

THE MEMOIRS *of*  
BLESSED  
RAMON LLULL

THE FIRST MISSIONARY  
MARTYR TO THE MUSLIMS



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Interior image: *Spanish philosopher, layman, scientist, he undertook missionary work in North Africa and Asia Minor © PVDE / Bridgeman Images*

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19th century lithograph of Blessed Ramon Llull.  
The ribbon coming from his mouth reads *Lux mea  
est ipse Dominus* (My light is the Lord Himself).





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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

BLESSED RAMON LLULL<sup>1</sup> (c.1232–1315), known as the *Doctor Illuminatus*, was a Franciscan tertiary and the first missionary martyr to the Muslims. He was not only a fearless and enterprising proclaimer of the Gospel but also a scholar and thinker of amazing originality and energy. During the course of his exciting life, he made numerous missionary expeditions to northern Africa and traveled over Europe soliciting support for both the conversion of the Saracens and the reclaiming of the Holy Land through a new crusade.

Llull's literary output is phenomenal, and a comprehensive catalogue includes well over three hundred books, most of which are of considerable length. Central to these is his *Greater Art* (*Arts Major*), which bears

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the saint is given in a variety of different spellings in both Latin (*Raimundus/Raymundus*) and English (Raymund/Ramon; and Lull/Lully/Llull.) The form used here is that preferred by contemporary scholars.

the subtitle *The Key to All Arts and Sciences and All the Works of the Divine Author*. This fascinating and ambitious work presents a method Llull invented (or rather, received through divine inspiration) for proving or evaluating the truth of any proposition and for obtaining mastery over any field of knowledge. It must be admitted that this work is very difficult to follow and apply, and the saint's own explanations of it are so voluminous (comprising about fifty volumes) that it is not fully or perfectly understood by scholars even to this day.<sup>2</sup>

He wrote on virtually every subject imaginable, including theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physics, medicine, etc.,<sup>3</sup> drawing extensively upon the science and learning of the Arabs whose language he had diligently mastered. His imagination also extended to the writing of novels of a spiritual nature, and his *Blanquerina*, a fictional account of a merchant who is converted

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<sup>2</sup> Including the present translator!

<sup>3</sup> Llull's writings even include works on the production of synthetic gemstones and the mysterious Philosopher's Stone. Such writings reflect that state of science at the time, when there was no distinction between chemistry and alchemy.

and eventually becomes pope, is regarded as the first major work of Catalan literature.

The life of Blessed Ramon Llull presented in this volume is a translation of a remarkable memoir dictated by the saint himself in September 1311 in Paris (just a few years before his death). In some instances, most notably for the description of his final expedition and martyrdom, it has been supplemented by the biography of Blessed Ramon written by Charles de Bovelles, a celebrated French mathematician, philosopher, and theologian of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The life of Ramon Llull is a fast-paced and thrilling narrative, reading almost like an action novel. The fact that it is his own authentic memoir is particularly important. For it contains honest and touching admissions of his own weakness and struggles (including experiences of doubt, depression, and fear) and also unvarnished reports of his many failures and disappointments (such as his lack of success in gaining support for his plans for the conversion of the Saracens and the launching of a new crusade). Nevertheless, the sanctity, determination, and single-mindedness of the saint shine through in inspiring fashion. Though he encountered much discouragement, tribulation, and

peril, he never allowed himself to be swayed from the work to which Christ had called him.

One of the striking features of Llull's memoir is the degree of respect he exhibits for the Saracen peoples, and also the fairness and goodness he encounters from many of them. Although he did not hesitate to point out the errors of their creed, he did so with such wisdom, courtesy, and logic that he won many of them over to Christianity. In his interest in philosophical theology, logic, and science, he found much to discuss with Arabic scholars and thinkers. Even many of those whom he did not succeed in converting came to respect him and his learning, and his life was spared on more than one occasion because of this. On the other hand, the Papal Curia apparently showed minimal or no interest in his efforts or plans to propagate the Faith. It is to be noted that this was during the era of Avignon popes, when the Catholic Church was wrought with many internal problems of its own.

Included also in this volume is a translation of substantial extracts from Llull's *Libellus de Fine* (*Book on the End*),<sup>4</sup> given here the descriptive title of his *Master-*

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<sup>4</sup> "The Latin title of the book, *Libellus de fine*, could be translated in several possible ways as *Booklet/Small Book about the End*!



*plan for the Conversion of Unbelievers and the Reclaiming of the Holy Land.* This work, which has never previously been translated into English, gives a detailed outline of his request made to Pope Clement V and the College of Cardinals for the establishment of monastic academies for the training of future missionaries in foreign languages. It also includes his plans for a new military order to reclaim the Holy Lands from Saracen control.

Llull's Latin is clear and energetic, but often quite distinctive and idiomatic. He freely uses terms and expressions borrowed from both vernacular Catalan and from Arabic. The term *Saracen* has generally been retained, but in some instances (depending upon the context), *Muslim* has been used instead. The term *Tartar* has been rendered as *Mongol*, as it was to that ethnic group that the author was referring. In some instances, sentences have been restructured for the sake of clarity. Texts in square brackets [ . . . ] are editorial additions.

It is the sincere hope of the translator that this work will offer an insight into the adventurous and devout life of Blessed Ramon Llull, a fascinating saint who gave his very life to spread the Gospel that he loved

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*Goal/Purpose* and conveys in the original each of these meaning.

so much. The title given to him of *Doctor Illuminatus* is particularly appropriate, for he shone with a radiant brightness in his intelligence, courage, persistence, and above all, in his ardor for Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

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THE MEMOIR  
OF BLESSED  
RAMON LLULL





## PREFACE

In the name of JESUS!

TO THE HONOR, praise, and love of Jesus Christ alone, Our Lord and God, Ramon, overcome by the entreaties and requests of his beloved friends and fellow religious, has narrated the account of his life which follows, and he has given permission for his narration to be written down.

In this account are to be found details of his conversion, penitence, and the various deeds and adventures of his life to this point.





## CHAPTER I

Ramon's conversion from the vanities of  
the world after a vision of Christ.

RAMON, AN OFFICER of the palace of the king of Majorca, was excessively devoted to the vanities and allurements of this passing world in his youth. Indeed, his favorite occupation was to spend his time writing love songs to various attractive young maidens who happened to catch his eye and his heart. This, indeed, was a very frequent occurrence for him as a young man!

It happened that one night, he was alone in his bedroom sitting by his bed. And he was then engaged (as was his custom) in composing a lyrical ballad to a certain beautiful woman, with whom he was then infatuated. As he mused intently upon coming up with good rhymes for his new love song, he suddenly saw a miraculous vision at his right side. Behold, it was the form

of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, raised up as if He was hanging upon the cross!

Ramon was terrified and overwhelmed by this vision and immediately threw his pen and paper down and hid himself within his bed. He shut his eyes firmly and prayed earnestly to the Lord for mercy.

Rising the next morning, he recollected the vision he had seen in the sober light of day. Surely, thought the youth, it was merely a dream or the product of his heated imagination. In fact, Ramon still burned with ardor for the woman with whom he had fallen in love. Therefore, he quickly put aside all thoughts of matters of religion and dismissed the memory of the vision from his mind.

The next night, he once more applied himself to completing his song for the lovely female who had then captured his heart. And again, Christ appeared to him in a vision, just as had happened on the previous night. This time, Ramon was even more terrified than he had been on the first night. He again leapt into his bed, covering himself with his blankets and shutting his eyes firmly. But once more, when the light of morning appeared, he dismissed the vision as a dream or hallucination and returned to his habitual thoughts of worldly love.



Precisely the same thing happened on the third night, and likewise on the fourth and the fifth. Now, by this stage, Ramon was becoming increasingly uneasy and anxious. By the fifth night, after the vision of the crucified Christ had appeared to him, he could no longer find refuge in sleep but spent the whole night tossing and turning. He considered in his mind the meaning of the vision and the way in which it had interrupted and prevented his completion of his song for the woman with whom he was infatuated. What could it mean? At last, the conclusion dawned upon him. Jesus Christ was calling him to abandon the vanities of the world and the desires of the flesh with which he had been hitherto so occupied and to devote himself wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord.

But still he struggled in his heart, for he recognized that his life to this point had been riddled with impiety, laxity, and vanity. "Perhaps," thought he, "I am unworthy to serve the Lord." The next night, he again passed in sleeplessness and perplexity, pondering this question. But then, illuminated by the grace of the Father of Lights, he reflected upon the infinite mercy, patience, and gentleness of Jesus Christ, which He never failed to show to sinners. And thus Ramon understood

very clearly and certainly that God willed him to renounce the world and to serve the Lord Christ with all his heart for the remainder of his life.