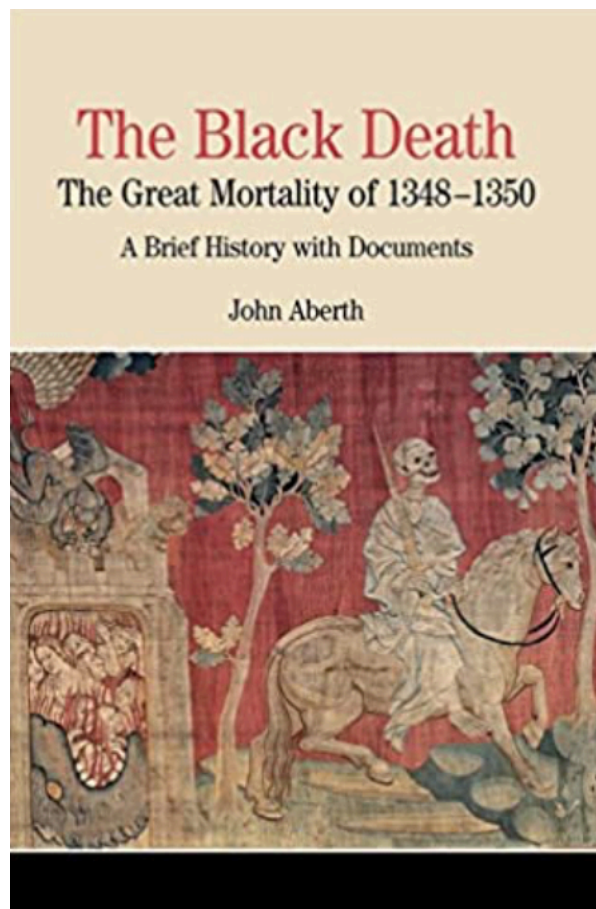


Primary Source

This is the book to cite:



Document 14

THE BLACK DEATH: THE GREAT MORTALITY OF 1348-1350: A BRIEF HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTS ...

14

GUI DE CHAULIAC

Great Surgery

1363

Heinrich Haeser, *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Medizin und der epidemischen Krankheiten*, 2 vols. (Jena: Mauke, 1853–65), 2:175–76.

Gui de Chauliac was one of the leading medical authorities of his day. Physician to three popes, Clement VI (1342–1352), Innocent VI (1352–1362), and Urban V (1362–1370), Chauliac studied medicine at the University of Toulouse and then at Montpellier and Bologna. Around 1363 he wrote what became a widely read medical textbook, Inventarium seu Collectorium in parte Cyrurgicali Medicine (A Partial Inventory or Collection of Surgical Medicine), often known simply as the Grande Chirurgie, or Great Surgery. Although Chauliac describes both the plagues of 1348 and 1360–61 in this work, only the former description is included here. Chauliac was in an excellent position to observe the Black Death's symptoms; he himself contracted the bubonic form of the disease during the first outbreak. He died at Lyon in 1368.

Therefore the said mortality began for us [in Avignon] in the month of January [1348], and lasted seven months. And it took two forms: the first lasted two months, accompanied by continuous fever and a spitting up of blood, and one died within three days. The second lasted the rest of the time, also accompanied by continuous fever and by apostemes [tumors] and antraci [carbuncles] on the external parts, principally under the armpits and in the groin, and one died within five days. And the mortality was so contagious, especially in those who were spitting up blood, that not only did one get it from another by living together, but also by looking at each other,^{*} to the point that people died without servants and were buried without priests. The father did not visit his son, nor the son his father; charity was dead, hope crushed.

And I call the mortality great because it overtook the whole world, or nearly all of it. But it began in the East, and like shooting arrows it passed through us on its way west. And it was so great, that it hardly left a quarter of the human race. And it was unheard of, because we only read of the mortality in the cities of Thrace and Palestine in the *Book of Epidemics*[†] written in the time of Hippocrates [ca. 460–377 BCE], and of the mortality that afflicted the Roman subjects

in the book, *De Epidemia*,[±] in the time of Galen [ca. 129–216 CE], and of the mortality in the city of Rome in the time of [Pope] Gregory [the Great, 590–604 CE]. And none was as great as this one, because those others only attacked a single region, [but] this the whole world. Those others were curable in some way; this in none. For the mortality rendered doctors useless and put them to shame, because they did not dare visit the sick out of fear of being infected. And when they did visit them, they could do little for them and were paid nothing. For all who got sick died, except for a few toward the end, who escaped when their buboes ripened.

Many were uncertain about the cause of this great mortality. In some places, they believed that the Jews had poisoned the world, and so they killed them. In some other areas, that it was a deformity of the poor, and they chased them out; in others, that it was the nobles, and so they [the nobles] hesitated to go out into the world. Finally, it reached the point where guards were posted in cities and towns, and they permitted no one to enter, unless he was well known. And if they found anyone with powders or unguents, they made him swallow them, fearing that these might be poisons.

Regardless of what people might say, the truth was that the cause of this mortality was twofold: one, a universal active cause, the other a particular, passive one. . . . [Chauliac describes the universal cause as the conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars on March 24, 1345.] For [the conjunction] made such an impression upon the air and the other elements that, just as a magnet moves iron, so it changed the thick humors [of the body] into something scorched and venomous, and shepherded them into the interior. And it made apostemes, from which followed continuous fevers and a spitting up of blood in the early stages, when the corrupted blood was strong and disturbed the body's constitution. And afterwards, when the constitution was in remission, it was not so greatly disturbed, and it expelled [the corrupt humors] as well as it could to the external parts, especially to the armpits and the groin. And this caused buboes and other apostemes, so that the exterior apostemes were the effect of interior apostemes. The particular, passive cause was the body's disposition, such as if it was full of evil humors, if it was weak, or bunged up [obstructed]. And for this reason it was the common people, the laborers, and those who lived evil lives who died.

Concerning cures, there was an effort [to find] a

*The location of this city is unknown and the reference to plague here is rather mysterious. Avenzoar, or Ibn Zuhr (1090–1162), who was a rival of Avicenna’s, also mentions the plague of Crannon.

†This represents a significant change from Gentile’s position in his first, long *Consilium*: “This said plague seems to grow ever more frightening, although in its evil [malicie] it is still not so great as that of the city of Crannon which Avenzoar relates in his *Liber Theizir*, or which Thucydides or Galen wrote about.”

‡Phlebotomy is the medical term for bleeding, a practice meant to restore the balance of bodily humors.

*A compound of elements used since ancient times and often composed of dozens of ingredients, the most important of which was snakeskin, thought to neutralize the deadly poison inside a sick person. Foligno was a strong advocate of theriac as a cure of plague, because he considered the cause of the disease to be poisonous rather than humoral in nature.

*Armenian bole is a form of clay high in iron oxide. Galen prescribed it, and it was well known among medical authorities in the Middle East. It was both taken internally and applied externally as a treatment for the buboe swellings.

*Agramont’s hometown of Lérida violated this principle; he describes it as “a town which suffers from many maladies . . . although it is on a height and exposed to winds . . . and open to the rising sun,” all of which should have cleansed it of the pestilential air. He resolves this dilemma by claiming that diseases in Lérida are “due not to bad air, but to an excessive regimen of fruits and viands, because of their abundance,” an ironic viewpoint given his dietary prescriptions.

*Obviously, this statement goes against Khātima’s own observation and experience of the disease. However, he is obliged to maintain it on Islamic grounds, that a plague can only come from God and represents a martyrdom for Muslim believers. This issue is explored in greater detail in chapter 5.

*Bathing was much more common in the Muslim world than in the

Christian West. Whereas Islam stresses the importance of purification, medieval Christians associated bathing with immorality in general and with houses of prostitution in particular. The medical faculty of the University of Paris, for example, advised people to avoid hot-water baths, except just prior to bleeding when it could help loosen up bad humors and so expel them.

*Not all medieval doctors practiced such extreme bloodletting, and Khātima himself advised against extreme bloodletting in the case of those already infected with plague.

*Evidently, in these cases the patient’s artery was severed, a frequent hazard of unskilled bloodletting.

*A treatise by an anonymous medical practitioner of Montpellier was devoted to explaining plague contagion by sight. According to this work, written in May 1349, the plague can kill “almost instantly,” as “when an aerial spirit leaves the eyes of a sick person and strikes the eyes of a healthy man attending him, especially when he is looking at the sick man in his death throes.” Euclid’s theory of mirrors generating fire, and the mythical basilisk and Aristotle’s Venomous Virgin, both of which can kill on sight, are cited in support of sight contagion.

†This was a collection of case studies probably compiled by a variety of authors who traveled throughout the Greek world. Their main explanation for diseases was bad air, an idea known as the miasmatic theory.

‡This was Galen’s commentary on the Hippocratic *Epidemics*, one of many commentaries that he wrote on Hippocrates.

*Chauliac’s decision to stay and tend to the sick in Avignon was not necessarily a choice on his part. According to the medieval biography of Pope Clement VI, Clement “ordered certain doctors and others who ministered to his necessities in life to visit and succor the poor” during the mortality.

4

Societal and Economic Impact

The Black Death severed, at least temporarily, many of the bonds and norms that held medieval society together. Observers movingly describe mass burial scenes (see [Figure 1](#)), and the heart-wrenching abandonment of even close family members is described by chronicler after chronicler, including Boccaccio in Florence ([Document 16](#)) and Agnolo di Tura in Siena ([Document 17](#)). There was a perceived moral laxity in the wake of the Black Death, when a cathartic release of emotions supposedly occurred that swept away a host of social and economic restraints. Any attempts to stem the tide, such as the mandates against concubinage, swearing, and dice-making tried by the city aldermen of Tournai, were short lived.¹

However, one might argue that such lamentations on the collapse of social mores and customs are literary conventions rather than objective observations of reality. Even before the advent of the Black Death,

Jean de Venette and Gilles li Muisis wrote of a social slackening among the inhabitants of Paris and Tournai, respectively.² By contrast, a truly unique account of the social effects of the disease is provided by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarch, who mourns the loss of friends and muses on the apparent indifference of an overvengeful God to the travails of humanity during the Black Death ([Document 15](#)). Although Petrarch pulls back from the brink of modern atheistic, or even agnostic, despair, his humanistic attempt to approach the disease from an individualistic perspective represents a departure from traditional historical writing. Along with his friend Boccaccio, Petrarch perhaps perceived the need for a new kind of history to chronicle an event on the scale of the Black Death.³ Petrarch's subjective approach, which challenged the old assumptions, may well be more trustworthy as a social record of the plague than the common denunciations of moral laxity in response to calamity.

Historians have been rather more confident of the difficult economic realities caused by the Black Death. Typically, chroniclers like Henry Knighton, a canon of Leicester Abbey in England who was writing during the 1390s, testified that the excessive mortality created

a shortage of both producers and consumers. The overall effect of this shortage was that wages of agricultural laborers went up and prices of goods went down, resulting in higher living standards for serfs but lower manorial incomes for their lords.⁴ But Knighton, like the Muslim chronicler al-Maqrīzī, who recorded a similar set of economic responses in Egypt ([Document 19](#)), was writing quite some time after the Black Death had first struck Europe in 1348. His impressions, therefore, may be colored by the cumulative effect of successive plague strikes.



Figure 1. Survivors burying the dead in coffins, as mandated by a city ordinance, during the Black Death at Tournai in Flanders in 1349. From a late medieval manuscript copy of the *Chronicle* of Gilles li Muisis. Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium/Bridgeman Art

Library.

Perhaps better medieval evidence exists in the labor legislation passed during or immediately after the Black Death by the city councils, monarchies, and representative assemblies of Italy, England, France, and Spain ([Documents 20](#) and [21](#)). These documents reveal that wages were indeed rising because of the Black Death, but so were prices, which the English ordinance of 1349 tried to keep “reasonable.” English manorial records confirm that prices remained high until the 1370s, which would have negated the buying power of higher wages; peasant laborers, however, may have been compensated in other, “hidden” ways that substantially raised their standards of living, such as increased leisure time and freedom of employment, as suggested by labor laws that complained that peasants were idle.⁵ Labor laws specified that lords who granted higher wages were to be punished alongside the serfs who accepted them, which implies that in some cases the new market forces created by the Black Death were so irresistible that only more draconian measures could halt them. But, in fact, the evidence for the enforcement of labor laws, almost exclusively consisting of English court rolls ([Document 22](#)), is contradictory. The “hundreds of thousands” of

cases of laborers that came before the justices each year may either be evidence of “zealous” enforcement or of rampant evasion.⁶ There was thus both a concerted effort by peasants to evade the new laws and an equally determined effort by the English gentry, the dominant presence in the Commons and the local courts, to make the laws stick (provided those being prosecuted were not of their class). Collectively, these labor laws represent a conservative reaction on the part of Europe’s ruling elite: a bold attempt to turn back the economic clock to a time before the Black Death.

Europeans’ response to the Black Death therefore had almost as great an impact on late medieval society and economy as the devastating mortality of the plague itself. But the long-term social and economic effects of the Black Death are contradictory and extremely complex. Scholars have focused much attention on the plague’s impact upon family life throughout the rest of the Middle Ages, with attempts to quantify changes in marriage and fertility rates. Although the mean age at marriage rose in some parts of England in the aftermath of the Black Death, indicating that women deliberately delayed marrying and having children in order to take advantage of new

employment opportunities, this measure behaves very differently in other places in Europe, particularly in Mediterranean regions, where it drops, seemingly in response to high mortality.

The Black Death also inaugurated a revolution in the medieval manorial economy. The variety of peasants’ experience with labor services and laws created tensions in society that finally erupted in the English Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.⁷ The death knell of the medieval manorial economy, with a complete transition from serfdom to a rent-paying class, which the English rebels demanded in 1381, finally came to pass in the fifteenth century as the result of repeated plague strikes that kept Europe’s population in decline, or at least in stagnation, until 1450. Emancipation, higher wages and living standards, greater landholdings, and the labor-saving devices that became available as a result of the economic necessities imposed by the Black Death may indeed have dramatically improved the lives of peasant survivors. On the other hand, agricultural laborers in the Muslim lands of Egypt and Syria do not seem to have enjoyed these benefits.⁸ It is also important to not forget the very human cost of the new world created by the Black Death. In the words of one

economic historian of the plague: “Clearly an age which relies for its prosperity upon large numbers of its members dying at an early age, and suffering the frequent losses of spouses, children, relatives, friends and colleagues, is somewhat less than golden.”⁹ Especially in an “age of faith,” one must measure quality of life in more than just material terms.

NOTES

¹*Recueil des chroniques de Flandre*, ed. Joseph-Jean de Smet, 4 vols. (Brussels, 1837–65), 2:379–81.

²*Chronique Latin de Guillaume de Nangis de 1113 à 1300, avec les continuations de cette chronique*, ed. Hercule Géraud, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard et cie, 1843), 2:185; *Recueil des chroniques de Flandre*, 2:346–47.

³Timothy Kircher, “Anxiety and Freedom in Boccaccio’s History of the Plague of 1348,” *Letteratura Italiana antica*, 3 (2002): 325–57.

⁴Henry Knighton, *Chronicon*, ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby, 2 vols. (Rolls Series, 92, 1889–95), 2:62.

⁵D. L. Farmer, “Crop Yields, Prices, and Wages in Medieval England,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, n.s. 6 (1983): 117–55; idem, “Prices and Wages, 1350–1500,” in *Agrarian History of England and Wales: Vol. 3, 1348–1500*, ed. E. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 431–525; John Hatcher, “England in the Aftermath of the Black Death,” *Past and Present*, 144 (1994): 3–35.

⁶Simon A. C. Penn and Christopher Dyer, “Wages and Earnings in Late Medieval England: Evidence from the Enforcement of the Labour Laws,” *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 43 (1990): 359; E. B. Fryde,

Peasants and Landlords in Later Medieval England (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 35.

⁷L. R. Poos, “The Social Context of Statute of Labourers Enforcement,” *Law and History Review*, 1 (1983): 27–52; Christopher Dyer, “The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381,” in *The English Rising of 1381*, ed. R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9–42.

⁸Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 281–83.

⁹John Hatcher, *Plague, Population, and the English Economy, 1348–1530* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 73.

15

FRANCESCO PETRARCH

Letters on Familiar Matters

May 1349

Francesco Petrarch, *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus et Variarum*, ed. Giuseppe Fracassetti, 3 vols. (Florence: Typis Felicis le Monnier, 1859–63), 1:438–40, 442–44.

One of the giants of early Renaissance Florence, Francesco Petrarch, born in Arezzo in 1304, helped define the emerging spirit of humanism, an intellectual movement that looked back to classical antiquity as the pinnacle of civilization and viewed human endeavors as a fit subject for study. Along with Dante, Villani, and his friend, Boccaccio,

Petrarch helped create the first vernacular literature in Italian, although he also wrote extensively in Latin. Yet Petrarch was also firmly rooted in the events of his times, including the Black Death. The following selection is from a letter he wrote from Parma in May 1349 to his friend in Avignon, Louis Sanctus, whom he nicknamed "Socrates." Petrarch laments the effect that the plague is having on human friendship. The letter is part of a collection, Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus (Letters on Familiar Matters), that he dedicated to Sanctus. Petrarch died in 1374.

If you wish to bemoan the fates of all mortal men, one breast and one tongue will not suffice for you. You have taken on an enormous, miserable, and irksome subject, useless, inexplicable. Tears must be sought from another source: Indeed, they are always springing up out of some recent and unending cause of sorrow, and the two eyes, already worn out, exhausted and dried up, can pour out only a little melancholy moisture. What therefore can you do to forget, except spread the poison, proffered as medicine, to your friends, not being content with your own misery and sickness, in which you keep knowing and wishing that you would fall? . . .

In the year 1348, one that I deplore, we were

deprived not only of our friends but of peoples throughout all the world. If anyone escaped, the following year mowed down others, and whatever had been passed over by the storm, is then pursued by a deadly scythe. When will posterity believe this to have been a time in which nearly the whole world—not just this or that part of the earth—is bereft of inhabitants, without there having occurred a conflagration in the heavens or on land, without wars or other visible disasters? When at any time has such a thing been seen or spoken of? Has what happened in these years ever been read about: empty houses, derelict cities, ruined estates, fields strewn with cadavers, a horrible and vast solitude encompassing the whole world? Consult historians, they are silent; ask physicians, they are stupefied; seek the answer from philosophers, they shrug their shoulders, furrow their brows, and with fingers pressed against their lips, bid you be silent. Will posterity believe these things, when we who have seen it can scarcely believe it, thinking it a dream except that we are awake and see these things with our open eyes, and when we know that what we bemoan is absolutely true, as in a city fully lit by the torches of its funerals we head for home, finding our longed-for security in its emptiness? O happy people of the next

generation, who will not know these miseries and most probably will reckon our testimony as a fable!

I do not deny that we deserve these misfortunes and even worse; but our forebears deserved them too, and may posterity not deserve them in turn. Therefore why is it, most Just of judges, why is it that the seething rage of Your vengeance has fallen so particularly hard upon our times? Why is it that in times when guilt was not lacking, the lessons of punishment were withheld? While all have sinned alike, we alone bear the lash. We alone, I say; for I hear it affirmed that compared to the number we receive at present, the lashes inflicted upon all men after that most famous ark [of Noah] had borne the remnants of humanity upon the formless sea would have been a delight, a joke, and a respite. Even when it behooves us to wage countless wars against these evils, in the course of which many kinds of remedies are tried, in the end it is not permitted to men to at least die with dignity. For it is a rare solace of death to die well. No remedy is exactly right, and there is no solace. And to the accumulated disaster is added not knowing the causes and origin of the evil. For neither ignorance nor even the plague itself is more hateful than the nonsense and tall tales of certain men, who profess to know everything but in fact know

nothing. Nonetheless their mouths, although accustomed to lying, are in the end silent, and although at first impudence had opened them out of habit, at last they are closed by stupidity.

But I return to my inquiry: Whether for those making a long journey it happens that one part of the way is tiring, another easy. For so it is with us that Your forbearance, God, has slackened little by little toward human crimes, and under the heavy burden of Your yoke, the Omnipotent now must set down His provisions, and You, the best traveler, no longer able to support us, throw us onto Your back and in Your anger avert Your eyes of mercy from us. What if we are making atonement not just for our crimes, but also for those of our fathers, whether these be worse I do not know, but certainly they were more pitiable. Or could it be perhaps that certain great truths are to be held suspect, that God does not care for mortal men? But let us drive these foolish thoughts from our minds. If God did not care for us, there would be nothing left to sustain us. For who will provide these necessities for us, if they are not attributed to God, but to nature; what feeling will be left to us, why give ourselves over to the quest for truth? Since Seneca^{*} calls most ungrateful all those who neglect their duties to God,

under a different name, are they not denying His due of heavenly majesty by impiously mocking Him? Surely You do care for us and our affairs, God. But there is some reason, hidden and unknown to us, why down through all the ages we, who are the most dignified of Your creatures, seem to be the ones most severely punished. Not that Your justice is less because it is concealed, for the depth of Your judgments is inscrutable and inaccessible to human senses. Therefore either we are truly the worst of all beings, which I would like to deny but dare not, or God is reserving us for some future good the more He is exercising and purging us from these present evils, or there is something there that we are altogether unable to conceive. In any case, whatever the reasons may be and however many are hidden from us, the results are most evident. . . .

Where are our sweet friends now? Where are the beloved faces? Where are the agreeable words, where the soothing and pleasant conversation? What lightning bolt devoured them? What earthquake overturned them? What storm submerged them? What abyss swallowed them? Once we were all together, now we are quite alone. We should make new friends, but where or with whom, when the human race is nearly

extinct, and it is predicted that the end of the world is soon at hand? We are—why pretend? —truly alone. . . . You see that our great band of friends is reduced in number. And behold, even as we speak we too are drifting apart, and we vanish like shadows. And in the same moment that one hears that the other is gone, he is soon following in his footsteps. . . .

Never does it seem to me to be a sadder occasion than when one inquires with trepidation after a friend. How goes it? How is our friend doing? But as soon as he has heard you say “farewell,” he is filled with dread and very quickly his face is wet with tears. And indeed he —I cannot say this without shedding many tears, and I would shed many now when I say this, except that with all the evil events that have happened these eyes have become exhausted and I would rather save all the rest of my tears, if there are any left, for when they are needed —I say that he is suddenly seized by this pestilential disease, which is now ravaging the world, toward evening, after a dinner with friends and that at sundown he goes to bed, after having digested so much from our conversation in the remembrance of our friendship and our exploits together. He passes that night among his last sorrows in a greatly terrified frame of mind. But in the morning he succumbs to a

quick death, and as if this misfortune were not enough, within three days, his sons and all his family follow him.

6

The Psyche of Hysteria

The flagellant movement and the pogroms against the Jews, although not always uncontrolled, were certainly hysterical—highly emotional—responses to the Black Death. Flagellation, or whipping—performed for a variety of motives including penitential atonement, mortification of the flesh, imitation of Christ, or divine supplication—was not unusual in the Middle Ages. As a punishment for sinful behavior it appears from an early date in Christianity and was included in the first monastic rules from the fourth to the sixth centuries. Self-inflicted flagellation became common in Christian observance during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In 1260, there arose in Perugia, Italy, a public, collective, processional movement of voluntary flagellants, the forerunner of the movement during the Black Death.¹

Scapegoating of minority groups seems to be a common failing in times of crisis, and medieval Christian society during the Black Death was no exception. The pogroms from 1348 to 1350 took place

within the context of centuries of assaults and “blood libels” directed against the Jews by Christians. Beginning in the eleventh century, Jews were attacked as “Christ killers” who had betrayed Jesus Christ to Pontius Pilate and rejected him as the messiah.² Nevertheless, by the fourteenth century there was also a long tradition whereby Church fathers argued for toleration of Jews, because their conversion at the end of time would serve as witness to the final triumph of Christianity.³ At the same time, the economic position of many Jewish communities in Europe was being steadily undermined. Since the eleventh century, Jews had been ousted from farming and various crafts and trades by Christian regulations and competition. By the middle of the twelfth century they were being stereotyped as money lenders; usury—the lending of money at exorbitant interest rates—was technically off-limits to Christians by canon law and became practically the only profession left open to them.⁴ Not even the specific accusation of well poisoning leveled against the Jews in 1348 was unprecedented. In France and Spain, both Jews and Muslims were implicated in the so-called “lepers’ plot” of 1321, which charged that members of both groups had induced lepers to poison Christians.⁵ It may be no accident that

the first attacks upon the Jews during the Black Death took place in the same countries.

THE FLAGELLANTS

The flagellant movement, which got its name from the *flagella*, or whips used in penitential ceremonies, revived in response to the arrival of the Black Death in 1348 (see [Figure 2](#)). The movement seems to have begun in late 1348 in Austria or Hungary, and progressed from there to Thuringia and Franconia in central Germany by the spring of 1349, when scholars think it entered its most radical phase. It came to south Germany and the Rhineland that summer and continued to the Low Countries, where it persisted until the autumn of 1349, when Pope Clement VI and King Philip VI of France determined to suppress it.⁶

Given the prevalent Christian belief that the plague was a righteous scourge sent down by God in retribution for man's wickedness and sin ([chapter 5](#)), it was perfectly logical for people to want to try to avert or atone for God's extraordinary wrath by performing an extraordinary penance. During the movement of 1348 to 1350, flagellation was governed by numerous rituals and protocols, but some medieval eyewitnesses, such as Heinrich of Herford ([Document 31](#)) and Gilles

li Muisis ([Document 33](#)) testify to the exceptional emotion, even hysteria, the ceremonies could arouse in both participants and spectators.

From the very beginning, it seems, opinion was divided about the flagellants, a point that comes through clearly despite the fact that nearly all medieval chroniclers, members of the Church establishment whom the flagellants allegedly opposed, were hostile observers. Some chroniclers hint at unorthodoxy among the flagellants. Herford, Fritsche Closener, and Muisis ([Documents 31](#), [32](#), and [33](#)) each point to various disturbing aspects of the movement, such as millenarian expectations, resistance to clerical authority, doctrinal error—in particular, concerning the salutary power of the flagellants' extraordinary penance—and lack of ecclesiastical guidance and authorization, thus relegating the flagellants to the status of a mere "sect." But whether this qualifies the movement as heretical is still open to debate. Changes in the geographic focus of the movement may have brought the flagellants into areas, such as Thuringia, where heresy was already prevalent, but there seems to be no evidence that local heresies actually influenced the flagellants. One can also attribute opposition to flagellants to the fact that an initially

broad-based, disciplined movement, like that described by Hugo of Reutlingen, later developed into unruly mobs. The chronology doesn't always correspond to a "two-phase" theory, however. Some flagellants experienced opposition early in the movement, and some later flagellants, like those in Flanders described by Gilles li Muisis, displayed no less discipline than their predecessors. It is possible, however, that the flagellants were at their most hysterical in the early days, when they anticipated the plague's arrival in their localities, but then grew considerably less anxious later, when the shock of the disease had worn off.⁷



Figure 2. Flagellants, from a Fifteenth-Century Chronicle from Constance, Switzerland.

© Bettmann/CORBIS.

Some medieval chroniclers also charged flagellants with being responsible for pogroms against the Jews. A Benedictine monk and master of theology at the University of Paris, Jean de Fayt, preached a sermon before the pope at Avignon on October 5, 1349, in which he alleged that "everywhere [flagellants] strive to kill Jews, thinking that it pleases God to exterminate them." Fayt went on to elaborate that flagellants rejected traditional Church teaching that

urged the preservation of Jews as witnesses to the ultimate triumph of Christianity at the Last Judgment. Fayt also claimed that flagellants accused the Jews of well poisoning, which went against scientific explanations that attributed the cause of the plague to a conjunction of the planets.⁸ Pope Clement VI endorsed Fayt's views when he issued a mandate to suppress the flagellants on October 20, 1349.⁹ However, neither Fayt nor the pope cite specific evidence of a connection between this movement and the anti-Jewish pogroms.

Some chroniclers provide more concrete examples. Heinrich of Rebdorf alleges that the Jews of Bamberg attacked and killed "14 flagellants or thereabouts, and other citizens who were their defenders."¹⁰ Gilles li Muisis relates how some Jewish astrologers had premonitions "that there would appear men carrying red crosses, and they had no doubt that then their sect would be destroyed." He goes on to tell the story of a rich baptized Jew of Brabant in Flanders, who appealed to Duke John III for protection when the flagellants arrived in town, on the grounds that "since the men who do such things are here, it is certain that I and the whole Jewish sect, wherever we can be found, will be destroyed." Muisis then relates that six

hundred Jews of Brabant, including the Christian convert on friendly terms with the duke, were killed on the grounds of well poisoning and other blood libels, but he does not mention that the flagellants played a role in the massacre.¹¹ A contemporary verse chronicle from Brabant also makes the connection between the flagellants and Jewish pogroms, but allegations of a similar connection at Cologne and Frankfurt receive no such corroboration.¹²

One can imagine that the extreme emotionalism literally whipped up by the flagellants would easily lend itself to other acts of violence. But in many cases, the timing was not quite right. The famous Jewish pogrom at Strasbourg, for instance, which occurred on February 14, 1349, preceded the arrival of the flagellants there that June or July ([Documents 32](#) and [38](#)). One therefore has to examine the documents carefully to decide whether a connection between the flagellants and Jewish pogroms in a given area is even possible.

NOTES

¹Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and Its Bearing on*

23

GABRIELE DE MUSSIS*History of the Plague*

1348

A. W. Henschel, "Dokument zur Geschichte des schwarzen Todes,"
Archiv für gesammte Medizin, 2 (1841): 45-47, 56-57.

Gabriele de Mussis was a lawyer from Piacenza, a city in Lombardy in northern Italy, who died in 1356. In this selection, which opens his Historia de Morbo, or History of the Plague, allegedly composed in 1348, Mussis imagines a dialogue between God and the earth as an explanation for why the Black Death suddenly has arrived on the scene. He then borrows from the book of Revelation to convey the awesome judgment handed down by God upon humanity.

Let all those present and future take this as a perpetual reminder that Almighty God, king of heaven, who is lord of the living and the dead and holds all things in His hand, looked down from on high upon the entire human race and saw it sinking and sliding into all kinds of wickedness, embracing out of sheer persistence numberless crimes and transgressions, and immersing itself to the very core, out of an

unfathomable malice, in every type of vice; saw it bereft of any redeeming goodness, not dreading the judgments of God, and that it hastened to perform every kind of evil deed. Unable to bear any longer so many abominations and horrors, He called out to the Earth: "What are you doing, Earth, held captive by gangs of worthless men, defiled by their sordid sins? Are you totally helpless? What are you doing? Why do you not demand vengeance with human blood for their evil deeds? Why do you suffer my enemies and adversaries to live? You ought to have already suffocated my enemies, in fulfillment of a long-standing desire. Prepare yourself to exercise the vengeance of which you are capable."

"And I, the Earth, founded by your Majesty, will open my veins and swallow the numberless criminals in accordance with your commands. I will refuse them their accustomed harvest. I will not produce grain, wine, and oil."^{*} . . .

And after mortals had thus been warned, the quivering spear of the Almighty, in the form of the plague, was sent down to infect the whole human race, aiming its cruel darts everywhere. Indeed, Orion, that cruel star, and the ferocious tail of the dragon, and the angel casting vials of poison into the sea, and the

horrible and unseasonable weather of Saturn were all given leave to harm land and sea, men and trees; advancing from east to west with plague-bearing steps, they poured out bowls of poison throughout the various regions of the world, leaving their fiery seals upon the sick.[†] On account of this, the horrible onslaught of death, running its course throughout the world and threatening ruin, devoured mortal men with a sudden blow, as will be explained below. Wring, wring your hands, people, and call upon the mercy of God. . . .

Truly, then was a time of bitterness and sorrow, and human endeavor was directed toward serving the Lord. I will tell what happened. After having a vision, a certain holy person issued a warning: that people of both sexes in every diocese, city, castle, and region should gather for three consecutive days in their parish church and with great devotion and lighted candles in their hands hear the mass of the Blessed Anastasia, which is usually celebrated on Christmas morning. And they should humbly implore mercy from the saint, that they might be delivered from the plague through the merits of the holy mass. Some people directed their prayers to a blessed martyr. Others humbly turned to other saints, thinking that they

might be able to escape the plague's deformity. For some of the aforementioned martyrs, as history tells us, were said to have died from a number of blows in the name of Jesus Christ, and for this reason, many held the opinion that they could preserve their health against the plague's arrows. And then in 1350 the most holy Pope Clement [VI] issued out of the apostolic consistory a general indulgence, which was to last for a year, to all those who confessed and were truly repentant of their faults and sins.^{*} As a result, an infinite number of people of both sexes made the pilgrimage to Rome, visiting with great reverence and devotion the basilicas of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and of St. John.

24

MICHELE DA PIAZZA

Chronicle

1347–1361

Michele da Piazza, *Cronaca*, ed. Antonino Giuffrida (Palermo: ILA Palma, 1980), 82–87.

In this selection, Piazza testifies to the powerful appeal of local religious shrines, such as those of the

blessed Virgin Agatha of Catania and the blessed Virgin Mary of Santa Maria della Scala, toward which large numbers of people turned for succor, spiritual and otherwise, during the plague. Piazza reports that supplications to these shrines were accompanied by incidents of the marvelous, although none of them involved healing. At the same time, Piazza also records the rancorous secular rivalries that existed between the Sicilian towns of Messina and Catania, which evidently persisted even at the height of the plague and from which not even Piazza, a Franciscan friar, could disentangle himself.

Wherefore the Messinese, taking stock of this terrible and monstrous calamity, chose to leave the city rather than stay there to die; and not only did they refuse to enter the city, but even to go near it. They camped out with their families in the open air and in the vineyards outside the city. But some, and they were the majority of the citizens, went to the city of Catania, believing that the Blessed Virgin Agatha of Catania would deliver them from this illness. . . . Indeed, very many Messinese were staying in the city of Catania, where with one voice they implored the lord patriarch through the pious petitions submitted to him, that for the sake of devotion he go personally to Messina,

bringing with him with all due honor some of the relics of the Virgin Agatha. “For we believe,” they said, “that with the arrival of the relics, the city of Messina will be completely delivered from this sickness.” So the patriarch, deeply moved by their prayers, agreed to go personally to Messina with the aforesaid relics. And this was around the end of the month of November in the year of our Lord 1347. The holy Virgin Agatha, seeing through the inward deceit and stratagems of the Messinese—who have always wanted to keep the virgin’s relics at Messina and were exploiting the situation for that end—prayed to the Lord to see to it that the whole populace of the city betake themselves to the patriarch, shouting and saying that such a plan in no way pleased them. And wresting the keys away from the churchwarden, they soundly rebuked the patriarch, asserting that he should choose death before agreeing to transfer the relics to Messina. After this scolding, the patriarch could do nothing else but enter the place where the relics were kept in a spirit of great devotion and honor, accompanied by a monastic choir intoning religious chants and holy prayers, and lave [bathe] the holy relics with some pure water; it was this holy water which he arranged to be brought to the city of Messina, when he personally crossed over to

there by ship. But oh, what a foolish idea you Messinese had, to think you could steal away the relics of the Blessed Virgin Agatha in this secret manner, under cover of a zealous devotion. Have you forgotten that when the body of the virgin was at Constantinople and desired to go back to her own country, to the city of Catania, she appeared in dreams to Gislebert and Goselin and ordered them to bring her body back to the city of Catania?*- Don't you know that if she had wanted to make her home in Messina, she by all means would have allowed this to happen? What more is there to say? Afterwards, the patriarch came to the city of Messina, bringing with him the aforesaid holy water, and he cured many and various sick people by sprinkling and touching them with the water. Therefore the citizens of Messina flocked to the patriarch, rushing to see him with great joy and giving many thanks to him and to God. For demons appeared in the city, having changed themselves into the shape of dogs, and they inflicted much harm on the bodies of the Messinese. Struck numb with terror, no one dared leave their homes. Nevertheless, by the general agreement of all and following the wishes of the archbishop of Messina, the citizens resolved to devoutly process around the city while chanting

litanies. And as the whole populace of Messina was entering the city, a black dog carrying a drawn sword in its paw appeared among them; growling, it rushed the crowd and broke silver vessels, lamps, and candelabra that were on the altars, and shattered various other kinds of things. At this sight, everyone all at once fell flat on their faces, half-dead with fear. But after a while the men recovered and got up, and they saw the dog leave the church, but no one dared follow it or approach it.

But the Messinese were terrified by this extraordinary vision, so that they all grew fearful to a marvelous degree. Therefore they decided to all walk barefoot in a priest-led procession to the [shrine of the] blessed Virgin [Mary] of Santa Maria della Scala, six miles away from Messina. When they drew near to the Virgin, everyone all at once became transfixed, and on bended knee with tears in their eyes they called with great devotion upon God and the blessed Virgin for aid. And they entered the church saying devout prayers, while the priests chanted the psalm, *misere nostri Deus* (Lord have mercy), and laid their hands upon the sculpted image of the mother of God, set up there since ancient times. They decided to bring this image back to the city of Messina, because they

reckoned that with it they could rid the city of demonic visions and apparitions, and completely deliver it from this mortality. Accordingly, they chose a suitable priest to honorably carry the image in his arms while riding on his horse. And as they were going back to the city with the aforesaid image, the holy mother of God, when she saw and approached the city, judged it to be loathsome and totally bloodied with sin, so that she turned her back on it and not only refused to enter the city but averted her eyes from it. As a result the earth opened wide, and the horse, upon which the image of the mother of God was being carried, remained fixed and immovable like a rock, unable to go forwards or back. When the people of Messina witnessed this miracle, they gasped with a sharp intake of breath, and weeping copious tears, they prayed to the blessed Virgin to not take new vengeance for their past sins; added to these humble prayers were the sacred entreaties which the holy bride of Christ, the Virgin herself, addressed to the Lord. Whereupon the earth that at first had opened is closed, and the horse moves: but when she came to the city gate, the holy mother of God refused to enter it in any way. Finally, after pious prayers were addressed to her, she entered the great church of the city of Messina, namely the Santa Maria

la Nuova. The women of Messina showered the image with silk cloth and precious jewels. But could not the holy mother of God have remained in her church and completely refused to enter the city? Or are we perhaps suggesting that she could be carried away from her station, albeit unwilling? In truth, she could have remained in her original location, because no amount of force could bear her away, she to whom God's power granted all mercy, all might, all goodness. But was this not to terrify the people so that out of fear they might completely purge themselves of their worldly temptations? What more is there to say? The arrival of the image availed nothing; on the contrary, the mortality entrenched itself even further, so that there was nothing else that could be done.

25

**SIMON ISLIP, ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY**

Effrenata (Unbridled)

May 28, 1350

Registrum Simonis de Sudbiria Diocesis Londoniensis, AD 1362–1375, ed. R. C. Fowler, 2 vols. (Canterbury and York Society, 34, 38, 1927–1938), 1:190–92.

reckoned that with it they could rid the city of demonic visions and apparitions, and completely deliver it from this mortality. Accordingly, they chose a suitable priest to honorably carry the image in his arms while riding on his horse. And as they were going back to the city with the aforesaid image, the holy mother of God, when she saw and approached the city, judged it to be loathsome and totally bloodied with sin, so that she turned her back on it and not only refused to enter the city but averted her eyes from it. As a result the earth opened wide, and the horse, upon which the image of the mother of God was being carried, remained fixed and immovable like a rock, unable to go forwards or back. When the people of Messina witnessed this miracle, they gasped with a sharp intake of breath, and weeping copious tears, they prayed to the blessed Virgin to not take new vengeance for their past sins; added to these humble prayers were the sacred entreaties which the holy bride of Christ, the Virgin herself, addressed to the Lord. Whereupon the earth that at first had opened is closed, and the horse moves: but when she came to the city gate, the holy mother of God refused to enter it in any way. Finally, after pious prayers were addressed to her, she entered the great church of the city of Messina, namely the Santa Maria

la Nuova. The women of Messina showered the image with silk cloth and precious jewels. But could not the holy mother of God have remained in her church and completely refused to enter the city? Or are we perhaps suggesting that she could be carried away from her station, albeit unwilling? In truth, she could have remained in her original location, because no amount of force could bear her away, she to whom God's power granted all mercy, all might, all goodness. But was this not to terrify the people so that out of fear they might completely purge themselves of their worldly temptations? What more is there to say? The arrival of the image availed nothing; on the contrary, the mortality entrenched itself even further, so that there was nothing else that could be done.

25

SIMON ISLIP, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Effrenata (Unbridled)

May 28, 1350

Registrum Simonis de Sudbiria Diocesis Londoniensis, AD 1362–1375,
ed. R. C. Fowler, 2 vols. (Canterbury and York Society, 34, 38,
1927–1938), 1:190–92.

From August 1348 to August 1349, England saw the passing of three archbishops of Canterbury: the first victim, John Stratford, probably died of old age in August 1348, but John Offord and Thomas Bradwardine died of the plague in May and August 1349, respectively. Simon Islip, who succeeded Bradwardine, endured longer as archbishop, surviving until 1366. The document printed here is from Islip's constitution, Effrenata (Unbridled), issued on May 28, 1350, to the bishops of the southern province of England. Islip tried to do for the clergy what the ordinance of laborers did for peasant opportunists, that is, to stop parish priests from leaving their churches to work for more lucrative salaries elsewhere, especially in private chapels, or chantries.

The unbridled greed of the human race would, out of its innate malice, grow to the point that charity would be banished from the bounds of the earth, unless its momentum was checked by the power of justice. Well, the [House of] Commons have brought to us their complaint, and experience, that effective teacher, shows us that surviving priests, who are unmindful of the fact that divine intervention spared them from the recent pestilence—not by reason of their own merits

—but so that they can carry out the ministry that was committed to them on behalf of God's people and the public welfare, and who do not blush for shame when their insatiable greed provides a wicked and pernicious example for other workers, even among the laity, now have no regard for the care of souls, which is most worthy of attention from the Church's ministers and which can merit glory to the unwilling man who takes it up, even if he should miserably fail in the rest of his duties. But priests are unwilling to take on the care of souls and to bear the burdens of their cures in mutual charity, but rather they wholly abandon these to devote themselves to celebrating anniversary masses and other private services. So that they can more easily revive old extravagances, they are not content with being paid ordinary salaries but demand for their services excessive wages, and thus they win more profit for themselves than curates do, in exchange only for their status and little work. Unless their unreasonable appetite is reduced to equitable levels, the greater number of anniversary masses and the size of their salaries, moderated by no sense of balance, will mean more and more churches, prebends, and chapels throughout our province, and in our diocese as well as yours, left wholly destitute of the services of

priests, and what adds to our sorrow, curates, attracted by similar wages, will be easily distracted toward these same private services, completely abandoning their cures. Wishing therefore to rein in the insatiable desire of these priests, on account of the above perils and other losses which could arise if we did not apply appropriate remedies, we require and exhort you, father, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, that, paying heed to the danger to souls and other causes mentioned above, you suitably provide before all else for the good governance of parish churches, prebends, and chapels whose care of souls is in jeopardy and in accordance with their needs, appointing for them the better and more qualified chaplains that can be found in service to anyone other than a parish. And you are to use whatever censures are sanctioned by the Church in order to act against those who do not comply and against their patrons and those who retain their services despite our ordinance and against all those who have the temerity to violate the ordinance, so that chaplains and anyone else performing any kind of religious service anywhere in your diocese may be content with a moderate salary. And if anyone who defies you seeks on that account to have himself transferred to our diocese or to the diocese of a fellow

bishop, we will and order you to make his first and last name known to us through your letters, or to the bishop into whose diocese he has transferred, and inform us of what actions you or your officials have taken against him. For we wish to follow up the actions that you or a fellow bishop has taken against those who come into our diocese, and to execute to the full force of the law the censures that have been inflicted upon them. We require and order that this likewise be done and carried out by all our fellow bishops in their dioceses. And so that it may be clear to you what level of salary has been fixed by us, we have ordained for our diocese [of Canterbury] that chaplains of a parish church, prebend, or chapel with a cure of souls be content to be paid a salary of one mark [just over half a pound] beyond what was formerly accustomed to be paid to a priest with the same cure of souls, but otherwise we wish that the salary of stipendiary priests be limited to the going rate that was in force in times past.

Post-Plague Parish Poverty

July 1, 1349, and September 20, 1349

Registrum Hamonis Hethe, Diocesis Roffensis, AD 1319-1352, ed. Charles Johnson, 2 vols. (Canterbury and York Society, 48, 1948), 2:886; Cambridge University Library, Ely Diocesan Records; G/I/1, Register Thomas de Lisle, fol. 27v.

The following two selections from the registers of Hamo Hethe, bishop of Rochester, and Thomas de Lisle, bishop of Ely, illustrate alternative responses to the death of parishioners from the plague, and the attendant falling off of priests' income from their oblations or offerings. Most of a parish priest's income came from the "voluntary" contributions of parishioners, which paid for his services at baptisms, last rites, marriages, confessions, and communions; in addition, parishioners were expected to tithe, or contribute a tenth of their produce, to the church every year. In the second document, the granter of the annual sustenance is John de Oo, who was acting as Thomas de Lisle's vicar-general while the bishop was away on a pilgrimage to Rome. The beneficiaries of the sustenance were two Cambridge priests. The excerpts are dated, respectively, July 1, 1349, and September 20, 1349.

Hamo Hethe, Bishop of Rochester

[July 1, 1349] Several priests and clerics refuse to accept benefices when these are lawfully offered to them, benefices where the curates have been forced to leave,^{*} or even those that are well and truly vacant. Moreover, in some of these benefices the priests are still absent, and have been for a long time, on account of the fact that by now it is well known that their incomes have been diminished by the mortality of the parishioners in these places, so that no one can live or support himself on what is left. We have learned that in many places where this has happened, the parish churches have for a long time remained unserved, and the cures [of souls] there are in danger of being almost abandoned, to the grave peril of souls. We, wishing to apply a remedy for this in so far as we are able right now, concede and grant by the tenor of these presents to all and several rectors and vicars already instituted or about to be instituted in our city and diocese, who have been forced to leave their benefices and whose annual income is ten marks [approximately six and a half pounds] or less, that each of them, while his poverty lasts, can licitly celebrate, or cause to be celebrated, by himself or another, one anniversary mass per year, or any number of masses whose total

value equals it, on behalf of his parishioners or patrons from anywhere else outside the diocese, so long as the anniversary masses are celebrated in the parish church in which he was instituted. This is to last until we see fit to decree otherwise.

Thomas de Lisle, Bishop of Ely

[September 20, 1349] A clear, urgent necessity demands that we provide you with pious aid. We are fully informed by your ample accounts and by the testimony of other trustworthy people that a portion is allotted to you in the aforesaid church from the oblations [offerings]—in so far as these are known—of its parishioners, and that the same parishioners have in the meantime suffered for so long from the pestilence, which is well known to be taking hold in this year, so that the oblations accruing from the said church are by no mean sufficient for the necessities of your life, nor can you obtain these elsewhere to allow you to support the burdens incumbent [upon your office]. For this reason you have humbly petitioned us to have an annual sustenance for the necessities of your life for two years. Truly, because it is not seemly for a person of your status in the holy Church of God to beg for life’s necessities, such as these consist in your

food and clothing, we, by the authority and office of the said father [Bishop Thomas de Lisle], grant that the support be awarded to you, in accordance with what you have requested. Nevertheless, we enjoin through these presents that as soon as you are able to be supported at a suitable level of your necessities through the proceeds and income of your portion, you altogether desist from the collection of this annual [sustenance], which you are strictly bound to do by virtue of the obedience that you have sworn to the said father.

LIBERTUS OF MONTE FECHE

Last Will and Testament

September 21, 1348

Archivio Capitolare di Arezzo, Pace Puccii Notario, no. 57, fol. 143r.

One of the best windows we have onto the religious mind-set of secular people during the Middle Ages is their wills. The way they allocate their resources reveals their religious priorities, at least when they made their will. We are fortunate to have the will of one man, Libertus of Monte Feche, from Liège in

Flanders, who actually dictated the document as he lay dying from his “illness,” probably the plague. The will is dated September 21, 1348, and was drawn up at Arezzo, a town south of Florence in Tuscany. Some of the legalistic language has been omitted from this selection.

The noble, wise and prudent man, Libertus, son of Raynerius of Monte Feche from the diocese of Liège, constable [and] knight of the officers of the magnificent and honorable commune, the commune of Florence, by the grace of God of sound mind and intellect but of failing body, wishing at this moment through wisdom to petition to have recorded and ordained in the presence of witnesses [and] in order to avoid any scandal between those who survive over his property, disposes of his goods in the present oral testament in the following manner:

In the first place, if he should die from this illness, he elects to be buried among the Servite friars of St. Mary of the city of Arezzo, within this church. For this place and for these friars, this testator leaves as a legal legacy and wishes to give from his goods five *florins* of a just and legal tender, ordering the aforementioned brothers to be and stay content with the above-stated five florins and not to ask for more of the testator’s

property.

Item, he leaves . . . for the health of his soul one gold *florin* to the church of the Blessed Anthony, near the city of Arezzo, outside and near the gate of the Holy Ghost, which is to be used for the beautification of this church. . . .

Item, he leaves . . . the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy in the city of Arezzo all the testator’s personal armor, with the sole exception of his helmet, which he wishes to give and place in the above-mentioned church of the Servite brothers, above his grave along with his other insignia.

Item, he leaves . . . and wishes to offer each year in perpetuity [to be placed] on the altar of the church of the Blessed Anthony a cross made from old silver called “Turonic”^{*} to be paid for from the harvests and the other rents of a strip of land belonging to the above-mentioned testator, which lies in the curia and district of the village of Monte Feche or from another estate in a place called “Doncio.”

Item, he leaves . . . to the church of Saint Anthony of Tragetto twenty-five *florins* to be taken from the value of the above-mentioned strip of land in the place called “Doncio” and for twenty-five *florins* from part of its sale to be used for commissioning a painting of the

person of this testator to be placed in this church, and the residual portion is to be for the church's use, as the below-stated Renciardo, his nephew and executor, should see fit.

Item, the testator leaves . . . for the health of his soul and that of his relatives and for the remission of their sins three *florins* . . . to the church of St. Anthony of Tragetto.

Item, he leaves . . . and assigns to Libionus, the below-mentioned son of Lambertus of Monte [Feche], his esteemed and excellent blood relative, four *bennaria*[†] of land belonging to the testator in a place called "Mensa" in the curia and district and territory of the village of [Monte] Feche, and if this land cannot be acquired,[‡] then the testator leaves . . . to this Libionus land of the testator located in a place called "Bustalgia". . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . to John, his illegitimate son, 200 *florins*. . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . to Angela, his illegitimate daughter, 80 *florins*. . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . to Libotus, his illegitimate son, 60 *florins*. . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . as above to Nicholas, his illegitimate son, 30 *florins*. . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . to Udelecta, another illegitimate daughter, 30 *florins*. . . .

Item, this testator leaves . . . as above to Marietta, another illegitimate daughter, 30 *florins*. . . .

Item, in regard to all other property, movables, real estate, salaries and credits of any sort, he institutes, wants, and demands that Renoardus,^{*} the above-stated nephew, be his universal heir, demanding and ordering that the above Renoardus, his nephew and heir, be held to enact and to initiate and maintain all of the above-stated legacies, . . . and this the above-stated testator asserts to be his last will, which he wishes to be valued and held by the right of an oral testament.

28

‘IMĀD AL-DĪN ABŪ ‘L-FIDĀ’ ISMĀ‘ĪL B.

‘UMAR IBN KATHĪR

The Beginning and End: On History

ca. 1350–1351

Gaston Wiet, "La Grande Peste Noire en Syrie et en Égypte," *Études d'Orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, 2 vols. (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962), 1:381–83.

The following selection is by ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū ‘l-Fidā’