

J. D. Mann

RAYMOND LULL

AND

SIX CENTURIES OF ISLAM

BY THE

REV. H. U. WEITBRECHT, PH.D., D.D.



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The books named below give more details of Raymond Lull's times, life and works.

Raymond Lull: The Illuminated Doctor. A Study in Medieval Missions. By W. T. A. BARBER, D.D. Pp. 172. London: Charles H. Kelly. 1903. 2s. 6d.

Raymond Lull: First Missionary to the Moslems. By S. M. SWEMER. Pp. 172. New York: Funk and Wagnalls. 1902. 3s.

Le bienheureux Raymond Lulle. Par MARIUS ANDRÉ. Pp. 216. Paris: Lecoffre. 2nd ed. 1900.

History of the Christian Religion and Church. By Dr. AUGUST NEANDER. See Fifth Period; First Section (Expansion and Arrest of the Christian Church).

History of Mediaeval Philosophy. By MAURICE DE WULF. Transl. by P. Coffey. Longmans. 1909.

Mediaeval Philosophy. By FREDERIC DENISON MAURICE.

These two contain chapters on the philosophy of Raymond Lull.

Les Croisades. Par BRÉHIER. Paris: Lecoffre. 1907.

A History of Christian Missions in the Middle Ages. By G. F. MACLEAR. Macmillans.

See Chapter XVI. on Missions to the Saracens and Mongols.

RAYMOND LULL

THE year 1915 finds Christian people in four continents commemorating the six hundredth anniversary of the death of Raymond Lull. Who was he, and why should his death be so widely remembered after so long a time? A glance at his life and times gives the answer.

At the time of Raymond Lull's birth in 1235, the great series of campaigns which we know as the Crusades were drawing towards their close. More than six centuries had passed since Mohammed died in 632. He had brought the pagans of Arabia to the worship of one God, and his successors went forth to other lands, at first mostly Christian, to enforce the same message and to proclaim that Mohammed had superseded all previous prophets, including the Christ. Their armies came with this message against peoples whose Christianity was largely corrupted and divided into warring sects, some of which helped the invader. The alternative to acceptance of Islam was for pagans the sword, for Jews and Christians the payment of a yearly poll-tax and a degraded position in state and society, for, wherever the faith of Islam conquered, there the law of the Koran must govern the land no less than the religion.

During these six hundred years the Arab nation, known in the West (from a district of Arabia) as Saracens, had built up a great empire. In the thirteenth century this included, counting from west to east, a great part of Spain, the whole of North Africa, Syria, Mesopotamia, much of Asia Minor and Central Asia, and Persia, while in North India Moslem rulers held sway over a population chiefly pagan. By that time the Arab power was divided and greatly decayed through inroads of Turks and Mongols who presently took over most of what had belonged to it; but it was still strong in Syria and Egypt. The chief ruler of the Mohammedan world was known as the *khalifa* or caliph, that is the successor, by divine right, of the prophet and prince of Mecca, and in this capacity he claimed (and still claims) to be the guardian of "the two holy places," viz., Mecca with Medina, and Jerusalem. The two former the Moslem specially reveres as the birth-place and burial-place of his prophet; but the latter also he esteems as the centre of the Jewish religion and the city of the prophet Jesus. The Arab rulers of the Holy Land had a considerable number of Christian subjects who paid their devotions at Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and besides them, Christian pilgrims came in large numbers from the countries of Europe to worship there. It was the oppressions and exactions practised on these pilgrims by the Moslem rulers of Palestine which gave the first occasion for the Crusades. In 1096, after a council held at Clermont, Pope Urban II. summoned the

princes and peoples of Europe to a war for the deliverance of the holy places from the grasp of the infidel. The assembly answered: "God wills it!" and armies were mustered from every land, the warriors being marked with a red cross on breast or shoulders. Seven great campaigns were undertaken, and during two centuries it is reckoned that not less than two million soldiers marched eastwards, of whom many, including kings and emperors, perished. The Holy Land, with parts of Asia Minor, North Africa and Mesopotamia, was conquered, and a kingdom of Jerusalem was set up, which stood for a time. But the Christian rulers were divided among themselves, and one by one the territories which they had gained were lost, till the fall of Acre in 1291, accompanied by the massacre of 60,000 Christians, closed this chapter of history.

During all this time, and for long afterwards, Islam and Christianity stood against each other less as religions than as empires. The religion of Mohammed had from the first been spread by the armies of Islam, and the Christian peoples, sunk in a condition of great ignorance, scarcely realised any other way of resisting Islam than by the sword; in fact they were almost entirely ignorant of the history of Mohammed and the teachings of his religion. But without such knowledge it was impossible to resist those evils of Islam that really matter, or to learn the lessons which God intended it to teach to an unfaithful church. Mohammed laid stress most rightly on the unity of God as against the worship of images which even some

Christians indulged in, and against heretics who taught that the Holy Trinity consisted of God the Father, God the Mother and God the Son. He also taught belief in the Angels of God, in His Prophets and their Books, including the Old and the New Testaments, in the Day of Judgment, and in the Decrees of God which ordain both good and evil. But he denied the divinity of our Lord and also His death and resurrection, and he quite ignored the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation, the Atonement, and the work of the Spirit—those facts of revelation through which we are brought into union with God—were the ones which he explicitly denied, while he claimed to supersede Jesus Christ and His revelation, and maintained that the Koran was the final scripture which did away with all that had gone before. In his teachings about the duties of religion, Mohammed took over much from the Jewish and Christian religions. Prayer, fasting and alms-giving are three of the main duties of Islam; and to these is added confession of the faith ("there is no God save Allah: Mohammed is the apostle of Allah"), and pilgrimage to the Ka'ba shrine at Mecca. But he also gave permission for polygamy and for divorce on very easy terms, likewise for slavery, and he positively encouraged the use of force for the promotion of religion, while he, professing to be the final apostle of God, was by his own confession morally imperfect. This religion, which took over so much of the truth of former revelations, while it missed their fulfilment in Christ, could only be overcome by understanding

its actual strength and weakness, and by setting forth both in teaching and in life the Saviour of mankind as He really is.

There were a very few men in the Middle Ages who saw this truth and tried to carry it into effect. One was St. Francis of Assisi, who went to preach the Gospel to the Sultan of Egypt in 1219. He was courteously treated, but dismissed with the plain intimation that he would not be again admitted. A well-known teacher of that time, Peter the Venerable, had the Koran translated into Latin, and wrote tracts for Mohammedans, in which he reasoned with them kindly; but the one man of the Middle Ages who gave his life to the work of preaching Christ to the Moslem in the spirit of love and with the help of adequate knowledge was "the enlightened teacher," Raymond Lull.

In his youth and early manhood no one would have been thought less likely to do this than Raymond Lull. He belonged to a noble Spanish family living on the island of Majorca off the southern coast of Spain. He became seneschal of the royal court of Majorca and gave his leisure partly to literature, partly to pleasure. He was happily married, yet he lived a dissolute life amid luxurious surroundings. Had he thus continued, Raymond Lull's name would have lived in the history of literature, for his songs and stories were widely read and still survive in early Spanish literature. But God had provided some better thing for him. He was writing one day a sonnet in praise of a lady whom he was pursuing with amorous intentions. Looking up for

inspiration he became conscious of the vision of Christ upon the cross regarding him with tender sorrow. His life was changed. He determined to give himself to the service of the Crucified, and meditating on the ill success of the so-called soldiers of the Cross in vanquishing the infidel, he resolved to assay the conversion of the Moslem with the weapons of love and learning. After the manner of the time Raymond left wife and child and attached himself to the Franciscan order as a tertiary; that is, a lay brother remaining in secular life.

Having taken his resolve Lull carried it out systematically. In the Europe of his day all learned work was done in Latin; but Lull saw clearly that, in order to reach the Moslem, he must master his language, so he set himself to study Arabic, and with this in view he purchased a Moorish slave. When the man found for what purpose his master was using him he turned upon him and blasphemed Christ. Lull forgot himself and struck the man, who then attacked his master and wounded him with his knife. For this he was thrown into prison, and there, dreading vengeance, he committed suicide to Lull's great sorrow. With other help Lull continued his studies for nine years, for it was his intention to qualify also as a teacher of theology and philosophy so that he might inspire others also to take up the work to which his own life was given. And those nine years were a time of prayer not less than of study.

It was inevitable that Lull's studies should be marked by the limitations of an age whose scholar-

ship was utterly ignorant of natural science and moved in a sterile routine of formal logic; but the sincerity and the prayer which went with it made it a real force for good. It was his belief that a method could be found by which all thinking men, and especially Saracen unbelievers, could be irresistibly convinced of the truth of Christianity. In search of this he withdrew to a mountain, and spent eight days in prayer and meditation. Then the conception of a universal system of knowledge flashed upon him, which he entitled "the Universal Art." Having sketched out the plan of his work at home, he spent four months more in solitude and fervent prayer that God would use the conception which He had vouchsafed for the furtherance of His kingdom.

This "Universal Art" formed the groundwork of the lectures on theology and philosophy which Lull presently delivered in the universities of Paris and Montpellier. He speedily became a popular and influential professor, whom his many disciples hailed as *doctor illuminatus*, the Enlightened Teacher. To us, now reading his works, this enthusiasm may seem strange, for the method of the "Universal Art" consisted in the demonstration of spiritual truth by logical formulas with the help of mathematical figures. But his arguments were addressed to opponents who were dominated by the same limited philosophy. The importance of these arguments consists in the fact that they represented an utterly new method of approach to the Moslem by love and persuasion, instead of by force. When in

1296 Lull completed his book on the "Universal Art," he wrote: "On bended knee, and in all humility, we beg that all would adopt this method [of persuasion]; for, of all ways of converting unbelievers and regaining the Holy Land, this is the easiest and the most in accord with Christian love, and far mightier than others." Moreover, Lull did a real service to the cause of Christian truth by combatting, with all his power, the followers of the Moslem philosopher, Averroes, who maintained that what was false in philosophy might be true in theology. Against this, Lull's system, with all its faults, stood for the position that truth is one.

The influence which Lull gained by his writings and lectures he first used in setting forward the training of missionaries for the Saracen world. In 1276 he started at Miramar in Majorca a school for the study of Arabic and geography. Later he urged the university of Paris to found chairs for the teaching of Greek (then almost unknown in Europe), Arabic and the Tātār language; Arabic in order to reach Moslems with the Gospel, and Tātār in order to convert to Christianity a nation then still heathen, but which Lull saw was likely soon to be swallowed up by Islam, as actually happened later. Three times did Lull visit Rome and once Avignon, when the pope had removed there on account of the great schism, and tried to move the head of Western Christendom to take regular measures for the evangelisation of the Moslem. Among other things he advocated the establishment of several monastic colleges for the study of missionary languages. But even though

the crusading spirit was waning the idea of a spiritual conflict could not yet displace it, and the popes did nothing. The council which was held at Vienne in France in 1311 gave Lull a readier hearing, and issued a decree for the establishment of professorships of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldee in various universities, but not much came even of this. Lull's literary activity was enormous. Besides poems and stories in his own vernacular, the Catalan dialect of Spanish, his Latin works on philosophy and theology are over two hundred in number. This combination of authorship in the language of learning and in the tongue of the common people was rare in his or in any age, and it is specially important in missionary work.

All this learning and influence Lull cast unreservedly into the scale for the promotion of his great lifework. His main endeavours were directed to the region of Tunis which at that time had pretty active commercial intercourse with Italy. By the time that he had been lecturing four years in Paris, his eloquent appeals had aroused enthusiasm, if not much imitation; and his resolve in 1291 to embark at Genoa for Tunis as a missionary to the Saracens was hailed with applause. But as the day of embarkation came nearer his courage quailed at the prospect of facing the fierce fanaticism of the Moslem. He dared not embark, and the vessel sailed without him. Lull felt that he was reprobate and sank into a fever which slowly wasted him. His friends would have had him go home, but he felt that the only cure was to go forward and implored them to put him on

the next vessel bound for Tunis. They did so, and before he had arrived at his destination he was well. The Bey, partly through the influence of Christian merchants at Tunis, received him honourably as a Christian philosopher. He was allowed to meet the leading Moslem divines for public discussion, and it would seem that his long study of Arabic had told, for he was able effectively to set forth the Christian doctrine of the divine attributes and other theological topics. Apparently there were no outbursts of bigotry, and Lull's scholarship and saintly character began to produce an effect on his hearers which alarmed the authorities. He was accused to the Bey of blasphemy, and thrown into prison. Tried by the *shari'a*, or Moslem law, he was sentenced to death, but the influence of friends and consideration for Christian powers procured his release, on condition that he should leave Tunis, never to return. Lull was duly embarked on a vessel bound for Italy, but the desire to witness to the Moslem was strong upon him, and he managed to escape to another vessel lying in the harbour. There he remained hidden for months in the hope of landing once more. Meanwhile he wrote one of his philosophical works, but eventually he was forced to return to Naples.

In the year 1300 Lull returned for a time to his own island of Majorca. There he succeeded in converting a considerable number of Moslems, who had remained since a former Mohammedan conquest; and this was the chief permanent result of his efforts as an evangelist. From Majorca he went on to Cyprus, but there the king was in no mind to risk

the stirring up of strife between his Christian and Moslem subjects. The missionary went on as far as Armenia in the hope of promoting a mission to the Tātārs ; but it does not appear that this effort met with success. In 1306 Lull again made for North Africa, but this time his destination was the port of Bugia, 300 miles west of Tunis. Here he went boldly forth into the city square, preaching and discussing publicly. He was soon imprisoned, and for some six months kept in confinement. His captors all this time did their best by arguments and threats and enticements to bring over the zealous Nazarene to Islam. At last the ruler, partly out of respect for him, partly for political reasons, set him free, strictly commanding him to leave the country for ever. But the veteran felt that he must obey God rather than man. He longed to strengthen the converts whom he had made on his first visit to Bugia, and he longed too for the crown of martyrdom. Remembering his first failure, he writes : " Although, O God, I am unworthy of dying for Thee, nevertheless I do not give up the hope of obtaining this holy and precious death." Once again, therefore, at the age of eighty, he left his native island for Bugia in August, 1314. Some months he did actually spend in quiet, exhorting and teaching his hidden disciples. But at length he could not be restrained from coming forth to preach publicly, nor did he conceal his identity. The fanaticism of the mob was roused, and they stoned him to death on the seashore on the 30th June, 1315. His friends were allowed to carry his

body back to Majorca, where it rests in the church of St. Francis at Palma. His death sealed the truth of his words: "He who loves not, lives not; he who lives by the Life, cannot die."

Another six hundred years have passed in the history of Islam since the martyrdom of Raymond Lull. The Arab dominion was replaced by the Turkish, which overthrew the ancient Eastern Empire of Rome when Constantinople fell in 1453. For two centuries after this the Turk was the terror of south-eastern Europe. He ruled over Hungary and part of Poland, and Buda-Pest was for a century and a half the capital of a Turkish province. But since then the Turkish Empire has steadily decayed, followed by the other great Moslem power, the Mughal empire of India, and in our own day we see almost the whole of the Mohammedan world under the rule of "Christian" powers. The consequences of this are momentous.

It means, in the first place, that the barriers placed by force and ignorance between the Christian and the Moslem world in the days of Raymond Lull are rapidly giving way. The preacher of the Gospel is now free to go to three-fourths of the Moslems of the world and to deliver his message to all who wish to hear it. The Old and New Testaments have been translated into all the important languages spoken by Mohammedans, and are widely read by them, and in these same languages a Christian literature is being created. Christian education is widely made use of by Moslems in India, Turkey and other lands. The western science and culture, against which the

Moslem world had barricaded itself for many centuries, is irresistibly overflowing it. The old idea that Moslem religion and Moslem rule must be necessarily linked together is yielding to the force of circumstances, and in the present war we see the Moslems of the world ranged on either side, in accordance with what they regard as their temporal interests, both for and against what was hitherto the leading Moslem power. Christian teaching has modified their ideals of conduct. War for the faith no longer rouses the old enthusiasm; modern teachers maintain that the Koran discountenances polygamy and slavery though it does not actually forbid them. Medical missions have shown the Moslem in a practical way that the Nazarene is animated by no feelings of enmity towards him, while in arts and sciences the Christian is at present far ahead. Many thousands of Moslems in Asia and Africa have entered the Christian church, and not a little Christian literature has been produced by them.

But there is another side to the picture. In lands where the Moslem and the pagan were formerly in deadly conflict, especially in Africa, the peace and commercial intercourse following on the rule of western powers has opened the way for the Moslem, carrying his religion with his trade, to influence his pagan neighbour and bring him into the pale of Islam, and in his readiness to use this opportunity he is an example to us. Islam provides an "easy way" for the animist; he may retain his polygamy, his magic, his blood-feuds; and so the number of converts yearly made from among these peoples by

Islam in all probability largely exceeds the number who accept the Gospel. The modern teachers of Islam, too, though they tone down the moral code of the faith to suit the prejudices of the West, yet speciously maintain that permissive polygamy and divorce are suited to the needs of human nature and avoid the social evils of western lands. Little as this is borne out by the moral and social conditions of India or Egypt, such teachings reinforce the attacks being made from other quarters on the axioms of Christian morality which have hitherto been accepted on all sides. The same class of persons claim that Islam, having rejected the mysteries of the Trinity and the Atonement, and believing in a prophet who did no miracles, shows that there is little or no need of the supernatural in religion. In fine, the present situation reminds us that the Moslem world is affecting the Christian no less really than it did in the days of Raymond Lull, when it loomed so large on the political horizon. And his life reminds us that we have to rely upon the same forces which moved him—the understanding and the love of our opponent. We must never forget that Islam owes its destructive force to the fault of the Christian church which, in its early days, had distorted the image of the Christ. Had Mohammed met with the pure faith of the New Testament and an undivided Church, it may well be that he would have become a propagator instead of an opponent of the Gospel. Our task is to show Christ as He really is, in life and word, to the Moslem world.

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