

This question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view. Write an essay on the following that integrates your analysis of the documents; in no case should documents simply be cited and explained in a "laundry list" fashion. You may refer to historical facts and developments not mentioned in the documents.

1. Analyze the various responses to the outbreaks of plague from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Discuss the beliefs and concerns that these responses express.

Historical Background: The plague struck Europe in a series of waves beginning in the mid-fourteenth century. It is estimated that the first wave killed about 25 million people, or one-third of the population of Western Europe. Sporadic but deadly outbreaks continued throughout Europe into the eighteenth century.

Europeans at the time did not understand the cause of this bacterial infection, which was spread by fleas that had been infected by their hosts, usually rats. When the rats died, the fleas moved on to infect other hosts, including human beings. Once infected, a person suffered extreme pain and, within a few days, about 80 percent of those infected died.

Document 1

You asked how my school is doing. It is full again but the plague, which killed twenty of the boys, drove many others away and doubtless kept some others from coming to us at all.

Schoolmaster at Deventer, Netherlands, letter, 1484

Document 2

The plague and sickness in England is due to the filth in the streets and the sputum and dogs' urine clogging the rushes on the floors of the houses.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, letter, 1512

Document 3

Since the rich fled, death was principally directed towards the poor so that only a few of the Paris porters and wage-earners, who had lived there in large numbers before the misfortune, were left.

Nicolas Versoris, French author, *Book of Reason*, 1523

Document 4

About 40 people at Casale in Western Lombardy smeared the bolts of the town gates with an ointment to spread the plague. Those who touched the gates were infected and many died. The heirs of the dead and diseased had actually paid people at Casale to smear the gates in order to obtain their inheritances more quickly.

Johann Weyer, German physician, *The Deceptions of Demons*, 1583

Document 5

Whatever house the pestilence visited was immediately nailed up, and if a person died within, he had to be buried there. Many died of hunger in their own houses. Throughout the country, all the roads and highways were guarded so that a person could not pass from one place to another.

Heinrich von Staden, Count of the Palatinate and traveler to Russia, *The Land and Government of Muscovy*, 1571

Document 6

Gold, fire, the gallows: gold for the expense of pest houses to quarantine the diseased, the gallows to punish those who violate the health regulations and to frighten the others, and bonfires to eliminate infected things.

Motto of Giovan Filippo, Sicilian physician of Palermo, 1576

Document 7

My husband Ottavio had a malignant fever. We were sure he would die. Sister Angelica del Macchia, prioress at Crocetta, sent me a little piece of bread that had touched the body of St. Domenica. I fed it to my husband and suddenly the fever broke.

Lisabetta Centenni, Italian housewife, legal deposition, 1624

Document 8

And thus would I meditate with myself alone: what if the sickness should come into this house? Who would I be willing to give up to the disease? Then would I say, the maid. Who next? My son John. Who next? My daughter Elizabeth. Who next? Myself.

Nehemiah Wallington, English Puritan, diary, 1625

Document 9

I have accompanied severity with compassion and charity. I have managed and fed the convalescents and servants of two pest houses; I have paid guards and gravediggers with the alms your lordships have sent me.

Father Dragoni, priest, letter to the Health Magistracy of Florence, 1630

Document 10

Plague-stricken patients hang around their necks toads, either dead or alive, whose venom should within a few days draw out the poison of the disease.

H. de Rochas, French physician, *The Reform of Medicine*, 1647

Document 11

The demand for nurses in Barcelona was so great that they were hard to find. Many times all they did was to make the patients die more quickly, because the sooner they died, the sooner the nurses collected the fees they had agreed on.

Miguel Parets, Barcelona tanner, diary, 1651

Document 12

The news came as we were ready to set forth for Italy that the plague was now violent in Rome, which discouraged all the gentlemen but three and myself, for I resolved to trust to Providence rather than not see so fine a place.

Sir John Reresby, English traveler, memoirs, 1656

Document 13

For nobody will dare to buy any wig, for fear of the infection, that the hair had been cut off the heads of people dead of the plague.

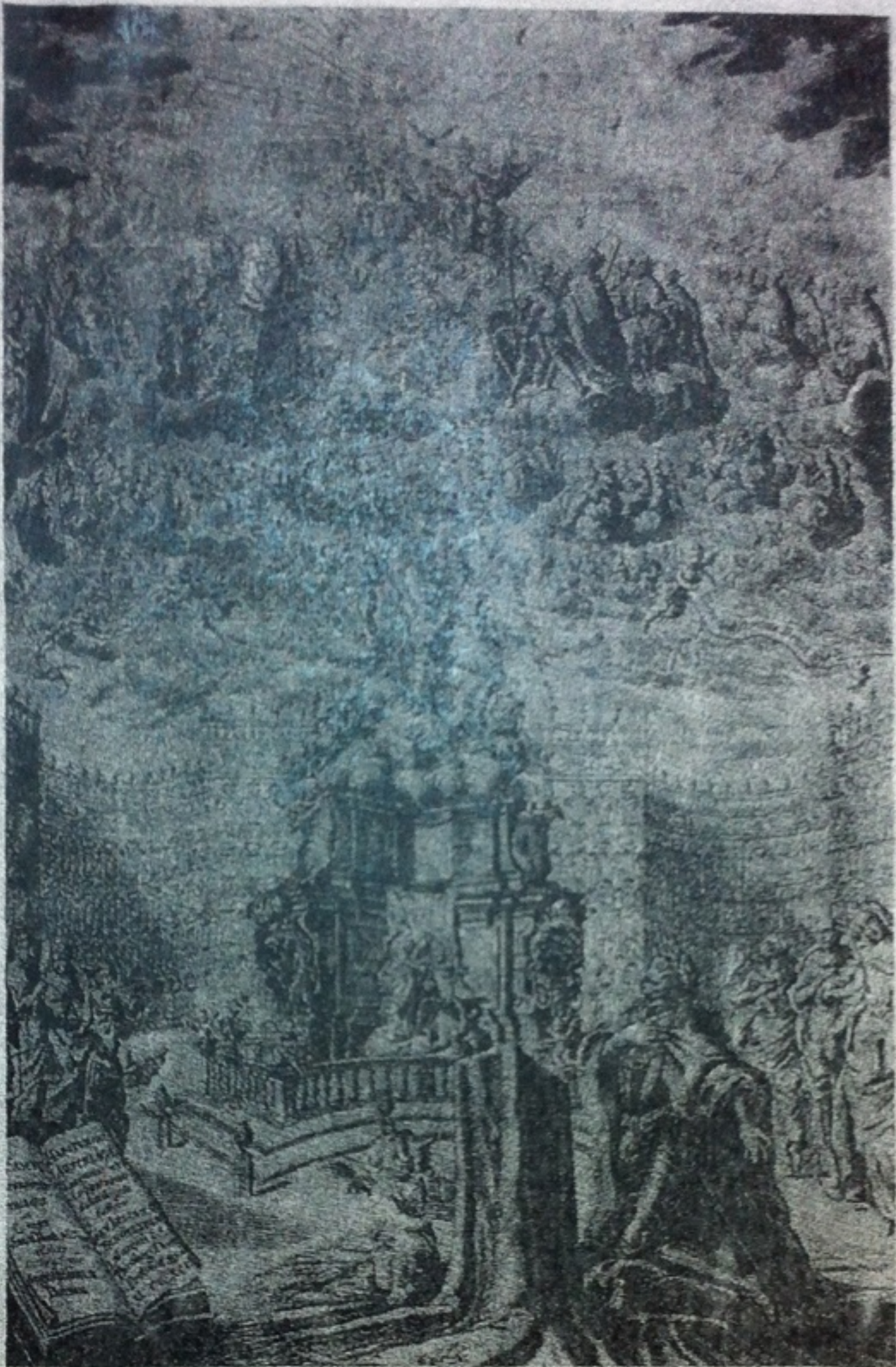
Samuel Pepys, English naval bureaucrat, *Diary*, 1665

Document 14

The trading nations of Europe were all afraid of us; no port of France, or Holland, or Spain, or Italy would admit our ships. Foreign exportation being stopped, the general trade in manufactured goods stopped next.

Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, 1722
(written about the plague of 1665)

Document 15



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Print depicting Emperor Leopold and the "Plague Column," which he commissioned in gratitude for the end of the plague that gripped Vienna in the 1680's, Vienna, 1696.

Document 16

The plague must be considered a particular chastisement exercised by an angry God over a sinful and offending people rather than as a calamity proceeding from common and natural causes. Consequently, it is little subject to the remedies pursued in the cases of ordinary maladies.

M. Bertrand, physician at Marseilles, *A Historical Relation of the Plague at Marseilles in the Year 1720*