was mercenary. The Society for promoting *Christian Knowledge* should look well at the third volume with which Mr. Warner threatens us to see what *Knowledge* or *Christianity* there is to be in it.

p. 45. 'A crusader was a hero, a saint!' Will Mr. Warner quote a single phrase from medieval literature to prove that Catholics ever maintained that crusaders were necessarily heroes or saints?

pp. 168-9. 'The Council of Narbonne (1243) ruled that "You shall proceed to the condemnation of no one without clear and distinct proofs or by confession. For it is better to let a crime go unpunished than to condemn the innocent." But this principle remained mere theory; there is not a single case of full acquittal in all the two hundred of the Inquisition of Carcassonne.'

Note that the Rev. H. J. Warner cites a regulation which, if it had been carried out, would have been favourable to the character of the Inquisitors. He therefore immediately concludes that it was not carried out by the Inquisitors. Has he any proof other than his particularly uncharitable imagination? None at all. There are, he says, no cases of full acquittal: now *two* reasons may be given for this fact, either the principle was not carried out, or it happened in every case brought before the Inquisitors that there were clear proofs or confession. But to our denouncer of intolerance there is only *one* reason possible, for it is

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beyond his imagination to believe that the Inquisitors could have behaved well.

p. 155. 'There is no instance [in the Register of Sentences at Toulouse, 1243-1249] of the death-penalty, but it is incredible that there was none, and perhaps they were recorded in another register now lost.'

You see it really is *incredible* to this lover of Christian tolerance that the Inquisitors should be for once behaving themselves; hence this jolly flight into the higher criticism, '*perhaps they were recorded in another register now lost.*'

p. 171. 'Even the Confessional was not inviolate against the claims of the Inquisition: "In private confession a heretic must be ordered to accuse his associates, otherwise he is not truly penitent."''

A refusal to absolve carries with it, according to the Rev. H. J. Warner, the right to violate the sacred seal of the confession. We know no other word to apply to this conclusion than to say that this statement that the confessional was not inviolate against the claims of the Inquisition is untrue; whether deliberate or said in ignorance, it is untrue.

p. 172. 'He was also asked whether he wished to have a summary of the depositions made against him. The answer was generally in the affirmative. But the extract was of no help to him.'

How does he know whether the extract was of help or not? He does not know. He merely uses his imagination. His imagination always runs in the same intolerant groove.

p. 185. 'Torture is very seldom mentioned in the Registers, the explanation being not that it was seldom inflicted, but that the notary was less interested in the means of obtaining avowals than . . . .'

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How does he know whether it was seldom inflicted or not? He does not know, but again he allows his imagination to decide the question for him. He does not know the Inquisitors. He does not know himself. He does not know that he is putting up 'a defence mechanism': truly an interesting case for the experimental psychologist.

p. 190. 'Deaths by sentence of inquisitorial courts were much less numerous (than by sentence of military courts); and this is true even of the zealous inquisitors . . . . The earlier Register of Bernard de Caux shows no case of burning, but it does not follow there was none.'

Not one escape will he allow the inquisitors, this man who ventures to denounce them for their lack of pity. You might have thought in the terms of the first statement that Bernard would be given the benefit of the doubt. You might think so; not the Rev. H. J. Warner.

Lastly we warn such readers as may venture to consult his pages to verify carefully all his quotations; for he omits in them just whatever he does not wish to find.

Allow me to be personal and thereby disclose not the least reason why I denounce the book:

Warner: *op. cit.* p. 25. Jarrett: *Life of St. Dominic*  
p. 41.

'It is generally stated that Prouille was intended by Dominic only for nuns; but that he intended to admit men; as well as women from the first is clear not only from the above Charter but also . . . . Even Jarrett, a Dominican prior dedicating his book, published with authority, to Dominican Nuns, has made this serious mistake.'

'But it is clear that St. Dominic had founded not only a convent of Nuns, but a Priory also of his friars: he had no doubt quite consciously established a double monastery . . . . (p. 42) where dwelt side by side the Preachers and the Nuns.'

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Warner : p. 25, foot-note 2.

'Jarrett also makes several errors in translating the Charter, but most misleading is his interpolation of the word "women".'

Warner : p. 26.

'This association of men and women in one religious community was an innovation for the Church, but not for the Catharists.'

*Cartulaire I*, p. 148.

*Mulieribus* . . . *ibidem* *religiose viventibus*

Jarrett : p. 43.

'St. Gilbert, who founded his order of double monasteries in England, was himself a canon regular and followed, as did St. Dominic, the rule of St. Augustine; and this precedent so recent (St. Gilbert only died in 1189) had itself a long tradition behind it. In the very age of Pepin and Charlemagne . . .'

What can be done with folk like the Rev. H. J. Warner, B.D.? What can be done with these lovers of justice, of tolerance, of accurate history? I think we cannot move them. They are really possessed of an *idée fixe*: their attitude reveals the 'defence mechanism' at every turn. But can we not appeal to their publishers? These will surely behave like gentlemen. How? Any gentleman will know how to behave who has accepted and published such libellous and ignorant history.

BEDE JARRETT, O.P.