

## H-O-H: “The Calamitous 14<sup>c</sup>”

### Essential Question

The historian, Barbara Tuchmann wrote in The Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14<sup>c</sup> that *when the gap between the ideal and the real [in a society] becomes too wide, the system breaks down.* Assess the validity of this thesis by analyzing the major political, economic, social, and intellectual forces that contributed to a breakdown of society in the late 14<sup>c</sup> and early 15<sup>c</sup>.

### Document 1

We now wish . . . to adduce the truths of the holy Scripture . . . which explicitly command or counsel that neither the Roman bishop called pope, nor any other bishop or priest, or deacon, has or ought to have any rulership or coercive judgment or jurisdiction over any priest or non-priest, ruler, community, group, or individual of whatever condition . . . Christ himself came into the world not to dominate men, nor to judge them [coercively] . . . not to wield temporal rule, but rather to be subject as regards the . . . present life; and moreover, he wanted to and did exclude himself, his apostles and disciples, and their successors, the bishops or priests, from all coercive authority or worldly rule, both by his example and by his word of counsel of command . . . When he was brought before Pontius Pilate . . . and accused of having called himself king of the Jews, and [Pilate] asked him whether he had said this . . . [his] reply included these words . . . 'My kingdom is not of this world,' that is, I have not come to reign by temporal rule or dominion, in the way . . . worldly kings reign . . . This, then, is the kingdom concerning which he came to teach and order, a kingdom which consists in the acts whereby the eternal kingdom is attained, that is, the acts of faith and the other theological virtues; not however, by coercing anyone thereto.

**SOURCE:** Marsilius of Padua in his *The Defender of Peace (Defensor Pacis)*, 1324.

### Document 2

(1) When Christ ordered the coin which was taken from the fish's mouth to be paid to the tax collector, he paid tribute to Caesar; and he did this not out of condescension or kindness, but because he had to pay it. From this it is clear that all temporal powers and possessions of the church are subject to the emperor, and he may take them as his own.

(2) That St. Peter had no more authority than the other apostles, and was not the head over the other apostles; and that Christ left behind no head of the church, and did not appoint anyone as his vicar.

(3) That the emperor has the right to make and depose popes and to punish them.

(4) That all priests, whether pope or archbishop or simple priest, are, in accordance with the appointment of Christ, of equal authority and jurisdiction.

(6) That the whole church together can not punish any man with coercive punishment, without the permission of the emperor.

The above articles are contrary to the holy scriptures and hostile to the catholic faith and we [John XXIII] declare them to be heretical and erroneous, and the aforesaid Marsilius and John [of Jandun] to be open and notorious heretics, or rather heresiarchs.

**SOURCE:** Condemnation of Marsilius of Padua by Pope John XII, 1327.

### Document 3

I am now living in [Avignon], in the Babylon of the West . . . Here reign the successors of the poor fishermen of Galilee [who] have strangely forgotten their origin. I am astounded, as I recall their predecessors, to see these men loaded with gold and clad in purple, boasting of the spoils of princes and nations; to see luxurious palaces and heights crowned with fortifications, instead of a boat turned downwards for [their] shelter. We no longer find the simple nets which were once used to gain a frugal living from the lake of Galilee . . . One is stupefied nowadays to hear the lying tongues, and to see worthless parchments turned by a leaden sea [i. e., official bulls of the pope] into nets which are used, in Christ's name, but by the arts of Belial [i.e., the devil], to catch hordes of unwary Christians. These fish, too, are dressed and laid on the burning coals of anxiety before they fill the insatiable maw of their captors.

Instead of holy solitude we find a criminal host and crowds . . .; instead of sobriety, licentious banquets . . .; instead of pious pilgrimages . . . foul sloth; instead of the bare feet of the apostles . . . horses decked in gold . . . In short, we seem to be among the kings of the Persians or Parthians, before whom we must fall down and worship, and who cannot be approached except presents be offered.

**SOURCE:** Petrarch, between 1340 and 1354.

## Document 4

I see the pope his sacred trust betray,  
For while the rich his grace can gain alway,  
His favors from the poor are aye withholden.  
He strives to gather wealth as best he may,  
Forcing Christ's people blindly to obey,  
So that he may repose in garmets golden.  
The vilest traffickers in souls are all  
His chapmen, and for gold a prebend's stall  
He'll sell them, or an abbacy or miter.  
And to us he sends clowns and tramps who crawl  
Vending his pardon briefs from cot to hall--  
Letters and pardons worthy of the writer,  
Which leaves our pokes, if not our souls, the lighter....

**SOURCE:** A stanza of a poem from the 14<sup>c</sup> troubadour, Raimon de Cornet, criticizing the Avignon Papacy.

## Document 5

1. That the material substance of bread and the material substance of wine remain in the sacrament of the altar.
2. That the accidents of bread do not remain without a subject [substance] in the said Sacrament.
3. That Christ is not in the Sacrament essentially and really, in his own corporeal presence.
4. That if a bishop or priest be in mortal sin he does not ordain, consecrate, or baptize.
5. That it is not ordained in the Gospel that Christ ordained the Mass.
7. That is a man be fully penitent any outward confession is superfluous and useless.
10. That it is contrary to Holy Scripture that ecclesiastics should have possessions.
14. That any deacon or priest may preach the Word of God apart from the authority of the Apostolic See or a Catholic bishop.
15. That no one is civil lord or prelate, or bishop, while he is in mortal sin.
16. That temporal lords can at their will take away temporal goods from the Church, when those who hold them are sinful (habitually sinful, not sinning in one act only).
17. That the people can at their own will correct sinful lords.
18. That tithes are mere alms, and that parishioners can withdraw them at their will because of the misdeeds of their curates.
20. That he who gives alms to friars is by that fact excommunicate.
22. That holy men have sinned in founding private religions [religious houses].
23. That religious who live in private religions are not of the Christian religion.
24. That friars are bound to gain their livelihood by the labour of their hands, and not by begging.
28. That the confirmation of young, the ordination of young clerics, the consecration of places are reserved for the Pope and bishops on account of the desire for temporal gain and honour.
30. That the excommunication of the Pope or of any prelate, is not to be feared, because it is the

censure of antichrist.

34. That all of the order of mendicants are heretics.

35. That the Roman Church is the synagogue of Satan, and the Pope is not the next and immediate vicar of Christ and the Apostles.

42. That it is fatuous to believe in the indulgences of the Pope and the bishops.

43. That all oaths made to corroborate human contracts and civil business are unlawful.

**SOURCE:** Propositions of John Wycliffe condemned at London, 1382.

## Document 6

The KNIGHT was a very distinguished man. From the beginning of his career he had loved chivalry, loyalty, honourable dealing, generosity, and good breeding. He had fought bravely in the king's service, beside which he had travelled further than most men in heathen as well as in Christian lands. Wherever he went he was honoured for his valour....

He was always outstandingly successful; yet though distinguished he was prudent, and his bearing as modest as a maid's. In his whole life he never spoke discourteously to any kind of man. He was a true and perfect noble knight. But, speaking of his equipment, his horses were good, yet he was not gaily dressed. He wore a tunic of thick cotton cloth, rust-marked from his coat of mail; for he had just come back from his travels and was making his pilgrimage to render thanks....

There was also a NUN, a Prioress, who smiled in an unaffected and quiet way; ... At table she showed her good breeding at every point: she never let a crumb fall from her mouth or wetted her fingers by dipping them too deeply into the sauce; and when she lifted the food to her lips she took care not to spill a single drop upon her breast. Etiquette was her passion. So scrupulously did she wipe her upper lip that no spot of grease was to be seen in her cup after she had drunk from it; and when she ate she reached daintily for her food. Indeed she was most gay, pleasant and friendly. She took pains to imitate courtly behaviour and cultivate a dignified bearing so as to be thought a person deserving of respect. Speaking of her sensibility, she was so tender-hearted and compassionate that she would weep whenever she saw a mouse caught in a trap, especially if it were bleeding or dead....

Next there was a MERCHANT with a forked beard who rode seated on a high saddle, wearing a many-coloured dress, boots fastened with neat handsome clasps, and upon his head a Flanders beaver hat. He gave out his opinions with great pomposity and never stopped talking about the increase of his profits. In his view the high seas between Harwich and Holland should be cleared of pirates at all costs. He was an expert at the exchange of currency. This worthy citizen used his head to the best advantage, conducting his money-lending and other financial transactions in a dignified manner; none guessed he was in debt. He was really a most estimable man; but to tell the truth his name escapes me....

With us there was a good religious man, a poor PARSON, but rich in holy thoughts and acts. He was also a learned man, a scholar, who truly preached Christ's Gospel and taught his parishioners devoutly. Benign, hardworking, and patient in adversity—as had often been put to the test—he was loath to

excommunicate those who failed to pay their tithes. To tell the truth he would rather give to the poor of his parish what had been offered him by the rich, or from his own pocket; for he managed to live on very little. Wide as was his parish, with houses few and far between, neither rain nor thunder nor sickness nor misfortune stopped him from going on foot, staff in hand, to visit his most distant parishioners, high or low. To his flock he set this noble example: first he practised, then he preached.... He never looked for ceremony and deference, nor was his conscience of the over-scrupulous and specious sort. He taught the Gospel of Christ and His twelve apostles: but first he followed it himself.

**SOURCE:** Excerpts from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, 1380s-1390s.

## Document 7

Twenty-six years ago during the month of August, I was the wife of the late knight Berenger de Roquefort, castellan of Montailou. The late Raimond Roussel was the intendant and the steward of our household which we held at the castle of Montailou. He often asked me to leave with him and to go to Lombardy with the good Christians who are there, telling me that the Lord has said that man must quit his father, mother, wife, husband, son and daughter and follow him, and that he would give him the kingdom of heaven. When I asked him, 'How could I quit my husband and my sons?' he replied that the Lord had ordered it and that it was better to leave a husband and sons whose eyes rot than to abandon him who lived for eternity and who gives the kingdom of heaven.

When I asked him, 'How is it possible that God created so many men and women if many of them are not saved?' he answered that only the good Christians will be saved and no others, neither religious nor priests, nor anyone except these good Christians. Because, he said, just as it is impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, it is impossible for those who are rich to be saved. This is why the kings and princes, prelates and religious, and all those who have wealth, cannot be saved, but only the Good Christians . . . He also told me that all spirits sinned at the beginning with the sin of pride, believing that they could know more and be worth more than God, and for that they fell to earth. These spirits later take on bodies, and the world will not end before all of them have been incarnated into the bodies of men and women. Thus it is that the soul of a newborn child is as old as that of an old man. . . .

**SOURCE:** The testimony of Beatrice de Planissoles, a member of the lower nobility, interrogated by Jacques Fournier, bishop of Pamiers, France (the future Pope Benedict XII), in 1320, for involvement in the Cathar heresy.

## Document 8

This holy Council of Constance . . . declares, first that it is lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, that it constitutes a General Council, representing the Catholic Church, and that therefore it

has its authority immediately from Christ; and that all men, of every rank and condition, including the pope himself, are bound to obey it in matters concerning the Faith, the abolition of the schism, and the reformation of the Church of God in its head and its members. Secondly, it declares that anyone, of any rank and condition, who shall contumaciously refuse to obey the orders, decrees, statutes or instructions, made or to be made by this holy Council, or by any other lawfully assembled general council . . . shall, unless he comes to a right frame of mind, be subjected to fitting penance and punished appropriately: and, if need be, recourse shall be had to the other sanctions of the law.

**SOURCE:** The decree *Haec Sancta*, issued by the Council of Constance, 1415.

## Document 9

Having laid down the main points of the wisdom of the Latins as regards language, mathematics and optics, I wish now to review the principles of wisdom from the point of view of experimental science, because without experiment it is impossible to know anything thoroughly.

There are two ways of acquiring knowledge, one through reason, the other by experiment. Argument reaches a conclusion and compels us to admit it, but it neither makes us certain nor so annihilates doubt that the mind rests calm in the intuition of truth, unless it finds this certitude by way of experience. Thus many have arguments toward attainable facts, but because they have not experienced them, they overlook them and neither avoid a harmful nor follow a beneficial course. Even if a man that has never seen fire, proves by good reasoning that fire burns, and devours and destroys things, nevertheless the mind of one hearing his arguments would never be convinced, nor would he avoid fire until he puts his hand or some combustible thing into it in order to prove by experiment what the argument taught. But after the fact of combustion is experienced, the mind is satisfied and lies calm in the certainty of truth. Hence argument is not enough, but experience is...

Experimental science is also that which alone, as the mistress of the speculative sciences, can discover magnificent truths in the fields of the other sciences, to which these other sciences can in no way attain. And these truths are not of the nature of former truths, but they may be even outside of them, in the fields of things where there are neither as yet conclusions or principles, and good examples may be given of this, but in everything which follows it is not necessary for the inexperienced to seek a reason in order to understand at the beginning, but rather he will never have a reason before he has tried the experiment.

**SOURCE:** Roger Bacon, *On Experimental Science*, 1268.

## Document 10

1. We, Rupert the Elder, by the grace of God Count Palatine of the Rhine, Elector of the Holy Empire, and Duke of Bavaria---lest we seem to abuse the privilege conceded to us by the Apostolic See of

founding a place of study at Heidelberg similar to that at Paris, and lest, for this reason, being subjected to the divine judgment, we should deserve to be deprived of the privilege granted---do decree, with provident counsel (which decree is to be observed unto all time), that the University of Heidelberg shall be ruled, disposed, and regulated according to the modes and manners accustomed to be observed in the University of Paris. Also that, as a handmaid of Paris---a worthy one, let us hope---the latter's steps shall be imitated in every way possible; so that, namely, there shall be four faculties in it: the first, of sacred theology and divinity; the second, of canon and civil law, which, by reason of their similarity, we think best to comprise under one faculty; the third, of medicine; the fourth, of liberal arts---of the three-fold philosophy, namely, primal, natural, and moral, three mutually subservient daughters....

**SOURCE:** Count Rupert of the Palatine on the foundation of the University of Heidelberg, 1386.

## Document 11

There is not a limb nor a form,  
Which does not smell of putrefaction.  
Before the soul is outside,  
The heart which wants to burst the body  
Raises and lifts the chest  
Which nearly touches the backbone  
--The face is discolored and pale,  
And the eyes veiled in the head.  
Speech fails him,  
For the tongue cleaves to the palate.  
The pulse trembles and he pants.  
The bones are disjoined on all sides;  
There is not a tendon which does not stretch as to burst.

**SOURCE:** *The Dance of Death (Le Pas de la Mort)* by the chronicler, Georges Chastellain, early 15<sup>c</sup>.

## Document 12

In the year 1349 there occurred the greatest epidemic that ever happened. Death went from one end of the earth to the other . . . . And from what this epidemic came, all wise teachers and physicians could only say that it was God's will . . . . This epidemic also came to Strasbourg in the summer of the above-mentioned year, and it is estimated that about sixteen thousand people died.

In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells--that is what they were accused of--and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from

the Mediterranean into Germany . . . .

On Saturday . . . they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. [Some said that about one thousand of them accepted baptism]. Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was canceled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt . . . .

Thus were the Jews burnt at Strasbourg, and in the same year in all the cities of the Rhine, whether Free Cities or Imperial Cities or cities belonging to the lords. In some towns they burnt the Jews after a trial, in others, without a trial. In some cities the Jews themselves set fire to their houses and cremated themselves. . . .

**SOURCE:** A contemporary chronicler's account about the cremation of the Jews of Strasbourg, 1349.

### Document 13

5. And when the gild is sitting, no one who is of the gild shall go outside the town for any business, without the permission of the steward. And if any does so, let him be fined two shillings, and pay them....

7. And when a gildsman dies, all those who are of the gild and are in the city shall attend the service of the dead, and the gildsmen shall bear the body and bring it to the place of burial. And whoever will not do this shall pay according to his oath, two pence, to be given to the poor. And those of the ward where the dead man shall be ought to find a man to watch over the body the night that the dead shall lie in his house. And so long as the service of the dead shall last, that is to say the vigil and the mass, there ought to burn four candles of the gild, each candle of two pounds weight or more, until the body is buried. And these four candles shall remain in the keeping of the steward of the gild....

19. And no one of the city of Southampton shall buy anything to sell again in the same city, unless he is of the gild merchant or of the franchise. And if anyone shall do so and is convicted of it, all which he has so bought shall be forfeited to the king; and no one shall be quit of custom unless he proves that he is in the gild or in the franchise, and this from year to year.

20. And no one shall buy honey, fat, salt herrings, or any kind of oil, or millstones, or fresh hides, or any kind of fresh skins, unless he is a gildsman: nor keep a tavern for wine, nor sell cloth at retail, except in market or fair days; nor keep grain in his granary beyond five quarters, to sell at retail, if he is not a gildsman; and whoever shall do this and be convicted, shall forfeit all to the king.

22. If any gildsman falls into poverty and has not the wherewithal to live, and is not able to work or to provide for himself, he shall have one mark from the gild to relieve his condition-when the gild shall sit. No one of the gild nor of the franchise shall avow another's goods for his by which the custom of

the city shall be injured. And if any one does so and is convicted, he shall lose the gild and the franchise; and the merchandise so avowed shall be forfeited to the king.

23. And no private man nor stranger shall bargain for or buy any kind of merchandise coming into the city before a burgess of the gild merchant, so long as the gildsman is present and wishes to bargain for and buy this merchandise; and if anyone does so and is convicted, that which he buys shall be forfeited to the king.

**SOURCE:** Southampton England guild [gild] organization privileges, 14<sup>c</sup>.

### Document 14

. . . . A point of discussion was mooted between the apprentice fullers [persons who beat finished cloth with sticks in order to clean and thicken them] on the one hand, and the master fullers on the other. The apprentices held that, as they laid out in a letter, no one could have work done in his house without taking apprentices . . . . For they complained of fulling masters who had their children work in their houses, without standing [for jobs] in the public square like the other apprentices, and they begged that their letter be answered. The fulling masters stated certain arguments to the contrary. The aldermen sent for both parties and for the Twenty also and asked the masters if indeed they kept their children as apprentices; each master said he did. It was declared by the aldermen that every apprentice must remain in the public square, as reason demanded.

Done in the year of 1344 [1345], in the month of February, and through a full sitting of the aldermen.

**SOURCE:** A dispute between master fullers and their apprentices in Flanders, 1345.

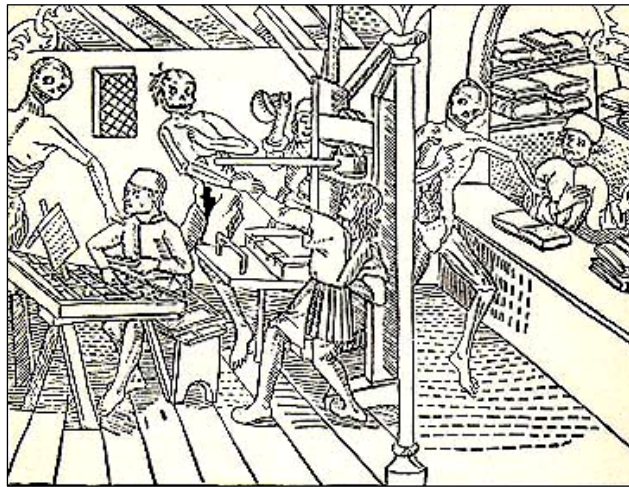
### Document 15

Whereas late against the malice of servants, which were idle, and not willing to serve after the pestilence, without taking excessive wages, it was ordained by our lord the king, and by the assent of the prelates, nobles, and other of his council, that such manner of servants, as well men as women, should be bound to serve, receiving salary and wages, accustomed in places where they ought to serve in the twentieth year of the reign of the king that now is, or five or six years before; and that the same servants refusing to serve in such manner should be punished by imprisonment of their bodies, as in the said statute is more plainly contained: whereupon commissions were made to divers people in every county to inquire and punish all them which offend against the same: and now forasmuch as it is given the king to understand in this present parliament, by the petition of the commonalty, that the

said servants having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and singular covetise, do withdraw themselves to serve great men and other, unless they have livery and wages to the double or treble of that they were wont to take the said twentieth year, and before, to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all the said commonalty, whereof the said commonalty prayeth remedy:....

**SOURCE:** The Statute of Laborers, 1351.

## Document 16



**SOURCE:** Late 14<sup>c</sup> woodcut.

## Document 17

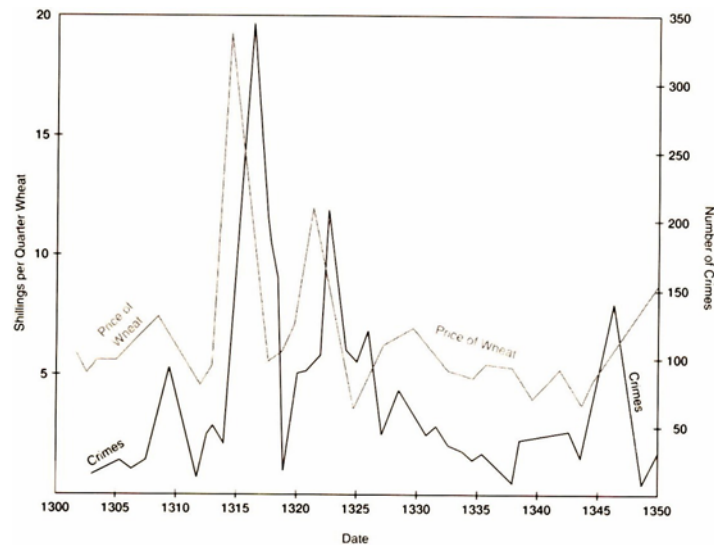
Anon after the deliverance of the king of Navarre there began a marvellous tribulation in the realm of France, as in Beauvoisin, in Brie, on the river of Marne, in Laonnois, and about Soissons. For certain people of the common villages, without any head or ruler, assembled together in Beauvoisin. In the beginning they passed not a hundred in number they said how the noblemen of the realm of France, knights and squires, shamed the realm, and that it should be a great wealth to destroy them all: and each of them said it was true, and said all with one voice: "Shame have he that cloth not his power to destroy all the gentlemen of the realm!"

Thus they gathered together without any other counsel, and without any armour saving with staves and knives, and so went to the house of a knight dwelling thereby, and brake up his house and slew the knight and the lady and all his children great and small and brent his house. And they then went to another castle, and took the knight thereof and bound him fast to a stake, and then violated his wife and his daughter before his face and then slew the lady and his daughter and all his other

children, and then slew the knight by great torment and burnt and beat down the castle. And so they did to divers other castles and good houses; and they multiplied so that they were a six thousand, and ever as they went forward they increased, for such like as they were fell ever to them, so that every gentleman fled from them and took their wives and children with them, and fled ten or twenty leagues off to be in surety, and left their house void and their goods therein. These mischievous people thus assembled without captain or armour robbed, brent and slew all gentlemen that they could lay hands on, and forced and ravished ladies and damosels, and did such shameful deeds that no human creature ought to think on any such, and he that did most mischief was most praised with them and greatest master. I dare not write the horrible deeds that they did to ladies and damosels; among other they slew a knight and after did put him on a broach and roasted him at the fire in the sight of the lady his wife and his children; and after the lady had been enforced and ravished with a ten or twelve, they made her perforce to eat of her husband and after made her to die an evil death and all her children. They made among them a king, one of Clermont in Beauvoisin: they chose him that was the most ungracousest of all other and they called him king Jaques Goodman, and so thereby they were called companions of the jaquery. They destroyed and brent in the country of Beauvoisin about Corbie, and Amiens and Montdidier more than threescore good houses and strong castles....

**SOURCE:** Jean Froissart on the *Jacquerie*, 1358.

## Document 18



**SOURCE:** Chart showing crime and the price of wheat in 14<sup>c</sup> Norfolk, England.

## Document 19

[Florence, 1393]

If you engage in the wool or French-cloth business, do [it] on your own and do not try to grow rich in two days. Manage on your own money and never borrow for profit's sake. Transact your business with trustworthy persons who enjoy good reputation and credit and who have something to show for their name. . . .Never be ensnared by greed for [high] prices; always demand flawless records; better go slowly, [but] do go safely.

If you exercise the wool craft (*Arte di Lana*), manage on your own money. Be not eager to send your merchandise abroad unless you have someone to whom it matters as much as to you. . . .

If you do business abroad, go often yourself--at least once a year--to see and to settle the accounts. Watch what [kind of] life the man who abroad in your behalf leads--whether he spends too much. [Make sure] that he extends sound credits, that he does not rush to [start] things or lies down too low[?], that he acts cautiously and never oversteps instructions. Should he cheat you in anything, fire him.

**SOURCE:** An Italian merchant's advice, 1393.

## Document 20



**SOURCE:** Portrait of King Richard II of England commissioned by himself in the 1390s.

## Document 21

'My fair sirs, the order of chivalry is more exalted and noble than imagination can suppose, and no knight ought to suffer himself to be debased by cowardice or any villainous or dirty action; but when his helmet is on his head he should be bold and fierce as a lion, and because I wish you to show your courage this day where it will be most needful, I order you to the front of the battalion, where you must exert yourselves that we may both obtain honors, otherwise your spurs will not become you.'

Each new knight in turn as he passed answered, 'Sire we will, with God's grace, so act, that we may gain your love and approval.' None of the English were knighted this day; they were invited by the King to become knights, but excused themselves for that time.

. . . . The King of Portugal fought on foot in this encounter, and having placed himself at the pass with a battle-axe in his hand, performed wonders, knocking down three or four of the stoutest of the enemy, insomuch that none dared approach him. The Spaniards, as you might imagine, had a hard afternoon's work, and the fortune of war was greatly against them. All who entered the fort of the Lisboners were cut to pieces, for the Portuguese would not ransom any, whether poor or noble. The number of slain was immense.

**SOURCE:** Jean Froissart's account of the Battle of Aljubarrota during the Hundred Years' War, 1385.

## Document 22

In the immediate wake of the Black Death we hear of an unparalleled abundance of food and goods, and of a wild, irresponsible life of pleasure. Agnolo di Tura writes that in Siena "everyone tended to enjoy eating and drinking, hunting, hawking, and gaming," and Matteo Villani laments similar behavior in Florence....

This extraordinary condition of plenty did not, of course, last very long. For most people the frenzied search for immediate gratification, characteristic of the survivors of calamities, was likewise short-lived. Throughout the subsequent decades, however, we continue to hear of an exceptional difference to accepted patterns of behavior and to institutional regulations, especially among the mendicant friars. It seems, as we shall see, that the plague tended to promote an unconventional, irresponsible, or self-indulgent life, on the one hand, and a more intense piety or religious excitement, on the other. Villani tells us, in his very next sentences, of the more lasting consequences of the epidemic:

"Men thought that, through the death of so many people, there would be abundance of all produce of the land; yet, on the contrary, by reason of men's ingratitude, everything came to unwonted scarcity and remained long thus; ... most commodities were more costly, by twice or more, than before the plague. And the price of labor, and the products of every trade and craft, rose in disorderly fashion beyond the double. Lawsuits and disputes and quarrels and riots arose everywhere among citizens in every land, by reason of legacies and successions; ... Wars and divers scandals arose throughout the world, contrary to men's expectation."

Conditions were similar in Siena. Prices rose to unprecedented levels. The economy of both Florence and Siena was further disrupted during these years by the defection of almost all the dependent towns within the little empire of each city. These towns seized as an opportunity for revolt the fall of the powerful Florentine oligarchy in 1343, and the Siennese in 1355. The two cities, greatly weakened, and governed by groups that pursued a less aggressive foreign policy, made little attempt to win them back.

The small towns and the countryside around the two cities were not decimated so severely by the epidemic, but the people in these regions felt the consequences of it in another way. Several armies of mercenaries of the sort that all the large states had come to employ in the fourteenth century took advantage of the weakness of the cities....

The ravages of the mercenary companies accelerated a great wave of immigration from the smaller towns and farms into the cities that had been initiated by the Black Death. Most of the newcomers were recruits for the woolen industry, who were attracted by relatively high wages. But the mortality offered exceptional opportunities also for notaries, jurists, physicians, and craftsmen. In both Florence and Siena the laws controlling immigration were relaxed, and special privileges, a rapid grant of citizenship, or exemption from taxes were offered to badly needed artisans or professional men, such as physicians....

In addition to bringing into the city great numbers of people from the surrounding towns and country, the Black Death affected the character of Florentine society in still another way. Through irregular inheritance and other exceptional circumstances, a class of *nouveaux riches* arose in the town and also in decimated Siena. Their wealth was accentuated by the impoverishment of many of the older families, such as the Bardi and the Peruzzi, who had lost their fortunes in the financial collapse. In both cities, too, many tradesmen and artisans were enriched to a degree unusual for the *popolo minuto*. Scaramella sees as one of the major conflicts of the time the struggle between the old families and this *gente nuova*. Outcries against both foreigners and the newly rich, never lacking in the two cities, increased in volume and violence. Antagonism to "the aliens and the ignorant" coalesced with antagonism to the new municipal regime; the government, it was said, had been captured by them.

**SECONDARY SOURCE:** Millard Meiss. *Painting in Florence and Sienna after the Black Death*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 67-69.