

Blessed Raymond Lull: Dialogue with Jews and Muslims

Just like Francis, Raymond Lull (1232 -1315), a Spaniard close to Francis' way of thinking (his membership in the Secular Franciscan Order is not sure), was dreaming of converting and not subjecting the Saracens. The philosopher Raymond Lull was convinced that the truth of the Christian belief could be proved by logic. He therefore made this appeal: "We must put an end to the material war between Christians and Saracens, because so long as it lasts, neither side can be in those peaceful dialogues which certainly result in the triumph of the Cross" (L. Siekeniac). Way ahead of his time, in his book on "The Pagan and the Three Wise Men", he brought together the representatives of the three great religions so that they should arrive at a common conviction of faith. For this purpose the missionaries were expected to learn Arabic in order to carry on a dialogue with the philosophers and mystics of the Muslims. He himself used this method with great success in discussions with his Jewish neighbours on the Spanish island Mallorca.

Encouraged by his success, Raymond Lull then crissed-crossed the Europe of his day to put forth his ideas, begging bread and speaking to anyone who would listen. He visited kings and universities where he most often met with ridicule. In his biography it says: "Travel-stained, ragged, despised, and lonely, the famous courier held on his way, made a fool gladly for the sake of his Beloved" (L. Siekeniac). On his return to Mallorca, he spent most of his spare time learning Arabic from a Moorish slave. In 1313 he went to Morocco where, at first, he was cordially received. He was still carrying out his philosophical discussions with the Moroccan populace in 1316 when the political situation worsened there. Oblivious to the growing hostility, Raymond Lull, who believed until the end that dialogue was the means to peace, was stoned to death.

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