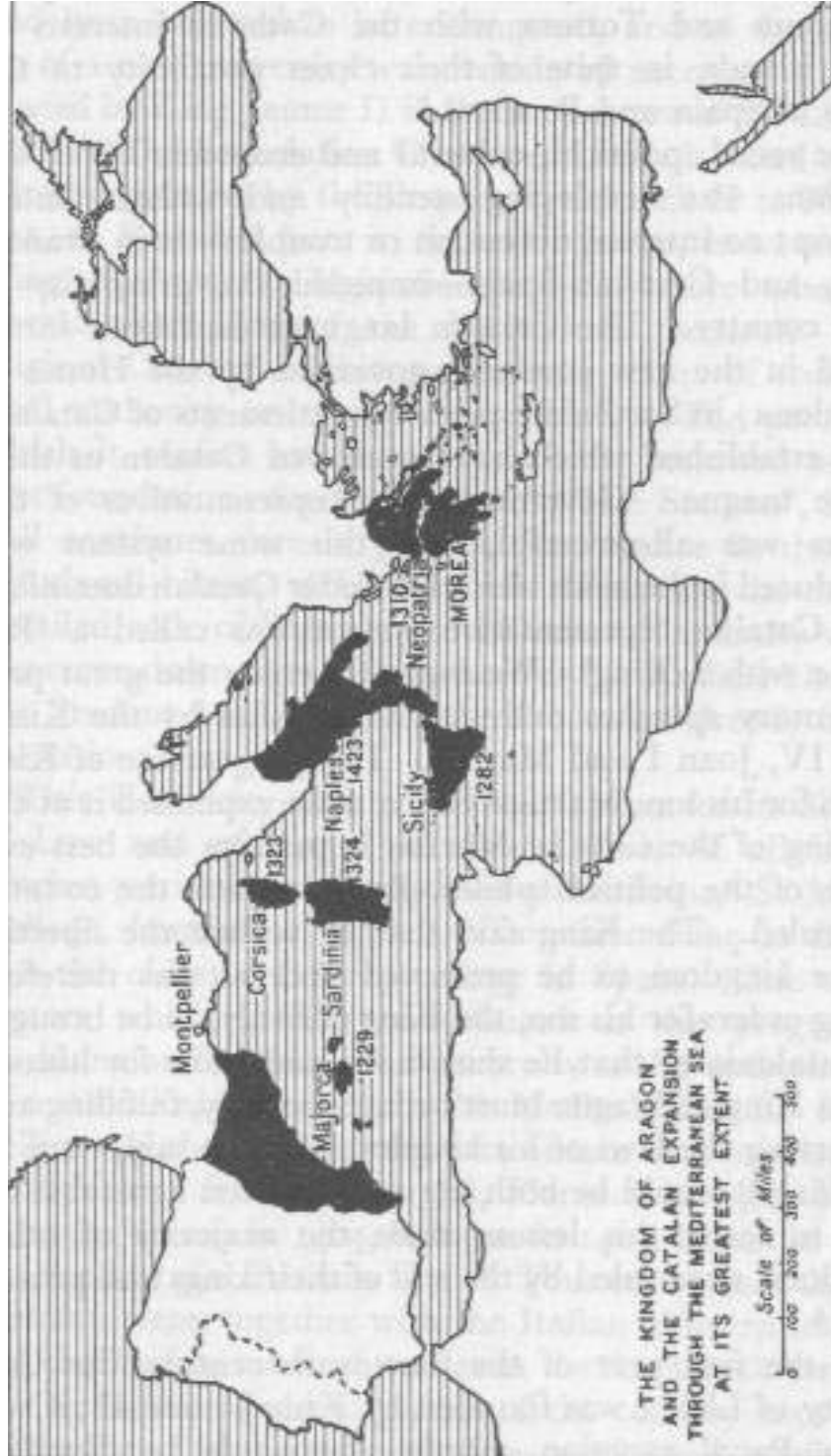


DURING THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY THE POWER OF THE Catalans grew until they were the leading country in the Mediterranean. The flag with the four red stripes was the national emblem of a confederation of peoples which, allowing for the difference of time and experience, may be considered the only precedent of the modern British Commonwealth. Not only the countries inhabited by Catalans—Catalonia, the Balearic Isles, Valencia and part of Aragon, but also Sicily, the duchies of Athens and Neopatria and later Sardinia and Naples, flew the same flag of Catalonia which had previously been the emblem given by the Catalans to Provence. Catalan consulates had been established in fifty-four towns, i.e. among almost all the known nations. Thanks to the great progress in navigation made by the Mediterranean sailors, and particularly by the Catalans, trade flourished and wealth increased; and the adventurous pursuit of new lands and greater commercial benefits stimulated the Catalans to sail even beyond the Mediterranean. Catalan cartography is said to have been the best of that time. The *portulans* of Dulcet (1339) and of Soler (1385) are considered by specialists to be exemplary of the best achievements of their time. There is not sufficient evidence to prove, as Nordenskjöld thinks, 'that the normal *portulano* is Catalan work',¹ but there is no doubt of the excellence of the medieval Catalan map-makers. Jaume Ferrer adventured in 1346 more than five degrees south of Cape Nion, in Western Africa, more than seventy years before the Portuguese reached that point.² In 1342 the Catalans had already sailed to the Canary



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Isles, and in 1368 Pope Urban V entrusted the bishops of Barcelona and Tortosa with the Catholic interests in these islands, in spite of their closer proximity to the coasts of Spain and Portugal.³

The social, political, cultural and economic life of the Catalans was developing steadily and without interruption; no internal dissension or troubles—as in France, Italy, and Castilian-Spain—impeded the prosperity of their country. The Catalan language had been introduced in the new countries governed by the House of Barcelona; in Sardinia especially, settlements of Catalans were established which have preserved Catalan as their native tongue. Government by representatives of the estates was all-powerful, and this same system was introduced in the lands which fell under Catalan dominion. The Catalan representative system was called a 'Republic with a King'. We may still enjoy the great parliamentary speeches delivered in Catalan by the Kings Pere IV, Joan I and Martí I. The programme of King Martí for his son, Martí of Sicily, as he explained it at the meeting of the *Corts* in Maella, is perhaps the best evidence of the political philosophy by which the country was ruled. The King said that he wished the liberties of the kingdom to be preserved and he was therefore giving orders for his son, the King of Sicily, to be brought to Catalonia so that he should see and learn for himself how a King of Aragon must behave, namely, fulfilling and preserving the laws of his kingdom; for, he said, once he was king it would be both less easy and less agreeable for him to learn this lesson, since the majority of other kingdoms were ruled by the will of their kings and princes only.⁴

In the first year of the fourteenth century the University of Lleida was founded by King Jaume II; it was given Papal sanction shortly afterwards by Boniface VIII, the patient of Arnau of Vilanova. The future of

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Montpellier as an intellectual centre for the Catalans had been believed to be endangered, and so the setting up of a new university was considered necessary. It was placed by King Jaume II in the very centre of the Catalan lands.⁵ The Foundation Charter of Lleida is based on the Charter granted by the Emperor Frederick II to Naples, but, as Rashdall puts it, 'in some points, however, the King of Aragon's legislation was far more wise and liberal than that of the Neapolitan monarch. His original Charter exhibits no jealousy either of ecclesiastical authority or of academic liberty. The privileges which it confers are the amplest ever bestowed on the first foundation of a University.'⁶ 'The Statutes', Rashdall continues, 'are of peculiar importance in the constitutional history of Universities. They are the earliest detailed code of Statutes for a Student-University which has come down to us. They show us the Student-liberties, the Student-dominion over the Professors already in full operation.'⁷

This University was to become famous for its Schools of Law and of Arts; but most famous of all in the Iberian peninsula was its School of Medicine,⁸ St. Mary's College, founded in 1372 by Domènec Ponç in Lleida was the oldest university college in Spain. One of the factors which greatly contributed to the progress of medicine and of science in general was the authorization of anatomical dissection in the Medical Schools. Montpellier was the first university to obtain that privilege, in 1366; Venice followed in 1368, Florence in 1388, Lleida in 1394, Vienne in 1404, Bologna in 1405, Padua in 1429, Prague in 1460, Paris in 1478.⁹ Thus once again the two Catalan were, together with the Italian Universities, taking the lead in medical studies in the fourteenth century.

The industrial development of the country kept pace with that of its commerce. Iron works and textile factories reached a high degree of efficiency. Agreements

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with Flanders, Italy, and England on the trade in wool, dyes and textiles were among the bases of material prosperity. At the close of the century and even more in the one following, English wool was brought to Catalonia to be dyed, spun, and woven, and the finished product was despatched back to England.¹⁰ In the following century a State control of all these processes of elaboration was established in order to guarantee that the textile products returned to England were made of the original English wool. The democratic principles on which the Catalans ran their business prevented the cropping-up of political or social troubles, for progress could be incorporated into the machinery of the State without causing violent reactions. But by the end of the fourteenth century some unrest was felt among the peasantry; the feudal structure of the Middle Ages was beginning to crack under the weight of such advanced social conditions. A fundamental readjustment of the rights of the peasants was therefore felt to be necessary at an early date. The land was mainly divided between ecclesiastic and aristocratic lords, and King Joan I requested of Pope Benedict XIII a new settlement of the problem in ecclesiastical land; the latter however refused to take the King's suggestion into consideration. The time had not yet come for a radical change.

In this active world, sailors and soldiers also had an important place. In 1305 after the conquest of Sicily (see p. 45) an expedition of professional soldiers was sent to the help of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II Paleologu, who was unable to check the advance of the Ottomans. These Catalan and Aragonese adventurers repeatedly defeated the Turks and later became the real masters of the country until they settled in Athens. They also founded the Duchy of Morea.¹¹ In 1323 Sardinia was wrested from the Genoese and Pisans was incorporated into the Catalan Confederation.

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This is a concise summary of the world in which lived the Catalan personalities who are the subject of this chapter. They are the two outstanding men of the period: Francesc Eiximenis and Vicenç Ferrer.

FRANCESC EIXIMENIS (1340-1409)

Apart from Lull, Eiximenis proved the most prolific of Catalan writers. In many points he may be compared to Lull: he was a Franciscan, and he also was attracted by the most various of mental activities. But Eiximenis was the more cultivated of the two; by his writings may easily be gauged both his better education as a scholar and the cultural progress recorded during the hundred years which separate him from Lull. On the other hand he lacked the creative genius of Lull.

Eiximenis was born in the northern Catalan city of Girona in 1340, and entered the Order of St. Francis when still very young. Most of his life was spent in the Franciscan friary of Valencia, but because of his outstanding personality he was singled out to fulfill several important political and diplomatic missions. He was on friendly terms with most of the great magnates of his country; to the Marquis of Villena he dedicated in 1385 his *Twelfth Book of the Christian*, better known as the *Regiment de Prínceps*. He was also a friend of Queen Maria of Aragon, at whose request his book *Scala Dei* was written. On the special advice of King Joan's minister, En Pere Dartés, he wrote a *Life of Christ*. Later in life, Eiximenis was made bishop of Elna, near Perpignan, and Patriarch of Jerusalem. His life was a much more sedentary one than Lull's or Vilanova's had been, and this more stable existence gave him more time for reading and meditation than his two predecessors had had. His approach to the problems of life and death was of a more scholarly nature, in contrast to the direct observation

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practised by his precursors. Eiximenis was eloquent and he moved easily among the simplest people of his country, in closer contact than Lull had done; thus he knew the customs, habits, traditions, and feelings of the ordinary fourteenth-century citizen of Catalonia as few other men did. For that reason the ideas of Eiximenis and the subjects which appealed to his intellect are characteristic of the moral and material standards of his people. He had a sensitive mind and, moreover, was a moralist and something of a pedagogue; therefore his ideas may be considered to reflect the best thought of the responsible minds of his country.

In spite of his intimate relations with the Catalan royal family, Eiximenis had some trouble with King Joan I due to his advanced concept of democracy, as expressed in the aforementioned *Regiment de Prínceps*.TM The King asked him on what evidence he had written that 'the noblemen had lost their nobility and become vain and cruel to such a degree that to maintain their appearance they despoil their vassals' and that 'in future there will be no kings, dukes, counts, and other noblemen, and to the end of the world popular justice only will reign'.¹³ But it would be a mistake to call the political ideas of Eiximenis extremist or radical; on the contrary, he was merely putting into words the general feelings of his fellow-countrymen at the close of the fourteenth century, when feudalism was no longer capable of evolution. His concept of social order was based on the idea of individual liberty combined with a well-integrated family nucleus; he was equally opposed to the controlling of society by the amorphous masses and by individual tyranny. He explains his social philosophy in these words: 'Nobody desires to be enslaved nor to deliver himself into the hands of someone else; everyone wishes to be free; therefore, a system must be found by which the liberty of mankind may be preserved.'¹⁴ This system he bases on

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democratic popular government: 'but as the multitudes are unable to rule their country in a direct way, they must elect the best men, in order to prevent the collapse of society'; and 'no elective post should be a permanent one'. On the duties of a king he writes: 'A king who inflicts harm to public interests and who rules against the customs of his country and contrary to those principles which he has sworn to respect at his accession must—unless he corrects his faults—be considered an enemy and as such be dethroned; a new king will have to take his place'; Eiximenis' views on freedom and tyranny are, then, those of our twentieth-century Western minds. He was an individualist in that he subordinated any social arrangement to the preservation of individual liberty and welfare. 'By nature, everyone is free—nature made all men equal until society elected its rulers for its own protection and sound government. Liberty is one of the primary and distinctive virtues existing among men, and no community ever gave absolute governing power to anyone; it was given by pacts and laws only. The ruler who sets liberty aside, who forsakes the noble obligations of his crown, falls into the deepest abyss, for a tyrant is a cancer of society, devoid of any goodness, denying God and law. He is a dagger pointed against public welfare, because the tyrant does not admit in human beings their natural essence from which springs the dignity of man.'¹⁵ These words of Eiximenis were written in 1385; making allowance for the time in which they were written, a likeness may be found with the words of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence of 1776: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.' The *Regiment de Prínceps* was published in Valencia in 1483, shortly after the introduction of printing.

Eiximenis, as a true follower of Arnau de Vilanova, had

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a great love for alchemy and astrology, and like him he took a profound interest in forecasting the future. Of his prophecies one at least was to prove true: his prevision of the armies of the air which one day would fight each other. But these products of Eiximenis' imagination are of little interest for us to-day; it is more important to stress the practical and constructive side of his mind and also those of his ideas which were representative of the Catalans of his time. His phrase 'It is necessary to develop the manual trades in order to increase public wealth', accords with the economic and social importance always allotted to manual work by the Catalans and may be connected with similar ideas already noted in the writings of Lull (see p. 52).

Eiximenis' realism is well expressed by his words 'nothing is good for man if man himself is not good'. Like his predecessors, he focussed all his attention on the enlightenment of the common people of his country; to this purpose he expanded the capacity of his native language for expressing philosophical and scientific concepts and improved Catalan far beyond the range it had covered in the days of Lull and Vilanova. In this respect, we may define Eiximenis as a pedagogue; but primarily he was a writer on political and social problems, as may be seen also by his *El Carro de les Dones* (The Cart of Women), a book which was first printed in Tarragona in 1485, some hundred years after it was written. This work is a most comprehensive review of every kind of problem—moral, religious, and material—which might trouble the women of Eiximenis' times. He treats of the unmarried, the married, and the widowed state; of chastity and education; of the behaviour of women in their conjugal life; and he also gives advice to men on how best to deal with women of the most diverse characters. He explains the specific qualities and—if this may be said of a writer of the fourteenth century—he gives

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the psychological reasons, together with philosophical and theological ones, which make women different from men. He discusses woman's influence in the family circle and postulates that no woman should be illiterate. The importance of this book in the history of Catalan culture was felt more than a century later, when Vives wrote his *Education of Christian Women*, which achieved fame more rapidly than any of his other writings, and within a few years of its publication in 1523 was already translated from the Latin into Spanish, French, English, and Italian. Many of Vives' views were similar to those of Eiximenis; but the influence of the classical-rationalistic ideas of the Renaissance is more strongly felt in Vives.

To Eiximenis we are also indebted for one of the first treatises on social morals—the *Tractat de doctrina compendiosa*—which deals with the moral qualities needed both in private citizens and in public personalities. Torres i Bages has called it a 'pamphlet of useful propaganda for spreading the right social doctrine among a free people which is the master of its own destiny, as the Catalan nation of his day was'.¹⁶

All the other works of Eiximenis, so far as they have been published, are mainly dedicated to religious matters. In his religious ideas Eiximenis was a follower of Lull and of the Franciscan philosophy of love; but in this respect he is less interesting to us now, because he was less original. The extensive *Llibre del Crestià* is an encyclopaedia in which he treats of religion and morals, though many other subjects also crop up in its pages. The first book—published in Valencia in 1483—demonstrates the necessity of the Christian religion and shows 'how God helps men to overcome the obstacles which would impede their loving Him in a natural and rational way', and later he explains at great length how great a source of help the Christian religion is for the common people.

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Together with Vicenç Ferrer, Bonifaci Ferrer, and Bernat Metge, Eiximenis was the link between the Middle Ages and the pre-Renaissance period represented in Catalonia by Ramon de Sibiude and Auziàs March.

VICENÇ FERRER

The brothers Vicenç and Bonifaci Ferrer were contemporaries of Eiximenis. The fame of the first has largely surpassed that of the second; but a prominent place should still be given to Bonifaci, the younger of the brothers, as being, after Wyclif, one of the first translators of the Bible from Latin into a vernacular language. His translation was written in the last years of the fourteenth century and published in 1478, but it has disappeared completely as a result of the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition which had been introduced into Catalonia in 1487.

Bonifaci Ferrer, born in Valencia in 1355, was a jurist and became a professor in Lleida. He was one of the nine delegates from the Catalan-Aragonese Confederation who met at Caspe in 1413 to elect a new king when Martí I died without direct succession. His brother Vicenç, born in Valencia in 1350, was already a Dominican when only nineteen years of age, and spent all his life either among the poorest people or in the Pope's palace in Avignon. When still very young he went to the University of Lleida, and later became professor of physics in Barcelona.

Vicenç Ferrer was a great orator and an imaginative writer, and his influence both on the people and on the ruling classes was such that at Caspe he was able to change the nation's destiny, for his was the deciding voice in the election. In a later chapter we shall come back to this much-discussed point (see chap. VI); here may be emphasized the rather personal contribution of Vicenç

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Ferrer to the evolution of his people's mentality by mentioning only three of his distinctive characteristics. These may also serve as examples of Catalan life at the close of the fourteenth century and during the first part of the fifteenth. In Ferrer's lifetime, the Dominican Head of the Inquisition in Catalonia, Nicolas Eymeric (1320-1399), a remarkable man whose gifts were unfortunately obscured by the most obstinate violence, was intent on using persecution and authoritative personal control in order to stop the traditional attitude of religious tolerance among the Catalans. He searched for and destroyed the works of Lull, as of many others, going to the extreme of inventing a non-existent Papal Bull against the Lullian doctrines.¹⁷ However, his attempt failed; he was exiled from his country by King Pere IV and took refuge at the Papal court at Avignon, from where he returned to Catalonia when the king died, only to start again his intrigues—for which King Joan I called him a '*diabolicus et depravatus homo*'.¹⁸ The municipal authorities of Barcelona were the most active against him, together with the theologians of Valencia and Majorca; and Eymeric ended his life in complete discredit and forsaken by everyone. It is important to mention this first attempt at introducing religious persecution, obscurantism and intolerance among the Catalans, because its complete failure serves as conclusive evidence of the strength of the democratic structure of the country. In 1391, the violent preaching of an archdeacon of Ecija (in Andalucía, in Southern Spain), called Hernando Martínez, who together with some agitators came to Catalonia after causing great disturbance in Seville, stirred up an alarming revolt, during which a great number of Jews were murdered and the Jewish quarter was burnt.¹⁹ The quenching of these disorders again gives evidence of the liberalism and determination of the popular authorities and of the royal

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policy in their defence of freedom of religious thought. Twenty-six persons responsible for the revolt were hanged, and the responsible propagandists were expelled from the country. The traditional conception the authorities had of their duties made them rely on reason rather than force even in the religious sphere; and such was the case with Vicenç Ferrer and his fellow friars, who summoned public meetings in the town of Tortosa where a great number of Jews met Christian theologians. After sixty-nine disputations all the Jews but two were converted,²⁰ this procedure was indeed in accordance with the liberal attitude and regard of human life upheld by the Order of Mercy, Penyafort, Lull, Vilanova, and Eiximenis. It reflects a spirit of tolerance and respect for the convictions of others which were not common in Europe in the time of Vicenç Ferrer, as indeed in some places not over-conspicuous even to-day.²¹

Vicenç Ferrer extended the area of his preaching throughout the whole of Spain and France and a great part of Italy. In his sermons in Toledo—in Spain—he rebuked the custom of that region of considering the descendants of converted Jews as vile and despicable, and he requested the authorities to forbid the use of the word *marranos* (pigs) to denote converted Jews. By Ferrer's most able tongue, Catalan was preached all over south-western Europe. His power of convincing eloquence was so great, and the likeness of Catalan and Provençal still so close in his day, that people who ignored this similitude thought it must be by a miracle that the sermons of Ferrer were understood without difficulty by those various peoples extending from the north of Italy to the south of France. When in 1455 Pope Calixtus III, a native of Valencia, canonized Ferrer, the fact that his speech had been understood by peoples of different nationalities was set forth as a relevant prodigy. Evidently, in the middle of the fifteenth

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century it was forgotten that from the town of Elche in the south of the Spanish peninsula to Nice, the same language was spoken in former days, just as these parts were inhabited by people with a common biological past. The printed sermons of Vicenç Ferrer show how rich and expressive was his Catalan and how great his ability as a polemical writer.

Another of Ferrer's characteristics, which is likewise to be found in other men of his time and country, is his preoccupation with the welfare of the people, particularly his care for the sick and afflicted. To such men as he was due the foundation of the first lunatic asylum. A friar of the Order of Mercy named Joan Gilabert Jofre, with the assistance of thirteen other persons, founded the *Hospital dels Folls* (hospital for lunatics) in the town of Valencia, in 1409. Ferrer used his personal influence to realize the project. It is interesting to remember what mental diseases were believed to be in the time of Ferrer and Jofre. Madmen were thought to be 'possessed' by the Devil, and the orthodox treatment was to beat the poor patients and frequently to burn them alive as witches.²² It is comforting to find that, at last, mental patients were considered to be ordinary persons suffering from a disease; it was among the Catalans that the first step was taken to overcome that brutal stage of human evolution, as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century. To quote the great French psychiatrist René Semelaigne: 'The first who seem to have been interested in these unfortunates are the Brothers of Mercy, an order founded in the thirteenth century with the object of ransoming Christians who fell into the hands of infidels: *Ut catenas et gravia eorum vincula dirumpere digneris, ut captivos omni solatio et medicina destitutos sanare digneris, te rogamus.*'²³ It is not unlikely that the founding of the first mental asylum by the friends of Ferrer answered a public need and perhaps a public demand,

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owing to the old traditions of the country as stressed by the Order of Mercy from its foundation almost two hundred years before.

To Vicenç Ferrer the University of Valencia also owes its existence. The first *Studis Generals* date from the time of the conquest of Valencia by King Jaume I in 1238. But it was by Ferrer's influence that the various schools of Valencia were joined into a single body as a University.

Another distinctive mark of Ferrer's intellect was his hatred of religious superstition and over-zealous fanaticism; his *Treaty on the Spiritual Life* is a good exposition of his realistic views on supernatural life and a warning against superstition. The appreciation of this book by Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros, the great statesman of the days of the Catholic Kings, will be mentioned later.

In these outstanding qualities Ferrer's personality may be compared to his great fellow-countrymen, from Olaguer to Eiximenis; and yet, his is the responsibility that the creative power of his people was doomed to barrenness and that the wealth and happiness of the Catalans declined. At the most decisive moment of their history, Ferrer considered it more important to solve a problem concerning only the Church than to preserve his country from being ruled by a mentality which was in many ways opposed to its own. From Ferrer down to our own times, the greatest efforts of the Catalans have been diverted from their natural tendency—which is towards creative progress—to a continuous struggle for their own existence, first as a people and later as individuals. We shall return to this subject in due course.

The greatest writer of Catalan prose in its classical period, Bernat Metge, was born in the same year as Vicenç Ferrer, 1350. Metge grew up to be an official of the royal house and served as secretary to Kings Joan I and Martí I. He came strongly under the influence of

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Petrarch, and by his writings set Catalan literature on the path leading to the Renaissance. In 1397, he was imprisoned on a charge of administrative irregularities; but this proved ill-founded and he was released. During this imprisonment he wrote his masterpiece *Lo Somni* (The Dream), which is considered the best Catalan literary product of the Middle Ages. It shows the Catalan tongue at the climax of its maturity, comparable to the Italian of the time and more developed than either French or Spanish in the fourteenth century. To find in either of these latter languages the maturity of expression of Metge's prose, we should have to wait till the sixteenth century—the time of Rabelais' *Pantagruel* and Rojas' *La Celestina*.

In Metge, as in many other Catalan writers of later times, continuous intercourse with Italian authors created an intimate contact between the two cultural movements, Italian and Catalan, during the pre-Renaissance period. He may thus rank as the last of the mediaevalists and the first of the pre-Renaissance writers. The philosophy of Metge is the common one of his country: he repeatedly stresses ideas such as 'The consent of all people has the same value as the law of nature'.²⁴ Like most Catalan thinkers, he stresses the importance of commonsense; even in psychology, his reasons in proof of the immortality of the soul are based on the general belief held by his people.

At the close of the Middle Ages the soil was thus prepared among the Catalans for a great florescence to coincide with the Renaissance, which was shortly to be ushered in by those three great events of history, the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks, the invention of printing, and the discovery of America. But just at that moment, the unexpected occurred, and the Catalan people found itself suddenly relegated, for the time being, to a secondary place in the world of progress.